

Patterns of Violence: Narratives of Occupied East Timor from Invasion to Independence,
1975-1999

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ABSTRACT

Patterns of Violence: Narratives of Occupied East Timor from Invasion to Independence,
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In October 2005, the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in East Timor (CAVR) released *Chega!*, its massive report detailing the human rights violations committed on all sides during the 1975 to 1999 Indonesian occupation of East Timor. *Chega!* offers the most comprehensive description of this history of East Timor during this period.

This thesis examines the CAVR's treatment of three major events of the occupation period. These events are the Indonesian invasion and conquest of East Timor (1975-1979), the Santa Cruz massacre (November 12, 1991), and the Popular Consultation (1999). For each of these events, the thesis analyzes four major narrative strands: the East Timorese narrative, the Indonesian narrative, the journalists' narrative, and the truth commission's narrative. The focus is on evaluating the current CAVR treatments of these events in light of previous work, as expressed in the other narratives.

The East Timorese truth commission sought to find patterns to the violence of the occupation. In the case of the invasion, it offered an extensive discussion of human rights violations committed by the East Timorese resistance, showing how the population suffered from both Indonesian war crimes and suicidal resistance policies. The Commission's treatment of the Santa Cruz massacre focused on what the killings showed about the makeup of the second generation of the resistance, which was devoted to a

diplomatic, rather than military, resolution to the East Timorese conflict. Finally, when discussing the Popular Consultation, the CAVR sought to reveal the planning behind the mass destruction of 1999 and to show that the militia violence was not anarchic, but rather conformed to quantifiable aims and strategies.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABRI (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia*)—Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (Army, Navy, Air Force, Police).

Apodeti (*Associação Popular Democrática Timorese*)—Timorese Popular Democratic Association.

ASDT (*Associação Social Democrática Timorese*)—Timorese Social Democratic Association.

CAVR (*Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor Leste*)—Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in East Timor.

CNRM (*Concelho Nacional da Resistência Maubere*)—National Council of Maubere Resistance.

CNRT (*Concelho Nacional da Resistência Timorese*)—National Council of Resistance of the People of East Timor.

Falintil (*Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste*)—National Liberation Armed Forces of East Timor.

FEER—*Far Eastern Economic Review*.

Fretilin (*Frente Revolucionária do Timor Leste Independente*)—Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor.

Gadapaksi (*Garda Muda Penegak Integrasi*)—Youth Guard for Upholding Integration.

Gestapu (*Gerakan September Tigapuluh*)—Movement of September Thirtieth.

INTERFET—International Force in East Timor.

Kopassus (*Komando Pasukan Khusus*)—Special Forces Command.

KPN (*Komisi Penyelidik Nasional*)—National Commission of Inquiry.

KPP HAM (*Komisi Penyelidik Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia di Timor Timur*)—Investigative Commission on Abuses of Human Rights in East Timor.

PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*)—Indonesian Communist Party.

Rp.—Rupiah.

TNI (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*)—National Army of Indonesia (Army, Navy, Air Force).

UDT (*União Democrática Timorese*)—Timorese Democratic Union.

UNAMET—United Nations Assistance Mission in East Timor.

INTRODUCTION: INDONESIA, EAST TIMOR, AND THE MEANING OF NARRATIVE

On October 31, 2005, Aniceto Guterres Lopes, Chair of the *Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor Leste* (Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in East Timor, CAVR), presented his Commission's report, *Chega!*, to East Timor's President, José Alexandre (Xanana) Gusmão.¹ The ceremony completed a process begun in August 2000, when East Timor's National Congress authorized a truth and reconciliation commission to address East Timor's legacy of suffering and violence arising from civil war and brutal Indonesian rule. By giving expression to East Timor's "individual and collective nightmares," *Chega!* became the newest addition to and version of the territory's historical narrative, versions of which had been vehemently fought over throughout the occupation.²

Indonesia: The New Order (1965-1998)

Knowledge of modern Indonesia, and of the New Order government that ruled it for thirty-two years, is a prerequisite for any understanding of East Timor, as their histories are inextricably bound together during much of the twentieth century.

¹ Lopes defined "Chega" as a "Portuguese word... which roughly translates to 'no more, stop, enough!'" ; Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in East Timor (hereafter CAVR), "Preface," <<http://www.ictj.org/static/Timor.CAVR.English/00--Preface.pdf>> (accessed January 6, 2006), p. iii. Under Indonesian rule, East Timor was known as "Timor Timur." Independent East Timor refers to itself as "Timor-Leste" (in Portuguese) or "Timor Lorosa'e" (in Tetum). Because neither of these phrases is used uniformly in the literature, I have chosen to employ the well-known designation of "East Timor."

² Ibid.

In late 1965, the Republic of Indonesia witnessed “one of the bloodiest inaugurations of a new regime anywhere in the world.”³ In less than two years, the *Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia* (Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia, ABRI), especially the Army, supported and directed the mass killing of members of the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (Indonesian Communist Party, PKI).⁴ The immediate cause of the bloodletting was a mysterious coup attempt on September 30, 1965, when a group of disaffected officers, calling themselves the “September Thirtieth Movement,” abducted and murdered six of the country’s senior generals. However, the “Movement” was exceedingly ill-run, allowing Army units, under Major-General Suharto, to prepare a counter-stroke against what Suharto called the *Gestapu* (*Gerakan September Tigapuluh*, Movement of September Thirtieth), a grammatically awkward term meant to stir Nazi connotations.⁵

By the evening of October 1, Suharto’s forces had taken control of the capital, Jakarta. Army-controlled newspapers immediately accused the PKI of engineering the coup.⁶ The actual extent of Communist involvement in the coup remains uncertain, but

³ Michael R. J. Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto: The Rise and Fall of the New Order*, 3rd edition (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 34.

⁴ From 1957 to 1965, Indonesia was ruled by a presidential dictatorship under the charismatic nationalist, Sukarno. His Guided Democracy rested on a balance of power between the PKI, which by 1965 had become the world’s largest non-ruling Communist party, and ABRI. Guided Democracy pushed Indonesia into economic collapse, international isolation, chronic domestic instability, and the *Konfrontasi* war with the British in Malaysia. See M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia: c. 1300 to the present* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), pp. 245, 254-268; Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, “Old State, New Society: Indonesia’s New Order in Comparative Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 42, 3 (May 1983): pp. 484-486; Ken Conboy, *Kopassus: Inside Indonesia’s Special Forces* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2003), pp. 92-105, 109, 131, 154-161; Adrian Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 144-156.

⁵ The events of the coup are surveyed most fully in Ricklefs, pp. 268-271; Conboy, pp. 131-140; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, pp. 16-24; Roland Challis, *Shadow of a Revolution: Indonesia and the Generals* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001), pp. 79-104; Vickers, pp. 156-157.

⁶ Specifically, the Army accused members of the PKI Women’s Movement of sadistically torturing the officers to death, after which they engaged in a bloodstained orgy; Jacques Leclerc, “Girls, girls, girls, and crocodiles,” in *Outward Appearances: Dressing State and Society in Indonesia*, ed. Henk Schulte Nordholt (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997), pp. 291-305, especially 297-299. These allegations were

is, to a great degree, academic.⁷ Its actual culpability was much less important than the fact that many Indonesians believed in such culpability. From 1965 to 1966, an estimated 500,000 Indonesians, condemned by association with the PKI, were put to death in a combination of communal frenzy and Army massacre.⁸ This was a society-wide project of mass murder, a response not only to the abortive coup, but to years of social polarization and resulting paranoia, “the expression of a...society placed under such intolerable pressure that it erupted in a kind of temporary mass psychopathy.”⁹ Of course, the Army cannot be absolved of responsibility for the massacres of 1965 and 1966, as it was the ABRI-created *Gestapu* myth that justified the mass slaughter and Army units that played a critical part in mobilizing and arming the population for mass killing.¹⁰

effectively refuted by Benedict R. O’G Anderson; Benedict R. O’G Anderson, “How did the generals die?” *Indonesia* 43 (April 1987): pp. 109-134.

⁷ Anderson and Ruth T. McVey were the first scholars to question the Army’s version of the coup in their so-called “Cornell Paper” of 1966. They argued that the coup was primarily an internal Army affair that inadvertently allowed Suharto and other anti-Communist officers to scapegoat the PKI for their own political ends. Anderson and McVey’s thesis continues to be influential; see Ernst Utrecht, “The Military Elite,” in *Ten Years’ Military Terror in Indonesia*, ed. Malcolm Caldwell (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975), pp. 41-43; Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia in the 1990s* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994), p. 20; Challis, pp. 91-92; Vickers, pp. 156-160. Other Indonesianists, however, argue that the PKI had compelling reasons to either sponsor or direct a coup; see Ricklefs, pp. 267-271; Conboy, pp. 109, 131, 134. An excellent survey of the various interpretations of the coup is Harold A. Crouch, “Another Look at the Indonesian ‘Coup’,” *Indonesia* 15 (April 1973): pp. 1-20. Such debates indicate that most events in Indonesian history spawn a host of conflicting explanations and scenarios: “[n]o major political event passes in Indonesia without spawning at least two or three, and often many more, interpretations of what happened and who was behind it”; David Burchier, “Crime, Law and State Authority in Indonesia,” in *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*, ed. Arief Budiman (Clayton: Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), p. 192.

⁸ Five hundred thousand is the most widely-cited estimate of the death toll. The number is explained in Robert Cribb, “How Many Deaths?: Problems in the statistics of massacre in Indonesia (1965-1966) and East Timor (1975-1980),” in *Violence in Indonesia*, eds. Ingrid Wessel and Georgia Wimhöfer (Hamburg: Abera, 2001), pp. 82, 86-88, 90-92.

⁹ Robert Cribb, “Unresolved Problems in the Indonesian Killings of 1965-1966,” *Asian Survey* 42, 4 (July 2002): p. 554.

¹⁰ Robert Cribb, “Introduction: Problems in the historiography of the killings in Indonesia,” in *The Indonesian Killings of 1965-1969: Studies from Java and Bali*, ed. Robert Cribb (Clayton: Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), pp. 16, 26; Conboy, pp. 147-148; Hamish McDonald, *Suharto’s Indonesia* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1981), pp. 52-53.

By April 1966, Suharto had effectively taken control of Indonesia's government, banned the PKI, and begun to purge ABRI and the bureaucracy of all vestiges of Communist influence.¹¹ By the end of 1966, the Army ended *Konfrontasi*, thereby restoring some of the Indonesia's international respectability.¹² In 1968, Suharto became Indonesia's second President, inaugurating the New Order government, which would rule Indonesia for over thirty years.

Repression and Development

Analyses of the New Order generally fall into two camps, one of which sees Suharto's regime as a military dictatorship maintained through violence, while the other portrays the New Order as an authoritarian regime that brought real economic progress to Indonesia.¹³ The greatest expression of the New Order's homicidal tendencies was the massacres that marked its beginning. Repression and violence remained inseparable from the New Order's method of rule, although the regime never subjected the country as a whole to another bloodletting on the scale of the mid-1960s. A 1994 Amnesty

¹¹ Justus M. van der Kroef, "Indonesian Communism since the 1965 Coup," *Pacific Affairs* 43, 1 (Spring 1970): p. 44; McDonald, pp. 53-57. At least 100,000 suspected Communists remained imprisoned in Indonesia in 1975; Carmel Budiardjo, "Repression and Political Imprisonment," in *Ten Years' Military Terror in Indonesia*, ed. Malcolm Caldwell (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975), p. 100. The mass killings had, meanwhile, run their course by the end of 1966, although verifiable reports of Communist-related unrest and harsh military countermeasures continued until 1969; Kroef, pp. 34-60; Ernst Utrecht, "The Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) since 1966," in *Ten Years' Military Terror in Indonesia*, ed. Malcolm Caldwell (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975), pp. 275-295; McDonald, pp. 60-62.

¹² McDonald, pp. 57-60. Army leaders had covertly curtailed *Konfrontasi* even before the abortive coup. Two of the officers most involved in these efforts, Ali Murtopo and Leonardus Benyamin ("Benny") Murdani, had close ties to Suharto and became his "fixers and troubleshooters"; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 30. Also see Ulf Sundhaussen, "The Military: Structure, Procedures, and Effects on Indonesian Society," in *Political Power and Communications in Indonesia*, eds. Karl D. Jackson and Lucian W. Pye (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 64-65.

¹³ It is important to note that these two analyses are not mutually exclusive. According to Vatikiotis, Western foreign aid, so crucial to Indonesia's economic growth, was prompted by donors' "grateful[ness] for the stability a strong government guaranteed. The New Order's obsession with order has been one of its best selling points in the corridors of western finance"; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 48.

International report detailed “human rights violations on a staggering scale” throughout Indonesia, including extra-judicial executions, torture, and political imprisonment.¹⁴ The report also placed the blame for this violence squarely on ABRI, which it stated to be the dominant power in the Indonesian government.¹⁵ Studies of the Indonesian military reveal that its heavy presence in the ruling apparatus was based on its self-conception. ABRI embraced *dwi-fungsi* (“dual function”), which meant, according to A. Hasnan Habib, an Indonesian Lieutenant-General, that it was responsible for both external defense and a “socio-political function.”¹⁶ The military perceived itself as the founder of the Republic, those who had led the “people’s war of independence” against the Dutch in the 1940s when the civilian nationalist leadership proved unable to do so.¹⁷ ABRI, and especially the Army, saw itself, in Michael R. J. Vatikiotis’s words, as “the co-founder” of the modern Indonesian state with an inherent right to participate in domestic politics.¹⁸

The New Order can be seen as the ultimate fulfillment of the *dwi-fungsi* ideal, as for most of the period ABRI was the “single strongest institution in the country.”¹⁹ In

¹⁴ Amnesty International, *Power and Impunity: Human rights under the New Order* (New York: Amnesty International, 1994), p. 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37, 41.

¹⁶ A. Hasnan Habib, “The Role of the Armed Forces in Indonesia’s Future Political Development,” in *Indonesia Assessment 1992: Political Perspectives on the 1990s*, eds. Harold Crouch and Hal Hill (Canberra: Department of Political and Social Change, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1992), p. 85.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88. In late December 1948, Sukarno and other nationalist leaders allowed themselves to be captured by the Dutch, hoping their imprisonment would spark an international outcry. In this they proved correct, but ABRI never forgave the civilian leaders for surrendering to Dutch forces while the army fought on; Ricklefs, p. 218; Challis, p. 39.

¹⁸ Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 70. For more on *dwi-fungsi*, see Peter Britton, “The Indonesian Army: ‘Stabiliser and Dynamiser,’ ” in *Showcase State: The Illusion of Indonesia’s ‘Accelerated Modernisation,’* ed. Rex Mortimer (Sydney: Angus and Robertson Publishers, 1973), pp. 83-84; Michael R. J. Vatikiotis, “The Military and Democracy in Indonesia,” in *The Military and Democracy in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. R. J. May and Viberto Selochan (Bathurst & London: Crawford House Publishing & C. Hurst & Co. [Publishers] Ltd., 1998), p. 31.

¹⁹ Douglas Kammen and Siddharth Chandra, *A Tour of Duty: Changing Patterns of Military Politics in Indonesia in the 1990s* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1999), p. 7. For details of ABRI’s dominance of the government, see Sundhaussen, pp. 51-52; David Reeve, “The Corporatist State: The Case of Golkar,” in *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*,

addition to its political representation, ABRI under the New Order was a dominant economic force.²⁰ Suharto made sure that lucrative business opportunities were farmed out to each of the service branches, thus giving officers and soldiers a major stake in the maintenance of the regime.²¹ Certain units were favored recipients of largesse, prime examples being the elite reserve and Special Forces battalions. Once again, this made good political sense: Suharto had close personal ties with both divisions and ensured that they remained under his direct command.²² Implicit in this system, in both its repressive and financial aspects, was the idea that the Indonesian people could not be trusted, and therefore needed ABRI to keep them in line. It was also foreseeable that any non-compliance with this vision of a “passive” population, of people acting, in effect, “against their own best interests,” as defined by the state, would be met with violence.²³ Even when the military’s political role was circumscribed, beginning in the mid-1990s, it still

ed. Arief Budiman (Clayton: Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), p. 165; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, pp. 70-71.

²⁰ Even under Guided Democracy, the Indonesian military had significant economic concerns, including special units devoted to running its smuggling operations, a tactic necessitated not only by greed, but also by the fact that central government budget allocations were never adequate to meet ABRI’s operational needs. Even in the 1980s, it was estimated that ABRI derived at least one-third of its budget from smuggling; Ricklefs, pp. 249, 255-256; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 72; Challis, p. 190.

²¹ Sundhaussen, p. 55; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 72. Crouch described the process thus: “[Suharto] Allies were rewarded, potential dissidents were brought over while recalcitrants were cut off from business opportunities”; Harold A. Crouch, “Military-Civilian Relations in Indonesia in the Late Soeharto Era,” in *The Military, the State, and Development in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Viberto Selochan (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 57. Suharto had already developed this practice while in command of Central Java’s Diponegoro Division in the 1950s. He proved so successful at linking the local economy to the Division’s finances that a nervous high command transferred him; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, pp. 15-16.

²² Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 77. Military control of Indonesia’s economy was among the greatest criticisms directed at the New Order. See Britton, pp. 91-98; Challis, p. 177.

²³ Robert E. Elson, “In fear of the people: Suharto and the justification of state-sponsored violence under the New Order,” in *Roots of Violence in Indonesia: Contemporary violence in historical perspective*, eds. Freek Colombijn and J. Thomas Lindblad (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), pp. 177-178, 193.

remained incredibly influential politically, ready to defend the state against anything it perceived to be a threat.²⁴

The second analytical trend of the New Order describes how the state achieved impressive economic development. According to political scientist R. William Liddle, it was Suharto's economic policies that "undoubtedly account[ed] for much of the positive support for the regime."²⁵ Suharto struck a bargain with the Indonesian population: accept his government's "repression and control," and it would deliver "accelerated economic development and modernization."²⁶ Proponents of the New Order could thus justify its repressive policies as a means of keeping the Indonesian population out of politics and focused on development tasks.²⁷

Almost immediately after coming to power, Suharto, advised by a group of Indonesian economists, instituted measures to curb hyperinflation and to boost exports.²⁸ These measures were so successful that Indonesia became "something of a model of Third World development."²⁹ From a purely statistical perspective, it is easy to see why. Under Suharto, Indonesia's infrastructure developed at a remarkable pace.³⁰ Basic

²⁴ For ABRI's declining political power, see Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, pp. 211-212.

²⁵ R. William Liddle, "Coercion, Co-optation, and the Management of Ethnic Relations in Indonesia," in *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), pp. 311-312.

²⁶ Robert Cribb, "From *Petrus* to Ninja: Death Squads in Indonesia," in *Death Squads in Global Perspective: Murder with Deniability*, eds. Bruce B. Campbell and Arthur D. Brenner (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 188. Rupert Emerson saw the New Order as part of a new wave of Asian nationalism, one that defined national greatness not in struggle against a foreign power, but in quiet economic advancement; Rupert Emerson, "Post-Independence Nationalism in South and Southeast Asia: A Reconsideration," *Pacific Affairs* 44, 2 (Summer 1971): p. 190.

²⁷ Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, p. xi. According to Ali Murtopo, bans on popular political activity were necessary so that people did not "spend their valuable time and energy being involved in the political struggles of parties and groups, but [instead] will be occupied wholly with development efforts"; Sundhaussen, p. 50.

²⁸ McDonald, pp. 75-79.

²⁹ Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 35.

³⁰ The economic data in this paragraph is found in Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, pp. 57-60; Shalendra D. Sharma, "The Indonesian Financial Crisis: From Banking Crisis to Financial Sector Reforms,

education was, theoretically, available to all; the percentage of the population living in poverty fell dramatically; infant mortality decreased; and Indonesia achieved self-sufficiency in rice production. By the 1990s, Indonesians were healthier than they had ever been; many had access to medical care; average daily caloric intake had increased from 2,035 in 1968 to 2,781 in 1990; and life expectancy had risen to 63 years (1995) from 46 years (1970). Throughout the New Order, Indonesia's economic growth averaged almost seven percent per year, a growth rate among the most impressive in the region. Its shipping lanes were clogged with traffic as forty percent of the world's international commerce passed through Indonesian waters annually. Business opportunities for Western companies exploded. By 1994, according to Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, the United States alone was "export[ing] more to Indonesia than to Eastern Europe," and had "invested over \$30 billion...in the ASEAN [Association of South-East Asian Nations] region," of which Indonesia was the prime member.³¹

Many Indonesianists point out that these advances needed to be qualified. The most oft-cited criticism of the New Order's economy was the fact that it institutionalized corruption throughout the Indonesian government and society, effectively mutilating the country's economic advances. Journalist Adam Schwarz stated that the New Order's biggest economic problem was cronyism. He suggested that many Indonesians did not object to the fact that Suharto used the "spoils of office" to buy off potential rivals and

1997-2001," *Indonesia* 71 (April 2001): pp. 81-83; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, pp. 34-47, 57-58; Challis, pp. 4-5; Vickers, pp. 184-196.

³¹ Ali Alatas, "Sharing Responsibilities with a Superpower (Excerpts from a keynote address at a Conference launching a public education project, *The Uncovering of Indonesia*"; New York, 13 April 1994)," in *A Voice for a Just Peace: A Collection of Speeches by Ali Alatas* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2001), p. 528.

keep allies happy, such were the prerequisites of power.³² However, by the 1990s, many Indonesians felt that cronyism had gone too far, as Suharto's children gained access to incredibly lucrative monopolies in petrochemicals, construction, shipping, and agriculture.³³

In hindsight, the Indonesian economy was also highly susceptible to external economic shocks. Economic growth was heavily dependent on high oil prices. When prices were high, as during the early 1990s, Indonesia's gross domestic product grew quickly. This growth, however, disguised the fact that a significant portion of state-owned businesses (at least two-thirds, by one estimate) were financially unsound.³⁴ The financial system was also weak; banks had been deregulated and ignored existing regulations assuming that the government would bail them out if things went bad.³⁵ For most of the 1990s, such confidence seemed justified and Suharto's power secure. Yet, consequent events would show that when the New Order's economic achievements were called into question, the stability of Suharto's rule was not far behind.

The New Order Falls: The Economic Crisis and the May Revolution

When the Thai baht depreciated on July 2, 1997, many economic analysts believed that the Indonesian economy was strong enough to avoid the turmoil.³⁶ Such expectations were quickly proven wrong. Within a month of the baht's depreciation,

³² Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, pp. 135-137. At a very basic level, Suharto ensured that every first-echelon bureaucrat received a small monthly allowance directly from him; new Ministers also received Rp.1 billion when they joined the Cabinet; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 112.

³³ Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, pp. 135-139, 141-144, 151-153; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, pp. 151-153; Vickers, pp. 201-203.

³⁴ Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, pp. 60-66.

³⁵ Sharma, pp. 86-90.

³⁶ Hal Hill, "The Indonesian economy: the strange and sudden death of a tiger," in *The last days of President Suharto*, eds. Edward Aspinall, Gerry van Klinken, and Herb Feith (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), p. 15.

bank runs erupted in Indonesia, and by October, with the Indonesian rupiah in free fall, the government was forced to negotiate a bailout agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It was clear that the New Order was institutionally incapable of responding to the economic crisis. With the country unable to pay its bills (when the rupiah was devalued in the summer of 1997, Jakarta's short-term foreign debt, alone, amounted to more money than was currently in circulation) and thousands of Indonesians slipping back into poverty, the government stalled on reform. Businesses and banks linked to Suharto's family and cronies, no matter how debt-ridden, were usually protected from closure. Then, in March 1998, Suharto, despite ill health, began his seventh term in office. As Vice-President, he selected B. J. Habibie, a long-standing associate who had previously headed Indonesia's technological development programs. Habibie lacked the support of ABRI and was not popular among international economists. By this point, Suharto's rule was clearly detrimental economically and he seemed increasingly out-of-touch.³⁷

The government's ineffective response to the economic crisis led to increasingly strident public protests, especially by students.³⁸ On May 12, 1998, a clash between

³⁷ Most of the information in this paragraph is taken from Sharma, pp. 90-103. The effects of Suharto's health on the exchange rate are described in Hill, "The Indonesian Economy," p. 17; Patrick Walters, "Suharto's endgame," in *The last days of President Suharto*, eds. Edward Aspinall, Gerry van Klinken, and Herb Feith (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), p. 21. Information on Indonesia's crippling foreign debt is from Gerry van Klinken, "From go-go to yo-yo," in *The last days of President Suharto*, eds. Edward Aspinall, Gerry van Klinken, and Herb Feith (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), p. 6. For information on Habibie, see Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, pp. 85-96; Takashi Shiraishi, "Rewiring the Indonesian State," in *Making Indonesia*, eds., Daniel S. Lev and Ruth McVey (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1996), pp. 164-179; Richard Robison, "A suspect pedigree," in *The last days of President Suharto*, eds. Edward Aspinall, Gerry van Klinken, and Herb Feith (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), pp. 126-128.

³⁸ For a discussion of student life under the New Order and the development of the student protest movement, see Edward Aspinall, "Students and the Military: Regime Friction and Civilian Dissent in the Late Suharto Period," *Indonesia* 59 (April 1995): pp. 21-44.

students and police outside Jakarta's Trisakti University left four students dead.³⁹ Over the next two days, Jakarta was convulsed by riots and looting. On May 19, students occupied Parliament's grounds, vowing to stay until Suharto quit. ABRI remained publicly loyal to Suharto and warned demonstrators that they were courting "their own Tiananmen" by protesting.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the students remained at the Parliament, a visible, and increasingly popular, symbol of mass rejection of Suharto's rule.⁴¹

The Indonesian President desperately maneuvered to keep power, but his promises of new elections failed to satisfy the 30,000 student protestors encamped around Parliament.⁴² Even national legislators began to turn against him.⁴³ With public support gone and ABRI increasingly unwilling or unable to guarantee his hold on power, Suharto submitted his resignation of May 21, 1998, making Habibie Indonesia's third President.⁴⁴ The New Order was over.

Analysts were divided about how to view the prospects of post-Suharto Indonesia. Some heralded the beginning of a "democratic moment" when "almost anything seems possible," including democracy and redress for past crimes.⁴⁵ Others focused on the

³⁹ The exact circumstances under which the students were shot and killed remain mysterious; see Susan Berfield and Dewi Loveard, "Ten days that shook Indonesia," in *The last days of President Suharto*, eds. Edward Aspinall, Gerry van Klinken, and Herb Feith (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), pp. 54-56; Jose Manuel Tesoro, "The Scapegoat?" *Asiaweek*, March 3, 2000 <<http://www.cgi.cnn.com/ASIANOW/asiaweek/magazine/2000/0303/cover1.html>> (accessed November 7, 2006).

⁴⁰ Louise Williams, "Amien Rais: first in line is a risky place," in *The last days of President Suharto*, eds. Edward Aspinall, Gerry van Klinken, and Herb Feith (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), p. 133.

⁴¹ Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 227.

⁴² Michael Vatikiotis and Adam Schwarz, "A Nation Awakes," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 4, 1998, p. 23.

⁴³ Patrick Walters, "The week of living dangerously," in *The last days of President Suharto*, eds. Edward Aspinall, Gerry van Klinken, and Herb Feith (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), pp. 83-84.

⁴⁴ Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, pp. 231-232; Vickers, p. 203.

⁴⁵ Edward Aspinall, "What chance democracy," in *The last days of President Suharto*, eds. Edward Aspinall, Gerry van Klinken, and Herb Feith (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), p. 142. Indeed, Habibie undertook some immediate reforms in the hopes of distancing himself from Suharto. He

significant difficulties faced by the Habibie Administration.⁴⁶ This combination of opportunity and uncertainty also prevailed in East Timor in 1998, just one example of how the territory's history paralleled developments in Indonesia.

East Timor: Colonialism, War, and Independence

Just over ten years after the massacre of the PKI, East Timor became a central component of the New Order's history.⁴⁷ This paper will analyze three major events in East Timor's modern history: the Indonesian invasion of 1975, the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991, and the Popular Consultation of 1999, which resulted in East Timor's independence from Indonesia but left the territory devastated by Indonesian-sponsored militias. Before describing these events in detail, it is necessary to elaborate on East Timor's history as part of the Portuguese Empire.

East Timor comprises half of an island in the south of the Indonesian archipelago and was a Portuguese colony in the midst of the Dutch East Indies.⁴⁸ The methods and effects of Portuguese colonialism are debated by scholars; however, all agree that Portugal cared little about East Timor.⁴⁹ Portuguese neglect persisted well into the twentieth century: 93 percent of the population was illiterate in 1973, infrastructure

released political prisoners, lifted restrictions on freedom of the press and assembly, and began limited denunciation of past military abuses; Challis, pp. 206-207.

⁴⁶ John McBeth, Michael Vatikiotis, and Margot Cohen, "Into the Void," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 4, 1998, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁷ In both 1975 and 1976, the annual summations of events in Indonesia published in *Asian Survey* listed Indonesia's invasion of East Timor as a major development of the New Order state. See Gary E. Hansen, "Indonesia 1975: National Resilience and Continuity in the New Order Struggle," *Asian Survey* 16, 2 (February 1976): pp. 146-158; R. William Liddle, "Indonesia 1976: Challenges to Suharto's Authority," *Asian Survey* 17, 2 (February 1977): pp. 95-106.

⁴⁸ The colonial era is surveyed in Jill Jolliffe, *East Timor: Nationalism and Colonialism* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1978), pp. 21-50, 53-60; John G. Taylor, *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor* (London: Zed Books, 1991), pp. 3-5, 8-15, 21-22; James Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1996), pp. 13-49.

⁴⁹ Taylor pp. 4, 12; Dunn, *Timor*, p. 15; Arnold S. Kohen, *From the Place of the Dead: The Epic Struggles of Bishop Belo of East Timor* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 68.

was minimal at best, and East Timor was “the most economically backward colony in Southeast Asia.”⁵⁰ Yet, James Dunn, Australian Consul in East Timor from 1962 to 1964, ultimately offered a positive view of Portuguese colonialism, doubting that East Timor would have done any better under Dutch rule.⁵¹ Indonesian West Timor was hardly a comparative model, being a backwater in the Indonesian Republic; indeed, economic activity was brisker and medical care was better in East Timor than in West Timor.⁵² By the mid-1970s, Dunn also pointed out, life in East Timor was dramatically improving. The number of schools and students had soared (although educated Timorese remained an incredibly small portion of the population) and East Timorese increasingly participated in public life as journalists, clergy, or soldiers; clearly, East Timor’s “backwardness” was “exaggerated.”⁵³

On April 25, 1974, Portugal’s dictatorship was overthrown in the Carnation Revolution. The new government made decolonization a priority and legalized indigenous political parties. Within weeks, several parties had been set up in East Timor, each representing a different option for the colony’s future. The first to form was the *União Democrática Timorese* (Timorese Democratic Union, UDT) on May 11, whose platform called for East Timor to form a federation with Portugal.⁵⁴ A second party was founded on May 20: the *Associação Social Democrática Timorese* (Timorese Social Democratic Association, ASDT), which called for independence.⁵⁵ In September 1974, the ASDT changed its name to the *Frente Revolucionária do Timor Leste Independente*

⁵⁰ The quotation is from Dunn, *Timor*, p. 17. Other information taken from Taylor, p. 17; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 33, 41-42.

⁵¹ Dunn, *Timor*, p. 47.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 40-41.

⁵³ The quotation is from *Ibid.* p. 8. Dunn’s nuanced discussion of Portuguese colonialism is detailed in *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8, 36, 40-41.

⁵⁴ Jolliffe, p. 62; Taylor, pp. 26-27; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 53-56.

⁵⁵ Jolliffe, pp. 62-64; Taylor, p. 27; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 56-62.

(Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, Fretilin), reflecting a radicalization of its politics, especially a more strident anti-colonialism. By this point, it was the largest party in East Timor.⁵⁶ The third significant party, the *Associação Popular Democrática Timorese* (Timorese Popular Democratic Association, Apodeti), was founded in late May 1974. It advocated merging with Indonesia, albeit with a special status, freedom of speech, and the right to strike. Apodeti remained by far the smallest of the three parties, and would not have survived without Indonesian support.⁵⁷

Throughout the following months, the new parties struggled to solidify their bases, the Portuguese sought decolonization, and Indonesia became involved in the situation.⁵⁸ The literature widely holds Indonesian machinations responsible for the destabilization of East Timor.⁵⁹ Beginning in 1974, Indonesia began broadcasting pro-Apodeti propaganda across the border, accusing the UDT and Fretilin of being “fascist” and “Communist,” respectively. This propaganda campaign was clumsy and counterproductive since these terms were alien to many Timorese and the common threat of Indonesia led to a UDT-Fretilin coalition in January 1975.⁶⁰ However, Indonesian

⁵⁶ Jolliffe, pp. 62-64; Taylor, pp. 32-35, 39-40; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 61-62.

