

# Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question from April 1974 to January 1978: a re-examination

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# **Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question from April 1974 to January 1978: a re-examination**

**Tomohiko Kimura**

A thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

**UNSW**



School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
University of New South Wales, Canberra

**2012**

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## Abbreviations

AAP	Australian Associated Press
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ACFOA	Australian Council for Overseas Aid
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AETA	Australia-East Timor Association
AIIPT	<i>Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976</i>
AJA	Australian Journalists Association
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANP	People's National Action ( <i>Ação Nacional Popular</i> )
ANU	Australian National University
ANZUK	Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States (Security Treaty)
Apodeti	Timorese Popular Democratic Association ( <i>Associação Popular Democrática Timorense</i> )
ASDT	Timorese Social Democratic Association ( <i>Associação Social Democrática Timorense</i> )
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASIAT	Australian Society for Inter-Country Aid-Timor
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organization
BAKIN	State Intelligence Coordinating Agency (Indonesia), ( <i>Badan Ko-ordinasi Intelijen Negara</i> )
CAA	Community Aid Abroad
CAVR	Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation ( <i>Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação</i> )
CHART	Cleaning House for Archival records on Timor
CIET	Campaign for Independent East Timor
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
CSIS	Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Indonesia)

DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DPR	People's Representative Council ( <i>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat</i> )
DRET	Democratic Republic of East Timor
EEC	European Economic Community
FAD	Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee of Cabinet
Falintil	Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor ( <i>Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste</i> )
FPDA	Five Power Defence Arrangements
Frelimo	Liberation Front of Mozambique ( <i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i> )
Fretilin	Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor ( <i>Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente</i> )
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
Hankam	Department of Defence and Security (Indonesia), ( <i>Pertahanan dan Keamanan</i> )
IBRD	International Bank for Rehabilitation and Development
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IGGI	Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia
IMf	International Monetary Fund
INTERFET	International Forces East Timor
JIO	Joint Intelligence Organisation
KKO	Marine Corps ( <i>Korps Komando</i> )
Kopassus	Indonesian Army Special Forces ( <i>Komando Pasukan Khusus</i> )
KOTA	Association of Timorese Heroes ( <i>Klibur Oan Timor Asuwain</i> )
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NCP	National Country Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIC	National Intelligence Committee
NLA	National Library of Australia
NZ	New Zealand

MFA	Movement of the Armed Forces ( <i>Movimento das Forças Armadas</i> )
OPSUS	Special Operation ( <i>Operasi Khusus</i> )
PGET	Provisional Government of East Timor
PKI	Indonesian Communist Party ( <i>Partai Komunis Indonesia</i> )
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PRC	People's Republic of China
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RTP	Radio and Television of Portugal ( <i>Rádio e Televisão de Portugal</i> )
SCOR	Security Council Official Records
SEATO	South East Asia Treaty Organisation
SMH	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
Trabalhista	Timorese Labour Party
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UDT	Timorese Democratic Union ( <i>União Democrática Timorense</i> )
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSW	University of New South Wales
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
ZOPFAN	South East Asia Zone of Peace and Neutrality

# Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides an outline of this thesis on Australian foreign policy towards East Timor during the 1970s. Section 1.1 presents the research's objectives, briefly discusses its methodology and materials utilised, and outlines its relationship to existing relevant literature. Section 1.2 reviews the literature authored since the middle of the 1970s, dividing the approximately thirty-five years into three periods: the 1970s; 1980s to 1990s; and after 2000. Finally, Section 1.3 briefly summarises the contents of each chapter of this thesis.

## *1.1 Outline of research*

### **Objectives of research**

On 12 January 1999, approximately three weeks after Australian Prime Minister John Howard sent a letter to Indonesian President Habibie encouraging him to directly negotiate with East Timor leaders in pursuit of an act of self-determination,<sup>1</sup> Foreign Minister Downer issued a media release entitled "Australian Government Historic Policy Shift on East Timor". In this official statement, he announced that "I am of the view that the long term prospects for reconciliation in East Timor would be best served by the holding of an act of self-determination at some future time, following a substantial period of autonomy", while adding that "this adjustment to Australian policy does not alter the Government's position which continues to recognise Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor".<sup>2</sup> In this way, the Australian government

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Howard to Habibie, 19 December 1998, in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition 1998-2000: An Australian Policy Challenge* (Canberra: Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2001), pp. 181-2.

<sup>2</sup> Media Release of Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer, 12 January 1999, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition 1998-2000*, p. 183.

declared its official commitment to a resolution of the East Timor question through self-determination for the Timorese.

After the publication of this new policy, the question of self-determination for East Timor evolved into an abrupt resolution. On 27 January 1999, the Indonesian government under President Habibie revealed its intention to provide the Timorese with a choice between special autonomy under Indonesian sovereignty or separation from Indonesia. On 5 May, having concluded talks with Portugal, the former colonial power of East Timor, and the UN Secretary-General which had begun in 1983, the Indonesian government agreed to hold a popular consultation to determine the political future of East Timor in the form of a direct ballot which finally took place on 30 August. On 3 September, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced that “the result of the vote is 94,388, or 21.5 per cent in favour, and 344,580, or 78.5%, against the proposed special autonomy. The people of East Timor have thus rejected the proposed autonomy and expressed their wish to begin a process of transition towards independence”.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the question of Indonesia’s occupation of East Timor ended with independence for East Timor being formally proclaimed on 20 May 2002 following prolonged military conflicts which had cost the lives of more than 100,000 people, including more than 1000 killed during post-ballot conflicts in September 1999.<sup>4</sup>

Even though the 1999 resolution of the East Timor question may appear to have been sudden and unexpected, it should be noted that not only the origins of Indonesia’s occupation of East Timor but also international efforts to resolve it on the basis of the will of the Timorese people had a more than two-decade history. As hostilities between the Indonesian military and pro-independence Timorese began to escalate in the mid-1970s, the Portuguese government,

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3 UN Press Release, SG/SM/7119, SC/6722, 3 September 1999, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *East Timor in Transition 1998-2000*, pp. 240-1.

4 In 2005, the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) estimated that 102,8000-183,000 civilians died during the period from April 1974 to October 1999 due to conflict-related causes.



United Nations and international civil society, notably in Australia, started facing this issue. Although the Australian government was publicly in support of the right to self-determination of the Timorese and against Indonesia's integration of East Timor by force, it weakened its attitude towards the end of the decade. Thus, as the 1970s was a remarkable period in terms of the origins of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor as well as international efforts to counter it, while not implying that the 1980s and 1990s were insignificant, this thesis concentrates on the question of East Timor's self-determination and Australia's relationship to it during this time.

How did East Timor, which was in the process of decolonisation from Portugal after 25 April 1974, become part of Indonesia? Why did the Australian government not recognise and publicly condemn Indonesia's annexation of East Timor despite the possible cost to its good relations with Indonesia and the silence of other governments in the region? What roles did Ministers, officials and people outside the Australian government play in framing Australian foreign policy? Why did the Australian government finally recognise East Timor as a *de facto* part of Indonesia on 20 January 1978 and begin to accommodate its takeover by Indonesia? These are questions investigated in this thesis.

### **Methodology and materials utilised**

As the methodology of this thesis is based on political and diplomatic history, one of its characteristics is its extensive use of diplomatic materials. In particular, it examines a number of public statements and records of talks among Australian Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, their Indonesian and Portuguese counterparts and Timorese leaders. To analyse Ministers' intentions, this study also pays attention to policy suggestions made to Ministers by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and Australian ambassadors.

However, this research does not postulate that only Ministers, with the professional

support of officials, determined Australian foreign policy. It also notes the significant influence of Australian public opinion, which was sympathetic to self-determination and independence for East Timor, on formal policymaking processes, as expressed by, in particular, Foreign Ministers who were more concerned with domestic opinion on this issue than Prime Ministers and Ambassadors to Indonesia whose main concerns were Australia's relations with Indonesia, a neighbouring regional power, and the ASEAN countries. Regarding the importance of public opinion and the media in terms of foreign policymaking, it is notable that, in June 1974, Alan Renouf, who was Secretary of the DFA under Foreign Minister Willesee and had already started dealing with the question of the decolonisation of Portuguese Timor, talked directly to the press as follows.

We are especially interested in editorial comment, and in the views of the serious commentators...For us, the editorials present the most readily available and distilled view of public opinion or criticism of the Government's actions in foreign policy. If the criticisms are valid, I can assure you they are taken into account in the process of policy advice and decision-making. If, as sometimes happens, the criticisms are based on wrong information, then we feel we have a duty to go to editors to put what we consider to be the correct case.<sup>5</sup>

As these remarks suggest that Foreign Ministers and officials of the DFA paid attention to domestic opinion and the media's comments which, as they became more critical of the Australian government's inaction regarding Indonesia's military intervention in East Timor, gradually influenced Australian foreign policy towards this issue, this thesis also looks at their effects.

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Renouf, "Foreign Affairs and the Press", *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 45:6, 1974.

Concerning the materials utilised, firstly, this research draws much information from a volume of *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976* (hereafter *AIIPT*) edited mainly by Wendy Way in 2000.<sup>6</sup> It consists of 484 documents created by the DFA and other institutions relevant to Australian policymaking towards the East Timor question during the period from 25 April 1974 to 17 July 1976, with some additional documents relating to before and after that period. Because of a decision of the Howard government, the publication of *AIIPT* became possible in 2000, some years earlier than the Australian government's regular practice of declassifying its historical records 30 years after their creation. In addition, this thesis utilises Ministerial public statements available from the *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, a monthly magazine of the DFA, and a number of files accessible at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra. They include documents excluded from the *AIIPT* volume mentioned above and those newly available after 2000, such as the Fraser government's cabinet papers and many documents of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) relating to the monitoring of the activities of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) in support of Fretilin.

Thus, this research benefits greatly from information derived from both public and declassified Australian government documents which, given the inability to access Indonesian government records is, no doubt, among the most useful and trustworthy available on Indonesia's policy of the annexation of East Timor. However, this does not mean that researchers can have indefinite access to Australian government records 30 years after their creation as Section 33 of the Archives Act 1983 notes that the National Archives can refuse to disclose a record when it contains "information or matter the disclosure of which under this Act could reasonably be expected to cause damage to the security, defence or international relations

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<sup>6</sup> Wendy Way (ed.), *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000).

of the Commonwealth” and so forth. For these reasons, for example, a great deal of information gathered by Australian intelligence remains classified despite recent appeals to the Administrative Tribunal by Clinton Fernandes.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it has to be noted that this research is conducted based on the information the Australian government considered appropriate to release.

Secondly, this thesis also makes use of periodicals and publications by individuals and interest groups to gather information on Australian domestic opinion. However, as it is not practically possible to canvass all opinions expressed on East Timor, the focus is on only some ‘well-known’ individuals and interest groups and a few ‘major’ newspapers; for example, the activities of James Dunn, Director of the Foreign Affairs Group of the Parliament’s Legislative Research Service, Denis Freney, a member of the CPA, Ken Fry, a Labor member of the Federal Parliament, David Scott, a leader of NGOs, and other individuals, and some interest groups, such as the Campaign for Independent East Timor (CIET) founded by Freney and the Australian East Timor Association (AETA) of which Scott was a senior member. Regarding the media, this thesis focuses on the following three ‘serious’ newspapers based in Australia’s two largest cities and its capital: *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney); *The Age* (Melbourne); and *The Canberra Times* (Canberra). However, it is fair to say that these selections are minimal and further investigation into various opinions including those supporting Indonesia’s integration of East Timor would improve this research.

### **Relationship with existing literature**

What is the originality of this research? In addition to providing a detailed historical description of the East Timor question, including Portugal’s decolonisation policy, Indonesia’s

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/AATA/2011/202.html>.

annexation policy and the political development of East Timor on the basis of Australian diplomatic records and other documents, this thesis examines how the Australian government decided to take a critical stand against Indonesia's policy of annexation of East Timor, taking into account some roles of the DFA in reflecting domestic opinion critical of forceful annexation. Given the focus of existing literature being on the roles of Prime Minister Whitlam and Ambassador Woolcott, this is a contribution of this research.

In the next section, we provide an overview of the arguments relating to this thesis's topic in the existing literature. While it briefly considers the political history of East Timor in the 1970s, its focal point is on the literature concerning Australian foreign policymaking.

## ***1.2 Literature survey***

### **1.2.1 Literature of 1970s**

#### **Literature on the history of East Timor in 1970s**

Following the beginning of the decolonisation of East Timor from Portugal in April 1974, some researchers and journalists began to pay attention to this political situation. Despite a number of observers appreciating the significance of the emergence of an independence movement in East Timor, after 7 December 1975, this territory was massively invaded by the Indonesian military. Regardless of international criticism and resistance by the Timorese, on 17 July 1976, President Suharto officially announced Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. While having diplomatically opposed this policy, on 20 January 1978, the Australian government at last announced its recognition of East Timor as a *de facto* part of Indonesia. Against the backdrop of the Australian public's concerns over humanitarian and self-determination questions regarding East Timor, some important literature was authored towards the end of the

1970s.

Initial publications on the East Timor question were in the form of leaflets and periodicals responding to Australian concerns over the foreseeable and ongoing conflicts in the territory. In November 1974, after returning to Sydney from East Timor, Denis Freney authored a monograph entitled *East Timor on the Road to Independence*<sup>8</sup> and set up the CIET, a pro-Fretilin organisation. Although this was the first detailed study dealing with the question of East Timor's independence and self-determination, it was soon followed by Grant Evans's *Eastern (Portuguese) Timor: Independence or Oppression?*<sup>9</sup> and Jill Jolliffe's *Report from East Timor*<sup>10</sup> which were printed in association with the Australian Union of Students. In November 1975, when Indonesia's military invasion began from East Timor's borders, John Waddingham and others launched a new periodical, *Timor Information Service*<sup>11</sup>, in Melbourne to disseminate information on East Timor from a less polemic point of view than that of the CIET. Helen Hill's *The Timor Story*<sup>12</sup> was also published in *Timor Information Service* in early 1976 soon after the launch of Indonesia's massive invasion of Dili. In February 1977, to maintain people's interest in the question of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor, Freney began to circulate another periodical, *East Timor News*.<sup>13</sup>

In 1978, more substantial works appeared in books and a thesis. Firstly, Jill Jolliffe, who had stayed in the territory from September to December 1975, published a book entitled *East Timor: Nationalism and Colonialism*. After gathering a wealth of information from written sources as well as interviews, she wrote a detailed account of the Indonesian annexation policy

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8 Campaign for Independent East Timor, *East Timor on the Road to Independence : A Background Report* (Sydney: Campaign for Independent East Timor, 1974).

9 Grant Evans, *Eastern (Portuguese) Timor: Independence or Oppression?* (Carlton, Vic: Australian Union of Students, 1975).

10 Jill Jolliffe, *Report from East Timor* (Canberra: A.N.U. Student's Association, 1975).

11 Back numbers of *Timor Information Service* are available at the website <http://chartperiodicals.wordpress.com/2010/08/31/tis/>.

12 Helen Hill, *The Timor Story* (Melbourne: Timor Information Service, 1976).

13 Back numbers of *East Timor News* are available at the website <http://chartperiodicals.wordpress.com/2010/09/01/etn/>.

and the politics of East Timor, including Fretilin's declaration of independence on 28 November 1975 which she had observed as one of three Australian journalists attending the ceremony.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, Helen Hill completed her Master's thesis, "Nationalism in East Timor" which focused on Fretilin members' ideologies and strategies and was published in 2002.<sup>15</sup> Thirdly, Bill Nicol, an Australian freelance journalist who had covered East Timor in 1975, published a book on the politics and decolonisation of East Timor<sup>16</sup> which was reprinted in 2002.<sup>17</sup> What characterises his book is his intentional detachment from the political activities of Fretilin; for example, he described José Ramos-Horta of Fretilin as a pragmatic politician who utilised Australian visitors to gather popular support for Fretilin in Timor and attempted to impress Australian audiences about Fretilin's primacy.

### **Literature on Australia's relations with East Timor in 1970s**

Research on Australian foreign policymaking towards East Timor began at the same time as the Australian public's concerns were aired. Firstly, in 1976, taking advantage of her position as an advisor to Foreign Minister Don Willesee of the Whitlam government, Nancy Viviani, an International Relations scholar, analysed the Whitlam government's policymaking towards East Timor.<sup>18</sup> On the basis of a good deal of information collected mostly from newspapers, Viviani examined the roles Prime Minister Whitlam, the DFA and domestic opinion played in Australian policymaking. Refuting the widely-accepted view that the "Indonesia lobby" of the DFA, including K. C. O. Shann, Robert Furlonger, Gordon Jockel, Graham Feakes and Richard Woolcott, dominated Australian policymaking, Viviani argued that Australian policy

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14 Jill Jolliffe, *East Timor: Nationalism & Colonialism* (St. Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1978).

15 Helen Hill, *Stirrings of Nationalism in East Timor: Fretilin 1974-1978: The Origins, Ideologies and Strategies of a Nationalist Movement* (Oxford, N.S.W.: Oxford Press, 2002).

16 Bill Nicol, *Timor; the Stillborn Nation* (Camberwell, Vic: Widescope, 1978).

17 Bill Nicol, *Timor: A Nation Reborn* (Jakarta: Equinox Pub., 2002).

18 Nancy Viviani, "Australians and the East Timor Issue", *Australian Outlook* 30:2, 1976.

towards Timor was “indeed Whitlam policy”.<sup>19</sup> As to the relationship between Prime Minister Whitlam and the DFA, Viviani analysed that “the reasons and motives for Australia’s Timor policy differed in some respects, but after the Jogjakarta meeting [in September 1974] both the Department of Foreign Affairs and Whitlam were committed to the same line: integration of Timor with Indonesia was the best option, but wishes of the Timorese would have to be taken into account”.<sup>20</sup>

In 1978, after the Fraser government announced its recognition of Indonesian *de facto* rule over East Timor, Viviani wrote another paper on the Fraser government’s policymaking towards East Timor.<sup>21</sup> She observed that “[t]he influence of this domestic opinion on government policy was not insignificant in contrast to the Whitlam period” and argued that “[t]he decision by the Government to join in the condemnation at the United Nations in December 1975 was in part a response to pressure within Australia, and Mr Peacock’s refusal to acquiesce in the act of self-determination in 1976 may be seen not only as a logical consequence of his initial stance at the UN but also as a decision to resist Indonesian pressure in order to avoid further alienation of Australian public opinion”. In anticipation of the persistent influence of domestic opinion regardless of the Fraser government’s announcement concerning East Timor in January 1978, she forecast that “[t]he Timor issue will continue to have consequences for Australian policy in the future” and that “[t]he most important consequences of the Timor issue lie in the future Australian policy towards Indonesia”.<sup>22</sup>

Remarkably, these analyses of Viviani gradually became accepted by other researchers; for example, with reference to Viviani’s paper, in 1976, Jill Jolliffe also wrote that “the Timor

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 201.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp. 203-4.

<sup>21</sup> Nancy Viviani, “Australians and the East Timor Issue: II”, *Australian Outlook* 32:3, 1978.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 260.



policy was generally identified as a peculiarly Whitlam policy”.<sup>23</sup> However, referring to the statement made by Foreign Minister Willesee on 30 October 1975, she considered that, after the journalists’ deaths in Balibo and during its last days, the Whitlam government responded to increasing public pressure and, on 16 October, adopted “a mildly critical tone”.<sup>24</sup> Thus, while largely accepting Viviani’s views, Jolliffe showed a different understanding of the time at which the Australian government started responding to domestic opinion and expressing critical views towards the Indonesian policy of the annexation of East Timor.

However, in 1979, Alan Renouf, the Secretary of the DFA from 1974 to 1977, countered Viviani’s views, arguing that he had insisted to Prime Minister Whitlam that the Department should have a more autonomous role.<sup>25</sup> Reflecting on the part he played, Renouf wrote that “I directed that Australia’s policy should be self-determination. This was approved by Foreign Minister Don Willesee” but that “[i]n his talks with Suharto [in September 1974], Whitlam changed the policy; the policy was now integration of East Timor with Indonesia but only through self-determination. The policy had become two-pronged and the two prongs might be irreconcilable”. He went on to write that “[t]he Department of Foreign Affairs did not favour Whitlam’s policy, at least not as formulated. Everyone involved agreed that East Timor’s integration made good sense. However, the Department rated the means of integration as at least equally important to integration”. Stressing the difference between the positions of Foreign Minister Willesee who had the support of the Department and Prime Minister Whitlam who was helped by Ambassadors to Indonesia, he wrote as follows.

It has often been alleged that the Department’s approach paralleled that of Whitlam. The

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<sup>23</sup> Jolliffe, *East Timor*, pp. 251-2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 256.

<sup>25</sup> Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 439-49.

Department allegedly attached over-riding importance to relations with Indonesia, as did Whitlam. It was said that its strong Indonesian lobby prevailed in policy formulation about East Timor. This is not correct. It is true that successive Australian Ambassadors in Jakarta preferred Whitlam's approach to that of Willesee and the Department but their influence was not decisive. The major influence of officials upon policy was objective and not dominated by a disposition to go along with Indonesia.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, former Secretary Renouf suggested that not only did Foreign Minister Willesee and the DFA pursue a different policy from that of Prime Minister Whitlam and Ambassadors to Indonesia but also that they had some influence on Australian policymaking. In any case, former Secretary Renouf defended the Whitlam government's policy and argued that there was nothing that Australia could do to stop the Indonesian invasion of East Timor.<sup>27</sup>

### **1.2.2 Literature in 1980s and 1990s**

#### **Literature on the history of East Timor in 1980s and 1990s**

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, until independence for East Timor was determined as a result of the popular ballot held under the auspices of the United Nations on 30 August 1999, the Australian government treated East Timor as part of Indonesia. In December 1989, it also concluded the Timor Gap Treaty, which delineated the seabed boundaries in the Arafura Sea, with the Indonesian government as an extension of the Australian government's policy regarding East Timor as part of Indonesia which led to the Portuguese government appealing this case to the International Court of Justice. In the 1990s, the international political climate surrounding the Indonesian annexation of East Timor changed dramatically. In particular, the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 442-4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 447.

brutal images of the Santa Cruz massacre in November 1991 which were broadcast to the world and the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to a Roman Catholic bishop, Carlos Belo, and José Ramos-Horta, two well-known Timorese advocates of self-determination, assisted international opinion towards favouring the realisation of an act of self-determination for the Timorese. In May 1998, in the midst of the Asian financial crisis which had begun in the second half of 1997, President Suharto, who had ruled Indonesia for more than thirty years, announced his resignation and his successor, President Habibie, initiated a review of the Indonesian policy of annexation of East Timor, as seen in the previous section.

During those two decades, a number of writers continued to work on the history of the Indonesian annexation of East Timor in the 1970s. Firstly, in 1980, Hamish McDonald, an Australian journalist who lived in Jakarta from 1975 and 1978, authored a book entitled *Suharto's Indonesia* which, in one chapter, dealt with Indonesia's integration of East Timor. In it, he focused on the roles of Ali Murtopo, a close aide of President Suharto, who led OPSUS (Operasi Khusus; Special Operation), and Harry Tjan and Yusuf Wanandi (Lim Bian Kie), two members of the CSIS, a think tank under the influence of Ali Murtopo.<sup>28</sup> Secondly, in 1983, James Dunn, who had served as the Australian consul in Dili from 1962 to 1964 and authored some papers on East Timor after 1974 as the Director of the Foreign Affairs Group of the Parliament's Legislative Research Service, published a book entitled *Timor: A People Betrayed* which became one of the best-known books on this topic. Having gathered a good deal of information from his interviews with the Timorese, leaked documents, newspapers and other sources, he detailed the history of East Timor during the 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>29</sup> In 1996, after being partially updated, this book was reprinted.<sup>30</sup> Thirdly, in 1984, Carmel Budiardjo and

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28 Hamish McDonald, *Suharto's Indonesia* (Blackburn, Vic.: Fontana Books, 1980), esp. pp. 189-215.

29 James Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed* (Milton, Qld.: Jacaranda, 1983).

30 James Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1996).

Liem Soei Liong, two human rights activists based in Europe, wrote about Indonesia's ongoing war in East Timor. They argued that, while pro-independence Timorese guerrilla activities had once been almost pacified by the Indonesian military during the period from 1977 to 1978, they were revived under the leadership of Xanana Gusmao in the early 1980s.<sup>31</sup> Fourthly, José Ramos-Horta, of Fretilin, published his autobiography which reflected on his activities since the 1970s aimed at gather international support for the cause of self-determination and independence for East Timor.<sup>32</sup>

During the 1990s, a great deal of important literature regarding Indonesia's integration of East Timor was authored from various perspectives and contributed to keeping people's interest in the territory alive. Firstly, in 1991, having carefully examined information flowing out of East Timor, John G. Taylor wrote about the guerrilla war between the Timorese resistance and Indonesian military during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, Mário Lemos Pires, the last Governor of Portuguese Timor, looked back on his role and the Portuguese decolonisation policy<sup>34</sup> with reference to two government volumes on Timor edited in 1981.<sup>35</sup> Thirdly, in 1992, Sue Rabbitt Roff, who had been involved in activities supporting Ramos-Horta at the United Nations, re-examined the Indonesian and Australian foreign policies towards East Timor during the period from 1974 to 1976 on the basis of information derived from both Indonesian language and Australian newspapers.<sup>36</sup> Fourthly, Michele Turner edited and published a book of personal recollections from Timorese refugees living in Australia and Australians who had

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31 Carmel Budiardjo and Liem Soei Liong, *The War against East Timor* (London: Zed Books, 1984).

32 José Ramos-Horta, *Funu: The Unfinished Saga of East Timor* (Trenton, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 1987).

33 John G. Taylor, *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor* (London: Zed Books, 1991). This book was later updated and reprinted under the title *East Timor: The Price of Freedom, Politics in Contemporary Asia* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

34 Mário Lemos Pires, *Descolonização De Timor : Missão Impossível?* (Lisboa: Circulo de Leitores : Publicações Dom Quixote, 1991).

35 Francisco A. Riscado et al., *Relatório Da Comissão De Análise E Esclarecimento Do Processo De Descolonização De Timor* (Lisboa: Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, 1981); Mário Lemos Pires (ed.), *Relatório Do Governo De Timor, Período De 13 De Novembro De 1974 a 7 De Dezembro De 1975* (Lisboa: Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, 1981).

36 Sue Rabbitt Roff, *Timor's Anschluss: Indonesian and Australian Policy in East Timor, 1974-1976* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1992).

worked in East Timor.<sup>37</sup> Fifthly, in 1996, at the request of Gareth Evans, the then Australian Foreign Minister, who was concerned about renewed public interest in the journalists' deaths in East Timor in 1975, Tom Sherman, a lawyer who also held the office of Chairman of the National Crime Authority, investigated the deaths of the 'Balibo Five' and Roger East.<sup>38</sup> Although revealing many facts and publishing his second report in 1999, Sherman did not reach a firm conclusion that the "Balibo Five" were murdered.<sup>39</sup> Sixthly, in 1997, Hendro Subroto, an Indonesian war correspondent who had followed the Indonesian military's intervention from Indonesian Timor to East Timor, authored a detailed book on its activities from 1975 to 1976 which, despite some observable political bias, provides valuable information on this critical period.<sup>40</sup> Finally, in 1999, Geoffrey Gunn, a scholar of Asian history and politics, published a detailed book on five hundred years of East Timor history from the sixteenth century to the 1990s.<sup>41</sup>

### **Literature on Australia's relations with East Timor in 1980s and 1990s**

Research on Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question during the 1970s was facilitated by some new material becoming available after 1980. In particular, the publication of more than ten leaked cablegrams sent from Jakarta to Canberra by Ambassador to Indonesia Richard Woolcott in August 1975 suggests that he argued for Australia's acceptance of Indonesia's integration of East Timor. Also, a minute from First Assistant Secretary Bill Pritchett of the Department of Defence dated 9 October 1975 which recommended to Defence

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37 Michele Turner (ed.), *Telling: East Timor, Personal Testimonies 1942-1992* (Kensington, N.S.W.: NSW University Press, 1992).

38 Tom Sherman, *Report on the Deaths of Australian-Based Journalists in East Timor in 1975* (Canberra: Australia. Department of Foreign Affairs, 1996).

39 Tom Sherman, *Second Report on the Deaths of Australian-Based Journalists in East Timor in 1975* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1999).

40 Hendro Subroto, *Eyewitness to Integration of East Timor* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1997).

41 Geoffrey C. Gunn, *Timor Loro Sae: 500 Years* (Macau: Livros do Oriente, 1999).

Minister Morrison that he consider persuading the Indonesians to start talks with Timorese leaders attracted the attention of many researchers.<sup>42</sup> Although the fact that, immediately after its 1980 publication, a book including not only these materials but also other documents relating to Australian defence and foreign policy was banned, one of its editors, George Munster, nevertheless published an extensive commentary on the leaked documents in 1982.<sup>43</sup> Other important sources of information were the writings of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam published in 1980<sup>44</sup>, 1985<sup>45</sup> and 1997<sup>46</sup>. With reference to these materials, researchers wrote further about the roles of Prime Minister Whitlam, Ambassador Woolcott and the Department of Defence.

Firstly, in 1982, Sue Nichterlein wrote about some aspects of the Whitlam and Fraser governments' policies towards the East Timor question and pointed out the following four characteristics of that of the Whitlam government: the West Irian precedent; underestimation of Fretilin's popular strength; Whitlam's acceptance of Woolcott's reporting; and Whitlam's exercise of imperial prime ministership.<sup>47</sup> Secondly, in his book mentioned above, James Dunn agreed with Viviani's views and argued that Prime Minister Whitlam, with the support of Ambassador Woolcott, played a dominant role in Australian policymaking. While refuting former Secretary Renouf's insistence on the independent role played by the DFA, Dunn observed disagreement between the Department of Defence and Prime Minister Whitlam.<sup>48</sup> Fourthly, in 1994, while not directly examining Australian foreign policymaking, Geoffrey

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42 George Munster and Richard Walsh (eds.), *Documents on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1968-1975* (J.R. Walsh and G.J. Munster, 1980), esp. pp. 186-225.

43 George Munster, *Secrets of State: A Detailed Assessment of the Book They Banned* (London; Sydney: Angus & Robertson for Walsh & Munster, 1982), esp. pp. 65-89.

44 Edward Gough Whitlam, "Australia, Indonesia and Europe's Empires", *Australian Outlook* 34:1, 1980.

45 Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975* (Ringwood, Vic: Viking, 1985), pp. 102-15.

46 Gough Whitlam, *Abiding Interests* (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1997), pp. 61-80.

47 Sue Nichterlein, "Australia: Courtier or Courtesan? The Timor Issue Revisited", *Australian Outlook* 36:1, 1982.

48 Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 131-3 and 221-2.

Gunn critically reviewed the tendency of Australian journalism to accommodate the Indonesian annexation and attributed part of the responsibility for the issue to it.<sup>49</sup> Fifthly, in 1995, Michael E. Salla looked back on twenty years of Australian foreign policy towards the conflicts in East Timor and divided it into five periods characterised as: acquiescence during the Whitlam period; ambiguous opposition from 1975 to 1976; promotion of the humanitarian agenda from 1976 to 1983; the undertaking of human rights diplomacy from 1983 to 1993; and cooperative security after 1993. Regarding the Whitlam period, Salla argued that “Australian foreign policy was orchestrated by Gough Whitlam” who carried out “a policy of acquiescence in Indonesia’s campaign to integrate East Timor” while he considered that the talks between Fraser and Suharto in October 1976 “represented the end of official, albeit, ambiguous Australian opposition to the Indonesian invasion”.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to the above literature, some testimonies of those involved in Australia’s relations with East Timor were published. Firstly, in reply to journalists’ interviews, former Foreign Minister Don Willesee reflected on his policy differences with Prime Minister Whitlam; for example, after the Santa Cruz massacre in November 1991, he insisted that “Gough and I had some disagreements [on foreign policy]” and that “I believed we ought not to play God, but let the Timorese decide”.<sup>51</sup> In March 1999, after the Indonesian government announced its intention to allow the Timorese to determine East Timor’s political future, Willesee talked about his statement in the Senate on 30 October 1975 saying that “I think my statement made it clear that I believed in self-determination”. Regarding his disagreement with Whitlam’s policy, he went on to say that “[t]here is no doubt that Gough felt East Timor should be incorporated within Indonesia. I just believed that we should have left the decision to the East Timorese,

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49 Geoffrey C. Gunn with Jefferson Lee, *A Critical View of Western Journalism and Scholarship on East Timor* (Manila: Journal of Contemporary Asia Publishers, 1994).

50 Michael E. Salla, “Australian Foreign Policy and East Timor”, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 49:2, 1995.

51 David Jenkins, “Whitlam can’t maintain outrage over East Timor”, *SMH*, 30 November 1991.

without any suggestions or trying to lead them to Indonesia. That was the difference between myself and Gough”. He added that he was limited as a Foreign Minister, saying that “I was constrained at the time. But as foreign minister you’ve got to manage your relationship with the prime minister. I had to compromise my way through the entire issue. My view the whole time was that the decision should be left absolutely to the East Timorese, but Gough just had a very firm opinion”.<sup>52</sup> Secondly, some people outside the Australian government who had protested against its policy also wrote about their activities, including Denis Freney, a central member of the CPA<sup>53</sup>, Ken Fry, an ALP member of the Federal Parliament<sup>54</sup>, Bruce Juddery, a journalist writing for *The Canberra Times*<sup>55</sup>, and Rob Wesley Smith, a long-time activist for East Timor in Darwin.<sup>56</sup>

### **1.2.3 Literature after 2000**

#### **Literature on history of East Timor after independence**

The independence of East Timor was finally determined as a result of the popular ballot held on 30 August 1999. However, soon after the result was published on 4 September, pro-integration militias, with the help of the Indonesian military, engaged in extensive killings of pro-independence people and the destruction of buildings throughout the territory. Also, a large number of Timorese moved (or were forced to move) to Indonesian Timor as refugees. To cope with such serious humanitarian problems, on 15 September, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted its Resolution 1264 which authorised a multinational force to restore peace and security in East Timor. After 20 September, the INTERFET (International Forces East

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52 Paul Kelly, “Willesee: Whitlam reigned on East Timor”, *The Australian*, 10 March 1999.

