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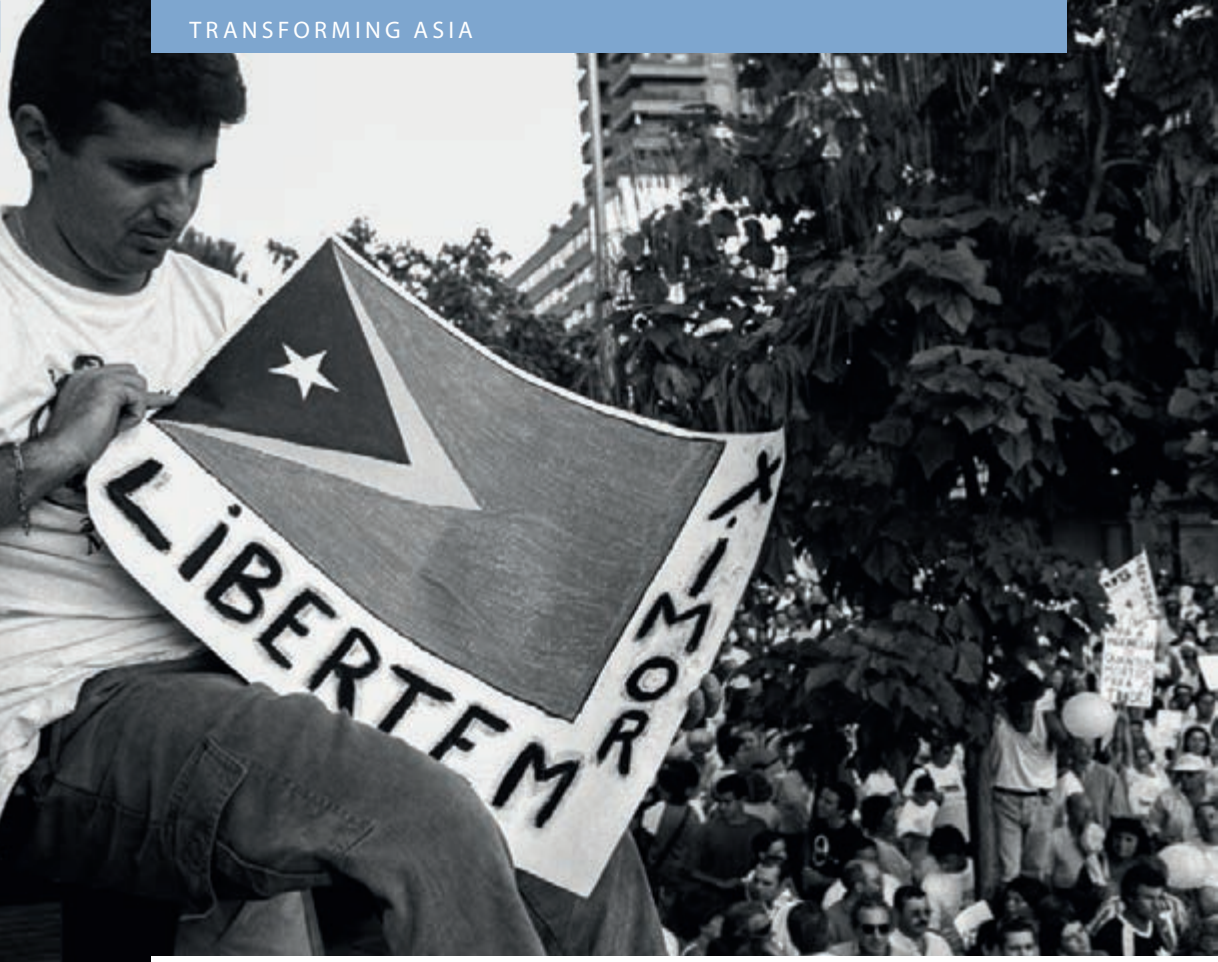

Edited by Zélia Pereira and Rui Graça Feijó

Timor-Leste's Long Road to Independence

Transnational Perspectives

Amsterdam University Press

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Timor-Leste's Long Road to Independence

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Transforming Asia

Asia is often viewed through a fog of superlatives: the most populous countries, lowest fertility rates, fastest growing economies, greatest number of billionaires, most avid consumers, and greatest threat to the world's environment. This recounting of superlatives obscures Asia's sheer diversity, uneven experience, and mixed inheritance.

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Transnational Perspectives

Edited by
Zélia Pereira and
Rui Graça Feijó

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Publication of this book received the support of the research project "The Self-determination of Timor-Leste: A Study in Transnational History," funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, FCT/PTDC/HAR-HIS/30670/2017.

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To *Maun Boot* Xanana Gusmão
Hero among heroes

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Amsterdam University Press submitted our book proposal to three external reviewers, whose comments were most illuminating. As editors, we tried to follow most of their suggestions, regretting not being able to do full justice to them given the limited space we had for such a daunting task as to offer a comprehensive view of an extremely long and complex process. All contributing authors were given copies of their suggestions and recommendations, and chapters were updated in line with them. This is the best tribute we can pay to those reviewers.

Saskia Gieling was our first contact at Amsterdam University Press, pursuing a relationship that had already borne two successful books. This time she could not carry on with the job until the last phases of production, but her successors in different capacities, Irene van Rossum, Maryse Elliott, Loretta Lou, Jasmijn Zondervan and Julie Benschop-Plokker, all did a marvellous job keeping this project running through the various stages until it emerged as a beautiful final product. May they all be aware of our gratitude.

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A Note on the Name of the Country

On May 20, 2002, a new nation was born that now pertains to the international constellation of independent, sovereign states: the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. This book is about the long process that eventually culminated on that day. When such a process began, the territory was mostly referred to as "Portuguese Timor." In 1975, it officially became known as Timor-Leste, although many references exist to Timor-Dili or East Timor (or, in French, Timor Oriental, in German Ost-Timor, in Italian Timor Est). For a while, the name Timor Lorosa'e coexisted with Timor-Leste, and is still used in the country, although not in an official capacity. Under the occupation, the territory was labelled Timor-Timur, the 27th province of the Republic of Indonesia. The authorities of the novel state have decided that the official name of the country is Timor-Leste and that this form should be used in all languages; the demonym, however, is not covered by the same rule, and East Timorese is accepted. Abiding by their request, this book adopts the form Timor-Leste as a default one, even though in specific places other names may be used for historical accuracy. When quoting from published material we kept the original form used by authors.

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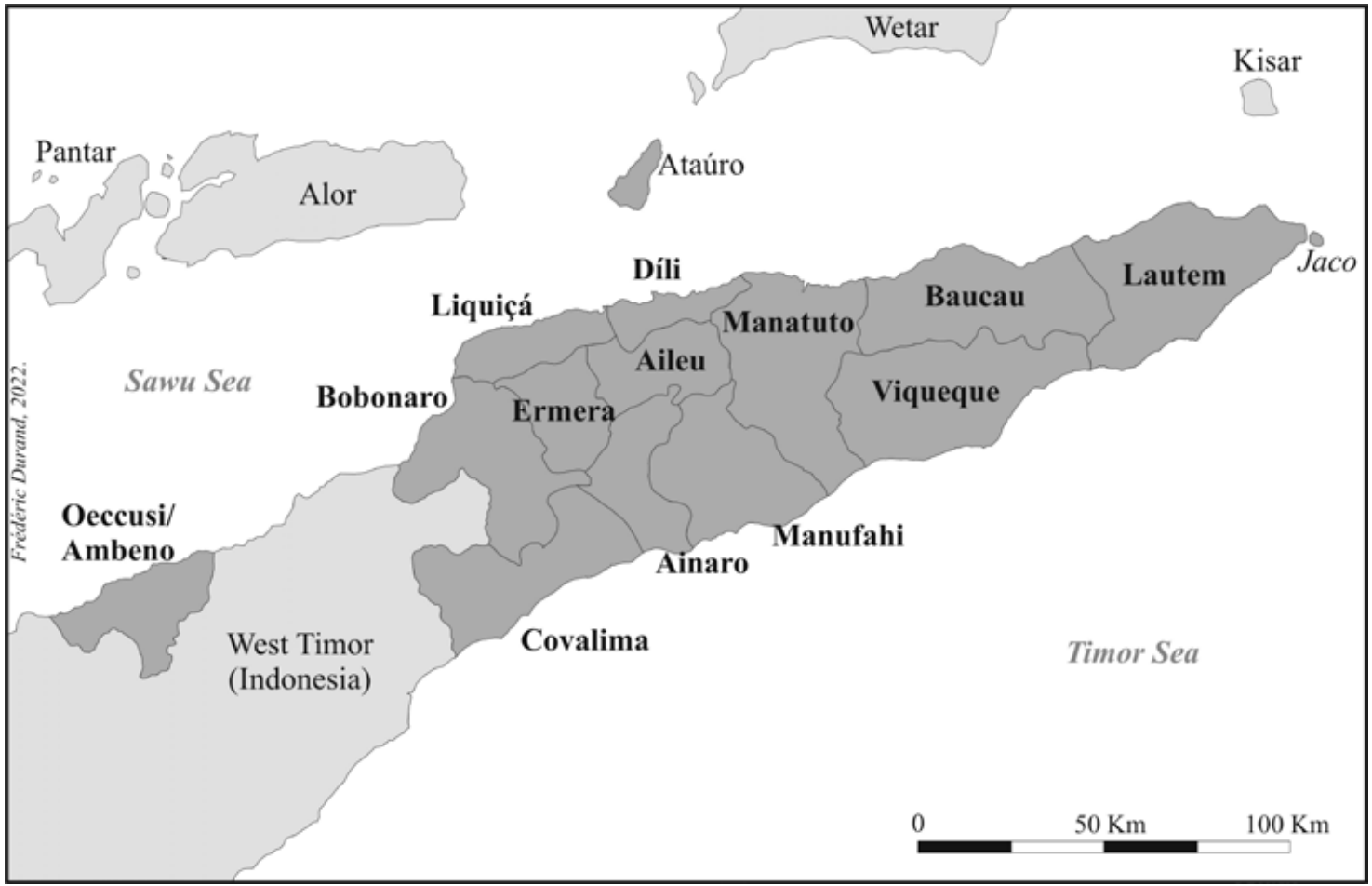

Figure 0.1.: Map of Timor-Leste. Courtesy of Frédéric Durand.

