East Timor Independence?

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Introduction.

It is not easy to write with feigned calm and dispassion about the events that have been unfolding in East Timor. Horror and shame are compounded by the fact that the crimes are so familiar and could so easily have been halted by the international community a long time ago.

Timor, the Malay word for "Orient", is an island of the Malay Archipelago, the largest and easternmost of the Lesser Sundas, lying between parallels 8 deg. 17' and 10 deg. 22' of south latitude and meridians 123 deg. 25' and 127 deg. 19' of latitude east from Greenwich. It is bathed by the Indian Ocean (Timor Sea) at South, and Pacific Ocean (Banda Sea) at North and has an oblong configuration in the direction of southwest -- northeast. The island is surrounded by the Roti and Saval islands through the Roti Strait, by the Lomblem, Pantar and Ombai islands across the Ombai Strait and by Kissar isle to the northeast. Southwards, Australia dists about 500 km, and 1000 km separates the southwest point of Timor from Java.

The total area of Timor is of 32 350 sq km, measuring the maximums of 470 km in length and 110 km in width. About 480 km wide, and a surface of 450 000 sq km, the Timor Sea which is divided between the two territories, opening west into the Indian Ocean and east into the Arafura Sea, part of the Pacific Ocean.

The territory of the island -- East Timor-- of which Portugal was recognized administrative power by United Nations, occupies an estimated area of almost 19 000 km, and comprises the eastern half of the island, with 265 km in length and 92 km of maximum width and an area of 16 384 km and the enclave of Ocussi-Ambeno that dists 70 km from Batugadi, with 2 461 sq km and a coastline 48 km long. Still part of East Timor is the island of Ataero (or Pulo-Cambing) with 144 sq km, just 23 km northwards of the capital Dili and the tiny isle of Jaco with 8 sq km, being the oriental extreme of East Timor just ahead of Tutuala.

# Ethnological origin, demography and policy.

There are 12 ethnic groups in East Timor each of which has its own language: 9 Austronesian language groups - Tetum, Mambai, Tokodede, Kemak, Galoli, Idate, Waima'a, Naueti; and 3 Papuan language groups - Bunak, Makasae, Fatuluku. The Tetum live in two separate geographic areas within East Timor. A simplified version of the Tetum language was utilised in Dili by the Portuguese as a lingua franca. This language has spread throughout East Timor so that Tetum, in its original or simplified form, came to be spoken by about 60% of the population. Though widespread, it is not understood by all.

One of the first references to the natives of East Timor is expressed in the description that in 1514 the Portuguese Rui de Brito sent to king D. Manuel. In our free transcription, he wrote in these terms: “Timor is an island beyond Java, has plenty sandalwood, plenty honey, plenty wax, hasn't junks for navigating, is a big island of kaffirs.”

The `kaffir' is meant to refer to the “black and of troubled hair”. Timorese what, not being untrue, was an imprecise observation as the type was to be found only in some regions, specially in Ocussi, and generically in West Timor.

From the antrophological point of view, the island arouses the upmost scientific interest such is the heterogeneity of it's people.

For centuries the East Timorese had been farmers, living in scattered hamlets and eating what they grew. Only a few coastal East Timorese were fishermen. Trading and shop keeping had for generations been in the hands of the Chinese. East Timor is extremely mountainous, so the majority of East Timorese had always lived in isolation, far from towns and foreign influences, tied to their fields and animistic practices. In spite of centuries of Catholic missionary work by the Portuguese, in 1975 animists still numbered as much as 72 % of the population. The local Timorese kings still played an important part in their lives and allegiances, whilst interference from Portuguese administrators and military was almost non-existent.

In the period between World War 2 and the 1975 Indonesian invasion, a number of East Timorese managed to gain an education in the colony's few schools. Some were mestizos, of Timorese and Portuguese parentage, others were Timorese from traditional ruling families, but the majority were native Timorese who gained their education through the Catholic minor seminary. The emergence of this small educated elite in the 1960s and 1970s ensured that, when the Portuguese left East Timor in 1975, these people with schooling, and nationalist aspirations, became the territory's leaders.

Politically, socially and ethnologically Timorese differ amongst themselves in groups. There is the division in independent sucos (kingdoms), the distinction between the Atoni tribes of the Servian kingdom, in West Timor, and the Belos of the Portuguese territory, groups such as the Firacos, ethnic designation adopted by the Timorese in between Baucau and Luca, or the Caladi which are the inhabitants of the central crest , Malays and non-Malays, so many "sucos" and more than twenty languages and dialects, the contribution of the exogamy, of parties irreconcilable. In conclusion, that is the expression of a relative absence of bio-ethnic unity of the populations.

The history of a People and their Culture voted to banishment from their motherland, the eastern half of an island, former Portuguese colony is the much unknown. Timor lies in South East Asia enclosed in world's largest archipelago. That is Indonesia, which gave it's name to the Republic constituted after the dutch withdrawl. Since the beginning, Indonesian governments have experienced resistance coming from independist movements of various islands which claim ethnical and cultural diveristy from the predominant Javanese type. Nonetheless they were continuously silenced thus unable to internationalize the situation to a stage that would force foreign intervention. When it became inevitable, in that single exception of the western half of New Guinea, the autodetermination of the papuans in favour of an integration in Indonesia was observed as an Indonesian orchestrated act, and remembered until today as the darkest episode in the history of UN.

Indonesia couldn't either afford the regional instability that the prospect of a small nation rising in between the empire would arouse .This solitary piece of territory and it's inhabitants had to be sacrificed for a hugger cause.

Portugal which's vast colonial possessions had once made the country great, with times had become responsible for it's retardment. The drawling of the situation was put to an end with a successful coup d'etat, in April '74, which engaged a national revolution ceasing dictatorship and commited to decolonization. Meanwhile, if East Timor, due to distance and expense, was already the most forgotten colony, less attention it was given towards the definition of it's future as the longed changes in the metropolis didn't avoid internal deviations and contradictions. It brought instability to the government of the country and the urgence to lay the basis of democracy.