53 Denis Freney, *A Map of Days: Life on the Left* (Port Melbourne: Heinemann, 1991), pp. 338-73.

54 Ken Fry, “Lest We Forget East Timor”, in Jim Aubrey (ed.), *Free East Timor: Australia's Culpability in East Timor's Genocide* (Sydney; London: Vintage, 1998), pp. 31-72.

55 Bruce Juddery, “My Timor Story”, Aubrey, *Free East Timor*, pp. 73-82.

56 Rob Wesley Smith, “Radio Maubere and Links to East Timor”, Aubrey (ed.), *Free East Timor*, pp. 83-102.



Timor), organised under an Australian command, was deployed to the territory of East Timor, causing diplomatic damage to Australian-Indonesian relations. The Indonesian military and pro-integration militias subsequently withdrew from the territory and, on 19 October, the Indonesian government announced its acceptance of the result of the popular ballot. On 20 May 2002, after East Timor had been under the control of the UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor) since 25 October 1999, its independence was officially declared. On 27 September, the United Nations accepted the membership of East Timor. In this way, East Timor's self-determination question, which had existed since the 1970s, ended up being resolved by its internationally-recognised independence in 2002.

Since 2000, some new literature regarding the history of East Timor has been written. In this regard, the activities of the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação; CAVR) should be noted. CAVR was formed in 2001 in accordance with UNTAET Regulation 2001/10 "to undertake truth seeking for the period 1974-1999, facilitate community reconciliation for less serious crimes, and report on its work and findings and make recommendations" and functioned from 2002 to 2005 under the supervision of seven Timorese executives.<sup>57</sup> Having conducted various research investigations and numerous interviews, CAVR completed its final report entitled *Chega!* in 2005,<sup>58</sup> which devoted hundreds of pages to the historical analysis of the conflict during the period from 25 April 1974 to 25 October 1999, particularly in "Part 3: The History of the Conflict". As to the originality of its research, CAVR claimed that "[b]y contrast with the often fragmentary and partial accounts that were available to the outside world during most of the occupation, the Commission's investigation covered the whole territory throughout the

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<sup>57</sup> As to CAVR, see the following website, <<http://www.cavr-timorleste.org/en/index.htm>>.

<sup>58</sup> *Chega!*, available at <<http://www.cavr-timorleste.org/>>.

whole period of the conflict”.<sup>59</sup>

Also, the 1975 killings of the journalists in East Timor were also re-investigated. Firstly, in 2000, having gathered information not only from Australian governmental records but also from interviews with its former intelligence officials who had worked on East Timor in 1975, Desmond Ball and Hamish McDonald co-authored a book on the deaths of the ‘Balibo Five’. In conclusion, they argued that the five journalists were deliberately killed on the morning of 16 October by members of the Indonesian Special Forces under the direction of Captain Yunus Yosfiah. They also asserted that Prime Minister Whitlam and the Foreign and Defence Ministers knew of the killings on the same day.<sup>60</sup> Secondly, in 2007, after collecting as much information as possible from written documents and interviews with the parties concerned, Magistrate Dorelle Pinch, a coroner in New South Wales, completed her report on the death of Brian Peters, the only one of the “Balibo Five” relevant to her jurisdiction but, in so doing, covered all the “Balibo Five”. In conclusion, her report reconfirmed that the five were deliberately killed on 16 October by members of the Indonesian Special Forces under orders from Captain Yosfiah. However, she could not find any evidence suggesting that Prime Minister Whitlam and/or the Foreign and Defence Ministers were informed of their killings within a day.<sup>61</sup> Thirdly, in 2009, while the film *Balibo* was being made under the direction of Robert Connolly for screening in Australia, Jill Jolliffe revised her 2001 book<sup>62</sup>, publishing a new one on which the film relied.<sup>63</sup>

In addition, Ken Conboy authored a detailed account of the intervention of the Indonesian Army Special Forces (Kopassus) into East Timor on the basis of the information he gathered from interviews with Indonesian military officers and written sources.<sup>64</sup> On the other

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59 *A plain guide to Chega!*, p. 9, available at < <http://www.cavr-timorleste.org/cheqaFiles/ChegaPlainGuide.pdf> >.

60 Desmond Ball and Hamish McDonald, *Death in Balibo Lies in Canberra* (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2000).

61 Dorelle Pinch, *Inquest into the Death of Brian Raymond Peters* (Sydney, N.S.W.: New South Wales State Coroner, 2007).

62 Jill Jolliffe, *Cover-Up: The Inside Story of the Balibo Five* (Carlton North, Vic.: Scribe, 2001).

63 Jill Jolliffe, *Balibo* (Carlton North, Vic.: Scribe Publications, 2009).

64 Kenneth J. Conboy, *Kopassus: Inside Indonesia's Special Forces* (Jakarta: Equinox Pub., 2003), pp. 188-276.

hand, Sara Niner focused on the activities of pro-independence leader Xanana Gusmão by editing his autobiography in 2000<sup>65</sup> and then publishing his biography in 2009.<sup>66</sup>

### **Literature on Australia's relations with East Timor after independence**

After 2000, the re-investigation of Australian foreign policymaking towards East Timor during the 1970s was revitalised by the publication of *AIIPT*, leading to several works based on these newly released documents being published.

Firstly, in December 2000, having conducted a number of public hearings and collected many submissions, the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee of the Australian Senate produced its final report on East Timor, two chapters of which dealt with Australian policy towards East Timor.<sup>67</sup> While acknowledging the different views of Prime Minister Whitlam and Foreign Minister Willesee who had the support of Secretary Renouf, the Committee's report concluded that "[i]t is always difficult, even in hindsight, to establish whether a different policy approach would have achieved a significantly different outcome".<sup>68</sup>

Secondly, in 2001, James Cotton, a professor of International Relations who had started reviewing the history of Australian policy towards East Timor,<sup>69</sup> examined Way's edited material and published a paper.<sup>70</sup> After being partially revised, it became part of his book published in 2004.<sup>71</sup> He argued that the central roles in Australian policymaking were played by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and Ambassador Richard Woolcott with the support of the DFA

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65 Xanana Gusmão and Sarah Niner (ed.), *To Resist Is to Win!: The Autobiography of Xanana Gusmao with Selected Letters & Speeches* (Richmond, Vic.: Aurora Books with David Lovell Publishing, 2000).

66 Sara Niner, *Xanana: Leader of the Struggle for Independent Timor-Leste* (North Melbourne, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009).

67 The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, *East Timor : Final Report of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee* (Canberra: The Committee, 2000).

68 Ibid., p.149.

69 James Cotton (ed.), *East Timor and Australia : AIIA Contributions to the Policy Debate* (Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, Australian Defence Force Academy, 1999).

70 James Cotton, "Part of the Indonesian World: Lessons in East Timor Policy-Making, 1974-76", *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 55:1, 2001.

71 James Cotton, *East Timor, Australia and Regional Order : Intervention and Its Aftermath in Southeast Asia* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

but with objections from some DFA officials and the Department of Defence. Regarding Ambassador Woolcott's cablegrams from Jakarta to Canberra, Cotton pointed out the following three flaws in his analysis: underestimation of Fretilin's resistance ability; ignorance of the long-term adverse effects on Australia's relations with Indonesia; and non-recognition of the substantial damage caused to the reputation of Indonesia as a regional player and a leader in the non-aligned world.<sup>72</sup>

Thirdly, John Birmingham blamed Richard Woolcott and Gough Whitlam for the Australian government's "appeasement" of Indonesia's military annexation of East Timor, writing that "[b]etween them, Woolcott and Whitlam laid the foundation for a tragedy".<sup>73</sup> Fourthly, a former intelligence official, Paul Monk, focused on Whitlam's role and information flows from Jakarta to Canberra. Having examined the *AIIPT* documents, he argued that it was true that Prime Minister Whitlam had never condoned Indonesia's use of force but was responsible for complicity in the Suharto government's military annexation of East Timor because of his indifferent attitude to others' suggestions and his dictatorial leadership in terms of Australian foreign policy.<sup>74</sup> Monk also critically commented on Birmingham's essay, arguing that "Birmingham plainly needs a more nuanced understanding of the dilemmas involved in foreign policy making" and that "Birmingham has not spent sufficient time analysing the documentary record".<sup>75</sup>

Fifthly, Goldsworthy and his co-authors examined Australian policy towards the Indonesian annexation of East Timor in the context of Australia's engagement with Asia and human rights policy during the period from the mid 1960s to the end of the 1970s.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., esp., pp. 31-7.

<sup>73</sup> John Birmingham, "Appeasing Jakarta: Australia's Complicity in the East Timor Tragedy", *Quarterly Essay*:2, 2001. esp. p.31.

<sup>74</sup> Paul M. Monk, "Secret Intelligence and Escape Clauses: Australia and the Indonesian Annexation of East Timor, 1963-76", *Critical Asian Studies* 33:2, 2001.

<sup>75</sup> Paul Monk, "Appeasing Jakarta: Correspondence", *Quarterly Essay*:3, 2001.

Acknowledging that “East Timor became the most important issue in Australian-Indonesian relations during the 1970s, and remained the most controversial human rights issue in Australian foreign policy for twenty-five years”, they concluded that it was caused “because it involved a basic conflict between the principle of self-determination...and cultivation of a special relationship with Indonesia”.<sup>76</sup> Sixthly, in 2002, Michel Boyle reviewed Australian policy towards East Timor in his PhD thesis on Australia’s relations with Indonesia under the New Order period, paying special attention to the development of security cooperation between the two countries.<sup>77</sup> Finally, in 2003, James Dunn updated and republished his book previously printed in 1996 but did not make substantial changes to his understanding of Australian foreign policymaking towards East Timor.<sup>78</sup>

In 2003, in response to renewed criticisms of his past role as the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Richard Woolcott defended himself in his autobiography.<sup>79</sup> Complaining that “I became something of a scapegoat for what critics regarded as a bad policy”<sup>80</sup>, he asserted that “[w]hen the documents were first published a few academics and journalists used the event to quote selectively from them in order to reiterate their already established criticisms of previous governments and policies”.<sup>81</sup> Insisting that he was an advisor not a policymaker, he explained that “[i]t is ministers that make policy, not ambassadors. The latter can and do advise and recommend; but ministers decide and set the government’s policy course. Strong prime ministers, such as Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke and Keating, are not easily influenced by officials.

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76 David Goldsworthy (ed.), *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia, Volume 1 - 1901 to the 1970's* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2001), pp. 352-71, esp. p. 357.

77 Michael Boyle, “Policy-Making and Pragmatism: Australia’s Management of Security Cooperation with Indonesia During the New Order Period”, unpublished PhD thesis, (UNSW, 2002), esp. pp. 219-73.

78 James Dunn, *East Timor: A Rough Passage to Independence* (Double Bay, N.S.W.: Longueville Books, 2003).

79 Richard Woolcott, *The Hot Seat: Reflections on Diplomacy from Stalin's Death to the Bali Bombings* (Pymble, N.S.W.: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003).

80 Ibid., p. 144.

81 Ibid., p. 169.

The same is true of strong foreign ministers like Hasluck, Barwick, Peacock and Evans. All of these men had minds of their own and would not take decisions without careful thought and without having considered the alternatives. In my own case there were several occasions on which my advice to the prime minister or minister of the day was not accepted”.<sup>82</sup> Whatever role he played, Woolcott maintained that “[t]he bipartisan policy towards East Timor and Indonesia followed by the Whitlam and Fraser Governments was appropriate and in Australia’s national interest at that time. Moreover, given the way the situation unfolded in 1975 and 1976, I believe there were no practical policy alternatives, despite some assertions to the contrary”.<sup>83</sup>

Australian foreign policy of the 1970s towards the East Timor question has also been reviewed in the international context of other governments’ policies at that time, with the CAVR report of 2005 being the most comprehensive in terms of the number of countries examined. In Chapter 7.1, it dealt with the policies of the three main external stakeholders, Portugal, Indonesia and Australia, as well as six other governments – five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council and Japan. Regarding the Australian government’s policy, the report argued that “Australian policy on Timor after the Carnation Revolution in Portugal was chiefly determined by the Australian Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam (1972-1975)”, and paid particular attention to Whitlam who “gave paramount importance to Australia’s place in Asia and its relationship with Indonesia”.<sup>84</sup> It also added that “his successor, Malcolm Fraser, continued the same policy line”.<sup>85</sup> In addition to the CAVR report, in 2001, Paulo Gorjão argued that the Australian and Portuguese governments realised their policy objectives of self-determination for East Timor in 1999 which they had failed to do in 1975.<sup>86</sup> In 2005, Brad Simpson looked at the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>84</sup> *Chega!*, Chapter 7.1: Self Determination, p. 26.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>86</sup> Paulo Gorjão, “The End of a Cycle: Australian and Portuguese Foreign Policies and the Fate of East Timor”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23:1, 2001.

United States' and other countries' policies towards the East Timor question with reference to declassified governmental records belonging to the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.<sup>87</sup>

After 2000, some of the literature argued about the historical relationship among the Australian media, interest groups and Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question. In 2000, focusing on the media's role during the period from 1974 to 1999, Rodney Tiffen, a professor of Political Science who had already analysed Australian media reports on the East Timor question of the 1970s in 1978,<sup>88</sup> concluded that "a central reason for Australia's policy failure over East Timor was that decision-makers did not sufficiently take account of the Australian media's independent role".<sup>89</sup>

As for the interest groups' influence, firstly, the CAVR report wrote about the role of "civil society", defining it as the sector differentiated from government and business in a democratic society. Dividing the period from 1974 to 1999 into the following five phrases of "beginning and early challenges, 1974-78", "crisis and new beginnings, 1978-83", "rebuilding civil society support, 1983-91", "turning points, 1991-98" and "self-determination, 1998-99",<sup>90</sup> the report argued that activities supportive of the Timorese expanded around the world. Regarding the first phase, the report mentioned that "Australia was the principal centre of international civil society support for Timor-Leste during this period"<sup>91</sup> but concluded that it "made no impact on the Indonesian government and its allies. Many in government, the media, business and civil society dismissed all who were vocal in defence of Timor-Leste, regardless of

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87 Brad Simpson, "Illegally and Beautifully": The United States, the Indonesian Invasion of East Timor and the International Community, 1974-76", *Cold War History* 5:3, 2005, esp., p. 282. He also analysed the successive period in another paper. See Brad Simpson, "Denying the 'First Right': The United States, Indonesia, and the Ranking of Human Rights by the Carter Administration, 1976-1980", *International History Review* 31:4, 2009.

88 Rodney Tiffen, *The News from Southeast Asia : The Sociology of Newsmaking* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1978), pp. 160-81.

89 Rodney Tiffen, *Diplomatic Deceits: Government, Media and East Timor* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001).

90 *Chega!*, Chapter 7.1: Self Determination, pp. 94-121.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

their alignment, as pro-Fretilin and anti-Indonesian”.<sup>92</sup> Clinton Fernandes, an International Relations scholar, has also written about various aspects of activities in support of self-determination for East Timor. In addition to his latest book, which examines factors contributing to the independence of East Timor,<sup>93</sup> he has placed part of his study on the development of international solidarity activities onto his website “Companion to East Timor”.<sup>94</sup> After 2000, some individuals who had supported independence and self-determination for East Timor since the 1970s worked on recording and writing about their past activities; for example, in 2005, David Scott, an executive of Australian NGOs, including Community Aid Abroad (now Oxfam Australia), looked back on his involvement in East Timor from his first visit to the territory in November 1975.<sup>95</sup> In 2000, John Waddingham, an editor of a periodical of the *Timor Information Service* in Melbourne during the period from 1975 to 1984, co-founded the CHART (Clearing House for Archival Records on Timor) project with Pat Walsh and has made valuable materials open to the public on his blog entitled the “Timor Archives”.<sup>96</sup>

#### **1.2.4 Findings from literature survey**

On the basis of the literature survey discussed above, it is possible to draw the following conclusions as to the roles of people involved in Australian policymaking. Firstly, most of the literature on Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question recognised that Prime Minister Whitlam exercised a dominant influence. Many also argued that

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>93</sup> Clinton Fernandes, *The Independence of East Timor: Multi-Dimensional Perspectives: Occupation, Resistance, and International Political Activism* (Portland, Or.: Sussex Academic Press, 2011).

<sup>94</sup> Clinton Fernandes, “Companion to East Timor”, accessible at <[http://hass.unsw.adfa.edu.au/timor\\_companion/before\\_the\\_invasion/before.php](http://hass.unsw.adfa.edu.au/timor_companion/before_the_invasion/before.php)>. As to his views on the development of international solidarity, see <[http://hass.unsw.adfa.edu.au/timor\\_companion/international\\_solidarity/solidarity.php](http://hass.unsw.adfa.edu.au/timor_companion/international_solidarity/solidarity.php)>.

<sup>95</sup> David Scott, *Last Flight out of Dili: Memoirs of an Accidental Activist in the Triumph of East Timor* (North Melbourne, Vic.: Pluto Press Australia, 2005).

<sup>96</sup> John Waddingham, “Timor Archives”, accessible at <<http://timorarchives.wordpress.com/>>.



his keen interest in developing Australia's relations with Indonesia, and Asia in general, contributed to his sympathetic policy towards the Indonesian annexation of East Timor in the process of its decolonisation from Portugal. Secondly, several works of literature have also pointed out Ambassador Woolcott's advisory role to Prime Minister Whitlam and his indirect influence although both former Secretary Renouf and Richard Woolcott have written that this was not decisive. Thirdly, most of the existing literature did not recognise that Foreign Minister Willesee and officials of the DFA significantly influenced Australian policymaking under the leadership of Prime Minister Whitlam. However, Don Willesee and Alan Renouf stressed that the DFA pursued a policy different in important respects from that of Prime Minister Whitlam and suggested that it did influence Australian foreign policymaking. Fourthly, although there was some literature on the roles of the media, interest groups and individuals outside the government, there seemed to be no definite views on their influence on Australian policymaking; for example, while Rodney Tiffen argued that the media played a role in opposing the Australian government's policy of accommodating the Indonesian annexation of East Timor, Geoffrey Gunn was concerned about its cooperative role in the Indonesia's policy. Also, as discussed above, while Nancy Viviani observed the influence of domestic opinion only after the Fraser government's period, Jill Jolliffe considered that, by its last days, the Whitlam government had already responded to domestic pressures and taken a moderately critical position. Fifthly, since publication of Viviani's paper in 1978, little has been written about the Fraser government's policy towards the East Timor question.

In this way, despite a considerable amount of existing literature regarding Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question in the 1970s having been accumulated, there remain some puzzles that have not yet been adequately solved. In particular, the roles of Foreign Minister Willesee and officials of the DFA should be re-examined given their insistence

that their policy goals were different from those of Prime Minister Whitlam. In addition, the influence of the media and interest groups on Australian policymaking should be reviewed. Given the scarcity of literature on the Fraser government, new historical research needs to uncover its policy towards the question of East Timor.

### ***1.3 Structure of thesis***

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Following this chapter, which explains the outline of this research and reviews the existing literature, Chapter 2 looks briefly at the historical transformation of Australian foreign policy towards the South-East Asian region, and Indonesia in particular, from the 1950s to the 1970s because this background is essential for the understanding of Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question.

Chapter 3 reviews Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question during the period from April 1974 to March 1975 with special attention paid to the DFA's commitment to a genuine and internationally acceptable act of self-determination for the Timorese which was different from the view of Prime Minister Whitlam. Its policy, which searched for a resolution to the question in accordance with the will of the majority of the Timorese, was formulated under the influence of critical domestic opinion which, it was anticipated, would increase.

Chapter 4 examines Australian foreign policymaking during the period from September 1974 to September 1975 and pays particular attention to the role of Prime Minister Whitlam who cooperated with Indonesia's integration policy as far as possible, with the assistance of Ambassadors to Indonesia Furlonger and Woolcott, while disregarding suggestions from the DFA and domestic opinions. He maintained Australia's non-involvement policy despite

the civil war in East Timor in August, the subsequent emergence of Fretilin's *de facto* rule in September 1975 and mounting public concern at home.

Chapter 5 looks at the transformation of Australian foreign policymaking toward the East Timor question from late September to mid-December 1975. During this period, the Indonesian military gradually escalated its intervention in the territory of East Timor and, finally, embarked on a full-scale attack after 7 December 1975. In the face of this Indonesian policy and against the backdrop of the development of domestic opinion, on 30 October, Foreign Minister Willesee issued a major statement on behalf of the Australian government which supported the right to self-determination of the Timorese. Thus, for the first time, the Australian government, which soon fell into caretaker mode under Prime Minister Fraser from 11 November to 13 December 1975 following the dismissal of the Labor government, stood publicly against Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. However, afraid of Australia's relations with Indonesia deteriorating, it did not make any diplomatic efforts to realise talks among the parties concerned and remained reluctant to take further action, while protesting against Indonesia's invasion of East Timor and voting for UNGA Resolution 3485 in December 1975..

Chapter 6 reviews Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question under the Fraser government from 13 December 1975, after it won the general election, to July 1976. During this period, the Indonesian military continued its mopping-up operations against pro-independence Fretilin supporters and Indonesian President Suharto finally put his signature on a bill to integrate the territory of East Timor as the 27<sup>th</sup> province of Indonesia on 17 July 1976. Faced with this policy and pressured by critical domestic opinion, the Fraser government publicly maintained its disapproving attitude and refused to recognise Indonesia's announcement of the integration of East Timor while continuing to endeavour to avoid excessive damage to Australia's relations with Indonesia.

Chapter 7 looks briefly at the shift in Australian foreign policy towards the East Timor question during the period from August 1976 to January 1978. Prior to summit talks with President Suharto in October 1976, the Fraser government began to consider recognising Indonesia's *de facto* integration of East Timor in the interest of Australia's relations with Indonesia. However as, due to persisting public concerns, it could not easily withdraw its non-recognition policy, it was not until 20 January 1978 that Foreign Minister Peacock announced its policy reversal.

Chapter 8 concludes this study of Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question from April 1974 to January 1978 with special reference to the role of dissenting opinions supporting self-determination for the Timorese.

## **Chapter 2: Historical and international contexts of Australia's engagement policy with Indonesia and other South East Asian countries during 1970s**

This chapter looks briefly at the transformation of Australian policy towards South East Asia and Indonesia in the context of the changing international politics during the period from the 1950s to 1970s. This chapter is necessary because it is crucial to understand why the Whitlam and Fraser governments were willing to establish friendly and close relations with Indonesia and other ASEAN countries in the 1970s before we proceed to analysing these governments' policies towards Indonesia's annexation of East Timor in succeeding chapters.

This chapter consists of the following two sections. Section 2.1 briefly examines Australian foreign policy under the Liberal and Country Party governments during the period from 1949 to 1972. Then, Section 2.2 provides an overview of the Whitlam Labor government's policy from 2 December 1972 to 11 November 1975 with particular attention paid to its changes to, and continuation of, elements of the previous government's policy. It also looks at the Fraser government's foreign policy during its initial period until 1977. In each section, general observations of Australian foreign policy towards South East Asia are followed by an examination of Australian policy towards Indonesia.

### ***2.1 Australian foreign policy towards South East Asia and Indonesia under Liberal and Country governments from 1949 to 1972***

#### **2.1.1 Australian foreign policy towards South East Asia during Menzies period**

### **Formation of “forward defence strategy”**

The Australian Liberal and Country Party governments from December 1949 to December 1972, in particular during the tenure of Prime Minister Menzies from December 1949 to January 1966, were eager to achieve closer relations with the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) against the backdrop of the development of the Cold War, in contrast to the previous Chifley Labor government’s attempt to pursue a more independent role in the world for Australia under the leadership of External Affairs Minister E.V. Evatt who stressed the importance of the United Nations. In line with the US policy of containing communism, the Menzies government did not recognise the government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and worked hard under the leadership of External Affairs Minister Percy Spender to establish the Colombo Plan to assist economic and social development in Asian countries in order to prevent the expansion of communism in Asia.<sup>1</sup>

In September 1951, the Menzies government formally concluded the ANZUS Treaty with the US and New Zealand (NZ) governments. Percy Spender, who signed the Treaty as Australian Ambassador to the US, continued his diplomatic efforts to strengthen Australian relations with the US in Washington until 1958.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, in May 1962, at the request of the US Kennedy administration, the Menzies government made a decision to deploy an Australian Army training team consisting of thirty officers to Vietnam.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to its relations with the US, the Menzies government also valued those with the UK; having joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) with the US, the UK and other powers in September 1954, the Menzies government started deploying Australian

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1 P. C. Spender, “Partnership with Asia”, *Foreign Affairs* 29:2, 1951.

2 David Lowe, “Perch Spender, Minister and Ambassador”, in Joan Beaumont, Christopher Waters and David Lowe (eds.), *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making, 1941-1969* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Publishing, 2003), pp. 62-87.

3 Garry Woodard, *Asian Alternatives: Australia's Vietnam Decision and Lessons on Going to War* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2004), pp. 49-69.

troops to Malaya to support the Commonwealth forces' counter-insurgency operations against the Malayan Communist Party's activities in 1955.<sup>4</sup>

In this way, in accordance with the policies of the UK and US, the Menzies government gradually became involved in military operations in Malaysia and Vietnam which it justified in terms of a "forward defence strategy"; for example, in January 1962, having defined that "[t]he basic aim of Australia's defence policy is to ensure the security of the Australian mainland and its island territories", the Defence Committee, an advisory organisation to the Defence Minister concerning defence matters, insisted that;

This aim can be best achieved by a forward defence strategy which involves the containment of enemy forces as far from our immediate environs as possible. The adoption of this forward defence strategy extends our strategic interests to South East Asia as the centre and closest part of the Allied defence line extending from Pakistan to Japan, and as the area most immediately threatened. While South East Asia is held, defence in depth is provided for Australia.<sup>5</sup>

Australia cannot defend herself unaided against the military power of the communist nations. Our reliance on collective defence is based on the two-fold recognition that the size of our continent, the sparseness of our population and the resources available for active defence generally are insufficient to protect even our immediate strategic interests against communist aggression, and that our assistance in the defence of the countries in our area of primary strategic interest contributes directly to our own security. A major objective of Australian defence policy and planning must be the development of the means to contribute adequate forces in support of

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4 P. G. Edwards and Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and commitments: the politics and diplomacy of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asian conflicts, 1948-1965* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, 1992), pp. 174-8.

5 Stephan Frühling, *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945* (Canberra, ACT.: Defence Publishing Service, Department of Defence, 2009), p. 281.

collective defence arrangements.<sup>6</sup>

As seen above, Australian defence advisors based Australian defence policy on the assumption that Australia's defence against communist aggression would be best achieved by the deployment of Australian troops in South East Asia in collaboration with its alliance partners, the USA and the UK.

In December 1964, in accordance with US policy, Prime Minister Menzies decided to escalate Australia's military involvement in South Vietnam. Prior to the dispatch of Australian forces, he asserted in the Parliament that "[t]he takeover of South Vietnam would be a direct military threat to Australia and all the countries of South and South East Asia".<sup>7</sup> At the peak of the Vietnam War in 1968, the number of Australian military personnel deployed in Vietnam exceeded 8,000 while that of the US was more than 500,000. In August 1965, in support of the Australian military deployment, the Defence Committee again insisted that "[t]o a large extent Australia's success in so establishing itself in South-East Asia has depended upon its close association with Britain and the United States and upon its military contribution to their efforts. It would otherwise have been very difficult for Australia to have achieved its present political status in South-East Asia".<sup>8</sup>

### **Australian relations with Indonesia under Sukarno**

In contrast to its relations with the USA, those with Indonesia during the period of the Menzies government saw little progress, despite the previous Chifley Labor government having established intimate relations with Indonesian leaders, including the first President, Sukarno, by

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 287.

<sup>7</sup> David Goldsworthy (ed.), *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2001), Vol.1, p. 293.

<sup>8</sup> Frühling, *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*, p. 342.



supporting Indonesia's struggle for independence against The Netherlands' policy of re-colonising the territory of the former Dutch East Indies by force. However, in the face of the Sukarno government's subsequent belligerent policy, with military assistance from the USSR and the PRC, against the disputed territory of West New Guinea and Malaysia, which involved Australian interests, Australian relations with Indonesia soon cooled.

Firstly, regarding the dispute between The Netherlands and Indonesian governments over the territory of West New Guinea, the sovereignty of which had not been settled in December 1949 when The Netherlands government granted Indonesia independence, the Menzies government supported The Netherlands' continuous control over the territory, claiming that Australia had the status of a principal party. The Menzies government considered that the Sukarno government's accession of West New Guinea might endanger the security of the Australian continent as well as the eastern half of New Guinea which remained under Australia's colonial control. However, having received a visit to Canberra from the Indonesian Foreign Minister in February 1959, the Australian government weakened its position from being "a principal party" to "a very interested third party".<sup>9</sup>

On 15 August 1962, the West New Guinea dispute which had evolved into a small-scale military conflict was finally resolved by conclusion of the New York Agreement between the representatives of The Netherlands and Indonesia through the good offices of the USA. In accordance with this agreement, after a tentative period of UN administration from 1 October 1962 to 1 May 1963, the territory of West New Guinea was formally incorporated into Indonesia in 1969 on the basis of the unanimous agreement of the representatives as an "act of free choice" which took place in the presence of Indonesian operatives. In this way, regardless of the Australian government's initial policy of opposition, the western part of New Guinea was

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<sup>9</sup> Alan Renouf, *The frightened country* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 419-27.

integrated into Indonesia's territory which became a significant lesson for Australian policymakers when they planned Australia's reaction to the East Timor question after April 1974.

Secondly, soon after the settlement of the West New Guinea dispute, the Menzies government faced another aggressive Indonesian policy called "Confrontation". During the period from 1963 to 1966, alleging that the Federation of Malaysia, which incorporated the former UK colonies of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak in 1963, was established under the influence of UK imperialism, the Sukarno government waged small-scale warfare against Malaysia. After September 1964, at the request of the Malaysian and UK governments, the Menzies government joined military operations in defence of Malaysia at the cost of twenty-three Australian soldiers' lives. Finally, in August 1966, following the stepping down of President Sukarno and Suharto's incremental seizure of power after the events of 30 September 1965, the Indonesian and Malaysian governments signed a peace treaty which terminated both "Confrontation" and Australia's military involvement in the conflict.

In addition to these international disputes, it is now known that the Menzies government also participated in the clandestine military operations of the US and UK assisting rebels on Sumatra Island against the Sukarno government in 1958.<sup>10</sup> Due to these circumstances, the Menzies government was not able to develop a significant relationship with the Indonesian government during the Sukarno period.

### 2.1.2 Transformation of Australian foreign policy from late 1960s

#### **International factors making "forward defence strategy" obsolete**

From the late 1960s, the Australian Liberal and Country Party government under two

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<sup>10</sup> Audrey Kahin and George McTurnan Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), pp. 155-7.

Prime Ministers, John Gorton (from January 1968 to March 1971) and William McMahon (from March 1971 to December 1972) was forced to review the long-held “forward defence strategy”, mainly because of the following three international factors influencing Australian foreign and defence policy: the UK’s decision to retreat from its bases located “East of Suez”; the US decision to withdraw its forces from Vietnam and apply the “Guam Doctrine” to its alliance partners; and the transformation of the Cold War, as highlighted by the start of normalisation talks between the PRC and the USA.<sup>11</sup>

Firstly, in January 1968, the UK government formally announced its intention to withdraw its forces from “East of Suez”, including its bases in Singapore and Malaysia, by the end of 1971. Almost simultaneously, it bid for membership of the European Economic Community which indicated to Commonwealth countries that the UK was retreating to Europe. In response to this development, the Australian government had to decide whether it would continue to station its troops in Singapore and Malaysia. In February 1969, after consultations with the governments concerned, Prime Minister Gorton officially declared the Australian government’s willingness to maintain troops there after 1971.<sup>12</sup> The governments of the UK, Australia, NZ, Malaysia and Singapore continued their negotiations on the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and, in April 1971, their representatives announced that “in the event of any form of armed attack externally organised or supported or the threat of such attack against Malaysia or Singapore, their governments would immediately consult together for the purpose of deciding what measures should be taken jointly or separately in relation to such attack or threat”.<sup>13</sup> When the FPDA came into effect on 1 November 1971, the Australian government

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11 There are some detailed works on the Australian government’s reaction to the changing international politics during the Gorton and McMahon period; for example, see Henry S. Albinski, *Australian External Policy under Labor: Content, Process and the National Debate* (St. Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1977), pp. 28-59.

12 “Defence in South-East Asia”, *Current Notes on International Affairs* 40:2, 1969, pp. 41-4.

13 “Five Power Meeting in London”, *Current Notes on International Affairs* 42:4, 1971, pp. 184-5.

emerged as the largest military contributor to Malaysia and Singapore with the presence of about 4,000 people who comprised approximately half the combined ANZUK force in the region.<sup>14</sup> In this way, independent of the UK's decision, the Australian government set out to make its own security policy towards South East Asia.

Secondly, and more importantly, the Australian government needed to deal with the new US policy towards Asia launched by the administration of Richard Nixon who was inaugurated as the 37<sup>th</sup> US President in January 1969. Appointing a well-recognised scholar of international politics, Henry Kissinger, as his advisor, President Nixon carried out American foreign and security policy based on a realist assessment of its own "national interests". While gradually withdrawing US forces from Vietnam as had been promised during the presidential campaign, the Nixon administration publicised for the first time the so-called "Guam Doctrine", which was addressed to the US's alliance partners, in Guam on 25 July 1969. With reference to this doctrine in his report to the US Congress in 1971, President Nixon reconfirmed that "[t]he United States will keep all of our treaty commitments" and that "[w]e shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security" but continued to say;

In cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defence.