⁵⁷ The conditions Apodeti stipulated for inclusion in the Republic were incredibly unrealistic, for none of these rights existed in Indonesia; Jolliffe, pp. 64-65; Taylor, pp. 27-28; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 62-66. Several smaller political parties were also formed, including KOTA and Trabalhista. Their influence was negligible, although Indonesia would later make use of them to claim widespread Timorese support for its invasion; Jolliffe, pp. 67-68.

⁵⁸ Independent Indonesia had ignored East Timor. While politicians occasionally made speeches denouncing Portuguese colonialism, little concrete action was taken. Indeed, the strongest voice for integration was a Westerner, Donald E. Weatherbee, who declared, correctly as it turned out, that “in a sense Portuguese Timor is a trust territory, the Portuguese holding it in trust for Indonesia”; Donald E. Weatherbee, “Portuguese Timor: An Indonesian Dilemma,” *Asian Survey* 6, 12 (December 1966): p. 695.

⁵⁹ Jolliffe, p. 84; Patricia Burnett, “From decolonization to destruction,” *Times Literary Supplement*, December 16, 1983, p. 1391; Taylor, p. 31; Dunn, *Timor*, p. 88.

⁶⁰ For Indonesian propaganda efforts in East Timor, see Taylor, p. 37; Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, p. 201; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 78-79, 83; Kohen, p. 79; Estêvão Cabral, “The Indonesian Propaganda War against East Timor,” in *The East Timor Question: The Struggle for Independence from Indonesia*, eds. Paul Hainsworth and Stephen McCloskey (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), pp. 70-74.

propaganda laid the groundwork for its version of events in East Timor and found a ready audience abroad.

The UDT-Fretilin alliance only lasted a few months, and its disintegration has generally been blamed on Indonesian interference.⁶¹ In fact, the UDT had compelling reasons to break the coalition. The alliance had never been strong, as both parties maintained their own foreign policy apparatuses, which had radically different approaches to foreign affairs, especially regarding Indonesia, where the UDT's contacts in ABRI increasingly warned about Fretilin's Communist leanings.⁶² UDT leaders were also anxious about Fretilin's populism. The Front had begun literacy campaigns, formed unions, and instituted agricultural cooperatives throughout the countryside, measures that enjoyed widespread popular support and whose socialist tinge worried the other political parties.⁶³

Despite any indigenous divisions, however, the final break between Fretilin and the UDT was initiated by Indonesia. ABRI effectively forced the UDT's hand in early August 1975, when Indonesian intelligence chief Ali Murtopo informed its representatives, incorrectly, that Fretilin was preparing a coup for August 15; he added that if the coup went ahead, Indonesia would not stand idly by. UDT leaders launched their own coup on August 11, not, as Indonesia would later claim, to advance integration

⁶¹ Jolliffe, pp. 94-95; Arnold S. Kohen and John G. Taylor. *An Act of Genocide: Indonesia's Invasion of East Timor* (London: Tapol, 1979), pp. 18, 20; Taylor, pp. 38-39, 41.

⁶² The UDT's and Fretilin's foreign policies are described in Jolliffe, pp. 110-112.

⁶³ Fretilin's social programs are described in Jolliffe, pp. 100-106; Kohen and Taylor, p. 23; Taylor, pp. 49-50. By far the most enthusiastic endorsement of Fretilin's social programs was offered by the Australian Communist Denis Freney, who contrasted Fretilin's commitment to the people with UDT's "rightist" kowtowing to Indonesia; Denis Freney, *Timor: Freedom caught between the Powers* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975), especially pp. 19-22. One of the few dissenting analyses about Fretilin's social programs was an article by Grant Evans, which described Fretilin's "political immaturity" and insisted that the party "encountered problems translating" its program of agricultural cooperatives into concrete policy; Grant Evans, "Portuguese Timor," *New Left Review* 91 (May-June 1975): p. 75.

with the Republic, but to forestall Indonesian military action. East Timor plunged into civil war.⁶⁴

The Civil War lasted from August 11 to September 24, 1975, ending with a decisive Fretilin victory as the Front's forces expelled their political opponents from East Timor, forcing them to take refuge in Indonesian West Timor. The Indonesians quickly forced these anti-Fretilin Timorese to sign a petition calling for integration with Indonesia.⁶⁵ Fretilin was now in control of East Timor, the Portuguese having fled during the conflict. They faced enormous challenges: most civil servants had left with the Portuguese and Indonesian Special Forces were conducting cross-border raids. These attacks were meant to destabilize the Fretilin government and create the impression that the Civil War was still raging. Although this was "sheer fabricated nonsense," the

⁶⁴ Taylor, pp. 49-50, 52; Matthew Jardine, *East Timor: Genocide in Paradise*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Odonian Press, 1999), pp. 28-30; Dunn, *Timor*, p. 148. Murtopo had long advocated a hard-line stance towards an independent East Timor. He was supported by his intelligence apparatus, and especially by General Benny Murdani. There was a great deal of division in the Indonesian government and ABRI high command about the approach Indonesia should adopt towards East Timor. Foreign Minister Adam Malik, who had guaranteed Indonesia's respect for East Timor's independence to Fretilin's foreign representative, José Ramos-Horta, in June 1974, was especially vocal in his opposition to the hardliners. Unfortunately, Malik could not hope to compete with Murtopo and Murdani, high-ranking generals who had Suharto's ear; Jolliffe, pp. 65-66; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 94-99; Kohen, pp. 79-80. There is also evidence of inter-ABRI tensions over East Timor. Murtopo and Murdani effectively ran their own operations in the territory. Indeed, the invasion seemed to catch much of the ABRI high command by surprise. One of these generals, Leo Lopulisa, later raged: "I am only the manager of a funeral parlor. Only that! I am not involved. I am only in charge of the funerals of the men who didn't come back"; David Jenkins, *Suharto and His Generals: Indonesian Military Politics, 1975-1983* (Ithaca: Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1984), pp. 24-25 n. 22. Other military figures supported the invasion as a means to increase ABRI's budget, which doubled due to East Timor operations by 1981; Sundhaussen, pp. 65, 67; Challis, p. 175. The encouragement of such political rivalries was typical of Suharto's governing style, which sought to create competing factions, each of which would spend so much time trying to outmaneuver the others that a united opposition would be difficult to create; Sundhaussen, p. 78; Jenkins, *Suharto and his Generals*, pp. 20, 22; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 77.

⁶⁵ Jolliffe, pp. 120-146; Kohen and Taylor, pp. 29-30; Taylor, pp. 50-54; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 150-160.

perception of continuing civil war in East Timor dominated international coverage and diplomatic versions of events.⁶⁶

Faced with a full-scale border war and neglected by the international community, Fretilin unilaterally declared independence on November 28, 1975, hoping that this act would focus international attention on the territory, as well as give their soldiers something to fight for.⁶⁷ The next day, its political opponents in West Timor issued a Declaration of Integration with Indonesia under the watchful eyes of Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik and senior ABRI officers. On December 7, Indonesia invaded East Timor.

Invasion and Aftermath (1975-1979)

The Indonesians estimated that the conquest of East Timor would take three weeks.⁶⁸ ABRI began committing atrocities against the East Timorese population the moment its units landed in the capital of Dili, with Indonesian soldiers gunning people down in the streets and conducting executions at the wharf.⁶⁹ Yet, Fretilin's resistance was much stronger than the Indonesians had anticipated, so much so that when Indonesia's Parliament declared East Timor the Republic's twenty-seventh province in July 1976, ABRI controlled neither the majority of East Timor's territory nor its population.⁷⁰ ABRI attempted to rectify this situation with a major offensive beginning

⁶⁶ The quotation is in Dunn, *Timor*, p. 194. See also Jolliffe, p. 146, 197-198; McDonald, pp. 209-210; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 160, 162-165, 193-195. By all accounts, Fretilin's brief control of East Timor was successful. Initial food shortages were successfully surmounted, the year's coffee crop was exported, and foreign aid secured from Australia; Jolliffe, p. 143; Taylor, pp. 56-57; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 245-246.

⁶⁷ Jolliffe, pp. 215-216; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 240-243.

⁶⁸ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "Gravel in Jakarta's Shoes," in *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London & New York: Verso, 1998), pp. 132-133.

⁶⁹ Dunn called "the attack on the Timorese capital...one of the most brutal operations of its kind in modern warfare"; Dunn, *Timor*, p. 251. See also Kohen and Taylor, pp. 73-79.

⁷⁰ McDonald, pp. 211-212; Taylor, pp. 70-71; Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, pp. 204-206.

in September 1977, which specifically targeted East Timorese civilians, destroying their crops and herding them into “resettlement centers.” ABRI overran Fretilin’s last major stronghold around Mount Matebian at the end of 1978. Civilians who had sheltered behind Fretilin lines surrendered en masse and joined their fellow Timorese in the resettlement centers. By 1979, the population of these camps reached an estimated 300,000 persons, and famine raged.⁷¹ Indonesia turned this horrific situation to its advantage, using the famine as a bargaining chip in its struggle for international recognition of its sovereignty over East Timor.⁷² In this, Jakarta was generally successful, as the international community, valuing good relations and economic ties with Indonesia, effectively granted *de facto* recognition to Indonesia’s claim.⁷³

The Santa Cruz Massacre (November 12, 1991)

By 1979, the East Timorese resistance was apparently defeated. Indonesia sealed off the territory, limiting both travel to and news originating from East Timor, a ban that applied to both the outside world and to Indonesians themselves.⁷⁴ The occupation of East Timor should have ceased to exist as an international issue and although this never quite happened, the plight of the East Timorese was something the major powers could ignore.

Yet, for all the military’s repression, East Timorese resistance to the occupation persisted. While small guerilla units continued to operate in the bush, major resistance

⁷¹ Taylor, pp. 84-93; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 267-294.

⁷² According to Arnold S. Kohen and John G. Taylor, whose *An Act of Genocide: Indonesia’s Invasion of East Timor*, is among the most thorough examinations of the famine, Indonesia applied a “calculated...policy of enforced starvation,” and then forced international relief agencies to funnel aid through the Indonesian Red Cross, which allowed Jakarta to effectively control the relief effort, as well as provided many opportunities for corruption; Kohen and Taylor, pp. 54-56, 84-90; the quotation is on p. 86.

⁷³ Kohen and Taylor, p. 132; Taylor, pp. 88-94.

⁷⁴ Kohen, pp. 92-93.

activity shifted to the cities and to East Timor's youth. This shocked the Indonesian authorities, who thought that the *geração foun*, or "younger generation" of East Timorese, would have been supporters of integration. According to Indonesian logic, most Timorese born before the invasion would resent the loss of independence for the rest of their lives. However, their children, who had matured knowing nothing but Indonesian sovereignty, would be much more acquiescent. Raised speaking *bahasa Indonesia* and having been educated in the New Order's schools, the *geração foun* would surely accept Jakarta's rule.⁷⁵ In this thinking, the Indonesians were deeply mistaken.

In November 1991, a Portuguese parliamentary delegation was scheduled to visit East Timor.⁷⁶ The visit was cancelled at the last minute, as the Indonesian Foreign Ministry objected to the inclusion of Jill Jolliffe in the delegation's journalist contingent.⁷⁷ Many Timorese had been anticipating the visit and were bitterly

⁷⁵ Jusuf Wanandi, a high Indonesian government official, reflected this mindset thus: "Forget about this [1975] generation....They will never love us. We need to wait until the next generation comes of age, and that will take a decade"; cited in Kohen, p. 136. See also Kohen, pp. 100-101; Peter Carey, "Third World Colonialism, the *Geração Foun*, and the Birth of a New Nation: Indonesia through East Timorese Eyes, 1975-1999," *Indonesia* 76 (October 2003): pp. 23-67.

⁷⁶ As Indonesian sovereignty was never officially recognized under international law, Portugal remained the official governing authority in East Timor. The Portuguese parliamentary visit was part of larger negotiations between Jakarta, Lisbon, and the UN aimed at resolving the East Timor issue. Indonesia had "opened" East Timor to the outside world in 1989, for the first time allowing tourists and a limited number of journalists to visit the province. "Openness" was a controversial policy within the Indonesian government. Its most prominent advocate was Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, opposed by hard-line military figures who maintained that a strong "security approach" was necessary to maintain the sacred unity of the state. Suharto's position was ambiguous. On one hand, he realized that some concessions had to be made to the post-Cold War international fetish for democratization. However, he also instructed his generals to maintain the unity of the state at all costs; Herb Feith, "East Timor: The Opening Up, the Crackdown and the Possibility of a Durable Settlement," in *Indonesia Assessment 1992: Political Perspectives on the 1990s*, eds. Harold Crouch and Hal Hill (Canberra: Department of Political and Social Change, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1992), pp. 63-80; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, pp. 184-186. Foreign visitors to East Timor recalled an overwhelming military presence and a population living in fear; Kirsty Sword and Pat Walsh, eds., "*Opening Up*": *Travellers' Impressions of East Timor, 1989-1991* (Fitzroy: Australia East Timor Association, 1991); Peter Carey, "A Personal Journey through East Timor," in *The East Timor Question: The Struggle for Independence from Indonesia*, eds. Paul Hainsworth and Stephen McCloskey (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), pp. 17-30.

⁷⁷ While the opposition to Jolliffe's presence came from the Foreign Ministry, cancellation of the visit certainly met with the approval of hard-line generals.

disappointed.⁷⁸ On October 28, 1991, two East Timorese, including an eighteen-year-old named Sebastião Gomes, were killed in a clash with ABRI. The resistance organized a funeral march in his memory on November 12. When the procession, now numbering several hundred persons, reached Dili's Santa Cruz cemetery, they were fired upon by Indonesian troops.⁷⁹ ABRI initially stated that 19 persons had been killed and ABRI's Commander, General Try Sutrisno, called any declarations to the contrary pure "bullshit."⁸⁰ Outside observers never accepted this estimate, with Amnesty International later calculating that 270 had been killed on November 12 and in following days.⁸¹

The massacre might have remained relatively unknown if not for the presence of foreign journalists, on hand to cover the cancelled Portuguese visit. Video of the Santa Cruz massacre "proved to have more immediate political impact than the mountains of written evidence accumulated by human rights organizations on the sixteen previous years of brutal Indonesian rule."⁸² The international outcry forced Jakarta to convene the *Komisi Penyelidik Nasional* (National Commission of Inquiry, KPN), which concluded that, while ABRI had overreacted, troops had been "provoked" by the marchers. The report was widely denounced as a whitewash, with Amnesty International calling it

⁷⁸ Kohen, pp. 142-147.

⁷⁹ The most detailed account of the massacre is Kohen, pp. 160-166. Some analysts maintain that the demonstration and the shooting were deliberately orchestrated. Douglas Kammen, for instance, argued that the shootings were arranged by certain military elements, especially in the elite *Komando Pasukan Khusus* (Special Forces Command, Kopassus) in order to discredit Brigadier-General Rudolf Samuel Warouw, who, upon assuming command of East Timor in December 1989, had begun to tighten discipline among soldiers and to crack down on officers' sideline businesses; Douglas Kammen, "Notes on the Transformation of the East Timor Military Command and its Implications for Indonesia," *Indonesia* 67 (April 1999): pp. 61-76. Kammen's thesis has been effectively refuted by Samuel Moore, "The Indonesian Military's Last Years in East Timor: An Analysis of its Secret Documents," *Indonesia* 72 (October 2001): p. 24 n. 34.

⁸⁰ Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, p. 213.

⁸¹ Amnesty International, *Power and Impunity*, pp. 50-53.

⁸² Anderson, "Gravel in Jakarta's Shoes," p. 137.

“fatally flawed” and “unacceptable,” and stating that the KPN had effectively endorsed military force as a justifiable reaction to dissent.⁸³

In the long term, the massacre forced Indonesia to moderate certain occupation policies. Suharto personally relieved two of the top generals in East Timor and expressed his condolences to the families of the dead.⁸⁴ Increased international attention to East Timor also prevented the execution of resistance leader Xanana Gusmão in 1992, and the regime was forced to allow a group of East Timorese who “invaded” the U.S. Embassy in 1994 to go into exile in Portugal.⁸⁵ In East Timor itself, the massacre “radicalized a new generation of East Timorese. It destroyed the myth that the very real economic development in East Timor had as its corollary the greater acceptance of integration” and ensured that East Timorese opposition to the occupation could not be so easily ignored as in the past.⁸⁶

Popular Consultation and Independence (1999)

The fall of Suharto created a sense of potential in East Timor. Less than a month after the dictator’s resignation, former Australian diplomat James Dunn wrote an article

⁸³ Amnesty International, *Power and Impunity*, p. 44. Not all human rights organizations took such a negative view of the KPN. Human Rights Watch, while describing the results of the investigation as “deeply flawed,” pointed out that it had been an “unprecedented respons[e] to international criticism on human rights” on Indonesia’s part; Human Rights Watch/Asia, *The Limits of Openness: Human Rights in Indonesia and East Timor* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), p. 23.

⁸⁴ Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, pp. 214-215. It seems that Suharto was generally infuriated at ABRI over the shooting. However, his insistence that ABRI discipline its members also derived from personal interest; in this case, the desire to reemphasize his control of the military; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 187.

⁸⁵ Anderson, “Gravel in Jakarta’s Shoes,” pp. 137-138. However, ABRI’s moderation had its limits. In 1993, Abilio Soares, a former member of Apodeti who supported a harsh military response to resistance activity, was installed as East Timor’s Governor. A year earlier, East Timor’s military had been put under the command of General Theo Syafie, who was more than willing to oblige Soares; Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, pp. 215-216, 219.

⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch, pp. 22-23. It is crucial to note, however, that there was *never* any chance of Indonesia becoming an international pariah; Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 189.

in which he characterized the Habibie government's handling of East Timor as a "barometer" of its "sincerity and commitment to democratic reforms."⁸⁷ In January 1999, Habibie issued a surprise proposal offering autonomy for East Timor, which meant control over a wide range of government affairs excepting foreign and fiscal policies and national defense. Habibie was greatly motivated by the "increasing sense [in some quarters of the government] that the East Timor issue was causing more trouble than it was worth."⁸⁸ The occupation was expensive, took a great deal of manpower to maintain, and sapped international goodwill towards the new Indonesian government, and thus affected the flow of economic aid. To many Indonesian officials, resolving the East Timor issue relieved a headache that had persisted for decades.⁸⁹

For years, Indonesia and Portugal had been pursuing negotiations under United Nations (UN) auspices. Habibie's autonomy proposal quickly resulted in an agreement on May 5, 1999. The East Timorese would vote on whether to accept or reject autonomy; if they rejected, independence would follow. The most controversial component of the May 5 Agreement was Indonesia's insistence that it handle security during the vote; United Nations personnel, who would conduct voter registrations and count the ballots, would be in East Timor under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. The United Nations' acceptance of these terms has been heavily criticized, with many wondering how the organization could trust the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (National Army of Indonesia,

⁸⁷ James Dunn, "A just settlement for Timor," in *The last days of President Suharto*, eds. Edward Aspinall, Gerry van Klinken, and Herb Feith (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), p. 150.

⁸⁸ Harold A. Crouch, "The TNI and East Timor Policy," in *Out of the Ashes: Destruction and Reconstruction of East Timor*, eds. James J. Fox and Dionisio Babo Soares (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2000), p. 152.

⁸⁹ Douglas Kammen, "The Trouble with Normal: The Indonesian Military, Paramilitaries, and the Final Solution in East Timor," in *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*, ed. Benedict R. O'G Anderson (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2001), p. 172.

TNI), given its record of human rights violations.⁹⁰ Yet others, especially UN personnel, maintained that Indonesia would not have signed any agreement had the international organization not acquiesced to its continuing military presence during the ballot. Further, no one knew if this chance would ever come again, and so the United Nations decided to take a calculated risk in order to carry out the vote.⁹¹ On June 11, 1999, the Security Council created the United Nations Assistance Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) to fulfill the conditions of the May 5 Agreement.

It was immediately clear to observers that the TNI was anything but impartial in its enforcement of security. The Indonesian Army, especially Kopassus, created and funded militias that carried out violent acts, including massacres, preceding the vote in August 1999.⁹² Their goal was to secure a favorable result, either support for autonomy, or such a narrow vote for independence that Indonesia might argue that it could not abandon the pro-integrationists to the mercy of their anti-autonomy fellows.⁹³ Despite

⁹⁰ These criticisms are found in Geoffrey Robinson's "With Unamet in East Timor: A Historian's Personal View," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 32, 1-2 (January-June 2000): p. 26; and "If You Leave Us Here, We Will Die," in *The New Killing Fields: Massacre and the Politics of Intervention*, eds. Nicolaus Mills and Kira Brunner (New York: Basic Books, 2002), p. 166. ABRI had become the TNI in April 1999, when the police force was severed from the military units and placed under the Interior Ministry. When dealing with events occurring during 1999, this paper will therefore use "TNI" when referring to the armed forces.

⁹¹ Those who maintain that, given the circumstances, the UN was correct in allowing Indonesia to handle security include Ian Martin, who headed the UN mission in East Timor; see Ian Martin, "The Popular Consultation and the United Nations Mission in East Timor—First Reflections," in *Out of the Ashes: Destruction and Reconstruction of East Timor*, eds. James J. Fox and Dionisio Babo Soares (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2000), p. 148. Other supporters include Richard Lloyd Parry, "The Shark Cage," in *The New Killing Fields: Massacre and the Politics of Intervention*, eds. Nicolaus Mills and Kira Brunner (New York: Basic Books, 2002), pp. 190-191.

⁹² The Indonesian Army had an extensive history of using East Timorese irregulars. The creation of militias escalated after the Santa Cruz massacre, as the military tried to assume a lower profile in the territory. These new gangs were sponsored especially by Prabowo Subianto, a Kopassus officer and Suharto's son-in-law. Major works on the long-term use of militias include Conboy, pp. 269-271, 310-311, 316 n. 12; Moore, pp. 28-30; Geoffrey Robinson, "People's war: militias in East Timor and Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 9, 3 (November 2001): pp. 272-285, 298-301.

⁹³ The TNI seemed to believe that it would be able to secure a vote in favor of autonomy. Surviving Army documents, as analyzed by Samuel Moore, show a conviction that the majority of the East Timorese supported integration, and that it would be possible to mobilize this popular support in

the TNI's official denials, many officers and civilian leaders made no secret of their support for the militias, openly attending pro-integrationist rallies and issuing arms to militias. Militia leaders themselves also bragged about the support offered by the Army. The TNI's plausible deniability was, therefore, ludicrous, and its international reputation further stained by its actions. Given these negative repercussions, why did the military go to such obvious lengths to secure a favorable vote?

The answers to this question lay in both the TNI's institutional culture and in the interests of specific units, in this case Kopassus. The majority of the TNI's members had served in East Timor.⁹⁴ Letting the East Timorese go would therefore have invalidated the sacrifices made by Indonesian soldiers. Military leaders also feared that East Timor's separation from Indonesia would begin a chain reaction leading to the disintegration of the Republic. In this scenario, East Timor's secession gave impetus to other separatist movements, specifically in restive Aceh and Irian Jaya, whose importance to the

conjunction with silencing the minority pro-independence lobby. Moore concluded that the Army was seduced by its own propaganda, and was therefore incredibly astounded when the voting went against integration; Moore, pp. 9-44. This was, of course, not the only time that the military had allowed its false perceptions of the Timorese to determine its policies; similarly, Murdani and his associates had believed that the conquest of East Timor would be simple, totally underestimating the strength and determination of Fretilin. Writing about the Holocaust, James E. Young pointed out that "it was not 'the facts' in and of themselves that determined actions taken...by the killers themselves; but it was the structural, mythological, and figurative apprehension of these facts that led to action"; James E. Young, "Introduction: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation," in *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 4. A similar process was discernable in 1999, as the TNI was suddenly confronted with an exceptionally public and humiliating repudiation of its illusions about East Timor. The "fact," as some soldiers saw it, was that Indonesia had poured a massive amount of resources into East Timor. The results of the Popular Consultation proved that the East Timorese were, at the very least, ungrateful, so why should they enjoy the fruits of this development policy as an independent nation? Thus, East Timor burned.

⁹⁴ The number of casualties sustained by the Indonesian Army in East Timor is difficult to calculate. Vickers gave a figure of 20,000 dead over the course of the occupation. However, he did not explain how he arrived at this figure; Vickers, p. 217. The most detailed analysis of the Indonesian death toll in East Timor is Gerry van Klinken, "Indonesian Casualties in East Timor, 1975-1999: Analysis of an Official List," *Indonesia* 80 (October 2005): pp. 109-122. In this fascinating study, Klinken cited a TNI document stating 3,700 soldiers had been killed and 2,400 wounded in East Timor from 1975 to 1999 (p. 110). These casualty figures seem low, even allowing for the fact that claims of tens of thousands dead might be significantly exaggerated.

Republic, both politically and economically, was significantly greater than East Timor's.⁹⁵

The control of East Timor's economy at a unit-based level also contributed to the military's reluctance. East Timor's provincial economy, as in all other parts of Indonesia, was farmed out to certain military units, in this case to Kopassus.⁹⁶ East Timor in effect became the Special Forces' fiefdom and developed what Roland Challis, a BBC Southeast Asia correspondent, disparagingly called a "plantation" economy.⁹⁷ Lucrative indigenous industries, especially coffee cultivation, were seized by the Special Forces, which purchased the crop at artificially low prices, then sold it on the international market for a substantial profit.⁹⁸ By the early 1980s, it was estimated that the Special Forces derived at least US\$30 million per year from its coffee monopoly.⁹⁹ While these profit margins had decreased by the late 1990s, Kopassus's economic attachment to East Timor undoubtedly contributed to its willingness to defy Habibie's and the world's hopes for a smooth vote.

Ultimately, all attempts to terrorize the Timorese population into voting for continued membership in the Republic failed. An astonishing 98.6 percent of registered voters turned out on August 30. The results were conclusively in favor of independence, with 78.5 percent of the voters rejecting Habibie's autonomy proposal. Immediately

⁹⁵ Parry, p. 200; Cotton, "The Emergence of an Independent East Timor: National and Regional Challenges," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 22, 1 (April 2000), *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost, Concordia University Libraries <<http://search.epnet.com>> (accessed September 8, 2006).

⁹⁶ The unit's history is extensively described in Conboy.

⁹⁷ Challis, p. 209.

⁹⁸ "As one Indonesian commander put it, P. T. Denok [the coffee monopoly] was 'the only company that landed with the marines. They came together'"; Taylor, p. 125.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125. Coffee cultivation was not the only industry in which the Special Forces were active. Other military interests included monopolies on marble and sandalwood, in several of which the unit partnered with Suharto's children; *Ibid.*, p. 127. Taylor's analysis is based extensively on work conducted by Indonesian anthropologist George Aditjondro, whose findings are discussed in Chapter 2.

following the announcement of the results, the militias embarked on an orgy of violence, as the TNI either stood by or joined in. Dili was burned; Timor's infrastructure destroyed; and most of the population displaced, with at least 200,000 East Timorese crossing the border into West Timor.¹⁰⁰ Under intense diplomatic pressure, including from Indonesia's long-term allies such as the U.S., Indonesia eventually agreed to allow peacekeepers into East Timor. The UN-backed International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) landed in Dili on September 20, 1999. It found a devastated territory. A World Bank document, compiled in late 1999, reported that 70 percent of East Timor's "administrative buildings have been partially or completely destroyed," while 75 to 80 percent of the schools were damaged or destroyed. The health system was also wrecked: the vast majority of doctors had fled the territory, and all medical equipment had been removed. East Timor might have gained its independence, but it had nearly been destroyed in the process.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ This evacuation is among the most puzzling aspects of the post-ballot events. William Shawcross called it "ethnic cleansing Indonesian style," an attempt by the TNI to partition East Timor, annexing its Western-most districts to Indonesia; William Shawcross, "From Kosovo to East Timor," in *Deliver Us from Evil: Peacekeepers, Warlords, and a World of Endless Conflict* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 393. While some Indonesian leaders certainly advocated such a course of action, Shawcross's analysis seems simplistic. A more nuanced discussion was offered by Geoffrey Robinson, who argued that Indonesian documents that supposedly showed a concrete and centralized plan to destroy East Timor and displace its people are equally, if not more, explainable as responsible attempts to guarantee the safe evacuation of Indonesian citizens and pro-autonomy supporters. Robinson, a member of UNAMET, certainly did not believe that the TNI was innocent of sponsoring the violence, merely that there was little proof that such steps were anything but a response to circumstances on the ground; Geoffrey Robinson, "The fruitless search for a smoking gun: Tracing the origins of violence in East Timor," in *Roots of Violence in Indonesia: Contemporary violence in historical perspective*, eds. Freek Colombijn and J. Thomas Lindblad (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), pp. 243-276. Robinson's analysis also influenced Crouch's work on the ballot; Crouch, "The TNI and East Timor Policy," pp. 169-170.

¹⁰¹ Sarah Cliffe, "The Joint Assessment Mission and Reconstruction in East Timor," in *Out of the Ashes: Destruction and Reconstruction of East Timor*, eds. James J. Fox and Dionisio Babo Soares (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2000), pp. 252-262.

The Narratives: Meaning and Structure

The analyses of these three events—the Indonesian invasion, the Santa Cruz massacre, and the Popular Consultation—occupy the remainder of this thesis. I will examine a series of narrative strands which purported to explain these case studies. For each, I will analyze four different narratives: the East Timorese, the Indonesian, the journalistic, and the truth commission’s. I do not aim to construct a master narrative of the occupation, as attempts to do so already exist and space does not permit, but rather to show how the four narratives nourished and influenced each other, both through their similarities and their differences.¹⁰²

I have had to be selective in my sources. So much has been written about East Timor that I can only present snapshots of writing about the occupation. This is not necessarily a drawback, as “[b]road generalizations and the use of ideal types are crucial to causal explanation; otherwise source material would become mired in descriptive detail.”¹⁰³ Nor will equal space be devoted to each narrative. While all their perspectives were undeniably crucial to East Timor’s story, they were not all important at the same time. The starting point for my use of narrative is offered by Donald Brenneis, who discussed narratives in conflict situations, pointing out that conflicts automatically spawn several different stories, none of which can be taken as objective. Despite these difficulties, however, conflict narratives offer an invaluable guide to how “participants

¹⁰² “Rather than coming to Holocaust narrative for indisputably ‘factual’ testimony...the critical reader might now turn to the manner in which these ‘facts’ have been understood and reconstructed in narrative: as a guide both to the kinds of understanding that victims [and perpetrators] brought to their experiences and to the kinds of actions they took on behalf of this understanding”; Young, p. 10. While I do not equate the Indonesian occupation with the Holocaust, Young’s point is still a valuable starting point to my analysis.

¹⁰³ Janet Hart, “Cracking the Code: Narrative and Political Mobilization in the Greek Resistance,” *Social Science History* 16, 4 (Winter 1992): p. 638.

define, clarify, and comprehend troubled relationships and troubling events.”¹⁰⁴ And according to Hayden White, it is only through studying conflicting narratives, which he terms “complex set[s] of codes,” that one arrives at “a story infinitely rich in suggestion and variety of affect.”¹⁰⁵ Narratives are necessary to create a “story” that can be studied by historians.¹⁰⁶ Despite their subjectivity, narratives provide an invaluable tool for understanding the construction of a conflict, a construction that is often capable of influencing events themselves. This was certainly the case in the narratives about East Timor.

The East Timorese Narrative

The main thrust of the East Timorese narrative concerns resistance activities. Indeed, much of the literature about the occupation chronicled the East Timorese struggle against the Indonesian invaders. Most authors are unabashedly pro-Timorese, and while not ignoring the Civil War, minimize its story in favor of descriptions of Indonesian repression. I have suggested that, while the Indonesians cannot avoid responsibility for events in 1975, neither were the East Timorese passive instruments. Suicidal policies were common behind Fretilin lines throughout the late 1970s. In September 1977, Fretilin’s President, Xavier do Amaral, was arrested for “high treason” and replaced by Nicolau Lobato, who declared Fretilin a Marxist organization. The Front purged itself of “counter-revolutionaries,” which almost always meant supporters of do Amaral, and was

¹⁰⁴ Donald Brenneis, “Telling Troubles: Narrative, Conflict and Experience,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 30, 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1988): pp. 279-291; quotation on pp. 286-287.

¹⁰⁵ Hayden White, “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory,” *History and Theory* 23, 1 (February 1984): p. 18.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

thus distracted from the war against Indonesia.¹⁰⁷ If Fretilin was not Communist before the invasion, as Indonesia liked to claim, it certainly became so after. Not every Timorese saw this as a positive development.