For Indonesia however, the solution was announced: annexation by any terms. As it couldn't be done without cover-up, the Indonesian accounted the "ignorance" of Timor's closest neighbor, Australia, offering access to the Timor Gap for oil. The maintenance of economic and institutional relations was (is) too important. Necessary non-interference from superpower USA was also naturally reached. Having the Americans weakened their position in South East Asia after Vietnam, Indonesia was regarded as the last great bastion of anti-communism in the region, essentially in those years for reasons of military strategy as we'll see ahead. Thus friendly relations were very important to preserve.

So, in name of political, economical and military goals, with two major countries making it possible for the pretender of East Timor, and before the impotence of Administrative Power Portugal, Indonesia invaded in December '75, interrupting a process of decolonization in course. The action was promptly condemned by the United Nations. Although in face of International Law, and of the most elementary human rights, Indonesia is regularly criticized by the International Community, East Timor remains still insignificant to put at stake superior governmental interests.

As the case of East Timor becomes more of a serious arrow nailed in the flank of Indonesia's diplomacy, Jakarta multiplies efforts to gain votes amongst countries who normally vote against in the sessions of UN, the mediator of the discussions between Portugal and Indonesia (without Timorese representation) to avoid further embarrassments that have resulted uncomfortable for its economic relations, and desirable leading role amongst the Non-Aligned Movement, the same that combated colonialism.

Nevertheless the same policy persists for Timor. As if once the annexation has been carried out it urges by all means to prove the righteousness of such action.

For the last 19 years, an excess of 200 000 Timorese have been killed by the Indonesians. The Resistance arms itself with the weapons captured from the enemy. Women, the aged and the children are concentrated in camps where they do forced labour and many starve to death. Suspects are tortured, spanking and sexual abuse are constant, many women have been sterilized. Family members are deliberately aparted. Transmigration programs project the definite dissolution of the Maubere People.

# Before and after the arrival of the Europeans

Previous to the European interference in the indigenous scheme of life, the island of Timor was inhabited by barbarian people that couldn't write but used iron and was already agricultural. Industry was limited to the fabrication of cotton cloths with which they covered themselves and the commerce reduced to the trade of wax and sandalwood for certain products that brought to Timor makasare, malays and javanese.

Much before the arrival of Portuguese and Dutch, Timor was part of the commercial nets politically centered east of Java, after in the Celebes, and linked by trade to China and India. In documents published during the Ming dynasty, in 1436, the commercial value of Timor is put in relief and described as a place where “the mountains are covered by trees of sandalwood producing the country nothing else”. One of the first Portuguese to visit the island, Duarte Barbosa, wrote in 1518: “there's an abundance of sandalwood, white, to which the Muslims in India and Persia give great value and where much of it is used”.

Other products were exported such as honey, wax and slaves, but trade relied mainly on sandalwood.

# Japanese occupation during World War II

During the Second World War, Portugal declared a policy of neutrality. Dutch and Australian troops nonetheless disembarked at East Timor in disrespect of Portuguese sovereignty. But the real menace came with the Japanese invasion, three months later, in February of 1942. The island became a stage of war between Japanese and the allieds. Timorese were seen as secondary actors when in truth, after crossing a period of rebellion against Portuguese rule, were they the more sacrificed during the resistance until 1945.

In spite of Portugal's policy of neutrality, the Australian and Dutch troops entered in Timor. It was the first of two foreigner military invasions. In Lisbon, Oliveira de Salazar denounced the allied disembark as an invasion of a neutral territory. Shortly after arrived the Japanese. It's not to admire that J. Santos Carvalho saw in these actions an attitude of depreciation towards the sovereignty of Portugal. When the allied forces arrived at Dili in December the 17th of 1941, he says that governor Ferreira de Carvalho, without means to retaliate by arms ordered the national flag to be hoisted in all public partitions and buildings of the colony. To further mark his position of neutrality he confined himself to his residence and, by free determination, wished to be considered prisoner.

The population of the capital went to live in the interior, mainly in Aileu, Liquie and Maubara. Some of the few Portuguese that remained in Dili pursued nevertheless with their usual lives, socializing with the forces stationed in Timor. They were given instructions by the local government to maintain a correct attitude but to show no familiarity neither to collaborate. An atmosphere of normality gain form, and some families were prepared to go back. It is even reported that an agreement signed by English and Portuguese governments defined that the allied troops would retire as soon as arrived a contingent of Portuguese forces from Maputo (Mozambique).

What happened instead was the Japanese invasion of Dili, in February of 1942. During January they had managed to occupy Malaysia (except Singapore), the Philippines (but not Bataan), Borneo and the Celebes, Birmania, New Guinea and the Salmon islands. Following general L. M. Chassin - “at the end of the second month of an hyperbolic invasion , the Japanese tide extended itself irresistibly beyond paralyzed and impotent adversaries.” In the middle of February they invaded Sumatra occupying Palembang, soon after Singapore is attacked and many Englishmen are made prisoners. Java was surrounded and on the 20th, Bali and Timor were taken. After a weak resistance , the Dutch troops abandoned by the Javanese soldiers -- which were in majority --, escaped to the interior leaving behind armament. Dili was then violently sacked by the Japanese, who found the city almost uninhabited.

# The Portuguese colonial empire

Up to the final years of dictatorship in Portugal, in spite of the condemnation of UN and the start of the guerrilla warfare in the African colonies of Angola, Guinea and Mozambique, the Portuguese Colonial Empire was defended by the government as an heritage of the glorious past and motive of national pride. However, the crescent expenses of it's maintenance begun to reflect increasingly on the economy and social tissue of the metropolis, what provoked crescent discontentment of the population, finally leading to the Revolution of '74 that installed democracy and gave independence to the colonies. East Timor was invaded by Indonesia precisely in the course of decolonization.

During dictatorship, the colonies continued to be dedicated considerable interest. For the nationalist ideology that characterized the regime, the vast regions of the World under Portuguese sovereignty were to be seen as the justification of a necessary conscience of greatness and pride to be Portuguese.