Introduction

Timor-Leste's Long Road to Independence: Outline for an Analytical Framework[1]

Zélia Pereira and Rui Graça Feijó

Abstract
The first part discusses the self-determination of Timor, underlying the features that singularise it in the context of Portuguese decolonisation and late-twentieth-century national emancipation. It calls attention to its transnational character. It stresses the "golden triangle" of armed struggle, clandestine activity and diplomatic efforts during the period of Indonesian occupation and the importance of the emerging Timorese Catholic Church in the formation of a plural form of nationalism. The second part offers comments on all the chapters in the collection.

Keywords*:* Timor, Portugal, Indonesia, United Nations, nationalism, decolonisation, resistance, Timorese Catholic Church

Monday, May 20, 2002. The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste is proclaimed as a new independent state to international applause. The day marks the end of a very long and winding road initiated in the wake of the Portuguese Carnation Revolution back in 1974. Before reaching this point, Timor-Leste travelled from a backward, half-forgotten Portuguese colony freed from the Japanese domination at the end of World War II – a time when the world started moving from "the age of Empire to the age of super-powers," including the overarching Cold War (Hilton and Mitter 2013) – to a dramatic annexation by neighbouring Indonesia. The "first wave of decolonisation"

1 Special thanks are due to Hannah Loney, Pocut Hanifah, Michael Leach, David Webster, Bruno Kahn and Pedro Aires Oliveira, who discussed this essay and offered relevant comments and suggestions which we have tried to consider. Lúcio Sousa and Alberto Fidalgo Castro also offered relevant comments. Any shortcomings remain our responsibility.

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began right at the territory's vicinity with the unilateral proclamation of independence by the Republic of Indonesia on August 17, 1945. Indeed, the Southeast Asia colonies occupied by the Japanese created, at the time of its debacle, "an opportune moment making it difficult if not impossible for colonial powers to recover their positions" (Shipway 2008: 61). This long process first witnessed the return and then a continuation of the Portuguese domination in fierce opposition to the winds of change that rocked the foundations of European colonialism in Asia and Africa before the mid-1970s, staging resistance to the proclamations of a new, emerging international law supported by the United Nations (Alexandre 2017; Santos and Pereira 2022). This was followed by a short, nineteen-month period during which post-authoritarian Portugal tried to develop a self-determination programme for all its colonies. This was a period in which "a series of weak and unstable provisional governments in Portugal could exercise little agency and were often reduced to hapless observers" (MacQueen 2018: 62). In the case of Timor, efforts to secure an "exemplary decolonisation" failed dramatically. A unilateral declaration of independence on November 28, 1975, was short-lived and was never recognised by more than a handful of countries. The territory was militarily invaded on December 7, 1975, by the forces of the Republic of Indonesia who attempted to stage a mock act of self-determination and transformed the territory into the republic's 27th province, Timor-Timur. The Indonesian move did not generate international support either, Australia being the sole country to ever issue *de jure* of recognition of such status for Timor, which remained in the eyes of international law as a "non-sovereign territory under Portuguese administration."

The years between 1975 and 1999 were lived under the Indonesian administration, exerting brutal repression on the Timorese resistance that never surrendered its claim to a genuine act of self-determination. The scope of the repression has been estimated by the independent Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation to have amounted to circa 180,000 deaths (not ruling out that the figure could be higher, in line with the claims of respected organisations like the International Committee of the Red Cross), most of them concentrated in the very first few years after the invasion (CAVR 2013). This number of deaths, for a territory that in the early 1970s had a population of about 610,000 souls, places the case of Timor-Leste in line with the brutal Khmer Rouge massacres in Cambodia's Killing Fields, and raises the issue (discussed by Clinton Fernandes in this book) of a possible act of genocide. Roman Catholic Bishop Belo, later a Nobel Peace laureate, spoke of "cultural genocide" to express the breadth of Indonesian repression of the Timorese people. After lengthy negotiations under the aegis

of the UN, Portugal and Indonesia reached an agreement (May 5, 1999) that paved the way for a "popular consultation" of the Timorese people following internationally accepted standards of freedom and fairness in the voting process. The referendum of August 30, 1999, returned a sound victory for those who stood in favour of independence. Indonesia eventually withdrew from the territory, to be replaced by a provisional UN administration, lasting about two and a half years – the largest ever operation conducted under the UN and destined to lay the foundations upon which a new independent state might emerge (Vasconcelos 2006; MacQueen 2015; Feijó 2022b).

On May 20, 2002, the restoration of independence of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste was proclaimed in Dili before the new authorities, duly chosen through electoral processes, and several foreign guests among whom the Portuguese president Jorge Sampaio, the Indonesian president Megawati Sukarnoputri, the UN secretary-general Kofi Annan and former US president Bill Clinton, as well as a special representative from Pope John Paul II. Soon afterwards, the new state was accepted as a full member of the United Nations. Fifty-seven years had elapsed after the onset of the decolonisation process in Southeast Asia; twenty-eight years since the Portuguese Carnation Revolution that changed the attitude of this country regarding its colonies; twenty-seven since the Republic of Indonesia had annexed the territory; and almost three years since the genuine act of self-determination finally took place. This long and painful process was, in a variety of perspectives, unprecedented and original.

Originalities at the Onset of Decolonisation

Timor remains a special case in the context of Portuguese decolonisation, not least because of all its overseas territories, Timor was probably the one with lower levels of colonial impact. "Heightened interventionism and new development projects were prioritised [by Portugal after World War II] in order to enhance social, economic and political reform overseas and, it was hoped, to appease local and international opposition" (Jerónimo 2018: 544) – but in the case of Timor this effort soon faded before it could produce any significant impact, and the colony remained mostly neglected and stagnant till 1974 (as argued in the chapter by Feijó in this volume). Timor did not conform to the same logic that led the African colonies to gain their independence (MacQueen 1998): no war of national liberation was ever staged in Portuguese Timor before the Indonesian invasion; no serious liberation movement or party challenged Portuguese rule before

1974; the Portuguese military presence, supported by local conscription to a large extent, was minute and unable to stand any serious attack; it was not an appetising morsel for superpowers to fight over its fate, and it did not present a case for Cold War confrontation; it did not have mineral resources – at least not fully discovered by 1974 – attracting foreign interest; and owing to its small size, it was not of importance in terms of areas of influence (Gonçalves 2003).

In fact, as opposed to all other instances in which the claim for decolonisation moved from rebelling colonies to the metropolis, in this one it was the metropolis that initiated the process by granting freedom to organise political movements in view of exercising self-determination. It should also be stressed that the emerging Timorese nationalist movements, unlike what happened with their African counterparts, had no substantial links to any of the main political parties that were active in Lisbon nor to the anti-colonialist movement that was brewing in Portugal at the end of the authoritarian regime (MacQueen 2018). Only one – FRETILIN (*Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente*/Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor-Leste) – developed contacts with the African liberation movements, mainly with FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*/Liberation Front of Mozambique). Except in the case of APODETI (*Associação Popular Democrática Timorense*/*Asosiasi Demokratik Rakyat Timor*/Timorese Popular Democratic Association) that supported and was supported by Indonesia, the nationalist movements that emerged in 1974 had no significant external links, namely to the Cold War superpowers. As António Costa Pinto put it, "Timor suffered the most extreme case of the crossroads of Portuguese decolonisation" (Pinto 2001).

In the long period under scrutiny, Portugal, as a colonial power and formally as the provider of administrative rights over the territory, shifted its position in a dramatic form. During the authoritarian rule, Portugal stood strongly against the changes advocated by several UN resolutions and resisted any attempt to provide a genuine act of self-determination to its colonies, as emerges in the chapter by Zélia Pereira in this book on the UN intervention in the process (see also Santos and Pereira 2022). After the fall of the dictatorship, Portugal attempted to provide a general framework for decolonisation, which failed in the case of Timor (Feijó 2022a; Pereira and Feijó 2022a). Following the Indonesian invasion, and despite the fact that the Portuguese position evolved over time (Mendes 2022), the country found itself in the original position of actively supporting the right to self-determination (and independence) of its former colony still formally under its jurisdiction but actually administered by a foreign, neo-colonial power.

There are not many examples of such a dramatic shift of position, and of a former colonial power being so intent on bringing about self-determination rights to its former dominions. The Portuguese foreign minister Jaime Gama is credited with the utterance: "It is rare for the colonial power to be part of the liberation movement" (quoted in Neves 2019: 55) – but that eventually happened and was consequential.

The events of 1974–1975 raised high expectations, namely that the Timorese might choose to live without foreign tutelage. The dramatic epilogue to that process proved otherwise. The colonial rule of the Portuguese was replaced by the establishment of a neo-colonial order under the Indonesians. All three Portuguese dominions in Asia were small territories surrounded by gigantic neighbours with expectations regarding their post-colonial status. In the Indian subcontinent, the "Portuguese State of India," comprising Goa, Daman and Diu had already been incorporated by force. India being the largest democracy in the world (by population), the military annexation, supported by important sectors of the local elite, evolved into a political integration based on extensive autonomy rights and proper representation in the institutions of the union. Before the year 1974 drew to a close, Portugal and India established diplomatic relations based on the recognition of the fait accompli (Saldanha 2000). In a similar vein, Macau was a strategically important city located in the Pearl River delta, which Portugal was intent on negotiating with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Negotiations formally started in the 1980s, and in 1999 Macau was peacefully returned to China under an agreement establishing the principle of "one nation, two systems" that had been applied to the case of Hong Kong (Fernandes 2006). Portugal and Indonesia had very low-intensity diplomatic relations since the mid-1960s, but soon after the Carnation Revolution of April 25, 1974, both countries found ways to entertain dialogue over the fate of Portuguese Timor, perhaps with different approaches on both sides that may have generated misunderstandings with severe consequences (Pereira and Feijó 2023). On the Portuguese side, the view was expressed that its Southeast Asia colony should be given the right to choose, the alternatives being the continuation of an association of some sort with the colonial power, the integration into the Republic of Indonesia, or the proclamation of independence. The crux of the matter was the need to stage a genuine act of self-determination. Indonesia as a leading member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) showed interest in facilitating the decolonisation of the Portuguese territory, not hiding its preference for a peaceful integration into its republic. Conversations between the two parties were intense, but never reached an agreement on the substance of the problem. After the military invasion, diplomatic

relations were severed, and the Timor issue remained on the agenda of the UN as Portugal sought to internationalise the question.