In Chapter 1, covering the invasion period, I discuss three sources. The first two, by resistance leader Xanana Gusmão and by UDT member Arsenio Ramos-Horta, speak directly about the troubles arising from Timorese political divisions. Gusmão was an early member of Fretilin, yet was greatly disturbed by the Front's political repression. Arsenio Ramos-Horta, the brother of José Ramos-Horta, one of the ASDT's founders, had been captured by Fretilin during the Civil War and spent three years as its prisoner. His autobiography, while containing several demonstrably false pro-Indonesian claims, nevertheless offers an insightful look at Fretilin's disastrous radicalization. The third source is a book by Arsenio's brother, José Ramos-Horta, the resistance's roving diplomat, who worked tirelessly to bring international attention to the plight of East Timor. His is a chronicle of the world's indifference to the situation in East Timor and as such fits well with other accounts that portrayed the resistance as extinct in the late 1970s.

Chapter 2, discussing the Santa Cruz massacre, opens with the memoir of Constâncio Pinto, a leader of East Timor's clandestine urban resistance and one of the prime organizers of the march that ended with the massacre. Pinto's book reveals the evolving tactics of the East Timorese resistance, specifically how the Timorese who

¹⁰⁷ The best analysis of this period is Ben Kiernan, "War, Genocide, and Resistance in East Timor, 1975-99: Comparative Reflections on Cambodia," in *War and State Terrorism: The United States, Japan, and the Asia-Pacific in the Long Twentieth Century*, eds. Mark Selden and Alvin Y. So (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), pp. 209, 212-218. See also Sarah Niner, "A Long Journey of Resistance: The Origins and Struggles of the CNRT," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 32, 1-2 (January-June 2000): pp. 11-18.

matured in the 1980s perceived themselves and their place within Indonesia. This section also includes analysis of an anonymous email that circulated on Indonesian university campuses in the wake of the massacre. This email was written specifically for Indonesians, using their language and anti-colonial rhetoric to expose the hypocrisy of the country's own brutal colonial practices in East Timor. As such, the source demonstrates how East Timorese nationalists used Indonesian occupation policies as a tool to protest the Indonesian occupation.

The third chapter focuses on the Popular Consultation. As of yet, there is no single source representative of Timorese experiences during the 1999 events. This section therefore employs interviews and news reports about the Popular Consultation to show how Timorese perceived their circumstances. It then discusses post-ballot efforts at reconciliation in East Timor, attempts by the newly independent Timor to come to grips with its violent past in order to forge a new nation.

The Indonesian Narrative

In Chapter 1, I will describe Indonesia's efforts to ensure that its version of Fretilin as a Communist movement became the accepted worldwide image of events in East Timor. I illustrate this point using recently declassified records of conversations between U.S. President Gerald Ford, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and Indonesian President Suharto, in which the leaders discussed the looming Communist threat in Asia following the fall of Saigon and in which Suharto effectively linked developments in East Timor to Cold War anxieties. I then trace how Indonesia successfully sold Fretilin's Communist credentials to the wider world, specifically through an analysis of the

conservative Australian journal *Quadrant*, which openly advocated East Timor's integration by referencing the anxieties of the Cold War.

A major consequence of the Santa Cruz massacre was the shredding of Indonesian conceptions that they had bought Timorese loyalty through development projects. In Chapter 2, I examine Indonesian portrayals of its development efforts in East Timor using two booklets issued for international consumption by the Indonesian government in the early 1980s. While these sources predate the massacre, they are useful for providing glimpses of how the Indonesians cast the benefits of integration. I will also discuss how this government line was questioned within Indonesia itself, specifically in two Indonesian academic studies. The section then turns to the Indonesian Foreign Ministry's damage control efforts following the massacre. Realizing that the shooting had greatly mauled their country's international reputation, Indonesian officials vigorously asserted that the country should not be held to the same human rights standards as its developed counterparts and that doing so represented Western prejudice.

Chapter 3 discusses Indonesia's attempts to come to grips with its actions during the referendum in 1999. It uses two accounts of the violence during the Popular Consultation. The first, a report by the *Komisi Penyelidik Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia di Timor Timur* (Investigative Commission on Abuses of Human Rights in East Timor, KPP-HAM), an Indonesian government body charged with investigating Indonesian involvement in the 1999 violence, shattered not only the TNI's denial of sponsoring the 1999 violence, but also the very conception of the occupation held by Indonesia's highest officials. The second source is the recent memoir by former Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, in which he describes Indonesia's diplomatic attempts to resolve the

East Timor issue. In the book, Alatas confirmed the deep divisions within the Indonesian government concerning the Popular Consultation and presented a deeply nationalistic version of the August ballot in which violence took place because of military indifference, international stubbornness, and diplomatic mistakes.

The Journalist Narrative

The Indonesian government always recognized the necessity of limiting and controlling information about East Timor. Their efforts in this regard included the careful management of foreign journalists or the denial of journalist access to East Timor altogether. And, on an infamous occasion in October 1975, it even included murder, as Special Forces troops murdered five Western journalists in the East Timorese town of Balibo in order to prevent them from reporting on ABRI's presence in East Timor.¹⁰⁸ East Timor then disappeared from newsprint for a long period, reemerging when Indonesia released news of the famine in the resettlement camps to the outside world in the late 1970s.

In Chapter 1, I examine three separate journalistic treatments of East Timor in the 1970s. The majority of my sources are from the *Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER)*, an "authoritative" publication that provided extensive coverage of the situation in East Timor throughout the period.¹⁰⁹ *FEER's* treatment of the Civil War period demonstrated a marked tendency to question Indonesian propaganda. However, these same articles

¹⁰⁸ The Balibo Affair is discussed extensively in Jolliffe, pp. 165-177, 233-241; Taylor, pp. 60-66; Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 206-215, 220-221; Rodney Tiffen, *Diplomatic Deceits: Government, Media and East Timor* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001), pp. 36-40. A pro-Indonesian version, stating that the killings took place during battle with Fretilin forces, and implying that the journalists helped those forces, is found in Conboy, pp. 229-230, 234-235.

¹⁰⁹ Dunn, *Timor*, p. 225.

also depended on Indonesian sources and thus reflected, if only abstractly, Indonesian preoccupations over East Timor. The second journalistic treatment of the war in East Timor is Hendro Subroto's *Eyewitness to Integration of East Timor*. Subroto, an Indonesian journalist, accompanied joint Timorese and ABRI units in raids on East Timor, and wrote a breathtaking account of the Indonesian landings in Dili on December 7. Finally, I analyze journalistic treatments of the famine using *FEER* articles which alternatively present stories describing East Timor as an excellent example of Indonesian development policies or as a hellish place gripped by starvation and despair. I also cite an article in *The New York Times*, whose portrayal of the harsh conditions behind Fretilin lines was so wrenching that the *Times* adopted an anti-occupation editorial stance that persisted for over twenty years.

In the second chapter, on media coverage of the Santa Cruz massacre, I initially focus on eyewitness testimony. The first testimonial of the massacre was offered by New Zealander Helen Todd, whose son, Kamal Bamadhaj, was shot and killed by ABRI while he observed the massacre with other foreign journalists. The second testimony is by Allan Nairn, an American reporter whose famous *New Yorker* account of the slaughter led to strong editorial condemnations of the occupation from both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. Both newspapers questioned why Indonesian rule was sanctioned by the United States, especially since the Cold War was over and the international community had shown so little regard for the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait that year, a situation that the dailies maintained was analogous to the Indonesian occupation of East Timor. This section also discusses the work of John Pilger, an

Australian journalist and incessant campaigner for East Timor's independence and his use of public knowledge of the massacre to castigate Western support of the occupation.

In the last chapter, I describe how news coverage of the Popular Consultation demonstrated a preoccupation with the questions of whether East Timor could be a viable independent country and whether the intra-Timorese violence was representative of a new civil war. Journalistic concern with such questions mirrored coverage of the East Timor situation in 1975, and demonstrates that, while few international journalists supported the occupation, the tropes that Indonesia had introduced into media coverage of East Timor remained compelling. The section concludes with a discussion of an editorial debate that took place in *The New York Times* in September 1999, in which three analysts tackled the issue of whether the United States should intervene militarily in East Timor, as it had recently done in Kosovo.

The Truth Commission's Narrative

East Timor's truth commission offered the most current and complete version of the occupation.¹¹⁰ The CAVR was established both to create a historical record and to promote national reconciliation. This thesis does not evaluate the "truth" of *Chega!*, rather it shows how the Commission attempted to discover patterns among the violence of East Timor's past. I seek to understand how the CAVR advances the story of East Timor, as told by the East Timorese themselves, who finally had the chance to speak following decades of silence.

¹¹⁰ The standard work on truth commissions is Priscilla B. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions* (New York & London: Routledge, 2002).

Chapter 1 discusses the CAVR's treatment of the 1975 Civil War, life behind Fretilin lines prior to 1978, and the famine of the late 1970s. In contrast to most treatments of this period, the CAVR devoted a great deal of space to describing human rights violations on the part of the resistance. Indeed, the report concluded, the horrendous death toll of the early years of the occupation was created largely by the combined brutality of the Indonesians and the resistance.

In its discussion of the Santa Cruz massacre, *Chega!* devoted relatively little space to describing the killing itself. It focused instead on the ways the massacre was representative of the clandestine resistance's strategy, which was itself derived from the decision to concentrate on diplomatic, rather than armed, means of pursuing East Timor's independence. For the truth commission, the process, not the event, mattered more in this case.

The final chapter discusses how East Timor's truth commission chronicled the Popular Consultation period. Again, the CAVR attempted to impose a framework upon events, describing how the militias of the late 1990s were the culmination of the long-term Indonesian strategy of stoking intra-Timorese tensions. *Chega!* also sought to delineate patterns in the post-ballot violence, whose massive scale and totality gave the impression of chaos. In fact, the CAVR concluded, militia violence reflected quantifiable aims and strategies. The destruction of East Timor was planned and deliberate, the final act of a brutal occupation.

CHAPTER 1 **INVASION AND AFTERMATH, 1975-1979**

Photos of the Indonesian invasion of December 7, 1975 are rare and mostly depict Indonesian paratroopers in the sky over Dili or that city burning as seen from Atauro Island, off the coast. The lack of images is indicative of a wider pattern. For almost fifteen years, East Timor was effectively sealed off. The Indonesian government tried to guarantee that the territory disappeared from international consciousness, except on terms that it could control. And by 1979, these efforts were seemingly successful. Full-scale Fretilin resistance had been broken by ABRI, East Timor had become Indonesia's twenty-seventh province, and the issue had been buried at the United Nations. It was a time of absolutes: one could agree with Indonesia's portrayal of Fretilin members as dangerous Marxist terrorists, or one could see the invasion as an act of aggression. And even those who took a skeptical position towards Indonesian claims were influenced by them. These years witnessed the struggle to define an East Timorese identity by the Indonesians, among the Timorese themselves, and in the outside world.

The East Timorese Narrative

In the Introduction, I demonstrated that most analyses portray the Fretilin interregnum—from the end of the Civil War in September 1975 to the invasion that December—in an extremely positive light. This underemphasizes the heavy politicization of much of East Timor's society. Family members often belonged to different political parties and held radically different opinions about the direction decolonization should take. Even the idea of political parties was a novelty. It seems

unlikely that East Timorese politicians would have matured in such a short time. Ideology, rather than practicality, determined the directions political parties took. This is confirmed by two authors considered below: Xanana Gusmão and Arsenio Ramos-Horta. Both agreed that Fretilin members were, at the least, undisciplined and, at worst, reactionary. However, beyond this, their opinions diverged. Xanana Gusmão became the leader of the resistance, while Arsenio Ramos-Horta embraced Indonesian control of East Timor. While these domestic struggles occurred, Arsenio's older brother, José Ramos-Horta, confronted international indifference towards East Timor and a willingness on the part of the world community to accept Indonesia's version of events.

Xanana Gusmão: How the Revolution Overcame Practicality

Gusmão wrote his "Autobiography" while imprisoned in Jakarta during the 1990s. The leader of the resistance portrayed himself as a semi-reluctant political actor, initially ambivalent towards the Timorese political parties established after the Carnation Revolution in 1974. Indeed, Gusmão hesitated to join any party. According to Gusmão, his reluctance to declare for any party irked many of his friends, some of whom even refused to speak to him until he had "identified" himself "politically."¹ Politics appeared to take over peoples' lives, representing not only how one felt about East Timor's future, but even determining who one's friends were and, in some cases, one's family relations.²

The real-world consequences of such divisions were starkly revealed by the UDT coup on August 11, 1975. Politics, which had always tended to be divisive and alienating, became lethal. Yet, it seemed to Gusmão that few had an idea what the major

¹ Xanana Gusmão, "Autobiography," in *To Resist Is to Win!: The Autobiography of Xanana Gusmão with Selected Letters & Speeches*, ed. Sarah Niner (Richmond: Aurora Books, 2000), p. 19.

² Ibid.

differences between the parties were. He recalled a young Timorese soldier telling him that the UDT was fighting Communism; however he had no idea what a Communist was.³ Political immaturity, Gusmão suggests, made Timorese victimize themselves before the Indonesians ever got a chance. Nor, according to Gusmão, was Fretilin immune to confusion and uncertainty. The “Autobiography” described the Fretilin leadership as astonishingly immature politically, split between radicals who wanted to declare immediate independence and moderates desiring to resume the decolonization process.⁴ This “fragile” political operation was also under constant external pressure from Indonesian military incursions.⁵

For Gusmão, the epitome of his party’s political immaturity was its decision to unilaterally declare independence on November 28, 1975, a step that, Gusmão decided two decades later, was symptomatic of Fretilin’s wider dysfunctionality. What, he asked, did East Timor’s new freedom mean? “Free” from whom? The Portuguese had fled, effectively surrendering their colonial prerogative. “From capitalism or imperialism?” Few people knew what those meant.⁶ Gusmão and the other members of Fretilin’s Central Committee should have possessed answers to some of these questions, but, according to Gusmão, they did not.⁷ The Declaration’s attempt to cement an East Timorese identity was, therefore, deeply flawed, for the people attempting to articulate an identity did not themselves possess one.

Following the December 7 invasion, Gusmão became one of Fretilin’s regional Vice-Secretaries and observed the internal divisions and increasing radicalization within

³ Ibid., pp. 22-31.

⁴ Ibid., p. 31.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 33, 36-37.

⁶ The paragraph up to this citation is based on Ibid., p. 33.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 36-37.

the Front.⁸ This portion of Gusmão's "Autobiography" rarely mentions Indonesians at all, focusing instead on the combination of political grandstanding and lethality that tore Fretilin apart during the war. As the conflict continued, Gusmão became increasingly weary, even contemptuous, of many Fretilin leaders, who seemed more concerned with the definition of "isms" and "dissertations" than with fighting ABRI.⁹ Political purity determined strategy no matter what the cost. For example, President Xavier do Amaral was supposedly removed due to his willingness to negotiate with the Indonesians, but Gusmão maintained that do Amaral's real sin was his desire to request aid from the Soviet Union. Fretilin radicals, who derived much of their inspiration from Mao, were naturally appalled that their President would associate with the "social imperialist" USSR.¹⁰ Do Amaral's argument that Fretilin should take aid from any source meant little to the Front's ideological purists.¹¹ Such dogmatism was not new to East Timorese politics, but, by 1976, doctrinal rigidity dominated party discussions. And, catastrophically, the aim of political purity increasingly led to violence.

Violence by Fretilin cadres was not solely attributable to the stresses of the invasion. Atrocities had been committed by both sides during the Civil War and continued in Fretilin prisons after its victory over the UDT. Gusmão was initially able to understand, if not condone, these acts because the UDT had attempted a coup and killed many Fretilin members; the horrors in Dili's prisons were revenge, an urge that, Gusmão insisted, soon exhausted itself.¹² Yet, under the stresses of the Indonesian invasion, politically motivated violence arose within Fretilin's own ranks. Do Amaral's removal as

⁸ For Gusmão's account of the invasion, see *Ibid.*, pp. 38-40.

⁹ *Ibid.*, first quotation on p. 44; second quotation on p. 47.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

President coincided with a growing conviction among many Fretilin cadres that the party needed to be purged. They called for “revolutionary violence” aimed at cleansing the resistance of “reactionary” elements, who were often supporters of the deposed do Amaral.¹³ The resistance did an excellent job of crippling itself even before ABRI began its last major assault in 1978.¹⁴

When the Indonesians did make an appearance in Gusmão’s “Autobiography,” it was with a vengeance, mercilessly bombing Fretilin’s redoubts around Mount Matebian.¹⁵ The Central Committee decided to abandon the base, and instructed the population to surrender to the Indonesians and Fretilin cadres to melt through Indonesian lines and reconstruct the resistance. Xanana Gusmão was one of the few who managed to do so. By early 1979, he was one of only three Fretilin Central Committee members still at large.¹⁶ Gusmão spent the following months wandering a ghostly countryside, hiding from ABRI while stricken with malaria. This part of the “Autobiography” reads like an account of rebirth, as Gusmão described consulting with East Timorese villagers and arriving at a greater appreciation of what independence meant to them. For him, this pilgrimage was an essential prerequisite to renewed resistance.¹⁷

¹³ Ibid., pp. 49-51, 55.

¹⁴ It is interesting to read these sections of Gusmão’s “Autobiography” in light of the theories of Frantz Fanon. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon wrote that violence was a cleansing force, to be used by the colonized not only to throw off the bonds of colonialism but also to purify and unify the new independent people. Revolutionary violence was, indeed, central to Fanon’s conception of the anti-colonial struggle and to the redemption of the colonized. See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), especially “Concerning Violence” and “Spontaneity: Its Strengths and Weaknesses,” pp. 35-147.

¹⁵ Gusmão, p. 56.

¹⁶ Kiernan, “War, Genocide, and Resistance in East Timor, 1975-99,” p. 219.

¹⁷ Gusmão, pp. 58-65.

The Brothers Ramos-Horta, Part I: Arsenio Ramos-Horta

Like his brother, José, Arsenio Ramos-Horta joined one of East Timor's new political parties, but opted for the UDT, rather than José's ASDT, which later became Fretilin. Arsenio was captured by Fretilin troops during the Civil War and was interned in squalid conditions in Dili.¹⁸ He was still in prison on December 7, and remembered feeling elation upon seeing Indonesian paratroopers parachuting into the capital.¹⁹

Arsenio Ramos-Horta was not, however, to be freed by Indonesian troops in Dili. As Fretilin forces pulled out of the capital, he was among the prisoners evacuated with them. For the following three years, Arsenio was forced to work as a radio operator for the resistance. The material circumstances behind Fretilin lines were, he wrote, exceedingly poor. He and other prisoners became incredibly weak, their health broken by hard labor and miniscule rations.²⁰ These horrific physical conditions were made worse by the attitudes of Fretilin's cadres, who considered their prisoners, according to Arsenio, "something [sic] under the level of animal," to whom no mercy could be shown,

¹⁸ In *Funu: The Unfinished Saga of East Timor*, José Ramos-Horta insisted that Arsenio had been "stranded" in Dili at the beginning of the Civil War and stumbled onto a UDT camp, where he was captured; José Ramos-Horta, *Funu: The Unfinished Saga of East Timor* (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 1987), p. 56. However, according to Arsenio, he was captured with several UDT troops as they attempted to cross the border into Indonesian West Timor; Arsenio Ramos-Horta, *The Eyewitness: Bitter Moments in East Timor Jungles* (Singapore: Usaha Quality Printers), pp. 5-6.

¹⁹ Arsenio Ramos-Horta, p. 6. It is important to note that Arsenio routinely referred to Indonesian troops as "volunteers," thus subscribing to a key component of Indonesia's propaganda. The Indonesian Foreign Ministry initially denied that the country had troops in East Timor. Any Indonesians in East Timor on December 7 were, according to Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik, merely "volunteers who are helping the Apodeti forces"; Dan Coggin, "The 'Volunteer' Invaders," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 19, 1975, p. 13. Few people at the time believed this line, and by the 1990s, Indonesia seemed to have given up on it as well. Julius Pour's hagiographic biography of General Benny Murdani, published in 1993, made no attempt to disguise the fact that the invasion was a military operation; Julius Pour, *Benny Moerdani: Profile of a Soldier Statesman*, trans Tim Scott (Jakarta: Yayasan Kejuangan Panglima Besar Sudirman, 1993), pp. 316-344.

²⁰ Arsenio Ramos-Horta, pp. 12, 24-25. By 1977, Arsenio estimated that at least 20,000 people had starved to death behind Fretilin lines, an estimate that cannot be immediately dismissed given that Indonesia routinely eradicated Timorese crops in outlying areas; *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31. Arsenio did not, naturally, mention this aspect of ABRI's strategy. For him, the lack of food was solely the result of Fretilin's rapacious policies and the greed of its cadres; *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

regardless of any previous blood or friendship ties.²¹ Arsenio's situation was especially onerous, he wrote, because he served under Alarico Fernandes, Fretilin's Information Minister, who Arsenio portrayed as violent, cowardly, and mentally unstable.²²

Fernandes was, according to Arsenio, completely devoted to radical Maoist ideology and envisioned the creation "of a communist state based on Mao's doctrine and it [Fretilin] would not stop...to achieve its target even if Fretilin had to eliminate two-thirds of East Timor population."²³ The Front described by Arsenio had thus become so radical that by the late 1970s it could allegedly contemplate mass murder in pursuit of its revolutionary aims. Indonesian victory was therefore necessary not only for Arsenio's salvation, but that of the Timorese as well.

Interestingly, the story of Alarico Fernandes's allegedly genocidal plans was not Fretilin's worst threat, according to Arsenio Ramos-Horta. What he actually considered the most malign effect of Fretilin's sway was how its Maoist ideology corrupted peoples' morality. Arsenio was especially incensed by the Front's destruction of Timorese sexual purity.²⁴ He described how Fretilin commanders swapped wives during political meetings, acerbically commenting that this must have been the reason Fretilin liked to discuss politics so much.²⁵ More scandalous was the fact that their promiscuity spread throughout Timorese society, as proven by the fact that Arsenio was

²¹ Ibid., pp. 59-60.

²² Ibid., p. 42. Gusmão offered a similar description of Fernandes; Gusmão, p. 32.

²³ Arsenio Ramos-Horta, p. 36.

²⁴ Arsenio's focus on Fretilin's supposedly rampant sexuality initially seems gratuitous and hypocritical, for Arsenio himself had neither trouble nor compunction about obtaining sexual favors during his captivity. Sex was clearly one of his personal obsessions.

²⁵ He ruefully added that "[s]exually speaking I was not very successful at the meetings"; Arsenio Ramos-Horta, p. 37.

propositioned by an eight-year-old girl.²⁶ It becomes clear that Arsenio has turned his own obsession with sex to political ends.

Arsenio was eventually freed by Indonesian soldiers at the end of 1978, supposedly the first time he had ever met an Indonesian soldier.²⁷ Following his recovery, the Indonesians found him a job teaching English in Dili, where he made enough money to purchase a motor-bike and ride it on newly-paved streets.²⁸ The remainder of his book extolled the material benefits of the occupation and called on his brother, José Ramos-Horta, to stop his diplomatic efforts and to help build a new East Timor under Indonesian rule.²⁹ Despite this pro-Indonesian conclusion, however, it is noteworthy that Arsenio Ramos-Horta wrote from an East Timorese perspective, seeking fulfillment as an Indonesian citizen, but nevertheless subscribing to the existence of a separate Timorese identity. His brother was not willing to make even this compromise.

The Brothers Ramos-Horta, Part II: José Ramos-Horta:

One of José Ramos-Horta's first stops after fleeing Dili was the United Nations in New York, where he pled East Timor's case before the General Assembly and Security Council. His *Funu: The Unfinished Saga of East Timor* recorded, over a decade later, an ever increasing disillusionment with this process. Unlike his brother, Arsenio, José Ramos-Horta refused to accept that Indonesia's annexation benefited the Timorese. Yet, reading his *Funu*, one cannot escape the impression that he would have agreed with Arsenio's contention that integration was an established fact and that attempts to alter the

²⁶ However, this proposition only happened after Arsenio told the girl, supposedly at her insistence, about a woman he had slept with the night before; *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

status quo were doomed to failure, at least in the short term. Indeed, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, there seemed little reason to believe otherwise.

Funu was overtly written to evoke sympathy, portraying José Ramos-Horta's efforts, and, by extension, those of his homeland, to persevere against a rapacious Indonesia abetted by international cynicism and appeasement. To accomplish this, José acquainted the reader with East Timor and with what he claimed was a distinct Timorese identity. These arguments were made through an interesting use of history, as seen in his claim that Portugal's "civilizing mission" had made "little if any impact" on traditional Timorese culture.³⁰ Indonesia, he continued, was now imprinting its own definition of Timorese identity.³¹ Despite all these attempts to subsume the Timorese into an identity defined by the colonizer, the country retained, José argued, its unique indigenous character. And that meant that it deserved a place among the community of nations.

Having rhetorically established a separate identity for his country, José Ramos-Horta showed how this identity had been violated with the assistance of the international community. *Funu* portrayed the uphill battle East Timor's supporters faced to keep the issue before the United Nations. According to José, the Fretilin delegation was severely hampered in these efforts. They had few allies, were chronically in debt, and had absolutely "nothing to offer" other countries in exchange for their support of UN

³⁰ José Ramos-Horta, *Funu*, p. 14. Note, however, that many East Timorese names, including Ramos-Horta's, had Portuguese origins, and that many Timorese possessed at least a basic understanding of the Portuguese language.

³¹ José Ramos-Horta vehemently denied, for instance, that Fretilin was a Communist movement; *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53. He also hinted that this perception might have been partially created by foreign supporters of East Timorese independence. He described the journalist Jill Jolliffe, for instance, as "a militant Trotskyist working as a stringer for a number of Australian newspapers"; *Ibid.*, p. 99. While in no way condemnatory of Jolliffe, the fact that Ramos-Horta singled her out for such a description suggests that he might have been attempting to distance the resistance from a radical leftist profile.

resolutions condemning the occupation.³² East Timor's independence movement had the benefit of moral authority, as few Western powers could completely ignore Indonesia's blatant aggression. Yet, these same powers also desperately wanted to maintain alliances with Suharto's Indonesia. They thus condemned Indonesia's actions in East Timor while forestalling any meaningful action to rectify the situation.³³ As described by José Ramos-Horta, international reaction to the invasion was characterized by a tepid condemnation, tempered with supposed realism. United Nations resolutions annually lamented the occupation and called for an Indonesian withdrawal, but studiously avoided imposing any sort of sanctions to compel Indonesian compliance; these resolutions were an embarrassment for Indonesia, but hardly a credible deterrent. This was, for José Ramos-Horta, nothing less than a cowardly stall for time, which, in this case, worked against Fretilin. The longer the occupation continued, the more it seemed to be a *fait accompli* and the more likely it became that the East Timor question would "simply fade" from the international agenda.³⁴ And, by the late 1970s, it certainly seemed as if the East Timor issue would do just that.³⁵

³² Ibid., p. 128. Indonesia, by contrast, made "East Timor a top priority issue," devoting its considerable diplomatic resources (Jakarta's delegation, for instance, did not have to share office space with the small delegation from Guinea-Bissau) to removing the issue from the UN agenda altogether; Ibid., p. 126.

³³ Ibid., p. 107.

³⁴ According to Ramos-Horta, the disappearance of East Timor from the UN's annual schedule was the ultimate goal of the Western powers; Ibid., pp. 122-123. Even Portugal, the only UN member with any clout in the situation—it was both a member of NATO and officially remained the governmental authority in East Timor—seemed to lose interest in advancing the agenda of its former colony until the early 1980s. This meant that Ramos-Horta was confronted with hemorrhaging support for anti-Indonesian resolutions; each year, the ballots in favor of keeping East Timor on the UN agenda grew fewer; Ibid., p. 127.

³⁵ As will be seen in Chapter 3, diplomacy eventually played a crucial role in facilitating East Timor's independence. And José Ramos-Horta insisted that he never doubted that this would be the outcome; Ibid., p. 206. However, at the time *Funu* was written, few would have predicted that result.

The Indonesian Narrative

The attack on December 7, 1975 was predicated on an Indonesian government narrative that cast East Timor as a battleground in the Cold War. This is not the place to debate whether Indonesian leaders genuinely believed that an independent East Timor would be a Communist menace or whether they cynically employed such rhetoric in order to gain Western approval. The Suharto regime made every effort to guarantee that this version of events predominated. The Indonesian government also insisted that Fretilin was a minority Communist movement, preventing the East Timorese from joining the Republic of Indonesia, which the vast majority wanted to do. And, early in the occupation, the Indonesians were generally successful in ensuring that they controlled outside perceptions of the situation in East Timor.

Selling the Communist Conspiracy to a Government...

In April 1975, Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese Army. The Communist victory caused Malcolm Caldwell, a Scottish Marxist academic, to write that a resurgent PKI, inspired by the “heroic example of Indochina,” would ultimately “liberate” Indonesia from Suharto and his “fascist” generals.³⁶ With American policy in tatters and friendly regimes in Asia appearing increasingly scarce, Suharto met with U.S. President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger at Camp David on July 5, 1975. Most of their discussion centered on developments in Vietnam, but also, tellingly, touched on the situation in Portuguese Timor.

³⁶ Malcolm Caldwell, “The International Context,” in *Ten Years’ Military Terror in Indonesia*, ed. Malcolm Caldwell (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975), p. 36.

Suharto might not have read Malcolm Caldwell's confident prediction of a Communist resurgence in Indonesia, but he expressed a similar conviction that the fall of Saigon presaged further Communist gains. In the short-term, Suharto told his hosts, the Northern Vietnamese victory would encourage leftist agitation in neighboring countries.³⁷ But in the long-term, these initial Communist agitations would find ready support from unified Vietnam. Once the Vietnamese Communists consolidated their victory, which Suharto estimated would take five years, they would offer financial and military aid to other leftist movements, thus destabilizing Southeast Asia.³⁸ Having made this dire prediction, Suharto reminded Ford of Indonesia's past struggle against Communism and of the fact that the New Order had spent years "unifying and nationalizing the people [of Indonesia] to prepare to fight the threats which eventually will be made against our independence," threats specifically associated with Communist aggression.³⁹ Suharto then suggested that the U.S. "review" its economic assistance policies in regards to Southeast Asia and dropped a hint that Indonesia was an archipelago nation with an antiquated Navy.⁴⁰ Ford was sympathetic, expressing his "understand[ing] if you [Indonesia] don't make economic progress there will be the growth of a Communist ideology in Indonesia," and bluntly asked Suharto "[h]ow big a Navy" he needed.⁴¹ The Indonesian President had clearly found a receptive audience for his warnings that Communism was ascendant in Southeast Asia, that future regional instability was all but

³⁷ "Memorandum of Conversation between President Ford, Suharto, and Kissinger, 5 July 1975, 12:40 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.," in *East Timor Revisited: Ford, Kissinger and the Indonesian Invasion*, eds. William Burr and Michael L. Evans, National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Book 62, December 6, 2001 <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/doc1.pdf>> (accessed January 10, 2007), p. 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4 for the quotation on economics, p. 5 for the quotation on the Navy.

certain, and that Indonesia, staunchly anti-Communist, should receive increased American support.

By lunchtime on July 5, Suharto had achieved continued and expanded American commitment to Indonesia's economic development and further U.S. arms shipments. If the conversation had stopped there, this meeting would merely represent an excellent example of how to successfully negotiate increased assistance from the U.S. during the Cold War. However, the transcript also reveals that Suharto took the opportunity to broach the subject of the Communist threat in Portuguese Timor to the highest levels of the U.S. government. The July 5 meeting would become a major part of the construction of the Indonesian narrative about East Timor, where Suharto explicitly linked events in the Portuguese colony to his dire predictions of a coming Communist advance in Southeast Asia.