We will continue to provide elements of military strength and economic resources appropriate to

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<sup>14</sup> "Five Power Defence Arrangements", *Current Notes on International Affairs* 42:11, 1971, pp. 634-5.

our size and our interests. But it is no longer natural or possible in this age to argue that security or development around the globe is primarily America's concern. The defense and progress of other countries must be first their responsibility and second, a regional responsibility.<sup>15</sup>

These new policies of the US Nixon administration profoundly influenced Australian foreign and defence policies. Also, pressured by the domestic protest movement called the "Vietnam Moratorium Campaign", the Gorton and McMahon governments gradually pulled Australian forces out of Vietnam. The Australian government also needed to consider how to respond to the "Guam Doctrine" and to review Australian relations with South East Asia from where conventional security threats against Australia were supposed to arise.

Thirdly, the Australian government faced the arrival of détente in the early 1970s. While the Cold War had developed as an ideological and power-political confrontation mainly between the two nuclear superpowers of the US and the USSR, many observers came to the conclusion that it had evolved into a moderate and less ideological contest with the emergence of a multi-polar world which included China, Japan and the EEC countries as emerging powers. In addition to the remarkable economic growth of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and Japan on the capitalist side and the Sino-Soviet split which led to military conflicts on their mutual border in 1969 on the communist side, the diplomatic activities of leaders of both sides contributed to the emergence of a moderate and less ideological multi-polar world; for example, in March 1970, an historic meeting between leaders of the FRG and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) took place for the first time since their separation into two countries in 1949.

A single diplomatic event that made a sound impact on international relations in Asia was the start of US-China talks aimed at normalising their relations; on 16 July 1971, with

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Nixon, *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's: Building for Peace: A Report to the Congress* (Washington: U.S.G.P.O., 1971), pp. 12-4.

reference to Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing from 9 to 11 July, President Nixon announced that the US government had started negotiations with China. In the Australian political context, this announcement enhanced the position of Gough Whitlam, the Opposition leader of the ALP, who had travelled to China and met Premier Zhou Enlai immediately before Kissinger's visit.<sup>16</sup> In February 1972, US President Nixon himself visited China and had talks with Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai and, in May, also travelled to Moscow to meet USSR leader Leonid Brezhnev and conclude two arms control treaties. Following this shift in US foreign policy, many governments also recognised the PRC government in the early 1970s.

This arrival of détente in Asia made Australia's "forward defence strategy" against the expansion of communism out of date. In 1972, the McMahon government began to take some measures to adjust Australian foreign policy to the new international political environment in Asia and, in June, Prime Minister McMahon travelled to Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia to exchange opinions with their leaders about problems in the region.<sup>17</sup>

### **Development of Australian relations with Indonesia under Suharto**

The emergence of President Suharto's "New Order" in Indonesia in the second half of the 1960s, which had strong support from the Indonesian military, provided a new opportunity for the Australian government to develop its relations with Indonesia.<sup>18</sup> A distinct character of this "New Order" was its strong commitment to anti-communism. Having killed some hundreds of thousands of "communists" during the period from 1965 to 1966 and continuing to suppress

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<sup>16</sup> Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1985), pp. 55-7.

<sup>17</sup> "The Prime Minister's Report to the Nation", *Current Notes on International Affairs* 43:6, 1972, pp. 284-6.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed account of the development of Australian economic and military cooperation with Indonesia from 1966 to 1972, see Michael Boyle, "Policy-Making and Pragmatism: Australia's Management of Security Cooperation with Indonesia During the New Order Period" (UNSW, 2002), pp. 67-179.

the activities of the PKI (the Indonesian Communist Party) at home, the Indonesian government implemented pro-capitalist economic and foreign policies; for example, it received most of its economic assistance through the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI) which was established in 1967 with the participation of the IMF, the IBRD and capitalist donors, including the US, Japan, Australia and The Netherlands, to provide the aid required to stabilise and rehabilitate the Indonesian economy. On the other hand, the “New Order” Indonesian government identified the PRC as a threat and diplomatic relations between the two countries were suspended until 1990.

Having joined the IGGI in 1967, the Australian government began to take some steps towards developing its own relations with Indonesia and, from 13 to 17 June 1968, after his travels to South Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia, Prime Minister Gorton visited Jakarta. Although he had prepared to raise the possibility of “a non-aggression pact” which would include Indonesia and Australia as signatories, neither President Suharto nor Foreign Minister Malik was interested in this idea during their summit talks.<sup>19</sup> However, the Australian and Indonesian governments agreed to accelerate transactions in the field of cultural, artistic, scientific and academic activities and tourism.<sup>20</sup> Importantly, this Liberal and Country Party government’s policy of enhancing Australian relations with Indonesia under Suharto was strongly supported by Opposition leader Gough Whitlam at home. In a newspaper article published in February 1967 after his inauguration as leader of the ALP, Whitlam argued that “[t]he new Government of Indonesia is well disposed towards this country. It is our obligation and in our interest to see that we render all the political, diplomatic and economic support we can”.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 145-9.

<sup>20</sup> “Visit to South-East Asia by the Prime Minister of Australia, 5-17 June”, *Current Notes on International Affairs* 39:6, 1968, pp. 229-34.

<sup>21</sup> Whitlam, *The Whitlam government 1972-1975*, p. 102.

What made the “New Order” in Indonesia particularly valuable in the eyes of Australian leaders was its foreign policy which included cooperation with neighbouring countries. In August 1967, Indonesia joined in forming the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) with Malaysia, Singapore, The Philippines and Thailand in Bangkok and, from the beginning, was seen as a key player of the group because of its territorial size and huge population of around 120 million people. The establishment of ASEAN raised expectations for regional peace and stability as the Bangkok Declaration noted that one of the ASEAN’s objectives was “[t]o promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter”.<sup>22</sup> In November 1971 in Kuala Lumpur, ASEAN also declared “South East Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside Powers”,<sup>23</sup> while the USA, UK, NZ and Australia still stationed their troops in South East Asia and provided military assistance.

In 1972, Australian relations with Indonesia made important progress; the McMahon government succeeded in holding two summit talks with Indonesia’s President Suharto based on the efforts of the previous Gorton government. Firstly, from 6 to 10 February, Suharto’s visit to Australia (Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney) was the first by an Indonesian President in Australian-Indonesian history. As a result of their talks, the two governments agreed to conduct regular meetings between officials of the DFA and other departments, and to hold negotiations conducted by experts to delineate the seabed boundary and land border between the two countries.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, from 5 to 8 June, Prime Minister McMahon visited Jakarta as part of his South East Asian tour. On this occasion, the two leaders agreed to defence cooperation between

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<sup>22</sup> “Bangkok Declaration”, Bangkok, 8 August 1967, <<http://www.aseansec.org/1212.htm>>.

<sup>23</sup> “Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration”, Kuala Lumpur, 27 November 1971, <<http://www.aseansec.org/1215.htm>>.

<sup>24</sup> “Visit of President Suharto”, *Current Notes on International Affairs* 43:2, 1972, pp. 31-42, esp. pp. 31-3.



Australia and Indonesia although they “were not thinking in terms of any kind of defence pact or alliance”. In accordance with this agreement, the Australian government established a \$20 million three-year program of technical and defence assistance which included the provision of Sabre jet fighters, the training of pilots and technicians, and assistance for coastal surveillance capabilities in addition to the ongoing programme of economic and technical assistance.<sup>25</sup>

In this way, in response to the establishment of Suharto’s “New Order” in Indonesia and the transformation of international politics in Asia, the Australian Liberal and Country Party government sought to establish closer relations with the Indonesian government in various fields, including defence cooperation.

## ***2.2 Australian foreign policy towards South East Asia and Indonesia during the periods of the Whitlam and Fraser governments***

### **2.2.1 Whitlam government’s foreign policy towards South East Asia and Indonesia**

#### **Whitlam government’s policy towards South East Asia**

On 2 December 1972, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) led by Gough Whitlam won a general election for the first time in twenty-three years. The ALP gained 67 seats to 58 for the Coalition Parties in the House of Representatives and also won the double-dissolution election in May 1974. However, the fact that the government could never hold a majority of seats in the Senate throughout its tenure eventually led to a political deadlock and Whitlam was dismissed as Prime Minister by Governor-General John Kerr on 11 November 1975.

Gough Whitlam was a Prime Minister keenly interested in Australian foreign policymaking. He concurrently served as the Foreign Minister from 5 December 1972 to 6

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<sup>25</sup> “The Prime Minister’s Visit to South-East Asia”, *Current Notes on International Affairs* 43:6, 1972, pp. 269-86, esp. pp. 269-75.

November 1973 before his appointment of Don Willesee to that position and, even after that time, sometimes acted as Foreign Minister. Gough Whitlam had first publicised the ALP's plan for foreign policy in his policy speech entitled "It's Time" on 13 November 1972 prior to the general election. In this speech, he promised some diplomatic initiatives, including the transfer of Australia's Chinese Embassy from Taipei to Beijing, and support for the ideas of the neutralisation of South East Asia and the withdrawal of the Australian garrison in Singapore while maintaining full commitment to the terms of the FPDA. In addition to these concrete proposals, Gough Whitlam listed the following four objectives as ALP's "four commitments commensurate to our power and resources".

First – our own national security

Secondly – a secure, united and friendly Papua New Guinea

Thirdly – achieve closer relations with our nearest and largest neighbour, Indonesia

Fourthly – promote the peace and prosperity of our neighbourhood<sup>26</sup>

On 5 December 1972, Gough Whitlam was formally inaugurated as the Australian Prime Minister as well as Foreign Minister and was set to realise the ALP's policy vision. Firstly, he instructed Australia's Ambassador to France, Alan Renouf, to open negotiations with his PRC counterpart in Paris to conclude an agreement on mutual recognition and the establishment of diplomatic relations. Secondly, on the same day, he made his first official speech which stated that the general direction of Australian foreign policy was "towards a more independent Australian stance in international affairs, an Australia which will be less militarily oriented and not open to suggestions of racism; an Australia which will enjoy a growing standing as a

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<sup>26</sup> Australian Labor Party, *Labor Party policy speech, 1972* (Canberra: Australian Labor Party Federal Secretariat, 1972), p. 43.

distinctive, tolerant, co-operative and well regarded nation not only in the Asian and Pacific region, but in the world at large". As is known today, this statement was drafted by First Assistant Secretary of the DFA, Richard Woolcott, and accepted by Prime Minister Whitlam without amendment.<sup>27</sup>

On 21 December, after two weeks of negotiations in Paris, the Whitlam government heralded its first major diplomatic achievement; Ambassador Renouf signed a joint communiqué in which the Australian government recognised "the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal Government of China" and acknowledged "the position of the Chinese Government that Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China".<sup>28</sup> Thus, Australian relations with the PRC were normalised which marked a distinct departure from Australian foreign policy under the Liberal and Country Party governments.

As for the Whitlam government's foreign policymaking, it is notable that the two officials of the DFA, Alan Renouf and Richard Woolcott, who made remarkable contributions to the Whitlam government in its first months continued to play significant roles. Alan Renouf, who had been privately informed in January 1973<sup>29</sup> of Whitlam's intention to appoint him Secretary of the DFA, actually took up the position in January 1974. Although Richard Woolcott, who enjoyed Gough Whitlam's personal confidence and accompanied him on most of his overseas trips, was not chosen as Secretary because of his youth,<sup>30</sup> he was promoted to Deputy Secretary in 1974 and then was appointed Australian Ambassador to Indonesia from March 1975. As seen in the following chapters, they both became substantially involved in Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question.

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27 Graham Freudenberg, "Aspects of Foreign Policy", in Hugh V. Emy, Owen E. Hughes and Race Mathews (eds.), *Whitlam re-visited: policy development, policies, and outcomes* (Leichhardt, NSW: Pluto Press, 1993), p. 201; Richard Woolcott, *The hot seat: reflections on diplomacy from Stalin's death to the Bali bombings* (Sydney, N.S.W. ; London: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 112.

28 "Australia's new relationship with China", *Current Notes on International Affairs* 43:12, 1972, pp. 631-3.

29 Alan Renouf, *The Champagne Trail : Experiences of a Diplomat* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1980), p. 98.

30 Ibid., p. 99.

Prime Minister Whitlam gradually clarified his vision of Australian foreign policy while making a number of foreign visits and issuing many official statements. It can be said that what Prime Minister Whitlam wanted to achieve was to accelerate “détente” in the Asia-Pacific region in the long term while promoting Australian relations with Indonesia and other South East Asian countries in the short term.

Regarding his intention to consolidate détente, in the House of Representatives on 24 May 1973, Prime Minister Whitlam stated that “[t]he central aim of my Government’s foreign policy will be to do all we can as a medium-sized power to help all nations including the great powers and not least our great ally, to make the most of the new opportunities now presenting themselves”. For this purpose, he advocated the creation of “an organisation genuinely representative of the region, without ideological overtones, conceived as an initiative to help free the region of Great Power rivalries”, while arguing that “[r]egional co-operation will be one of the keystones of Australia’s foreign policy for the 70s”.<sup>31</sup>

Bearing this grand vision in mind, Prime Minister Whitlam incrementally implemented Australian policy towards South East Asia, while withdrawing its forces from Vietnam and Singapore and terminating the “forward defence strategy”. In addition to his special attention to Australian relations with Indonesia, he made some efforts to transform the nature of Australian relations with South East Asia from military involvement to economic, commercial and cultural engagement; for example, in his Roy Milne memorial lecture on 30 November 1973, Prime Minister Whitlam emphasised that “[a]n internationalist party, a socialist party like ours cannot, on principle, remain indifferent to the condition of its neighbours, particularly when its neighbourhood is the most deprived part of the globe” and denied any idea of isolationism from South East Asia, while also emphasising that “Australia

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31 “Australia’s foreign policy”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 44:5, 1973, pp. 335-44, esp. p. 336-8.

shall never again garrison troops abroad as part of a military commitment to involve this country in Asian wars” because of the experience of the Vietnam War.<sup>32</sup>

In 1974, the Whitlam government took some concrete steps to develop Australian relations with South East Asia. Firstly, from January to February 1974, the Prime Minister visited six South East Asian countries, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Burma, Singapore and The Philippines. Reporting on this trip to the Parliament on 7 March, he stated that “[w]e no longer look on the countries of South-East Asia as buffer states or as some southern military line where a possible future enemy should be held. Rather, we look upon them as countries having a common interest with Australia and New Zealand in consolidating the security and stability of the region as a whole”.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, on 16 and 17 April, the Whitlam government convened a joint meeting between Australian officials and the Secretary-General of the ASEAN in Canberra, during which Foreign Minister Willesee announced an allocation of \$5 million to ASEAN economic projects suitable for co-operation between the ASEAN and Australia. This was the first agreement between the ASEAN and any non-member country.<sup>34</sup>

However, despite these diplomatic efforts, Australian relations with South East Asia did not develop as remarkably as hoped partly because of human rights questions which tended to cause mutual friction. In May 1974, Deputy Secretary Woolcott also had to admit that this was “one issue of some importance and sensitivity in our relations with Asian countries”.<sup>35</sup>

### **Whitlam government’s policy towards Indonesia**

As can be clearly seen in the ALP’s policy speech entitled “It’s Time”, the Whitlam government aimed to establish closer Australian relations with Indonesia. Whitlam’s special

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32 Gough Whitlam, *Australia’s foreign policy: new directions, new definitions* (Canberra: Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1973), pp. 3, 5.

33 “The Prime Minister’s Visit to South-East Asia”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 45:3, 1974, pp. 158-63.

34 “Australia to give \$5,000,000 to ASEAN”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 45:4, 1974, pp. 280-5.

35 Richard Woolcott, “Australia and Asia in the Seventies”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 45:5, 1974, pp. 314-23, esp. pp. 321-2.

interest in Indonesia should be understood together with his desire to make Australia's foreign and security policies more independent from those of the USA, as he critically noted: "[s]uccessive Australian Governments, from Menzies to McMahon, saw our involvement [in Vietnam] as an insurance premium, to be paid for future American support and protection, nominally against China, but specially, against Indonesia".<sup>36</sup> Consequently he was of the view that Australia's foreign and security policies had to follow the US Vietnam policy because of Australia's security concerns over Indonesia. To address this problem, he considered it urgent to consolidate Australian-Indonesian relations.

From 20 to 25 February 1973, having announced that "[t]he futures of our countries are indissolubly linked together and our relationship will be a crucial factor in determining the future of our region for the rest of the century"<sup>37</sup>, Prime Minister Whitlam travelled to Indonesia as his third overseas destination, after NZ and Papua New Guinea. Accompanied by Richard Kirby, who had served as the Australian representative on the Good Offices Committee in support of Indonesia's aspiration for independence in the late 1940s,<sup>38</sup> Prime Minister Whitlam attempted to remind Indonesian leaders of the close Australian-Indonesian relations at that time. While making many speeches in Jakarta in expectation of the development of Australian-Indonesian relations, he revealed his idea of these two middle powers cooperating to cope with the great powers' influence as follows.

Our ultimate interests lie in helping to preserve stable and peaceful relations between the great powers. In military and industrial terms, Australia and Indonesia can both perhaps be described as middle powers. We have a common interest in seeing that stable balance is maintained

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<sup>36</sup> Whitlam, *The Whitlam government 1972-1975*, p. 29.

<sup>37</sup> "Visit to Indonesia", *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 44:1, 1973, p. 40.

<sup>38</sup> "The Prime Minister's visit to Indonesia", *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 44:2, 1973, pp. 90-100, esp. p. 91.

between the great powers – China, the Soviet Union, Japan, the United States – on whose decisions the peace of the world will principally depend. As middle powers, we can both be active in working for peace and understanding in the world at large. It is in this broader context that I see the need for a fresh and independent policy for Australia in international relations. It is in this context that I see great new opportunities for co-operation with Indonesia.<sup>39</sup>

Following Prime Minister Whitlam's visit to Jakarta, the two governments continued their efforts to achieve closer diplomatic relations; in November 1973, Indonesian Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, and officials visited Canberra to have talks with their counterparts. While the riot in Jakarta on 15 January 1974, which was triggered by political struggles among Indonesian leaders and coincided with Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka's visit, caused eleven shooting deaths and a number of political arrests which enhanced Australian concerns over the Suharto government, the Whitlam government did not change its policy of improving their relations. In March 1974, Foreign Minister Willesee visited Jakarta to have talks with Foreign Minister Malik, President Suharto and others which resulted in a new quadripartite proposal linking Indonesia, NZ, Papua New Guinea and Australia.<sup>40</sup> In May 1974, Deputy Secretary Woolcott publicly stated that "Indonesia's size and proximity mean that Australia has an imperative and permanent interest in seeking the best possible relationship with Indonesia which is compatible with our other national interests. Indonesia is not only important as a neighbour but, in its own right, as a substantial middle power in the Asia and Pacific area which is taking a lead in promoting regional co-ordination".<sup>41</sup>

In this way, against the backdrop of the transformation of international politics in the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., esp. pp. 99-100.

<sup>40</sup> "Foreign Minister's visit to Indonesia", *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 45:3, 1974, pp. 209-10.

<sup>41</sup> Woolcott, "Australia and Asia in the Seventies", p. 320.

1970s, the Whitlam government implemented its foreign policy of putting a high priority on the development of Australian relations with Indonesia. As seen in the following chapters, even after Indonesia embarked on its annexation policy of East Timor in 1974, Prime Minister Whitlam interpreted this as an opportunity to develop Australian relations with Indonesia.

### **2.2.1 Fraser government's policy towards South East Asia and Indonesia**

#### **Fraser government's policy towards South East Asia**

On 11 November 1975, a serious domestic political deadlock involving the passage of the Appropriation Bills in the Senate which had existed since 16 October resulted in the dismissal by Governor-General John Kerr of Prime Minister Whitlam and the appointment of Malcolm Fraser, the leader of the opposition party, as the head of government. When accepting this, Malcolm Fraser promised that he would dissolve both Houses of Parliament on the passage of the Appropriation Bills in the Senate and confirmed that his government would act only as a caretaker government that would make “no appointments or dismissals or initiate new policies before a general election is held”.<sup>42</sup> In the end, having won the general election of 13 December 1975 with an overwhelming majority of 91 to 36 seats in the House of Representatives and 35 to 27 in the Senate, the Fraser Liberal and Country Party government was released from caretaker mode.

Like former Prime Minister Whitlam, Prime Minister Fraser was very much interested in Australian foreign and defence policymaking. Having taken office as Defence Minister in the Gorton government during the critical period from November 1969 to March 1971, he also had previous experience in forming Australian external policy. With regard to his leadership in foreign policymaking, Alan Renouf later wrote that “throughout his period of office from 1975

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<sup>42</sup> Letter from Fraser to Kerr, 11 November 1975, in Paul Kelly, *November 1975: The Inside Story of Australia's Greatest Political Crisis* (St Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 350.



to 1983, Fraser dominated both the formulation and the practice of Australian foreign policy”.<sup>43</sup>

Prime Minister Fraser appointed Andrew Peacock as Foreign Minister, a position he occupied from November 1975 to November 1980.

Prime Minister Fraser began to clarify his vision of Australian foreign policy in reply to media interviews after the election in December 1975. One of its general characteristics was that it would reflect scepticism of détente and of the USSR’s intentions.<sup>44</sup> From that point of view, he stated that Australia would take positions closer to those the USA in the United Nations and also support the establishment of the US Navy base on Diego Garcia Island in the Indian Ocean,<sup>45</sup> while withdrawing a previous government’s decision to recognise the USSR’s *de jure* sovereignties over the three Baltic States.<sup>46</sup> Regarding Australian policy towards Asia, Prime Minister Fraser mentioned his intention to realise “closer relationships with Japan” and “to maintain links with China”, and also insisted that “closer relationships can be established with the ASEAN countries than has been the case in the past”.<sup>47</sup>

On 1 June 1976, in his statement entitled “World situation”, Prime Minister Fraser publicised his philosophy and views on Australian foreign policy after having consulted with Alan Renouf, Arthur Tange (Secretary of the Department of Defence), Andrew Peacock and two advisors from academia, David Kemp and Owen Harries.<sup>48</sup> Under the banner of “an active and enlightened realism”, the Prime Minister insisted that “[w]e must be prepared to face the world as it is, and not as we would like it to be” and that “[w]e must recognise that Australia, a middle power, lives in a world where power in a broad sense remains the major factor in international politics”. As for South East Asia, Prime Minister Fraser argued that Australia’s interests were

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43 Alan Renouf, *Malcolm Fraser and Australian Foreign Policy* (Mosman, N.S.W: Australian Professional Publications, 1986), p. 72.

44 Peter Samuel, “Fraser talks: where we go now”, *The Bulletin*, 20 December 1975.

45 “We seek closer ASEAN links: Fraser”, *The Age*, 20 December 1975.

46 Renouf, *Malcolm Fraser and Australian Foreign Policy*, p. 83.

47 “We seek closer ASEAN links: Fraser”.

48 Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs* (Carlton, Vic.: The Miegunyah Press, 2010), pp. 454-7.

“that the region should not become in the future an arena of great power conflict”, “that relations between states should be peaceful and co-operative”, “that political change in the area should not provide occasion for the assertion of a dominant role by any of the great powers” and “that there should be opportunity for commercial and cultural exchange between Australia and the countries of the area”.<sup>49</sup>

What characterised the Fraser government’s initial policy towards South East Asia was the keen attention it paid to ASEAN and, in particular, Indonesia as its *de facto* leader. In January 1976, when Foreign Minister Peacock travelled to Jakarta, he told President Suharto that “[t]he Prime Minister would...be most interested in visiting Bali at the end of the ASEAN Summit Meeting next month so that he would have an opportunity to talk with the Heads of Government there and, especially, the President”.<sup>50</sup> However, against the backdrop of the deterioration in Australian relations with Indonesia over the East Timor question, this proposal was declined at the pre-ASEAN Summit ministerial meeting on 9 and 10 February. In the end, the five leaders of the member countries of ASEAN held their first summit talks in Bali from 23 to 25 February without the attendance of any leaders outside the region and signed three documents, the “Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia”, the “Declaration of ASEAN Concord” and the “Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Secretariat”, to strengthen their ties.

The Fraser government continued to seek closer Australian relations with the ASEAN by setting aside the East Timor question as far as possible. On 14 April, during his second visit to Jakarta, Foreign Minister Peacock again told Foreign Minister Malik about the Australian government’s hope that “Indonesia would see Australia is a country prepared to co-ordinate

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49 “World situation: Prime Minister’s statement”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 47:6, 1976, pp. 300-13. As to the term “power”, Malcolm Fraser argued as follows; “[i]n international politics power includes not only military strength. Economic resources, industrial capacity, population, domestic stability and diplomacy all contribute to a nation’s power and influence in the world”.

50 Record of conversation between Peacock and Suharto, Jakarta, 20 January 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 20.

activities with ASEAN and with itself. Australia saw Indonesia as the most important of the ASEAN countries, and the most influential”.<sup>51</sup> In his “World situation” speech, Prime Minister Fraser also spoke of the Australian government’s desire to develop its relations with ASEAN, saying that “[w]e want to identify and develop further areas of practical co-operation on shared political and strategic interests”.<sup>52</sup>

On 30 November 1976, following Prime Minister Fraser’s visit to Jakarta the previous month, a government Cabinet meeting agreed that “the importance of closer relations with ASEAN countries be re-affirmed”.<sup>53</sup> Then, the Fraser government established a high-level official committee (the Standing Intergovernmental Committee on Relations with ASEAN), which was chaired by the DFA, to play an advisory role in terms of expanding and deepening Australian relations with ASEAN countries.<sup>54</sup> On 15 March 1977, Foreign Minister Peacock issued a public statement on Australian foreign policy which again stated that “[t]he Government attaches the greatest importance to consolidation and developing our close relationship with the five members of ASEAN, individually and collectively”.<sup>55</sup>

From 6 to 8 August 1977, Australian relations with ASEAN saw notable progress when, after their own second summit meeting from 4 August in Kuala Lumpur, the five leaders of the ASEAN held post-summit talks attended by Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, NZ Prime Minister Robert Muldoon and Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda. During these talks, Prime Minister Fraser announced a further \$10 million contribution under the ASEAN-Australia Economic Co-operation program and an increase of \$90 million in its development assistance to

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51 Record of conversation between Peacock and Malik, Jakarta, 14 April 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 22.

52 “World situation: Prime Minister’s statement”, esp. p.306.

53 Cabinet Minute, “Submission No. 838 : The Development of Closer Relations with the ASEAN Countries - Decision No. 1906”, 30 November 1976, NAA, A12909 838.

54 “Australia-ASEAN relations”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 48:1, 1977, p. 50. Other members of the Intergovernmental Committee included the Departments of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Defence, Treasury, Overseas Trade, Industry and Commerce, Business and Consumer Affairs, and other departments as appropriate.

55 “Australian Foreign Minister’s policy statement”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 48:3, 1977, pp. 131-46, esp. p.137.

ASEAN countries over the next few years.<sup>56</sup> However, Australia's economic assistance was overshadowed by the huge amount of Japanese aid announced by Prime Minister Fukuda who said that he had "responded positively to the request for cooperation to the value of \$1 billion for ASEAN industrial projects".<sup>57</sup> On 17 August, in appreciation of the post-summit talks, Prime Minister Fraser declared that "[t]he goodwill between the eight countries was most evident. This goodwill has the most important long term implications for the development of a framework of co-operative, imaginative and mutually beneficial relations between the countries of ASEAN and their neighbours".<sup>58</sup>

On 10 December 1977, the Fraser Liberal and Country Party government won the general election against Gough Whitlam's ALP winning by 86 to 38 seats in the House of Representatives. After another victory in the next election held in October 1980, the Fraser government remained in office until March 1983.

### **Fraser government's policy towards Indonesia**

Against the backdrop of the deterioration in Australian relations with Indonesia caused by the Australian public's reaction to Indonesia's handling of East Timor which involved the deaths of the "Balibo Five" in October 1975, the Fraser government could not publicly commit to the development of Australian relations with Indonesia as had the previous Whitlam government. The Fraser government's vote for UNGA Resolution 3485 on the day prior to the general election also manifested its opposition to Indonesia's policy of the forcible annexation of East Timor.

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<sup>56</sup> "ASEAN: The Kuala Lumpur summit meeting and post-summit talks", *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 48:8, 1977, pp. 402-3.

<sup>57</sup> As to Japan's policymaking process towards the ASEAN post-summit talks in Kuala Lumpur in August 1977 and Prime Minister Fukuda's speech in Manila on 18 August 1977, see Sueo Sudo, *The Fukuda Doctrine and Asean : New Dimensions in Japanese Foreign Policy* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992), pp. 151-85, pp. 241-7.

<sup>58</sup> "ASEAN: The Kuala Lumpur summit meeting and post-summit talks".

Despite its public attitude which was critical of Indonesia's policy, the Fraser government nevertheless maintained the policy of successive Australian governments' policies since the late 1960s of strengthening Australian relations with Indonesia under President Suharto. This attitude was expressed in secret messages delivered privately to President Suharto in November 1975, as seen in Chapter 5. After the Foreign Minister's two visits to Jakarta in January and April, the Prime Minister confirmed that "Australia has a deep interest in maintaining sound and close relations with Indonesia" in his "World situation" speech of 1 June.<sup>59</sup>

From 7 to 11 October 1976, Prime Minister Fraser made his first visit to Jakarta. While staying there, he stated that "it is a fundamental foreign policy objective of the Australian Government to consolidate, to strengthen, and to develop further in the years ahead, a close, cordial and co-operative relationship between Australia and Indonesia".<sup>60</sup> After having confidential talks, Prime Minister Fraser and President Suharto jointly announced that "Australia and Indonesia have a common interest, not only in close co-operation between themselves, but also in contributing to the development of the South-East Asian region in peace and prosperity and in harmony with the interests and aspirations of all its people".<sup>61</sup>

In August 1977, Prime Minister Fraser and President Suharto met again at the ASEAN post-summit talks in Kuala Lumpur and exchanged their opinions on bilateral issues. In this way, the Fraser government sought to establish closer Australian relations with both ASEAN and Indonesia.

## Conclusion

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59 "World situation: Prime Minister's statement", esp. p.306.

60 "Prime Minister's visit to Indonesia", *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 47:10, pp. 525-40, esp. p. 530.

61 Ibid., esp. p.538.

During the period from the late 1960s to late 1970s, international relations in South East Asia experienced profound transformations brought about by various external and internal factors. The withdrawals of the US and UK forces from the region, the US Nixon administration's announcement of the "Guam Doctrine" and the heralding of détente in Asia were important external factors, while the establishment of Suharto's "New Order" in Indonesia and the formation of the ASEAN were remarkable internal elements.

In the face of these significant changes, the Australian government reviewed its "forward defence strategy" and introduced new conceptions of foreign and security policies. Irrespective of the party in power, the Australian government came to value its relations with Indonesia under Suharto and to see ASEAN as a successful regional organisation. It is important to bear these historical and international contexts of Australian foreign policy towards South East Asia in mind when we re-examine Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question during the 1970s in the following chapters.

### **Chapter 3: Beginning of crisis in Portuguese Timor and Department of Foreign Affairs' support for internationally acceptable act of self-determination from 1974 to March 1975**

This chapter examines Australian foreign policymaking paying special attention to the role of its Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) during the period from April 1974 to March 1975 when the Australian government was faced with Indonesia's launch of its policy of annexation of Portuguese Timor and when the process of decolonisation of Portugal's territories had begun under the influence of the Portuguese revolution (Carnation Revolution). The focal point of this chapter is the investigation of how and why the Australian DFA committed to a resolution in accordance with the will of the people in the territory, disregarding Prime Minister Whitlam's preference for Indonesia's incorporation of Portuguese Timor.

To analyse the Australian foreign policymaking process towards Portuguese Timor, this chapter consists of three sections. Section 3.1 looks firstly at the development of the process of decolonisation and Indonesian policy and then at the Australian policymaking process with special attention paid to the activities of its DFA during the period from April to early September 1974. Section 3.2 has a similar structure but deals with the period from September 1974 to March 1975. Section 3.3 is concerned with the growth of Australian public interest in Portuguese Timor and, firstly, takes a look at Australian opinions expressed in Australian newspapers and then analyses various activities of the Australian people and groups interested in the territory.

#### ***3.1 Start of Portuguese decolonisation of East Timor and Indonesia's***

*annexation policy, and Australian Department of Foreign Affairs' brief for Prime Minister Whitlam*

**3.1.1 Start of decolonisation of Portuguese Timor and Indonesia's annexation policy**

**Portuguese revolution and start of decolonisation of Portuguese Timor**

It was the Portuguese revolution in Lisbon that opened up new political opportunities for people who had been deprived of their political freedoms under Portuguese colonial rule. On 25 April 1974, MFA (Movimento das Forças Armadas), an organisation established by Portuguese middle-ranking soldiers who were critical of the prolonged wars in its African colonies, successfully overthrew the government of Prime Minister Marcelo Caetano, the successor to the dictatorship since 1932 of António de Oliveira Salazar. On 15 May 1974, General Antonio de Spínola, who had served as the Governor-General of Guine-Bissau and became well known for the publication of his book *Portugal and the future (Portugal e o futuro)*, in which he advocated the creation of a Portuguese Federation to resolve the question of Portugal's overseas territories, was inaugurated as the first President after the revolution.