Indonesia might have behaved like India. There was a part of the Timorese elite ready to accept some form of integration, based on the argument that the partition of the island had been a crime perpetrated by the Portuguese and the Dutch in the mid-nineteenth century, the people being ethnically and culturally much the same. A political party was formed to express these views (APODETI) and openly supported by the Indonesian regime. It failed to attract wide popular support but nevertheless was important among the local elite, including several traditional leaders. Later in 1975, as rifts within the nationalist movement erupted, the "Indonesian option" was espoused by other parties, namely the UDT (*União Democrática Timorense*/ Timorese Democratic Union), formerly a party supporting the continuation of links with Portugal and medium-term independence (Hicks 2015). It is not a surprise to recall that, soon after the military invasion, Indonesian installed members of the local elite in a "provisional government" and later appointed local leaders to head the provincial government, including Mário Carrascalão, a high cadre of the UDT, who discharged the function for ten years (Carrascalão 2006). However, despite having a claim based on anti-colonial arguments, the Indonesians failed to consolidate their grip on power as the popular resistance to their rule grew stronger.

Understanding Opposition to Indonesian Rule

Monday, August 30, 1999. After lengthy negotiation under the aegis of the UN secretary-general who had been entrusted with the "Timor issue" back in November 1982, Portugal and Indonesia had finally reached an agreement (May 5) paving the way for a UN-sponsored and supervised act of self-determination (officially referred to as a "popular consultation") that took place in this day. A comprehensive registration of Timorese resulted in an electoral roll of 451,792 individuals. Of these, 438,956 (98.6%) turned out to cast their ballot. A few days later in New York, Secretary-General Kofi Annan proclaimed the official results: 94,388 (21.5%) voted for an autonomy status within the Republic of Indonesia, while 344,580 (78.5%) rejected it, opening up a process of withdrawal from the occupying country and eventually independence. Indonesian leaders were shocked and surprised:

> For the past two months, they had been constantly fed with highly optimistic predictions of a victory for the pro-integration forces in the

> balloting, although the predicted margin of victory was progressively scaled down as the date of balloting got closer: from an 80 to 20 winning margin to 60 to 40 and finally to 55 to 45 in the days just before the balloting. (Alatas 2006: 211)

There could be no doubt that Indonesian rule was expressively rejected by an overwhelming majority of the people. The occupiers' narrative that the Resistance was limited to a radical fringe was thus soundly denied. Why was that so?

In a famous article entitled "Imagining East Timor" (1993), Benedict Anderson asks two related questions: Why has Indonesia's attempt to absorb Timor-Leste failed? How does one explain the very rapid spread and development of East Timorese nationalism? Anderson was surprised by the evolution he witnessed on the ground, not least because it seemed to question some assumptions regarding his theses on nationalism (Anderson 1983). His tentative response was that the Indonesians faced severe difficulties to "imagine the Timorese as Indonesians," replicating an attitude that fed the Indonesian nationalism against Dutch colonialism. "The commonality of 'Indonesia' is fundamentally one of historical experience and mythology," and in this sense long-term membership of the Dutch East Indies – the formal argument used by Sukarno and later Suharto to claim sovereignty over their territory, including the long struggle to incorporate Western Papua/Irian Jaya – is a powerful element that left Timor-Leste outside its realm. This attitude is evidenced by the extremist methods of rule that were used in Timor-Leste after the invasion of 1975 (CAVR 2013; Pacheco 2017). From this stance, Anderson derived the idea that "nationalist projects can turn into 'colonial' projects." In a similar vein, Awet Tewelde Weldemichael applied the concept of "Third World colonialism," or "secondary colonialism," to the relation between Indonesia and Timor-Leste. "In pursuit of their own national interests, or those of a small ruling elite, important African and Asian powers implemented policies towards weaker entities that were no less colonial and sought no less imperially grandiose than Europe's" (2013: 2). David Hicks concurs that Portuguese colonialism was followed by the "recolonisation by an Asian neighbour" (2015: 167), and so do Stephen McCloskey (2000) and Rod Nixon (2012)

The Indonesian authorities long maintained that they had replaced Portuguese negligence of its colony with significant efforts to bring investments and "development" to the territory. Schools, health facilities, roads and electric power are among the items often mentioned in relation to

local development. However, as Rod Nixon (2012) has argued, the level of a "neo-subsistence state" was never overcome. In fact, he argued that

> the diverse range of variables examined (i.e., education, participation in public administration, insertion in workforce, health care, physical infrastructures) indicates that despite high levels of public sector spending, the overall extent to which social and economic modernisation was realised in East Timor during the Indonesian period is minimal. (Nixon 2012: 100)

Retrieving a suggestion made by Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo (2018), one may classify Indonesia's policy as an example of "repressive developmentalism." However, as Andrew McWilliam (2020) notes, the economic bases of traditional Timor-Leste were significantly disrupted with the advancement of some market-oriented initiatives as well as by the massive impact of transmigration. At the end of the Indonesian period, Timor-Leste emerged not only as one of the poorest regions of the archipelago (although not the very poorest) but as the least developed country in Asia, with extremely low ratings in the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In 2004, Timor-Leste's HDI was a mere 0.436, placing the country in 158th place (of 177 countries examined), whereas Indonesia's ranking was 111th with an HDI of 0.692 (UNDP 2004). Of course, changes did take place, like the increased urbanisation which translated into the substantial growth of Dili (Belo 2014a), or the surge in education which promoted the rise of students' movements as political actors (Pinto and Jardine 1997; Leach 2016). The face of Timor-Leste may have changed, but the reception of those transformations was not necessarily peaceful nor destined to elicit praise.

Josh Trindade (2019) has suggested that the Timorese harbour a deep notion of *tempu rai-diak* (literally, "time of the good earth/soil") – "a time in the past when people lived in peace, agriculture was good and there was no shortage of food, war or violence" (2019: 71). Often, this utopian past is referred to the times prior to the European settlements. But it may also be retro-projected onto much more recent times. The key to this notion is the fact that it refers to a presumed time when a stable social order existed, only to be disrupted by foreign intervention. It was not surprising that some elders who had resented the Portuguese colonial exploitation later opposed those days, re-imagined as better than the current situation, to the time under Indonesian occupation. These sorts of processes have been observed in many societies at different moments of their history. For example, writing

on sixteenth-century northern Italy's popular culture, Carlo Ginzburg noted that

> [i]n societies founded on oral tradition, the memory of the community involuntarily tends to mask and reabsorb changes. To the relatively flexibility of material life there corresponds accentuated immobility of the image of the past. Things have always been like this; the world is what it is. Only in periods of acute social change does an image emerge, generally a mythical one, of a different and better past – a model of perfection in the light of which the present appears to be a deterioration, a degeneration. [...] The struggle to transform the social order then becomes a conscious attempt to return to that mythical past. (2013: 73)

The existence of what might be conceived as "objective" conditions for political action, such as economic deprivation, need to be considered in a broader framework. The British Marxist historian E. P. Thompson popularised in the 1970s the notion of "moral economy" – a term originally formulated in the eighteenth century with vague purposes (Gotz 2015) – that represented an approach inspired by Antonio Gramsci which permitted an explanatory focus on material conditions coupled with the acknowledgement that these are often filtered by cultural forms revealing patterns of "hegemony." To surpass the shortcomings of "crass economic reductionism" that obliterates "the complexities of motive, behaviour and function" that are at the base of political expression, Thompson argued for the importance of recognising the centrality of a cultural notion of "legitimacy." He wrote:

> By the notion of legitimation I mean that the men and women in the [revolting] crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or custom; and, in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community. (1971: 78)

Thompson reasoned that collective action was a product of agency and that, contrary to established assumptions that basically considered riots and other forms of political behaviour as a "spasmodic" response to objective stimuli – and in that sense, people were viewed as objects mechanically following predetermined paths – they ought to be envisaged as full subjects with "moral" values. "An outrage to these moral assumptions, quite as much as the actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action" (Thompson 1971: 79).

Marc Edelman would later claim (2012) that, for Thompson, the use of the term "moral" conflates two distinct yet interrelated notions: one is "moral" as in mores or customs, with an inkling to tradition; the other is "moral" as in ethics or principled stances. In our view, it is precisely this facet of Thompson's argument – that there is a cultural level formulated around a shared perception of what things "ought to be" articulated with more material aspects – that allows one to envisage political action as a global phenomenon driven by human agency. Returning to the subject twenty-odd years later, Thompson would insist on the strength of his stance:

> "Riot" [...] is not a "natural" or "obvious" response to hunger but a sophisticated pattern of collective behaviour, a collective alternative to individualistic and familial strategies of survival. Of course, hunger rioters were hungry, but hunger does not dictate that they must riot nor does it determine the riot's forms. (1993: 266)

Consideration of "culture" in the anthropological sense is all the more important since Partha Chatterjee has argued that Asian and African grassroots anti-colonial nationalism possesses a singular feature: a spiritual dimension. "The spiritual is an 'inner' domain bearing the essential marks of cultural identity" (1993: 6). Posited in opposition to the "material domain" comprising Western skills – economy, science, technology, but also statecraft – the "spiritual domain" assumes a relevant role in preserving the distinctness of one's culture. As Tonnesson and Antlov have argued (1996), there is no single "Asian form of the nation," or nationalism, but the spiritual inner domain is often present in the process of "imagining a community."

Elaborating on Thompson's insights, James C. Scott refined the argument and applied it to an analysis of peasant rebellion in Southeast Asia (1976). Assuming that "exploitation without rebellion seems a far more ordinary state of affairs than revolutionary war," and thus that "objective" conditions do not by themselves promote human agency, Scott proposes to place "subsistence ethics" at the centre of the analysis of peasant politics: "their notion of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation" (1976: 3–4). Again, the material basis is shrouded in cultural values: "The violation of these standards could be expected to provoke resentment and resistance – not only because needs were unmet, but because rights were violated" (1976: 6). Finally, a reminder that "the study of the moral economy of the peasantry, while it begins in the domain of economics, must end in the study of peasant culture and religion" (1976: vii). We broadly adopt this

conception as a powerful tool to explore the recent history of Timor-Leste and its struggle for independence.

Axel Honneth, on his part, has written extensively on the notion of "recognition" (for instance: Honneth 1995; Fraser and Honneth 2003), and he traces "social conflict to the violation of implicit rules of mutual recognition" (Honneth 1995: 160). He uses the concept of *Missachtung* which can be translated as "disrespect," being one that refers not only to a failure to show proper deference bur rather to a broad class of issues, including humiliation, degradation, insult, disenfranchisement and physical abuse (1994: viii). In brief, also for Honneth, social conflict has a moral logic, that is, a culturally mediated explanation. This view opposed conceptions of social unrest, rebellion, protest or resistance as derived from "interest" supposedly emerging from "objective inequalities" in the distribution of material opportunities without ever being linked to everyday web of moral feelings (1995: 161). To a certain extent, this duality mirrors what John Steel regarded as the competition between "ideas" and "interests" (2004: 96). Honneth's stance has been regarded as a way to replace political sociology by moral psychology (Fraser and Honneth 2003: 201–211). To this he retorted that he stands for analysing "a process of symbolically mediated negotiation directed toward the interpretation of underlying normative principles," thus avoiding a clash between the two orders of consideration (idem, 249).