Suharto assured Ford that the majority of East Timor's people desired "unity with Indonesia," and that those Timorese who agitated for independence were "Communist-influenced."⁴² The Indonesian President thus placed Fretilin in the forefront of Communist groups who he claimed would be inspired by the North Vietnamese victory. The East Timorese political party was now held to be a menace to the region. And if Indonesia was the best guarantee of continuing stability, an assessment that the U.S. President had just endorsed, it followed that the presence of a Communist state on its borders was a major reason for concern to which the United States should be sympathetic. In addition, to fight Fretilin would actually be an act of liberation on Indonesia's part, as, according to Suharto, the population of East Timor yearned to be part of Indonesia. Such tropes must have appealed Gerald Ford, a President confronting

⁴² Ibid., p. 6.

the debacle in Indochina and needing to take steps to prop up any potential ally in a suddenly unfriendly region.⁴³

The ideas Suharto planted with the Ford Administration in July were reinforced at another meeting five months later. On December 6, 1975, as Suharto, Ford, and Kissinger met in Jakarta, events in East Timor had reached a boiling point for the Indonesian President. With Fretilin's Declaration of Independence, said Suharto, Indonesia was confronted with a "fate [sic] accompli." "Communists" now controlled Portuguese Timor, guaranteeing an "increase [to] the instability in the area."⁴⁴ Suharto continued that his government's priority was "to establish peace and order for the present and the future in the interest of the security of the area [a]nd Indonesia," and that Indonesia would likely have to "take rapid or drastic action" to achieve these aims.⁴⁵ The Indonesian President was baldly telling Ford that Indonesia would take military action against East Timor. Gerald Ford was understanding, and responded that the U.S. "will not press you [Indonesia] on the issue," while Kissinger promised to provide diplomatic cover, although he stressed that Indonesia had to quickly establish control over the

⁴³ Suharto's case was bolstered by the fact that the U.S. State Department had little interest in or knowledge about East Timor. At a high-level State Department meeting on August 12, 1975, Fretilin was described as "a Communist-dominated group"; "The Secretary's Principal's and Regional Staff Meeting, Tuesday August 12, 1975," in *East Timor Revisited: Ford, Kissinger and the Indonesian Invasion*, eds. William Burr and Michael L. Evans, National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Book 62, December 6, 2001 <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/doc2.pdf>> (accessed January 10, 2007), p. 3. Yet, just over three months later, a brief to President Ford from the State Department called Fretilin merely "a vaguely leftist party"; "Department of State Briefing Paper: Indonesia and Portuguese Timor, November 21, 1975," in *East Timor Revisited: Ford, Kissinger and the Indonesian Invasion*, eds. William Burr and Michael L. Evans, National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Book 62, December 6, 2001 <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/doc3a.pdf>> (accessed January 10, 2007), p. 1. Relations with Indonesia were the State Department's priority, and the U.S. government proved more than willing to trust Suharto's assessment of the situation.

⁴⁴ "Ford-Kissinger-Suharto discussion, Embassy Jakarta Telegram 1579, December 6, 1975," in *East Timor Revisited: Ford, Kissinger and the Indonesian Invasion*, eds. William Burr and Michael L. Evans, National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Book 62, December 6, 2001 <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/doc4.pdf>> (accessed January 10, 2007).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

territory in order to minimize international fallout.⁴⁶ The three men then proceeded to discuss trade relations, effectively leaving East Timor to whatever fate Indonesia decided. Suharto's portrayal of East Timor as a source of Communist conspiracy had found a ready audience in the American government and was now officially part of the American foreign policy mindset.

...and to the World

Indonesia was quite successful at controlling how East Timor was perceived in the West, not only within their governments, but also among influential portions of their populations. In Australia, support for the invasion and occupation was especially vehement in the pages of *Quadrant*, a journal closely associated with the highest levels of Australian conservatism.⁴⁷ This section specifically examines *Quadrant* articles by economist Heinz W. Arndt, who justified support for the occupation in the context of the Cold War and for the sake of Australia's diplomatic relationship with Asia in general, and Indonesia in particular.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Of course, Suharto and his generals expected the war to be over quickly, and Suharto assured Kissinger that, while there would "probably be a small guerilla war" following the invasion, so many East Timorese supported integration that the situation would quickly resolve itself favorably; *Ibid*.

⁴⁷ For a full discussion of *Quadrant* and its support for the occupation, see Ben Kiernan, "Cover-Up and Denial of Genocide: Australia, the USA, East Timor, and the Aborigines," *Critical Asian Studies* 34, 2 (June 2002): pp. 163-183.

⁴⁸ *Quadrant's* support for the occupation was not unqualified. In 1983, John Traill and Kenneth Rivett, Commissioners on the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, wrote an article in which they criticized Indonesian brutality in East Timor and discounted the idea that Fretilin took orders from Moscow or Beijing. They maintained, however, that East Timor's integration was a fact, and that continuing to encourage the independence movement effectively condemned the population to further suffering; John Traill and Kenneth Rivett, "A Bid for Peace in East Timor," *Quadrant* 27, 4 (April 1983): pp. 9-15. The next month, *Quadrant* published a rebuttal by John Wheeldon, a former Australian Senator, who argued that pragmatism did not excuse the fact that East Timor had been conquered in a vicious act of aggression; John Wheeldon, "East Timor," *Quadrant* 27, 5 (May 1983): pp. 61-62. Yet, in 1995, *Quadrant* still published articles arguing that Indonesia's economic development, as well as Australia's relations with Indonesia, should take higher priority than events in East Timor; see, for example, Peter Ryan, "Indonesia and Me," *Quadrant* 39, 7-8 (July-August 1995): pp. 119-120.

Arndt fully subscribed to Indonesia's characterization of Fretilin as Communist. For him, Jakarta's fears of "a 'Cuba' on Indonesia's doorstep" made perfect sense given "the advance of revolutionary socialism throughout the Third World" (read Indochina).⁴⁹ Those who dismissed the Communist threat were oblivious to this international reality. Indeed, Arndt maintained, it made little sense for Indonesia to incorporate East Timor *without* having an overriding national security interest. Indonesia, he reminded readers, was a poor country whose government "had no wish to saddle itself...with another poverty-stricken, backward province."⁵⁰ By this logic, Portuguese mismanagement of decolonization, coupled with Communist Fretilin's seizure of the territory in a "coup," had effectively forced Indonesia to intervene.⁵¹ Faced with threats to "its national security interests...and...the consequent risk of a communist satellite being established" in East Timor, Indonesia had acted, Arndt maintained, no differently "than any other power...would have done in similar circumstances."⁵²

This last point—that Indonesia's actions would have been taken by any responsible Western government in similar circumstances—was closely associated with H. W. Arndt's second major criticism of those opposing the occupation: a racist worldview. Arndt stated that Australia's fundamental sin was its "culture-bound prejudices against Asians in general and Indonesians in particular," the idea that, because Indonesians are "Asians," the worst things said about them had to be true.⁵³ Those who accused Indonesia of committing genocide in East Timor were therefore addressing the

⁴⁹ Heinz W. Arndt, "Timor: Expediency or Principle?" *Quadrant* 20, 5 (May 1976): p. 19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*; Heinz W. Arndt, "Timor: Vendetta against Indonesia," *Quadrant* 23, 12 (December 1979): p. 15

⁵² Arndt, "Timor: Vendetta against Indonesia," p. 16.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

basest instincts of the Australian body politic, and especially its fear that the country was vulnerable to attack from Asian hordes.⁵⁴ Arndt insinuated that anyone who gave credence to stories about Indonesian atrocities in East Timor was not only naïve, but also hopelessly backward, representative of the worst stereotypes about Australians' inveterate racism, a racism of which neighboring Asian countries were fully aware, and which they resented. Criticizing Indonesia and its policies in East Timor was therefore weakening Australia and, in a Cold War world, the country could not afford weakness.

The Journalist Narrative

Indonesian and international journalists covering East Timor before the invasion were based in the Indonesian town of Atambua, West Timor, roughly forty kilometers from the border with East Timor.⁵⁵ From Atambua, they had access to the camps in West Timor where East Timorese refugees congregated after fleeing the Civil War. Based on material gathered in these camps, the reporters of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (*FEER*) wrote several articles before December 7. A survey of the results shows an interesting and complex relationship between the Indonesian version of events and what reporters saw on the ground. The details that made it into articles were often tellingly different from Indonesia's official line, yet, the general picture was grounded in the Indonesian narrative. Even Indonesian reporters fully appraised of ABRI infiltration into East Timor, among them Hendro Subroto, a reporter for *Televisi Republik Indonesia*

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Details of the deployment of journalists are found in Hendro Subroto, *Eyewitness to Integration of East Timor* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1997), p. 40. Subroto, who spent months on the border, had a very low opinion of foreign journalists, who, being based in Jakarta, often spent no more than a few days in Indonesian Timor at a given time.

(TVRI), found their material controlled and censored by the state.⁵⁶ International reporters would not gain access to East Timor until the late 1970s, when they filed stories about their visits to the resettlement camps and about the famine raging there. Testimony by those who had lived behind Fretilin lines also began to appear in Western publications. In 1979, *The New York Times* published an interview with a priest who had lived with the resistance, and consequently, the paper issued an editorial condemning the occupation, an opposition that its editors maintained for decades.⁵⁷

Before the Invasion

Initially, the *Far Eastern Economic Review's* reporting on the growing tensions in East Timor was colored by the perspective that "regional stability" trumped the wishes of East Timor's people.⁵⁸ That Indonesia would invade if it felt threatened by leftists in East Timor was also reported as a given, despite the Suharto government's consistent denials.⁵⁹ Indonesia, *FEER* reporting assumed, was clearly following events in East Timor very closely, and its wishes would likely be the determining factor in Timor's political future.⁶⁰ Even when articles concerned events in East Timor itself, the Timorese were seen through the prism of their giant neighbor. The Timorese did not matter, what mattered was how Indonesia chose to react to their actions. Until late 1975, however,

⁵⁶ It is uncertain how many of Subroto's reports were ever seen by the Indonesian public: "As a journalist, I am proud to have been able to cover the integration struggle of East Timor, although only a small part of it was broadcasted and the rest was turned into [sic] the national archives"; *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁵⁷ The history of *The New York Times'* editorial stance against the occupation is described in Kohen, p. 96.

⁵⁸ Raymond Yao, "Treading warily to a new status," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 11, 1975, p. 20.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* During an interview in October 1975, Ali Murtopo, Suharto's intelligence chief, dismissed a question about whether Indonesia would "intervene directly" in East Timor by saying: "This is a hypothetical question and it has no operational basis in terms of political reality"; Dan Coggin, "Indonesia's 'special interest,'" *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 17, 1975, p. 13.

⁶⁰ Robin Osborne, "The Indonesian offensive," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 14, 1975, p. 26.

Indonesia's aims regarding East Timor remained opaque, and the lengths to which it was willing to go to guarantee its "interests" were likewise unknown.

Following the Civil War, *FEER* correspondents had ready access to the anti-Fretilin political leadership residing in refugee camps. Contrary to Indonesian propaganda, these Timorese seemed "defeated and dispirited," broken by their defeat.⁶¹ The same article also pointed out that Fretilin's victory proved that the party must have "won considerable support outside the Europeanised élite of Dili" and was truly a mass movement.⁶² The *FEER* view of the situation along the Indonesian-Timorese border in October 1975 therefore conflicted strongly with what Suharto had said at Camp David in July, namely, that the vast majority of East Timorese enthusiastically supported integration. Indeed, on reading the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, the impression of Fretilin is one of a dynamic party with widespread popular support that had effectively expelled its rivals from East Timor, leaving them to fade into insignificance along the border, supported at most by Indonesian guerillas.⁶³

It is noteworthy that Fretilin's victory in the Civil War and Indonesia's apparent lack of forceful response infuriated the Hong Kong-based editors of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.⁶⁴ As with Heinz W. Arndt in *Quadrant*, *FEER* editors saw

⁶¹ Dan Coggin, "Timor: The Waiting Game," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 17, 1975, p. 11.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶³ Dan Coggin, "Indonesia's isolating tactics," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 19, 1975, p. 9. The situation along the border was, however, subject to change. A month later, Coggin reported that UDT and Apodeti forces seemed to have recovered their morale, and quoted an anonymous Western diplomat saying that, "It has become an open, stand-up fight again, and over the course of the next couple of months it looks like it could go either way"; Dan Coggin, "'Beaten' army back on the battlefield," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 31, 1975, p. 15.

⁶⁴ This clear divide between the *Far Eastern Economic Review*'s reporters and editors is fascinating. It certainly arose from the editors' anti-Communism, itself possibly influenced by Hong Kong's geographic location. It is also possible that the editors were echoing the views of the British establishment, which strongly supported Indonesia's efforts at integration. For a summary of British policy, see Jardine, *East Timor*, pp. 50-51.

international relations solely in terms of the Cold War. For them, Fretilin was clearly a Communist front, whose supporters were “terroris[ing] into submission the largely apolitical population” of East Timor.⁶⁵ The *Far Eastern Economic Review*’s editors also insisted that East Timor should become part of Indonesia for the good of the Timorese themselves. Echoing Indonesian proclamations, as well as the Australian Prime Minister, they declared that East Timor could never “be an independent entity, politically or economically” and that the only solution to this “problem” was integration.⁶⁶ Ultimately, the editors maintained, Suharto had been much too lenient, “smother[ing] his own deep-seated anti-communist instincts...in favour of maintaining Indonesia’s image of sobriety.”⁶⁷ This restraint was commendable, but, *FEER*’s editors concluded, the Timor situation demanded “swift surgery,” not diplomacy.⁶⁸ For the good of the region and of the Timorese themselves it was imperative that Indonesia absorb East Timor.

The War from an Indonesian Perspective

As foreign journalists were barred from East Timor following the invasion, among the best journalistic accounts of the war, from both a practical and analytical perspective, is Hendro Subroto’s *Eyewitness to Integration of East Timor*. In many ways, Subroto’s professional narrative parallels the official Indonesian one, but it also differs in interesting ways. For instance, he portrayed the Civil War as an attempt by the UDT to eradicate the Communist scourge of Fretilin.⁶⁹ However, for Subroto, the major count

⁶⁵ “The Great Betrayal,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 17, 1975, p. 9

⁶⁶ “Timor Timorousness,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 12, 1975, p. 9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* In early September 1975, an anonymous *FEER* reporter had written an article listing reasons that Suharto was sure to avoid military confrontation over Portuguese Timor; A Correspondent, “Suharto: Staying cool on the sidelines,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 12, 1975, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁸ “Timor Timorousness,” p. 9.

⁶⁹ Subroto, pp. 17-23.

against Fretilin was not its Communist ideology, which received only passing mention, but its aggressive and violent tactics. Indeed, Subroto proudly admitted that ABRI had crossed the border into East Timor in 1975, but, he insisted, only in response to Fretilin sorties into Indonesian West Timor. Thus, Indonesia's border incursions were not the culmination of a long-term policy of destabilization, but were actually demanded by the people of West Timor.⁷⁰

Subroto's account of the border war also contained several differences with the official Indonesian version. He was quite clear that, while the UDT had great enthusiasm for war with Fretilin, its efforts would have failed without Indonesian aid.⁷¹ Subroto also insisted that, when he accompanied troops into East Timor, it was to cover both Timorese "Partisan" and Indonesian units. Noteworthy, however, is the fact that Subroto seemed to engage in self-censorship: he only photographed East Timorese units, never ABRI personnel.⁷² Thus, while verbally contradicting his government's insistence that there were no ABRI units participating in the border war, Subroto visually conformed to Jakarta's pronouncements.

The climax of Hendro Subroto's book is the invasion of Dili, an incredibly detailed passage that includes diagrams of Indonesia's naval and air deployments.⁷³ The operation, as breathlessly described by Subroto, was a massive achievement, with ABRI

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 57-59. Subroto did admit, however, that Indonesia had long been trying to influence a pro-integration outcome in East Timor; Ibid., pp. 11-14.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 61-67. In a personal example of this aid in action, Subroto was wounded while riding in an armored personnel carrier, which the UDT could only have received from Indonesia. His wound was then treated by an ABRI doctor; Ibid., pp. 96-120.

⁷² Ibid., p. 65. One of these photos appeared in Singapore's *Straits Times* in October 1975.

⁷³ The invasion is described in Ibid., pp. 137-177; the naval and air deployment diagrams are found on pp. 142 and 153, respectively. Subroto's justification for the invasion echoed that put out by Jakarta, namely that Fretilin's unilateral declaration of independence "truly discouraged all options for a possible peaceful, fair and just solution and settlement regarding the East Timor question in accordance with the wishes of the people"; Ibid., p. 128. Subroto did not mention how a "peaceful, fair and just solution" would be possible given that Indonesia and its Timorese proxies had been attacking the Fretilin government for months by that point.

troops facing fierce Fretilin resistance while having to make do with equipment cobbled together from several different countries.⁷⁴ The reader is encouraged to admire ABRI for its soldiers' courage and professionalism. The Army's executions of Timorese at Dili's docks are not mentioned. The conquest of Dili, in Subroto's view, was above all a war story, with soldiers battling valiantly and achieving their objectives while immortalized by combat journalists.

After describing the conquest of Dili, *Eyewitness to Integration of East Timor* elaborated at length about atrocities allegedly committed by Fretilin.⁷⁵ Subroto cited eyewitness testimony (much of it, incidentally, by Arsenio Ramos-Horta) to prove that Indonesia's invasion had saved lives by ending Fretilin's reign of terror.⁷⁶ These post-invasion atrocity stories became another component of Indonesia's justification for the invasion. Many were recycled variants of earlier Indonesian pronouncements labeling Fretilin members as murderous terrorists. Atrocity was always part of the story told about East Timor, even when told by the Indonesians. But such stories were the hardest to shape to Indonesia's desired aims.

Famine and Atrocity

By 1978, ABRI had forced hundreds of thousands of Timorese out of the mountains and confined them to resettlement camps under horrific conditions. Mass starvation ensued and Indonesia eventually requested international humanitarian

⁷⁴ The scale of Fretilin's resistance is shown by the fact that four of the nine Air Force planes were damaged by ground fire during their initial drops, two severely; Subroto, pp. 144-146, 161-162. The logistical problems that characterized the invasion, which included poor coordination, supply problems, and incidents of friendly fire, were admitted by Benny Murdani himself, who called ABRI's performance "totally embarrassing"; Pour, p. 333.

⁷⁵ Subroto, pp. 178-180, 195, 208-217, 223-234.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

assistance. Foreign journalists were able to finally gain access to East Timor and they described a hellish situation that had, by 1979, become “as bad as anything that is being reported from Kampuchea,” whose desperate refugees dominated international headlines.⁷⁷ After years of silence, East Timor returned to the news cycle as a disaster story.

In late 1978, two reporters for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* traveled to East Timor. The radically different stories they filed show the malleability of journalistic accounts of East Timor. Much depended on the constraints under which the reporters were forced to operate, but much also depended on what the reporters themselves were willing to see and acknowledge. The first article was written by an anonymous correspondent and covered President Suharto’s first visit to the province in July 1978.⁷⁸ The author focused on Suharto’s speech in Maliana, where the President was given a “tumultuous greeting” by over 10,000 Timorese “in colourful traditional dress, beating their drums and spears as a sign of welcome to their leader,” all the while waving Indonesian flags.⁷⁹ Suharto, “[o]bviously overwhelmed by the massive reception,” then abandoned his prepared remarks and “spoke to the people spontaneously,” promising them Rp.1 million for an irrigation project.⁸⁰ The audience, “A Correspondent” reported, responded with thunderous applause, drawing even more effusiveness from Suharto, who regaled them “with the traditional loud cry of Indonesian revolutionary fighters,

⁷⁷ David Jenkins, “A new ordeal for East Timor,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 16, 1979, p. 24.

⁷⁸ Throughout the occupation, there were documented cases of the Indonesian government planting favorable articles in the press. These articles were usually written by Indonesian officials who were not identified as such; Cabral, p. 72. There is no way of knowing if that was the case with this particular article, but the fact that Indonesia employed such methods, coupled with the incredibly favorable tone of the article, is intriguing.

⁷⁹ A Correspondent, “Developing a feeling of unity,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 4, 1978, p. 24.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

‘Merdeka’ (freedom),” which the crowd echoed four times.⁸¹ Anyone perusing this article was left with the impression that Indonesia was undertaking strenuous efforts to develop East Timor and that the Indonesian leader felt a special connection with the Timorese, which they reciprocated. The article contained absolutely nothing about famine and war damage; for the author, these negatives did not exist.

Another *FEEER* correspondent, David Jenkins, visited the Remexio refugee camp less than two months after Suharto’s August tour of Maliana. Jenkins’s visit had eerie parallels with Suharto’s. He too was greeted by Timorese, but this audience was living skeletons, “bewildered residents drawn up in two rows, jiggling Indonesian flags and mouthing the words *merdeka* (freedom) to the prompting of local cheerleaders”; it was “something less,” Jenkins concluded, than “an effusive welcome.”⁸² The “singularly depressing” Remexio camp contained only four thousand people; there were at least fourteen similar camps throughout East Timor, several of them more crowded, and in many people were even worse off.⁸³ According to Jenkins, there were at least 125,000 displaced people in East Timor, 100,000 still hiding out in the mountains, and 60,000 were already dead.⁸⁴ Jenkins’s East Timor was a society “in a state of deep collective trauma” whose people were “shocked both by the severity of the killing and by the recent political changes.”⁸⁵ Those he interviewed were singularly not disposed to give Suharto a tumultuous reception. Yet Jenkins’s article, for all its demolishing of Indonesian propaganda, still subscribed to a fundamental component of the Indonesian narrative:

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁸² David Jenkins, “Timor’s arithmetic of despair,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 29, 1978, p. 31.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31. In 1979, Jenkins wrote another article from the refugee camps, where he estimated that East Timor’s population had dropped by 100,000 since 1975; Jenkins, “A new ordeal for East Timor,” p. 24.

⁸⁵ Jenkins, “Timor’s arithmetic of despair,” p. 31.

Jakarta's humanitarianism. In his conclusion, Jenkins wrote that Indonesia had been "saddled with this enormous humanitarian and development problem as a result of its takeover," implying that the Indonesian government had stumbled upon this humanitarian disaster, not played a major part in creating it.⁸⁶ Even Jenkins, a journalist obviously at odds with the image Indonesia wanted to project, was unable to escape completely the narrative frame that his hosts had constructed.

There were also journalistic attempts to place responsibility for the disaster squarely on Indonesia. In the case of *The New York Times*, these attempts led to an anti-occupation editorial stance persisting for decades. It began with a December 1979 article written by Kathleen Teltsch.⁸⁷ She had interviewed Father Leoneto Viera do Rego, a Catholic priest identified as the first Western eyewitness to the war, who claimed to have spent three years in the highlands with Fretilin. The priest described massive Indonesian bombardments and a systematic military strategy of starvation. Teltsch further noted that the U.S. State Department did not dispute allegations of a horrendous humanitarian situation in East Timor, although it attributed the problem to neglectful Portuguese colonial practices, not Indonesian actions. Teltsch herself did not place blame for the crisis, but her article left no doubt that something horrible was happening in East Timor, something about which most people were unaware, and which the American government wanted to downplay.

Ten days after Kathleen Teltsch's article, *The New York Times* editorial page carried a blistering attack on Indonesia for its aggressive action and on the U.S.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 32.

⁸⁷ This paragraph is based on Kathleen Teltsch, "Portuguese Priest Seeks Backing For an Independent East Timor," *The New York Times*, December 14, 1979, p. A20.

government for acquiescing to the invasion.⁸⁸ The piece accused the Indonesian government of aggression and of using the harmless “leftist” tendencies of Fretilin as a “pretext” to justify its covetous aims. Using information clearly gleaned from Father do Rego, the *Times* then charged the Indonesian government with committing war crimes such as bombing populated areas and “forcing Timorese into the mountains and devastating their rice economy.” During these atrocities, the Carter Administration, the paper noted, had “muted its concern” for the sake of the “familiar pragmatic reasons”: oil, fear of offending Muslim sensibilities, and diplomatic fondness for Indonesia’s “rightist and repressive” government. In the case of *The New York Times*, a first-hand account of the slaughter in East Timor led to an editorial policy of opposition to the occupation.⁸⁹ Allegations of atrocity would always be the weakest link in the Indonesian narrative. Jakarta had used stories of pre-invasion atrocities by Fretilin in order to justify intervention. However, horrific accounts of Timorese life under Indonesian rule proved to be the most difficult narrative to control, and once they were proven, it was difficult to justify a continued Indonesian presence in East Timor.

The Truth Commission’s Narrative

The Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation concluded that the majority of deaths throughout the occupation resulted from Indonesian, especially ABRI,

⁸⁸ This paragraph is based on “An Unjust War in East Timor,” *The New York Times*, December 24, 1979, p. A14.

⁸⁹ In July 1980, *The New York Times* featured another condemnatory editorial commemorating the upcoming fifth anniversary of the invasion, which declared that the results of the occupation “have been so dreadful that Indonesia has made East Timor’s long years under Portuguese rule seem like an idyll—and made even a return to Portuguese responsibility a desirable goal”; “Tears for Timor,” *The New York Times*, July 25, 1980, p. A24.

policies.⁹⁰ However, the CAVR's report also devoted a great deal of space to descriptions of intra-Timorese violence. *Chega!* foregrounds these atrocities, arguing that significant portions of the violence that gripped the territory in the late 1970s—the deadliest period of the occupation—resulted from resistance group policies. Indeed, many infamous Indonesian practices, including mass killings and forced displacement of the population, were practiced among the East Timorese before the invasion. The massive death toll of the early occupation resulted from indigenous (Timorese) and foreign (Indonesian) measures that combined in a cycle of escalating and mutually reinforcing lethality.

Before the Invasion: Early Atrocities

According to *Chega!*, the major theme of East Timor's existence following the Carnation Revolution was that of division, both political and, increasingly, social. The Civil War was one of the most brutal expressions of self-inflicted injuries which complemented Indonesia's aggression. The Commission heard evidence of localized killings, carried out by both Fretilin and the UDT, occurring from mid-1975.⁹¹ Instead of reining in the escalating violence and paramilitarism, many of East Timor's elite positively encouraged such measures.⁹² Violence became self-igniting: increased lawlessness was manipulated by Indonesian agents, and when their machinations

⁹⁰ The Commission estimated that 70 percent of killings were committed by Indonesian forces and their East Timorese auxiliaries; CAVR, "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," <http://www.ictj.org/static/Timor.CAVR.English/07.2_Unlawful_Killings_and_Enforced_Disappearances.pdf> (accessed January 6, 2006), p. 6.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 13-14.

⁹² CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," <<http://www.ictj.org/static/Timor.CAVR.English/03-History-of-the-Conflict.pdf>> (accessed January 6, 2006), pp. 25-26.

increased tensions within East Timor, it provided Timorese militants with greater justification for paramilitarism.⁹³

The CAVR provided fascinating evidence that people often defined their political opponents through personal, rather than ideological prisms. Portuguese Timor had little tradition of mass politics, which meant that political identity following the Carnation Revolution was forged without much civic participation. People often chose a political party “based on local allegiance and conformity rather than party principles or policies.”⁹⁴ Personal differences and localized conflicts became political fodder, resulting in what the truth commission termed a “[l]ack of political tolerance.”⁹⁵ The ultimate expression of this growing inability to compromise was, of course, the Civil War, whose short duration in no way mitigated the “deep wounds” it inflicted on East Timorese society.⁹⁶ The Civil War was noteworthy for precipitating the first large-scale perpetration of atrocities that would reoccur throughout the occupation.

Both the UDT and Fretilin committed mass killings during the Civil War, with those perpetrated by the former concentrated at the beginning of hostilities and those by the latter framed as retributive killings.⁹⁷ Fretilin’s victory in September effectively gave

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 23, 33-39; CAVR, “Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances,” p. 11. The CAVR also faulted the Portuguese for mismanaging the decolonization process; CAVR, “Self-Determination,” <http://www.ictj.org/static/Timor.CAVR.English/07.1_Self_Determination.pdf> (accessed January 26, 2006), pp. 11-13.

⁹⁴ CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” p. 25.

⁹⁵ There were many cases, for example, of local party officials delineating their “territory,” issuing everyone in it with party cards, and then physically assaulting anyone who did not carry one. There were also incidents where teachers expelled pupils from schools for belonging to the “wrong” party; CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” p. 29.

⁹⁶ CAVR, “This History of the Conflict,” p. 43.

⁹⁷ See CAVR, “Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances,” pp. 14, 16-19, 21-23, 25-26 for UDT mass killings; and pp. 19-24, 26-27 for Fretilin killings. It is important to note that many killings were motivated by local, rather than political dynamics. *Chega!* documented the fact that the Civil War was fought most fiercely “in the rural areas, where tensions based on long-standing clan feuds and personal grudges, intensified by more recent militant party ideological divisions, exploded into violence.” The Civil War might have begun as an attempted coup, but it devolved into a regional, rather than national struggle.

it control of East Timor and provided its members with the opportunity to settle scores with UDT and Apodeti prisoners. *Chega!* suggests that the poor treatment meted out to these captives marked an important benchmark in East Timor's political violence. The opportunity to torture and maltreat prisoners created a "culture of abuse" within Fretilin, the impression that opponents deserved to be assaulted, and that such treatment would be tolerated by the Front's leadership.⁹⁸

The Civil War also witnessed massive forced population movements similar to those that would occur throughout the late 1970s and in 1999. The CAVR estimated that up to 50 percent of Portuguese Timor's population fled or was forced from its homes in August and September 1975.⁹⁹ The most concerted expulsions forced residents to move across the border into Indonesian West Timor, where up to 40,000 were confined to Indonesian-controlled camps in increasingly desperate circumstances.¹⁰⁰ The vast majority of refugees within East Timor had returned to their homes before the invasion, but they would soon be forced to flee again, in greater numbers to face a much more uncertain future.¹⁰¹

According to Mário Carrascalão, a UDT leader: "In Atsabe we saw Fretilin together with UDT against Apodeti. Apodeti in Same was different, it was with UDT against Fretilin. In Dili it was Fretilin and Apodeti against UDT"; CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 42. Interesting parallels could be drawn between localized influences on killing during East Timor's Civil War and during the anti-Communist massacres in Indonesia during the mid-1960s.

⁹⁸ CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 48; CAVR, "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," p. 55-56.

⁹⁹ CAVR, "Forced Displacement and Famine," <http://www.ictj.org/static/Timor.CAVR.English/07.3_Forced_Displacement_and_Famine.pdf> (accessed January 6, 2006), pp. 10-12.

¹⁰⁰ Indonesia claimed that 40,000 East Timorese had fled their homeland during the Civil War. Many East Timorese sources, including leaders of the UDT, disputed these figures in testimony before the CAVR, where they claimed that perhaps 20,000 people had crossed the border, and that Indonesia deliberately exaggerated the figures to bolster its case for intervention; *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Invasion and Full-Scale Warfare: ABRI, Fretilin, and the Suffering Population

According to the CAVR, a major reason Indonesia was able to act with relative impunity towards East Timor was the Republic's enviable international profile. Good relations with Indonesia were prized by a multitude of countries and blocs.¹⁰² By contrast, East Timor had little to offer in an international partnership.¹⁰³ The Indonesian military faced few constraints on its actions in East Timor, which the CAVR conclusively documented were characterized by "widespread atrocities."¹⁰⁴ Indeed, killing by ABRI and its auxiliaries became such common practice that the perpetrators developed distinctive slang for their acts.¹⁰⁵ Such mass killings, the CAVR concluded, "were implemented as part of a larger, centrally coordinated strategy aimed at eliminating the Resistance once and for all," destroying resistance leaders or anyone suspected of actively opposing Indonesian rule.¹⁰⁶ The military aimed to "pacify" the Timorese population, and the fact that it consistently chose to employ violence to achieve this end created a culture of impunity, made subsequent violence more likely, and indicated that such measures had approval at the highest levels.¹⁰⁷

Pacifying East Timor's population required ABRI to achieve physical control over the population, a condition which the resistance was determined to prevent. The Commission's description of the war between the invasion and the fall of Mount

¹⁰² CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," pp. 17-19; CAVR, "Self-Determination," pp. 5-6, 18-21. Details of several countries' relations with Indonesia are found in CAVR, "Self-Determination," pp. 23-33, 39-76.

¹⁰³ CAVR, "Self-Determination," pp. 65-67.

¹⁰⁴ CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 65.

¹⁰⁵ Among the most common ways to say that someone was taken to be killed were that they had "gone for a bath," "gone hunting," "gone to the city," or been "sent to school"; CAVR, "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," pp. 67-68.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁷ CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 65; CAVR, "Regime of Occupation," <<http://www.ictj.org/static/Timor.CAVR.English/04-Regime-of-Occupation.pdf>> (accessed January 6, 2006), p. 2; CAVR, "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," p. 6.

Matebian portrayed the people as the ultimate commodity, “caught between a fear of life under harsh Indonesian military rule and a resistance determined to keep them out of Indonesian control.”¹⁰⁸ Just as the people were the ultimate prize over which the two sides fought, so were they the ultimate victims of the conflict, not only at the hands of the invader, but of their own side as well.