The expression "Portuguese Colonial Empire" would be generalized and even met official formalization. Colonial patrimony was considered as the remaining spoils of the Portuguese conquests of the glorious period of expansion.

These notions were mystified but also expressed in Law as in 1930 Oliveira de Salazar (at the time minister of Finances and, for some time of the Colonies) published the Colonial Act. It stated some fundamental principles for the overseas territorial administration and proclaimed that it was “of the organic essence of the Portuguese nation to possess and colonize overseas territories and to civilize indigenous populations there comprised”. The overseas dimension of Portugal was however soon put at stake after World War II. The converging interest of the two victorious superpowers on the re-distribution of World regions productors of raw materials contributed for an international agreement on the legal right for all peoples to their own government. Stated as a fundamental principle of the UN Charter, anti-colonialism gave thrust to the independist movements of the colonies, and in matter of time unavoidably accepted by the great colonial nations: England, France, Netherlands, Belgium. Yet such countries relied on mechanisms of economical domination that would last, assuring that political independence wouldn't substantially affect the structure of trade relations.

Loss of the Indian territories and the reactions. The first problem that the Portuguese had to deal with was the conflict with the Indian Union, independent state in 1947. The Indian nationalism had triumphed over the English occupation, and in 1956 forced the French to abandon their establishments in 1956. The same was demanded to the Portuguese over their territories of Goa, Daman and Diu, but in face of refusal. India severed the diplomatic relations. The passage through Indian territory in order to reach the two enclaves dependent of Daman was denied since 1954, and despite the recognition of such right by International Court of Justice recognized t (1960), Dadrб and Nagar Haveli were effectively lost. This was followed by mass invasions of passive resisters which Portuguese were still able to hinder until December 19 of 1961, when the Indian Union made prevail it's superior military force, to obtain final retreat of the Portuguese.

Goa had been capital of the Portuguese expansion to the East. Conquered in 1510 by Afonso de Albuquerque, it was also an active center of religious diffusion to the point of being called the Rome of the Orient. In spite of it's the historical and spiritual importance, the reactions against the military attack of the Indian Union parted mainly from official sectors, and only moderately shared by the public opinion. For the historian J. Hermano de Saraiva whom we have followed, it reflected the dominant politic ideologies: at the end of the XIXth century, the colonizing activity was considered a service rendered to civilization but since World War II viewed as an attempt to the liberty of the peoples. This “doctrinal involucre of interest to which the Portuguese were completely strange was rapidly adopted by the intellectual groups, in great part responsible for the formation of the public opinion”. That's how Saraiva justifies that the protests for the loss of Goa to the Indian Union were directed less to the foreign power than to the Portuguese authorities, “for not having known to negotiate a modus viviendi acceptable for both parts”. More than that, he detects in this curious reaction a tendency that would accentuate along the two following decades: the crisis of patriotism. To defend or to exalt the national values appeared to the bourgeois elites of the 60's as a provincial attitude, expression of cultural under-development.

# Indonesian invasion

Indonesia invaded the territory in December 1975, relying on US diplomatic support and arms, used illegally but with secret authorisation from Washington; new arms shipments were sent under the cover of an official "embargo".

There was no need to threaten bombing or even sanctions. It would have sufficed for the US and its allies to withdraw active participation and inform their associates in the Indonesian military command that the atrocities must be terminated and the territory granted the right of self-determination, as upheld by the United Nations and the international court of justice. “We cannot undo the past, but should at least be willing to recognise what we have done, and face the moral responsibility of saving the remnants and providing reparations” - a small gesture of compensation for terrible crimes.

Many were immediately killed, while their villages were burned down to the ground. Others run to the mountains in the heart of their land, and organized a resistance movement. These brave peasants - and their sons - have opposed the barbarian indonesian soldiers for 23 years now. Torture, rape, all kinds of physical, sexual and psychological violations, violent repression and brutal murder have been the daily life of the Maubere people (the original people of East Timor) since.

Even before president Habibie's surprise call for a referendum this year, the army anticipated threats to its rule, including its control over East Timor's resources, and undertook careful planning with "the aim, quite simply... to destroy a nation".

The plans were known to western intelligence. The army recruited thousands of West Timorese and brought in forces from Java. More ominously, the military command sent units of its dreaded US-trained Kopassus special forces and, as senior military adviser, General Makarim, a US-trained intelligence specialist with "a reputation for callous violence".

Terror and destruction began early in the year. The army forces responsible have been described as "rogue elements" in the west. There is good reason, however, to accept Bishop Belo's assignment of direct responsibility to General Wiranto. It appears that the militias have been managed by elite units of Kopassus, the "crack special forces unit" that had "been training regularly with US and Australian forces until their behaviour became too much of an embarrassment for their foreign friends".

These forces adopted the tactics of the US Phoenix programme in the Vietnam war, which killed tens of thousands of peasants and much of the indigenous South Vietnamese leadership, as well as "the tactics employed by the Contras" in Nicaragua. The state terrorists were "not simply going after the most radical pro-independence people, but... the moderates, the people who have influence in their community."

Well before the referendum, the commander of the Indonesian military in Dili, Colonel Tono Suratman, warned of what was to come: "If the pro-independents do win... all will be destroyed. It will be worse than 23 years ago". An army document of early May, when international agreement on the referendum was reached, ordered "massacres should be carried out from village to village after the announcement of the ballot if the pro-independence supporters win". The independence movement "should be eliminated from its leadership down to its roots".

Citing diplomatic, church and militia sources, the Australian press reported that "hundreds of modern assault rifles, grenades and mortars are being stockpiled, ready for use if the autonomy option is rejected at the ballot box".

All of this was understood by Indonesia's "foreign friends", who also knew how to bring the terror to an end, but preferred evasive and ambiguous reactions that the Indonesian generals could easily interpret as a "green light" to carry out their work.