The demand for "recognition" in modern societies emerge from a link that is often established between "recognition" and "identity":

> [O]ur identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition and misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in false, distorted and reduced mode of being. (Taylor 1994: 75)

For Charles Taylor, thus, "due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe to people. It is a vital human need" (1994: 76). It materialises through compatible notions such as "dignity" used in a universalist and egalitarian sense. It is precisely this notion of "dignity" (or assaulted dignity) that José Mattoso used in the title of his biography of the Resistance leader Nino Konis Santana (Mattoso 2005).

The notion of dignity can help us understand the evolution of the anti-Indonesian sentiment of the Timorese population. One telling example

is that of the students' organisation RENETIL (*Resistência National dos Estudantes de Timor-Leste*/National Resistance of East Timorese Students), founded in 1988 with significant success. According to George Aditjondro, the family background of this organisation's activists, in terms of their past political affiliation, was composed of 48% of APODETI supporters, 26% of the UDT and a mere 24% of FRETILIN (1999). This example illuminates the fundamental political earthquake that took place under Indonesian occupation, and which was translated in the continuation of a plural nationalism. Opposition to Indonesian brutal policies that denied the people its "dignity" actually emerged from all quarters of society.

On Timorese Identity and Revolt Patterns

The question then arises: Did the Timorese possess a "moral" basis of their own that might be challenged by Indonesian behaviour once they had conquered the territory? Or were Indonesian voices right in claiming that the annexation of Timor-Leste was a major step to overturn the dramatic effects of colonialism in separating populations that used to share basic ways of life? Was there something differentiating the population of Timor-Leste, after several centuries of Portuguese presence, from that of other parts of Indonesia, and would that substrate provide sufficient grounds to root a nascent nationalism or an individual *lisan* (customary code)? At the end of the day, one might follow Josh Trindade (2019) and ask: "The 'Imagined Community' of East Timor – does it exist?" To answer this question, the results of the referendum of August 1999 provide evidence that it must be positive. At the very least, those results prove that by and large the people of Timor-Leste saw themselves as non-Indonesian. One might recall the famous utterance of Ernest Renan, the French polymath of the late nineteenth century, according to which "a nation is an everyday plebiscite" – nothing better than a real plebiscite to gauge the strength of national ideals. However, one possesses other sources of evidence that precede the end of the Indonesian period.

Exploring this issue at length falls outside the realm of the present introduction. However, one may recall here two instances that lend support to the idea that Timor-Leste possessed a sufficient number of elements to ground its "imagined community" as separate from others. The first comes from Bishop Belo, who is famously known to have considered the Indonesian attitudes towards the East Timorese as "cultural genocide" insofar as basic tenets of their ways of life were being repressed. Genocide is a precise

juridical concept whose possible application to the case of Timor-Leste is discussed in the chapter by Clinton Fernandes in this volume. It must be used sparingly. However, evidence exists that the breadth of Indonesian violence amounted at least to a classification as an atrocity and a "crime against Humanity" (Bloxham and Moses 2022). The key element of intent to cause severe harm was present, for instance, in the name of the military operation of 1977-1978 – "operation encirclement and annihilation". The purpose of destroying a preexisting culture was therefore present – and this betrays the recognition of its existence.

The second telling example is that of American anthropologists who spent years of fieldwork in "Portuguese Timor" between 1970 and 1974, witnessing the onset of the self-determination process, and who later reflect on their experiences. They were later called to testify before the US Congress[2] and the UN Committee on Decolonisation.[3] Shepard Forman and Elizabeth Traube concurred that "the people of East Timor are perfectly capable, provided the opportunity, of articulating decisively their political choices," given that they possess "an ability and a willingness to engage in collective decision-making" which "generated a heightened sense of their unity as a people." Traube would elaborate in her 1979 statement:

> I would not dispute [the Indonesian claim to sovereignty over Timor-Leste] on the basis of cultural grounds abstracted from their historical context. I am well aware of the pervasive family resemblances between cultures of East Timor and those contained within the Republic of Indonesia. However, contemporary East Timor is in significant respects the product of colonial history which [...] has cumulatively differentiated the eastern part of the island from the rest of the archipelago.

This idea is further expanded when considering the "cultural construction of history" or "the ways in which the members of a determinate culture create their historical reality by investing the past with meaning." In this context, a most relevant feature is the way in which East Timorese envisage the Portuguese – as younger brothers who had set sail in earlier periods only

2 There is a digitised rendering of the interventions that took place on June 28, 1977, https://books.google.com/books?id=THZkQy1N610C&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:LYEZwrZKarYC&hl=pt-PT&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwicqMfkq0T3AhUPy4UKHZMIBkwQ6AF6BAgFEAI.

3 Elizabeth Traube appeared before this committee on three occasions: 22.10.1979 (https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/5463?ln=en and also https://xdata.bookmarc.pt/cidac/tl/TL3507-04.pdf); 15.8.1980 (https://xdata.bookmarc.pt/cidac/tl/TL0440.pdf); 17.10.1980 (https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/16587?ln=en and also https://xdata.bookmarc.pt/cidac/tl/TL3539.pdf).

to be enticed to return endowed with new instruments of knowledge that allowed them to exercise a benign rule – as different from other peoples regarded as simple *malae* (that is, foreigners), a category that includes the Indonesians (Traube 1980).

In brief: the argument was made that the peoples of Timor-Leste possessed objective and subjective elements upon which to ground the imagination of an autonomous community, sufficiently important as to draw a line between their own cultures and the vast array of cultures within the Republic of Indonesia. Respect for those idiosyncrasies, which was not observed by the occupiers, was paramount to achieve any significant form of integration; failure to do so could only ignite grassroots rejection of the annexation.

The next critical question was also posed by James C. Scott. Why is it that open rebellion is *not* the most characteristic expression of peasant politics? What other forms of political mobilisation may constitute an alternative to open rebellion, given that "rebellion is one of the least likely consequences of exploitation" (1976: 12, 193)?. A few years after his seminal book, Scott published a study entitled *The Weapons of the Weak* (1985) in which he elaborates a response to his own questions:

> Most subordinate classes through much of history have rarely been afforded the luxury of open, organised, political activity. Or, better stated, such activity was dangerous, if not suicidal. Even when the option existed, it is not clear that the same objectives might not also be pursued by other strategies. [...] Formal, organised political activity, even if clandestine and revolutionary, is typically the preserve of the middle class and the intelligentsia; to look for peasant politics in this realm is to look largely in vain. (1985: xv)

This fresh perspective offers one ground to approach the resistance of the people of Timor-Leste to Indonesian annexation, and may even explain why the authorities of Jakarta were genuinely surprised by the breadth of the referendum's results. Quoting Scott once again, "everyday forms of resistance make no headlines" (1985: xvii), but they are powerful. These would include foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage and so on. All these forms of resistance assume symbolic relevance in that they epitomise opposition to oppression, and derive from shared worldviews under attack. Attention must therefore be paid to attitudes that may not be perceived as "heroic" but nonetheless represent a deeply felt revolt against a powerful enemy.

The construction of national identity, namely after independence, is highly charged in symbolic terms (Arthur 2019). Among its constitutive elements one finds the elusive notion of *funu* (struggle or war), that is, the resistance to all forms of external domination, and a correlate idea of "singing the *halerik*," the song of sufferance (Trindade 2019). This notion is incorporated into the text of the country's constitution, whose preamble reads: "The elaboration and adoption of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste is the culmination of the secular resistance of the Timorese People intensified following the invasion of December 7, 1975."

The consideration of resistance and *funu* as a key element of the nascent national identity discourse is rendered popularly accessible by means of highlighting the feats of several heroes (Leach 2017; Kent and Feijó 2020), such as Dom Boaventura, who led the Manufahi Uprising against the Portuguese in 1911–1912 (Sousa 2016) or Dom Aleixo Corte-Real, a prominent leader of the anti-Japanese resistance (1942–1943). However, the leaders of the Viqueque Uprising (1959) who stood in favour of integration with Indonesia (Alexandre 2017) are conspicuously absent from this pantheon. Curiously, they figured in Indonesian history textbooks.

For historians, the picture is somehow more complex. Both Frédéric Durand (2011) and Douglas Kammen (2015) have written on "three centuries of conflict," often devoid of a central element of leadership or clustered around a short period series of related events – such as the battles of Cailaco (1729) or Penfui (1749), which are exceptions to the norm of more diffuse actions (Durand 2011) – but generally involving colonial or neo-colonial coercion triggering a response. "The recurrence of violence is central to the national narrative of colonial oppression and indigenous resistance," Kammen writes (2015: 170). In fact,

> Until quite recently there has been a consensus among scholars of Timor that the indigenous population was generally hostile to European encroachment and opposed colonial rule [and some] have argued that the many rebellions against the white rule were not simply the reaction of peoples who were culturally prone to violence or inherently hostile to foreigners but instead represent the nascent origins of supra-local subjectivities that eventually coalesced into recognisable modern nationalism. (Kammen 2015: 42)

Yet, one needs caution in examining the rejection of Portuguese domination. To an extent, the Portuguese legacy – which undoubtedly incorporated a significant level of exploitation and use of violence to establish itself, as

shown by Durand and Kammen – has been used to subvert its terms and to provide an accrued basis upon which to build the distinction in relation to the Indonesian. José Ramos-Horta, in his Nobel Peace Prize lecture, claimed that the East Timorese national identity had two pillars directly feeding on the Portuguese legacy: the language and the religion. The guerrilla leader Taur Matan Ruak equally noted that the language of communication among the Resistance members – if not for other reasons, to escape easy understanding by the Indonesians – was the Portuguese (2001). This was also the language that vast numbers of Timorese who were baptised after the annexation used in their choice of new names, albeit with a generous level of creativity (Feijó 2011). It can be assumed that the Timorese were open to integrate, in their search for an individual identity, all elements that might reinforce their difference in regard to Indonesia. After all, the UDT (one of the historical parties in Timor-Leste) was created in May 1974 on the assumption that Portugal was not a colonial power, and it did attract substantial local support. If anything, the incorporation of the Portuguese legacy into the nationalist narrative increased Portugal's responsibility in the international arena – a point that the Resistance was eager to bring to the fore time and again. It is important to note that, after a moment in which the recognition of the unilateral declaration of independence was a cornerstone of the Timorese claims, it soon was replaced by the acknowledgement that no rightful act of self-determination had taken place – neither on November 28, 1975, nor on May 31, 1976, when the Indonesians staged what would be regarded as "the act of no choice" – that Portuguese administration was still legally binding and that the stipulations of international law ought to be abided by all parts.