As the MFA's coup was triggered by Portuguese soldiers' dissatisfaction with their country's long-lasting colonial wars in Africa, one of the most immediate tasks of the revolution was to settle the self-determination and independence questions of Portugal's overseas territories, along with democratisation of Portuguese domestic politics. In this regard, policy differences soon became apparent between President Spínola, who rejected the idea of the total independence of overseas territories, and MFA members who considered that this was the only realistic solution. In the end, the promulgation of law 7/74 on 26 July 1974 paved the way to



independence for Portugal's overseas territories,<sup>1</sup> thereby making Spínola's federation plan less realistic. On 7 September 1974, the Portuguese government concluded the Lusaka Accord with Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique: Liberation Front of Mozambique) and recognised Mozambique's independence from 25 June 1975. On 10 September, the Portuguese government officially recognised independence for Guine-Bissau as many other governments had already done. In this way, the Portuguese Empire started to be dismantled.

The outbreak of revolution in Lisbon was soon reported and influenced politics in Portuguese Timor which is located about 14,000km from Lisbon. While the Governor of Timor, Colonel Alves Aldeia, who was appointed by the Caetano government, remained in office for the next few months, under the leadership of Major António Arnão Metelo, a member of MFA, the Committee for the Self-determination of Timor was established. It began to introduce MFA's basic policy into Portuguese Timor to create essential conditions for the establishment of democracy, including the freedoms of meeting, association and the expression of thought.<sup>2</sup>

### **Establishment of three political associations**

In line with MFA's policy, the following three political associations were founded during May 1974. Firstly, on 11 May, UDT (União Democrática Timorense: Timorese Democratic Union) was established as a political association advocating the principle of progressive autonomy under the flag of Portugal.<sup>3</sup> While initially representing Spínola's Portuguese federation plan, it gradually shifted its policy objective towards pro-independence as the Portuguese federation plan became less feasible. The first presidency of UDT was assumed

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1 Portuguese Council of State, Constitutional Law 7-24, 27 July 1974, in Heike Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community: Basic Documents* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.34.

2 Memorandum to Posts, Canberra, 8 August 1974, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 2.

3 For accounts of UDT, see Bill Nicol, *Timor: A Nation Reborn* (Jakarta: Equinox Pub., 2002), pp. 83-9; James Dunn, *East Timor: A Rough Passage to Independence* (Double Bay, N.S.W.: Longueville Books, 2003), pp. 48-51; José Ramos-Horta, *Funu: The Unfinished Saga of East Timor* (Trenton, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 1987), pp. 29-32.

by Lopes da Cruz. Other important figures in the organisation were Mário Carrascalão, who had served as the chairperson of the Timor branch of the ANP (*Acção Nacional Popular*: People's National Action), the only legal party under the old regime, his younger brother, João Carrascalão, the Mayor of Dili, Augusto Mouzinho, and Domingos de Oliveira.

Secondly, on 20 May, the ASDT (Associação Social Democrática Timor: Timorese Social Democratic Association) was formed as a political association in support of socialism, democracy and the right to independence.<sup>4</sup> Four months after its formation, on 12 September, it changed its name to Fretilin (Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente: Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) which sounds similar to Frelimo in Mozambique. After this renaming, Fretilin began to claim itself as “the only legitimate representative of the people of East Timor” and directed its activities towards mobilising popular support for independence. Its first president was Francisco Xavier do Amaral, a full-blooded Timorese in his mid-thirties, trained as a priest and with experience as a teacher and customs officer. Other core members of ASDT/Fretilin were educated Timorese in their mid-twenties, many of whom had gathered at anti-Portuguese colonial meetings prior to the revolution. They included Vice-president Nicolau Lobato, a respected intellectual and public servant with experience in the military, Rogério Lobato, Nicolau’s brother, who was the highest-ranking Timorese in the Portuguese army, Alarico Fernandes, a public servant who received radio training in Darwin, Mari Alkatiri, a radical Muslim of Arabic descent who had studied in Angola, and José Ramos-Horta, a journalist for *A Voz de Timor* who had been exiled in Mozambique due to his criticism of Portuguese rule. Around the time of its renaming as Fretilin, ASDT was also joined by some radical students returning from Lisbon, including

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<sup>4</sup> For accounts of the initial period of ASDT/Fretilin, see Jill Jolliffe, *East Timor: Nationalism & Colonialism* (St. Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1978), pp. 63-76; Nicol, *Timor*, pp. 90-105; Helen Hill, *Stirrings of Nationalism in East Timor: Fretilin 1974-1978: The Origins, Ideologies and Strategies of a Nationalist Movement* (Oxford, N.S.W.: Oxford Press, 2002), pp. 59-95; Dunn, *East Timor*, pp. 51-7; Ramos-Horta, *Funu*, pp. 34-9.

António Carvarino (Mau Lear) and Vicente dos Reis (Sahe).

Thirdly, on 27 May, Apodeti (Associação Popular Democrática Timorese: Timorese Popular Democratic Association) was organised as a political group in pursuit of the “feasibility of integration with autonomy to the Indonesian community in terms of international law”.<sup>5</sup> Its first president was Arnaldo dos Reis Araújo, a man in his sixties who had been in prison for almost 30 years on a charge of collaboration with the Japanese military during the Second World War. However, its Secretary-General, José Osório Soares, a man in his mid-thirties who had worked as a Portuguese official, was thought to be a more influential person. Although not a founding member, Guilherme Gonçalves, a ruler of the Atsabe district, soon became a central figure in Apodeti and was soon tied up with the Indonesian annexation policy.

On 19 June, declaring that Portuguese policy was to let people decide their futures, the Committee for the Self-determination of Timor officially recognised the three parties, UDT, ASDT and Apodeti, and their future options.<sup>6</sup> In the initial period, UDT garnered the most popular support, ASDT the second and Apodeti the least.<sup>7</sup> However, differences among these political associations were minor and there was good communication among their political leaders; for example, it is known that Ramos-Horta asked José Osório Soares of Apodeti to join ASDT<sup>8</sup> and also sought an alliance with UDT leaders.<sup>9</sup>

Soon after the formation of these political associations, their leaders embarked on diplomatic activities to seek international support for their political objectives. The most important neighbours to communicate with were Indonesia and Australia. In this context, on 17 June, during his visit to Jakarta, José Ramos-Horta of ASDT achieved diplomatic success when

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5 Nicol, *Timor*, pp. 70-82; Dunn, *East Timor*, pp. 57-61.

6 Memorandum to Posts, Canberra, 8 August 1974, op. cit.

7 Ramos-Horta admitted that UDT was the strongest and ASDT the second when he visited Australia in July 1974. Peter Hastings, “Voice for Timor independence”, *SMH*, 22 July 1974.

8 Ramos-Horta, *Funu*, p. 32.

9 Ibid., p. 34.

he received a letter signed by Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik which noted Indonesia's adherence to the right of independence, its intention not to expand its territory, and its policy of maintaining good relations, friendship and cooperation with Portuguese Timor after independence regardless of its form of government.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, when he visited Australia in July, he was only able to meet officials of DFA not Australian Foreign Minister Willesee. Despite this, his visit to Australia was of some importance because he established a number of contacts with Australian people, including Denis Frenay, a member of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) who became a passionate supporter of Ramos-Horta and Fretilin.

Compared with José Ramos-Horta's visits to Indonesia and Australia, that of Arnaldo dos Reis Araújo to Indonesia was little known. At a press conference on 31 August, he revealed that he had been in Indonesia for the past two months to make Apodeti's policy known and to elicit Indonesian views.<sup>11</sup> Then, he talked about his preference for Portuguese Timor being part of Indonesia and some foreseeable problems arising if it became independent, including the small size of its territory and its lack of educated people. He also mentioned his hope that its people would not become "communists".<sup>12</sup> As a matter of fact, his visit to Indonesia was funded and supported by CSIS (Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Indonesia) which was planning to annex Portuguese Timor, as the Deputy Director of the Indonesian CSIS, Harry Tjan, admitted to Australian diplomats.<sup>13</sup>

### **Indonesian clandestine operations towards Portuguese Timor**

Shortly after 25 April 1974, Indonesian policymakers in Jakarta turned their eyes to

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-4.

<sup>11</sup> Memorandum to Canberra, Jakarta, 4 September 1974, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 2.

<sup>12</sup> "Timor merger sought with Indonesia", *The Canberra Times*, 2 September 1974.

<sup>13</sup> Memorandum to Canberra, 4 September 1974, op.cit.

political developments in the parts of Portuguese Timor sharing common borders with Timor Island. In particular, officials of BAKIN (Badan Koordinasi Intelijen Negara; State Intelligence Coordinating Agency), an intelligence agency conducting surveillance of communist activities, and CSIS, a think-tank supported by Ali Murtopo, a close advisor to President Suharto and the head of OPSUS (Operasi Khusus: Special Operation) who had arranged the “Act of Free Choice” in West New Guinea in 1969, began to gather information on Portuguese Timor and frame Indonesian policy towards it.

Remarkably, only a few months after the Portuguese revolution, Indonesian officials began approaching Australian diplomats in Jakarta regarding Portuguese Timor and informing them of Indonesia’s intention to annex it; for example, on 22 May, Satari of BAKIN told them that “a comprehensive study has been undertaken by BAKIN on Portuguese Timor” and admitted that “Indonesia’s first preference would be for the eventual incorporation of Portuguese Timor, if this could be done in a manner that did not reflect adversely on Indonesia”. He also asserted that decolonisation of Portuguese Timor was a security question for the Indonesian government.<sup>14</sup> On 27 June, Colonel Sunarso of BAKIN talked about Portuguese Timor’s future political and legal status if it became a part of Indonesia, despite his acknowledgement that the majority of people in Portuguese Timor favoured independence.<sup>15</sup> On 2 July, Harry Tjan aired his intention to submit a policy paper to President Suharto in which he planned to recommend that “Indonesia mount a clandestine operation in Portuguese Timor to ensure that the territory would opt for incorporation into Indonesia”. Touching on “the possibility of diplomatic cooperation between Australia and Indonesia”, he mentioned that “Australia’s role could be to ‘neutralise’ unfavourable opinion in other countries towards an

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<sup>14</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 22 May 1974, in Wendy Way (ed.), *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000), (hereafter *AIIPT*), p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum to Canberra, Jakarta, 28 June 1974, *AIIT*, pp. 60-1.

Indonesian takeover”.<sup>16</sup>

In July, having travelled around Indonesian Timor and Flores to gather information, Australian diplomat Denis Fisher observed some level of development of an Indonesian policy towards Portuguese Timor. According to his report, El Tari, the Governor of Indonesia’s Nusa Tenggara Timor Province, who had been involved in Indonesian annexation policy under instructions from Jakarta, delivered broadcasts on some of the advantages for the people of Portuguese Timor of integration into Indonesia over the Indonesian Government Radio Station in Kupang in Tetum, the East Timor *lingua franca*. Fisher also reported that an OPSUS member who had worked for the incorporation of West New Guinea into Indonesia through an “Act of Free Choice” in 1969 participated in a campaign of infiltration of Tetum-speakers in Indonesian Timor into Portuguese Timor.<sup>17</sup> According to the report of CAVR (Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação; Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation), in August, the Indonesian military started to provide a member of Apodeti with weapons and military training.<sup>18</sup>

### **Harry Tjan’s preliminary discussion with DFA officials**

President Suharto’s dispatch of Harry Tjan to Canberra in August<sup>19</sup> prior to the upcoming summit talks with Prime Minister Whitlam highlighted Indonesian efforts to win over Australian policymakers regarding Indonesian policy towards Portuguese Timor. In his preliminary discussion with officials of the Australian DFA on 21 August, Tjan insisted that “the integration of Portuguese Timor into Indonesia would be in the best strategic interests of Indonesia and Australia and of the region as a whole” because an independent Portuguese Timor

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<sup>16</sup> Letter from Furlonger to Feakes, Jakarta, 3 July 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>17</sup> Report by Fisher, Jakarta, [July 1974], *AIIPT*, pp. 74-6.

<sup>18</sup> *Chega!*, Part 3, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Minute from Arriens to Furlonger, Jakarta, 14 August 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 79-80.

might destabilise the region due to the subsequent penetration of “a Power” – supposedly the USSR or China – or tribal rivalry within the territory. Having said that his views were shared by Ali Murtopo and other Indonesian policymakers, Tjan also revealed that President Suharto supported the idea of Indonesia’s integration of Portuguese Timor providing the following two conditions were met. One was that this integration should comply with the Indonesian constitutional principle of a unitary state which implied that Indonesian incorporation of it into its federal system as a state was unacceptable regardless of Apodeti’s bid for “autonomy”. The other was a question of public presentation by the Indonesian government as President Suharto was anxious that “Indonesia must be seen to observe the wishes of the Timorese people” and that Indonesian policy should not prejudice “regional harmony”. President Suharto agreed with Tjan that Australia would play a crucial role in the question of public presentation.<sup>20</sup>

An important aspect of Indonesian policy towards Portuguese Timor in this period was that the objective of Indonesia’s annexation of Portuguese Timor had not yet been determined. Foreign Minister Malik’s letter to Ramos-Horta in June was an example, as it suggested the possibility that the Indonesian government might have decided to live with an independent Portuguese Timor. Harry Tjan also admitted to the officials of DFA that “Indonesia’s foreign policy towards Portuguese Timor had not been finally determined and there were divergent attitudes within the Indonesian Government”.<sup>21</sup> One of the reasons the Indonesian government could not determine its policy towards Portuguese Timor was that it had not yet received authoritative views on relevant Australian policy which could have a decisive influence. This explains why Indonesian policymakers were eager to obtain Prime Minister Whitlam’s views on this issue during the informal summit talks scheduled for September.

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<sup>20</sup> Record of meeting with Tjan, Canberra, 21 August 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 85-7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

### **3.1.2 DFA's policy and Whitlam-Suharto talks in September 1974**

#### **Early policymaking process in Department of Foreign Affairs**

Following the outbreak of the revolution in Lisbon and facing the decolonisation of Portugal's colonies, the Australian DFA began to study the political changes in those colonies, including Timor, and their implications for Australia. On 3 May, it held its first officials' meeting under the chairmanship of Frank Cooper, the head of its Europe, Central and Southern Africa Branch. Its participants were inclined to support an Indonesian integration of Portuguese Timor as a natural solution as the record of the meeting noted that "[i]t was thought that the logical long term prospect for the economically non-viable territory was integration with Indonesia, under United Nations auspices in the first instance".<sup>22</sup> One of the reasons supporting this conclusion arose from the Australian government's preference to start negotiations with the Indonesian government on delineation of the seabed boundary in the Timor Sea.<sup>23</sup> The Indonesian government had already accepted the Australian claim that the borderlines between the two countries be delineated close to the Indonesian archipelago, except for the "Timor gap" area, in recognition of the fact that they were geologically separated by the Timor Trench. However, the Portuguese government had previously insisted that the border be aligned in the middle of the two territories on the assumption that Timor Island and the Australian continent were part of the same land mass.

However, on 7 May, Secretary Alan Renouf questioned the outcome of the officials' meeting commenting that "'[g]ive it to [Indonesia]' is the easy way out but it is not necessarily the right one".<sup>24</sup> Renouf later claimed that he had directed the Department that Australia's policy towards Portuguese Timor should be self-determination<sup>25</sup> which seems to have had some

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<sup>22</sup> Meeting of Ad Hoc Task Force on Portugal, Canberra, 3 May 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>23</sup> Policy Planning Paper, Canberra, [3 May 1974], *AIIPT*, pp. 50-2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, esp., p.51.

<sup>25</sup> Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1979), p. 442.



influence on officials' thinking. On 17 May, in the second meeting regarding the Portuguese revolution, officials confirmed that there were three possible outcomes of decolonisation of Portuguese Timor; continued association with Portugal, independence from, or association with, Indonesia. The participants also agreed on the need to investigate the thinking of native Timorese as well as the Indonesian attitude and to have a clear idea of Australian objectives in relation to Portuguese Timor.<sup>26</sup>

At the end of May, in order to gauge the opinion of the Timorese, Foreign Minister Willesee decided to send officers to Portuguese Timor.<sup>27</sup> The Department selected Alister McLennan, the head of the Indonesian Section, and James Dunn, the Director of the Foreign Affairs Group in the Parliamentary Library, who had previously served as Australian consul of Dili from 1962 to 1964, as members of the mission. After travelling to Portuguese Timor from 17 to 27 June, they authored a report on Timorese politics in which they concluded that “[p]olitical change has influenced the small elite in Timor but has scarcely permeated to the mass of Timorese...Because of the backwardness and inexperience of the Timorese, genuine self-determination will require careful preparation...Colonialism has isolated Timor from the region but Indonesia and Australia may exercise powerful influence in the future”.<sup>28</sup>

Australian policymakers' understanding of Portuguese Timor was facilitated by the visit of José Ramos-Horta to Australia in July. Although Foreign Minister Willesee decided not to receive him in order to avoid being perceived as too close to a politician from one of three political associations,<sup>29</sup> DFA's First Assistant Secretary, Graham Feakes, and other officials met him. In reply to Ramos-Horta, who was eager for Australian government financial and diplomatic assistance for ASDT and its purpose of independence, the officials emphasised that it

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<sup>26</sup> Second Meeting of Ad Hoc Task Force on Portugal, Canberra, 17 May 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 54-5.

<sup>27</sup> Submission to Willesee, Canberra, 24 May 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 56-7.

<sup>28</sup> Savingram to posts, Canberra, 3 July 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 63-8.

<sup>29</sup> Submission to Willesee, Canberra, 16 July 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 69-70.

was difficult for the Department to endorse the objective of a particular party and that self-determination in Portuguese Timor would be expected to be a genuine one after some preparatory period. The officials also explained that they expected that Ministers would endorse the objective of self-determination despite Australia's policy towards Portuguese Timor not having yet been determined.<sup>30</sup> During Ramos-Horta's stay in Canberra, he and Gordon Jockel, the head of the Joint Intelligence Organisation and a former Ambassador to Indonesia from March 1969 to February 1972, also met with Peter Hastings, a journalist who had begun to cover Portuguese Timor.<sup>31</sup>

In the meantime, DFA needed to determine Australia's response to the Indonesian intention to integrate Portuguese Timor, information on which had begun to be delivered through the Australian Embassy in Jakarta. In this context, on 6 June, in reply to John McCredie, the Minister in the Australian Embassy in Jakarta,<sup>32</sup> Feakes wrote that "[m]y own feeling, which I think would be widely shared in the Department, is that there will have to be an internationally acceptable act of self-determination in Portuguese Timor before any change in its international status takes place", although he agreed that "for the Timorese to choose union, or some form of association, with Indonesia" was the best solution. He also mentioned a potential role for Australian diplomats by suggesting to the Indonesians that they consider the risks of Timorese resistance against integration into Indonesia and the possibility of living with an independent Portuguese Timor.<sup>33</sup> On 27 July, replying to Ambassador Furlonger, who had sent further information on Indonesia's annexation policy, Feakes mentioned some foreseeable demerits for the Australian government of becoming closely associated with it. He wrote that

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30 Memorandum to posts, Canberra, 7 August 1974, NAA,A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 2.

31 Denis Freney, *A Map of Days : Life on the Left* (Port Melbourne: Heinemann, 1991), p. 340.

32 Letter from McCredie to Feakes, Jakarta, 29 May 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 57-9. While Ambassador Furlonger was on leave, McCredie corresponded with Feakes regarding Australia's policy towards Portuguese Timor.

33 Letter from Feakes to McCredie, Canberra, 6 June 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 59-60.

“[a]ny hint of Australian involvement or even acquiescence would be damaging to the government’s reputation overseas, to its domestic credibility and to the confidence in us of small countries, especially PNG” and that “[i]n terms of domestic opinion, there are enough problems in maintaining our present policy towards Indonesia without the complication of association with a doubtful operation in Timor...” Thus, Graham Feakes stated that the Department could not endorse the bare proposition that the absorption of Portuguese Timor into Indonesia would best suit Australia’s interests.<sup>34</sup>

In August, prior to the summit talks between Gough Whitlam and Suharto, DFA asked the Department of Defence about its opinions on the defence significance of Portuguese Timor and, at its request, William Pritchett, the First Assistant Secretary of the Department of Defence, drafted a working paper.<sup>35</sup> One of Pritchett’s conclusions was that “[t]he exclusion of major powers and of Indonesia from Portuguese Timor and thus the maximisation of Australia’s option to deploy forces to Portuguese Timor would be best served by its development [through self-determination] as an independent state” on the basis of the assumption that “Portuguese Timor could be an important factor in the security of our important sea lines of communication through the eastern Indonesian archipelago and to the security of north-western Australia and to our contiguous off-shore resources areas”.<sup>36</sup> However, commenting that it had “a major disagreement with Pritchett’s paper”, DFA criticised it for considering “the defence significance of Portuguese Timor in isolation from the defence significance of Indonesia”. DFA only agreed with a few parts of the paper, including its recognition that access to Portuguese Timor by a major power might threaten the security of Indonesia and Australia.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Letter from Feakes to Furlonger, Canberra, 26 July 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 70-2.

<sup>35</sup> Memorandum to Rogers, Canberra, 15 August 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 80-4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, esp. p. 84.

<sup>37</sup> Memorandum to Department of Defence, Canberra, 26 August 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 88-9.

### **Department's briefing for Prime Minister Whitlam prior to summit talks**

On 2 September, DFA submitted a briefing paper, with talking points on Portuguese Timor for Prime Minister Whitlam's meeting with President Suharto, which was read through by the Prime Minister during his flight to Jogjakarta, according to Richard Woolcott who accompanied him.<sup>38</sup> With reference to Indonesia's preference for its absorption of Portuguese Timor, the briefing paper directed Prime Minister Whitlam's attention to the "Indonesians' strong interest in Australia's attitude". After that, regardless of Indonesia's preference, the paper emphasised the importance of "a genuine and internationally acceptable self-determination" in Australian policymaking towards Portuguese Timor, while also suggesting that, considering Australia's relations with Indonesia, the Prime Minister should talk about the absence of Australian ambitions in the territory and its appreciation of Indonesian grounds for strategic concerns over Portuguese Timor. Remarkably, the paper elaborated on the following conditions of Australia's policy towards the question of self-determination for Portuguese Timor.

(c) In keeping with the general tenor of Australia's foreign policy and our attitudes towards Portugal's African colonies, we are committed to decolonisation in Portuguese Timor on the basis of valid self-determination. Australia would be bound by the result of a genuine and internationally acceptable act of self-determination in Portuguese Timor.

(d) On this basis any of the three options for the future of the territory - continuing association with Portugal, independence, or incorporation into Indonesia - would be legitimate in Australia's view.

(e) Conversely, any future disposition of Portuguese Timor which was contrary to the wishes of its people would be likely, in Australia's view, to have a destabilising influence in the region. It would be important for this reason that the act of self-determination should be accepted as a genuine test of Timorese opinion

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<sup>38</sup> Brief for Whitlam, Canberra, 2 September 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 90-3. See also its editorial footnote 2.

by the Governments and people of countries in the region.<sup>39</sup> (Emphasis in the original)

As can be clearly seen, DFA expected Prime Minister Whitlam to talk to President Suharto about Australia's commitment to a particular process of self-determination based on the will of the Timorese people, not a particular outcome of decolonisation. In addition, the paper went on to suggest that "(f) Because of the political and economic backwardness of Portuguese Timor, there is a need to proceed slowly and deliberately towards self-determination in order to prepare the people. Australia believes that the Portuguese would accept this view if it was put to them by Australia and Indonesia". In this connection, the Department recommended that Prime Minister Whitlam discuss Australian and Indonesian cooperation to make sure that the Portuguese government would properly implement its decolonisation policy until the Timorese were given sufficient time to decide their own future. The Department also suggested that the Prime Minister mention an Australian plan for developing its relationship with Portuguese Timor by providing scholarships to Timorese students and inviting Timorese political leaders to Australia.<sup>40</sup>

#### **Whitlam's personal diplomacy in talks with Suharto in September 1974**

However, Prime Minister Whitlam evidently did not seriously consider the Department's advice. During his informal talks with President Suharto on the morning of 6 September, he began to express his personal views on Portuguese Timor; after referring to Harry Tjan's visit to Canberra, he stated that what he might say would likely become the attitude of the Australian government. Prime Minister Whitlam told Suharto that the following two things were fundamental to his thinking on Portuguese Timor; one was that "Portuguese Timor should

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

become part of Indonesia” and the other that “this should happen in accordance with the properly expressed wishes of the people of Portuguese Timor”. He also made it clear that “[i]ndependence would be unwelcome to Indonesia, to Australia and to other countries in the region”, because “an independent Portuguese Timor would inevitably become the focus of attention of others outside the region”. At the same time, he reminded President Suharto of the potential influence of Australian public opinion on the Australian government’s attitude and mentioned that “incorporation into Indonesia should appear to be a natural process arising from the wishes of the people.”<sup>41</sup>

After listening to these remarks, President Suharto explained Indonesia’s policy towards Portuguese Timor which was almost identical to what Harry Tjan had told Australian officials. Observing that Portuguese Timor faced two alternatives, independence or incorporation with another country, Suharto asserted that an independent Portuguese Timor might seek assistance from communist powers, notably China or the Soviet Union, given its scant likelihood of being economically viable, and could become a destabilising factor in the region. President Suharto’s conclusion was that “[u]ltimately the Indonesians hoped for the incorporation of Portuguese Timor as being in the best interests of the region, of Indonesia and of Australia”, adding that his belief was that “this should occur on the basis of the freely expressed wishes of the people of Portuguese Timor”.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, Gough Whitlam and Suharto developed a common understanding of the future of Portuguese Timor; Indonesian incorporation of Portuguese Timor in accordance with the will of the people. However, from the beginning, it was doubtful whether this was feasible given that few Timorese supported the idea. It should also be mentioned that the two leaders did not discuss any diplomatic initiatives concerning the Portuguese staying longer in the territory or

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41 Record of meeting between Whitlam and Soeharto, Yogyakarta, 6 September 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 95-8.

42 Ibid.

making this viable through the provision of some economic aid.

### ***3.2 Development of crisis in Portuguese Timor and Department of Foreign Affairs' policy from September 1974 to March 1975***

#### **3.2.1 Development of Portuguese decolonisation policy, Timorese independence movement and Indonesian annexation policy**

##### **Development of Portuguese decolonisation policy**

The resignation of António de Spínola from the Portuguese Presidency and his replacement by General Francisco da Costa Gomes on 30 September 1974 accelerated the decolonisation of Portugal's colonies. Most notably, on 15 January 1975, when it concluded the Alvor Agreement with three liberation groups in Angola, the most significant Portuguese colony, the Portuguese government finally accepted its independence from 11 November 1975. Meanwhile, Portuguese politics confronted domestic instability and, on 11 March, Spínola and other rightists attempted a counter-revolutionary coup which ended in failure.

Under new President Gomes, the Portuguese government engaged in its decolonisation policy towards Timor in consultation with relevant parties. In particular, in October, it had two diplomatic opportunities for this. The first was talks between Portuguese policymakers (Deputy Foreign Minister Campinos, Foreign Minister Soares, Prime Minister Gonçalves, President Gomes and Commander of the Portuguese forces in Portuguese Timor, Metelo) and Ali Murtopo, an emissary of Indonesia's President Suharto, in Lisbon on 14 and 15 October. On this occasion, Foreign Minister Soares explained to Ali Murtopo that the Portuguese decolonisation policy towards Timor would consider both the wishes of the people of Portuguese Timor and the interests of neighbouring countries, especially Australia and Indonesia. When asked by Ali

Murtopo about the Portuguese government's attitude if the people of Portuguese Timor decided to voluntarily join Indonesia in a process of self-determination, Foreign Minister Soares replied that it would respect this decision on the basis that it was the will of the people.<sup>43</sup>

The second diplomatic opportunity was the October 1974 visit of Portugal's Minister for Inter-Territorial Co-ordination, António de Almeida Santos, to Australia, Indonesia and Portuguese Timor. In his talk with Prime Minister Whitlam on 15 October, Almeida Santos talked about Portugal's preparedness to "accept the responsibility for at least the next few years, while the country was developed and a public education program was carried out" and asked for Australian economic and technical assistance. While saying that "Portugal had no objection to the eventual integration of Timor into Indonesia", he stressed that "at least four or five years would be necessary to prepare the Timorese for such a solution".<sup>44</sup> In his talk with Foreign Minister Willesee on 16 October, Almeida Santos expressed more blatantly his distrust of Indonesia, saying that "Indonesia wanted to annex Portuguese Timor, but not want it to appear that this was its aim". He also said that an Indonesian coercive integration "could cause troubles within the next few years". Almeida Santos expressed his willingness to invite Prime Minister Whitlam and Foreign Minister Willesee to Portugal, too.<sup>45</sup> In Jakarta, he met President Suharto, Foreign Minister Malik and others. Travelling to Portuguese Timor on 19 October, Almeida Santos reportedly said that "[t]he continuation of certain links with Portugal seems to be the only valid solution for the present" because of the territory's lack of both economic viability and popular support for integration with Indonesia, while also making it clear that "Portugal would respect the decision of the constituent assembly, if it were to vote for integration into Indonesia or independence".<sup>46</sup>

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43 Memorandum to Canberra, Jakarta, 4 November 1974, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 4.

44 Record of conversation between Whitlam and Almeida Santos, Canberra, 15 October 1974, NAA, A10463 801/13/11/1 pt 4.

45 Record of conversation between Willesee and Almeida Santos, Canberra, 16 October 1974, NAA, A10463 801/13/11/1 pt 4.

46 Cablegram to Canberra, Lisbon, 22 October 1974, NAA, A1838 49/2/1/1 pt 4.



On 13 November, President Gomes swore in Lieutenant-Colonel Mário Lemos Pires as the new Governor of Portuguese Timor and declared that “the main objective we propose to achieve is to guide and direct the political development and awareness of the people in Timor, so that they may, at the appropriate time, freely choose their own destiny”.<sup>47</sup>

After flying to Portuguese Timor, Governor Pires started implementing various policies, including reforms in the civil services, education and army, with the assistance of his subordinates, Major Francisco Mota and Major Costa Jonatas, who had served in East Timor in the 1960s. Meanwhile, Portuguese Metropolitan soldiers stationed in the territory continued to return to Portugal so that, of about 3,000 in 1974, only 200 remained by the middle of 1975. This was retrospectively commented on by José Ramos-Horta as “the single most damaging error committed by the Portuguese in 1974”.<sup>48</sup>

### **Formation of UDT-Fretilin Coalition for Independence in January 1975**

In Portuguese Timor, the report that Prime Minister Whitlam and President Suharto had agreed on Indonesia’s incorporation of it shocked the people who dreamed of independence. On 20 September, Fretilin organised a demonstration of about 2000 Timorese to protest against this merger and presented petitions to the Portuguese Governor and Indonesian Consul.<sup>49</sup> Fretilin members’ perceptions of the crisis were expressed in a letter from José Ramos-Horta, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to Denis Freney the next day. Enclosing a copy of the manifesto of Fretilin, he wrote that “we, the Timorese people, are prepared to fight if necessary to defend our country, we shall never allow a foreign power to take over our Country, we shall resort to violence if violence is used to trample our rights”. Fretilin also desperately appealed for

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<sup>47</sup> Memorandum to Canberra, Lisbon, 19 November 1974, NAA, A1838 49/2/1/1 pt 4.

<sup>48</sup> Ramos-Horta, *Funu*, p. 48.

<sup>49</sup> Record of conversation between Holland and Dunn, Canberra, 17 October 1974, NAA, A6119 (2008/00322792), 4407.

Australian assistance.<sup>50</sup>

To counter the Indonesian threat, the leaders of Fretilin and UDT discussed a possible future merger.<sup>51</sup> During his visit to Portuguese Timor in October mentioned above, Minister Almeida Santos also considered that, in reality, UDT and Fretilin had similar objectives because UDT did not rule out the possibility of independence while Fretilin also wanted continuing external assistance, especially from Portugal.<sup>52</sup> Thus, through the good offices of Governor Pires, talks between UDT and Fretilin continued.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, on 21 January 1975, Fretilin and UDT published a joint communiqué based on their recognition “that we can only free ourselves from colonialism if we unite and join our forces in order to achieve a common objective – National Independence”. The communiqué noted that the two parties had agreed on many issues, including the total independence of East Timor, repudiation of Apodeti, rejection of integration into Indonesia, recognition of Portugal as the only valid party with which to discuss the process of decolonisation, recourse to the United Nations as a supervisory body of decolonisation, but excluding the participation of Indonesia, other ASEAN countries and Australia on the supervisory committee, and the establishment of a transitional government by the Portuguese government and the two parties.<sup>54</sup>

In February, submitting a new proposal to the Portuguese government, the UDT-Fretilin Coalition modified its strategy towards independence. According to information delivered by Minister Almeida Santos to Australian Ambassador Cooper on 24 February, regarding its relations with Portugal, the Coalition advocated “an interim period of eight years during which power would be progressively transferred to a transitional government to be

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<sup>50</sup> Letter from Ramos-Horta to Freney, 21 September 1974, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535/1/4).

<sup>51</sup> Ramos-Horta, *Funu*, pp. 36-7.

<sup>52</sup> Memorandum to Canberra, Lisbon, 19 November 1974, op.cit.

<sup>53</sup> Ramos-Horta, *Funu*, p. 51.

<sup>54</sup> Memorandum to Canberra, Lisbon, 24 January 1975, NAA, A1838 49/2/1/1 pt 4.

followed by elections for a constituent assembly” instead of immediate independence. As to its relations with Indonesia, the UDT-Fretilin Coalition floated ideas for “[a] policy of non-alignment” and “a pact of non-aggression and cooperation with maintenance of peace and good neighbourliness together with non-interference and cooperation in all fields and at all levels”. On the Portuguese side, Almeida Santos considered that “a transitional period of 8 years was unrealistic” but said that Portugal would be “prepared to retain responsibility” “if Indonesia and Australia agreed to cooperate and assist with Timor’s economic development”.<sup>55</sup> This UDT-Fretilin Coalition proposal also attracted the attention of Australian policymakers and was referred to in a letter from Prime Minister Whitlam to President Suharto dated 28 February, as will be seen later.