The sordid history must be viewed against the background of US-Indonesia relations in the postwar era. The rich resources of the archipelago, and its critical strategic location, guaranteed it a central role in US global planning. These factors lie behind US efforts 40 years ago to dismantle Indonesia, perceived as too independent and too democratic - even permitting participation of the poor peasants. These factors account for western support for the regime of killers and torturers who emerged from the 1965 coup.

Their achievements were seen as a vindication of Washington's wars in Indochina, motivated in large part by concerns that the "virus" of independent nationalism might "infect" Indonesia, to use Kissinger-like rhetoric.

The recent convulsions inside Indonesia - with its people finally crying for freedom and democracy - and the Nobel Peace Prize of 1996 - shared between Bishop Belo, a dominican supporting the Maubere people in Dili, and Jose Ramos Horta, a politician and activist who represents the Resistance historic leader, Xanana Gusmao, imprisioned in Indonesia for a 20-year sentence - have brought a new hope to the fight of this martyr people. Also, economic crisis hitting south-east Asia has shaken the dictatorship in Jakarta more than ever. The winds of change blowing throughout Indonesia started to hit East Timor...

# Introduction to Indonesia

Indonesia is the country with the more of Muslims in the world which means 87 per cent of 180 million habitants. Nevertheless, the major part of the declared Muslims mix their faith in Allah with animistic or Hindu-Buddhist beliefs. These are reminiscences of the Indian colonization that would be interrupted with the penetration of Islam in the 16th century, generally superficial and incomplete.

Due to the insular configuration, composed by 13 677 islands, 3 000 inhabited, and with an approximate extension of 1/8 the perimeter of Earth, Indonesia faces problems of national unity. Being the fifth most populous nation, 2/3 are concentrated in only the fifth larger island, Java, where the density is one of the highest. The solution passes inevitably by birth control and transmigration to territories such as Papua New Guinea, recently East Timor but also in between with the evident purpose of dissolving local cultures in the predominant Javanese which is only one amongst 360 tribal and ethno-linguistic groups and more than 250 different languages and dialects.

The Dutch colonial domain had been massively based in Java, with the rest of the archipelago had developed very unequally. From the rigid Islamic areas of North Sumatra to the tribes of Borneo or the Christian islands of the east, a variety of economic and social systems experienced very distinct problems for their progress.

# Independence of Indonesia and Sukarno

At the time of Indonesia's proclamation of independence in 1945, President Sukarno defined an ideological base for the state -- the "Panca sila" (meaning "five virtues") -- to be followed by all citizens and sworn by the social organizations. Main principles imposed were the adoption of Indonesian "Bahasa" language and the acceptance of one among five religions -- Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism -- forbidding the animist cults and other traditional practices. Thus "Panca sila" was assumed as an instrument of governmental control and a mean to javanize the diverse cultures.

But not without much internal opposition. Illuded with the possibility of the creation of an official Islamic state, when Suharto reached to power, Communist administrators and Islamic movements supported the Revolution, but what they didn't expect was the minor concessions offered, and once annihilated the Communist Party, an “important preoccupation of the government has been to control, domesticate or destroy the most orthodox and active Muslim factions” (Prof. A. Barbedo de Magalhгes, Oporto University). Since then they oftenly erupt in riots against the military aristocracy, basically syncretic in matter of religion.

Besides reaffirming the "Panca sila", in 1982 Suharto introduced the Law of the Associations which would fasten the strain on political, religious and social associations as it increased the powers of the administration to dismiss or impute directors to the aggregations, to destroy or agglutinate them in others more vast and controlled by the militaries.

Social and Political instability is patent in public insurrections in favor of democracy, which in September of 1984 culminated with the killing of 60 Muslims and imprisonment of important personalities such as of former governors that defied an inquiry to the incident.

Neo-colonialism in Indonesia? Many authors mention that Sukarno had a dream: the formation of a great Indonesia comprising the totality of the ancient Dutch East Indies, inclusive the non-Indonesian population. For this reason had he renounced to the federate structures initially conceived for the creation of the United States of Indonesia -- thus betraying the agreement with the Dutch for the transfer of sovereignty --, in favor of an unitary constitution, although still provisional. The new direction was taken in August of 1950, three months after an unilateral declaration of independence by the South Moluccas.

The first elections, free and democratic in fact, would be held in 1955, but disputed by more or less 170 parties! Their differences naturally brought difficulties to the functioning of the parliamentary democracy. On one hand, between the exponents of pre-Islamic syncretism of the "Nahdatul Ulama" (NU) and the orthodox Moslems of the "Masyumi", which's vital strength came from the outside -- West Sumatra and North Celebes besides Occidental Java (Sundanese ethnic origin). On the other hand, between the Nationalist Party (PNI) and the Communist Party (PKI), based in Java, and these with the Moslems.

The inefficiency of the administration, which passed through seven governments since 1949 to '57, and the rivalry engaged by the parties alone, in contrast with the heroism of the Revolution of August 17th, after all, the concentration of decision and power in Java as restrictor of the economic, social and cultural development aroused at the end tension in the exterior islands.

In February of 1957, Sukarno criticized the Western liberal democracy because unadapted to Indonesian particularity. He interfered more in the constitutional processes and appeals to his concept of "Guided Democracy", founded on indigenous procedures: the important questions should be decided through prolonged deliberations ("musyawarah") in order to obtain consensus ("mukafat"). This was the practice in the village and the same model ought to be adopted for the nation. Sukarno proposed a government formed by the four main parties and a national council represented by parties and functional groups in which, under the guidance of the president (himself), consensus would express itself.

In spite of the charisma gained by Sukarno as father of the country and mentor of the principle "unity in diversity", he was unable to avoid the proclamations of the martial law in March of 1957 as a response to the regional dissidences which reached their peak.

At the end of the year a further set-back was brought by the defeat of a motion for the renewal of negotiations concerning the destiny of West New Guinea. In a series of direct actions across the country, Dutch property was seized with the Indonesian government taking over. In the beginning of 1958 West Sumatra claimed for the constitution of a new central government under the leadership of Hatta, a moderate and historic figure of the Revolution, from the start vice-president of Sukarno up until two years ago when he resigned because disagreeing with his policy. Ignored the appeal of the Sumatrese a new revolutionary government was formed, supported by leaders of the Masyumi Party, including the ex-Prime Ministers Natsir (September 1950 -- March '51) and Harahap (August '55 -- March '56). The military commandant of the North Celebes joined the initiative, yet most striking was CIA's assistance with armament including aircrafts.