The context for the popular response to Indonesian rule is thus rich in the forms it might assume, and one should be prepared to look into less glamorous but nevertheless quite powerful forms of everyday resistance.

The very first reaction to the Indonesian invasion on December 7, 1975, was for many to seek refuge "in the mountains," put up military resistance based on the fact that FALINTIL (*Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste*/Armed Forces for the National Liberation of Timor-Leste) had secured control over the Portuguese army's weapons' storeroom consisting of NATO-quality material, and organise "liberated areas." The Indonesian military commanders had boasted they would take breakfast in Batugadé (on the border), lunch in Dili and dinner in Lospalos (in the easternmost district), but effective control over the entire territory would take several years, even though it was supported by part of the elite and by sectors of the population who had felt rejected by FRETILIN. It would only be

achieved after serious reinforcements of personnel and weaponry, including indiscriminate bombings with Swiss produced napalm from US-supplied OV-10 Bronco planes (Bochsler 2022). Nicolau dos Reis Lobato, the charismatic leader of the Resistance, was killed in combat on the last day of 1978, and soon the last "liberated areas" surrendered, initiating a new phase of the process.

Unlike many anti-colonial struggles based on military actions (as the Portuguese colonies in Africa had witnessed), Timor-Leste lacked the conditions to build its strategy on warfare: the supply of fresh weaponry was impossible, the guerrillas being forced to rely solely on the initial arsenal coupled with a few instances when Indonesian soldiers were killed or captured and surrendered their guns (or when some of them were willing to sell their material) (Falur Rate Laek 2017: 115). Also, Timor-Leste being half an island surrounded by the Indonesian archipelago where hostility towards their struggle was dominant, there was no chance of having a cross-border safe haven for the guerrillas, no external source of support, or even control over commercial products capable of returning financial assistance to the Resistance (see the chapter by Bowles in this volume). With virtually no resources other than popular support, imagination was required to redraft a comprehensive strategy. This was a task that took years to mature, mainly after the reflux of the late 1970s, and it would fall on the shoulders of an emerging new leader, Xanana Gusmão (Niner 2009). An important contribution to the evolution of the resistance in this period was made by Professor José Mattoso (2005), whose biography of the guerrilla leader Konis Santana draws a comprehensive picture of various aspects of the struggle. A long interview with Taur Matan Ruak conducted by Maria Ângela Carrascalão (2012) and the memoirs of guerrilla leader Falur Rate Laek (2017) also offer suggestive insights.

A Golden Triangle (with Four Sides)

The Resistance grew in three directions. The Armed Front comprised the group of guerrilla fighters, living mostly in the mountains and active in the countryside, who were able to keep a constant source of pressure on the invaders and to raise the symbolic flag of unfaltering determination not to accept the annexation and Indonesian rule. Their effort was critical to deny Indonesia the propagated narrative that the staged act of self-determination had been implicitly accepted by the population of the territory. Although not critical in a narrow military sense, this front was symbolically of the highest importance (see the chapter by Bowles in this volume).

Throughout the territory, many were increasingly turning against the new rulers, including a substantial number of those who had initially greeted the invasion. Some significant transformations of the social fabric that were undergoing, such as the expansion of urban areas (mostly Dili) or the increase in schooling (that fuelled a students' movement), offered new grounds for recruitment. As from 1990 a new Clandestine Front was formally organised which extended its branches into almost every *suku* in the territory, both urban and rural. NUREPs (*núcleos de resistência popular*/centres of popular resistance) flourished. After independence was achieved, special consideration has been instituted to honour all those who participated in the various "fronts" of the Resistance, including active members of the Clandestine Front, who constitute the vast majority of those who were attributed official "veteran" status (and the inherent benefits) (Roll 2014). The last time we accessed the database for veterans, this included more than 40,000 individuals – and tens of thousands of files were awaiting decisions. Of these, the organised clandestine activists form the overwhelming majority. This figure testifies to the enormous importance of clandestine, civilian activities during the occupation. Many played double roles, for instance, discharging political functions at the local level of the Indonesian administration, and at the same time conveying precious information to the Resistance – sometimes being simultaneously *xefes suku/kepala desa* in the official administration and NUREP coordinators in the clandestine network. Acts of actual resistance of the Clandestine Front are parallel to others that may fall within the "weapons of the weak" frame set by James C. Scott. For this reason, the actual frontiers of the Clandestine Front are more blurred than the other two fronts, and the articulation of formal and informal structures more complex.

One telling example of grassroots disdain for Indonesian rule is that of naming practices adopted by the Timorese: when they flocked to be baptised, they had to choose new names alongside their gentile ones – and they opted for "Portuguese names," an idiosyncratic category as these were not necessarily names imported from Portugal but names invented by the Timorese themselves who regarded them as "Portuguese." By doing so they were sending a clear message they did not wish to adopt Indonesian names and were prepared to fend off restrictions on the use of the Portuguese language (Feijó 2011). Another interesting instance of the use of the "weapons of the weak" was the fact that a great number of individuals who were chosen by the Indonesians to discharge administrative positions at *suku* and *aldeia* levels, apparently being previously vetted for suitability, were also active in NUREPs and other grassroots levels of the Resistance network, providing

critical information they could access. The scope of active resistance was thus quite wide, ranging from everyday forms of disdain to highly sensitive, organised actions destined to upset the workings of the administration.

Finally, there was a third front – the Diplomatic Front, comprising Timorese in exile who were active in pursuing the interests of Timor-Leste in the world arena. Among many improvised "diplomats" one must acknowledge the outstanding role of José Ramos-Horta – "Homo Diplomaticus" – who was eventually bestowed with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 (together with Bishop Belo), a tribute to his efforts to keep the flame of the Timor-Leste struggle for self-determination unfurled and pressure on world leaders to take decisive action.

This golden triangle of the Timorese Resistance reveals the extent to which leaders were capable of adapting to an evolving situation and articulating the needs of their struggle in different chessboards. To the symbolic needs fulfilled by the Armed Front, and the international dimension of the issue in the hands of the Diplomatic Front, they added a strong Clandestine Front that was able to move beyond the original partisan support base of the cause for independence (basically limited to FRETILIN) and incorporated new strands of opposition to Indonesian rule – in line with the moves being pursued by those in exile. After decades of grassroots approximations and some episodes of dissent, in April 1998 the Resistance met in Peniche (Portugal) and was able to build an umbrella organisation in which virtually all strands of opinion favouring the cause of independence were brought together: the CNRT (*Conselho Nacional da Resistência Timorense*/National Council of the Timorese Resistance). By that time, Suharto was about to fall and a new chapter would soon be opened. This golden triangle signified that the Timorese were actively challenging the extant rule and struggling for self-determination.

One special element must be referred: the changing attitude of the Timorese Catholic Church. Two chapters in this book (by Maria José Garrido and Pocut Hanifah) address some relevant aspects of this issue. At this point, we must devote our attention to a brief analysis of the history of the Catholic Church in Timor.

The Timorese Catholic Church

When the Indonesians invaded Timor-Leste, about one-quarter of the population were nominally Catholics (Belo 2014b; Figueiredo 2018). According to Bishop Belo, at that time there were only nineteen parishes and missions, and

a mere eleven priests were of Timorese ancestry – still, a major innovation in the social basis of the Church. The memory persisted of a dark episode in the long history of the Catholic presence in the territory, as the bishop and all the priests had left Timor and fled to Australia when the Japanese invaded in 1942, depriving the population of spiritual solace (Belo 2014b). Efforts had been made to foster the "Timorisation" of the religious cadres, but these were only the beginning of a process that would be accelerated after 1975 (Lennox 2000; Durand 2004). Furthermore, the local Church had been a staunch supporter of the colonial regime, some of its prelates symbolically serving as a members of the Lisbon parliament for the colony (1957–1961 and 1965–1969). Even though Moisés Fernandes (2022) argues that there were some signs of discontent regarding the close association of the institution with the colonial regime, which eventually surfaced in the Catholic weekly *Seara* (Fields of wheat) where proto-nationalist Timorese wrote in the early 1970s before the publication was shut down by the governor, the overall attitude of the local Church was in line with the establishment. It came as no surprise that when the process of self-determination was set in train, Bishop José Joaquim Ribeiro stuck with conservative positions and in a pastoral letter raised the alert over the spread of "Marxist socialism" and "materialist and atheist ideologies" he associated with FRETILIN, a party he openly criticised after the brief civil war of August/September 1975.