### **Emergence of military option in Indonesian policy towards Portuguese Timor**

After the Whitlam-Suharto talks on 6 September 1974, Indonesian policymakers began implementing various policies with the aim of annexing Portuguese Timor, including the visit of Ali Murtopo to Lisbon in the middle of October 1974. According to a well-cited Australian record, Ali Murtopo told Australian Ambassador Cooper in Lisbon that “until Mr Whitlam’s visit to Djakarta they had been undecided about Timor. However the Prime Minister’s support for the idea of incorporation into Indonesia had helped them to crystallise their own thinking and they were now firmly convinced of the wisdom of this course”.<sup>56</sup> This remark by Ali Murtopo is evidence that Indonesian policymakers took Australian Prime Minister Whitlam’s words into account when making decisions regarding Portuguese Timor.

An important point about Indonesian policy towards Portuguese Timor after October 1974 was that it began to consider the future possibility of resorting to force in order to achieve

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<sup>55</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Lisbon, 24 February 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 199.

<sup>56</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Lisbon, 14 October 1974, *AIIPT*, p. 119.

the objective of annexing Portuguese Timor. The following is a record of a meeting at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta dated 16 October attended by Lim Bian Kie (Jusuf Wanandi) and Harry Tjan of CSIS, who spoke as follows;

Lim said that by 1976 it should be possible for Indonesia to gauge fairly accurately what the likely outcome of a plebiscite would be. If it was clear that the territory would not vote for incorporation into Indonesia, Lim said that the use of force could not be ruled out. (Harry Tjan agreed.) He spoke of the possibility of fomenting disorder in Portuguese Timor and of the Indonesian forces stepping in to salvage the situation at the request of certain sections of the population.<sup>57</sup>

Information on Indonesian policy towards Portuguese Timor continued to flow to Australian diplomats in Jakarta. On 26 October, Harry Tjan again mentioned the emergence of a hard line in Indonesia's policy towards Portuguese Timor. According to him, the Indonesian Department of Defence and Security (Hankam) had the running and Benny Murdani who worked in it was playing a key role. On the other hand, CSIS declined to exert its influence over policymaking and Ali Murtopo of OPSUS came to be in charge of liaising with the Portuguese, briefing foreign journalists and analysing the situations in Portugal and Portuguese Timor. Governor El Tari ran the operation in Timor, reporting directly to President Suharto. On this occasion, Harry Tjan also stressed that Indonesia's decision to incorporate Portuguese Timor was irreversible. Although suggesting that a letter from Prime Minister Whitlam might be the only way of delivering Australia's views to President Suharto, his opinion was that it "would have little chance of influencing Indonesian policy" and that "Australia's view did not matter". He also talked about his preparation for "a paper on this last-resort scenario" which could be

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<sup>57</sup> Letter from Furlonger to Feakes, Jakarta, 16 October 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 122-4.

carried out without any substantial evidence of communist subversion in Portuguese Timor.<sup>58</sup>

In January 1975, Harry Tjan announced the formation of a special committee to deal with Portuguese Timor. It was nominally chaired by Minister for Defence and Security Panggabean but actually by the head of BAKIN, General Yoga Sugama. Other members included Foreign Minister Adam Malik, Minister for Information Mashuri, Benny Murdani of Hankam, Ali Murtopo of OPSUS and President Suharto. According to Harry Tjan, “the HANKAM view tended to prevail” and “[g]enerally the Committee was very anti-communist”.<sup>59</sup> In another meeting with Australian diplomats in March, Harry Tjan said that only President Suharto, with advice from Ali Murtopo, was moderating Indonesian policy because of the President’s concerns over Indonesia’s international reputation. Despite this, Tjan speculated that “in the last resort the President’s thinking would be determined by his concern to maintain the security and stability of the region”. As for Indonesian military action, Tjan aired the possibility of an intervention on the pretext of protecting a pro-integration government established around the border area against any attack of the government in Dili or pro-independence parties. He also added that Indonesia might take action regardless of foreign opinion if the Portuguese government became communist and allowed a communist power to gain influence in Timor.<sup>60</sup>

However, despite these hawkish arguments, after receiving a letter from Prime Minister Whitlam encouraging President Suharto to consider starting talks with the UDT-Fretilin Coalition in early March and having discussions with the Portuguese delegation in London on 9 March, as discussed later, Indonesian policymakers expressed the possibility of living with an independent Portuguese Timor; for example, Tjan said that “[w]hether Indonesia

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58 Minute from Arriens to Furlonger, Jakarta, 26 October 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 128-9.

59 Record of conversation between Tjan and Taylor, Jakarta, 30 January 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 165-166; Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 13 February 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 183-4.

60 Record of conversation between Tjan and Taylor, Jakarta, 10 March 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 220-2.

would be prepared to enter some form of non-aggression treaty with an independent Portuguese Timor would depend on the Portuguese. If they were prepared to play a similar role in bringing Portuguese Timor and Indonesia together, as Australia had done with Papua New Guinea, Indonesia might agree to some form of agreement.”<sup>61</sup> Yoga Sugama also said that Indonesia would be happy to cooperate with an independent Portuguese Timor on the condition that it did not allow guerrilla groups hostile to Indonesia, including South Moluccan dissidents and communist countries, to seek to subvert Indonesia from the territory.<sup>62</sup>

### **Indonesian interferences in Portuguese Timor**

In accordance with Indonesian policymakers’ intentions, various interference activities were carried out to create pretexts for a military intervention in Portuguese Timor; for example, by means of the media, on 2 October, the Indonesian Newspaper *Sinar Harapan* asserted that the demonstration organised by Fretilin on 20 September had been supported and financed by “left-wing Chinese” “referred to as communists”.<sup>63</sup> On 2 November, *The Indonesian Times* published a long article on Portuguese Timor which predicted the future growth of a pro-Indonesian and militant Apodeti.<sup>64</sup>

Actually, the recruitment and training of Timorese guerrillas started in Atambua in Indonesian Timor in late 1974. According to Feliciano Gomes, a Timorese arrested and imprisoned in an army jail by the Portuguese authorities on 1 November 1974, he had been told by Guilherme Maria Gonçalves of Apodeti at a meeting attended by four Indonesian civilians “to urge strong people from his tribe to go to Indonesia for army training and then come back to Portuguese Timor to fight against parties opposing merger with Indonesia”. He also said that 17

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61 Ibid., esp. p. 222.

62 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 18 March 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 227-8.

63 Memorandum to Canberra, Jakarta, 4 October 1974, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 3.

64 Ghafur Fadyi, “Portuguese Timor”, *The Indonesian Times*, 2 November 1974.

Timorese went to Indonesian Timor after the meeting.<sup>65</sup> The CAVR report also revealed that, sometime between December 1974 and February 1975, 8 members of the Indonesian Special Forces led by Dading Kalbuadi arrived in Atambua and took over the training of 216 Timorese guerrillas.<sup>66</sup>

During February and March 1975, the Indonesian interference campaign further escalated; for example, on 25 February, the front page of *The Indonesia Times* reported that “[h]undreds of political refugees from Portuguese Timor have crossed the border into Indonesian territory as a result of [sic] intimidations by leftist forces in the colony”, that “[i]ntimidations and direct threats are facing citizens who do not openly support the leftist groups pioneered by the FRETILIN party” and that “[t]he main target is the APODETI party”.<sup>67</sup> The State radio in Kupang in Indonesian Timor continued to transmit threatening messages cautioning that Indonesia would not allow the people in Portuguese Timor to become communist and asserted that both UDT and Fretilin were communist organisations.<sup>68</sup> It also warned that “a great disaster can happen in Portuguese Timor like the wars in Vietnam and Cambodia” unless Timor became part of Indonesia.<sup>69</sup>

### **Talks in London between Portuguese and Indonesian representatives on 9 March 1975**

In the meantime, the Portuguese and Indonesian governments were preparing for talks concerning Portuguese Timor. However, it should be noted that the Portuguese government initially planned to convene trilateral talks, by including Australia, to discuss independence for Timor. On 4 February, Minister Almeida Santos met Australian Ambassador Cooper and

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<sup>65</sup> Michael Richardson, “Timor chief tells of Indonesia intrigue”, *SMH*, 4 March 1975.

<sup>66</sup> *Chega!* Part 3, pp. 33-4.

<sup>67</sup> *The Indonesian Times*, 25 February 1975.

<sup>68</sup> Michael Richardson, “Indonesia beams radio propaganda at the Timorese”, *SMH*, 10 March 1975.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Richardson, “Indonesia warns of ‘Vietnam’ in Timor”, *The Age*, 10 March 1975.

sounded out the possibility of holding a secret trilateral meeting in the middle of February regarding independence for Portuguese Timor under the UDT-Fretilin Coalition on the assumption that “APODETI would disappear”.<sup>70</sup> However, having given this some consideration, Foreign Minister Willesee decided to decline Australian participation and, on 11 February, informed Ambassador Cooper that “[w]e would raise no objections were Portugal and Indonesia to get together to sort out a common approach to the Timorese problem, indeed we should welcome it”.<sup>71</sup> In the end, the Portuguese government decided to convene bilateral talks with Indonesia.

At the Portuguese Embassy in London on 9 March, Portuguese representatives, Minister without Portfolio Major Vitor Alves, Almeida Santos, Jorge Campinos, Major Francisco Mota and others, had talks with Indonesian representatives, Ali Murtopo, the Ambassador to France, the Ambassador to the United Kingdom and others. At the conclusion of around five hours of discussions, on the one hand, the Portuguese delegation restated that “[r]espect for the wishes of the people of Timor was as important for Portugal as for Indonesia”. Then, the Portuguese delegation asked the Indonesian delegation to replace its consul in Dili, Tomodok, who blatantly supported Apodeti and to moderate the Indonesian radio propaganda from Kupang designed to intimidate the pro-independence Timorese. On the other hand, the Portuguese delegation agreed that “Portugal would not do anything that would create difficulties for the integration into Indonesia” and would permit Indonesian aid for Apodeti “in very discreet ways” as well as Indonesian “[p]articipation in the economic development of Timor as evidence of its presence”. Lastly, the Portuguese delegation declared that “Portugal considered that the future of Timor could not be formulated without taking Indonesia into account”.<sup>72</sup>

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70 Cablegram to Canberra, Lisbon, 4 February 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 166-7; Cablegram to Canberra, Lisbon, 6 February 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 169-70.

71 Cablegram to Lisbon, Canberra, 11 February 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 174-6.

72 Record of talks held in London on 9 March 1975 between delegations of the Portuguese and Indonesian governments about the future of Portuguese Timor, NAA, A10005, 202/1/1 ANNEX1A.



Thus, as a result of the London talks, the Portuguese government abandoned its policy to negotiate exclusively with the two pro-independence parties, Fretilin and UDT, and again admitted Apodeti. It also allowed Indonesia to provide modest support for Apodeti as long as it did not undertake blatant interference. As a result, the London talks brought about the destabilisation of politics in Portuguese Timor given Fretilin's determined refusal to cooperate with Apodeti.

### **3.2.2 Department's policy towards Portuguese Timor from October 1974 to March 1975**

#### **Review of Whitlam's policy**

After the Whitlam-Suharto informal talks on 6 September 1974, the DFA, the policy suggestions of which were not seriously considered by the Prime Minister, again reviewed Australia's policy towards Portuguese Timor. In this context, the Department confirmed Prime Minister Whitlam's preference for the Indonesian incorporation of Portuguese Timor which was indicated when he said to Graham Feakes and Richard Woolcott that "I am in favour of incorporation but obeisance has to be made to self-determination. I want it incorporated but I do not want this done in a way which will create argument in Australia which would make people more critical of Indonesia".<sup>73</sup>

Regardless of this, it is notable that DFA continued to support the need for a proper act of self-determination in Portuguese Timor rather than as a result of Indonesia's incorporation of the territory; for example, on 14 October, Duncan Campbell, the Minister and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Australian mission to the UN, stated at the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly that "Australia supports the right to self-determination for all

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<sup>73</sup> Minute from Woolcott to Renouf, Canberra, 24 September 1974, *AIIPT*, p. 111.

colonial people. We do not seek any special position in Portuguese Timor and the wishes of the people of the territory concerning independence should be decisive”.<sup>74</sup> On 16 October, Foreign Minister Willesee said to Portuguese Minister Almeida Santos that “[i]f...a hurried decision was made to integrate Portuguese Timor, it could leave a bad atmosphere, which could be easily avoided”.<sup>75</sup>

DFA also directly told its Indonesian counterparts about its view. On 29 October, in Australian-Indonesian annual official talks in Jakarta, Secretary Renouf stated to Indonesian officials that “[t]he right of self-determination had to be respected in a manner that would be internationally acceptable” with reference to emerging domestic criticisms of Prime Minister Whitlam. Secretary Renouf also countered the Indonesian allegation that Portuguese Timor might fall under the influence of communist powers and become a threat to Indonesia, saying that “[s]o far there were no sign of any interest in Portuguese Timor by China” and that “perhaps all the major powers were deliberately laying off Portuguese Timor for fear of provoking a response by the others”. Nevertheless, he also said that “[t]he most desirable outcome would be association of Portuguese Timor with Indonesia”.<sup>76</sup>

From November to December 1974, the DFA brought forward an internal review of Australia’s policy towards Portuguese Timor. What made Australian policymakers concerned was growing domestic interest in Portuguese Timor. In this regard, Foreign Minister Willesee drew Prime Minister Whitlam’s attention to the plan of some parliamentarians to visit Portuguese Timor.<sup>77</sup> Graham Feakes also referred to “the beginning of a campaign in Australia about Portuguese Timor” in the meeting mentioned below.<sup>78</sup>

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74 Statement by Campbell in Fourth Committee of UN General Assembly, New York, 14 October 1974, *AIIPT*, p. 120.

75 Record of conversation between Willesee and Almeida Santos, 16 October 1974, *op. cit.*

76 Record of first session of Australian-Indonesia officials’ talks, 29 October 1974, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 2.

77 Letter From Willesee to Whitlam, Canberra, 10 December 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 142-3.

78 Record of Policy Discussion, Canberra, 11 December 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 145-8.

On 11 December, when José Ramos-Horta was staying in Australia again, the Department formally convened a senior officials' meeting to discuss Australia's policy towards Portuguese Timor. The participants' opinions were divided as to whether it was feasible and desirable for the Australian government to question Indonesia's forcible annexation policy of Portuguese Timor. On the one hand, Gordon Jockel insisted on the need to avoid military conflicts in Portuguese Timor given that the military strength of the Timorese was much superior to that of West New Guinea. According to him, 1000 were currently in the army, 15,000 had formerly been in the military and 3,000 reserves had received some military training in Portuguese Timor. Jockel also emphasised that "incorporation into Indonesia should not be regarded as a foregone conclusion" because of President Suharto's personal character and taking into account his international standing. Michael Cook, the First Assistant Secretary of the North and West Asia Division, also pointed out the problems inherent in applying the West New Guinea analogy to Portuguese Timor, observing that "what was now clear was that the people were not malleable". He speculated that "in the long run independence may be better than integration" and argued the merits of the Australian government immediately launching an aid program prior to independence. On the other hand, Roy Fernandes, the First Assistant Secretary of the Western Division, was sceptical of any possibility of the Indonesian government accepting independence for Portuguese Timor and insisted that Australia's self-interest was to avoid another West New Guinea-type situation when considering Australia's relationship with Indonesia. Fernandes and Feakes were against the provision of Australian aid to Portuguese Timor.<sup>79</sup>

In the end, the Departmental paper submitted to Foreign Minister Willesee under the name of Feakes on 13 December took both scenarios into account. On the one hand, the paper

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. As clearly seen here, it is not appropriate to regard Gordon Jockel as one of the so-called "Indonesia lobby" despite Nancy Viviani's claim. See Nancy Viviani "Australians and the Timor Issue", *Australian Outlook* 30:2, 1976, p.201.

considered the future possibility of an Indonesian military intervention in Portuguese Timor and noted that, even in this case, “we should have to go on living with the Indonesians”. On the other hand, the paper also mentioned that “[w]e have indeed to recognise that we may have a new independent State on our northern doorstep in the next few years” and maintained that “[c]are must thus be exercised now in dealing with the Timorese and their leaders”. It also acknowledged that “[t]here is also public opinion in Australia to consider: while it may suit us to stay silent as long as we can, the Government must also expect to come under pressure to declare its attitude from time to time”.<sup>80</sup>

In terms of the immediate political outlook in Portuguese Timor, the Department observed that “a continuation of the Portuguese link” garnered the most support while there was little popular desire for integration of the territory into Indonesia. The Department regarded it as “no bad interim solution” because it might provide Australia with “several years of breathing space”. At the same time, the Department considered the need for a possible positive reaction of the Australian government to rapid development of the independence movement, writing that “...in 12-18 months (or even before), if it has become apparent that developments are moving more rapidly than we now expect and particularly if the Timorese themselves are clearly moving rapidly towards independence, we should have to reconsider the position. The merits of a more forward approach might then become more prominent”.<sup>81</sup>

On the basis of these recognitions, the Departmental paper suggested that Foreign Minister Willesee take some diplomatic initiatives although, at the same time, recommending that, “for the time being, Australia should follow a policy of non-involvement in relation to Portuguese Timor” and oppose the re-opening of the Australian Consulate in Dili. As for Australia’s policy towards Indonesia, it suggested that “we should try to bring the Indonesians

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<sup>80</sup> Submission to Willesee, Canberra, 13 December 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 148-53.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

to recognise that, if the Timorese are clearly intent on independence, it should be possible to live with that, and that many of their fears about an independent Timor appear groundless or exaggerated". Regarding Australia's policy towards Portuguese Timor, the Department recommended that Australia policymakers take "suitable opportunities to explain to Timorese leaders that Australia would respect the wishes of the people of the territory" and collect information through regular visits from the Embassy in Jakarta and Canberra. The Department also supported the idea of providing Australian aid "through a trilateral arrangement involving Portugal and Indonesia".<sup>82</sup> On 20 December, Foreign Minister Willesee endorsed all the paper's recommendations.

On 11 December, Foreign Minister Willesee met Ramos-Horta for the first time, with officials of the Department. He had decided to receive him to avoid "unfortunate and unfounded interpretations" of the Australian government's commitment to self-determination stated in the previous month, contrary to Graham Feakes' suggestion.<sup>83</sup> In line with his and the Department's policy, Foreign Minister Willesee explained to Ramos-Horta that "Australia would be prepared to accept and support the outcome of an act of self-determination whether this led to independence, a decision to continue in association with Portugal, or to incorporation into Indonesia". He also talked about his willingness to consider some technical training for the Timorese people.<sup>84</sup>

### **Interdepartmental coordination and rejection of Portuguese trilateral plan**

From January to February 1975, DFA initiated an interdepartmental coordination of Australia's policy towards Portuguese Timor. On 14 January, to obtain the endorsements of

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Submission to Willesee, Canberra, 25 November 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 134-5. See also its editorial note.

<sup>84</sup> Memorandum to Jakarta, Canberra, 13 December 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 154-6.

Prime Minister Whitlam and Defence Minister Lance Barnard, Foreign Minister Willesee sent them a letter and the Departmental paper mentioned above, which was described as “the result of very careful consideration and consultation among the senior officers of my Department”. In his letter, the Foreign Minister explained that the paper placed “more emphasis in our future policy on our commitment to the right of the people of the territory to decide their own political future” on the basis of the recognition that “self-determination is likely to yield a result other than the association of Portuguese Timor with Indonesia”. Furthermore, the Foreign Minister clearly stated that the two elements of Australia’s policy which Prime Minister Whitlam had talked about with President Suharto on 6 September – “an appreciation that the association of Portuguese Timor with Indonesia would best suit Australian national interests” and “Australian commitment to the right of the people of Portuguese Timor to decide their own political future by means of an internationally acceptable act of self-determination” – were incompatible.<sup>85</sup>

Meanwhile, during February, while waiting for replies from the Prime Minister and Defence Minister, Foreign Minister Willesee made an important decision. As previously mentioned, he decided not to participate in the secret trilateral meeting proposed by the Portuguese government. Despite this decisive chance to influence the course of Portuguese Timor, the Department judged that “[w]hat Santos proposes would risk drawing us more deeply into the problems of P. Timor than we should like” and that “[i]t is for Portugal itself to bring about acceptable decolonisation in Timor in association with the Timorese themselves”.<sup>86</sup> The Department favoured bilateral talks between Portugal and Indonesia in the light of that being “analogous to the Macao enclave” while observing that “the Indonesians are clearly keeping the military option open”.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Letter from Willesee to Whitlam, Canberra, 14 January 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 160-1.

<sup>86</sup> Submission to Willesee, Canberra, 10 February 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 170-4. esp. p. 172.

<sup>87</sup> Cablegram to Lisbon, Canberra, 11 February 1975, op. cit., esp. p. 176.

However, at the same time, Foreign Minister Willesee still sought to avoid Indonesian military intervention in Portuguese Timor as he expressed to Graham Feakes and Lance Joseph, the Acting First Assistant Secretary, when making the decision. Concerning “the recent information suggesting military preparation by Indonesia”, Foreign Minister Willesee told them that “we should be actively trying to deflect the Indonesians from an immoderate policy in Timor. We should be trying to allay their fears about an independent Timor, to encourage them to accept that independence was the most likely eventuality, and to bring them to recognise that, like us, Indonesia would have to learn to live with it.” Then, they agreed that “it would be timely to repeat our advice to the Indonesians” by taking advantage of coming diplomatic opportunities with Indonesia, such as Richard Woolcott’s arrival in Jakarta as a new Ambassador in the next month and a possible visit of President Suharto to Australia in the next few months. Foreign Minister Willesee and Lance Joseph exchanged some ideas on an effective alternative strategy for Indonesia which the Australian government should also be able to explain.<sup>88</sup>

#### **Letter from Whitlam to Suharto co-authored with Department of Defence**

On 11 February, DFA formally received a letter from the Department of Defence signed by Defence Minister Barnard. Writing that “[t]his subject bears very directly on our defence and strategic interests”, Barnard agreed with most of the DFA policy. He argued that “[w]hat is of central concern to the defence interests, and I believe to our political interests as a Government, is...the manner in which Portuguese Timor moves either to independence or to Indonesian control”. The reason he was concerned about the possibility of Indonesian military intervention in Portuguese Timor was that he could expect an “unfavourable reaction from a

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<sup>88</sup> Record of conversation between Willesee, Feakes and Joseph, Canberra, 13 February 1975, *AIHPT*, pp. 181-3.

wide and influential range of Australian opinion, which would limit our ability to maintain our present relationship with Indonesia". He foresaw that "[a] particular area of policy that would come under attack from all the critics would be our Indonesian program of defence aid and co-operation", although it was "the only tangible activity supporting our relationship with Indonesia in the defence and strategic field". He worried that "if we reduce it, the overall relationship would be damaged and reduced". The Defence Minister also expressed his concern that Indonesian military intervention in Portuguese Timor might again make independent Papua New Guinea (PNG) dependent on Australia in terms of its security policy because of PNG's fear of Indonesia. If that happened, he thought that Australian defence policy would have to be reviewed.<sup>89</sup>

For these reasons, Defence Minister Barnard strongly supported Foreign Minister Willesee's idea that "a co-ordinated approach should be developed between our two Departments". He insisted that "a clear statement of Australian views again be put to the Indonesian Government" on the assumption that the Indonesian "consideration of military action is based on quite unrealistic assessments of the dangers to their interests from political developments in Portuguese Timor" and that "[t]he Indonesians do not appear to have a clear understanding of our opposition to the use of military force and the dangers of this for our relationship, or of our emphasis on the importance of an act of free choice by the people of Portuguese Timor". The Defence Minister also proposed that "[w]e could say that we should be ready to provide political and economic support to our important common interests with Indonesia in this situation" and insisted that "I believe it most important that we make an early approach to the Indonesians".<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Letter from Barnard to Willesee, Canberra, 11 February 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 176-80.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*



On 14 February, having studied the letter from the Department of Defence, DFA reached a conclusion that “[w]e must welcome the prospect of developing a coordinated approach with Defence on Portuguese Timor”.<sup>91</sup> On 19 February, in reply to Defence Minister Barnard, Foreign Minister Willesee wrote that “[t]he problem, I agree, is of utmost importance to both of us...I agree that we need to renew our efforts to bring home to the Indonesians the emphasis placed in our own policy on an internationally acceptable act of self-determination in the territory, as well as on Australia’s opposition to the use of military force. I also agree that these efforts need to be complemented by an attempt to promote changes in Indonesia’s own policy which would help both Indonesia and Portuguese Timor by making it unnecessary for Portuguese Timor to look beyond its own region for support”.<sup>92</sup>

On 21 February, Prime Minister Whitlam, who had received these exchanges between the Foreign and Defence Ministers, agreed to send a personal letter to President Suharto, taking advantage of Richard Woolcott’s departure for Jakarta to take up the position of Australian Ambassador to Indonesia.<sup>93</sup>

While drafting this letter, government officials expressed different opinions as to the strength of its words. On the one hand, Secretary Renouf suggested to the Prime Minister that “it is important that the warning set out in the letter should itself avoid damaging our relations more than is necessary” on the ground that “it is doubtful whether anything can be done which will restrain the Indonesians from a military action if they are bent on it”.<sup>94</sup> Bill Pritchett of the Department of Defence also wrote to Graham Feakes that “it will be important that what we say convey an impression of genuine friendship and shared concern, of respect for Indonesia’s interests and status and of an Australia perspective or partnership with Indonesia in managing

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91 Minute from Joseph to Feakes, Canberra, 14 February 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 184-6.

92 Letter from Willesee to Barnard, Canberra, 19 February 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 188-9.

93 Submission to Whitlam, Canberra, 22 February 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 194-5.

94 *Ibid.*

regional problems”.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, Gordon Jockel suggested to Arthur Tange, John Rowland and Richard Woolcott the drafting of a very strong letter including a phrase such as “to speak plainly, military action against the territory would inevitably have serious consequences for our relations”, in order to dissuade President Suharto from resorting to force at the cost of affecting Australia’s relationship with Indonesia and the personal relationship between the two leaders.<sup>96</sup>

As to the contents of the letter, Bill Pritchett made a constructive proposal. He wrote that “I feel that there are considerable attractions in encouraging the Indonesians, and the Portuguese and the Timorese, to arrange that at independence the Timorese enter into a basic treaty relationship with Indonesia. This Treaty, which would be without time limit, could refer to common interests, amity, co-operation and so on, but would contain a key article whereby the parties would agree to consult together about developments affecting their common interests in the security and stability of the region”.<sup>97</sup>

In the end, having been cleared by Prime Minister Whitlam,<sup>98</sup> his letter to President Suharto was finalised on 28 February 1975. After mentioning the Prime Minister’s wish to hold talks with the President in Australia in early April, it dealt almost exclusively with Portuguese Timor. Despite Jockel’s proposal, the tone of the letter emphasised Australia’s relationship with Indonesia and the personal relationship between Whitlam and Suharto; for example, it stated that “I can assure you that, whatever solution may be found, Indonesia’s interests will certainly continue to weigh very heavily in our own thinking”. Nevertheless, the gist of the letter was to encourage President Suharto to review Indonesian policy towards Portuguese Timor in line with the ideas of Foreign Minister Willesee and Defence Minister Barnard. For this purpose, the

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95 Letter from Pritchett to Feakes, Canberra, 21 February 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 190-2.

96 Minute from Jockel to Tange, Rowland and Woolcott, Canberra, 24 February 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 196-7.

97 Letter from Pritchett to Feakes, Canberra, 21 February 1975, op. cit., esp., p. 190.

98 File note in Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, 25 February 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 200.

Prime Minister's letter drew the President's attention to Australian assessments that the Communist Party was not influential in Portuguese politics and that there were no evidence to suggest a risk of interference in Portuguese Timor by external powers such as China and the Soviet Union. With reference to the widespread Australian support for an internationally acceptable act of self-determination in Portuguese Timor and public concerns over the possibility of some Indonesian military action there, as expressed in late February, the Prime Minister's letter cautioned the President that "I am sure you will understand that no Australian Government could allow it to be thought, whether beforehand or afterwards, that it supported such action".<sup>99</sup> In this way, the letter attempted to impress on the President the various problems inherent in Indonesian military action against Portuguese Timor.

The Prime Minister's letter also made the concrete proposal to President Suharto that "a new approach could be adopted which would avoid the various dangers of which we are both so much aware, and that there should be time to explore and develop it" with reference to the proposal of the UDT-Fretilin Coalition made to the Portuguese government in the same month. Appreciating that the proposal "could offer...a promising basis for close co-operative arrangements between Portuguese Timor and Indonesia", the letter clearly noted some parts of the Coalition's proposal including "a program for constitutional progress extending over a period of eight years" and "a policy of non-alignment and a pact of non-aggression and co-operation with Indonesia, providing for the maintenance of peace and good neighbourliness, non-interference and co-operation in all fields and at all levels". Then, the letter encouraged the President to immediately take some diplomatic actions, arguing that "it would seem to call for active efforts on the part of Indonesia, in particular, to establish co-operation with Portugal and friendly relations with the political leaders in Portuguese Timor, which could influence their

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<sup>99</sup> Letter from Whitlam to Soeharto, Canberra, 28 February 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 200-2.

outlook”. Finally, the Prime Minister’s letter indicated Australia’s willingness to assist in dialogue between Indonesian, Portuguese and Timorese political leaders.<sup>100</sup>

On 4 March, the Prime Minister’s letter was delivered to the Indonesian Chief of Protocol in Jakarta. Also, its main points were confidentially explained to Australia’s alliance partners, New Zealand and the United States.<sup>101</sup> On 8 March, while meeting with President Suharto after presenting his credentials, Ambassador Richard Woolcott was informed that the President was carefully studying the Prime Minister’s letter and that Indonesia had no intention of attempting to integrate Portuguese Timor by military force.<sup>102</sup>

#### **Departmental brief for Whitlam’s informal talks with Suharto in April 1975**

In addition to the Prime Minister’s letter to President Suharto, DFA authored other papers in relation to Australia’s policy towards Portuguese Timor and Indonesia; for example, it drafted a paper entitled “Portuguese Timor – talking points with Indonesia” in consultation with the Department of Defence and sent it to the Australian Embassy in Jakarta on 3 March. Based on the recognition that “[t]hus far both our countries have tended to ignore what seems to be the increasing inevitability of the emergence of a new independent state on our doorstep”, the paper concluded that “[a] positive approach for both Australia and Indonesia would therefore be to accept the challenge of helping in the process of decolonisation in Portuguese Timor, preferably in a cooperative effort”, although again adding that “[t]he chief responsibility rests with Portugal and the Timorese, with Indonesians occupying next place because of their predominant interest. Our role will be to help all those concerned to work together”.<sup>103</sup>

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100 Ibid.

101 Letter from Feakes to Hill, Canberra, 5 March 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 212-3.

102 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 8 March 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 218-20.

103 Memorandum to Jakarta, Canberra, 3 March 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 204-8, esp. p. 208.

In the middle of March, Secretary Renouf expressed his expectations for the UDT-Fretilin proposal in his letter instructing Australian diplomatic missions in ASEAN to assess the likely reactions of ASEAN governments if the Indonesian military intervened in Portuguese Timor. Recognising that “[t]he possibility of Indonesian military action in Timor has always been with us”, the Secretary argued that “the new UDT-FRETILIN proposals would seem to remove the immediate urgency from the situation and we believe that they offer some hope for achieving a political outcome in Portuguese Timor which could meet both the political aspirations of the Timorese and the legitimate security interests of Indonesia”.<sup>104</sup>

At the end of March, prior to talks with Suharto in Townsville from 3 to 5 April, DFA submitted briefs to Whitlam. After mentioning that “there will be close public interest in whether you take the occasion of President Soeharto’s visit to reaffirm the importance Australia attaches to self-determination in Portuguese Timor and to register with him Australia’s opposition to military intervention there”, one of the briefing papers clearly noted that “[i]n your forthcoming discussion with President Soeharto we suggest that you follow the line of your letter of 28 February to him”. Then, again with reference to the UDT-Fretilin proposal in February, it argued that “[w]e feel that if Indonesia and Australia were to embark on cultivating good and influential relations with the Timorese there could be favourable prospects for stability in the territory. There would be obvious advantages to Indonesia and Australia in terms of both security and goodwill”.<sup>105</sup> In this way, the Department consistently asked Prime Minister Whitlam to review his policy and attempted to change the direction of Australia’s policy towards Portuguese Timor.

### ***3.3 Increasing Australian public interest in Portuguese Timor***

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<sup>104</sup> Letter from Renouf to Heads of Mission, Canberra, 14 March 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 223-5.

<sup>105</sup> Brief for Whitlam, Canberra, 31 March 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 236-8.

### **3.3.1 Australian media's growing concerns over Portuguese Timor**

#### **Australian media reports on Portuguese Timor and Ramos-Horta's visit in July**

After 25 April 1974, Australian newspapers and journalists contributing to them renewed their interest in Portuguese Timor and began to write more about the topic. In particular, Peter Hastings, an expert in strategic affairs, and Michael Richardson, a recognised journalist focusing on the South-east Asian region, were among early contributors to the forming of Australian public opinion.