Suppression of the revolt was nevertheless soon accomplished, and with the regions undermined, the parties discredited and the prestige of the victorious army elevated, Sukarno resumed the idea of Guided Democracy in partnership with the military. Meanwhile, the army chief of staff A. Nasution had committed himself to the thought that the return to the revolutionary constitution of 1945 (presidential-type) would offer the best means for implementing the principles of deliberation, consensus and functional representation. Sukarno urged this course in a speech to the Constituent Assembly, elected in 1955 to draft a permanent constitution. Despite failing the approval of the necessary two-thirds for majority, he introduced it through a presidential decree of dubious legality.

Indonesia's domestic as well as foreign diplomacy is difficult to conceive in terms other than in the context of neo-colonialism. It certainly is incompatible with the spirit of the Afro-Asian Conference of Bandung held in Java, in 1955. Among twenty nine countries consensus was reached in order to condemn colonialism “in all it's forms of manifestation”. As it seems, imperialism isn't condemnable so long the territories comes from an ancient colony. Like the annexation of the Moluccan islands (1950-52) and in 1969 the also former Dutch West New Guinea, long pretended. The last was integrated after an Act of Free Choice sanctioned by UN. In truth, many journalists and observers would consider the process orchestrated but it had already been sealed. Today it is remembered as perhaps the most unfortunate episode UN's history.

In both regions, as well as in other islands of the Pacific, population claim Melanesian ancestrality, not identifying themselves with Indonesia, predominantly Malaysian.

The country has always been tormented by regional rebellions. From the perpetrated by Islamic fundamentalist movements, even in Java (where in the district of Acheh, a Moslem state practically subsisted between 1948 and 1962), Sumatra and Celebes as we've seen but also Kalimantan, to those involving Christian groups as in the South Moluccas. Still in 1984 the Movement for the Liberation of Papua erupted in attacks against the main cities of the territory, hoisting their flag in the capital opposite to the Regional Parliament.

The power of Sukarno depended along the years of the preservation of the equilibrium between the army and the Communist Party (PKI). The period assisted to the crescent popularity of the communists due to the consistent protection moved by the President in face of the incursions of the militaries. he opposed to the prohibitions of congresses and editorials, banished political organizations patronized by the military to blacken the PKI, placing some of their militants in political posts. Many analysts think that Sukarno was preparing the path for the rise of the communists to the power. Others say that his action intended to assure a the permanently threatened equilibrium

The coup of Suharto and the military. On the night of September 30, 1965, a group of subaltern officials based at Halim Air Base attempted a coup d'йtat to anticipate what they alleged to be the take-over of a pro-Western council of generals. But by following morning the Strategic Reserve of the Army Forces (KOSTRAD), commanded by Suharto, had concluded a successful counter-attack. For specialist Benedict Anderson, of Cornell University, it seems odd that Suharto, who would gather the reins of power into his hands, hadn't been aimed at by the "30th of September Movement" which assassinated six army generals (while a seventh, A. Nasution, escaped).

With propaganda that implicated important nationalist and communist politicians in the first stroke and the estimulation of the widely spread resentment of the pro-Chinese PKI was object of among the Indonesian Islamic groups, the militaries gradually assumed power. Suharto begun to maintain the already wasted and sickened Sukarno in a fictional presidency, as a symbol of national unity until by decree emptying his legal authority, in March 11, 1966. The next semester would be fatal for more than half a million Chinese and Indonesian besides an excess of 200 thousand political prisoners which altogether formed one of the greatest Communist parties of the World. The wave of hysteria was such that they were pointed out and oftenly even executed by their proper neighbor civilians in the villages.

# Formation of East-Timorese political associations

During Portuguese dictatorship, civilians were prohibited to gather for political discussions. But since the 60's an educated elite with nationalist aspirations begun to reune clandistinely and vehicle some principles in catholic press. Three weeks after the democratic Revolution, formation of political associations was incentivated, in the process of decolonization. Immediatly UDT was founded, wanting to prolong Portugal's presence in view of a progressive autonomy. ASDT, future Fretilin, called for radical independence, while Apodeti, supported by Indonesia, for the integration of East Timor in the neighbour power.

Although the changes acrossing the metropolis were of little immediate effect in the rural society, they had profound impact among the elites of East Timor, particularly in the administrator sectors, centered in the cities and specially in Dili They polarized the opposition to certain aspects of the Portuguese rule.

Since the 60s, an educated elite with nationalist aspirations began to emerge, often product of the catholic schools and particularly from the seminaries of Dare (outside Dili) and S. Jose in the colony of Macao. Discussions involved small groups of students and administrators that gathered clandestinely in the capital. The main escapes of their ideas were catholic publications of reduced circulation like Seara, which was closed down by the political police PIDE.

The conclusions reached are considered general and vagrant. Subjects like traditional marriage and the educational system were debated but not much was proposed as a global critic and alternatives.

Anyhow, this collective of student-administrators and higher level bureaucrats, as well as important rural proprietors would constitute the basis of the two main political parties: UDT and ASDT/Fretilin.

Three weeks after the Revolution 25th of April, the Governor of East Timor created the Commission for the Autodetermination which's intentions were to bring out to legality all the incipient political associations.

# The parties

UDT (Timor Democratic Union). This became the first party, was also the most popular for some months. The initial declaration, of May 11th, made apology of democratic principles, distribution of revenues and, the fulcral aspect, a progressive autonomy materialized with an increasing participation of the Timorese but always in the light of the Portuguese flag, to culminate with the integration of East Timor in a Portuguese language community. The political platform as conceived by first president Mбrio Carrascalгo was to hold Portugal's presence as far as possible without putting aside the option for independence. But although having presented a cohesive front at start, the course of events in the months followed would evidence different susceptibilities towards a same problem.