Within a decade of the invasion, the proportion of Catholics would rise to circa 80%, by 1990 it would reach 90%, and soon after independence to 96.9% (NSD and UNPF 2011) – Timor-Leste becoming the country in Asia with the highest proportion of Catholics overtaking the Philippines. In the meantime, the Church had grown and by the mid-1990s it would count about eighty priests, twenty-nine of whom were Timorese, and 220 regular clergy men and women, covering thirty parishes and ninety-eight "pastoral centres" (Carey 1999). Even if one considers that there is a degree of formalist bias in these figures, basically reflecting the number of people who were baptised as a minimum requirement to be considered Catholics, the acceptance of the local Church as an authoritative instance is worth our attention. Moreover, the Timorese Catholic Church travelled a long way between those years in which it staunchly opposed animist rituals and the cohabitation between those and their own, as it was focused on "converting the pagans" and eradicating their rituals and practices, to a new attitude that envisaged a common faith in the Almighty (God or Maromak) as a sign of convergence. The notion of "conversion" must therefore be taken with extreme caution, as Susana de Matos Viegas has shown in her study of the intricate relations between Father Rodrigues, a Catholic missionary,

and Perekoro, the "King of Nari," a Fataluku local leader (2016). Elisabeth G. Traube has judiciously revealed, based on historical records and recent fieldwork, the extent to which cohabitation between more than one religious practice is present in contemporary Timor-Leste, stating that "identifying as Catholic still does not preclude respecting customary ritual" (2017: 48). On the contrary: there are ways in which local culture absorbs the presence of the Catholic Church, namely in the framework of the myth of the returning young brother who arrives with newly found wisdom and is thus entitled to assume ruling functions as king (Traube 1980: 85; Trindade 2019). In 2013, Father Tomás Lopes, a young native priest, sat at the table of a deceased woman's family ceremonial meal besides a local *lia na'in* (literally, "lord of the word," the officer of a traditional ceremony) with whom he had shared the administration of funerary rituals besides her grave adorned with Catholic and animist symbols. He told one of us: "Traditions existed long before the missionaries arrived. Traditions have a strong component of faith, and faith brings people together, be they Catholic or pagan." And he would elaborate: "I am not quite sure whether local faith does or does not help reach the Christian god" (Viegas and Feijó 2017: 10). The same argument has been made by Alberto Fidalgo Castro, who wrote:

> The relation between Catholicism and traditional religion in Timor-Leste does not consist of hybridisation resulting from a mixture of elements pertaining to these two belief systems and leading to the emergence of a putative third way; there is no – but for an odd exception – new belief system outside the Catholic and the traditional. In this light, I sustain that in contemporary Timor-Leste [...] what one really finds is a coexistence between the two belief systems. (2012: 80)

A telling example of this cohabitation may be read in Michael Leach's survey of educated students that found an overwhelming 93.5% stating that the main attribute to "being a true East Timorese" was "respect for tradition and *adat/lisan*," whereas 78% indicated "adherence to Catholicism" – an impressive figure bearing in mind that there is a possible overrepresentation of Protestants in the sample which lower the response rate (2012: 240). All these elements point in one sense: the Timorese Catholic Church, precisely because it was a national institution attentive to the idiosyncrasies of the country and was able to entertain a substantial dialogue with its people and their cultural values, rather than a mere branch of a distant, transnational institution, was critical in reshaping a sense of commonality to which the vast majority of the Timorese adhered. This was only possible because the

Church in Timor-Leste was not a monolithic actor following strictures imposed from the outside. The Indonesian Catholic authorities tried in various ways to strengthen the hand of those inside Timor-Leste who showed signs of disagreement with the orientation of the local hierarchy, creating some tensions, as Father José Alves Martins, a Jesuit, testifies in his memoirs (Martins 2014). The national character of the local Catholic Church is, to a degree, mirrored in the Concordat established between the Vatican and the Timorese state in 2015 (ratified in 2016) – certainly not by chance, at the time of a "government of national inclusion" supported by all parliamentary parties.

This is not to say, however, that the spread of Catholicism eclipsed other forms of self-identification. Take the example of OJETIL (*Organização de Jovens e Estudantes de Timor Leste*/Organisation for Young People and Students of Timor-Leste), which initially had "Catholic" in its name, but decided to drop it in order to enlarge its recruitment basis while still advising its members to be involved in the local Catholic Church's activities (Leach 2017: 103).

How can one explain the paradox of the massive drive to Catholicism when Timor-Leste was subject to the domination of a mostly Muslim country?

In December 1975 Bishop Ribeiro looked out of his window to the paratroopers and thought "they were angels descending from heaven," but soon he was compelled to complete his meditation, "only to realise they were actually devils from hell." The brutality of the Indonesian attack was directly felt by the Church, whose precincts were not spared (Martins 2014). Bishop Ribeiro did not take long to resign in horror and was replaced by the first Timorese to ascend to the top of the local hierarchy – Mgr. Martinho da Costa Lopes – who would accelerate the process of creating a national Church and take the side of the aggressed people. In 1982, Mgr. Costa Lopes (who would never be appointed bishop but rather "apostolic administrator," a sign of the Vatican's uneasiness with the situation) took the bold initiative to meet with Xanana Gusmão in Mehara (easternmost district of Lautém) in the house of the local *xefe suku* (who was articulated with the resistance). There he urged the revolutionary leader to abandon his inclination to steer the resistance along a Marxist-Leninist path and offered to side with all those who suffered the hardships of the current situation. This proved to be the first visible step in a long-term convergence between the resistance and the Church that would mature in the following years (as Maria José Garrido vividly shows in her chapter).

If one returns to the notion of "moral economy," one may notice that the emergence of a national Timorese Catholic Church in tune with the suffering

of the local population, using the idea of the agony of Christ to draw a parallel with the fate of the Timorese (Hodge 2012), fills a critical gap. It was a lightning rod offering the people "a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations" supposed to convey "definite, and passionately held, notions of the common weal" (Thompson 1971: 79). It also offered through many years an institutional cadre associated with international visibility. James C. Scott also mentions the fact that, in Southeast Asian cases of unrest, religion was often a major factor, and one might see reliance on religious institutions and beliefs "not so much as an alternative to rebellion as a symbolic and material shelter when rebellion has failed or is impossible" (1976: 221).

A precision must be inserted here. Contrary to other parts of the world where the Catholic Church has been associated with emancipatory movements by means of the "theology of liberation" – a strong component of the South American Catholic Church – and in contrast with the progressive nature of the grassroots movements that supported the Timor-Leste struggle for self-determination, the Timorese Catholic Church emerged as a very conservative institution. A leading member of the international Catholic solidarity movement, Pat Walsh, – himself a former priest – claims that "it is a deeply traditional church, arguably pre-Vatican II in style." (Walsh 2022). One more reason to stress the singularity of its contribution.

The new country's constitution pays adequate tribute to the exceptional role played by the Timorese Catholic Church. In that document, the role of this institution is placed alongside the contribution of the three "fronts" that we have mentioned. It is possible to consider that the Clandestine Front, in a way, absorbed the initiatives taken by numerous clergymen. But it is also possible to acknowledge that the magnitude of the Church's commitment deserves a very special status. That is why we believe it must be seen in the context of a "golden triangle" of the Timorese Resistance "fronts" – but with a fourth rather independent element.

Another Critical Triangle: The Transnational Dimension

The decolonisation of Timor-Leste began as a sort of domestic problem within the Portuguese state. After the Carnation Revolution, Portugal decided to end its colonial empire and grant the right to self-determination to its overseas territories. In the case of its Southeast Asian colony, an attempt was made to develop the process in direct articulation with the emerging nationalist movements, excluding an internationalisation of the issue that

might be sought through an invitation to the UN to get involved – even though UN resolutions and stated principles were observed along the way. Indonesia made it known it wanted Portugal to enter a bilateral process of negotiations in view of agreeing to a settled solution that might avoid involving the people of Timor-Leste in a democratic act of self-determination. Portugal accepted the offer to meet with Indonesian delegations on many occasions but refrained from attributing to those events the nature of a negotiation (Pereira and Feijó 2023). However, the very same day Indonesia invaded Timor-Leste, Portugal called for a meeting of the UN Security Council. Henceforth, the issue was moved to the international arena. No longer a domestic nor a bilateral issue involving Portugal and Indonesia, it was formally a question of international law. It would remain so for the ensuing quarter century, the UN being called to intervene in a variety of ways (discussed in the chapter by Zélia Pereira), and many countries in the world being summoned to take a position.

The Timor-Leste issue had already hit the international arena even before the Portuguese decolonisation process began. In the early 1960s Western powers with interest in their area of influence (the UK, the US, Australia and New Zealand) held talks in which an agreement emerged that would bind their future attitude when the Portuguese empire collapsed (as they anticipated): all efforts would be deployed to guarantee that Indonesia would incorporate the Portuguese colony, thus preventing the possibility of a troublesome independent state from materialising (Fernandes 2016). These countries, and above all the US and Australia, would be very active in support of the Indonesian interests right from the moment when Lisbon set decolonisation in motion. They would remain active after the annexation (Fernandes 2004). (In this book, two chapters address the reactions of Western powers to the Indonesian invasion: Peter Job on Australia, Norrie MacQueen on the UK.)

With the internationalisation of the Timor-Leste issue and the intervention of the United Nations in the process, formal state diplomacy became an important component of the search for a solution. Portugal and several other countries, including the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, which were particularly active in the very first years, providing much needed support that was not coming from other quarters (as the chapter by Zélia Pereira on the Timor issue at the UN makes clear), sought to keep the flame of the Timorese right to self-determination alive. The support offered by the African Portuguese-speaking countries was critical from the very early stages of the process, a time when Portuguese diplomacy defended a lower profile for its activities in regard to Timor-Leste (a theme that attracted very little attention).

They had to fend off aggressive diplomatic efforts not only by Indonesia but by several countries whose material interests in keeping good relations with Indonesia induced a realpolitik in sharp contrast with the stated goals of international law. Even some countries which officially had sympathetic views on decolonisation developed policies that often ran contrary to their rhetoric (Gleijeses 2018). One may argue that the correspondence was not perfect between stated solidarity goals and that the actual performance by state officials was not always unblemished and was marred by hesitation, misunderstandings and changes in position. Official state diplomacy is thus one of the elements of the transnational triangle, alongside the persistence of a resolute resistance movement in the very fabric of the Timor-Leste society.

The Vatican also performed a role in this area. Although the Pope was always intent on making sure no attitude was adopted that could be read as an aggression to the Indonesian Catholics – a minority in the country, but still numbering about five million, that is, almost ten times as many as the population of Timor-Leste – he still sought to protect the Timorese Catholics. An example of his attitude was the appointment of Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, the apostolic administrator of Dili, to the category of bishop in reconnaissance of the importance of the local Church; however, in order to dispel fears of a possible confrontation within the hierarchy of the Indonesian Church, he formally appointed him as bishop of Lorium, a long-extinct diocese in southern Italy, a move that allowed Belo to avoid responding to Jakarta, find a direct way to the Pope, in this way satisfying both parts. Another example was his decision to visit Timor-Leste during his trip to Indonesia (1989), where he managed once again to strike a delicate balance between the requests of the Timorese (that he kiss the ground on arrival) and the impositions of the Indonesians (that did not allow for that to happen); in the end, the Pope kissed a cross lying on the ground during the Mass service at Tasi Tolu.

Unlike the increasingly clear attitude of the Timorese Catholic Church, the Vatican remaind cautious. The nuncios in Jakarta were inclined to side with the local authorities and to raise obstacles to the "special relation" between Rome and Dili. The chapter by Pocut Hanifah in this volume shows some of the ways the Indonesian hierarchy tried to interfere with the religious operating in Timor-Leste and deny them the room for manoeuvre they required. In this context, it is very difficult to consider the international Catholic Church as a monolithic entity, and the relative independence of the Timore Church must once again be stressed.