According to testimony before the truth commission, life in the “Liberated Zones” (areas outside Indonesian control) required a fine balance between politics and pragmatism. Fretilin’s declared strategy was for a “people’s war” of liberation, with the population living in proximity to and providing logistical support for the soldiers of the *Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste* (National Liberation Armed Forces of East Timor, Falintil). Fretilin expected the people to develop a proper revolutionary consciousness under its tutelage. In their minds, Fretilin leaders created an indissoluble link between the war against Indonesia and the war against the colonial mindset, by which they meant acceptance of deference to the Indonesians, inequality, and poverty. An independent East Timor required not only victory over ABRI but a successful social revolution.¹⁰⁹ “Strategically, people were considered a source of power, while ideologically the war was seen as a revolutionary war.”¹¹⁰ Fretilin’s strategy thus depended on its physical control of the population: to surrender the people meant surrendering any chance of making a successful revolution, which Fretilin considered an essential component of the war effort.

¹⁰⁸ CAVR, “Forced Displacement and Famine,” p. 17.

¹⁰⁹ CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” pp. 68, 71-72; CAVR, “Resistance: Structure and Strategy,” <<http://www.ictj.org/static/Timor.CAVR.English/05-Resistance-Structure-and-Strategy.pdf>> (accessed January 6, 2006), pp. 9-14; CAVR, “Forced Displacement and Famine,” p. 17.

¹¹⁰ CAVR, “Resistance,” pp. 21-22.

This “people’s war” strategy was controversial. In *Chega!*, the contest of ideas was usually portrayed as a struggle between the military professionals in Falintil and increasingly radical politicians in Fretilin.¹¹¹ The former argued that since the war was going to be protracted and brutal, it was unrealistic to require Falintil to provide security for a huge number of civilians. The population should be allowed to surrender so that Falintil could focus on military action against ABRI.¹¹² Opposing this group was an increasingly radical faction of Fretilin that refused to countenance the idea of mass civilian surrender. For these militants, victory was linked to ideological purity, and surrendering the population was nothing less than “a betrayal of the national liberation struggle.”¹¹³ These tensions form the background of the overthrow of do Amaral, which brought the ascendancy of the radical political leaders who began purging the resistance of “traitors” once they came to power.

It is important to note that while the intra-Fretilin purges reached their height during the hunt for so-called “agents of Xavier” (do Amaral), similar purges had occurred on a smaller scale for years.¹¹⁴ Low-scale purges of “spies” and “traitors” had started in early 1976, and were “already common” by 1977, especially coinciding with periods of severe stress such as those triggered by Indonesian offensives.¹¹⁵ But the purges beginning in late 1977 were not only the most severe of the entire Fretilin administration,

¹¹¹ This paragraph is based on CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” pp. 71, 77-78; CAVR, “Resistance,” pp. 17-22.

¹¹² This point of view was not, of course, confined to a single arm of the resistance. Do Amaral, for instance, favored a similar strategy.

¹¹³ CAVR, “Resistance,” p. 22.

¹¹⁴ CAVR, “Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances,” pp. 128-137; quotation on p. 135.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-132, 139-148; quotation on p. 130. It is important to point out that those summarily executed or imprisoned by Fretilin were not necessarily guilty of political crimes. They could also have merely been accused of “a minor offence, such as petty theft or being found in prohibited areas looking for food. They might also have been arrested simply because of a family or other relationship to a person deemed guilty of treason or some other crime”; *Ibid.*, p. 137.

they also coincided with ABRI's massive "encirclement and annihilation" campaign. It was the combination of these two events that made the late 1970s the deadliest period in the occupation, as ABRI and the resistance fought for control of the population while the people suffered massively.

Famine: Indonesia's Crimes Culminate

The truth commission placed blame squarely on the Indonesian military for the famine of the late 1970s. While Fretilin's policies undoubtedly caused massive deprivation, the "greatest humanitarian tragedy in Timor-Leste's history" took place only after the majority of the population surrendered to ABRI, a surrender necessitated, it should be recalled, by ABRI's atrocious attack on that population's food supplies.¹¹⁶ Any hope that the starving population would be saved by surrendering proved false in the face of lethal Indonesian military policy.

Chega! attributed famine deaths to an ABRI mind-set which prioritized security over humanitarianism. The surrendered and already starving Timorese were quickly placed in a series of internment camps meant not to facilitate the distribution of aid, but to effect Indonesian control over the population.¹¹⁷ The camps were situated near major transportation networks, rather than food production centers, and Timorese movement outside the camps was tightly controlled by the military.¹¹⁸ Minimal preparation had been made to accommodate a massive population increase in the camps, and so the new arrivals, already weakened and malnourished, were confronted with a complete dearth of

¹¹⁶ CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 83.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

necessities.¹¹⁹ The skyrocketing death toll was compounded by Indonesia's initial refusal to allow humanitarian relief to reach the camps.¹²⁰ Since the invasion, the military had tightly controlled access to East Timor, and it maintained this prerogative even in the midst of humanitarian catastrophe.¹²¹

What reason could there be to subject an already traumatized population to such measures? The CAVR found the answer in the fact that ABRI was determined to approach any problem it faced in East Timor from a military campaign perspective. It will be recalled that Indonesia had been fighting to seize physical control over the population. Once that population was in its hands, the military moved to cut any remaining links between civilians and the remnants of the resistance. The internment centers, located in areas easily accessible to ABRI, "were the central element of [that] strategy."¹²² Famine deaths resulted from a combination of the poor location of the camps, the soul-crushing presence of the military in those camps, and ABRI's refusal to allow food aid to reach the starving until it was sure the resistance had been crushed. The Indonesians had probably not intended that so many civilians would die, but they had certainly created conditions ripe for famine by targeting civilian food supplies and then exacerbating those conditions through negligent and cavalier treatment. The Indonesian military was prepared to sacrifice untold numbers of Timorese for the sake of shattering any remaining Timorese nationalism and of fulfilling its strategic vision of a pacified

¹¹⁹ CAVR, "Forced Displacement and Famine," pp. 52-53, 56, 77.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 61; CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 84.

Timor. The civilian deaths that occurred were the “direct” and deliberate result of such policies.¹²³

Conclusion

During most of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, the East Timorese were invisible to the outside world. The rubrics through which their experiences were interpreted were based on explanations originating in Indonesia. The most common portrayed Fretilin as an oppressive Communist front and insisted that the invasion was a continuance of the Civil War, which had, in fact, ended months before. These bogus images found a ready audience among Indonesia’s allies, who already feared the imminent advance of Communism throughout Southeast Asia following the Communist victories in Indochina. And even those who did not accept Indonesia’s version of events in East Timor nevertheless worked within the confines of the narratives Indonesia had established. Many journalists, especially those writing for the prestigious and usually well informed *Far Eastern Economic Review*, consistently filed stories based on information provided by the Indonesians. While some publications expressed skepticism about Indonesian justifications, even they circulated Jakarta’s rationales.

Interestingly, the narratives of the East Timorese themselves also emphasized civil war among the Timorese rather than Indonesian colonialism. The Civil War, according to East Timorese testimony, sowed the seeds for mistrust and instability that would plague and hinder efforts to form a united front against Indonesian aggression. Indonesian accusations highlighting Fretilin’s Communist character were also given

¹²³ CAVR, “Forced Displacement and Famine,” p. 78.

credence by circumstances. Yet, in a crucial departure from the Indonesian narrative, when the East Timorese wrote about their self-inflicted wounds, it was an attempt to exorcise and make sense of the events that had crippled the Timorese political process, rather than a response to Indonesian allegations.

A final point must be made concerning the influence of the Indonesian narrative on popular and elite perceptions of East Timor, namely that it came with a hidden expiration date. As subsequent chapters will show, the history of the occupation concluded with the breakdown of Indonesia's ability to determine how the outside world viewed its East Timor policy. This process had already begun in the 1970s, and would come to predominate in the 1990s. Crucial to this new development would be the Santa Cruz massacre of 1991, the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2 THE SANTA CRUZ MASSACRE, 1991

In late April 1991, an extraordinary gathering took place at American University in Washington, D.C. when an academic colloquium convened to discuss East Timor. The roster of participants included U.S. State Department officials, ABRI representatives, eminent Western and Indonesian academics, a representative of the Portuguese foreign service, journalists, activists, and East Timorese refugees.¹ In hindsight, some of the presentations at the conference were heartbreakingly prescient. The Reverend Paul Moore, the Episcopal Bishop of New York, who had visited East Timor the previous year, spoke of young East Timorese engaging in an “*intifada* kind of resistance” against the Indonesians, and worried that ABRI would respond with a “Tiananmen Square” type massacre.² Six months later, young East Timorese demonstrators lay dead under a hail of Indonesian bullets at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, the killings witnessed by journalists Allan Nairn and Amy Goodman, who had themselves participated in the April colloquium.³ It is this event, and the way the various points of view represented at American University both reflected and deviated from the reality of a supposedly pacified East Timor, with which this chapter is concerned.

¹ Among the participants were Professors John G. Taylor (South Bank University, London), Benedict R. O’G Anderson (Cornell University, New York), Geoffrey Robinson (University of California, Los Angeles), and Mubyarto (Gadja Mada University, Yogyakarta); José Ramos-Horta; James Dunn; Allan Nairn; and Amy Goodman. For a complete list see G. Carter Bentley, ed., “Dimensions of Domination: An East Timor Colloquy (Social Science Research Council Workshop on East Timor, American University, Washington DC, 25-6 April 1991),” in *East Timor at the Crossroads: The Forging of a Nation*, eds. Peter Carey and G. Carter Bentley (London: Cassell, 1995), p. 161.

² *Ibid.*, p. 167. Both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* would later compare the Santa Cruz massacre to the Tiananmen crackdown. See “Indonesia’s ‘Tiananmen’,” *The Washington Post*, December 9, 1991, p. A20; “The Tiananmen in East Timor,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 1992, p. A20.

³ Bentley, p. 170.

The East Timorese Narrative

As has been described in Chapter 1, 1980s East Timor seemed a thoroughly cowed territory. Indonesia controlled most of the population and had destroyed the resistance as a major fighting force. Yet the resistance to Indonesian occupation persevered, albeit in an altered form, its focus shifting to East Timor's urban areas and to the youth who were the direct targets of much Indonesian aid and courting. The formation and proliferation of clandestine resistance cells dedicated to bringing East Timor to the attention of the outside world demonstrated a new type of resistance, one much less focused on ideology. The documents analyzed in this section, written by East Timorese student activists, also reveal how savvy and sophisticated the resistance had become. Far from being a gang of undisciplined malcontents, the resistance was in fact a highly organized body with defined goals and strategies, primary among them being to capture international attention at every media opportunity. It was for this reason that the march to Santa Cruz cemetery was organized.

Constâncio Pinto and the New Resistance

In July 1990, Constâncio Pinto became the Secretary of the Executive Committee of the CNRM in the Clandestine Front. The veteran clandestine activist—Pinto had joined a resistance cell in 1983—became one of the major leaders of the East Timorese struggle for self-determination, the culmination of a life lived under the oppressive

security state Indonesia had established in East Timor.⁴ Born in 1963, he fled with his family behind Fretilin lines following the invasion. Forced from the hills by starvation in 1978 and confined in a resettlement center, the family was lucky enough to make it back to Dili in November of that year. Pinto, who had already served in a variety of support capacities for Fretilin during the war, easily transitioned into clandestine resistance, which he described in *East Timor's Unfinished Struggle: Inside the Timorese Resistance*, written with veteran activist Matthew Jardine.⁵

The resistance described by Pinto was both founded upon and a response to the structure of the occupation. It would have been impossible for the resistance to continue without Indonesian connivance. In fact, the resistance survived off the corruption of the occupation. All of Falintil's weapons and ammunition came from Indonesian soldiers, and most were not even captured in battle. A major role of the clandestine urban resistance was to purchase war material from ABRI soldiers, who would sell a bullet or a hand grenade for the relatively low price of Rp.1,500 and Rp.25,000, respectively.⁶ Many actions of Pinto's clandestine resistance were also determined by the constant surveillance to which all East Timorese were subject by Indonesian intelligence services. Pinto could not even tell the rest of his family about his resistance activities for fear of being betrayed.⁷ Yet, according to Pinto, the very pervasiveness of Indonesia's spy

⁴ CNRM stands for *Concelho Nacional da Resistência Maubere* (National Council of Maubere Resistance), an umbrella group aiming to represent all East Timorese nationalists. Active from 1987 to 1998, when it was replaced by the *Concelho Nacional da Resistência Timorense* (National Council of Resistance of the People of East Timor, CNRT) following President Habibie's offer of autonomy for East Timor, the CNRM's other leaders were Xanana Gusmão as commander-in-chief and José Ramos-Horta as chief diplomat; Constâncio Pinto and Matthew Jardine, *East Timor's Unfinished Struggle: Inside the Timorese Resistance* (Boston: South End Press, 1997), p. 127.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-91.

⁶ According to Pinto, Rp.1,500 came to about US\$0.80 in the 1980s and 1990s; *Ibid.*, p. 102. By that reckoning, one hand grenade would cost just over US\$13.00.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 100.

networks was adapted by the resistance when he was recruited to spy on the very resistance of which he was, unknown to the Indonesians, such a prominent member. Pinto was able to use this position against his controllers, feeding them false or misleading information while gleaning whatever he could about Indonesian policy and upcoming offensives and security sweeps.⁸ Pinto's resistance activities, in other words, benefited from the very institutions with which the Indonesians maintained their authority. Collaboration, of a sort, the ability to struggle against and yet make use of the instruments of occupation, became crucial to the success of the resistance as a whole.

Of course, the East Timorese resistance only worked with the occupation as a necessity for working against it. Pinto and his colleagues were responsible for providing Falintil with food, ammunition, weapons, money, and intelligence. Their main goal, however, was to organize demonstrations in times of a massive media presence in order to draw international attention to East Timor's plight.⁹ In furtherance of this aim, Pinto and his colleagues planned a massive turnout of East Timorese during the scheduled visit of Portugal's parliamentary delegation in November 1991. When Portugal's representatives canceled their trip, the resistance substituted a memorial march, which led to the Santa Cruz massacre.

In retrospect, Pinto had excessive expectations for the visit of the Portuguese parliamentary delegation. He believed, for example, that Lisbon's representatives "would stay until arriving at some sort of agreement with the Indonesians that would end

⁸ Pinto's life as a double agent is described in *Ibid.*, pp. 158-174. The crucial nature of Pinto's contacts with Indonesian intelligence is shown by the fact that he considered "information [to be] the most important resource" for the resistance; *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 96. The first major demonstration in these circumstances occurred during Pope John Paul II's visit to East Timor in 1989, an action which Pinto helped plan, but did not participate in; *Ibid.*, pp. 106-118.

the occupation.”¹⁰ This unrealistic hope translated into grandiose, and probably unrealizable, plans for the delegation’s visit, as Pinto planned a series of massive demonstrations in Dili as well as a meeting between the Portuguese and Xanana Gusmão, then the most wanted man in East Timor.¹¹ ABRI also had been put on high alert at the time, with Pinto recalling that soldiers visited schools and bluntly threatened to kill any demonstrators and bury them in mass graves.¹² Despite the warning signs that ABRI had even less tolerance than usual for demonstrations, Pinto and his colleagues continued to plan, this time taking advantage of the presence in November of the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on Torture, Pieter Koojimans. Pinto recalled having little sense that the demonstration would be more dangerous than usual, since he felt that the Indonesians would not risk “very extreme actions” in the presence of a major UN official and a coterie of international journalists.¹³ Such assurances, ultimately, proved tragically mistaken.

Constância Pinto did not actually participate in the Santa Cruz demonstration. He had been forced to disappear on November 2, upon learning that ABRI was about to arrest him. Pinto’s book, consequently, does not describe the demonstration itself, but rather the aftermath that he witnessed the night of November 12. According to him, everyone in post-massacre Dili was in mourning, with candles in every window and some East Timorese talking about organizing an uprising and attacking ABRI bases with

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹¹ Pinto discusses these plans in *Ibid.*, p. 176. It should be noted that Pinto had been instrumental in setting up an interview between journalist Robert Domm and Gusmão in September 1990, which took place at the latter’s jungle headquarters under the Indonesians’ noses; *Ibid.*, pp. 126-134. However, setting up a similar meeting in 1991 Dili would have been considerably harder.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

nothing but stones and arrows.¹⁴ In Pinto's recollection, the Santa Cruz shooting came very close to setting off a second massacre. Pinto escaped to the West in 1992. At that point international diplomacy had failed to pressure Indonesia into abandoning East Timor (a fact which infuriated many Timorese), but massive news coverage of the Santa Cruz massacre had made it impossible for the East Timor issue to be hushed up.¹⁵ Therefore, the Dili shooting of November 1991 tragically and ironically fulfilled the major aim of the clandestine resistance—it brought increased international and public attention to East Timor and the plight of its people.

Addressing Indonesians

The East Timorese resistance did not confine its activities merely to winning international support. Young East Timorese activists also operated on university campuses throughout the Republic. By integrating East Timorese into Indonesia's educational system, the regime had hoped to assimilate them into Indonesian culture. Yet, according to Constâncio Pinto, such academic endeavors backfired. Instead of Indonesianizing young Timorese, it introduced them to Indonesian nationalism, whose terms and spirit they appropriated for their own nationalist struggle.¹⁶ The opportunity to study in other parts of Indonesia also gave East Timorese activists greater opportunity to mobilize, as it allowed them to escape the stifling security presence in their homeland.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 194-195.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 196, 209.

¹⁶ Constâncio Pinto, "The Student Movement and the Independence Struggle in East Timor: An Interview," in *Bitter Flowers, Sweet Flowers: East Timor, Indonesia, and the World Community*, eds. Richard Tanter, Mark Selden, and Stephen R. Shalom (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), p. 32.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

One example of how an East Timorese used the benefits of an Indonesian education in service of the resistance is found in an anonymous email circulated throughout Indonesian campuses in 1992. Entitled, "If only I were Free," the email was overtly modeled on a classic of anti-Dutch Indonesian nationalism from the early 1900s.¹⁸ Throughout the email, the unknown author expressed admiration for Indonesian nationalists and their struggle to overthrow the cruel and dehumanizing Dutch colonial regime.¹⁹ And yet, the author wondered, how was it possible to celebrate Indonesia's Independence Day when Indonesia was itself engaging in brutal colonial domination? How was it just to make the East Timorese celebrate an Independence Day that to them meant nothing except a reaffirmation of their colonial status?²⁰ Indeed, the author continued, Independence Day in East Timor was nothing less than a reminder of how East Timor's own nationalist aspirations had been crushed by the Indonesian military, and, as was shown by the Santa Cruz massacre, crushed with as much butchery as the Dutch ever visited upon the Indonesians during their independence struggle. Indonesia in 1992, the author of "If only I were Free" argued, was a colonial power in its own right, and Independence Day, Indonesia's commemoration of its Declaration of Independence from Dutch colonial rule, was now tarnished by the Republic's imperialism in East Timor.²¹

"If only I were Free" is an important document because it shows how East Timorese nationalists used the memorial commemoration of the occupation as a tool

¹⁸ The document was Soewardi Soeryaningrat's "If only I were a Dutchman," from 1913; Anonymous, "If only I were Free," in *Indonesian Politics and Society: A Reader*, eds. David Bourchier and Vedi R. Hadiz (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 265. For further discussion of Indonesian anti-colonial nationalism, see Ricklefs, pp. 155-184; Vickers, pp. 58-85.

¹⁹ Anonymous, p. 266.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 266-267.

²¹ The author was careful, however, to place the blame for Indonesian atrocities on the regime and ABRI, and not the Indonesian people; *Ibid.*, p. 267.

against the occupation. Just as Pinto and the clandestine resistance took advantage of their rulers' corruption and espionage system, so this unknown author imbibed the lessons of Indonesian schools and then appropriated those lessons for anti-regime ends. The East Timorese author made an appeal to Indonesians in their own language, echoing their own anti-colonialist rhetoric, mastered while studying in Indonesian schools.²² The anonymous author had absorbed the lessons of Indonesian nationalism and then applied those lessons to East Timor's situation, a fascinating, if no doubt unintended result of Indonesia's education policies in East Timor, policies that ended up feeding, rather than starving, the resistance.

The Indonesian Narrative

As was shown in the previous chapter, Indonesia justified its intervention in East Timor by asserting that the territory was completely unsustainable as an independent entity. The necessity to develop East Timor, and the fact that Indonesia was devoting so many resources to that end, became the regime's main rationale for the occupation. And as was shown in the Introduction, the regime also hoped that successful development programs would lead to Timorese acceptance of Indonesian rule. The growth of the clandestine resistance, with its fatal consequences at the Santa Cruz cemetery, thus came as a rude shock, exposing the fact that, for all the economic progress it had undoubtedly brought to the territory, Indonesian rule remained profoundly unpopular among East

²² It is interesting to compare the use of Indonesian by East Timorese nationalists to the use of Dutch by Indonesian nationalists in the first half of the twentieth century. Whereas, for East Timorese, Indonesian was an essential tool for mass communication, earlier Indonesian nationalists had expressed their opposition to Dutch rule through speaking and writing in Malay, rather than Dutch or other indigenous languages. Because the Dutch discouraged the use of common Malay, that language became a radical expression of nationalism and unity. Nationalist leaders, such as Sukarno, were highly educated and spoke Dutch, but most Indonesians did not express their nationalist aspirations in that language; Vickers, p. 62.

Timorese. In one afternoon, Indonesia's justification for the occupation was shattered before the world. Suharto's regime responded by going on the diplomatic offensive, joining with the authoritarian governments of other developing countries by claiming that human rights was a luxury that the developing world could not yet afford. It is these two phenomena—the rhetoric of development with which Indonesia underpinned the occupation and the harsh diplomatic reaction that ensued when that rhetoric was proven to be largely a sham—that form the subject of this section.

Development and its Discontents

Justifying the occupation of East Timor was the duty of every part of the Indonesian government. Agencies dealing with the Republic's external relations issued pamphlets and other media items in order to garner foreign support.²³ This section begins by examining two publications issued by the Indonesian Foreign and Information Ministries in the 1980s. The documents, *East Timor After Integration* and *The Province of East Timor: Development in Progress*, both began with the premise that Indonesia had taken on the odious and awesome challenge of developing and modernizing the province, which was more than the Portuguese had ever bothered to do.²⁴ Both publications offer

²³ Republic of Indonesia, *The Province of East Timor: Development in Progress* (Jakarta: Department of Foreign Affairs and Department of Information, n.d), p. 8.

²⁴ Republic of Indonesia, *East Timor After Integration*, 2nd edition (Jakarta: Department of Foreign Affairs, 1984), p. 90; Republic of Indonesia, *The Province of East Timor*, p. 19. The latter document also claimed that East Timor had always been part of Indonesia's "territorial unity" under the Majapahit Empire from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, only to be sundered by pernicious European imperialism. Thus, the Indonesian incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia was more of a family reunion than a conquest; Republic of Indonesia, *The Province of East Timor*, p. 7. For a detailed examination of the New Order's use of Majapahit history as a policy tool, see Leo Suryadinata, "Determinants of Indonesia's Foreign Policy: In Search of an Explanation" (Singapore: Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore, 1993), pp. 2-4. For a discussion of Majapahit, see Ricklefs, pp. 16-18, 33-34.

extensive descriptions of Jakarta's development efforts in all areas of East Timor.²⁵ The Indonesian Foreign Ministry claimed that from 1976 to 1984 the central government had sunk Rp.207,736,691,506 into East Timor, far more than was given to any other Indonesian province and an amount so great that it actually had negative effects on Indonesia's national budget.²⁶ This money was spent on programs to improve tangible developmental criteria such as farming, industry, education, health care, and media access, as well as on less quantifiable items such as spiritual development. *East Timor After Integration* even managed to spin the resettlement camps into which East Timorese were confined and in which many died as intended to "improve social welfare" by concentrating the East Timorese population in designated areas in which Indonesian development policies could be easily enacted.²⁷ *The Province of East Timor: Development in Progress* even bragged about the number of taxis Indonesia had imported into Dili.²⁸ The strategy of the Indonesian government in these pamphlets was to deploy data and to prove that the East Timorese were better off under Indonesian rule than they had ever been before, and to reassure the readers that the regime was committed to continuing its developmental policies for the good of the East Timorese.

This paternal image of Indonesia furthering the development of East Timor met with great opposition, not just from Western and East Timorese activists, but even from some Indonesians. Two academic studies rejected this image, detailing the occupation's

²⁵ Republic of Indonesia, *East Timor After Integration*, pp. 90-143; Republic of Indonesia, *The Province of East Timor*, pp. 21-49.

²⁶ The amount is found in Republic of Indonesia, *East Timor After Integration*, p. 92. A yearly break-down of development funds is found in *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93. For the burden the disbursement of such funds imposed on the national budget, see Republic of Indonesia, *The Province of East Timor*, p. 19.

²⁷ Republic of Indonesia, *East Timor After Integration*, pp. 138-139.

²⁸ Three hundred forty-two taxis by 1979; Republic of Indonesia, *The Province of East Timor*, p. 42. Interestingly, Indonesian journalist Hendro Subroto was able to easily catch a cab in pre-invasion Dili; Subroto, p. 30.

harmful effects on East Timor and effectively debunking the figures and rhetoric with which the Indonesian government advertised its developmental policies. By far the more critical of the two was George Aditjondro's *In the Shadow of Mount Ramelau: The Impact of the Occupation of East Timor*, which concluded that of the billions of rupiah pumped into developmental projects in East Timor, very little ever made it to the Timorese themselves. Instead, Aditjondro argued, Jakarta's development funds were often absorbed by Indonesian companies associated with the military. These companies had been established immediately following the invasion, and had been given lucrative monopolies over high-value goods such as sandalwood, marble, and coffee, which taken together, comprised East Timor's most profitable exports.²⁹ Such corruption was endemic in the New Order, but Aditjondro's critique was especially bold given that it argued that the military's exploitation of East Timor's resources made the Timorese people themselves poorer.³⁰ For along with monopolies came price controls, which meant that the military monopoly purchased a product at fixed below-market prices in East Timor, and sold it in a neighboring Indonesian province at an unregulated price, and for a hefty profit.³¹ Aditjondro further exacerbated his criticism of the regime's occupation policies by describing how other former Portuguese colonies were faring on the developmental index. His data were explosive: in almost all cases, these former

²⁹ George J. Aditjondro, *In the Shadow of Mount Ramelau: The Impact of the Occupation of East Timor* (Leiden: INDOC, Indonesian Documentation and Information Center, 1994), pp. 57-62.

³⁰ In the mid-1990s, Aditjondro successfully applied for asylum in Australia, fearing that he was about to be imprisoned for criticizing Suharto; Adam Schwarz, "Running for Cover," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 29, 1995, p. 29. He was thus no supporter of the New Order, which makes his negative analysis of the occupation suspect. However, as many of Aditjondro's conclusions, if not his tone, recur in the study of Professor Mubyarto *et al.*, I believe that *In the Shadow of Mount Ramelau* presents a relatively acceptable portrayal of the Indonesian military's detrimental economic exploitation of East Timor. And Aditjondro's work is still valuable as an example of opposition to the occupation within Indonesia itself, a phenomenon generally ignored in the literature.

³¹ As an example, Aditjondro estimated that coffee sold for Rp.2.500 per kilogram more in West Timor than its per kilogram price in East Timor; Aditjondro, p. 45.

colonies had higher literacy rates, more doctors, and higher per capita income than did East Timor. This held true for colonies even smaller than East Timor, such as Cabo Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe, giving the lie to Indonesia's claim that micro-states were destined to fail.³² Aditjondro thus challenged the very foundations of the occupation, questioning its rationale and justification, and concluding that the occupation had actually been detrimental to both East Timor and the Republic itself.³³

A less antagonistic, yet still damning, study of the occupation's effects on East Timor was conducted in 1991 by a team at Gadjah Mada University led by Professor Mubyarto at the behest of the Bank of Indonesia. Their report, *East Timor: The Impact of Integration*, also concluded that rhetoric and reality did not agree in East Timor: "[w]hile the integration of East Timor...has brought physical progress...it has not yet been able to eliminate social, economic and political problems resulting from an integration process which has cost too many human lives."³⁴ As George Aditjondro would find later, so Mubyarto and his team discovered that many development projects actually ended up harming the people they were supposed to assist. It was true, for instance, that the Indonesian government had built much low-cost housing in East Timor. However, the program was ineffective because the houses were similar in design to those on Java, with specifications unsuitable for East Timor's climate.³⁵ And East Timor's agricultural

³² Angola and Mozambique were major exceptions to this trend of Lusophone colonies doing well after independence. Both scored lower on Aditjondro's developmental index than did East Timor; *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78. However, the poverty of these two countries was at least partly explicable due to ongoing warfare.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78. Aditjondro summed up his conclusions: "This, then, has been a brief sketch of the grim situation of a neighbour of Indonesia, who, like a gagged and bound victim of a rape, is deemed to have enjoyed its own violation"; *Ibid.*, p. 83. Note the similarities between this sentiment and those expressed in Anonymous, "If only I were Free."

³⁴ Mubyarto *et al.*, *East Timor: The Impact of Integration, An Indonesian Socio-Anthropological Study* (Northcote: IRIP, 1991), pp. 3-4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

output had still not recovered from the war, as most farmers were unable to purchase modern tools.³⁶ While Mubyarto *et al.* did not attribute these failings to avarice or cruelty, their conclusions nevertheless painted a grim portrait of Indonesia's development efforts, efforts hampered by the attitude of Indonesia's representatives in East Timor. *East Timor: The Impact of Integration* chronicled Indonesian arrogance towards the Timorese, stereotyped as backward and lazy. The East Timorese responded to this contempt with a marked distrust of Indonesians and their policies.³⁷ This mutual stereotyping, coupled with what Mubyarto *et al.* characterized as ABRI's "excessive" presence, fostered secessionist tendencies and thus perpetuated the very problems that Indonesia was trying to correct.³⁸ It was only through involving the East Timorese in their own province's development that the Indonesian government had any hope of winning them over.³⁹ Mubyarto and his colleagues, in contrast to George Aditjondro, certainly saw this as possible and desirable, but they agreed with him that Indonesia's development policies in East Timor left much to be desired.

The Republic Strikes Back: Defense and Offense

The Santa Cruz massacre presented Indonesia with an enormous diplomatic challenge, effectively showing that many East Timorese did not accept integration despite its touted material benefits. Notwithstanding that its developmental policies had not bought loyalty, the New Order regime remained wedded to using the rhetoric of

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4. Indeed, much of the study was comprised of incredibly detailed descriptions of East Timorese society, a type of anthropological examination of Indonesia's twenty-seventh province designed to acquaint Indonesian officials with their East Timorese subjects.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-62.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-68.

modernization in response to the massacre.⁴⁰ In this, Jakarta was not alone. Its defensive efforts corresponded to those of other authoritarian regimes in the early 1990s as they prepared to attend the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in June 1993. With other Asian countries, especially China, Indonesia elaborated a position of developmental exceptionalism in regards to human rights, stating that human rights could be subservient to economic development.⁴¹ Addressing the Vienna Conference, Ali Alatas, Indonesia's Foreign Minister since 1988, argued that gross poverty was also a human rights violation, and that countries might choose to tackle this particular problem in advance of other violations.⁴² He also maintained that each country had the right to interpret what was meant by "human rights." Indonesia and other developing countries "do not and cannot maintain a purely individualistic approach towards human rights," both because they were more communally oriented than the West, and because the economic rights of the entire nation took precedence over those of the individual.⁴³ The major justification for the New Order's existence—that it delivered economic development to its citizens—which was also a major justification for Indonesia's presence in East Timor, became the regime's primary excuse for any undemocratic action or atrocity.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Jakarta also engaged the services of Hill & Knowlton, a Washington-based public relations firm that was later used by Kuwait to effect American support against Iraq; Matthew Jardine, "Forgotten Genocide," *The Progressive* 56, 12 (December 1992), *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost, Concordia University Libraries, March 6, 2007 <<http://search.epnet.com>>.

⁴¹ For more on the collective position taken by Asian leaders at the Vienna Conference, see Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, p. 167; Challis, p. 169.