Firmly based on two groups, the higher positioned administrator elite and the larger proprietors of coffee plantations. UDT accounted still the favours of many suco liurais, although the majority of these belonged to the circle of the imposed chiefs, in an ancient practice of the colonial government to substitute the legitimate when less malleable... They used their influence to gain support for the party in the countryside managing strong implantation in areas like Liquie, Maubara, Maubisse, Ainaro, Manatuto, Laclubar.

While a group of conservatives were granted support by traditional chiefs and administrators -- whose positions and privileges under Portuguese rule made them emphasize a continuation with the metropolis --, those with commercial preoccupations of economical diversification beyond the Portuguese orbit focused on the advantages of independence.

Not until 27 of July did the MFA in Lisbon determine the new orientation in relation with the colonial territories. By it, the Timorese were officially and for the first time confronted with the possibility of independence.

In a message to the Portuguese President, UDT still inquired about the viability of federation, but no further elucidation was obtained. Few days later, UDT published the provisional statutes where preconized autodetermination oriented to federation with Portugal, with an intermediate phase for obtention of independence, and rejecting integration in any potential foreign country. It is probable that the discouragement of a definite bind with Portugal had also to do with the winds of independence that blew from the ancient metropolis. Spreading throughout the African colonies, in East Timor it influenced a crescent opposing party of independist militancy that defied UDT's hesitations: ASDT.

Amongst UDT founders pontificated the mentioned Mario Carrascalгo, proprietor of coffee plantations, director of the Agriculture Services, and also former leader of caetanist party ANP (Popular National Association), the only one allowed. Ex-seminarist Lopes da Cruz was too a ANP member and director of Timor's journal, A Voz de Timor, patronized by the government. He and intellectual Domingos de Oliveira were custom officials. Cesar Mouzinho was Mayor of Dili.

ASDT/Fretilin (Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor). The plan of ASDT was acknowledged in the proper day of it's foundation, 20th of May. Adopting the doctrines of socialism and democracy it called upfront for a gradual independence preceded of administrator, economical, social and political reforms. Three to eight years was the period of transition considered necessary. And from the beginning with the participation of the Timorese in the administration.

In the majority, ASDT was constituted with recent recruited members of the urbane elites, mainly those living in Dнli, which maintained the link to the rural areas of where they came from. Some were even descendants of liurai families.

With an average age under 30, the elder Xavier do Amaral, of 37, became ASDT's chairman. The leaders were commited to nationalism and reaffirmation of the Timorese culture, agreed on the priority of agricultural development, on alphabetization and extensive health programmes. But furthermore, the political perspectives deferred. The dominating tendency between the founders of ASDT was clearly social-democratic, represented by men like journalist Ramos-Horta, administrator Alarico Fernandes, Justino Mota and former professor Xavier do Amaral. Ramos-Horta says that for him and the majority of his colleagues it represented social justice, equitative distribution of the country's wealth, a mixed economy and a parliamentary system with extended democratic liberties. As to what extent did they have a model, sociologist John G. Taylor mentions the social-democracy of the 60 and 70's in Austria and Scandinavia. Anyway it wasn't experimented, as the urgency to gain internal and foreign support seems to have kept on depriving the opportunity.

Still during the ASDT period, a secondary current leaded by ancient sergeant and administrator, also ex-seminarist, Nicolau Lobato, “combined a fervent anticolonial nationalism with notions of economical and political development self-reliance based upon the experiences of Angola and Mozambique”. His ideas would begin to prevail after the transformation of ASDT into FRETILIN.

Apodeti (Timorese Popular Democratic Association). In 25 of May a third party appeared under the designation of Association for the Integration of Timor in Indonesia. Renamed Apodeti, the manifesto of the party defended an integration with autonomy in the Republic of Indonesia in accordance to the International Law and principles such as the obligatory teaching of the Indonesian language (Indonesian Bahasa), free education and medical assistance, and the right to go on strike.

The visionaries of Apodeti parted from the assumption that Portugal would abandon East Timor and that the idea of independence couldn't stand a chance because of Indonesia. In reality, the revindication of autonomy in a process of integration appeared more as a popular measure and than as a political stand.

It has been written that in the beginning of the 60's, BAKIN (military co-ordinator agency of the secret intelligence INTEL), mounted a net in East Timor which dealed with merchants, custom-house functionaries and agents from the Indonesian consulate of Dili, in change of favours, payments and refuge in case of conflict. Among them, those who would become the prominent leaders of Apodeti: professor and administrator Osуrio Soares, liurai of Atsabe (near the boarder of Indonesian Timor) Guilherme Gonzalves, and cattle breeder Arnaldo dos Reis Arajo.

Still before the Portuguese Revolution, BAKIN had trained East-timoreses in radio transmissions and as interpreters.

Nevertheless, while UDT and ASDT/Fretilin rapidly reached to the thousands of adepts, Apodeti wouldn't reach more than a couple of hundreds during the whole year of '74.

The support came mainly from the sucos of Guilherme Atsabe and a small Muslim community of Dili. Besides this it had no expression. The dubious personalities of it's leaders, all with criminal record and their political purposes made Apodeti in the words of East Timor's last governor, J. Lemos Pires “an enclosed organization, with difficulties to dialogue with the people and government even worse with the opponent parties”. Fretilin considered Apodeti illegal.

Three minor parties appeared, all more or less insignificant. The KOTA (Klibur Oan Timur Aswain), meaning "sons of the mountain warriors", was filiated in the Popular Monarchical Party of the metropolis. Remounting it's origins to the Topasses (see Ethnology of the Timorese), KOTA postulated the restoration of powers to the liurais who could trace their ancestrality back to the Topasse period in order to constitute a democratic monarchy, with the king to be elected amongst the liurais. Like KOTA, the Timorese Democratic Labour Movement hadn't a programme and agrouped only eight members, all from the same family. They wished to mobilize the working class. The Democratic Association for the integration of East Timor in Australia received money for promises of integration in Australia. It's existence was ephemerous because the Australian government departed from the idea even before the end of 1974.