In June, in his article on political awareness in Portuguese Timor, Peter Hastings forecast that “[i]f there was a referendum in Timor most people would probably vote for either independence or amended status quo. What they would not do is vote for inclusion in Indonesia”.<sup>106</sup> An editorial in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in the same month appears to have been the first editorial on Portuguese Timor in a leading Australian newspaper since April 1974. Countering sceptical views on the viability of Portuguese Timor, it argued that “the economic disability could be overcome if petroleum explorers now operating in the area were successful or if the colony's wheezing budget were underwritten by international or regional agreement” and urged Australians to pay “full regard to the wishes of the Timorese”.<sup>107</sup>

The visit of Ramos-Horta to Australia in July was an important opportunity for the Australian people to improve their understanding of Portuguese Timor and develop their personal bonds with him; for example, during the period from 16 to 24 July, Ramos-Horta was accommodated in Canberra by James Dunn, who had travelled to Portuguese Timor in the previous month, and met a number of people. Aside from the government officials mentioned earlier, he met parliamentarians – Chris Hurford and Manfred Cross of the Labor Party and

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<sup>106</sup> Peter Hastings, “Stirrings of awareness in Portuguese Timor”, *SMH*, 8 June 1974.

<sup>107</sup> Editorial “Tremors in Timor”, *SMH*, 21 June 1974.

Andrew Peacock, the Shadow Foreign Minister of the Liberal Party – journalists such as Peter Hastings, embassy staffs, including those of Indonesia and West Germany, ANU academics – Hedley Bull and T.B. Millar of International Relations and Fred Fisk of Economics – and NGO members – Brendon O’ Dwyer and Ann Pickering of ACFOA, the umbrella organisation of Australian private aid organisations.<sup>108</sup> In Melbourne, Ramos-Horta set up a support group for Timor headed by the President of the Australian Union of Students, Neil McLean,<sup>109</sup> and, in Sydney, began his acquaintance with Denis Freney who turned out to be a passionate supporter of him and Fretilin, as discussed later.

Having met with Ramos-Horta, Peter Hastings wrote an article about him and the political situation in Portuguese Timor which concluded by introducing Ramos-Horta’s message to “[t]ell Australians that an independent Timor sees its foreign policy as being aligned with the two giants of the area – Indonesia and Australia”.<sup>110</sup> An ACFOA magazine also printed an interview with Ramos-Horta in which he said that “Australia can do a lot for Timor. You can start by giving scholarships to Timorese students to attend your colleges and universities; financial aid to our school system, aid for agricultural development. We would like to have a team of Australians experienced in health, education, agriculture who understand the problems of developing countries to go to Timor to help us with our plans”.<sup>111</sup>

Prior to the informal summit talks between Gough Whitlam and Suharto on 6 September, Australian commentators paid close attention to Australia’s relationships with Indonesia and Portuguese Timor. In this context, Peter Hastings insisted on a need for Indonesia and Australia to have deliberate policies towards Portuguese Timor, writing that “[o]ne hopes Mr Whitlam is in no rush to have Indonesia swallow the place. It may prove indigestible, and a

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<sup>108</sup> Memorandum to posts, Canberra, 7 August 1974, op. cit.

<sup>109</sup> Letter from Ramos-Horta to Freney, 21 September 1974, op. cit.

<sup>110</sup> Peter Hastings, “Voice for Timor independence”, *SMH*, 22 July 1974.

<sup>111</sup> “Interview: Ramos Horta”, *Development News Digest*, September 1974.

wise policy both for Indonesia and Australia may be to persuade the Portuguese to stay on a while longer, even at the cost of Australian aid”.<sup>112</sup> Michael Richardson also published articles detailing the political situation in Portuguese Timor and the Indonesian and Australian policies towards it.<sup>113</sup>

### **Emergence of opinions critical of Whitlam’s policy**

Immediately after the Whitlam-Suharto talks, in general, the Australian media recognised and appreciated the Prime Minister’s success in strengthening his personal bonds with President Suharto and inter-governmental relations with Indonesia and the Asian region; for example, Michael Richardson praised Prime Minister Whitlam by writing that “[h]is own stature as an Australian leader with a real rapport in Asia is considerably enhanced: indeed, it is probably no exaggeration to say he is now clearly pre-eminent among post-war Federal Prime Ministers in this coveted but complex field”.<sup>114</sup>

However, after the publication of reports on the two leaders’ talks regarding Portuguese Timor, opinions critical of them emerged and were reported in this way; “[t]he Prime Minister (Mr. Whitlam) and President Suharto are believed to agree that Portugal’s colony on Timor Island should become part of Indonesia in the interest of regional stability. Both are said to be insistent that this should only come about if the Timorese vote in favor of union with Indonesia through an internationally acceptable act of free choice”.<sup>115</sup>

In response to this report, on 11 September, *The Age* argued that “[t]he inhabitants...should have freedom to choose their future” and that “[t]he influence we now

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<sup>112</sup> Peter Hastings, “Indonesian realities”, *SMH*, 5 September 1974.

<sup>113</sup> Michael Richardson, “Timor: a colonial question that has to be settled”, *The Age*, 5 September 1974; “PM ready to strengthen Jakarta link”, *The Age*, 6 September 1974.

<sup>114</sup> Michael Richardson, “Whitlam scores a quiet triumph”, *The Age*, 9 September 1974.

<sup>115</sup> Michael Richardson, “PM backs Timor claim”, *The Age*, 9 September 1974.



appear to have in Jakarta must be exerted for the ultimate benefit of the Timorese”, although refraining from apparently supporting independence for Portuguese Timor.<sup>116</sup> In the same newspaper, Bernard Callinan, a retired soldier who fought in a guerrilla war against the Japanese army during the Second World War on Timor Island and was the author of *Independent Company: the Australian Army in Portuguese Timor 1941-43*, wrote that “[o]ur Government should ensure that at least ample time and facilities are given them to determine and express freely the desires for their future” in order to repay the debt owed to the war-time contribution of both the Europeans and Timorese.<sup>117</sup>

Peter Hastings also criticised the report on the Whitlam-Suharto talks. On 16 September, he argued that “[i]ts 600,000 people, its coffee, vegetables, beef cattle, tourist possibilities and very probably onshore and offshore oil reserves make it potentially a great deal more viable than most Pacific island States”. Because of concern that “[t]here is a risk now of Indonesian attitudes hardening and leading to precipitate political action”, Hastings declared that “[t]he most sensible policy Australia could adopt at this stage would be to act in concert with Jakarta in obtaining Lisbon’s promise to continue to administer the colony for some years, even if Australia finds itself in the ironic situation of paying good money in the form of aid to keep Portugal in the area”.<sup>118</sup> After travelling to Portuguese Timor in October, Hastings published four articles on it in November. In the last, he once again cautioned that “Portuguese Timor may not prove easily digestible to Indonesia, thus causing more problems than if it were independent. Let us wait a bit and see. This is not West Irian and it is not 1962”.<sup>119</sup>

In December, when Ramos-Horta travelled to Australia, the Australian media again

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116 Editorial “Who decides the fate of Timor?”, *The Age*, 11 September 1974.

117 B. J. Callinan, “Debt to pay in Portuguese Timor”, *The Age*, 11 September 1974.

118 Peter Hastings, “Whitlam treads dangerous ground on Timor”, *SMH*, 16 September 1974.

119 Peter Hastings, “A European colony on our doorstep”, *SMH*, 13 November 1974; “Timor needs aid – and looks to Australia for it”, *SMH*, 14 November 1974; “Jakarta casts an anxious eye over Timor”, *SMH*, 16 November 1974; “Whitlam was given an unsophisticated briefing on Timor”, *SMH*, 19 November 1974.

reported it; for example, *The Sydney Morning Herald* stated that he called for Australian backing for independence quoting his words that “Australia owes a debt to the Timorese people because of their sacrifices for the Australian cause during World War II”.<sup>120</sup>

### **Australian media’s reactions to reports on likelihood of Indonesian military action**

An article by Peter Hastings on 21 February 1975 and some following reports strongly stimulated Australian public opinion on Portuguese Timor. In his article entitled “Jakarta ponders a military ‘solution’”, Hastings reported that “[t]here are mounting and unwelcome indications...that the Indonesian Government is seriously considering taking out Portuguese Timor in a military operation in the not-too-distant future”. He listed some evidence, including “KKO (Marine Corps) exercises in Java”, “increased border activity in Timor”, “a general upgrading of military preparedness” and “rumours” of “an amphibious operation against Dili and the...jet strip at Baucau”. Then, he argued that Indonesia’s annexation policy was based on Jakarta’s miscalculation and forecast some counterproductive prospects, including Australian media reports critical of Indonesia, Portugal appealing to the Security Council and the UN, and the world’s attention being drawn to the Timorese resistance to Indonesia.<sup>121</sup> On 25 February, many Australian newspapers again reported on Portuguese Timor on their front pages with reference to Indonesian semi-official news sources, such as *Antara*.<sup>122</sup>

In response to these reports, Australian newspapers expressed their opinions on Portuguese Timor in their editorials; for instance, *The Sydney Morning Herald* wrote that “[t]he Australian stance can only be that the Timorese have the right to determine their own future”<sup>123</sup> and *The Age* argued that “the rights of the people of Timor must be respected, and their

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120 “Timor leader seeks Aust backing for independence”, *SMH*, 4 December 1974.

121 Peter Hastings, “The Portuguese Timor question – Jakarta ponders a military ‘solution’”, *SMH*, 21 February 1975.

122 “Jakarta moves closer to takeover in Timor”, *SMH*, 25 February 1975.

123 Editorial “Timor crisis”, *SMH*, 26 February 1975.

wishes...must be paramount. A military solution is not, and must not be, the answer".<sup>124</sup> *The Canberra Times* also advocated an Australian policy which would protect "the right of self-determination of the Timorese people" and declared that "[a] military operation by Indonesia...to impose a solution on Timor must be ruled out as totally unacceptable".<sup>125</sup> Thus, all expressed their support for the right of self-determination for the Timorese and opposition to an Indonesian military takeover of the territory.

In March, some Australian journalists visited Portuguese Timor to investigate its political situation with their own eyes; for example, Michael Richardson wrote that "my own judgment and that of most other Western observers is that FRETILIN is a nationalist party determined to improve the welfare of the mass of Timorese people by co-operative endeavour rather than State Socialism", disagreeing with the Indonesian allegation that FRETILIN was a communist organisation.<sup>126</sup> He also referred to some of Ramos-Horta words, including "[w]e know we cannot harm the security or interests of our neighbours. FRETILIN leaders are well aware of their responsibilities to maintain peace and security in this area".<sup>127</sup>

### **3.3.2 Australian public concerns and Denis Freney's involvement in Portuguese Timor**

#### **Denis Freney, José Ramos-Horta and Campaign for Independent East Timor**

When it comes to Australian non-governmental relations with Portuguese Timor in the 1970s, it is necessary to take a look at the role of Denis Freney. Born in Sydney in 1936, he joined the Australian Labor Party and then the CPA in his teens, and attended the University of Sydney and others. However, in 1957, he was expelled from the CPA because of his

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124 Editorial "Timor takeover not the answer", *The Age*, 24 February 1975.

125 Editorial "Pressures in Timor", *The Canberra Times*, 26 February 1975.

126 Michael Richardson, "Timor's freedom drive rolls on", *SMH*, 17 March 1975.

127 Michael Richardson, "Real threat or work of a fevered imagination?", *SMH*, 21 March 1975.

commitment to Trotskyism. After working as a teacher for a few years, in 1960, he moved to Europe and engaged in support activities for anti-colonial liberation movements in South Africa, Algeria and other places as a member of the Fourth International. In 1968, he returned to Sydney and began to organise a number of campaigns and demonstrations against: the Vietnam War; the apartheid policy in South Africa in 1971 when the Springbok rugby team toured Australia; and suppression of Aboriginal people at home. Meanwhile, in 1970, he rejoined the CPA and became a journalist and sub-editor on the *Tribune*, the Party's weekly newspaper.<sup>128</sup>

Denis Freney and José Ramos-Horta met for the first time in Sydney in July 1974. On this occasion, Freney mentioned his idea of utilising the Anti-Apartheid Movement, which he had organised, to provide support for Ramos-Horta and his group while, in return, Ramos-Horta explained the political situation in Portuguese Timor.<sup>129</sup> Ramos-Horta also called on the CPA headquarters in Sydney and met its National Secretary, Laurie Aarons, who gave him some financial and personnel assistance.<sup>130</sup> These were the beginnings of a relationship between Freney and Ramos-Horta and between the CPA and ASDT/Fretilin.

The event that cemented the relationships between Freney and Ramos-Horta and the two parties was news of the Whitlam-Suharto summit talks in September. In his letter to Ramos-Horta on 16 September, accusing Prime Minister Whitlam of “a disgusting sell-out of the right of self-determination of your people”, Freney told him that “[w]e are confident that we will be able to rally support for your struggle” with members of the Southern Africa Liberation Centre which succeeded the Anti-Apartheid Movement. He also touched on the possibility of visits by himself and a trade union delegation to Portuguese Timor.<sup>131</sup> On 21 September, Ramos-Horta replied to Freney, as mentioned earlier, and expressed his wish to receive early

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128 Freney, *A Map of Days*; See also, David McKnight, “Dynamo of left led Timor Protest”, *The Australian*, 11 September 1995.

129 Freney, *A Map of Days*, pp.339-40.

130 Mark Aarons, *The Family File* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2010), p. 277.

131 Letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta, 16 September 1974, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

visits from Australian trade union delegations and NGOs as well as Freney.<sup>132</sup> On 30 September, Freney wrote that he would visit the territory of Portuguese Timor from 19 October for two weeks to “gain firsthand knowledge of your struggle and demands” and “prepare materials for a number of newspaper articles and for a longer pamphlet or booklet for sale here, outlining your struggle”.<sup>133</sup>

In October, Denis Freney travelled to Portuguese Timor via Darwin where he met Brian Manning, a member of the CPA, who had visited Portuguese Timor earlier the same month, and became his close aide regarding Timorese affairs. In Portuguese Timor, Freney met Fretilin leaders including José Ramos-Horta, Nicolau Lobato, Alarico Fernandes and Sahe. They were already concerned about the possibility of an Indonesian invasion and asked Freney to alert Australia and the world to the danger of this action. In reply, Freney promised that he would form a solidarity group in Australia and raise funds to help their representatives to travel to Australia and other countries. In return, during his trip, he was given a Fretilin membership card.<sup>134</sup> In addition to Manning and Freney, Grant Evans, a member of the CPA in Victoria, who later published a monograph on Timor in association with the Australian Union of Students,<sup>135</sup> visited Portuguese Timor in the same month.<sup>136</sup> In the context of the development of a relationship between Fretilin and CPA, it should be noted that Ramos-Horta had asked Laurie Aarons for his “assistance, including guerrilla training for Timorese”.<sup>137</sup>

On returning to Sydney on 4 November, Denis Freney started working hard to establish a committee for independent East Timor with a core of members of the Southern Africa

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132 Letter from Ramos-Horta to Freney, 21 September 1974, op. cit.

133 Letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta, 30 September 1974, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

134 Freney, *A Map of Days*, pp. 343-8, esp. 347.

135 Grant Evans, *Eastern (Portuguese) Timor : Independence or Oppression?* (Carlton, Vic.: Australian Union of Students, 1975).

136 Letter from Director General of ASIO to Director of JIO, 20 March 1975, NAA, A6119 (2008/00322792), 4407.

137 Record of conversation between Holland and Dunn, Canberra, 17 October 1974, NAA, A6119 (2008/00322792), 4407.

Liberation Centre.<sup>138</sup> On 5 November, Freney wrote to Ramos-Horta that he was contacting as many people as possible<sup>139</sup> and, on 6 November, mentioned his intention of approaching two kinds of people for the campaign: core and financial supporters for a committee in support of Fretilin; and others who were sympathetic to independence and non-integration but not particularly to Fretilin which would attract wider support, including people from the Liberal Party and conservatives.<sup>140</sup>

On 9 November, on the basis of his field trip and research, Denis Freney completed “a background report”. In this publication, he did not conceal his commitment to Fretilin, writing that “[t]here can be no doubt that FRETILIN is the major political force in East Timor today” while also writing about UDT and Apodeti.<sup>141</sup> In this regard, a few days later, Freney wrote to Ramos-Horta that “I tried to keep it diplomatic, although it doesn’t [sic] pull any punches in relation to UDT and APODETI”.<sup>142</sup> In its conclusion, his report declared that “the Australian people must be aroused to the danger of a military adventure by Indonesia in invading East Timor. The Australian Government must make very clear to the Indonesian generals that any invasion will be resisted militarily by Australia and that all economic and military aid from Australia to Indonesia will be cut off until the threat of invasion is ended and the right of self-determination to the people of East Timor guaranteed”.<sup>143</sup>

In the end, the Campaign for Independent East Timor (CIET) was formally established as an organisation “to campaign for the right of East Timor to self-determination and independence; opposition to forced integration of East Timor in Indonesia and to support the

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138 Freney, *A Map of Days*, p. 348.

139 Letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta, 5 November 1974, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

140 Letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta, 6 November 1974, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

141 Campaign for Independent East Timor, *East Timor on the Road to Independence: A Background Report* (Sydney: Campaign for Independent East Timor, 1974). This report was dated 28 November but its body was based on the report dated 9 November and authored by “a member of the committee of the Southern African Liberation Centre, Sydney, who spent two weeks in East Timor in October”, which means Denis Freney.

142 Letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta, 12 November 1974, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

143 Campaign for Independent East Timor, *East Timor on the Road to Independence*.

co-operatives, anti-illiteracy program and village health program being organised by FRETILIN”.<sup>144</sup> On 11 November, publishing its first press release, the CIET announced that it had started to approach Members of Parliament, all foreign embassies in Canberra, overseas organisations and United Nations’ bodies. The press release also publicised CIET’s plans to “invite a delegation from East Timor to visit Australia in December” and its desire “to organise a visit by a representative Australian delegation to East Timor early next year”.<sup>145</sup>

Along with the establishment of the CIET, Freney gave Ramos-Horta some suggestions for contacting overseas organisations and persons to ask for their assistance; for example, on 5 November, Freney suggested Ramos-Horta write to “Angola Comite” in Amsterdam, “a very big movement in Holland that has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the African liberation movements”.<sup>146</sup> Ramos-Horta actually wrote a letter dated 15 November<sup>147</sup> and received a reply dated 17 December<sup>148</sup>. Thus, communications between Fretilin and Angola Comite began. Freney also advised Ramos-Horta to write to two PNG opposition parliamentarians<sup>149</sup> and a committee established in Britain in support of East Timor and in opposition to the Indonesian invasion threat to ask for their support.<sup>150</sup>

### **Visits of Ramos-Horta to Australia and Australian delegation to Portuguese Timor**

Meanwhile, Freney prepared for Ramos-Horta’s visit to Australia in December. An important thing about this visit, which was realised during the period from 30 November to 23 December, is that it was funded and organised by Denis Freney and his group, as evidenced by

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> CIET, Press Release, 11 November 1974, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

<sup>146</sup> Letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta, 6 November 1974, op. cit.

<sup>147</sup> Letter from Ramos-Horta to Angola Comite, 15 November 1974, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

<sup>148</sup> Letter from Angola Comite to Fretilin, 17 December 1974, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

<sup>149</sup> Letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta, 6 November 1974, op. cit.

<sup>150</sup> Letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta, 12 January 1975, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535). Although exchanges between the two continued, this is the last letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta available at the National Library of Australia.

the exchanges between Ramos-Horta and Freney; for example, on 20 November, after asking Ramos-Horta to purchase return air tickets between Dili and Melbourne in Dili, Freney wrote that “[w]e will...reimburse you when you come to Sydney” and also that “[a]ccommodation and other travel expenses will be looked after here”. He also mentioned that they were preparing posters and 2,000 badges, half of which would be given to Ramos-Horta. In addition, Freney introduced him to Rob Wesley-Smith, a Darwin resident who later became well known for his passionate commitment to Timor affairs.<sup>151</sup>

During his travel in Australia, with the assistance of Freney and others, Ramos-Horta had a number of opportunities to talk with Australian people and speak about the political situation in Portuguese Timor and Fretilin, in Darwin, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and other cities; for example, during his stay in Canberra from 2 to 5 and 11 December, he met James Dunn, Peter Hastings, Gordon Jockel, Foreign Minister Willesee and officials of DFA, including Richard Woolcott and Graham Feakes, the Tanzanian Minister for Education, Simon Chiwanga, Shadow Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock, fifteen Labor Members of Parliament, including John Kerin and Arthur Gietzelt who were planning to visit Portuguese Timor, three ACFOA members, Nevill Curtis, Brendan O’Dwyer and Ann Pickering, and some ANU scholars, including Fred Fisk. Ramos-Horta also visited eight embassies, including those of Indonesia, Portugal and the United States of America.<sup>152</sup>

After Ramos-Horta returned home on 23 December, the previous day to Cyclone Tracy’s devastation of Darwin, Freney and Ramos-Horta continued to discuss how to organise visits of Australian delegations to Portuguese Timor in February or March. As a letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta at the end of 1974 mentioned, there were already two planned; one consisted of people from church, student, union and other organisations and the other of

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<sup>151</sup> Letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta, 20 November 1974, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

<sup>152</sup> “Itinerary: Visit of Mr. J. M. Ramos Horta to Canberra December 1974”, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).



Members of Parliament, including Kerin and Geitzelt. While being in touch with the latter, Freney's group basically managed the former.<sup>153</sup>

What was the most important issue for Freney and Ramos-Horta was that popular support for Fretilin in Portuguese Timor would strongly impress Australian delegations and then create favourable public opinions of Fretilin in Australia and the world. In this regard, on 5 February, in anticipation of an Australian delegation's visit on 24 March, Ramos-Horta wrote that "[w]e are preparing mass demonstrations for the delegation so it will be the largest demonstration that this country has seen. Many thousands of peoples will congregate here in Dili and every village that is visited by the delegation will hold mass rallies. So please let them know about this reception that will greet them when they arrive here. This will encourage them to come. Please insist on Andrew Peacock being part of the delegation and also Bob Hawk [sic]".<sup>154</sup> In another letter, Ramos-Horta wrote that "[w]e are getting everything organised for 24<sup>th</sup> March" and that "[i]t is very important the delegation may have a large Press and TV coverage".<sup>155</sup>

In the end, on 11 March, the Australian delegation organised by Freney's group and hosted by Fretilin flew to Dili by chartered aircraft. It consisted of six people from various backgrounds. Jim Roulston, the President of the Victorian Branch of the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union and a senior member of the Australian Labor Party in Victoria, led the mission and Mark Aarons, Laurie Aarons' son who worked for ABC Radio, accompanied the delegation. According to ASIO, Mark Aarons and one of the delegation members, Keith Wilson, were prominent members of the CPA.<sup>156</sup> The delegation also included a member of the NGO Community Aid Abroad, John Birch. Regarding the members of the delegation, Freney later

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<sup>153</sup> Letter from Freney to Ramos-Horta, [undated; the end of 1974], NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

<sup>154</sup> Letter from Ramos-Horta to Freney, 5 February 1975, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

<sup>155</sup> Letter from Ramos-Horta, [undated; February 1975], NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

<sup>156</sup> Aarons, *The Family File*, p. 278.

wrote that “[i]t seemed a balanced team, although I had hoped we would be able to attract some better known figures”.<sup>157</sup> For Ramos-Horta’s part, after their departure from Portuguese Timor, he complained to Freney about the participation of communists which could provoke Indonesia, writing that “[p]eople like Jim Roulston or John Birch are okay. Do you understand?”.<sup>158</sup>

On arrival at Dili airport in the evening, the delegation was welcomed by a massive pro-Fretilin demonstration, as planned by Fretilin. On the next day, Ramos-Horta reported to Freney that “[b]etween 10 to 15 thousands [sic] people were at the airport and demonstrated all the way to Hotel Turismo where the delegation is staying. The members of the delegation walked all the way, although we had a special bus prepared to take them. It was a great success indeed”. Jill Jolliffe, who joined the delegation as the representative of the Australian Union of Students, exaggeratedly wrote that the number of participants was closer to 50,000 and they chanted “Viva FRETILIN!”, “Independence or Death” and “Portugal out, Indonesia out!”.<sup>159</sup> After travelling in Portuguese Timor, she also wrote that “the whole of East Timor is in a FRETILIN fever”.<sup>160</sup> Coming back to Canberra, she insisted on the urgent need to provide assistance to the territory and a particular need for a strong Australian declaration in support of its independence.<sup>161</sup>

### **Parliamentarians’ interest in Portuguese Timor**

Against the backdrop of growing public concern over Portuguese Timor, many Members of Parliament developed an interest in the territory and began to speak about it. As seen above, when Ramos-Horta visited Canberra, two Labor Members of Parliament met him in

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<sup>157</sup> Freney, *A Map of Days*, p. 349.

<sup>158</sup> Letter from Ramos-Horta to Freney, [undated; April 1975], NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

<sup>159</sup> Jill Jolliffe, *Report from East Timor* ([Canberra]: A.N.U. Student's Association, 1975), p. 2. Another report on this visit reported that the number of the participants in the demonstration was 15,000. See “We must back Timor’s independence”, *Scope*, 24 April 1975.

<sup>160</sup> Jolliffe, *Report from East Timor*, p. 3.

<sup>161</sup> “‘Urgent need’ for East Timor aid”, *The Canberra Times*, 25 March 1975.

July and fifteen saw him in December. Also, Andrew Peacock, a Shadow Minister of the Liberal Party, had talks with Ramos-Horta in both July and December.

The Director of the Foreign Affairs Group of the Parliamentary Library Service, James Dunn's, passionate involvement might have assisted parliamentarians' understanding of Portuguese Timor. In August 1974, prior to the Whitlam-Suharto talks, he authored his first monograph on the decolonisation question in which he argued that "[a] more positive course...would be for Australia to seek Indonesia's cooperation in helping to bring about the birth of the new state, if it becomes clear that complete independence is what the Timorese want". His recommendations included resuming consular representation in Dili to keep the government informed and an Australian policy which would "weaken the influence of those Indonesians who might seek to subvert the independence movement and incorporate Portuguese Timor into Indonesia against the will of the Timorese".<sup>162</sup>

After the Whitlam-Suharto talks in September, Members of Parliament started to raise the question of Portuguese Timor. On 30 October, Andrew Peacock argued that "[s]o far as Portuguese Timor is concerned we would prefer to see Portugal remain in control and assist with a program for self-determination. It would then be up to the Timorese to determine their own future in a program that they can work out". In reply to Peacock, the Minister assisting the Minister for Foreign Affairs in matters relating to PNG and the Minister for Science, Bill Morrison, replied that "[t]he government does not seek any special position in Portuguese Timor and it believes that the views and the attitudes of the people of Portuguese Timor should be decisive". Chris Hurford, who had met Ramos-Horta in July, also spoke about Portuguese Timor.<sup>163</sup>

In late February 1975, in response to the reports on the Indonesian military's

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<sup>162</sup> James Dunn, "Portuguese Timor before and after the coup - options for the future", 27 August 1974, NAA, A2539, B1974/65.

<sup>163</sup> Campaign for Independent East Timor, *East Timor on the Road to Independence*, p. 2.

preparation to invade Portuguese Timor, Andrew Peacock again raised the matter of Australia's policy towards Portuguese Timor. On 24 February, accusing Prime Minister Whitlam of encouraging an Indonesian takeover of Timor, Peacock said that "Mr Whitlam should make an unequivocal statement supporting complete freedom of choice for the Timorese: the Government should seek from Indonesia an urgent and firm statement on its attitude towards self-determination".<sup>164</sup> On 25 February, during parliamentary debates, he again insisted that "[t]he most important action Australia can take is to bring Timor, Indonesia and the Portuguese together to discuss this matter" to realise "a just and democratic determination for the people of East Timor".<sup>165</sup>

On 17 March, following the Australian delegation's visit organised by Denis Freney, six Labor parliamentarians of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, consisting of John Kerin, Ken Fry, Arthur Gietzelt, Richie Gun, Gareth Clayton and Gordon McIntosh, visited Portuguese Timor. Ramos-Horta and other members of Fretilin only knew of their visit a couple of hours before their arrival although Ramos-Horta had asked Freney to send him details on their visits to "organise a larger demo for them".<sup>166</sup> Despite this, Fretilin "organised a successful rally" on the next day.<sup>167</sup> Observing that about 3,000 attended the Fretilin's rally and about 150 people joined UDT's one, Ken Fry later wrote that he "estimated that Fretilin had eighty-five per cent support, UDT about fifteen per cent, and Apodeti something less than one per cent" of the people.<sup>168</sup> After staying in Portuguese Timor for some days and returning to Canberra on 21 March, Fry also talked to the press about his convictions that "most people wanted independence" and "the country was capable of surviving as an entity".<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> "Jakarta moves closer to take over in Timor", *SMH*, 25 February 1975.

<sup>165</sup> "Timor : we send in a diplomat", *The Age*, 26 February 1975.

<sup>166</sup> Letter from Ramos-Horta to Freney, 12 March 1975, op. cit.

<sup>167</sup> Letter from Ramos-Horta to Freney, [undated; April 1975], op. cit.

<sup>168</sup> Ken Fry, *A Humble Backbencher* (Canberra: Ginninderra Press, 2002), p.97.

<sup>169</sup> "Timor invasion view", *The Canberra Times*, 22 March 1975.

On 2 April, prior to the Whitlam-Suharto talks in Townsville, on behalf of the parliamentary delegation, Senator Gietzelt wrote a letter to Prime Minister Whitlam and publicised it to the press on the same day. On the basis of the conclusion that “the overwhelming majority of Timorese aspire to independence” and that “any action by any outside power to frustrate Timorese independence would be totally without justification”, the parliamentarians suggested that “Australia establish a Consulate in Portuguese Timor as a matter of urgency” and that “the Australian Government discuss with both the Indonesian and Portuguese Governments the question of future economic and technical assistance to Timor from Australia”. They also stressed that “the backwardness of the economy of Timor is no argument against independence” because “the people of Timor are prepared to pay any price for independence”.<sup>170</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In the face of the possibility of the Indonesian acquisition of Portuguese Timor by force after the decolonisation of Portuguese Timor began on 25 April 1974, Australian policymakers and the public began to consider Australia’s policy towards it. Despite Prime Minister Whitlam’s personal preference for the Indonesian annexation of Portuguese Timor, as expressed during his talks with President Suharto in September 1974, the DFA, leading newspapers, parliamentarians and interested individuals, including James Dunn, supported a resolution based on the will of the people of Portuguese Timor which demonstrated that few people were in favour of its integration into Indonesia. On the initiative of Denis Freney of the CPA, in November 1974, a pro-Fretilin organisation, the CIET, was formed in Sydney, too, and began to stimulate public opinion in Australia and around the world. In February 1975, in the hope of avoiding Indonesian military action against Portuguese Timor, in cooperation with the

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<sup>170</sup> Letter from Gietzelt to Whitlam, NLA, Papers of Kenneth Fry (MS 5233), box 102, folder 1. John Kerin did not put his signature on this letter because he was abroad when the letter was drafted.

Department of Defence, DFA drafted a letter from Prime Minister Whitlam to Indonesian President Suharto in which the President was encouraged to start diplomatic dialogue with the pro-independence UDT-Fretilin Coalition. DFA suggested that the Prime Minister speak to President Suharto about Australia's commitment to a proper act of self-determination before their two summit talks in September 1974 and in April 1975.

In this way, against the backdrop of Australian public concern, DFA initiated an Australian policy which aimed to avoid Indonesian military intervention in Portuguese Timor and realise its decolonisation in accordance with the genuine will of the people. At the same time, in the light of the Australian relationship with Indonesia that Prime Minister Whitlam always bore in mind, the Department showed reluctance to adopt some policies which could complicate it, including reopening the Australian Consulate in Dili and strengthening ties with the Portuguese government in relation to the decolonisation of Portuguese Timor.

## **Chapter 4: Road to civil war in East Timor and Australian policymaking under influence of Prime Minister Whitlam from September 1974 to September 1975**

This chapter outlines the role of Prime Minister Whitlam in Australian foreign policymaking concerning the question of the decolonisation of Portuguese Timor, which involved the eruption of civil war, from September 1974 to September 1975. During this period, Prime Minister Whitlam implemented as sympathetic a policy as possible towards Indonesia's intention to annex Portuguese Timor in the interest of Australia's relations with Indonesia and the region, while disregarding Foreign Minister Willesee's suggestions and domestic dissenting opinions in support of self-determination for the Timorese. Also, attention is paid here to two Ambassadors to Indonesia, Robert Furlonger and Richard Woolcott, from whom Prime Minister Whitlam received substantial advice on the making of Australian policy towards Portuguese Timor.

This chapter consists of three sections. Section 4.1 examines two informal summit talks between Prime Minister Whitlam and President Suharto held in September 1974 and April 1975 and reviews the roles of the two Ambassadors to Indonesia. Section 4.2 describes the political development of Portuguese Timor leading up to the outbreak of civil war in August 1975. Its focal points are Portuguese policy, Timorese politics and Indonesian policy, with special attention paid to international diplomacy involving the Australian government. Section 4.3 focuses on Australian reactions to the question of Portuguese Timor from April to September 1975. Prime Minister Whitlam dominated Australian policymaking after the talks in Townsville in April 1975 but the media and interested people continued to raise their voices against the

inactive policy of Australia towards the affairs of East Timor.

## ***4.1 Two informal summit talks between Prime Minister Whitlam and President Suharto and advice from Ambassadors to Indonesia***

### **4.1.1 Ambassador Furlonger and Whitlam-Suharto talks in September 1974**

#### **Ambassador Furlonger's suggestions to Prime Minister Whitlam**

As discussed in Chapter 2, since its inauguration in December 1972 and against the backdrop of a changing international political order in the Asia-Pacific in the first half of the 1970s, the Whitlam government publicly committed to strengthening its ties with Indonesia in the interests of Australia's defence and foreign policy. For this purpose, in February 1973, less than three months after his inauguration, Prime Minister Whitlam visited Jakarta for talks with President Suharto. For the benefit of Australian-Indonesian relations, they agreed to having further informal-style talks which were realised in September 1974 and April 1975.