⁴² Ali Alatas, "A Balanced Approach to Global Action on Human Rights (Statement before the Second World Conference on Human Rights; Vienna, 14 June 1993)," in *A Voice for a Just Peace: A Collection of Speeches by Ali Alatas* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2001), p. 475.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 477.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that pro-democracy activists in Indonesia called on the international community to refuse to accept the contention that development took priority over human rights. In May 1993, a group of forty-nine Indonesian non-governmental organizations and 109 individual activists released a statement that refuted Alatas's future talking points in detail. The statement argued that

Closely linked with Indonesia's prioritization of development over human rights was a righteous fury that anyone dared challenge how the country managed its internal affairs. Indonesia's diplomatic representatives adopted an aggressive attitude that accused the regime's critics of racism and double standards. At the Vienna Conference, Ali Alatas, without any embarrassment, asked how Indonesia could be singled out for criticism when "a few hundred kilometers from here an entire nation is being subjected to brutal aggression, mass murder, systematic rape, and the inhuman practice of ethnic cleansing" without any strong international response.⁴⁵ He went on to caution against "prejudicial publicity," which made some countries, specifically Indonesia, "the targets of unfair censure."⁴⁶ An Indonesian military analyst went even further in a paper blasting "human rights" as a "political weapon" used by the West to keep the economies of developing countries from competing with them.⁴⁷ Through these actions, the Republic's representatives attempted to diffuse and deflect the criticisms leveled at Indonesia in the wake of the Santa Cruz massacre. Soon after the event, Indonesia discovered that it no longer controlled the public and diplomatic narrative. Prior to the invasion, the regime

development, while certainly a right, meant nothing unless accompanied by human dignity, and that human rights were a universal, rather than relative, concept; Indonesian NGOs for Democracy, "Joint Declaration on Human Rights," in *Indonesian Politics and Society: A Reader*, eds. David Bouchier and Vedi R. Hadiz (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 248-250, 254.

⁴⁵ Alatas, "A Balanced Approach to Global Action on Human Rights," p. 480.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 480-481. In February 1992, just after the Santa Cruz massacre, Alatas had criticized East Timorese activists for keeping emotions towards their "long-discredited cause" so high that the crisis would never be resolved, in other words, for bringing too much publicity for Indonesia's actions; Ali Alatas, "East Timor: Debunking the Myths (From 'East Timor—Debunking the Myths around a Process of Decolonization,' Remarks before members of the National Press Club; Washington DC, 20 February 1992)," in *A Voice for a Just Peace: A Collection of Speeches by Ali Alatas* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2001), pp. 508-519, quote on p. 518.

⁴⁷ Juwono Sudarsono, "The diplomatic scam called human rights," in *Indonesian Politics and Society: A Reader*, eds. David Bouchier and Vedi R. Hadiz (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 246-248, quotation on p. 247. Sudarsono's article was published in 1997, which puts it outside the timeline under discussion. However, the fact that it paralleled so closely the accusations Alatas had made in the aftermath of the Santa Cruz massacre, and the fact that it remained posted on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website until 2001, thus demonstrating incredible continuity in policy, merits its inclusion here.

had successfully managed the flow of information, and was able to ensure that its version of events was always in the foreground, but the government's ability to continue to shape the news, already teetering in the early 1990s, died amidst the gravestones of Santa Cruz.

The Journalist Narrative

Relevant journalistic coverage of the Santa Cruz massacre fell into two distinct phases. The first phase centered on numerous reports of the massacre in media around the world, featuring moving eyewitness accounts—East Timor became major news for the first time. One of the first major articles on the massacre, Helen Todd's "A Son's Death in East Timor," was written by the mother of a Western activist killed during the shooting. This moving and personalized reconstruction of the massacre was written with the mother witnessing for her dead son, and it merits comparison with the first-person account of the shooting by Allan Nairn, whose article for *The New Yorker* was one of the most indelible records of the killings. The second phase in coverage was marked by calls for action to aid the East Timorese. Moved by the eyewitness accounts of the shooting, both in print and on television, editors and journalists called for Western governments to take action to guarantee the rights of the East Timorese. Individual journalists, with Australian John Pilger leading the pack, made it their mission to report on and skewer Western complicity in the occupation. Foreign media coverage made the Santa Cruz massacre a prominent event and the killings came to symbolize Indonesia's East Timor policies for a worldwide audience. The new narrative of East Timor would always have to include the events of November 12.

Acts of Witness

Helen Todd's memorialization of her son, twenty-year-old Kamal Bamadhaj, appeared in *The Wall Street Journal (Eastern Edition)* on December 3, 1991, less than a month after the Massacre.⁴⁸ Bamadhaj, a New Zealander and East Timor activist, had gone to Dili in late October, hoping to act as a translator for the Portuguese parliamentary delegation. Like many other foreigners, Bamadhaj was a witness of the march to the Santa Cruz cemetery, where, according to Indonesian officials, he was caught in the fire of Indonesian soldiers defending their lives against a fanatical and armed Timorese mob. When the smoke cleared, the official story went, Bamadhaj lay dead. Helen Todd's refusal to accept this story, coupled with her painstaking account—based on eyewitnesses—of Bamadhaj's last hours were the subject of "A Son's Death in East Timor."

While Constâncio Pinto claimed that the memorial march was carefully organized, Helen Todd saw it as an act of desperation on the part of East Timorese activists, who had already exposed themselves to Indonesian reprisals by agreeing to be interviewed by Portuguese parliamentarians, and thus thought they were about to be arrested anyway. Indeed, Todd reported that her son had written to her that unless the international community took action, the Timorese would experience "another wave of genocide." The East Timor described by Todd was not a hopeful place, but one where the Indonesian security apparatus held sway and Indonesia's developmental rhetoric hid its rapaciousness.

⁴⁸ All references in the next few paragraphs are from Helen Todd, "A Son's Death in East Timor," *The Wall Street Journal (Eastern Edition)*, December 3, 1991, p. A14.

As life in occupied East Timor was desperate, so too, according to Helen Todd, was the death of her son. Basing her account on conversations with Anton Marti, the Dili representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who had been with Bamadhaj in his last hours, Todd assembled an account that demonstrated the casual cruelty and general untrustworthiness of the Indonesian authorities. According to Marti, he had found Kamal Bamadhaj lying in his own blood after the shooting, desperately clutching his New Zealand passport and pleading for aid. Marti had put him in a Red Cross jeep and tried to drive him to a hospital, only to be stopped and turned back at two ABRI roadblocks. By the time they finally got through the security cordon, it was too late, he had bled to death. The Indonesian soldiers had been fully aware that Bamadhaj was a foreigner, wrote Todd, underscoring the fact that East Timorese received even worse medical treatment than her fatally wounded son had received. What the shooting proved, concluded Todd, was that Indonesia had convinced the world that the occupation was beneficial for East Timor without convincing the Timorese themselves and that the only way for Indonesia to maintain control was through violence.

Among the most moving accounts of that violence was Allan Nairn's article in "The Talk of the Town" section of *The New Yorker* on December 9, 1991. Unlike Helen Todd, Nairn was an eyewitness to the Santa Cruz massacre. His story meshed well with hers, particularly about the brutality of the Indonesian occupation and the unreliability of ABRI's accounts of what had happened. Like Todd, Nairn described a territory living in fear, where the caked blood of the murdered Sebastião Gomes still could be clearly seen on the steps where he had been shot and killed on October 28.⁴⁹ And yet, according to

⁴⁹ Allan Nairn, "The Talk of the Town: Notes and Comment," *The New Yorker*, December 9, 1991, p. 41.

Nairn, the East Timorese were generally unbowed. The memorial march was not an act of desperation, but a highly disciplined expression of East Timorese rejection of Indonesian rule. Even so, Nairn recalled that the march was “astonish[ing]” in scope, with more and more people joining the demonstrators as they moved through Dili; “East Timor and its occupiers surely hadn’t witnessed such a bold public display in years,” he noted.⁵⁰

It was into this disciplined and nonthreatening mob that Indonesian soldiers fired. According to Nairn, there was no doubt that ABRI meant to shoot the demonstrators. Soldiers had not fired in defense of their lives, as the Indonesian government later claimed, but had marched up the street, formed up, raised their rifles, and shot into the crowd.⁵¹ It was, according to Nairn, “deliberate mass murder”: “[t]he soldiers simply shot several hundred unarmed men, women, and children.”⁵² Nor did the killing stop after the initial volleys. Nairn and Amy Goodman, another American journalist, were themselves beaten (Nairn’s skull was fractured) and their equipment seized, while “[a]ll around, other soldiers were executing Timorese.”⁵³ Nairn was convinced the soldiers were about to shoot him and Goodman, as well, until the two managed to pull out their American passports. This immediately gave the soldiers a shock: “[a]pparently because we were from the United States...a country that provided Indonesia with fifty million dollars in outright aid this year, and sells it most of its weapons...the soldiers decided not to shoot us.”⁵⁴ Nairn and Goodman were able to flee on a passing truck, leaving behind the dead and dying, including Kamal Bamadhaj. The reports of Todd and Nairn

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁵² Ibid., p. 42.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

constituted a powerful indictment of the occupation. The Indonesians found it nearly impossible to refute the accounts of a grieving mother and a wounded eyewitness. Their testimony spread rapidly throughout the foreign media, establishing the Santa Cruz massacre as a worldwide icon for Indonesian colonial brutality.

Action and Activism

The idea that the West needed to do something about the East Timor situation was implicit in the work of Helen Todd and Allan Nairn. In the United States, opposition to the occupation in the wake of the shooting was especially evident in the editorial pages of such influential newspapers as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. *The New York Times*, already opposed to the occupation, specifically cited Nairn's and Goodman's experiences when criticizing the Indonesians in an editorial on November 21, 1991.⁵⁵ The same article lamented the fact that few Americans knew anything about East Timor, and that the world had "deservedly punished" Iraq for undertaking the same action in Kuwait that Indonesia had taken in East Timor.⁵⁶ In early December, another *Times* editorial, written by long-time columnist Anthony Lewis, explicitly criticized the Administration of President George H.W. Bush for its commitment to a "realist" foreign policy, especially the State Department's conviction that "quiet diplomacy," which Lewis castigated as merely asking Suharto to treat the East Timorese more nicely, was the best way to handle Jakarta.⁵⁷ Lewis, for his part, pointed out that decades of such "quiet diplomacy" had utterly failed to prevent the shooting in the first place and had, indeed,

⁵⁵ "Tears for East Timor," *The New York Times*, November 21, 1991, p. A26

⁵⁶ According to the article, the major difference between Indonesia/East Timor and Iraq/Kuwait was that "Indonesia is evidently too important, and East Timor too poor, for this wrong to excite indignation"; *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Anthony Lewis, "Realism and Evil," *The New York Times*, December 6, 1991, p. A35

failed to curb any harsh policies throughout the occupation.⁵⁸ Realism, according to Lewis, had become an excuse for inaction and acquiescence; a robust international response was required to end the occupation and bring justice to East Timor.

The Washington Post was as scathing as *The New York Times* in its editorial treatment of Indonesia following the Santa Cruz massacre, but it kept up its attack considerably longer than the *Times*. The *Post*'s first treatment of the killing appeared on November 20, 1991, in an editorial that attacked American support for Indonesia's conquest of East Timor, support which might have made sense in the context of the Cold War but was unconscionable after the 1989 Revolutions.⁵⁹ Another editorial on December 9 once again pointed out that the end of the Cold War allowed many "previously inhibited" people "to ask for change in a place like Indonesia," and went on to advocate self-determination for East Timor.⁶⁰ Another editorial a year after the shooting labeled Indonesia an exploitative imperialist power and reiterated the call for East Timorese self-determination.⁶¹ By this point, it was clear that hopes for a resolution to the East Timor issue in the aftermath of Santa Cruz were mistaken. However, these editorials clearly show the reasoning that editors used to criticize U.S. support for Indonesia; the rubric of anti-Communism no longer allowed the United States to excuse

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Dead in East Timor," *The Washington Post*, November 20, 1991, p. A22.

⁶⁰ "Indonesia's 'Tiananmen'," p. A20.

⁶¹ "A Leading Asian Colonialist," *The Washington Post*, December 5, 1992, p. A22. It should be noted that this editorial was occasioned by the Indonesian capture of Gusmão. However, the fact that his captivity even excited comment was due in large part to the lingering publicity of Santa Cruz. Three months after the publication of "A Leading Asian Colonialist," *The Washington Post* published an account by Swedish journalist Sven Bergman, who had visited East Timor in late 1992, and reported that Indonesia maintained a massive security presence in the territory; Sven Bergman, "Timor's Untelevised Terror," *The Washington Post*, March 14, 1993, p. C2. It seemed that little had changed after the massacre, and media interest, once so strong, had faded.

Indonesia's repression in the post-Cold War world.⁶² They also showed that the editors of major American dailies expected the government's human rights rhetoric to actually mean something, and that Western policy towards international crimes needed to become consistent, without regard to political circumstances.

With some media outlets now less willing to accept Indonesia's version of events in East Timor, journalists were free to engage in muckraking exposés of international support for the occupation. John Pilger was the best exemplar of this breed, ceaselessly writing and speaking against the occupation and attacking every country that supported it. His tactics were guaranteed to offend. In 1992, he traveled undercover to East Timor with Max Stahl, a British cameraman who had smuggled footage of the Santa Cruz massacre to the outside world. The two filmed their journey throughout the occupied territory, chronicling a continuous Indonesian security presence, despite Suharto's pledge to draw down ABRI's numbers in East Timor.⁶³ One of the reasons Pilger made this journey was to examine reported mass graves of Santa Cruz victims; however, he and Stahl came to believe that all of East Timor was a mass grave, "marked by paths that ended abruptly, and fields inexplicably bulldozed, and earth inexplicably covered with tarmac; and by the legions of crosses."⁶⁴ The November 1991 shooting, according to

⁶² Indeed, the U.S. State Department no longer used the exigencies of anti-Communism to excuse its support for Indonesia. When queried in 1992, State Department witness Kenneth Quinn told the U.S. Senate that American support for Indonesia was based on the fact that Indonesia was the world's largest Muslim nation (and had been very supportive of the United States during the Gulf War) and that U.S. companies had extensive commercial investments in Indonesia. Strategic and economic concerns now determined American support for Suharto, not anti-Communism; United States Senate, "Hearing of the East Asian Affairs Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Subject: East Timor. Friday, March 6, 1992," *Federal News Service* <<http://www.fnsg.com/>> (accessed October 2, 2006).

⁶³ For Pilger's scathing review of Suharto's response to the Santa Cruz massacre, and his fierce denunciation of the West's acceptance of the cosmetic changes in the occupation, see John Pilger, "How Suharto Faked the Truth" *New Statesman & Society*, July 29, 1994, pp. 18-19.

⁶⁴ John Pilger, "East Timor," in *Distant Voices* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 272.

Pilger, was merely the killing that was noticed. It was not an aberration, as Indonesia's Western defenders claimed, but the norm.

For John Pilger, the occupation was inextricably linked with foreign support. Indonesia could act with relative impunity because it was enabled and protected by Western countries. This was not a revelation—Western commercial and strategic ties with Indonesia were well-documented—but Pilger was unique in his ability to find incriminating and embarrassing evidence of foreign complicity in atrocities in East Timor. He was especially critical of the British government, which increased aid to Indonesia by 250 percent following the massacre, “the largest percentage rise of any donor country.”⁶⁵ Pilger managed to link this aid directly to Indonesia's military activities in East Timor. For instance, the British government sold several BAE Hawk aircraft to the Indonesian Air Force, after ABRI promised not to use them for offensive purposes. Yet, when Pilger interviewed Alan Clark, a Defense Procurement Minister under Margaret Thatcher, he found that such a guarantee had never been asked for, indeed, that Clark would not have accepted one even if it had been offered. According to an unabashed Clark: “[t]hat [the guarantee] must have been something the Foreign Office did...a guarantee is worthless from any government as far as I'm concerned.”⁶⁶ In this one interview, Pilger effectively skewered the British government's assurance that it was not facilitating Indonesian military actions in East Timor.⁶⁷ And in the aftermath of

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 301. By the mid-1990s, Britain had replaced the United States as Indonesia's biggest source of arms; Pilger, “How Suharto Faked the Truth,” p. 19.

⁶⁶ Pilger, “East Timor,” p. 307.

⁶⁷ Indonesia's purchase of BAE Hawks became a major issue in the United Kingdom in the 1990s. In 1996, four women disabled a Hawk about to be delivered to Indonesia. Tried in Liverpool, the “Ploughshares Women” claimed that their actions were justified under British law, as they had acted to “prevent a crime,” namely the use of offensive weaponry in the “genocide” in East Timor. John Pilger was among the expert witnesses called by the defense to establish the fact that Hawks were used in combat in East Timor. The four women were acquitted on all charges. Three of them write about the “Ploughshares

Santa Cruz, it was difficult to convince the public that such military actions would lead to anything less than the murder of more peaceful demonstrators.

The Truth Commission's Narrative

The Santa Cruz massacre had an ambiguous place in the findings of the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation. East Timor's truth commission endorsed the idea that the shooting was one of the most prominent and momentous events of the occupation, but then shied away from describing the events of the massacre, instead devoting the majority of its account of the Santa Cruz atrocity to an examination of the aftermath of the shooting, especially the multiple investigations conducted by Indonesia and the international community.⁶⁸ This fascinating occurrence is the subject of this section.

The Massacre

In some respects, according to the CAVR, the years preceding the Santa Cruz massacre, dating from the early 1980s, were far less onerous for many Timorese than the bloodbath and horror that had followed immediately after the 1975 invasion.⁶⁹ The dearth of mass killings, however, did not mean that the Indonesian occupiers forswore violence. In this respect, the Santa Cruz massacre was a natural outgrowth of Indonesia's repression. What made the Santa Cruz shooting noteworthy was that it revealed to the

Action" and their trial in Andrea Needham, Jen Parker, and Jo Wilson, "Seeds of Hope—East Timor Ploughshares Disarming the Hawks," in *The East Timor Question: The Struggle for Independence from Indonesia*, eds. Paul Hainsworth and Stephen McCloskey (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), pp. 85-93.

⁶⁸ In the section titled "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," of the thirty pages devoted to the Massacre (pp. 199-229), only six concerned the shooting itself (pp. 199-205).

⁶⁹ CAVR, "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," p. 199.

world the “violent oppression by the Indonesian military of ordinary East Timorese,” and made such oppression undeniable.⁷⁰ It was, the CAVR stated, the “turning point in world opinion [about] the territory,” confirming what East Timor’s advocates had been claiming: that East Timor was anything but pacified under Indonesian rule, that Indonesia’s control was maintained through violence, and that the East Timorese had the right to freely decide their national fate.⁷¹ The truth commission insisted that East Timor’s struggle for freedom was inseparable from the 1991 massacre in Dili.

The findings of the CAVR about Santa Cruz are straightforward. The Commission concurred with eyewitness statements that ABRI had fired into an “unarmed and peaceful crowd.”⁷² The CAVR also made exhaustive use of ballistics evidence to prove that there had been few attempts on the part of ABRI to keep casualties to a minimum; Indonesian troops opened fire with little if any warning and had shot to kill.⁷³ The Commission also found that those wounded in the shooting had been mistreated, often by being subjected to interrogation, including torture, before receiving medical treatment, and, in some cases, being taken directly from hospitals to be killed by Indonesian forces.⁷⁴ The disappearances of many wounded demonstrators from the hospitals made it difficult for the truth commission to offer an accurate estimate of how

⁷⁰ CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” p. 115.

⁷¹ CAVR, “Self-Determination,” pp. 108-109. The CAVR also referred to the Santa Cruz massacre as a “turning point” in “The History of the Conflict,” p. 115.

⁷² CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” p. 116. It should be noted, however, that in another section *Chega!* stated that some violence had been perpetrated by the East Timorese demonstrators against Indonesian troops, including the stabbing of an Indonesian officer and the throwing of rocks. This did not, of course, absolve Indonesia of responsibility for the shooting, and the report went on to state that these actions had occurred well before the demonstrators reached the Santa Cruz cemetery, and could thus not have acted as immediate provocation; CAVR, “Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances,” p. 199.

⁷³ CAVR, “Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances,” p. 201.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

many died in the massacre, however, it felt that a figure of 200 casualties was “not...unreasonable.”⁷⁵

A great deal of *Chega!*'s narrative about the Santa Cruz massacre summarized the multiple inquiries that had been conducted after the killings. The CAVR was overwhelmingly critical of the six investigations that Jakarta launched to examine the atrocity, blasting them for sloppy work, undue willingness to privilege the testimony of ABRI members over that of the wounded and other eyewitnesses, and eagerness to place blame for the shooting on the demonstrators.⁷⁶ Indonesia's investigations into Santa Cruz were, the CAVR concluded, little more than “damage limitation and deliberate attempts to manufacture a version” of the massacre that was critical enough of the military that it would alleviate international criticism, but not so onerous that it threatened “the institutional mechanisms of impunity which protected” ABRI members from harsh censure over human rights violations.⁷⁷

In contrast to the Indonesian investigations, the CAVR presented a detailed breakdown of unit and individual responsibility for the shooting.⁷⁸ Yet, the Commission was the first to admit that its investigation of the massacre was incomplete. According to *Chega!*, the truth commission lacked the time and resources to fully examine the massacre and its aftermath.⁷⁹ It had discovered the potential existence of two mass graves containing remains of those murdered during and after the massacre, but it had not been able to exhume them.⁸⁰ Time constraints had also hampered the CAVR's

⁷⁵ CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” p. 117.

⁷⁶ CAVR, “Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances,” pp. 205-229.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.

⁷⁹ CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” p. 117.

⁸⁰ CAVR, “Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances,” p. 204.

investigation into the massacre.⁸¹ In addition, the Indonesian government had been exceptionally unhelpful, refusing to release its records about the shooting or assist in tracing East Timorese who disappeared after the massacre.⁸² Yet, despite these very real constraints, the CAVR's treatment of the Santa Cruz massacre also resulted from those things it chose to emphasize in this period of East Timor's history, namely the development of the second-generation clandestine urban resistance and that resistance's focus on diplomatic, rather than armed, methods of achieving self-determination.

Patterns

In agreement with Constâncio Pinto and the unknown author of "If only I were Free," the CAVR found that the crucial component of the long-term resistance to the occupation was East Timor's youth. The urbanization of the Timorese population under the occupation, as well as expanding access to education, created the foundations for renewed resistance that the Indonesian authorities had hoped to avoid with their modernization of East Timor.⁸³ Furthermore, *Chega!* emphasized, the student resistance was highly organized, both inside East Timor and in the archipelago as a whole.⁸⁴ From the mid 1980s, young East Timorese began to articulate their grievances against the occupation system, and, gradually, their tactics and aims solidified. The CAVR located

⁸¹ CAVR, "Introduction," <<http://www.ictj.org/static/Timor.CAVR.English/01-Introduction.pdf>> (accessed January 6, 2006), p. 49.

⁸² CAVR, "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," p. 229.

⁸³ CAVR, "Resistance," pp. 41-48.

⁸⁴ According to *Chega!*, the first major student resistance organization to form in East Timor was the *Organização de Juventude Católica de Timor-Leste* (Timor-Leste Catholic Youth Organization, OJECTIL) founded in Dili in 1986. In 1988, the *Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor-Leste* (Timor-Leste Students' National Resistance, Renetil) was formed by Timorese students studying on Bali in order to spread East Timorese activism throughout the wider Indonesian university system. These and other groups, the "clandestine youth movement" as a whole, were placed under the control of the *Comité Executivo da CNRM da Frente Clandestina* (Executive Committee of the CNRM for the Clandestine Front) in 1990. See CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 108-109; CAVR, "Resistance," pp. 43-44.

the genesis of this new clandestine resistance in the 1989 visit of Pope John Paul II to East Timor. This event became a “watershed in the activities of the youth clandestine movement,” with a peaceful pro-independence demonstration occurring during the Papal mass, in front of foreign media, and despite a massive Indonesian security presence.⁸⁵ The aim of the clandestine resistance, shown by this and other demonstrations, was to gain international visibility, to prove that the Timorese had not acquiesced to Indonesian rule.⁸⁶ The Santa Cruz demonstration was the continuation of long-term resistance strategy, conforming to patterns and goals established in the 1980s. Demonstrations such as the one preceding the shooting were characteristic of the new resistance that formed after the destruction of massive armed resistance in 1979.

As seen in the previous chapter, the truth commission was highly critical of the Fretilin-led armed resistance of the mid-to-late 1970s. It was much more comfortable with, even laudatory of, the resistance that emerged after the defeat at Mount Matebian. As described by the Commission, the new resistance was more realistic and less ideological than its Fretilin predecessor, with its leaders realizing that they could never defeat the Indonesians militarily, but would have to rely on international pressure to force Indonesia to moderate its East Timor policy.⁸⁷ This did not mean that Falintil grounded arms, but rather that its aim shifted from “win[ing] the war” with Indonesia to “add[ing] weight to the demands of a wider resistance” as enunciated by the clandestine youth movement in its demonstrations and by East Timor’s diplomats in foreign capitals.⁸⁸ The new resistance, as described by the CAVR, was one of concrete and realistic action, not

⁸⁵ CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” p. 112.

⁸⁶ CAVR, “Resistance,” pp. 44.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

ideology and suicidal bravery. It was a resistance whose members were capable of a Santa Cruz demonstration, a tactic at which old Fretilin cadres would have scoffed.

The benefits of this tactical shift was a point much stressed by the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation, which listed “diplomacy” as “the most important factor in achieving self-determination” for East Timor.⁸⁹ Such diplomacy was made possible when the resistance abandoned Fretilin’s hard-line policies of non-negotiation and self-reliance.⁹⁰ The Santa Cruz massacre, in the CAVR’s chronology, thus coincided with the development of an inclusive East Timorese nationalist movement that moderately advocated self-determination for the territory, rather than outright independence.⁹¹ And it was this inclusive movement, which would come to include not only members of Fretilin, but also of the UDT and Apodeti, that culminated in the successful independence vote in 1999.⁹² One event, even one as heinous as Santa Cruz, was secondary to the broader picture of how the resistance, especially its clandestine wing, developed into what the CAVR called one of the “most successful movements of people’s diplomacy” in the twentieth century.⁹³ The Santa Cruz massacre, while undeniably important, even “pivotal,” to the maturity of the resistance, was not the truth commission’s focus.⁹⁴ It was the process, rather than the event, that seemed to matter.

⁸⁹ CAVR, “Self-Determination,” p. 123.

⁹⁰ CAVR, “Resistance,” p. 31; CAVR, “Self-Determination,” p. 83.

⁹¹ CAVR, “Self-Determination,” pp. 78, 80-81.

⁹² CAVR, “Resistance,” pp. 47-48.

⁹³ CAVR, “Self-Determination,” p. 94.

⁹⁴ CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” p. 115.

Conclusion

The massacre at Dili's Santa Cruz cemetery was a pivotal event in East Timor's modern history. Before the shooting, Indonesia had been able to proudly declare that it had brought modernization to backwater East Timor and that the Timorese, aside from a few malcontents, appreciated these efforts. Opposition to Indonesia's colonialist policies in East Timor emerged among Indonesians themselves, and some of them wrote pieces attacking the occupation as immoral, wasteful, and neocolonialist. However, Suharto's dictatorship, at the height of elaborating its development policies and with world opinion on its side, could afford to ignore such dissidents. After November 12, 1991, this was no longer possible. The brutality of Indonesian rule had been exposed before the world, and claims that the Timorese accepted Jakarta's suzerainty lay in tatters.

The Santa Cruz demonstration was not an isolated incident. From the late 1980s on, young East Timorese had taken to the streets to make their dissatisfaction with the occupation known. A highly committed clandestine resistance had been organized among students both within the territory and throughout the wider archipelago. Ironically, the very education opportunities that were meant to Indonesianize young Timorese introduced them to a greater knowledge of anti-colonialism and gave them the tools to communicate to Indonesians the injustice of the occupation using their own nationalist rhetoric. Thus, by 1991, the East Timorese resistance movement had matured beyond its early self-destructive emphasis on Marxism and ideological purity. And it was this maturation, the transformation of the East Timorese resistance into a coherent and representative nationalist movement, which culminated in independence by the end of the

century. This was the story which the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation emphasized in its study. The mobilization for the demonstration which led to the Santa Cruz massacre reflected the maturation of the resistance movement; its success in transforming world opinion validated the new strategies of the resistance.

It would be a mistake to completely subsume the massacre into the chronicle of the East Timorese resistance and to flatten the story of the second resistance. The events of November 1991 were so pivotal because, for many Westerners, they were the first indication that East Timor existed, let alone that atrocities occurred there. It was the media coverage of the massacre, the moving personal recollections of Helen Todd and Allan Nairn, and the footage of East Timorese screaming and running for their lives amid the crack of bullets, which made November 12 matter. The presence of international observers guaranteed that Santa Cruz did not fade from memory. The narrative of East Timor would now be colored by the massacre and many subsequent events would be seen through the prism of its dead. In contrast to the 1970s, this was a narrative beyond Indonesia's control. The situation in East Timor was now synonymous with murder of the weak and innocent. After Santa Cruz, it was impossible to ignore East Timor's claim for independence and justice. The East Timorese and their wishes were now the key part of the story.

CHAPTER 3

POPULAR CONSULTATION AND DESTRUCTION, 1999

On December 10, 1996, Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo and José Ramos-Horta accepted Nobel Peace Prizes in Oslo.¹ In his acceptance speech, Belo, head of the Catholic Church in East Timor since 1983, affirmed that the Timorese people desired peace with Indonesia and called for respect for human rights.² José Ramos-Horta, speaking for the CNRM, took the opportunity to outline a peace plan for East Timor. This plan envisioned a period of at least seven years during which East Timor would gain autonomy within the Republic of Indonesia. An act of self-determination could then be proclaimed if all parties agreed.³ This proposal, elaborated before a huge international audience, was an example of the resistance asserting its primacy: it, not the Indonesian government, represented East Timor and its people. After the end of the Cold War and following the Santa Cruz massacre, East Timor could no longer be ignored by the world, and the impetus for a resolution to the conflict grew. Yet when a resolution occurred in 1999, as 78.5 percent of the Timorese voted for independence, it was in the face of Indonesian opposition, intra-Timorese violence, and the erupting tensions of the territory's past.

¹ This event is discussed in Margot Cohen, "Nobel Calling," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 24, 1996, pp. 16-17; Keith D. Suter, "The Nobel Peace Prize and East Timor," *Contemporary Review* 270, 1577 (June 1997), *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost, Concordia University Libraries, January 30, 2007 <<http://search.epnet.com>>; Kohen, pp. 220-253.

² Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, "The Nobel Lecture Given by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1996," *Indonesia* 64 (October 1997): p. 158.

³ José Ramos-Horta, "The Nobel Lecture Given by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1996," *Indonesia* 64 (October 1997): p. 168. Ramos-Horta was not always so conciliatory. Soon after learning he had received the Peace Prize, Ramos-Horta had pledged to "intensify the resistance in East Timor, in Indonesia and the international arena," and called Indonesia's claims of legitimacy in East Timor an "illusion," hardly language appealing to the Indonesian Foreign Ministry; Cohen, "Nobel Calling," p. 17.

The East Timorese Narrative

Relatively few Timorese have written at length about their personal experiences during the Popular Consultation. Representative figures such as Constâncio Pinto have yet to set down their experiences in print about this period. Thus, the East Timorese narrative of the events of the late 1990s must be gleaned from interviews and reporting at the time. These records indicate that the Timorese were profoundly conscious of the divisions that existed within their society, divisions that would have to be overcome if the nation in formation was to develop and survive.

The Meaning of Collaboration

Many East Timorese supported a continuing Indonesian presence in 1999, and feared what would happen to them if the pro-independence side succeeded in the August vote. It was a problem of which Xanana Gusmão was intensely aware. In a 1998 interview with *Far Eastern Economic Review* reporter Margot Cohen, he spoke of the need to “respect the rights of the losers” of any referendum on East Timor’s future status.⁴ The major political task facing the East Timorese, Gusmão elaborated, was to convince those Timorese supporting integration that their rights, especially “their right to live,” would be respected.⁵ Implicit in Gusmão’s statements was his fear that the Timorese were so traumatized, not only by the occupation, but by the memories and

⁴ Margot Cohen, “Crack in the Wall,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 3, 1998, p. 24.

⁵ *Ibid.*

grudges of the Civil War, that the chance for East Timor to finally determine its own future could easily evaporate amidst mass bloodletting on all sides.⁶

Yet, the harsh social divisions and hardened identities that Gusmão and others feared were perceived by other contemporary observers to be less rigid and permanent. Two 1999 *FEER* articles, both written by Dan Murphy, showed that Timorese who supported the occupation had identities more malleable than the label “collaborator” could encompass. The first article, Murphy’s “Up in Arms,” profiled Martinho Fernandes, a civil servant and proud militia leader. Fernandes had a long history of support for integration: he was formerly a member of Apodeti, he had been imprisoned by Fretilin during the Civil War, and had acted as a guide for Kopassus after the Indonesians freed him in 1977.⁷ Fernandes did not hide the fact that he was still prepared to fight for integration and he justified the creation of militias as a necessary precaution given that Falintil remained armed.⁸ In many ways Fernandes’s profile seemed to confirm the existence of irreconcilable divisions within Timorese society. However, his family life made the situation much more complex. In the 1970s, Fernandes had adopted a boy named Francisco Gusmão, a relative of Xanana Gusmão, after the child’s father was murdered by ABRI. Among the “things peace has got going for it,” according to Murphy, was the fact that Fernandes had not only adopted a relative of the resistance’s leader, but also that the father and stepson maintained a cordial relationship despite the fact that Francisco Gusmão was staunchly pro-independence.⁹ Similar situations were

⁶ It was far from clear at this point that intra-Timorese violence would be primarily committed by pro-integration forces. For instance, summer 1998 had seen several attacks by Timorese students on their schools and Indonesian teachers; Margot Cohen, “Class Conflict,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 8, 1998, p. 34.