Of these parties, KOTA and the Labour party were further mentioned and precisely by the Indonesian authorities with the sole purpose to evoke that four of the five parties, which they alleged that was the majority of the East-timorese, had petitioned for integration during the Civil War

On 15 September the United Nations Security Council unanimously authorised the establishment of a multinational force in Timor (UNSCR 1264). The resolution gives the force three tasks for its mandate: first, to restore peace and security to East Timor; second to protect and support the United Nations Mission in East Timor and; third, to facilitate within force capabilities humanitarian assistance operations in East Timor. The multinational force is commanded by Australia’s Major General Peter Cosgrove

# Australian support

The multinational force has been authorised by the United Nations Security Council, under chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, to use all necessary measures to achieve its mandate. The multinational force would prepare the ground for the United Nations to complete its task of managing East Timor's transition to independence. This will involve the arrival as soon as possible of a fully-fledged blue helmet UN peacekeeping operation and the establishment of a UN transitional administration.

Australian support for peacekeeping operations is not something new – Bougainville is but one ongoing example. But the East Timor operation – multilateral in scope, strongly representing South East Asia, led by Australia and conducted under a United Nations Chapter VII or peace enforcement mandate – is of a very different nature. This is the first time that Australia has been asked by the United Nations to build and lead a multinational force and to provide the largest single component. When Australia’s deployment was at full strength, it had committed 4,500 troops.

Australian involvement in the East Timor crisis is not motivated by any desire to cause difficulties in relations between Australia and Indonesia. It is important that Australia is in East Timor at the request of the United Nations and with the agreement of the Indonesian Government. It was in Australia’s vital interests that Indonesia be a peaceful, stable and democratic state, economically prosperous and playing a leading and respected role in the region. It was also in Indonesia’s own interests to ensure East Timor’s transition is a peaceful and orderly one. Australia’s efforts in building the relations with Indonesia were directed to that outcome.

With respect to defence relations, it is in australian security interests to have links such as defence attache representation, high-level strategic talks, staff college courses, maritime surveillance and disaster relief exercises. Such contacts are necessary to achieve the objectives in East Timor, and are desirable because defence links will be part of any effective long-term relationship with Indonesia. That decision shows the challenges Jakarta and Canberra face in maintaining a working defence relationship that supports the long-term national and strategic interests of both countries.

Prime Minister Howard has said that “the deployment of Australian troops to East Timor meets the test of national interest in two respects. First, in the spirit of Australia's military tradition, troops are going to defend what Australian society believes to be right. The troops are not going to occupy territory, to impose the will of Australia on others or to act against the legitimate interests of another country. Rather, they go to East Timor at the request of the United Nations and with the agreement of the Indonesian government. INTERFET troops are defending East Timor’s desire for independence, as delivered in a free vote granted to them by the Indonesian Government and with the blessing of the international community. In addition, INTERFET troops will facilitate the humanitarian relief that is so desperately needed for the hundreds of thousands of displaced people in East Timor.

Second, Australian troops in East Timor will work to put an end to the terrible violence that prevailed immediately after the result of the ballot was announced. Apart from the human cost, the scale of violence we witnessed undermines Australia's own interest in a stable region. The troops will prepare the way for the United Nations to undertake the vital task of developing a transitional political and administrative framework for East Timor. For East Timorese, this offers the hope of reconciliation among groups that have fought each other for decades and the opportunity to create their own future. They have a responsibility to come to grips with these issues. For Indonesia, it will more readily be able to concentrate on its nation building task, with the full support of the international community.”

# USA admits Timorese right to self-determination

On a letter to Senator Russel Feingold, dated December 27th, 1996, U.S. President Bill Clinton recognized, for the first time, that he "noted with interest your [a group of 15 U.S. Senators] support of a UN-sponsored self-determination referendum in East Timor".

# Indonesia admits independence

For the first time in 23 years, Indonesia has admitted the right of the Timorese people to indepence. Last January, on the eve of another high-level bilateral summit on East Timor between the Portuguese and Indonesian Foreign Ministers, at the United Nations' headquarters in New Yourk, the Indonesian authorities stated that if the East Timorese rejected the current authonomy plan offered by Indonesia, the central government in Jakarta would be ready to let them separate from their invadors.

Only a couple of weeks later, president B.J. Habibie announced, at a meeting with indonesian businessmen at the Chamber of Commerce, that by January 1st, 2000 the problem of East Timor would be 'fixed': either the Timorese accepted the "large-scale authonomy" proposed by the Indonesian government in New York (August 5th, 1998), or Indonesia "would wave them goodbye". It was the first time the Indonesian authorities openly talked of independence for East Timor.

Meanwhile, the situation on the territory has worsened in the last months, followin the alleged massacre at Alas (south of Dili) last December, when as much as 52 people would have been killed. The military (18,000 soldiers currently serve in the occupied territory, according to intelligence data smuggled out of East Timor by a dicident officer - that is, 1 for each 40 East Timorese, or proportionally 7 times more than in the rest of Indonesia) have been arming civilian militia, in what international observers consider to be a move aimed at starting a civil war on the verge of Indonesia's leave.