However, as seen in Chapter 3, as early as around May and June 1974, the Australian Embassy in Indonesia had begun to receive information about Indonesia's plan to integrate Portuguese Timor, the decolonisation of which had just begun under the influence of the Portuguese revolution of 25 April. Given the frankness of Indonesian policymakers in speaking about Portuguese Timor, on 3 July, Ambassador Furlonger wrote to Graham Feakes that "[w]e are, in effect, being consulted".<sup>1</sup> Despite Feakes's insistence on Australia's commitment to the principle of self-determination, on 30 July, Furlonger suggested that Prime Minister Whitlam accept Suharto's "judgement that it would be in the interests of the region – not only Indonesia – if Portuguese Timor were to become part of Indonesia" as a proposition in the coming informal

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Furlonger to Feakes, Jakarta, 3 July 1974, in Wendy Way (ed.), *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000), (hereafter *AIIPT*), pp. 62-3.



talks between himself and Suharto.<sup>2</sup> He went on to write the following.

Could the Prime Minister not say that he shares the assessment that it would be in the interest of the region that Portuguese Timor unite with Indonesia? He could then go on to qualify this by saying that, in the modern world, self-determination cannot be ignored, and that there could be problems in bringing about union. This could in turn open up the question of independence and other options. But I think Soeharto would expect us to begin by seeking a shared assessment of what would be in the best interests of the region, if it is attainable.<sup>3</sup>

On 2 September, four days before the summit talks, Ambassador Furlonger wrote a letter to Prime Minister Whitlam providing some suggestions for his talks with President Suharto. In this letter, the Ambassador appreciated that Australian foreign policy had made “great progress in our relationship with Indonesia in recent years”, directing the Prime Minister’s attention to the fact that his coming talks were of a private type, only three of which President Suharto had previously held (with the South-East Asian leaders Prime Minister of Malaysia Razak, President of The Philippines Marcos and Prime Minister of Burma Ne Win). He also noted Suharto’s “personal bond” with Gough Whitlam and his “almost uncritical belief in Australian good faith and understanding towards Indonesia”. However, the Ambassador cautioned that Australia’s relationship with Indonesia was “still fragile and unnatural in significant respects”, observing that “there is a mood of enhanced sensitivity to outside criticism” particularly because “the Indonesian government has still not fully recovered from the shock of the January riots”. Therefore, Ambassador Furlonger suggested that Prime Minister Whitlam continue his sympathetic attitude towards President Suharto, writing that “[y]our meeting with

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from Furlonger to Feakes, Jakarta, 30 July 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 72-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Soeharto will be a critical test of whether, despite the internal problems and sensitivities on both sides, a basis for an enduring relationship can be established". In this context, the Ambassador noted that "Portuguese Timor will...be seen by Soeharto as a test of the extent to which Australian and Indonesian perceptions of South East Asia are shared."<sup>4</sup>

### **Whitlam and Suharto's dealings in informal talks in September 1974**

As seen in Chapter 3, during his talks with President Suharto on 6 September 1974, Prime Minister Whitlam expressed his personal view that "Portuguese Timor should become part of Indonesia" and that "this should happen in accordance with the properly expressed wishes of the people of Portuguese Timor". This was followed by the President's explanation of Indonesian policy towards Portuguese Timor which was in line with the Prime Minister's remarks. Thus, the two leaders reached a common conclusion regarding the disposition of Portuguese Timor. Obviously, Prime Minister Whitlam took the suggestions of Ambassador Furlonger seriously while treating those of the DFA lightly.

Although little known, Prime Minister Whitlam and President Suharto discussed other territorial questions, regional problems and bilateral issues during their talks on 6 September. Particularly, their discussions on Christmas Island and the Cocos Islands, the two Australian territories in the Indian Ocean which had been transferred from the United Kingdom in the 1950s, are notable. Regarding Christmas Island, in reply to the Prime Minister, who mentioned that Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew had informally raised a territorial claim over it, President Suharto expressed his clear opposition to its transfer to Singapore on the basis of his suspicion that Singapore might wish to possess it to extend its air space for military exercises

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<sup>4</sup> Cablegram from Furlonger to Whitlam, Jakarta, 2 September 1974, *AIIPT*, pp. 93-5.

which would have “serious disadvantages for Indonesia and for regional harmony”.<sup>5</sup> In terms of the Cocos Islands, when Whitlam spoke about the Australian government’s intention to regain control of its people from the virtual rule of the Clunies Ross family and asked Suharto for his views on the islands, including the question of Australian sovereignty over them, President Suharto stated that “in the interests of regional security” “the Cocos Islands should remain under the control of the Australian government”.<sup>6</sup>

The other topics discussed included South-East Asian affairs, the two countries’ domestic matters, foreign policy issues and bilateral relations; for example, with respect to the concept of Indonesia’s archipelago, Suharto explained it as a measure “to secure a safe strategic environment for Indonesia by affirming Indonesian sovereignty over all the sea territory contained within the Archipelago” which Prime Minister Whitlam endorsed in general terms.<sup>7</sup> On Australia’s part, Whitlam mentioned the future possibility of the ruling Labor party being replaced by the opposition Liberal Party in an upcoming election but added that it was unlikely that Australian foreign policy would change under the guidance of Andrew Peacock, the then Opposition leader. Whitlam also talked about his plan to appoint Richard Woolcott as the next Australian Ambassador to Indonesia. Towards the end of the talks, Prime Minister Whitlam again touched on the potential influence of the Australian public’s concerns over Portuguese Timor on Australian-Indonesian relations and raised questions concerning the Indonesian political detainees arrested after the coup in 1965, the riot in Jakarta in January 1974 and Indonesian fishermen’s intrusions into Australian territory.<sup>8</sup>

After the talks, replying to a question in an interview by Michael Richardson, Prime Minister Whitlam said that “I believe that my informal private talks with President Soeharto

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5 Record of Meeting between Whitlam and Soeharto, Yogyakarta, 10 A.M., 6 September 1974, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 3.

6 Record of Meeting between Whitlam and Soeharto, Wonosobo, 8 P.M., 6 September 1974, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 3.

7 Record of Meeting between Whitlam and Soeharto, Yogyakarta, 10 A.M., 6 September 1974, op.cit.

8 Record of Meeting between Whitlam and Soeharto, Wonosobo, 8 P.M., 6 September 1974, op.cit.

have been very useful indeed. It is true that it is easier to establish close personal relationships in a relaxed and informal atmosphere...I am looking forward to another informal meeting with President Soeharto in Australia next year”.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4.1.2 Ambassador Woolcott and Whitlam-Suharto talks in April 1975**

##### **Ambassador Woolcott’s suggestions to Prime Minister Whitlam**

After the Whitlam-Suharto talks, as already seen in Chapter 3, the Indonesian government decided to integrate Portuguese Timor and began implementing various policies for this purpose. To counter them, in Portuguese Timor, pro-independence Fretilin increased its activities in search of domestic and international support. In Australia, the media, various parliamentarians and the public expressed their concerns over Indonesia’s coercive annexation policy of Portuguese Timor. In December, under the leadership of Foreign Minister Willesee, the DFA formally decided on its commitment to proper self-determination for the Timorese, few of whom were identified as favouring integration with Indonesia. In February 1975, in consultation with the Department of Defence, the DFA drafted a letter from Prime Minister Whitlam encouraging Indonesian President Suharto to start talks with the pro-independence UDT-Fretilin Coalition.

However, despite what was written in this letter, the Prime Minister was not interested in changing his policy and, on 4 March, the day the letter was handed over, he had talks with General Surono, the Deputy Commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces in Canberra. On this occasion, Prime Minister Whitlam said that “his position remained...that described to the President in those talks” last year and that “[h]e still believed that the integration of Portuguese Timor into Indonesia was the most desirable outcome”, while adding that “Indonesia should

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<sup>9</sup> “Australia-Indonesia relations”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 45:9, 1974, pp. 590-2.

achieve this in a respectable matter, acceptable to public opinion in Australia: in the language of the United Nations, by means of an act of self-determination”.<sup>10</sup>

Richard Woolcott, taking office as the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia on 4 March, backed up the Prime Minister’s policy in order to maintain good relations with Indonesia regardless of the question of Portuguese Timor. Writing a letter to Whitlam on the day prior to his talks with President Suharto, with reference to some words of his predecessor Robert Furlonger, Ambassador Woolcott argued that the “President and those around him regarded Australia unique amongst countries of Western origin in the degree of understanding that we showed towards the problems of Indonesia and the region”. He also observed that President Suharto “continues to attach very considerable importance to strengthening the developing partnership with Australia and that he continues to want to treat Australia as a honorary member of a sort of South East Asian Club, an approach he has not adopted towards any other non-Asian country.” On the basis of these observations, as to Australian policy towards East Timor, Ambassador Woolcott wrote to Whitlam as follows.

To demand [self-determination] too stridently in Timor at present can be equated with a demand for independence. Do we want actually to encourage an independent East Timor? I would doubt it. It is not wanted by Indonesia; nor I believe, by any of the other countries in the region...It would be unfortunate if we were come to be regarded as, politically, a party principal in Timor, when the real parties principal are the people of Timor and the Governments of Portugal and Indonesia, and allow ourselves to be drawn into a situation in which we could find ourselves as the only, or the main, country in the region obstructing what Indonesia and its

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<sup>10</sup> Record of conversation between Whitlam, Surono and Her Tasning, Canberra, 4 March 1975, NAA, A1838, 801/13/11/1, pt 8.

other neighbours would see as Indonesia's legitimate interest.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, in line with former Ambassador Furlonger's idea, but contrary to the DFA's suggestions, Ambassador Woolcott advised the Prime Minister to refrain from speaking about self-determination and independence for the Timorese in his talks with President Suharto. He justified his advice in terms of the need for Australian policy to be in harmony with the interests of Indonesia and other South-East Asian countries.

### **Confidence-building between Whitlam and Suharto and control of public opinion**

From 3 to 5 April 1975 in Townsville, Prime Minister Whitlam and President Suharto had informal discussions for the second time. About 60 demonstrators, mainly students, gathered at the hotel which was the venue for these summit talks, calling on "Mr Whitlam and President Suharto to give assurances that the Timorese would be allowed to determine their own future without coercion".<sup>12</sup> On 3 April, the Prime Minister and President began by discussing Indo-China, where North Viet-Nam and the Viet Cong were about to assume control of South Viet-Nam, rather than Portuguese Timor. Then, they changed their topics to other regional problems, including Cambodia, Burma's membership of ASEAN, Thailand, the southern Philippines, Papua New Guinea and the intrusion of Indonesian fishermen into Australian waters. In line with his views on Portuguese Timor, it is notable that Prime Minister Whitlam said that the British colony Brunei "would have to be associated with another country" as "[a]n independent Brunei was not feasible", while also saying that Brunei and other remaining colonial dependencies close to Australia did not attract Australia's significant attention.<sup>13</sup> This

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<sup>11</sup> Letter from Woolcott to Whitlam, Canberra, 2 April 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 240-2.

<sup>12</sup> "Indo-China first topic for PM, Suharto", *The Canberra Times*, 4 April 1975.

<sup>13</sup> Record of conversation between Whitlam and Soeharto, Townsville, 3 April 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 10.

remark of Prime Minister Whitlam on Brunei might have been made to establish favourable conditions for speaking about Portuguese Timor the next day.

It was during their second talk on 4 April that Prime Minister Whitlam and President Suharto discussed the decolonisation question of Portuguese Timor. In accordance with their previous talk on 6 September 1974, Gough Whitlam repeated that “he still hoped that Portuguese Timor would be associated with or integrated into Indonesia; but this result should be achieved in a way which would not upset the Australian people”. Undervaluing the independence movement in Portuguese Timor, he went on to say that “the majority of the people of Portuguese Timor had no sense of politics, and that in time they would come to recognise their ethnic kinship with their Indonesian neighbours”. Despite this insistence, which could encourage Indonesia’s annexation policy, Whitlam asserted that “[t]he question of Portuguese Timor was simply not the responsibility of Australia” but that of “the people of Portuguese Timor, Portugal and Indonesia”. Finally, he stressed that he “would ensure that our actions in regards to Portuguese Timor would be guided by the principle that good relations with Indonesia were of paramount importance to Australia.”<sup>14</sup>

Following Whitlam’s remarks, President Suharto argued in favour of Indonesia’s policy towards Portuguese Timor. Referring to the three possible future outcomes for Portuguese Timor, he stated again that “Indonesia had concluded that integration with Indonesia was the best solution.” Then, in line with the outcome of the London talks with the Portuguese government on 9 March, President Suharto explained that Indonesia’s integration policy would provide assistance for Apodeti and influence the policies of UDT and Fretilin. Finally, after appreciating Australia’s understanding of the Indonesian goal of the integration of Portuguese Timor, President Suharto touched on his concerns over Australia’s excessive aid to Portuguese

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<sup>14</sup> Record of conversation between Whitlam and Soeharto, Townsville, 4 April 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 244-8.

Timor because of its potential influence over the territory's independence movement.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, Prime Minister Whitlam and President Suharto again agreed, in general terms, with Indonesia's integration policy. Despite this, on the next day, an Australian newspaper reported that "[a]ccording to Foreign Affairs officials, Mr Whitlam stressed that the people of Portuguese Timor should be allowed to determine their own future".<sup>16</sup> During their talks on 5 April, President Suharto also "proposed to say that Indonesia had no territorial ambitions whatsoever and he would be emphasising the right to self-determination for the people of Portuguese Timor".<sup>17</sup> In this way, Gough Whitlam and Suharto also agreed to persuade the media with misleading information regarding their talks on Portuguese Timor.

The two leaders went on to discuss other issues, such as their countries' domestic and foreign policy matters. Expressing his satisfaction with the talks, Lieutenant General Sudharmono, the Indonesian State Secretary and Minister of State, suggested that "Indonesia hoped that informal visits...could become annual events".<sup>18</sup>

Having flown back from Townsville to Jakarta on the same flight as President Suharto, Ambassador Woolcott sent his analysis on the outcome of these informal talks to Canberra. Observing that the "President was clearly very satisfied with the visit", Ambassador Woolcott reported that "[w]e have in fact achieved a unique position for a non-Asian country with these arrangements. We should attach importance to preserving them". However, as he noted that "[w]e shall continue to need to watch the Portuguese Timor situation",<sup>19</sup> the apparent success of the summit talks in Townsville was only achieved by postponing resolution of the Portuguese Timor issue and it was only a matter of time before it re-emerged as a major problem between

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., esp., p. 247-8.

<sup>16</sup> "Indonesia assures Whitlam on Timor", *The Canberra Times*, 5 April 1975.

<sup>17</sup> Record of conversation between Whitlam and Soeharto, Townsville, 5 April 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 10.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 7 April 1975, *AIIPT*, pp.250-1.



Australia and Indonesia.

## ***4.2 Escalation of Indonesian interference and eruption of civil war in Portuguese Timor***

### **4.2.1 Indonesian interference with Timorese politics**

#### **Indonesian tactics to weaken coalition of independence parties**

During April and May 1975, Indonesian policymakers temporarily changed their approach towards Portuguese Timor. Making it known that “the President on his return from Australia ordered a review of the policy”, Akosah of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained to Australian diplomats that “[t]he new aim was not to frighten the Portuguese Timorese but to convince them that integration with Indonesia was the best solution”. He called it a more “elegant” approach but said that “the objective – integration with Indonesia – was the same”. While optimistically expecting that “given time, there was a chance which Indonesia should not lose”, he admitted that, “by adopting a softer line, Indonesia may still not achieve its objective through an act of self-determination”. He mentioned that an Indonesian team’s visit to Dili in early April and the subsequent invitation to Timorese political leaders to visit Jakarta were part of Indonesia’s new strategy.<sup>20</sup>

Actually, at the invitation of OPSUS, Lopes da Cruz and Costa Mousinho of UDT and José Ramos-Horta of Fretilin visited Jakarta in the same month. After meeting the two UDT leaders in Jakarta, Allan Taylor reported their changing attitudes to Canberra as follows: “[i]n their discussion in Jakarta...the UDT leaders have supported the claim for independence, but said that they would accept integration with Indonesia if that were the expressed wishes of the

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<sup>20</sup> Record of conversation between Akosah and Taylor, 15 April 1975, Jakarta, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 10.

people of Portuguese Timor...Lopes da Cruz said that UDT/FRETILIN constitutional proposals still stood. But he did not appear as firmly wedded to them as in early March. For instance he referred to the difference within the UDT on whether APODETI should be allowed to participate in the proposed transitional government. He favoured APODETI participation”.<sup>21</sup> Taylor also wrote that Lopes da Cruz said that “he had agreed with the Indonesians that Portuguese Timor should not become a centre for communist activity in the region” and had insisted that Fretilin contained some communist members.<sup>22</sup> The two UDT leaders also expressed their determination to fight against communism in Timor in an article in *A Voz de Timor*, the major Timorese newspaper.<sup>23</sup> Following their travels to Indonesia, the two UDT leaders visited Australia to discuss the question of the decolonisation of Portuguese Timor with Australian policymakers and other interested people.<sup>24</sup>

Also, after meeting with Ramos-Horta in Jakarta, Taylor reported his weakening confidence as follows: “Horta considers the changed Indonesian tactics as a serious setback for the cause of an independent Portuguese Timor. Previous Indonesian policy (Radio Kupang and so on) had antagonised the Timorese and made it easier for opponents of integration”.<sup>25</sup> Writing that “...Mr Horta was much less confident about FRETILIN success than in early March...Now he virtually said the Timorese would be bought off by Indonesia”, Taylor speculated that “the Indonesian task of persuading the people of Portuguese Timor to favour integration may not be as difficult as we have thought”.<sup>26</sup>

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21 Cablegram to Canberra, 17 April 1975, Jakarta, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 9.

22 Memorandum to Canberra, Jakarta, 22 April 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 254-5.

23 “Infiltração Comunista”, *A Voz de Timor*, 22 April 1975.

24 In Australia, the two UDT leaders met Graham Feakes, Acting Foreign Minister Morrison, ex-servicemen and others (see Record of Conversation between Feakes and Lopes da Cruz, Canberra, 24 April 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 257-9). According to Denis Freney, during their stays in Australia, Bernard Callinan, a prominent ex-serviceman in Melbourne, instigated the two UDT leaders to break with Fretilin (see Denis Freney, *Timor : Freedom Caught between the Powers* (Nottingham: Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation for Spokesman Books, 1975), pp. 38-41).

25 Cablegram to Canberra, 22 April 1975, Jakarta, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 9.

26 Memorandum to Canberra, Jakarta, 22 April 1975, op. cit.

On 7 May, under the auspices of Portuguese authority, the first preliminary talks between the Commission for the Decolonisation of Timor (CDT) and the UDT-Fretilin Coalition were convened. However, the parties had conflicting opinions on the question of Apodeti participation; the former insisted on the inclusion of Apodeti in the decolonisation process but the latter refused to admit its participation due to fear of Indonesian influence.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, the unity of the UDT-Fretilin Coalition was contested by some of its leaders, including Lopes da Cruz, who insisted on the termination of the coalition with Fretilin which some radical leaders of Fretilin also supported. In the end, on 26 May, a rupture of the Coalition was announced. José Ramos-Horta and others' subsequent efforts to restore it ended in vain.<sup>28</sup>

In June, prior to the Macao talks, Indonesian policymakers again geared up their various blatant interference activities in Portuguese Timor, including a radio broadcast from Kupang asserting that UDT and Fretilin intended to make Portuguese Timor communist<sup>29</sup>, the suspected involvement of the Indonesian military or paramilitary in burning houses and stealing cattle inside the territory of Portuguese Timor<sup>30</sup> and Indonesian newspapers' unfounded allegations of Fretilin atrocities against Apodeti.<sup>31</sup> *The New Standard*, an Indonesian English language magazine under the control of Ali Murtopo, also printed Apodeti's proclamation of "the colony of Timor as the twenty-seventh province of the Republic of Indonesia" which was signed by its members in Dili on 1 June.<sup>32</sup> In defence of the reactivation of Indonesia's interference policy in advance of the Macao talks, Harry Tjan denounced "the Portuguese proposal for consideration at the Macao meeting" as being "essentially a variation of the

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27 Mário Lemos Pires (ed.), *Relatório Do Governo De Timor* (Lisboa: Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, 1981), pp. 159-63.

28 Ramos-Horta, *Funu*, pp. 52-3.

29 Pires (ed.), *Relatório Do Governo De Timor*, p. 176.

30 "Indonesia denies Timor incident", *SMH*, 16 June 1975.

31 "Many 'flee' from Portuguese Timor", *The Canberra Times*, 10 June 1975.

32 Cablegram to Canberra, 20 June 1975, Jakarta, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 10.

FRETILIN/UDT Coalition program”. Asserting that “[b]ecause of the attitude adopted by FRETILIN, APODETI appeared to be constructive and helpful, whereas FRETILIN was the negative element in the situation”, Harry Tjan again explained Indonesia’s supportive attitude towards Apodeti which took advantage of Fretilin’s policy of boycotting the Macao talks.<sup>33</sup>

### **Macao talks and finalisation of decolonisation process of Portuguese Timor**

In Macao from 26 to 28 June 1975, the talks convened to discuss the process of decolonisation of Portuguese Timor were undertaken with the participation of all relevant parties except Fretilin. The participants included Vítor Alves, Almeida Santos, Jorge Campinos and Major Mota from the Portuguese government; José Araújo, José Osório Soares, Guilherme Maria Gonçalves from Apodeti; and Costa Mouzinho and João Carrascalão from UDT.<sup>34</sup> In the communiqué issued afterwards, they reaffirmed “the right of the people of Portuguese Timor to self-determination and the principle that it was up to the people of Timor to define the political future of the territory”.<sup>35</sup>

While personally disagreeing with Fretilin’s policy of boycotting the talks, José Ramos-Horta, who was in Australia, defended it as follows: “[t]he Portuguese government has already recognised the principle of the right to independence for the people of East Timor in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Charter”; “Apodeti categorically rejects this principle and has declared East Timor the 27<sup>th</sup> province of Indonesia. This clearly undemocratic attitude is an attempt to trammel on the fundamental rights of the people of East Timor. Therefore Fretilin cannot participate in a process which attacks the fundamental rights of the Timorese people”; and “Fretilin has the majority of popular support

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<sup>33</sup> Record of conversation between Curtin, Taylor and Tjan, Jakarta, 18 June 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 281-2.

<sup>34</sup> Pires (ed.), *Relatório Do Governo De Timor*, p. 179.

<sup>35</sup> Summary of outcome of Macao Talks between Portugal, APODETI and UDT, 26-28 June 1975, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, p. 37.

and consequently the process of decolonisation cannot succeed without the cooperation of our party”.<sup>36</sup>

Following the Macao talks, on 17 July, Portuguese President Costa Gomes publicised the Portuguese Council of the Revolution Constitutional Law 7-75 which would determine the timetable and transitional process for the decolonisation of Portuguese Timor. The law included the following Articles: “[t]he Portuguese State reaffirms the right of the people of Timor to self-determination, with its implications, including the acceptance of its independence” (Article 1); “[t]he popular assembly...shall be elected on the third Sunday of October 1976” (Article 3); “[a]fter the election, it shall be incumbent upon the Popular Assembly to decide, by simple majority in a direct and secret ballot, upon the political and administrative status of the Territory of Timor” (Article 4); “[t]he political and administrative status of the Territory of Timor should be decided upon in order that, on the third Sunday of October 1978, all prerogatives of sovereignty and administration of the Portuguese Republic may cease in the Territory” (Article 5); and “[t]he Portuguese government shall endeavor satisfactorily to conclude the decolonisation of the Territory of Timor, both safeguarding the balance of the strategic zone in which Timor lies and ensuring complete prevention of any risks of neo-colonialist ambitions” (Article 13). Article 6 noted the establishment of the transitional political organisations “within 100 days from the day of this law” (17 July 1975) and detailed their compositions.<sup>37</sup> As seen above, while paying attention to “risks of neo-colonialist ambitions”, the Portuguese law did not note any special facilitation of Indonesia’s annexation policy.

### **Deterioration of politics in Portuguese Timor**

The political situation in Portuguese Timor rapidly deteriorated after the Macao talks,

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<sup>36</sup> “Boycott of Timor talks defended”, *The Canberra Times*, 28 June 1975.

<sup>37</sup> Portuguese Council of the Revolution Constitutional Law 7-75, 17 July 1975, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, pp. 34-6.

as Allan Taylor and Michael Curtin, two Australian diplomats who visited Portuguese Timor from 25 June to 9 July, reported. Observing growing tensions between UDT and Fretilin, fuelled by UDT's first public rally which gathered about 6,000 people in Dili on 26 June and succeeding minor clashes with Fretilin supporters on 28 June, they concluded that these incidents "demonstrate that the political situation could very quickly deteriorate. The party leaders had not been able to exert much control over their supporters in the streets and Fretilin seemed bent on reacting to any hostility on the part of UDT". Major Barrento of the Portuguese Army also said that "UDT and Fretilin appeared set on fighting things out. In the meantime, economic life was grinding to a halt: no one wanted to do any work. Perhaps the matter could only be settled 'by blood'".<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, Indonesian policymakers engaged in diplomatic activities to ensure favourable conditions for its policy of the integration of Portuguese Timor. Firstly, at Camp David in the United States on 5 July, President Suharto met with US President Gerald Ford as part of his overseas visits to Iran, Yugoslavia, Canada, the US and Japan. During their talks, regarding the question of the decolonisation of Portuguese Timor, President Suharto asserted that "the only way is to integrate into Indonesia" because of its scant economic viability. Then, he also insisted that "those who want independence are those who are Communist-influenced" and that "[t]hose wanting Indonesian integration are being subjected to heavy pressure by those who are almost Communists". Finally, after saying that "Indonesia doesn't want to insert itself into Timor self-determination, but the problem is how to manage the self-determination process with a majority wanting unity with Indonesia", President Suharto asked for President Ford's opinions.<sup>39</sup> Although failing to receive any, President Suharto was at least successful in

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<sup>38</sup> "Visit to Portuguese Timor 25 June – 9 July 1975", NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 26.

<sup>39</sup> Memorandum of Conversation between Ford and Suharto, Camp David, Maryland, 5 July 1975, in Brad Coleman, David Goldman and David Nickles (eds.), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-12, Documents on East and South East Asia, 1973-1976* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2011), Document 126. (This volume is available at

delivering his own views. Four days after the talks, on 9 July, President Suharto publicly stated that “Portuguese Timor could not become independent because of its lack of economic potential” and asserted that the majority of people in Portuguese Timor were in favour of integration with Indonesia.<sup>40</sup>

Secondly, on 10 July, during his talks with Australian diplomats, Harry Tjan spoke of Indonesia’s plan for the annexation of Portuguese Timor more frankly than ever, stressing that “[t]he Indonesian Government has decided that Portuguese Timor will be incorporated into Indonesia” and that it was “the final policy decision”. Remarkably, on this occasion, he revealed for the first time an Indonesian “study of likely international reaction to Indonesian intervention in Portuguese Timor”. According to it, Indonesian policymakers foresaw no significant protest from ASEAN countries, the United States or the USSR. They also considered that “[r]elations with Portugal were not important to Indonesia”, that “[a]ny reference of the matter to the United Nations would be handled by Indonesia satisfactorily” and that “[t]he Black African countries would react but this would not be serious for Indonesia”. They anticipated vigorous protests from China and Australia but “[i]n China’s case, the protest would be routine and stereotyped”. As for Australia, Indonesian policymakers forecast that “[t]he Australian Government would feel compelled to protest” because of “a commotion” created by “certain groups and the press” but they considered that “it would all die down in due course”.<sup>41</sup> In this way, by intentionally revealing the most sensitive information in advance, Harry Tjan and other Indonesian policymakers sought to win Australian policymakers to the Indonesian side for as long as they could.

Thirdly, on 2 August, Ali Murtopo had talks in Jakarta with three UDT leaders, João

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<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12>.)

40 “Finance a barrier for Timor: Soeharto”, *SMH*, 10 July 1975.

41 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 10 July 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 290-1.

Carrascalão, Domingos de Oliveira and Lopez da Cruz, who sought to clarify President Suharto's statement on 9 July. During the talks, Ali Murtopo said that Fretilin was now a communist movement and that it was planning to move to seize power on 15 August. Then, he threatened the UDT leaders that, if that actually happened, Indonesia would act.<sup>42</sup> In reply, João Carrascalão and Domingos de Oliveira explained that Fretilin was essentially a nationalist movement and insisted that UDT itself was capable of expelling people sympathetic to communism in the Portuguese administration and Fretilin.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Indonesian policymakers successfully pushed João Carrascalão and Domingos de Oliveira into declaring that they would take action against "communists" in Portuguese Timor.

#### **4.2.2 Civil war in Portuguese Timor and Portuguese and Indonesian diplomacy**

##### **Outbreak of civil war**

After 10 August, the political landscape in Portuguese Timor changed dramatically. At midnight on 10 August, UDT supporters led by João Carrascalão attacked police headquarters to capture arms, surrounded Portuguese military headquarters<sup>44</sup> and took control of the port, airport and radio and telephone facilities in Dili.<sup>45</sup> On 13 August, João Carrascalão issued a press release demanding the following: "(a) Immediate departure from Timor of 'communist' members of the administration and 'communist' members of FRETILIN; (b) Continuation in office of Governor Pires; (c) Meeting with moderate members of FRETILIN 'to work together to constitute a movement for independence'; (d) Access to Dili to be controlled by UDT." He also stressed the limited purpose of their actions, adding that "(e) After movement for independence has been created the Governor is to continue his plan of work in Timor without

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42 James Dunn, *East Timor : A Rough Passage to Independence* (Double Bay, N.S.W.: Longueville Books, 2003), pp. 140-1.

43 *Chega!*, Chap.3, p. 40.

44 "Moderates seize arms, but calm restored – Timor HQ ringed", *SMH*, 12 August 1975.

45 *Chega!*, Chap.3, p. 41.



any more confrontation with the Timorese people so that Indonesia clearly understands our intentions”.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, UDT supporters began to arrest Fretilin supporters, killing some of them. Attempts by the Portuguese authorities to establish good offices between UDT and Fretilin failed.<sup>47</sup>

By 20 August, after having refused UDT’s demands and with the support of most of the Timorese indigenous soldiers, Fretilin launched counterattacks against UDT supporters. Thus, civil war in Portuguese Timor broke out, costing the lives of an estimated 1,500 to 3,000 people.<sup>48</sup> Refugees, mostly UDT supporters, numbering between 10,000 and 30,000 people, escaped to Indonesian Timor, a few thousand of whom fled to Darwin by ship and aircraft. Having lost control of the police and military, on the night of 26 August, Governor Pires also evacuated from Dili to offshore Atauro Island. However, before doing so, he issued the following message: “[t]he presence of international forces in Timor right away is most necessary to avoid more bloodshed...This is an SOS. I am tired of seeing people dying especially women and children”.<sup>49</sup>

By early September, Fretilin won the civil war and became the *de facto* ruler of East Timor while UDT lost its unity as a single political entity. Despite Fretilin’s recognition of Portugal as the sovereign power, Portuguese influence over the people in the territory declined markedly.

### **Indonesian and Portuguese policies towards civil war in Portuguese Timor**

While the political crisis was occurring in Portuguese Timor, the Portuguese and

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46 Submission to Willesee, Canberra, 13 August 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 304-6.

47 For detailed accounts of the eruption of the civil war in Portuguese Timor in August 1975, see Dunn, *East Timor*, pp. 139-74; Jill Jolliffe, *East Timor : Nationalism & Colonialism* (St. Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1978), pp. 120-43; *Chega!*, Chap.3. pp. 40-5.

48 *Chega!*, Chap.3, p.43.

49 “1,100 flee fighting in Timor”, *The Canberra Times*, 25 August 1975.

Indonesian governments were actively engaged in international diplomacy involving the Australian and other governments. When it came to Indonesian policy, it was not surprising that some of its policymakers soon talked about the possibility of Indonesian military intervention in Portuguese Timor; for example, on 14 August, during his talks with Australian Ambassador Woolcott, General Yoga Sugama said that “if chaos develops we will move to pre-empt it and we will look to Australia for understanding”. He also said that “[h]e was sure that because of the relations of confidence between the President and the Prime Minister the President would both want to know Mr Whitlam’s views on the situation and to have ‘the benefit of his advice’.”<sup>50</sup> On 15 August, President Suharto made a decision to not intervene at least for the time being<sup>51</sup> but Indonesian clandestine interference activities escalated. On 16 August, US intelligence sources, supposedly shared by the Australian government, reported that “50 Indonesian-trained Timorese guerrillas reportedly crossed the border into the Portuguese territory”.<sup>52</sup>

On the part of the Portuguese, immediately after UDT’s action, the Portuguese government dispatched a special Presidential emissary, Major António João Soares, to Portuguese Timor to report on the situation and provide recommendations. While waiting for his return to Lisbon, President Costa Gomes told Australian Ambassador Cooper that the timetable for decolonisation drawn up in Macao still represented Portuguese policy although there was some room for flexibility.<sup>53</sup> However, Major Soares returned to Lisbon without reaching Portuguese Timor because the Indonesian government refused to provide him a flight from Bali to Kupang.<sup>54</sup>

Following the outbreak of civil war, the Portuguese government publicly requested

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50 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 14 August 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 306-9, esp., p. 308.

51 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 15 August 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 310-2.