⁷ Dan Murphy, “Up in Arms,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 18, 1999, p. 25.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

relatively common in East Timor. As had been the case with the brothers Arsenio and José Ramos-Horta in the 1970s, so it was also in the 1990s: politics could divide families, but not necessarily sunder them.

Dan Murphy further demonstrated the tenuous nature of collaboration in occupied East Timor in “Local Hero,” a profile of Oscar Lima, a former Falintil guerrilla who had started a construction company and become a millionaire, becoming an undeniable beneficiary of the occupation who remained “a staunch supporter of independence.”¹⁰ Indeed, Lima was close friends with Xanana Gusmão and claimed the latter had regularly snuck into his house for dinner in the early 1990s. Lima’s motivation was not entirely nationalistic. With his highly placed resistance contacts, Lima would benefit immensely from independent East Timor’s business opportunities, especially if political independence coincided with the departure of the Indonesian businessmen who then dominated the territory’s economy. Nevertheless, the fact that Lima would support independence, with all its intangibles and uncertainties, over the status quo from which he benefited enormously exposed “the depth of Jakarta’s failure to win over the hearts and minds of the East Timorese.” It also underscored the fact that there were few absolutes in occupied Timor. Collaboration and resistance were flexible concepts. If they lived in East Timor, even the most ardent nationalist had to reach some sort of accommodation with the regime. And likewise, someone who benefited from the occupation or believed in integration would not necessarily assume that those opposed to Indonesian rule were traitors. While East Timor’s society before the August ballot was certainly fractured, there were also reasons to believe that self-determination could

¹⁰ This paragraph is based on Dan Murphy, “Local Hero,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 18, 1999, p. 47.

evolve without mass violence. Few might have believed in that likelihood, but the potential was undeniable.

Blame and Reconciliation

The mass violence that engulfed East Timor in 1998 and 1999 was hardly unanticipated. Militia violence had exploded across the territory and it was clear that the groups were being supported by the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (National Army of Indonesia, TNI). Indeed, an *Asiaweek* investigation concluded that without the TNI, “the militia would disappear overnight.”¹¹ This assessment of the relative weakness of the militias without military support was echoed and extended by John Pilger, still active on behalf of East Timorese independence. In a September 1999 article for London’s *Guardian Unlimited*, he insisted that Indonesia was deceiving the West into believing that the Timorese themselves caused violence in East Timor. On the contrary, he claimed, most militia members “are not East Timorese at all, but Indonesian soldiers in disguise.”¹² While Pilger’s point was undoubtedly flawed by the fact that he ignored the glaring evidence of intra-Timorese antagonism, it was also representative of a major

¹¹ The article further noted that militia membership could be economical; some militia members were paid, and steady income was attractive. The pay was, of course, provided by the TNI; Tom McCawley, “Murderous Puppets,” *Asiaweek*, September 17, 1999 <<http://www-cgi.cnn.com/ASIANOW/asiaweek/magazine/99/0917/militia.html>> (accessed July 25, 2007). Another *Asiaweek* article estimated that the TNI had provided at least 10,000 weapons, including M16 rifles, to militia members by the fall of 1999; Sangwon Suh and Tom McCawley, “East Timor’s Agony,” *Asiaweek*, September 17, 1999 <<http://www-cgi.cnn.com/ASIANOW/asiaweek/magazine/99/0917/cover1.html>> (accessed July 25, 2007).

¹² John Pilger, “Under the influence: The real reason for the United Nations’ peacekeeping role in East Timor is to maintain Indonesian control,” *Guardian Unlimited*, September 21, 1999 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/>> (accessed January 31, 2007).

resistance trope: that the TNI, virtually alone, was responsible for the violence gripping East Timor during the Popular Consultation period.¹³

This was certainly the view of Xanana Gusmão who, despite his misapprehensions about tensions among East Timorese, placed the blame for the pre-ballot violence solely on the TNI. Interviewed by the *Far Eastern Economic Review* on August 5, 1999, Gusmão told the questioner that he was most concerned about how the TNI, rather than the militias, would respond to East Timor's independence.¹⁴ The militias, he opined, were composed of "our brothers," who would be amenable to a "political approach" by the pro-independence activists, whereas the TNI, with its history of bloody suppression and stated disinclination to release East Timor from the Republic, made him "very, very worried."¹⁵ Thus, less than a month before the ballot, the announced results of which would cause the militias to lay waste to East Timor, Gusmão expressed more concern about the Indonesian Army than about potential civil war. Indeed, he warned Indonesia's Defense Minister, General Wiranto, to rein in his Indonesian troops, otherwise they would "suffer many casualties" at the hands of Falintil.¹⁶ Gusmão and others here seemed more prepared for war with Indonesia, with combating another invasion or covert destabilization program, than with confronting

¹³ In an interesting counterpoint, Allan Nairn had snuck into East Timor in the spring of 1999 and secured an interview with Herminio da Costa, a high-ranking militia commander, who bragged that the militias had received a "conditional license to kill" from the TNI: so long as the militias attacked pro-independence demonstrators, the police and TNI would leave them alone. Nairn's careful report is a more convincing portrayal of events in East Timor at this time than Pilger's invective; Allan Nairn, "License to Kill in East Timor," *The Nation*, May, 31, 1999 <<http://www.thenation.com/archive/>> (accessed August 7, 2006). Nairn attempted to return to East Timor for the Popular Consultation, but was discovered and deported by the Indonesians, who had been wary of letting him report from the country ever since his coverage of Santa Cruz; "Indonesians Deport an American Journalist," *The New York Times*, September 20, 1999, p. A6.

¹⁴ "Will There be Chaos and Killing....?" *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 2, 1999, p. 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

domestic problems.¹⁷ Perhaps, after more than two decades of occupation, looking to the Indonesians as the source of all traumas in East Timor was a natural response. By focusing criticism on the TNI rather than Timorese militias, Gusmão effectively appealed to international opinion, which already perceived Indonesia as an aggressor and potential spoiler. The media-savvy Gusmão was also arguing against the idea that East Timor was about to be ripped apart by civil war, an idea that the Indonesians had successfully disseminated, as will be seen. An unstable East Timor would have difficulty acquiring international aid and protection, whereas an East Timor portrayed as recovering from Indonesian depredations committed in the face of an internationally-sanctioned act of self-determination would be more appealing to world public opinion.

The horrific aftermath of the August 1999 ballot required that newly independent East Timor confront its past. Its political leaders, especially Gusmão, opted to pursue a policy of reconciliation, consistent with the political solution he had said he wanted to offer pro-integrationists in the months before the vote.¹⁸ This process, which would culminate in the establishment of the CAVR, was seen by the country's leadership as "vital to the political and economic renaissance the new nation so urgently needs."¹⁹ There was a sense in East Timor, Margot Cohen reported, that the relative peacefulness

¹⁷ José Ramos-Horta was also threatening Indonesia with dire consequences should it not allow the ballot to take place. On August 17, 1999, he threatened to unleash a "desperate and ferocious" internet campaign against Indonesia if it refused to abide by the results of the August 30 ballot. Ramos-Horta claimed that 100 hackers in Europe and the United States were prepared to unleash computer viruses against Indonesian interests, affecting everything from the Jakarta stock exchange to Indonesian air traffic control. Indonesia, it was reported, took this threat "extremely serious[ly]," although many analysts concluded that Ramos-Horta was bluffing; David T. Hill, "East Timor and the Internet: Global Political Leverage in/on Indonesia," *Indonesia* 73 (April 2002): pp. 42-43.

¹⁸ This decision was controversial within East Timor. Bishop Belo, for instance, publicly called for an international tribunal to be established for East Timor, in the mold of those already operating for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and charged with trying those "absolutely" responsible for the violence; Philip Shenon, "Timorese Bishop is calling for a War Crimes Tribunal," *The New York Times*, September 13, 1999, p. A6.

¹⁹ Margot Cohen, "A Lot to Forgive," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 28, 2002, p. 16.

of the early 2000s was contingent on some form of non-retributive justice being applied to the perpetrators of the most recent violence.²⁰ The bitterness engendered by the events of 1999 remained and threatened to explode in further violence unless steps were taken to alleviate the tension.

What the leadership of East Timor chose, or were constrained by circumstances, to do was described by Adelino Gomes, a prominent Portuguese journalist, in 2004.²¹ Gomes recounted the CAVR hearing on Internal Political Conflict, held in Dili in December 2003 and attended by most of East Timor's past and present political leaders. Gomes reported that former Fretilin Central Committee members admitted responsibility and asked forgiveness for human rights violations during the Civil War, a conflict that a UDT leader apologized for beginning. The meeting ended with Gomes almost in tears as the representatives from all the old parties shared a spontaneous group hug. As Gomes recounted it, the hearing was a resounding success for political reconciliation, and, by extension, for the policy of reconciliation throughout East Timor.²² The country's leaders hoped for peace, but the question was whether they would be able to achieve it in practice.

The Indonesian Narrative

Responses among Indonesians to the events of 1999 in East Timor were complex. Some, such as presidential candidate Megawati Sukarnoputri, considered President

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ This paragraph is based on Adelino Gomes, " 'A lesson in humanity,' " Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor <<http://www.easttimor-reconciliation.org/>> (accessed May 12, 2007).

²² It should be noted that Gomes also appealed to the international media to devote more coverage to the reconciliation process in East Timor. Framing this appeal, it was unlikely that he would highlight shortcomings in the reconciliation process.

Habibie's East Timor policy to be irresponsible and opportunistic, and felt that any alteration of the Republic's borders during a period of political transition was potentially disastrous.²³ Others in the Indonesian government considered East Timor to be too much of a diplomatic and economic liability to be worth retaining, not just an irritating "pebble in our shoe," in the words of an anonymous Indonesian diplomat and government minister, but "a millstone around our neck."²⁴ Another group, including much of the military, agreed with militia leader Martinho Fernandes, who refused to surrender integration without violence. Still others were so preoccupied with their own concerns, including living in a country that had just undergone a revolution and was in the midst of economic meltdown, that they could spare little thought for events in a distant province. And some Indonesians considered the resolution of the East Timor situation to be the litmus test for Indonesia's new democracy.²⁵ Many of these responses will be considered in this section, using the report of the *Komisi Penyelidik Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia di Timor Timur* (Investigative Commission on Abuses of Human Rights in East Timor, KPP HAM) and Ali Alatas's view of the East Timor situation from inside the government of Indonesia as described by him in *The Pebble in the Shoe*.

KPP HAM

²³ Megawati Sukarnoputri, "Blame it on Habibie: A leading opposition figure says the world shouldn't confuse the discredited government with the Indonesian people," *Newsweek International*, September 20, 1999, p. 25.

²⁴ John McBeth and Dan Murphy, "Sudden Impact," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 11, 1999, p. 19. The description of East Timor as a "pebble in our shoe" came from Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, and was the title of his book about East Timor, which is discussed below.

²⁵ A valuable source for the widely varied Indonesian reactions to the Popular Consultation is *The Jakarta Post*, an English-language Indonesian newspaper, especially its editorial pages in August and September 1999.

In late September 1999, the Indonesian government charged KPP HAM to investigate human rights violations in East Timor from January to October 1999.²⁶ KPP HAM's conclusions were explosive, not merely accusing the TNI of orchestrating the pre- and post-ballot violence, but also challenging the very legitimacy of the occupation itself. This historical revisionism began in the first pages of the report, when KPP HAM denigrated the Indonesian government's past assertions that the Timorese had freely chosen to become part of the Republic. In fact, the Investigative Commission concluded, the New Order's East Timor policy in the mid 1970s was a conscious "effort to suppress the right to self-determination" of the Timorese.²⁷ The occupation had run "counter to the fundamental rights of the people of East Timor" and represented an illegal act of Indonesian aggression.²⁸ The events of 1999 were not an aberration, but the continuation of a pattern of murder, torture, and destruction.²⁹

In the case of the period of its mandate—January to October 1999—KPP HAM's report completely dismissed the notion that the East Timorese had been divided into two factions battling on equal terms for control of the territory's future. There had been no civil war, no chaotic bloodletting, but instead a "systematic, planned, collective, massive, and widespread" effort to terrorize the Timorese.³⁰ The actual perpetrators were often Timorese themselves, especially after the May 5 Agreement, when the TNI found itself suddenly subjected to intense international scrutiny.³¹ However, the militias' violence

²⁶ The former month refers to Habibie's announcement that East Timor would be allowed to undergo self-determination; the latter month saw the end of Indonesian sovereignty in East Timor.

²⁷ KPP HAM, "Full Report of the Investigative Commission into Human Rights Violations in East Timor," in *Masters of Terror: Indonesia's Military and Violence in East Timor*, eds. Richard Tanter, Desmond Ball, and Gerry van Klinken (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), p. 22.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-39.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

was, KPP HAM concluded, unquestionably sanctioned and instigated by the TNI, which used the militias as “proxy forces.”³² According to the report, militias and the TNI carried out joint operations against pro-independence Timorese, the military both armed and stored weapons for the militias, and militia ceremonies were attended by prominent military figures.³³ This meant that the Indonesian authorities not only tolerated, but actively encouraged the militias, and it was these authorities, especially those serving in the security apparatus, that bore the blame for the disaster that had engulfed East Timor in 1999.³⁴

After squarely blaming the Indonesian military for the destruction of East Timor, KPP HAM compiled a preliminary list of individuals that it felt should be investigated and tried. The list was wide-ranging and included not only militia leaders and culpable members of the TNI and the police—those who had personally committed human rights violations—but also Indonesian bureaucrats serving in East Timor and military commanders.³⁵ Of especial import was the fact that the indictments prominently listed Defense Minister Wiranto. In KPP HAM’s estimation, the plans for post-ballot militia violence were so comprehensive and relatively open that he must have known about them. It argued that he had, in fact, either approved the plans himself or simply allowed

³² Ibid., p. 39.

³³ Ibid., pp. 29-34.

³⁴ This does not mean that KPP HAM’s report excused the militias’ actions. Indeed, the report pointed out that many militia members had formerly belonged to *Garda Muda Penegak Integrasi* (Youth Guard for Upholding Integration, Gadapaksi), a paramilitary organization established by Kopassus in the early 1990s. Many of the immediate perpetrators therefore had long-term ties with the occupation authorities and had freely chosen to participate in the anti-independence campaign; Ibid., pp. 30-31. The report also pointed out that many of the direct perpetrators—those on the ground burning, looting, raping, and killing—were Timorese. It went on to state, however, that those Timorese had often been accompanied by Indonesian police; Ibid., p. 58.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 59-60.

them to be carried out.³⁶ The fact that a civilian organization, government-sanctioned or not, could contemplate the indictment of the head of the Indonesian armed forces was a sure sign of the waning power of the military in the immediate aftermath of the May Revolution, although it must be noted that the Indonesian Attorney-General's Office repressed the report until March 2001.

Ali Alatas

Indonesia's former Foreign Minister wrote his memoir of East Timor diplomacy, *The Pebble in the Shoe: The Diplomatic Struggle for East Timor*, for, he argued, "the sake of completeness."³⁷ In many respects, Alatas seemed well placed to offer an insider's perspective on this issue. He was a veteran member of the Indonesian Foreign Service, and as Foreign Minister had constantly defended the occupation, a fact evident in the previous chapter. Alatas also served as Foreign Minister during the most important Indo-Portuguese negotiations over the future of East Timor.³⁸ Alatas's book describes these negotiations in some detail. Alatas portrayed the talks as immensely frustrating, marred by constant bickering over diplomatic minutiae and protocol.³⁹ Worst for Alatas, however, was what he considered to be Portugal's unprofessional conduct, which he blamed for retarding any progress towards a solution.⁴⁰ Indeed, for Alatas, the problems

³⁶ KPP HAM also faulted Wiranto for publicly and repeatedly hailing the productive nature of the TNI-militia relationship, which effectively sanctioned their violent anti-independence activities; *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³⁷ Ali Alatas, *The Pebble in the Shoe: The Diplomatic Struggle for East Timor* (Jakarta: Aksara Karunia, 2006), p. xi.

³⁸ These negotiations began in secret in 1984. Alatas served as Foreign Minister from 1988 to 1999.

³⁹ Alatas, *The Pebble in the Shoe*, pp. 67-84.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

that Indonesia faced because of East Timor were most often not of the Republic's own making, but rather the result of international connivance, sloppiness, or bad judgement.

Despite his airing of the regime's position that East Timor was an inviolable part of Indonesia and that international pressure to alter the situation was an unjustified imposition upon Indonesia, Alatas's book revealed him to be among the coterie of government officials who, in the early 1990s, unsuccessfully urged Suharto to accord some sort of special status to East Timor as a way of diffusing international criticism.⁴¹ Habibie's offer of autonomy in 1998 was therefore not representative of totally new thinking within the Indonesian government.⁴² However, while Alatas might have supported some type of accommodation with the Timorese nationalists, he totally opposed Habibie's ultimate offer to East Timor posing a choice between significant autonomy and outright independence.⁴³

Alatas's description of how Habibie presented his decision on independence to the Indonesian Cabinet on January 27, 1999 reveals a great deal about the functioning of the Indonesian government. There was a compelling logic to Habibie's decision, namely that there seemed little reason for Indonesia to continue financing East Timor during a transitional autonomy period only to have the territory leave the Republic at a later date.⁴⁴ Giving independence to East Timor would also remove a great drain on the national

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 100-104.

⁴² Alatas claimed that he had himself suggested the idea of offering autonomy to East Timor to Habibie in June 1998; *ibid.*, p. 135.

⁴³ Prior to January 1999, Indonesia had firmly ruled out any type of referendum; John McBeth, "A Special Case," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 6, 1998, 29. Under the terms of the May 5 Agreement, autonomous East Timor would be allowed its own flag, political parties, provincial government, and court system (although the Indonesian Supreme Court remained the final court of appeal). The central government would maintain control over foreign affairs, fiscal policy, and national defense; Alatas, *The Pebble in the Shoe*, p. 164.

⁴⁴ Alatas, *The Pebble in the Shoe*, p. 149.

budget.⁴⁵ In fact, Alatas stated that Habibie encountered no outright ministerial opposition to his proposal in January, even from the military.⁴⁶ This lack of opposition was partially explained by the mindset of Alatas and other Indonesian officials, few of whom believed the Timorese would vote to leave the Republic. Indeed, according to Alatas, Indonesian bureaucrats devoted much less time to contingency planning for East Timor's independence than to crafting an autonomy package acceptable to the international community that was not applicable to other restive provinces within Indonesia.⁴⁷ The potential concerns of the Timorese seemed to factor little in the analysis of Indonesian government officials during much of the Popular Consultation, rather, the Habibie Administration was more concerned with massaging international opinion and preventing the "balkanization" of Indonesia.

Opposition to the independence option for East Timor did exist within the government of Indonesia, a situation of which Habibie and Alatas were well aware. It was in order to soothe this opposition, Alatas explained, that the government constrained him with "an extremely rigid and narrow brief" regarding acceptable security arrangements for the Popular Consultation.⁴⁸ This brief was ultimately adhered to, as under the May 5 Agreement, security was to be the responsibility of the TNI and police, rather than an international force.⁴⁹ Alatas recalled that he was fully cognizant of the poor security situation in East Timor in 1998 and 1999, and he must have known that

⁴⁵ Alatas recalled that the government's economic officials were the most enthusiastic about the independence offer; *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-153.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁴⁹ Alatas vehemently defended this most controversial part of the May 5 Agreement, and claimed that any insistence by the United Nations that a peacekeeping force deploy to East Timor prior to the ballot would have resulted in the negotiations breaking down. Indeed, according to Alatas, even the decision to allow unarmed foreign civilian police personnel to monitor the voting was approved only after great struggle within the Indonesian government; *Ibid.*, pp. 175-183.

allowing the TNI to maintain its presence in the territory was inviting trouble. However, in Alatas's view, the greatest threat to peace in East Timor came not from the TNI, but from the Timorese themselves. Alatas recalled that his thoughts contained a great deal of foreboding, as he believed that the losing side of the ballot would never accept the results. If the pro-independence side lost, Alatas opined, then they would resume their guerrilla campaign, whereas the success of the independence option would lead its opponents to commit mass violence; either way, post-ballot violence was inevitable.⁵⁰ This did not mean Alatas denied the existence of TNI collusion with the militias, but he also insisted that this collusion resulted more from ambivalence than malevolence or planning.⁵¹ At the worst, the TNI engaged in a "misguided" policy of encouraging the militias, but Alatas felt by doing so they were taking advantage of a situation already bordering on civil war, rather than creating the atmosphere themselves.⁵²

By August 30, Alatas had begun to suspect that Timorese support for the autonomy option was not as strong as many in the government, especially in the military, believed. Despite this pessimism, Alatas still confessed himself "painfully surprised" when the East Timorese overwhelmingly voted for independence, a sentiment doubtless shared by a great deal of the Indonesian Administration.⁵³ As the territory descended into violence, Alatas found himself following the Indonesian government's line that no foreign peacekeepers would be permitted in East Timor. Yet even as he did so, Alatas insisted that he felt increasingly doubtful that the TNI could control the situation. He thought that even Habibie had lost confidence in the military, but that the President

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. xvi.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 214.

⁵² Ibid. pp. 189-194; quotation on p. 194.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 211.

deferred to Wiranto, who refused for weeks to countenance the presence of peacekeepers on Indonesian soil.⁵⁴ The fact that Indonesia's top general could effectively stymie his President's preferences says a great deal about the power dynamics of the Habibie Administration, as it was only when Wiranto stopped his opposition that the government, with Alatas as its spokesman, acquiesced to a Chapter VII peacekeeping deployment.⁵⁵ Alatas thus saw his "worst fears become reality" in East Timor, with the territory dissolving into inevitable violence and Indonesia's international reputation torn to shreds.⁵⁶

The Journalist Narrative

In 1999, journalists could travel throughout East Timor with far less interference than in the past. However, they were still constrained by the fact that the militias, and often the TNI, considered them little more than proponents of independence, and thus potentially subject to the same harsh measures that were enacted against Timorese opponents of integration.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, international journalists in East Timor offered

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 219. Habibie's resistance to peacekeepers would not save his political career, which was finished in a great deal because of the Indonesian nationalist backlash over the "loss" of East Timor; Ibid., pp. 230-231.

⁵⁵ It has been suggested that Wiranto's obstinate opposition to peacekeepers was in furtherance of the General's political career, effectively torpedoing Habibie's presidency to allow Wiranto to run for office; Suh and McCawley.

⁵⁶ Alatas, *The Pebble in the Shoe*, p. xvii.

⁵⁷ Indeed, *Asiaweek's* Tom McCawley reported that, following the ballot, journalists, especially Indonesian ones, had been deliberately targeted by the militias, who accused the media of "taking a pro-independence line." The effect of this anti-journalist violence was to confine reporters to UNAMET headquarters in Dili as of early September 1999, effectively giving the militias a free hand in the rest of the territory; Tom McCawley, "One Reporter's Notebook: How journalists came under the gun too," *Asiaweek*, September 17, 1999 <<http://www-cgi.cnn.com/ASIANOW/asiaweek/magazine/99/0917/journalists.html>> (accessed July 26, 2007). Being a journalist could be quite dangerous in 1999 East Timor. Perhaps the most infamous example of this was the murder of *Financial Times* reporter Sander Thoenes by a TNI unit in September 1999, an act which caused fury throughout the journalistic community; Cameron W. Barr, "A Brutal Exit: Battalion 745," *Christian Science Monitor* March 17, 2000, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost, Concordia University Libraries, <<http://search.epnet.com>> (accessed February 21,

valuable commentary on events in 1999. This section examines two distinct trends in journalistic coverage of the Popular Consultation, both of which reflect continuities with previously discussed media coverage of East Timor. The first trend, which was prevalent before the actual ballot on August 30, 1999, witnessed debates over whether East Timor was a viable independent country, and whether the violence presaging the ballot was a sign of incipient civil war. Such coverage mirrored concerns that had been articulated in 1975. The second trend, which arose after the militias began their greatest terror campaign against the Timorese population in September 1999, recalled editorial coverage following the Santa Cruz massacre, which had analyzed events in East Timor in the context of the end of the Cold War and the Persian Gulf War. In 1999, the editorial temptation was to compare international responses to the massacres in Kosovo and in East Timor, thus establishing a debate on the uses of humanitarian intervention. A fascinating example of this dynamic was found in the editorial pages of *The New York Times*, which witnessed a confrontation between international affairs experts about the proper use of humanitarian intervention, and whether the situation in East Timor represented the opportunity to advance respect for international human rights.

Echoes of the Past: Viability and Civil Conflict

As in 1975, editorial coverage of the benefits of integration showed a clear discrepancy between reporters on the ground and their editors in 1999. In the 1970s, editorials in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* criticized the Suharto regime for failing to act aggressively enough to prevent the existence of a “Communist” East Timor. The

2007). There was also a great deal of violence directed against Indonesian journalists by both the Indonesian military and militias; David T. Hill, p. 45 n. 96.

invasion was also supported by the Australian conservative magazine *Quadrant*, which accused those who supported East Timorese independence of coddling Communism and of incipient racism. Journalistic coverage of events in late 1975, which was almost totally dependent on sources provided by the Indonesians, also encouraged the assumption that the conflict was a long civil war between Fretilin and its opponents. Thus, a conflict that actually involved Indonesian troops was widely presented as an intra-Timorese war, albeit with one side receiving substantial Indonesian support. These two concerns—whether East Timor was a “viable” independent country and whether the mass militia violence was actually civil war—re-emerged in coverage of the Popular Consultation.

On February 18, 1999, *FEER* reporter Dan Murphy published an article on coffee cultivation in East Timor, which concluded that the territory did, indeed, possess at least one industry with proven profitability and huge growth potential, an industry that could, in theory, do a great deal to make an independent East Timor economically viable.⁵⁸ According to Murphy, coffee cultivation was by far the largest industry in East Timor, occupying at least one-fifth of the population. It could also be quite profitable, with economists estimating that the coffee industry would bring at least US\$30 million into the territory in 1999.⁵⁹ This industry was also well-integrated into the global economy. The military monopolies that controlled coffee production for most of the occupation, which had been so criticized by George Aditjondro, had been dismantled in the mid-1990s allowing East Timorese farmers to sell their products on the open market. Murphy

⁵⁸ This paragraph is based on Dan Murphy, “Perky Future,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 18, 1999, p. 46.

⁵⁹ To give an indication of how large a contribution this would make to East Timor’s budget, it should be noted that the province’s 1998 GDP was US\$113 million; *Ibid.*

reported this new freedom meant farmers had been motivated to open new land to cultivation and to take better care of their crops, which had often been neglected under the Indonesian monopoly system. In addition, East Timorese coffee farmers had played the international market well, joining the National Cooperative Business Association of the United States and quickly obtaining an organic certificate for their coffee, all of which translated, concluded Murphy, into rising incomes. East Timor's coffee was in demand and its farmers had proven their ability to navigate the international marketplace, resulting in both increased profits and production. The coffee industry in East Timor, in Murphy's estimation, was well-placed to provide needed funds to the Timorese government, whether autonomous or independent.⁶⁰

Ten days before the ballot, Murphy's editors at the *Far Eastern Economic Review* issued an editorial in which they recommended that the East Timorese accept Indonesia's autonomy package, rather than vote for independence.⁶¹ While admitting that "in a more perfect world we would champion sovereignty for every community," they concluded that East Timor lacked the means for independent economic survival. The territory was, the *FEER* editors argued, too dependent on agriculture and lacking in proven natural resources to survive as an independent entity, and, while Indonesia's rule had undoubtedly been "brutal," that country also had proven itself capable of delivering economic development to East Timor. The Indonesian government's offer of autonomy was, *FEER*'s editors felt, extremely "reasonable," and an excellent opportunity for the

⁶⁰ This article may also be read alongside Murphy's "Local Hero," discussed previously, whose profile of Oscar Lima suggested that there were indigenous entrepreneurs poised to take advantage of new business opportunities that would result from independence.

⁶¹ This paragraph is based on "A Way Out," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 20, 1998, p. 62.

Timorese to achieve a measure of political autonomy while maintaining ties with the more robust Indonesian economy.

With the province of East Timor apparently dissolving into chaos following the September announcement of the results of the Popular Consultation, it was important to ask what type of environment would greet any peacekeepers. A renewed civil war in East Timor would certainly not encourage the dispatch of such a force. Yet, at least for readers of *The Economist*, the perception was that peacekeepers going into East Timor would be entering a disaster zone, with rampaging militias and Indonesian troops ready to create a bloodbath. Such coverage had begun in April 1999, when *The Economist* reported that optimism suggesting that the Popular Consultation would proceed smoothly was being dashed by the depredations of the militias.⁶² The same article further reported that Gusmão was calling for a “popular insurrection” against the militias should Indonesian troops fail to contain the violence.⁶³ Such reporting could only bolster impressions, which Indonesia was actively trying to encourage, that East Timor was sliding steadily into anarchy.⁶⁴ In September, that impression was further bolstered. According to “The dangers in East Timor,” any peacekeeping force would be entering “a humanitarian mess,” not only confronting a devastated territory and brutalized population, but also 20,000 Indonesia troops “of varying loyalties” and likely resentful of

⁶² “East Timor, adrift and violent,” *The Economist*, April 10, 1999, p. 40.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ It should be noted that *The Economist* did not function as a pro-Indonesian publication during the Popular Consultation. In a December 2000 article, “The fire next time,” the magazine disparaged the idea that East Timor’s departure from the Republic would inevitably lead to the break-up of Indonesia. Through a detailed analysis of the reasons other restive provinces wanted to leave Indonesia, none of which had to do with East Timor, *The Economist* concluded that secessionist instability in Indonesia was the result of the government’s own flawed annexation policies, rather than a domino effect that began with East Timor; “The fire next time,” *The Economist*, December 9, 2000, pp. 24, 26.

an armed foreign presence in their country.⁶⁵ *The Economist* also predicted that pro-independence Timorese would use the cover of an armed humanitarian deployment in order to settle scores with actual and suspected militia members.⁶⁶ Any peacekeeping force entering East Timor, in other words, would find a logistical, emotional, and nationalist nightmare. It was not difficult to escape the impression, after reading this article that it was best to leave East Timor to its own devices.

To Intervene or Not to Intervene

As had been the case following the Santa Cruz massacre, editorial opinion on the situation in East Timor in 1999 was heavily influenced by concurrent circumstances. In 1991 and 1992, the end of the Cold War and the expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait in the Persian Gulf War framed the East Timor question in the media; both events undercut Indonesia's claims to East Timor. In 1999, editorialists and columnists were preoccupied with the parallels between Kosovo and East Timor, and especially with why it had been acceptable for the West to intervene in the former, but apparently not the latter, despite similar circumstances. This section examines three editorials that appeared in *The New York Times* from September 11 to September 15, 1999. These articles, by Stanley Hoffmann, Ronald Steel, and Thomas L. Friedman, all struggled with the similarities between Kosovo and East Timor and whether the U.S. should militarily intervene in every case of mass human rights violations.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ "The dangers in East Timor," *The Economist*, September 18, 1999, p. 39. The fear that peacekeepers would have to fight Indonesian troops preoccupied many governments, especially Australia's, which would provide the bulk of any international force, and was a major reason why it was felt necessary to secure Indonesian support for the deployment of a peacekeeping force; Suh and McCawley.

⁶⁶ "The dangers in East Timor," p. 39.