Agreement Between the Republic of Indonesia and the Portugese Republic on the Question of East Timor

The Governments of Indonesia and Portugal, recalling General Assembly resolutions and the relevant resolutions and decisions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly on the question of East Timor; bearing in mind the sustained efforts of the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal since July 1983, through the good offices of the Secretary-General, to find a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor; recalling the agreement of 5 August 1998 to undertake, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, negotiations on a special status based on a wide-ranging autonomy for East Timor without prejudice to the positions of principle of the respective Governments on the final status of East Timor; having discussed a constitutional framework for an autonomy for East Timor on the basis of a draft presented by the United Nations, as amended by the Indonesian Government; noting the position of the Government of Indonesia that the proposed special autonomy should be implemented only as an end solution to the question of East Timor with full recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor; noting the position of the Government of Portugal that an autonomy regime should be transitional, not requiring recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor or the removal of East Timor from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories of the General Assembly, pending a final decision on the status of East Timor by the East Timorese people through an act of self-determination under United Notions auspices; taking into account that although the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal each have their positions of principle on the prepared proposal for special autonomy, both agree that it is essential to move the peace process forward, and that therefore, the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal agree that the Secretary-General should consult the East Timorese people on the constitutional framework for autonomy attached hereto as an annex; bearing in mind that the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal requested the Secretary-General to devise the method and procedures for the popular consultation through a direct, secret and universal ballot signed up in New York on this 5th day of May, 1999 the Agreement Between the Republic of Indonesia and the Portugese Republic on the Question of East Timor

*“Article 1 Request the Secretary-General to put the attached proposed constitutional framework providing for a special autonomy for East Timor within the unitary Republic of Indonesia to the East Timorese people, both inside and outside East Timor, for their consideration and acceptance or rejection through a popular consultation on the basis of a direct, secret and universal ballot.*

*Article 2 Request the Secretary-General to establish, immediately after the signing of this Agreement, an appropriate United Nations mission in East Timor to enable him to effectively carry out the popular consultation.*

*Article 3 The Government of Indonesia will be responsible for maintaining peace and security in East Timor in order to ensure that the popular consultation is carried out in a fair and peaceful way in an atmosphere free of intimidation, violence or interference from any side.*

*Article 4 Request the Secretary-General to report the result of the popular consultation to the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as to inform the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal and the East Timorese people.*

*Article 5 If the Secretary-General determines, on the basis of the result of the popular consultation and in accordance with this Agreement, that, the proposed constitutional framework for special autonomy is acceptable to the East Timorese people, the Government of Indonesia shall initiate the constitutional measures necessary for the implementation of the constitutional framework, and the Government of Portugal shall initiate within the United Nations the procedures necessary for the removal of East Timor from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories of the General Assembly and the deletion of the question of East Timor from the agendas of the Security Council and the General Assembly.*

*Article 6 If the Secretary-General determines, on the basis of the result of the popular consultation and in accordance with this Agreement, that the proposed constitutional framework for special autonomy is not acceptable to the East Timorese people, the Government of Indonesia shall take the constitutional steps necessary to terminate its links with East Timor thus restoring under Indonesian law the status East Timor held prior to 17 July 1976, and the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal and the Secretary-General shall agree on arrangements for a peaceful and orderly transfer of authority in East Timor to the United Nations. The Secretary-General shall, subject to the appropriate legislative mandate, initiate the procedure enabling East Timor to begin a process of transition towards independence.*

*Article 7 During the interim period between the conclusion of the popular consultation and the start of the implementation of either option, the parties request the Secretary-General to maintain an adequate United Nations presence in East Timor. “*

# Conclusion

On August, 30th, History was written in East Timor: 98.6% of registered voters exercised their democratic right in a UN-organised referendum, considered by the Indonesian authorities as "free and fair". Defying eight months of intimidation by indonesian-armed militiamen, mostly transmigrated from West Timor, the population stood in long queues at the ballot sites, in some cases waiting hours in the sun after walking kilometres to the nearest polling station.

Hardly anybody partied in Dili, though, or in the rest of the territory; celebrations were held abroad, though, in Australia, Portugal, the United States, Ireland, England, Mozambique, even Indonesia, wherever a Timorese community is to be found. But inside the new Nation, just four hours after the official announcement, the defeated militia gangs started to set East Timor on fire. BBC, CNN, and other international TV stations broadcasted to the world images once seen in other war scenarios - fire of automatic weapons, houses set on fire, innocent civilians seeking shelter in the schools, the churches, the neighbouring mountains. International media reports mentioned 145 deaths in Dili only, in the 48 hours following the announcement. On September, 5th and 6th, most international observers, journalists and the civilian personnel of UNAMET were evacuated from the territory, either by chartered planes or the Australian Air Force. On the afternoon of September, the 5th, four indonesian ministers - including Defence and Foreign Affairs holders, General Wiranto and Mr. Ali Alatas - and one secretary of State paid a 4-hour visit to Dili - though they never left the airport "for security reasons".

On the evening of that same day, the UN Security Council, gathered on an emergency meeting in New York, once more abstained from sending in a peace-keeping force. The Indonesian authorities claimed to be able to restore peace and tranquility, though 20.000 men already stationed in the territory failed to do so until now, and were even reported to have participated, in some cases directly, in the new mass killings started on September, 4th. TV, photographic and oral evidence from UNAMET staff and international media wasn't enough, so the Council decided to send a "fact-finding mission" to Jakarta.

On the morning of September, the 6th, the home of Nobel Peace Prize winner, Ximenes Belo, was set on fire. The bishop seaked refugee in Baucau, though he was impotent to save the hundreds of refugees in his frontyard, now facing death or deportation to West Timor, like so many before them. More than 1,000 refugees were sheltered at the UNAMET compound in Dili, and the UN convoys were shot at in the road to the airport.

Despite several United Nations Resolutions on the right of the Timorese to self-determination (the UN has never recognized the indonesian annexation of the territory), the international community has been blind to the fight of its inhabitants. Only since November 12th, 1991, when more than 250 youngsters were killed during a brutal massacre occurred in a cematery in Dili (the capital city of East Timor), have the "civilized" nations condemned Indonesia in a more consistent way. But words of condemnation sound empty when the same countries sell arms to the regime (a dictatorship ruling Indonesia for decades), and strengthen the economic ties binding European and American states to Jakarta.

The five days which mediated until official results were announced were days of tension, with frequent militia attacks in Dili and other spots in the territory. But on the morning of September, 4th, UNAMET (United Nations Assistance Mission to East Timor) leader Ian Martin announced the results, minutes after the United Nations' Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, had done the same in New York: 21.5% of the voters had chosen to accept the Special Autonomy offered to the territory by Indonesia, while an overwhelming majority of 78.5% reffused it, thus laying the path to independence.

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