The role of worldwide Catholics, however, was felt beyond the reaches of the Church's hierarchy. In many instances, grassroots solidarity movements

were created, animated and sustained by local branches of Catholic institutions. The worldwide networks of Catholics was a fundamental pillar in the structuring of the solidarity campaigns. The overall picture we wish to convey is, thus, a complex one.

The diplomatic efforts in favour of Timor-Leste met with significant international resistance. Many countries had strong economic interests in Indonesia, and were eager to facilitate the reconnaissance of the annexation, although few went as far as Australia and formally recognised it. It is well established that Portugal, which was trying to accede to the then European Economic Community (now the European Union), suffered strong pressures from countries like Germany or even left-leaning France to reduce the intensity of its opposition to the deepening of economic ties between Europe and Indonesia. Realpolitik and business interests went hand in hand for a long time, only subsiding at a later stage of the process, namely when Indonesia was hit by the Southeast Asian financial crisis and governments became sensitive to the conditions the public opinion was pressing to attach to economic aid.

A third element complements the transnational triangle: solidarity movements all over the world (the theme of a workshop organised in Lisbon in May 2022 by the editors of this volume). Official diplomatic efforts constitute a part of the solidarity dispensed to the Timorese cause. Votes at the UN General Assembly, initiatives before the Committee of 24 or the Commission on Human Rights, financial support, speeches in international fora such as the Council of Europe or the European Parliament – these are but a few instances of the support Timor-Leste received from a select number of countries. One can consider this as institutional solidarity.

The world's public opinion was far vaster than that of the supportive countries. In key countries that did not express official sympathy for the cause (Australia, the US and many others) grassroots movements of the civil society, sometimes supported by long-established institutions like local churches, joined together with those that bloomed in friendly nations. As the years passed, the cause of Timor-Leste was revivified by events such as the Pope's visit in 1989 or the broadcast of Max Stahl's footage of the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991, and the demise of the Cold War brought the theme of human rights to the fore – always supported by a network of activism. In a great number of countries, these movements were critical in raising awareness in the public opinion to the drama of Timor-Leste. In some cases, they were successful in bringing about changes in their own governments' attitudes and were a constant source of nuisance for Indonesian interests abroad. Following a suggestion by David Webster, one might label these

organisations and their actions as "citizen diplomacy." They represent the third vector of the transnational triangle.

Self-determination and Human Rights

The fall of Suharto in May 1998 was a milestone in the process leading up to a solution for the Timor-Leste issue. The dramatic effects of the Asian economic crisis rendered the Indonesian regime vulnerable to external pressure. Only this time pressure was not to antagonise the Timorese and their dreams in the name of "regional security" as in the old days of the Cold War, but rather to step back from confrontation and embrace a peaceful solution that could not avoid a democratic exercise of self-determination. The zeitgeist had changed, much because of a shift in the world's public opinion. In fact, the combination of the demise of the Cold War (which had justified the Western countries turning a blind eye to Indonesian atrocities) and the renewed popularity of the Timor-Leste cause in the wake of meaningful events such as the Pope's visit which triggered popular demonstrations in favour of independence that echoed in the world media, and the broadcasting of Santa Cruz massacre footage caused a significant impact on the conditions most governments had to continue their realpolitik complicity. By and large, this shift coincided with a new phenomenon: the rise of human rights as a major concern for world public opinion and their leaders' necessity to follow suit. This would be consequential in the case of Timor-Leste.

The rise of the human rights issue, already present in the UN Charter (1945) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) may be referred to the promulgation in the 1960s of two new instruments adopted by the United Nations: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. They originated the creation of the new, specialised UN Commission on Human Rights as the treaties' monitoring body, which asserted itself as a credible actor sometime later. This time, self-determination was duly accounted for (Miller 2020) as Article 1 of each of those documents reads: "All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." Henceforth, self-determination was itself part of a wider, more fluid notion of human rights.

When Portugal initiated its decolonisation process, including that of Timor-Leste, the dominant narrative hovered around the notion that self-determination was a fundamental right of peoples. The right to

self-determination had been, by and large, established in the wake of World War I when world leaders – from V. I. Lenin to Woodrow Wilson – realised that "national peoples, groups with a shared ethnicity, language, culture and religion should be allowed to decide their fate" (Sterio 2013: 1). After World War II claims to this right exploded and gave rise to a great wave of decolonisation. The United Nations enshrined it in the 1945 Charter. After passing several resolutions on this issue, the UN created a special institution – the "Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples," also known as the Special Committee on Decolonisation, or the Committee of 24. The Committee of 24 was established in 1961 by the UN General Assembly (UNGA), as its subsidiary organ devoted to the issue of decolonisation, pursuant to resolution 1654 (XVI) of November 27, 1961. The Committee of 24 was mandated to examine the application of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (UNGA resolution 1514 (XV) of December 14, 1960) and to make suggestions and recommendations on the progress and extent of the implementation of the declaration. The Committee of 24 commenced its work in 1962 and, from that date, it became the main locus to address the issues pertaining to decolonisation. The case of Timor-Leste was duly contemplated, and since 1974 Portugal kept the Committee of 24 informed of all initiatives about that territory, before and after the Indonesian invasion.

The heyday of decolonisation was nevertheless irretrievably in the past. As Brad Simpson argues in his chapter, doubts began to surface as to the viability of granting self-determination to all the polities included in the listing of "non-autonomous territories under foreign administration," which theoretically ought to benefit from the wording of international law. International public opinion was not very keen on this issue either, assuming the bulk of the process to have already been completed. Moreover, the practical results of the process through which former colonies had evolved to independent states in earlier decades was increasingly dominated by autocratic regimes fraught with endemic corruption. Post-independence governance was often associated with a decline in the well-being of large sectors of the populations, and in sharp contrast with the "third wave of democracy" (Huntington) which was fast becoming the new international zeitgeist. Even among the progressive sectors of the public opinion, disenchantment with that agenda was evident. As Partha Chatterjee has argued, in the 1970s,

> the emancipatory aspects of nationalism were undermined by countless revelations of secret deals, manipulations, and the cynical pursuit

> of individual interests [...] The leaders of the African struggles against colonialism and racism had spoiled their records by becoming heads of corrupt, fractious, and often brutal regimes. (1993: 1)

In other words: detaching self-determination per se from a wider context of human rights defence was proving ever more difficult a task, and it would have alienated a large swath of the international public opinion. The enormous public outcry and mobilisation in the face of the 1994 Rwanda "genocide" was proof that the winds were blowing differently.

In this context, the Timor-Leste issue could not help being slowly removed from the limelight into progressive oblivion. Together with Eritrea and South Sudan, Timor-Leste was among the cases of "Third World colonialism" lingering in the 1990s that were eventually resolved in favour of international law (Weldemichael 2013), while Western Papua/Irian Jaya and Western Sahara symbolise the continuation – to this day – of a pending case with no solution in sight. Another case that hit the world's public opinion in the 1990s was that of Kosovo, which was resolved with a significant UN intervention (Tansey 2009). However, one may distinguish an emerging new sense attributed to self-determination, this time applied not to colonial polities but rather to campaigns for independence being carried out in places such as Catalonia, Scotland or Quebec, let alone the dramatic problems of the Caucasus or those of Ukraine, or even in debates about devolution of powers to regions and cities within large polities (Miller 2020).

Portugal sensed that the UNGA resolution of 1982 which had entrusted the UN secretary-general (UNSG) with a prominent role in developing efforts to find a suitable solution for the problem would only produce medium- to long-term results and that insisting on the right to self-determination was insufficient to foster progress (see chapter 7 by Zélia Pereira in this volume). Moreover, Portugal was interested in raising its profile within the UN apparatus by means of increased participation in the Commission on Human Rights, which had a seat in Geneva. Public opinion was ever more sensitive to the theme of human rights, and reports from Dili made it clear that in this respect the situation was deteriorating by the day. Solidarity movements were adamant that human rights should be prioritised over the legal issue of the right to self-determination in a narrow sense. Ana Gomes, a diplomat long associated with accompanying initiatives about Timor-Leste and who would play a central role in 1999, was designated to a place in the UN headquarters in Geneva. Without challenging or endangering the process that was running under the aegis of the UNSG, Portugal was intent on opening a new arena of discussion. From about 1986 the new strategy,

formulated in the first instance by the diplomat António Costa Lobo, was to denounce in the Commission on Human Rights the abuses committed in Timor-Leste by Indonesian forces, emphasising that they originated in the breach of another fundamental right – the right to self-determination (Gomes 1995). Another Portuguese diplomat involved in the process, António Monteiro, would later claim that

> [t]he "human rights" component of the Timor-Leste issue – which we must remember is an eminently political issue in the international agenda – forced Portugal to structure its discourse in a more solid and coherent way, trying to obtain compromises from partner countries regarding principles to be observed, either though bilateral declarations of in texts approved in the context of the European Common Foreign and Security Policy. Only in this way can we serve the interests of Portugal as this forces our partners to keep a coherent position in regard to the violations of human rights in Timor in a political context in which the other major principle that is pertinent to the solution of this issue – the right to self-determination – does not seem to generate widespread adhesion even though it is consecrated in the UN Charter. (Monteiro 1996: 161)

Of course, the right to self-determination is a fundamental one although the 1948 UN Declaration on Human Rights did not explicitly include it in its realm (Simpson 2018: 420). But the public opinion was certainly more prone to react to massacres, torture, disappearances, rapes and unauthorised sterilisation, forced displacement, famines, collective thefts and the like of actions that relief organisations were disclosing and bringing into the open, all of which were later documented rather graphically by the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (*Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação*, CAVR) (2013). During the twenty-four-year-long occupation, thousands of children were forcefully separated from their kin and community and sent over to other parts of the archipelago to "make them Indonesians." This trend accelerated in the 1990s and proved critical in reviving the Timorese cause in a world attuned to combat violations of human rights and defending humanitarian principles of action (Rothschild 2023).

If one wishes to venture further in time, the rise of the human rights agenda was critical in reshaping the nationalist discourse in Timor-Leste itself, laying grounds for imagining the new nation as one fully committed to democracy and the upholding of fundamental rights, moving away from the sole concern with independence. José Ramos-Horta's Nobel Peace Prize

address is an epitome of the new discourse that marked the later years of the resistance (Ramos-Horta and Belo 1997), as the Magna Carta – approved on the occasion of the formation of the CNRT – also mirrors. The constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste has been hailed as a cornerstone of the new vision grounded on human rights as paramount to the social contract.