⁶⁷ Friedman's article was also notable for appearing alongside two other pieces that explicitly mentioned East Timor. In one, Maureen Dowd castigated then-candidate George W. Bush's foreign policy

On September 11, 1999, Stanley Hoffmann, professor of international relations at Harvard University, published "Principles in the Balkans, but Not in East Timor?" This article inaugurated a debate within *The New York Times* on whether there were similarities between the Kosovo and East Timor situations and, if so, what the proper international response to the violence in East Timor should be. For his part, Hoffmann perceived compelling similarities between events in Kosovo and East Timor, namely that they confronted the international community with a choice between whether to privilege national sovereignty over the protection of human rights.⁶⁸ For Hoffmann, the West's eventual forceful response to the Kosovo situation represented "a new standard" in international relations, "that no state was allowed to commit gross human rights violations even on its own territory" with impunity. In both Kosovo and East Timor, Hoffmann continued, "quasi-genocidal violence" demanded a forceful international response in the name of human rights and the fact that the international community had intervened militarily in Kosovo meant that such intervention should also take place in East Timor. Indeed, according to Hoffmann, East Timor in 1999 represented an even more compelling case for humanitarian intervention than Kosovo because arguments in favour of national sovereignty could not properly be applied to East Timor. Unlike Serbia in Kosovo, Hoffmann pointed out, Indonesian control over East Timor was illegal and unjustified. Therefore, to act as if it was necessary to get Indonesia's permission to

experience given that he thought the inhabitants of East Timor were called "East Timorians," rather than "East Timorese"; Maureen Dowd, "Trust but Verify," *The New York Times*, September 15, 1999, p. A29. In the other article, historian John Roosa, who had been an official observer of the Popular Consultation, criticized the Clinton Administration for trusting Indonesia's assertions that it could guarantee security following the vote and for failing to push for an international force to be on stand-by should Indonesia fail in its security responsibilities; John Roosa, "Fatal Trust in Timor," *The New York Times*, September 15, 1999, p. A29. Thus, on September 15, 1999, three of the four op-eds on page A29 of *The New York Times* explicitly concerned the situation in East Timor.

⁶⁸ This paragraph is based on Stanley Hoffmann, "Principles in the Balkans, but Not in East Timor?" *The New York Times*, September 11, 1999, p. A11.

dispatch a peacekeeping force to East Timor made the international community's "commitment to human rights...[look] scandalously selective."⁶⁹ It was incumbent upon the United Nations to take forceful action to guarantee East Timor's security, not only because of the Kosovo precedent of privileging human rights over sovereignty, but because East Timor represented a case where arguments about sovereign immunity did not even apply. To intervene in Kosovo in the name of human rights, argued Hoffmann, mandated intervention in the analogous situation in East Timor.

The day after Hoffmann's article appeared, *The New York Times* published an editorial by Ronald Steel, a professor of international relations at the University of Southern California. Steel's article, entitled "East Timor Isn't Kosovo," forcefully disagreed with Hoffmann's premise that an armed international response to Serbian depredations in Kosovo represented a new paradigm in international relations, one that called for similar intervention in East Timor. In fact, Steel argued, there was no new international consensus on humanitarian intervention and, furthermore, while the situation in East Timor represented a much "stronger" case for intervention than had been the case in Kosovo, a peacekeeping force should not be dispatched to the territory.⁷⁰ This was the case, Steel believed, because the premise that the situations in East Timor and Kosovo were analogous was false. Serbia, he wrote, was a "puny" country that had no direct bearing on American interests. The United States, according to Steel, had not gone into Kosovo for humanitarian reasons, but to contain the Balkan conflict and to prove

⁶⁹ Hoffmann also argued that it would be considerably easier to gain Security Council approval for a peacekeeping deployment to East Timor than had been the case in Kosovo. Russia and China, he pointed out, whose policies had stymied international action against Serbia, had no interest in defending Indonesia; *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ This paragraph is based on Ronald Steel, "East Timor Isn't Kosovo." *The New York Times*, September 12, 1999, p. WK19.

NATO's continuing relevance in the post-Cold War world. Intervention against Serbia could, therefore, take place "relatively cheaply," with massive public support, and with little chance of long-term damage to the United States' wider economic and political needs. Indonesia, by contrast, was, according to Steel, a major component of international political and economic systems and thus could not be so readily confronted by American power. Indonesia was the world's fourth most populous country, a major American trading partner and strategic ally, and possessed a military capability that Serbia would have envied. Military action against Serbia, in other words, had entailed little risk, while action against Indonesia carried great economic, political, and strategic drawbacks. Humanitarian intervention, Steel concluded, should thus remain "the exception rather than the rule" and should certainly not be undertaken against Indonesia. Such realism, he admitted, was "deeply regrettable on moral grounds," but was nevertheless mandated by this case.⁷¹

Three days after Steel's article appeared arguing against intervention in East Timor on realist grounds, Thomas L. Friedman's "The Four Questions" presented its own version of the proper international response to the bloodshed in East Timor. Like Steel, Friedman adopted a realist stance towards humanitarian intervention, but he arrived at a cautious rationale for American action.⁷² Friedman, like Stanley Hoffmann, argued from the premise that the Kosovo and East Timor situations were analogous and concluded that the reasons to intervene in Kosovo also applied to East Timor. Friedman discussed these reasons under the rubric of his titular four questions, which focused on U.S.

⁷¹ Steel also criticized the United Nations for ever pushing Indonesia to hold the Popular Consultation, given that there was little chance of forceful action to uphold the results. The whole experience, he opined, had left the UN looking weak and ineffective; *Ibid.*

⁷² This paragraph is based on Thomas L. Friedman, "The Four Questions," *The New York Times*, September 15, 1999, p. A29.

strategic interests, cost, effectiveness, and time commitment. In Kosovo, according to Friedman, the United States had been presented with a strategic problem that NATO was able to confront relatively cheaply via an air war and with a fair expectation of achieving a sustainable peace through the introduction of a multinational peacekeeping force. American intervention in East Timor, Friedman argued, followed a parallel track. It was strategically justifiable in that the stability of the archipelago would be increased by the removal of the East Timor occupation. Intervention could also be conducted relatively cheaply from the American perspective, with the U.S. providing logistical and intelligence support to an UN-sanctioned force, in lieu of troops. Friedman further argued that an independent East Timor would be self-sustainable. And, finally, there was no reason, he predicted, to suppose that American involvement in East Timor would necessitate the United States taking its focus away from any other problem areas. Using realist criteria, Friedman came to the conclusion that military intervention in East Timor was justifiable on realist grounds.

The Truth Commission's Narrative

In several ways, the CAVR concluded, 1998 was a fortuitous year for East Timor. With the fall of Suharto and the crippling of the New Order, an autonomy package for East Timor could be openly considered within the Indonesian government. President Habibie's decision to let East Timor become independent, while more pragmatic than altruistic, was nevertheless more generous than any previous offer to the Timorese by the government of Indonesia.⁷³ In addition, the Timorese resistance was at the apogee of its unity and organization, with the *Concelho Nacional da Resistência Timorense* (National

⁷³ CAVR, "Self-Determination," pp. 21-23.

Council of Timorese Resistance, CNRT) replacing the CNRM in early 1998.⁷⁴

Furthermore, the reputation of resistance diplomacy had been bolstered by José Ramos-Horta's reception of the Nobel Peace Prize and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's decision to make the resolution of the East Timor conflict a personal priority.⁷⁵

Unfortunately, the May 5 Agreement that capped this revitalized diplomacy was, the CAVR concluded, inherently flawed by its provisions assigning the maintenance of security during the Popular Consultation to the TNI.⁷⁶ While such an accommodation might have been necessary to secure Indonesian approval of the Agreement, it also opened the door to a security situation that resulted in the greatest upsurge of violence and upheaval in East Timor that the island had seen since the disasters of the 1970s.⁷⁷

This violence, committed overwhelmingly by the militias and the TNI was, the CAVR found, the culmination of Indonesia's long-term occupation strategies, especially that of stoking intra-Timorese violence. Regarding the events of 1999, the Commission also disputed the assumption in the media that anarchy had taken hold of the territory. In fact, the CAVR found, there were clear patterns and aims to the militia rampage and much of *Chega!*'s coverage of the Popular Consultation period was devoted to revealing its underlying structure.

The Epitome of Occupation Policy

Intra-Timorese violence was, of course, not a new feature of modern East Timor's history. Such violence, encouraged at times by Indonesia, was present from the earliest

⁷⁴ The CNRT represented the unity of all of East Timor's pre-invasion political parties; CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," pp. 125-126.

⁷⁵ CAVR, "Self-Determination," pp. 36-37, 89.

⁷⁶ CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," pp. 132-133, 136-138.

⁷⁷ CAVR, "Forced Displacement and Famine," p. 106.

days of decolonization and reached its zenith with the use by ABRI of Timorese “Partisans” preceding the invasion.⁷⁸ However, the first real precursor to the militias of the late 1990s had been the establishment in 1976 of Timorese paramilitary forces subordinate to ABRI, which were designed to combat Fretilin; these forces were disbanded in 1978.⁷⁹ Despite sporadic attempts by the Indonesians to reactivate indigenous paramilitary cells throughout the 1980s, the most direct ancestor of the militias was Gadapaksi, a paramilitary group formed in Dili by Kopassus in the mid-1990s with the aim of combating the clandestine resistance.⁸⁰ Many future militia leaders had been members of Gadapaksi.⁸¹ “In many ways,” East Timor’s truth commission concluded, “the formation of militias [from 1998 to 1999] was the culmination of the strategy of militarisation” practiced by the Indonesian military in East Timor from the earliest days of the occupation.⁸²

The context in which the first militias were mobilized by the Indonesian military is instructive. According to the CAVR, June 1998 saw multiple demonstrations throughout East Timor calling for self-determination and independence.⁸³ Almost immediately, these demonstrators were confronted by militia groups. The CAVR found that these early militias had been mobilized by the TNI, which found itself facing a groundswell of pro-independence sentiment. From the military’s perspective, the

⁷⁸ CAVR, “Regime of Occupation,” pp. 19-20.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 21-22. A major proponent of Gadapaksi had been Kopassus officer Prabowo Subianto, Suharto’s son-in-law.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 28.

⁸² Ibid., p. 30. The Commission also found that the militias were merely the most public facet of Indonesia’s efforts to secure a vote for autonomy. East Timorese civil servants were publicly threatened with dismissal if they supported independence and the province’s civil budget was looted to pay for pro-autonomy activities and propaganda; CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” p. 141. The truth commission concluded that at least US\$5.2 million was thus “channelled to the militias” by the Indonesian civil administration in East Timor; CAVR, “Regime of Occupation,” p. 35.

⁸³ CAVR, “The History of the Conflict,” pp. 126-127.

situation was spiralling out of control; the demonstrations had to be confronted quickly and ruthlessly, but there were too few troops in East Timor to do so, and the TNI wanted to downplay its role in the suppression of the demonstrations. Thus, the CAVR concluded, the TNI had used pre-existing Timorese paramilitary organizations to act against the pro-independence demonstrators due to its desire for deniability and because of personnel shortages.⁸⁴ Militia violence began well before autonomy was even suggested for East Timor, as a response to the specific circumstances of June 1998, although the militias thus created were easily adaptable for anti-independence activism in 1999.⁸⁵

Indeed, according to the CAVR, the militias were always central to the military's plans to create a pro-autonomy vote in East Timor. The four generals serving in Habibie's Cabinet, the Commission concluded, would only have agreed to the President's proposal to offer East Timor a vote on independence if they had felt assured that the Timorese would never exercise that option.⁸⁶ The existence and successful employment of militias would certainly have played a role in such a calculation. Yet, any anti-independence campaign had to be carefully managed to offer the TNI maximum deniability. The Indonesian military in East Timor had found itself subject to an "unprecedented" degree of international scrutiny as the August ballot approached; by August 30, 1999, the CAVR reported, the United Nations Assistance Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) had accredited at least 600 journalists and 2,300 foreign observers to

⁸⁴ CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 128; CAVR, "Regime of Occupation," p. 30; CAVR, "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," pp. 247, 261-263.

⁸⁵ CAVR, "Forced Displacement and Famine," pp. 110-117.

⁸⁶ CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 130.

monitor the Popular Consultation.⁸⁷ The necessity of preserving positive international opinion thus mandated the use of Timorese militias to secure Indonesian aims.

However, in practice, the TNI proved completely unable to maintain distance between itself and the militias: military support for the militias was public, insistent, and undeniable. *Chega!* extensively documented links between the Indonesian military and the militias. On the ground, the TNI formally incorporated the militias into the territorial military structure, with TNI officers attending militia inauguration ceremonies and rallies, giving speeches supporting militia actions, and, on occasion, quartering militia members in TNI barracks.⁸⁸ The Commission also found evidence of operational collusion between the TNI and militias, with Indonesian military figures consistently helping Timorese militias prepare for their operations, providing them with arms and ammunition, and helping the militias dispose of bodies.⁸⁹ Furthermore, these actions were not confined to one locality or practiced by only a few military units; this widespread pattern characterized TNI-militia relations throughout the territory. This meant, the CAVR concluded, that the militias were an integral part of “a TNI plan” for the province, one that the military could not cover up.⁹⁰

Aims and Patterns

The major aim of the militias was to ensure that East Timor voted for autonomy, not independence, in August 1999. This was to be achieved through intimidation, murder, and expulsion, all of which had become regular militia tactics before they were

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 136.

⁸⁸ CAVR, “Regime of Occupation,” pp. 33-34.

⁸⁹ CAVR, “This History of the Conflict,” pp. 131, 147; CAVR, “Regime of Occupation,” p. 36; CAVR, “Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances,” p. 246.

⁹⁰ CAVR, “Regime of Occupation,” p. 36.

practiced on a province-wide scale in September 1999. A key goal of the militias' was to create the impression of civil war, allowing Indonesia to claim that the militias were merely pro-autonomy groups defending themselves against marauding pro-independence activists. Almost every militia action, so the Indonesians claimed, was the response to provocation on the part of the CNRT.⁹¹ However, the CAVR found little evidence of such provocation on the part of the resistance. *Chega!* recorded only a few killings by pro-independence activists in the summer of 1999, as well as 22 killings and seven disappearances committed by Falintil in 1999.⁹² However, these acts of verifiable resistance violence paled in comparison to those committed by the militias and TNI, who in the same period were estimated to have murdered between 1,400 and 1,500 people.⁹³ Furthermore, the Commission pointed out, Falintil had put itself into cantonments during the ballot, and remained there even at the height of militia violence in September 1999, thus giving the lie to the idea that two armed groups were fighting for control over East Timor.⁹⁴ Reading the CAVR, it is clear that the TNI used the militias as its proxies, hoping to create the impression of mass chaos in East Timor in order to disguise its own responsibility for the human rights violations. A perusal of media coverage shows that this impression of anarchy in East Timor at times found a receptive audience. However, the CAVR found little evidence that the CNRT engaged in a program of intimidation and provocation, and concluded that the resistance was the victim of targeted violence.⁹⁵

⁹¹ CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 131; CAVR, "Regime of Occupation," p. 36.

⁹² For the two killings in the summer of 1999, see CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 142. For the killings and disappearances by Falintil, see CAVR, "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," pp. 243-244.

⁹³ CAVR, "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," p. 245.

⁹⁴ CAVR, "The History of the Conflict," p. 147.

⁹⁵ The CAVR found that East Timorese students were especially targeted by the TNI and militias, as they were at the vanguard of the CNRT's pro-independence efforts; CAVR, "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," p. 246. Amnesty International also reported that East Timorese students had

In the course of its work, the CAVR found definite patterns to militia violence during the Popular Consultation period. These patterns existed in terms of both the timing and scope of the violence. The truth commission discovered, for instance, that violence had been heaviest at certain crucial times. The first major spike in violence occurred during April 1999, as Indonesia and Portugal were concluding the negotiations that would result in the May 5 Agreement.⁹⁶ Violence at this time interfered with these negotiations and sent a warning to the resistance. Violent actions by militias markedly tapered off during the UNAMET period from early June to late August, as a heavy and widespread foreign presence in the territory made it difficult to disguise collusion between the militias and TNI.⁹⁷ However, once voting concluded, violence increased again and then exploded out of all proportion when the election results were announced on September 4, at which point “TNI soldiers and police...[took] to the streets in towns and villages across the territory, firing their weapons, attacking supporters of independence, and burning houses and public buildings.”⁹⁸ Two days later, President Habibie declared martial law in East Timor, far too late to stop the greatest and most gratuitous explosions of violence in the entire Popular Consultation period.⁹⁹

The period following the ballot witnessed, the CAVR reiterated, the “final and most comprehensive phase of the violence” in East Timor during 1999.¹⁰⁰ Tactics which

been intimidated and assaulted by the TNI on Java during the Popular Consultation; Amnesty International, *East Timor as Violence Descended: Testimonies from East Timorese Refugees* (London: Amnesty International, 1999), p. 10.

⁹⁶ CAVR, “Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances,” pp. 247, 259-261.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 247, 261-263. It should be noted that while violence may have relatively decreased during the UNAMET period, it never ceased. By mid-July 1999, for example, an estimated 40,000 to 60,000 Timorese had been driven from their homes by the militias and it was uncertain whether they would be able to cast their votes on August 30; CAVR, “Forced Displacement and Famine,” p. 120.

⁹⁸ CAVR, “Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances,” p. 247.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

¹⁰⁰ CAVR, “Regime of Occupation,” p. 31.

had been practiced in isolation now occurred throughout the province. While tens of thousands of Timorese had been displaced before the ballot, hundreds of thousands would be driven from their homes in September 1999.¹⁰¹ And although before, militias and the TNI had generally targeted CNRT activists, violence after the ballot also routinely engulfed those activists' friends and families.¹⁰² Previously unscathed groups, such as the clergy, were now exposed to attack.¹⁰³ The CAVR even recorded cases of entire communities being targeted because they were perceived as being pro-independence or because a major CNRT figure either lived in the community or was from there.¹⁰⁴ Beginning in September 1999, the CAVR chronicled what can only be described as a frenzy of massacre and destruction carried out by the TNI and militias. Following their defeat in the Popular Consultation, these groups undertook a massive campaign against anyone they considered to be pro-independence. This purge affected all of Timorese society, and was seemingly driven by the idea of inflicting extreme suffering on those who had voted for independence, as well as their relatives and communities. Indeed, this suffering was to extend to the entire territory, as the militias achieved the near-complete destruction of East Timor's economy.¹⁰⁵ Yet, the CAVR made clear, the violence was neither unplanned nor random, but was, in fact, deliberately

¹⁰¹ The CAVR estimated that upon the arrival of INTERFET in late-September, at least 300,000 Timorese were internally displaced, while 250,000 were refugees in West Timor; CAVR, "Forced Displacement and Famine," pp. 122, 152.

¹⁰² CAVR, "Unlawful Killings and Enforced Disappearances," p. 264.

¹⁰³ It should be noted that a major exception to the relative inviolability of the East Timorese clergy took place during the Liquiça Church Massacre on April 6, 1999. This combined TNI-militia operation killed between 30 and 100 Timorese; Ibid., pp. 250-252.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 274-276.

¹⁰⁵ Destroyed by the militias and TNI was almost every piece of modern machinery in East Timor, nearly 70 percent of government buildings, 80 to 90 percent of urban housing, 95 percent of schools, and almost every hospital and clinic as well as all their equipment. For a complete list see, CAVR, "Economic and Social Rights," <<http://www.ictj.org/static/Timor.CAVR.English/07.9-Economic-and-Social-Rights.pdf>> (accessed January 26, 2006), p. 27.

and coldly orchestrated by the TNI and the militias, and conformed to discernable patterns and goals.

Conclusion

In 1999, East Timor was given the opportunity to participate in an act of self-determination. This was only made possible by the fall of Suharto and the acknowledgement, within most of the Indonesian government, that the integration of East Timor had caused a great deal of harm to the Republic's international image. Yet a significant portion of Indonesia's ruling elite, especially in the military, was reluctant to allow East Timor to achieve independence. To prevent this, it sponsored the creation of Timorese militias, which were supported by the TNI in a terror campaign against the province's population. As East Timor's truth commission made clear, there were definite operational and logistical links between the TNI and militias, and the violence that levelled East Timor in September 1999 was the predictable and natural outcome of these links.

Examination of the other narrative strands of the events of 1999 East Timor reveals both continuity and change. Journalistic coverage, for instance, showed a marked distrust of Indonesian claims to neutrality regarding the outcome of the Popular Consultation, and generally reported on the close association between the TNI and militias. However, media coverage of the 1999 ballot also demonstrated preoccupations with the viability of an independent East Timor and with the possibility that the territory was about to dissolve into civil war, both issues that had been central in journalists' reporting on East Timor since the 1970s. From the Indonesian perspective, KPP HAM

challenged not only the TNI's protestations of innocence regarding support for the militias, but the very justification for the occupation itself. KPP HAM's conclusions were so explosive that Indonesia's Attorney-General suppressed its report until March 2001. Nationalistic tomes like that of Ali Alatas dominated Indonesian perceptions of the events of 1999. And, for the East Timorese, the Popular Consultation period could only be bittersweet. The early decade had seen the Santa Cruz massacre, which brought international attention to the situation in East Timor. In 1996, two East Timorese won the Nobel Peace Prize and used the opportunity to call for a comprehensive peace with Indonesia. Yet, when independence was finally achieved, it came at a very high cost, with the Indonesian military engineering the creation of a devastated territory and deeply traumatized people. The new country's leadership, which in many ways had never considered the possibility such devastation could occur, was faced with a gargantuan task of rebuilding and reconciliation. The East Timorese were now fully in control of their own narrative, but at tremendous cost.

CONCLUSION

This thesis analyzes and places in historical perspective the conclusions of East Timor's Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation, which has become the major new source for the history of the occupation period, comparing the Commission's findings with media reports, memoirs and other documents from the period in question. These other sources were clustered together to illustrate major patterns, which ultimately evolved into "narratives." For the purposes of this paper, four separate narratives were examined. The first, the East Timorese narrative, was composed of memoirs, interviews, manifestos, and speeches. The Indonesian narrative, the second, was based on diplomatic correspondence and speeches, government documents, memoirs, and academic works. The third pattern, the journalists' narrative, was composed of news reports from a wide variety of newspapers and magazines from the U.S. and other countries. The final narrative, that of East Timor's truth commission, was derived from the CAVR's massive *Chega!*. This report is the most complete record to date of the whole of the occupation, a chronicle of what happened to the people of East Timor from 1974 to 1999. Each of these narrative strands contained its own patterns, concerns, and conflicts, yet each also formed an indelible part of the history of occupied East Timor.

To facilitate analysis, this paper focused on the three major events of modern East Timor's history. The first event was the Indonesian invasion of December 7, 1975, itself preceded by civil war within East Timor. Following the invasion, Fretilin forces and much of the Timorese population fled into the hills, where they remained in deteriorating circumstances until Indonesian bombardments and their own political instability forced

the mass surrender of the population in the late 1970s. This population was then subjected to a horrific famine, due in great part to the occupation practices of the Indonesian military forces. The second major event analyzed was the Santa Cruz massacre of November 12, 1991, when a crowd of Timorese demonstrators was fired into by Indonesian troops. The killings, which took place before the eyes of the international media, stoked international criticism against the occupation and ensured that the situation in East Timor remained imprinted on the world's conscience. The final event, the Popular Consultation of 1999, saw the East Timorese given the opportunity for self-determination. The consequent balloting resulted in a landslide victory for those Timorese advocating independence, however, the results were marred by the destruction of the territory by Indonesian-sponsored militias that occurred after the results of the voting were announced. Together, these three events encompass the experience of the East Timorese under Indonesian occupation; this examination of the conclusions of the CAVR reveals a great deal about the shades of meaning emerging within each of the narratives.

Assessing events during the years from 1975 to 1979, the CAVR concluded that the death toll suffered by the Timorese resulted from a combination of Indonesian war crimes and Fretilin's ideological preoccupations. It had been well-known that ABRI's targeting of civilians and their crops caused starvation, however, the CAVR was almost as scathing in treating the impact on the Timorese living behind Falintil lines of the Fretilin administration's refusal to allow the population to surrender and its self-defeating and suicidal purges. Many East Timorese had already recorded their disappointment with the Fretilin regime of the 1970s, but the CAVR offered by far the most public and well-

documented treatment of the manner in which the policies of the anti-Indonesian resistance combined with ABRI atrocities to create a lethal cycle. By focusing so much on intra-Timorese violence at this time and apportioning blame to all sides, the CAVR doubtless hoped to speed reconciliation among the East Timorese, many of whom remained scarred by the memories of the Civil War and its aftermath.

The events of the 1970s were also notable for the ability of Indonesia to control the narrative of the events unfolding in East Timor. The Suharto regime was able to convince many foreign governments, among them the governments of Australia and the United States, that an independent East Timor represented a great threat to the anti-Communist Republic of Indonesia, and, by extension, to Western interests in Southeast Asia. The U.S. government, for its part, had little interest in or knowledge about East Timor, and proved more than willing to accept Indonesia's version of events in the territory, a version that led, inexorably, to annexation. Journalists had little problem questioning Indonesian insinuations that an independent East Timor would be a Communist satellite, or that the Timorese people overwhelmingly desired integration with Indonesia, but were constrained by the fact that they depended on Indonesia for the bulk of their information about events in East Timor. While reporters might be critical of Indonesian aims, their stories still dealt with themes chosen by the Indonesians, especially pertinent being those of civil conflict, Indonesia's reluctant entry into Timorese politics, and the difficulties that would be faced by East Timor as an independent nation. The Indonesian narrative thus dominated 1970s coverage of and perceptions toward the situation in East Timor. It was only with the Santa Cruz massacre that Indonesia's narrative lost a great deal of its appeal to an international audience.

The CAVR's treatment of the Santa Cruz massacre of 1991 is fascinating for how the Commission contextualized the shooting. In *Chega!*, the importance of the massacre was shown by the patterns it represented. The authors of the report clearly argued that Indonesia bore ultimate and sole responsibility for the massacre and that the regime's attempts to hold its military personnel responsible were halfhearted at best and a whitewash at worst. *Chega!* also criticized Indonesia for its treatment of the wounded and for refusing to assist the CAVR in determining the fate of those Timorese who disappeared after the massacre. However, the truth commission's primary focus when describing Santa Cruz was on the ways that the event fit into the patterns of the occupation as a whole. The CAVR especially emphasized how the demonstration that had preceded the killing was representative of the new clandestine resistance strategy, where young East Timorese, usually students, staged demonstrations before an international audience with the aim of showing that they were not reconciled to Indonesian rule. This new strategy was itself predicated on the fact that, following its military defeat in the late 1970s, the anti-Indonesian resistance decided to focus on achieving diplomatic recognition, with the aim of securing self-determination for East Timor. It was these two processes, which were crucial to the history of East Timor as a whole, which preoccupied the CAVR and its treatment of the Santa Cruz massacre, not the fate of the disappeared of Santa Cruz, which, while tragic, affected only the families of the missing.

The Santa Cruz massacre was important because it demolished Indonesian attempts to justify their occupation of East Timor. The regime did this by describing the development projects it had undertaken in East Timor, which included the construction of

roads, schools, and hospitals. These achievements, while undeniable, often had a military component and were almost always undertaken for strategic ends or to provide the military monopolies with a revenue source. Further, the inefficiencies and inequalities of the occupation were commented on by Indonesians themselves, especially academics, who criticized Indonesia's development policies and even the occupation itself. And following the emotional first-hand testimony of reporters on the scene at Santa Cruz, Indonesia's boasts of modernization in East Timor availed it little in the international community. After the end of the Cold War made it difficult to appeal to anti-Communism to justify its policies in East Timor, Indonesia depended upon its developmental policies to maintain international acquiescence of the occupation. Santa Cruz proved in a very public way that the East Timorese themselves were not appeased by these arguments, and made it more difficult for Western governments to rationalize their support for the regime's policies in East Timor, although they still managed to do so. The Santa Cruz massacre, then, witnessed the break-down of the Indonesian narrative of East Timor. After 1991, anything Indonesia claimed about East Timor was tainted by the blood of Santa Cruz.

The CAVR's description of the Popular Consultation period, from 1998 to 1999, is even more concerned with patterns of violence than its treatment of the Santa Cruz massacre. This was the case because the events of 1999 superficially resembled mass chaos, with militias and their Indonesian allies running amok throughout East Timor, laying waste and murdering. However, when examined by the truth commission, the violence of the militias demonstrated clear patterns and planning. Violent periods were time-sensitive and early targets were often pro-independence activists, rather than whole

communities; militia violence before September 1999, while endemic, was often selective. The militias, which the CAVR considered in many ways to be the epitome of Indonesian occupation policies, were most destructive, the Commission found, after the results of the ballot were announced on September 4, 1999. It was at that point that violence exploded throughout the territory, now targeting not only CNRT activists but also those communities who supported them. This violence, while extreme, nevertheless conformed to many of the basic patterns and planning that had characterized the early actions of the militias in 1998. Despite the impression the TNI hoped to create, one of spontaneous civil conflict and mass chaos, the CAVR found instead that the atrocities of 1999 were discernable, explicable, and quantifiable.

In many ways, the other narratives of the Popular Consultation were themselves culminations of previous treatments of East Timor. East Timorese society, for instance, remained deeply divided, not only over whether or not East Timor should be independent, but over the unmediated traumas of the mid-1970s. The CNRT's leaders, who were well aware of these divisions, sought to assuage the concerns of the pro-autonomy camp with promises of a political solution to their concerns and appealed for reconciliation. Indeed, reconciliation became a major theme of independent East Timor's first government, driven as much by necessity as by choice. Meanwhile, Indonesia was also split over how to view the end of the occupation. One trend was to see the occupation as a criminal act, which culminated with TNI support for the militias in 1999. A second trend viewed the Popular Consultation as an almost farcical exercise, a series of missed opportunities and tragic misestimations. And for journalists, the Popular Consultation was the occasion for renewed debates over whether or not East Timor was a

viable independent entity, whether or not the violence was a civil war, and what the proper international response to the violence should be. Each of these trends paralleled previous coverage of the occupation. While few trusted the Indonesian narrative anymore, it was difficult to escape it once it had been framed.

This thesis has shown that, while *Chega!* offers perhaps the most comprehensive description of occupied East Timor, its conclusions had many antecedents in the various narratives that came before it. These narratives, in dialogue with and in opposition to each other, formed the story of East Timor. The CAVR itself was concerned with describing the patterns of violations. One reason for this was simple conceptual mechanics: it was impossible to chronicle every event of a twenty-five-year period without resort to some type of rubric to organize the narrative and analysis. In order to explain how East Timor survived the occupation and became an independent nation, the East Timorese truth commission focused on those events and trends that led to independence. At times, this meant that the Commission favored the elaboration of processes over events, however, to do so was part of its mandate. The CAVR was also strongly focused on cases of intra-Timorese violence. This was a major advance in the popular narrative of East Timor, much of which had been written by activists who emphasized the heroic nature of the Timorese people's struggle against the Indonesian occupier, offering an endless catalogue of undoubtedly real and horrendous crimes that the Indonesians had committed against their Timorese subjects. The Commission, in contrast, focused on Timorese reconciliation. It could not afford to ignore the injuries that the East Timorese had inflicted upon themselves. To do so would not only have been against the Commission's mandate, but against finding the truth, which was the

ultimate aim of the CAVR, as it was felt that only through a full accounting would East Timor finally be able to move beyond its past.

A final word remains to be said about the fate of the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation's report. After receiving *Chega!* in 2005, the government of independent East Timor made many efforts to disassociate itself from the report. Perhaps dissatisfied with the truth commission's conclusions, or wary of its repercussions, the governments of East Timor and Indonesia established a joint truth commission, the Commission of Truth and Friendship (CTF) in 2005. The Commission of Truth and Friendship was hailed by its international advisors, Robert Evans and Alice Evans, as a great achievement in post-conflict resolution, as the two nations came together to "reveal the conclusive truth, heal the wounds, and contribute to future friendship."¹ However, there were strong indications that the joint truth commission would be little more than a device for perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity to reshape the historical record to their advantage. General Wiranto, for instance, in testimony before the Commission of Truth and Friendship in May 2007, denied that the military had sponsored the creation of militias, stated that the violence of 1999 was the result of a Timorese civil war, and claimed that there had been no systematic violations of human rights in East Timor.² This not only contradicted the most respected research on the events of 1999, but also conflicted with Indonesian data, not only from government

¹ The two authors also praised the CTF for securing the testimony of major players such as Habibie and Wiranto, whose participation they claimed would make their conclusions more accurate; Robert Evans and Alice Evans, "The toothless commission of truth," *The Jakarta Post*, May 4, 2007 <<http://www.etan.org/et2007/may/05/04will.htm>> (accessed May 17, 2007).

² BBC, "General denies E Timor violations," May 5, 2007 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6628129.stm>> (accessed May 17, 2007).

investigations, but also from military figures.³ If the Commission of Truth and Friendship was to provide, as its sponsors stated, the most comprehensive account of the occupation, such distortions give great cause for concern. Yet, even if the joint truth commission provides a more complete description of occupied East Timor than the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation, the latter's importance in the narrative of independent East Timor is guaranteed.

³ For instance, in late 2000, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, told *FEER*'s John McBeth that "To be frank there was a close liaison between the military and militia in East Timor and because of that there has been a difference of opinion within the military over how we should deal with the militia"; John McBeth, "Up in Arms," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 19, 2000, p. 22

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