Epilogue

The decolonisation of Timor-Leste, first from the Portuguese empire, later from the neo-colonial rule imposed by Indonesia, was a complex process that involved much more than these three polities. In many ways, it was a violent process, and violence remains a living feature in the memory of the colonised, much more than in that of the successive colonisers, be they the Europeans or the Southeast Asians. Historicising decolonisation means "resisting the temptation to read history backwards starting from the known endpoint in order to assemble the causal factors that inexorably brought about the colonial collapse" (Thomas and Thompson 2018: 6). Reflecting on the long road travelled by Timor-Leste till it reached world acclaimed and recognised independence implies paying attention to hesitations, changes in attitudes and different individual journeys. One must also pay attention to shifting historical conditions across time and place, considering it was a "contingent, evolving and manifold process rather than a predestined, monolithic or temporarily fixed experience" (Lee 2018: 437). The complexity of the process, and its transnational nature, must be contemplated at the centre of any research agenda.

Scope and Structure of the Book

The time has not yet arrived for a bird's-eye, comprehensive view of the long process leading to the independence of Timor-Leste. Research has been carried out on many aspects, allowing for sound conclusions that are nevertheless rather circumscribed to specific agendas. In some respects, the work to date is like the polishing of small stones that can be juxtaposed to generate a mosaic: the overall image is still somewhat blurred but the constituent elements are sound. This is how we envisage this book.

The volume is divided into four parts. Part One is devoted to a survey of the period that preceded the onset of Portuguese decolonisation. It

comprises three chapters. First, Rui Graça Feijó offers a comprehensive, mostly bibliographic survey covering the years between the onset of the big wave of decolonisation that started at the end of World War II in Timor-Leste's neighbour, Indonesia, until the Carnation Revolution in Lisbon set in motion a late self-determination process that eventually engulfed all its colonies. He shows how the will to respond to the devastation of the Japanese occupation (1942–1945) by implementing a development programme soon waned, keeping Portuguese Timor as the most backward of its overseas territories, with a relatively low level of impact brought by the European colonisers. In turn, the local elite accommodated the presence of the Portuguese administration without much resistance. The one episode of revolt was suppressed successfully, leaving a scar but not feeding any anti-colonial movement of significance. It concludes that the process of self-determination set in motion in 1974, instead of following the usual model of a process imposed on the colonial power by the overseas territories (namely by waging war like in Portuguese overseas territories in Africa), was rather initiated and facilitated by the metropolis deciding to respect the fundamental rights of a peaceful colony.

Chapter 2 by Pedro Aires Oliveira examines in detail the effects of the Bandung conference on the fate of colonial powers, namely that of Portugal, and analyses the extent to which the challenge to colonial rule was strengthened in the final years of the Portuguese authoritarian regime. He focuses on the hitherto less scrutinised bilateral relations between Indonesia and Portugal, a critical issue to fully understand the positions the two countries would assume in the moments after the Portuguese Revolution, and stresses the pragmatism that both exhibited along the years, even in the face of momentous changes like the replacement of Sukarno by Suharto. The relations between a country that regarded itself as a champion of anti-colonialism and mobilised transnational solidarity against the colonial order and another one that obstinately refused to embark in the new era lasted without great friction for a quarter century, a puzzling experience that tells much about realpolitik in those days.

Chapter 3 is authored by Brad Simpson and brings us a refreshing discussion of the relevance of the notion of self-determination. Much as the outcome of the long process of Timor-Leste moving from being a Portuguese colony to an independent state can be framed within the boundaries of the right to self-determination, ultimately being this right, which offered the foundations for the staging of the UN-sponsored referendum in 1999, the glow of this concept seems to be fading in recent years, far from the heyday of the post-World War II period. It is as if the major cases have been

solved and what is left in the listing of "non-autonomous territories under foreign administration" is composed of entities that do not meet the basic requirements to justify their exercise of the solemn rights enshrined in UN resolutions. Timor-Leste was a critical case, which to a large extent benefited from the emergence of an international agenda placing great emphasis on the broad notion of human rights, which in a way embraced the right to self-determination as a by-product. Other cases, such as Western Sahara, do not seem to have had the same fate, and they linger on without a solution in sight.

Part Two of the book (The Portuguese Revolution Arrives in Timor-Leste) is composed of three chapters that all address issues relating to the period that immediately followed the fall of the authoritarian regime in Lisbon and the setting in motion of the self-determination process.

Chapter 4 by Michael Leach brings us to Timor-Leste in May 1974 to accompany the emergence of the main nationalist movements and their "nations-of-intent," that is, the way they rose to voice autonomous ideas as to the future of the territory. Unlike most of the other Portuguese colonies, nationalism in Timor-Leste was a plural reality and no single liberation movement was able to represent the vast array of positions present in the local society. Given that the process of self-determination was abruptly cut short by the Indonesian invasion, and that a long period was necessary before Timor-Leste could exercise its internationally acclaimed rights, it is natural that an evolution in the early positions made itself felt. In fact, Timorese nationalism kept its plural nature but eventually converged into a complex umbrella organisation that helped sustain the claim to self-determination and independence. That process is analysed in detail in this chapter.

Zélia Pereira authors chapter 5 dealing with how the Portuguese authorities faced the Timor question within the broad framework of the decolonisation process. She focuses on the National Decolonisation Commission, set up in late 1974, which accompanied the evolution of self-determination procedures. This commission debated several hypotheses, at various moments, and this study highlights precisely the hesitations, the contradictions and the variety of positions being supported by a significant number of political and military actors in Lisbon. The emerging image is one of uncertainty as to the best way to act, positing an evolution of the main options. The idea that Portugal had clearly defined ideas from the start of the process is thus proven wrong, even though a consensus emerged in mid- to late 1975.

Chapter 6 welcomes Martinho Gusmão, a leading Timorese intellectual and former priest, who offers us an inspired meditation of the *Canções Revolucionárias* (Revolutionary songs) of the tragically disappeared poet

Francisco Borja da Costa (1946–1975). The chapter is a philosophical critique of lyrics that were to endure in the imaginary of the Timorese people, being a significant part of their cultural identity forged in the struggle against foreign oppression. It retrieves the fundamental link between literature and political struggle, adding a notable dimension to the epic of national liberation.

Part Three of the book discusses different aspects of the reaction to Indonesian annexation, firmly based on experiences lived in the international arena. Chapter 7 by Zélia Pereira offers a broad survey of the role of the United Nations, covering the period between the approval of the first anti-colonial resolutions by the General Assembly in 1960 and 1982, focusing mainly on the period between 1974 (when the self-determination process was set in motion after the Portuguese Carnation Revolution) and the moment when the UNGA entrusted the contentious issue to the good offices of the secretary-general. It deals with the continuing role the UNGA played over the years. The UN witnessed a roller coaster of attitudes, from difficulties to engage with the seriousness of the Timor issue to a late and decisive involvement in finding a lasting solution based on well-established principles that were left dormant for far too long. The chapter also stresses a paradox: Portugal moved from being staunchly opposed to UN directives on decolonisation, and thus politically isolated (before 1974), to a champion of the right of self-determination for Timor-Leste (after 1975), a stance that resulted in an unexpected isolation again.

Chapters 8 (by Peter Job) and 9 (by Norrie MacQueen) bring us testimonies of two instances of the reaction of important international actors to the annexation of Timor-Leste. Job analyses the Australian response, while MacQueen focuses on the British one. In both cases, realpolitik, or the defence of material interests over self-styled principles, was the overriding course of action. Public opinion in both countries represented a fragile argument in support of international law that was being brutally disrupted. In the case of Great Britain, the country had been involved, in the 1960s, in secret talks with friendly nations that concluded on the convenience of facilitating Indonesia's takeover of the Portuguese colony; but it required a soft approach, as the issue of the Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas and the stern British opposition to Argentinian claims to the islands might be brought up in international fora. As for the Fraser government in Canberra, it did not meet serious political objections from main rivals, although it had to deal with a raucous solidarity movement in support of Timor-Leste's rights.

Finally, Part Four is entitled "Resisting the Indonesian Annexation of Timor-Leste" and comprises the last four chapters. Chapter 10 is authored

by Edith Bowles and offers an in-depth analysis of an important segment of the armed struggle that was kept alive throughout the occupation years, in articulation with the clandestine network of the Resistance. The combination of different "fronts" (the Armed and the Clandestine, inside the territory, and the Diplomatic acting abroad) was a key feature of the resistance to the annexation. Small as it may seem now, with a number of actual guerrilla fighters sometimes being down to a few hundreds, the military resistance was nevertheless a critical symbol of the rejection the people of Timor-Leste revealed to the Indonesians' rule, not least because of the support it gained among the villagers. This sort of intertwinement between the people and the guerrillas is well documented in this chapter.

Chapter 11 by Maria José Garrido presents an overview of the evolution of the Catholic Church in Timor from the moment it was ready to welcome the Indonesians as a way to "stop communism" to its rise as a main pillar of the opposition to foreign occupation. The process of "Timorisation" of the Catholic Church underlies such an evolution, which was assumed both by the hierarchy and the grassroots levels of the institution. Based on extensive interviews with relevant actors, this chapter offers a vivid view of the engagement of Catholic personnel with the Resistance in a variety of ways, a fact that the constitution of the new country singles out as critical to building a new sense of national identity. This chapter allows one to understand why the percentage of Catholics in Timor-Leste is the highest in any Asian country.

Pocut Hanifah, in chapter 12, brings us into Indonesia itself – a mandatory but still sensitive area of research, which poses several levels of difficulty even under the new regime. She looks at the important issue of the contribution of Catholics to the Timorese struggle, and the ambiguities surrounding the actions of several clergymen. Although the role of the Church is today recognised in Timor-Leste, its history is somehow more complex than often reported. Timor-Leste has developed a national church entertaining several forms of tension with the international hierarchy, and this becomes very clear in this bright essay.

The final chapter is authored by Clinton Fernandes and discusses a critical point of contention in academic circles and beyond: Can one consider that the actions of the Indonesian authoritarian regime in Timor-Leste for the best of twenty-four years constitute a case of genocide according to internationally defined principles? Fernandes surveys the literature on the issue, including the one referring to this particular case, and his argument brings together juridical and historical perspectives in support of a severe indictment of the Indonesian occupation.

The research project of which this book is a product does not stop at this publication. Among other initiatives, in May 2022 an international workshop was organised in Lisbon (and online) dedicated exclusively to the analysis of the solidarity movements all over the world, and their real impact on shaping the final solution for the question of Timor-Leste. Contributions to this workshop touched on a multitude of countries and different experiences. It is hoped that a companion volume to this book will eventually see the light of day.

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