52 Dale Van Atta and Brian Toohey, “The Timor Papers”, *The National Times*, 30 May-5 June 1982, pp. 17-36, esp., p.18.

53 Cablegram to Canberra, Lisbon, 18 August 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 315-6.

54 Michael Richardson, “Our man banned from flying to Portuguese Timor”, *The Age*, 21 August 1975.

international assistance. For this purpose, it sent two letters from its Foreign Minister to the UN Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim. In the first, dated 22 August, the Portuguese government noted that it had made an urgent appeal to Indonesia and Australia as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross to ask for their support for humanitarian tasks.<sup>55</sup> In the second, dated 23 August, the Portuguese government alerted Waldheim to the fact that “the situation in Timor has deteriorated to an even graver extent” and urged him “to exert all your influence with the international community so as to avoid a further loss of life”. It also appealed that “[i]f a negotiated solution between the conflicting parties is not found, international action may become necessary, for which the good offices of Your Excellency are indispensable”.<sup>56</sup>

#### **Almeida Santos’s mission and plan for ‘Joint authority’ consisting of four countries**

To facilitate negotiations with the relevant parties, the Portuguese government again dispatched António de Almeida Santos, the former Minister for Inter-territorial Coordination, to Jakarta. The focal point of these multilateral negotiations, which involved Indonesia, Portugal, Australia and Malaysia (as discussed below), was how to deal with Indonesia’s bid for international authorisation of its military intervention in Portuguese Timor.

On 29 August, Acting Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja authored a “draft memorandum of understanding” which noted: “1. The Republic of Indonesia recognises the Republic of Portugal as the sole authority in Portuguese Timor; 2. Both sides reaffirm their continued adherence to the principle of decolonisation and the understanding to insure its implementation in an orderly manner enabling the people to decide their own political future; 3. Realising that the situation in Portuguese Timor requires immediate restoration of peace and

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<sup>55</sup> Letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal to the Secretary-General, 22 August 1975, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, p. 38.

<sup>56</sup> Letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal to the Secretary-General, 23 August 1975, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, p. 38.

order to enable the resumption of humanitarian actions and the expeditious implementation of the process of decolonisation, it was agreed to establish as the highest administrative body in Portuguese Timor a joint authority consisting of Indonesia, Portugal, (Australia) and (Malaysia); 4. Upon the request of the Portuguese Government it was agreed that Indonesia will dispatch a task force to Portuguese Timor to assist in the restoration of peace and order; 5. It was further agreed that said task force will be under Indonesian Command, with the understanding that after the establishment of the joint authority, the task force commander will be under the directives of said authority; and 6. Financial consequences will be borne by the Government of Portugal”.<sup>57</sup>

As the last clause was followed by a sentence indicating Portuguese reservations, Portuguese Special Envoy Almeida Santos and President Costa Gomes soon discussed the draft memorandum via an international call. On 30 August, the Portuguese Chargé d’Affaires in Jakarta talked to Australian Ambassador Woolcott about Portugal’s intentions to present the following reservations to the Indonesians: “(a) Portugal could only agree to a multi-national task force; it could not agree to a wholly Indonesian force; (b) Indonesian intervention should cease when order was restored in Timor; (c) The role of the task force was to keep order and not to administer the territory; (d) Portugal reserved the right to resume administrative control when order had been restored; and (e) Portugal would not accept full responsibility for payment for the operation”.<sup>58</sup> From these comments, the Portuguese distrust of Indonesia’s ambition to annex Portuguese Timor by force was apparent.

By 1 September, the Portuguese delegation added more detailed reservations<sup>59</sup> and Mochtar authored another draft.<sup>60</sup> Then, the focal point of the multilateral negotiations shifted to the question of Australian participation. Mochtar stated publicly that “Indonesia and Portugal

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<sup>57</sup> Cablegram to Canberra (JA1538), Jakarta, 30 August 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 12.

<sup>58</sup> Cablegram to Canberra (JA1541), Jakarta, 30 August 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 12.

<sup>59</sup> Cablegram to Canberra (JA1559), Jakarta, 1 September 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 13.

<sup>60</sup> Cablegram to Canberra (JA1575), Jakarta, 1 September 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 13.

would like Australia to be a member of the proposed joint administrative authority”.<sup>61</sup> He also stressed to Ambassador Woolcott that “[h]is real task was to convince Santos that Indonesia genuinely wanted to intervene only to restore peace and order and re-establish the conditions under which the people on the island could have a say in their own future” and emphasised that his view was shared by President Suharto.<sup>62</sup>

In Canberra during the morning and evening of 1 September, Portugal’s Special Envoy Almeida Santos had talks with Prime Minister Whitlam, who was concurrently the Acting Foreign Minister, and Defence Minister Morrison. Asking for Australian participation, he said that “[i]f Australia could not send troops then perhaps it could send equipment and one or two people to the joint command authority”. He also explained that “[t]he joint authority could not be only an administrative authority. It had rather to control the behaviour of the Indonesian troops and protect the Fretilin party and its sympathisers”. However, despite Almeida Santos’s efforts to include Australia in a joint authority, Prime Minister Whitlam was not interested.<sup>63</sup>

### **Aborted talks between Portugal and Fretilin**

From Canberra, Almeida Santos headed for his next destination, Atauro Island in Portuguese Timor, via Darwin. On 4 September, in Darwin, he met Rawdon Dalrymple, an officer of the Department of Foreign Affairs, to offer another diplomatic proposal. On the basis of a proposal put forward by Fretilin on 3 September,<sup>64</sup> he advocated a convention of bilateral talks with the attendance of him, Xavier do Amaral and other Fretilin members in Canberra on 20 September. He also sounded out Australian support for this, insisting that it would be of benefit to Australia to facilitate these talks because of Australia’s future relationship with an

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61 Cablegram to Canberra (JA 1544), Jakarta, 30 August 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 12.

62 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 29 August 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 359-60.

63 Record of conversation between Santos, Whitlam and Morrison, Canberra, 10.30 a.m., 1 September 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 13.

64 Pires (ed.), *Relatório Do Governo De Timor*, p. 327.

independent East Timor. Having heard his proposal, Dalrymple considered that Almeida Santos was intending to fulfil Portugal's decolonisation responsibilities by handing over power to Fretilin.<sup>65</sup>

However, the Indonesian and Australian governments strongly opposed the idea of bilateral talks between Portugal and Fretilin, insisting that UDT and Apodeti be included. On 9 September, President Suharto also stated that "[t]he plan of Dr Almeida Santos...to hand over de facto power over Portuguese Timor to Fretilin is considered by Indonesia to be a fait accompli and a unilateral act which goes against the agreement and the principles underlying the Indonesian attitude".<sup>66</sup> In the end, without arriving at any significant agreements with the relevant parties, Almeida Santos returned to Lisbon on 15 September.

In Dili on 16 September, the Central Committee of Fretilin, after a call from José Ramos-Horta who had returned from Australia, convened a meeting of President Xavier do Amaral, Vice-President Nicolau Lobato and three other senior members. Then, it issued a statement regarding its internal and external policies, of which the first four Articles of ten stated that: "1. The affairs of East Timor must be decided by the Timorese people within national territory, without external pressures. FRETILIN still recognises Portugal's sovereignty over East Timor and seeks talks with the Portuguese Government's representatives on September 20, 1975, in Bacau[sic] (East Timor); 2. The Central Committee of FRETILIN would welcome a joint peace force by East Timorese troops and Indonesian troops to jointly control the border areas, to avoid any misunderstandings and unnecessary conflicts. The Central Committee believes this peace force must be of equal numbers on both sides. It is imperative that it starts immediately; 3. The Central Committee of FRETILIN would welcome a joint conference with representatives from Portugal, Australia and Indonesia, and the leaders of East

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<sup>65</sup> Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 5 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 387-9.

<sup>66</sup> Hamish McDonald, "Indonesia warns over Timor deal", *SMH*, 10 September 1975.

Timor in order to eliminate rumours and misunderstandings and to promote friendship and co-operation amongst the people of the region; 4. The Central Committee of FRETILIN welcomes fact-finding missions from ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations), Australia and New Zealand as well as observers from other nations and the press, to assess the situation in East Timor, which is now fully controlled by FRETILIN".<sup>67</sup> Thus, Fretilin, which began to call itself "a front for national liberation that unites all Timorese nationalists without discrimination of race, religion or political belief" (Article 10), continued to seek talks with the Portuguese and Indonesian governments while expressing its willingness to accept fact-finding missions and observers from the countries in the region, including Australia.

### **Indonesia's continuing interference and pressure**

Disregarding the ongoing international diplomacy, Indonesian clandestine operations escalated. On 2 September, Harry Tjan and Lim Bian Kie of Indonesian CSIS met Allan Taylor and revealed their "top secret" information. On this occasion, they stressed that "Ali Murtopo and Yoga Sugama were still in control of the Portuguese Timor policy", despite Mochtar's diplomatic activity. Then, they said that they now turned their eyes to UDT, particularly President Lopez da Cruz, who had fled with Domingos de Oliveira to Maliana, a town in the border area under the control of pro-integration groups. They went on to say that Lopes da Cruz, who had changed his position from a pro-independence leader to a pro-integrationist, submitted "a statement supporting integration with Indonesia, and asking for Indonesian assistance" on 1 September. Then, they made it known that Lopes da Cruz's statement would be publicised, together with similar statements by Apodeti and other anti-Fretilin groups' leaders, when Fretilin declared independence for East Timor. They also stated that "Indonesian support –

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<sup>67</sup> Freney, *Timor*, pp. 62-4.

volunteers, arms and so on – could be sent to the Lopes da Cruz faction of UDT to fight FRETILIN”.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the Indonesians had gradually and covertly increased their military assistance to anti-Fretilin groups, while continuing to inform Australian diplomats of this sensitive information.

Actually, US intelligence sources soon reported that “the two Indonesian special forces groups, consisting of about 100 men each, may have entered Portuguese Timor on the evening of September 3-4”.<sup>69</sup> It is now known in more detail that under the direction of Major-General Benny Murdani and the field commander Colonel Dading Kalbuadi three teams of Indonesian Special Forces led by Captain Yunus Yosfiah (Team Susi), Major Sorian Effendi (Team Umi) and Major Tarub (Team Tuti) intruded into the territory of East Timor in September.<sup>70</sup> However, these small-scale intrusions were easily counterattacked and expelled by soldiers of Falintil (Forças Armadas de Libertação e Independência de Timor-Leste: The Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor), which was established during the civil war by indigenous soldiers in support of Fretilin.

Indonesian policymakers also put diplomatic pressure on Fretilin; for example, on 18 September, disregarding the Fretilin proposal put forward on 16 September, Foreign Minister Malik announced that “Indonesia could not negotiate with Fretilin” because “Indonesia recognized Portugal as the sole legal authority in Portuguese Timor”.<sup>71</sup> On 23 September, an Indonesian newspaper reported a UDT and Apodeti’s decision to combine their military actions to regain power from Fretilin,<sup>72</sup> which suggested an increase in Indonesian military assistance to anti-Fretilin groups.

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68 Record of conversation between Tjan, Lim and Taylor, Jakarta, 2 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 371-2.

69 Dale Van Atta and Brian Toohey, “The Timor Papers”, *The National Times*, 30 May-5 June 1982, pp.17-36, esp., p. 36.

70 Kenneth Conboy, *Kopassus : Inside Indonesia's Special Forces* (Jakarta: Equinox Pub., 2003), pp.210-21.

71 “Indonesia Not to Negotiate with Fretilin”, *The Indonesia Times*, 19 September 1975.

72 “UDT, Apodeti, Combine Military Actions”, *The Indonesian Times*, 23 September 1975.



### ***4.3 Whitlam's policy and dissenting opinion***

#### **4.3.1 Australian policy guided by Gough Whitlam and Richard Woolcott**

##### **Policy differences between Prime Minister Whitlam and Foreign Minister Willesee**

What became apparent in Australian policymaking circles after the Whitlam-Suharto talks in Townsville in early April 1975 was that, when developing policy towards Portuguese Timor, Prime Minister Whitlam was accepting advice from the Australian Embassy in Jakarta which was headed by Ambassador Woolcott rather than attending to suggestions from the DFA which was supervised by Foreign Minister Willesee. According to Graham Feakes's observations some time after the talks, Foreign Minister Willesee felt very strongly that the Prime Minister was wrong.<sup>73</sup>

Prime Minister Whitlam and Ambassador Woolcott, who gained the upper hand in Australian policymaking on the question of Portuguese Timor, began to persuade dissenting individuals to follow their policies; for example, on 17 April, Ambassador Woolcott wrote to Foreign Minister Willesee with regard to the policy differences between the two Ministers as follows.

...the problem for the Department as well as me is that there still seem to be differences in the approach to Timor between you, as the Foreign Minister, and the Prime Minister. As I understand it, you tend to place the main emphasis on a proper act of self-determination for Portuguese Timor. If this act were to lead to incorporation in Indonesia, you would 'accept' this. However, it was clear in Townsville the Prime Minister continues to believe that the logic of the situation is

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<sup>73</sup> Letter from Feakes to Woolcott, Canberra, 4 June 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 270.

that Timor should become part of Indonesia and we would 'welcome' such an outcome to an act of choice. While we support the principle of self-determination and while we certainly could not condone the use of force, the Prime Minister still does not want to encourage the emergence of an independent East Timor and he believes that continuing public emphasis on self-determination, at this stage, is likely to strengthen pressures for independence.<sup>74</sup> (Emphases in the original)

In this way, Ambassador Woolcott suggested that Foreign Minister Willesee consider Prime Minister Whitlam's opinion and refrain from speaking publicly about self-determination for the Timorese which could strengthen the independence movement in Portuguese Timor.

On 22 April, while acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gough Whitlam replied to a letter from Senator Arthur Gietzelt written on behalf of himself and five other parliamentarians, which he had read in the plane on his way to Townsville, to explain his policy towards Portuguese Timor. Countering its observations that "the overwhelming majority of the people aspire to independence", Gough Whitlam expressed his unwillingness to accept "at face value the claims of the political personalities who have emerged in the first year of political activity in Timor". His alternative view was that "[t]here may well be, below the surface, thoroughly indigenous political forces which would carry the inhabitants of Portuguese Timor in directions from those on which their present leaders are set". With respect to the option of integration with Indonesia, Whitlam argued that "the division of the island of Timor is no more than an accident of Western colonial history". Despite his negative views on the independence movement in Portuguese Timor, he added that "I can assure you that the Government has always supported the right of the Timorese to decide their own future. If the people of Portuguese Timor, after

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<sup>74</sup> Letter from Woolcott to Willesee, Jakarta, 17 April 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 253-4.

careful consideration, were to choose independence, then we would of course accept that decision". In any case, Whitlam clearly opposed the re-establishment of a Consulate in Dili on the grounds that "[p]olitical interests in Portuguese Timor could seek to use our presence to involve us to an extent which I do not feel would be appropriate for Australia". In the last part of his letter, Gough Whitlam emphasised that "[t]he question of Portuguese Timor must be seen against the fundamental importance to us of a long-term cooperative relationship with Indonesia".<sup>75</sup>

On 2 June, Ambassador Woolcott again wrote to Foreign Minister Willesee regarding Australian policy towards Portuguese Timor. As for the political situation in Portuguese Timor, he observed that "a genuine act of self-determination in the territory would result in eventual independence" but that the possibility that "Indonesia might come to accept the idea of independence" was "extremely unlikely". Regarding the possibility of Indonesian military intervention, he wrote that "[i]f Indonesia decides to use force or crude pressure to achieve its objectives I do not think that Australian opposition would prevent this, once the President had decided that such action was in Indonesia's national interest". He repeated that Australia's policy was in harmony with those of the South-East Asian region, writing that "it would be important to avoid becoming the only or the main country in the region obstructing what Indonesia and its other neighbours could well see as Indonesia's legitimate national interest". Although he recognised that Australian diplomats and politicians should continue to "encourage Indonesia to go through with some process to determine the will of the people" and "impress upon the Indonesians our opposition to the use of force", his conclusion was that "our best interests will lie in coming to terms with the realities of the situation".<sup>76</sup>

On 7 July, Foreign Minister Willesee, in reply to Ambassador Woolcott, again made

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<sup>75</sup> Letter from Whitlam to Gietzelt, 22 April 1975, NLA, Papers of Kenneth Fry (MS 5233), Box102, Folder 1.

<sup>76</sup> Dispatch to Willesee, Jakarta, 2 June 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 265-9.

his points clear. With reference to the Ambassador's conclusive words mentioned above, the Foreign Minister commented that "the 'realities' you speak of...would also have to apply to the domestic situation in Australia". In this context, the Foreign Minister explained to the Ambassador the difficulty of avoiding issuing a statement in support of a proper act of self-determination for the Timorese when Indonesian interference became sufficiently blatant to stimulate Australian domestic opinion. He also noted "the attention of many groups in Australia sympathetic to Portuguese Timorese independence". While foreseeing difficult relations between Australia and Indonesia being caused by Australian public opinion in the case of Indonesian military action, Foreign Minister Willesee still hoped that Indonesia might accept the thought of an independent Portuguese Timor through Australian diplomatic persuasion and constructive approaches towards the Timorese and Portuguese. In this context, he argued that there were some advantages for the Australian government in issuing a public statement in support of a proper act of self-determination, not only because it was in line with the general philosophy of the ALP and the Government's stance at the UN but also because it would provide "a safeguard that other options for the future of Timor, other than independence – including that of integration with Indonesia – may be left open" and would help to "deflect pressure that the Government declare itself in favour of independence".<sup>77</sup>

In this way, from April to July 1975, Australian foreign policymakers continued to debate Australia's position on the question of Portuguese Timor. On the one hand, in cooperation with Ambassador Woolcott, Prime Minister Whitlam condoned the Indonesian government doing almost what it wanted in Portuguese Timor in the interest of Australian relations with Indonesia and the region. On the other hand, against the backdrop of domestic pressures, Foreign Minister Willesee insisted on an Australian policy which might dissuade the

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<sup>77</sup> Letter from Willesee to Woolcott, Canberra, 7 July 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 285-7.

Indonesians from annexing East Timor by force and on an Australian government public statement in support of a proper act of self-determination for the Timorese.

### **Whitlam's policy towards civil war in Portuguese Timor**

Facing the political turmoil in Portuguese Timor and Yoga Sugama's request for Prime Minister Whitlam's views, Australian policymakers needed to seriously consider their reactions. In this regard, on 14 August, Ambassador Woolcott wrote to Canberra as follows.

We should also seek to emphasise the point publicly that we are not a party principal and that it is not in Australia's interests to become deeply involved in this matter. While it is not for us to be apologists for Indonesia it is certainly not in our interests to be in the vanguard of Indonesia's critics. There are also no inherent reasons why integration with Indonesia might not prove more workable for the Timorese inhabitants than independence or continuing factional friction.

I am fully aware of our consistent and public support for self-determination which is both enshrined in the Government's platform and in our general stance at the United Nations. But Portuguese Timor is now a complex and unclear situation and in the final analysis we need to make a pragmatic, practical, hard-headed assessment of our real long-term interests. There is no doubt in my mind that our relations with Indonesia in the long-term are more important to us than the future of Portuguese Timor, especially when the situation in the latter is as confused as it is, and the Portuguese seem to be losing control of the situation. I know I am suggesting that our principles should be tempered by the proximity of Indonesia and its importance to us and by the relative unimportance of Portuguese Timor but, in my view, this is where our

national interest lies.<sup>78</sup> (Emphases in the original)

On 16 August, Prime Minister Whitlam agreed with these suggestions, noting that “Woolcott is right” in the margin of a copy of the cablegram.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, in a meeting on 18 August, Foreign Minister Willesee again expressed his concerns over Whitlam’s policy.<sup>80</sup> On 20 August, after receiving another cablegram from Ambassador Woolcott reporting Suharto’s decision not to intervene militarily in Portuguese Timor and stating that this decision was made partly because of the President’s concerns about Australia’s reaction, Foreign Minister Willesee wrote to Prime Minister Whitlam as follows.

...As I have argued to you I am concerned that the Government would find itself in an embarrassing and politically indefensible position if Indonesia takes military action and it becomes known that we were forewarned of this possibility by a senior Indonesian official and did not respond to the invitation to state our views. I am also concerned that a failure to provide our views at this juncture may limit the range of reactions to any Indonesian military action available to us since the Indonesians would be able to argue to us that we were forewarned of their thinking and did not demur.

If, as Woolcott suggests, we do have some influence on President Suharto’s thinking, I believe we should attempt to trade on that influence and dissuade the Indonesians further from trying to integrate Portuguese Timor forcefully.

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78 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 14 August 1975, op.cit., esp. p. 309.

79 Ibid. See its footnote.

80 Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 19 August 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 317-8.

Unconfirmed reports I have received this evening highlight the prospect of disorder in the colony and in my opinion add a dimension of urgency to the need for urging restraint on the Indonesians...<sup>81</sup> (Emphasis in the original)

However, the Prime Minister continued to disregard Foreign Minister Willesee's suggestions. Meanwhile, in response to Governor Lemos Pires' request for the presence of international forces to bring about order and peace in Portuguese Timor, Indonesian policymakers considered military intervention and again asked "urgently" for "Mr Whitlam's views on Indonesian direct involvement".<sup>82</sup> Although assuming that no direct or indirect message to President Suharto was called for at this stage, Prime Minister Whitlam discussed his possible responses with DFA officials. During the discussion, the Prime Minister said that he did "not wish to give a prior indication to the Indonesians that he would understand an Indonesian military intervention in Portuguese Timor in the absence of a Portuguese request" but "[i]f the Indonesians themselves should decide such intervention necessary he would however be prepared publicly to show understanding of its causes and circumstances".<sup>83</sup>

On 26 August, at the request of many people both inside and outside Australia, Prime Minister Whitlam made his first statement on Portuguese Timor in the House of Representatives, which included the following messages.

I return...to the conclusion that the first priority is to put an end to the killing and fighting and to restore order. This objective requires the active intervention of Portugal itself. It is a responsibility that cannot be shrugged off on to others such as Australia. We have no national

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81 Note from Willesee to Whitlam, Canberra, 20 August 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 320.

82 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 24 August 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 336-7.

83 Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 25 August 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 342.

obligations or interest in getting reinvolved in colonial or post colonial affairs in Portuguese Timor at the very time when Papua New Guinea's imminent independence is leading to the ending of our colonial role there. We have no ethnic or cultural ties with the Timorese which would suggest a role for Australia in substitution for Portugal in Portuguese Timor.

The other interested country in all this is, of course, Indonesia with whom we have been in very close touch on developments in Portuguese Timor in recent days. Indonesia has shared the Australian concern about the evident drift in Portuguese policies and, like us, has urged on the Portuguese the need to reassert Portuguese control in Portuguese Timor. We, for our part, understand Indonesia's concern that the territory should not be allowed to become a source of instability on Indonesia's borders. Portuguese Timor is in many ways part of the Indonesian world, and its future is obviously a matter of great importance to Indonesia.<sup>84</sup>

Although the Prime Minister continued to say that "[t]he Australian Government has frequently stated its concern that the people of the territory should be able to decide their own future",<sup>85</sup> his underlying intention was to prepare for Indonesia's military intervention in Portuguese Timor when the Indonesian government made a decision. On the same day, during talks with Indonesian Ambassador Her Tasning, who asked about Australia's attitude in the case of a Portuguese request for Indonesian and Australian intervention, Prime Minister Whitlam replied that "Australia would certainly not want to involve Australian military forces in Portuguese Timor but that it was up to the Indonesian authorities to make up their own minds how they responded to the Portuguese. We would not be in a situation of seeking to exercise a

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<sup>84</sup> Statement by Whitlam, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 46:8, pp. 443-4.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.



veto on the Indonesian response”.<sup>86</sup>

### **Whitlam’s policy towards Fretilin’s early rule in Portuguese Timor**

Despite the emergence of the new political situation given Fretilin’s *de facto* control in Portuguese Timor and growing domestic pressures for active Australian diplomacy, Prime Minister Whitlam did not change his policy; for example, on 1 September, during talks with Portuguese Special Envoy Almeida Santos (as discussed above), he stated that Australia could not accept a way of thinking that “Australia should have some responsibility for decolonisation or self-determination” as a substitute for Portugal and also denied intending to send any Australian troops to Timor.<sup>87</sup> He was also not interested in the diplomatic plan suggested by Secretary Renouf of making Indonesian military action be seen as “to be acting not as a neo-colonialist but as the agent of a group of like-minded countries seeking regional peace” and concluding with an alternative regional agreement.<sup>88</sup>

Prime Minister Whitlam continued to receive advice from Ambassador Woolcott. On 3 September, having received the “top secret” information about Indonesian clandestine operations on the previous day, Ambassador Woolcott wrote to Gough Whitlam and Alan Renouf that “[t]he Indonesian Government from the President down have made it clear that it greatly appreciates your recent statements on Timor. So far Australian/Indonesian relations have not been harmed by developments in Timor which is of course one of our main objectives. On the contrary, they have been strengthened”.<sup>89</sup> After applauding Prime Minister Whitlam’s handling of the civil war in Portuguese Timor, Ambassador Woolcott proposed an Australian policy in the case of there being no Portuguese-Indonesian substantial agreement and “a

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<sup>86</sup> Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 26 August 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 345-6.

<sup>87</sup> Record of conversation between Santos, Whitlam and Morrison, Canberra, 1 September 1975, *op. cit.*

<sup>88</sup> Submission to Whitlam, Canberra, 4 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 379-83.

<sup>89</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 3 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 375-9.

continuation and extension of Indonesia's covert activities" as follows.

...I consider our best interests would be served by strict non-involvement outside of humanitarian assistance, understanding of Indonesia's concern about Timor and its action, and by efforts to blunt as far as possible the recrudescence of latent hostility to Indonesia in the Australian community.

Domestically, pressures against too obvious an Indonesian involvement in Portuguese Timor are sure to develop. But we should not lose sight of the fact that there is now very little likelihood of a proper act of self-determination taking place in Portuguese Timor and that Australia's best long-term interests, as well as those of Indonesia, and possibly even those of the majority of the indigenous Timorese in East Timor, are likely to be served by the incorporation of Portuguese Timor into Indonesia.<sup>90</sup> (Emphasis in the original)

After his discussion with Secretary Renouf, Prime Minister (and Acting Foreign Minister) Whitlam again agreed with these suggestions.<sup>91</sup> Accordingly, Ambassador Woolcott and other policymakers made some efforts to influence Australian public opinion; for example, at the request of the Ambassador, the DFA contacted Radio Australia to convey that there were some feelings in Jakarta that its reports had a pro-Fretilin bias.<sup>92</sup> On 24 September, writing directly to Bruce Juddery of *The Canberra Times*, who had written that Australian policy towards East Timor was a "nasty, narrow, cynical, obtuse and wholly dishonourable exercise" on 17 September, Ambassador Woolcott stated that "[t]he core of the Timor problem for

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 5 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 385-7, esp. p. 385.

<sup>92</sup> Letter from Mott to Woolcott, Canberra, 23 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 429-30.

Australia lies in its ramifications for our future relationship with Indonesia and the South East Asian region as a whole”.<sup>93</sup>

On the other hand, on 8 September, in response to Australian domestic concerns over the predicament of the Timorese, Prime Minister Whitlam decided to provide a cash contribution of \$100,000 to the ICRC Appeal for its relief work in Portuguese Timor and in Indonesian Timor to where more than 10,000 refugees from East Timor had evacuated. He announced this decision on 18 September.<sup>94</sup>

#### **4.3.2 Australian media and interest groups’ concerns over Portuguese Timor**

##### **Australian media and journalists’ concerns over Portuguese Timor**

The Australian media and journalists’ interests in the question of Portuguese Timor declined somewhat after the Whitlam-Suharto talks of April 1975, partly because of the moderation of Indonesia’s blatant interference policy and partly because of the shift in Australia’s attention to the situation in South Vietnam which was about to be overwhelmed by North Vietnam; for example, Michael Richardson, who had covered Portuguese Timor in March, flew to Saigon to report its fall in late April.

However, in June, after the resumption of Indonesia’s crude interference policy, some journalists again raised the question of the re-establishment of the Australian Consulate in Dili; for example, with reference to the letters exchanged between Prime Minister Whitlam and Senator Arthur Giezelt in April, Peter Hastings concluded that “the advantages of re-establishing our mission outweigh the disadvantages” because “if Australia knows what is happening on the ground in Timor on a day-to-day basis, there is much less chance of damaging

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<sup>93</sup> Letter from Woolcott to Juddery, Jakarta, 24 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 431-3.

<sup>94</sup> Submission to Whitlam, Canberra 19 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 423-5.

misunderstandings with Jakarta”.<sup>95</sup> Bruce Juddery of *The Canberra Times*, who started covering Portuguese Timor after his visit there in April<sup>96</sup>, also criticised the Government’s reluctance to re-open the Australian Consulate in Dili. After referring to one public servant’s comment that “[t]he real fear...is that the Indonesians are going to try to get East Timor, and if we aren't there, this will spare us the pain of a difficult situation”, Juddery’s criticism stated that “Australian policy smacks more of a hand-washing than an exercise in statesmanship”.<sup>97</sup>

However, it was the breakout of political turmoil in Portuguese Timor on 10 August and, in particular, the sensational stories told by Timorese refugees evacuating from Dili to Darwin that attracted wide attention from the media. After the civil war began to take hold in late August, Australian newspapers often argued about the Australian government’s possible reactions to the situation in East Timor; for example, *The Sydney Morning Herald* insisted that “[o]nce those who wished to leave Timor have been assisted to do so, Australia must direct its efforts towards ending the fighting and persuading the colony’s factions” to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict. It also warned that “[b]y standing pat, Australia would, in effect, be prompting only one of the three options which have been advocated for Timor – namely, its incorporation into Indonesia”.<sup>98</sup> *The Age* asserted that “[t]he best Australia can do is to keep all its diplomatic lines burning to counsel restraint in Jakarta, to urge positive action by Portugal and possibly, if the opportunity arises, to assume the role of mediator”, while rejecting the idea of “a quick surgical intervention by Australia to separate the combatants and restore order”.<sup>99</sup>

Commenting on Prime Minister Whitlam’s statement of 26 August, Australian

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<sup>95</sup> Peter Hastings, “Why Australia should reopen its consulate in East Timor”, *SMH*, 12 June 1975.

<sup>96</sup> Bruce Juddery, “East Timor: which way to turn”, *The Canberra Times*, 18 April 1975; “East Timor; 450 Years of Portuguese neglect”, *The Canberra Times*, 21 April 1975; “Fretilin to show Timor the advantages”, *The Canberra Times*, 23 April 1975; “Timorese leaders meet minister”, *The Canberra Times*, 24 April 1975.

<sup>97</sup> Bruce Juddery, “Situation in East Timor seems to be warming up again”, *The Canberra Times*, 11 June 1975.

<sup>98</sup> Editorial “Crisis in Timor”, *SMH*, 23 August 1975.

<sup>99</sup> Editorial “Time running out in Timor”, *The Age*, 26 August 1975.

newspapers further argued the need for an active Australian policy to achieve peace and order in East Timor; for example, *The Sydney Morning Herald* insisted that “[t]he only reasonable alternative is a joint mediation effort by Australia and Indonesia, with Portuguese endorsement, to bring an end to the fighting” because “Lisbon is incapable of the action necessary to restore order”.<sup>100</sup> *The Canberra Times* suggested that Australia help Portuguese Special Envoy Almeida Santos to visit Timor and offer him every facility, including Australian troops “to guarantee the best possible chance of success for his mission” “if no trustworthy Portuguese forces are available in the region”.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, being sceptical of the effectiveness and appropriateness of sending Australian troops to Portuguese Timor, *The Age* evaluated that “Mr. Whitlam is nearly right”. It proposed that, alternatively, Australia “tell the United Nations that it is willing to offer its good offices in any UN sponsored truce supervisory and any test of self-determination”.<sup>102</sup>

In early September, Australian newspapers raised their voices, demanding that the Australian government make a positive contribution to peace and a settlement on the basis of the will of the people of East Timor; for example, in anticipation of the convening of talks involving Portugal, the three Timorese political factions and Indonesia, *The Sydney Morning Herald* suggested that Australia “should seek to promote Indonesian acceptance of Fretilin for what it is”.<sup>103</sup> *The Age* insisted that Prime Minister Whitlam press the Indonesian government to not intervene in Portuguese Timor and “involve Australia more actively in the efforts to get the Timorese parties talking as a prelude, hopefully, to a plebiscite that would show clearly where the colony’s 650,000 people see their future” even at the cost of damaging Australia’s relations

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<sup>100</sup> Editorial “Who is Pilate?”, *SMH*, 27 August 1975.

<sup>101</sup> Editorial “The tragedy in Timor”, *SMH*, 27 August 1975.

<sup>102</sup> Editorial “Limits to our duty to Timor”, *The Age*, 28 August 1975.

<sup>103</sup> Editorial “Timor’s future”, *SMH*, 10 September 1975.

with Indonesia to some extent.<sup>104</sup>

Bruce Juddery continued to write his critical opinions of Australian policy towards East Timor in *The Canberra Times*. In his article on 3 September, he noted that “Australia’s handling of the East Timor question over the past three weeks has been exclusively the Prime Minister’s business”. Then, with reference to an academic strategist’s views that “an Indonesian invasion would be followed by 10 years of warfare in East Timor”, Juddery warned that “[i]t is worth asking...if Indonesia could survive its own Vietnam”.<sup>105</sup> On 17 September, after introducing his article with the following remarks made by relevant DFA officials: “Indonesia is big and important: Timor is small and unimportant. So why not let us help Indonesia get what she wants”, he warned that “it may be as serious a blunder as the series of diplomatic manoeuvres that involved Australia in the Vietnam War – and over the long term, do even greater damage to Australia’s national interests than did that conflict”. Predicting the certain future impacts of dissenting opinions in Australia over Australia’s relations with Indonesia, Bruce Juddery wrote that “[a] war of recession in Timor might not bring out the crowds that rallied to the Vietnam moratoriums but it would wreck relations below the government-to-government level and might strain them there, too”.<sup>106</sup> This article attracted Whitlam’s attention<sup>107</sup> and was responded to by Ambassador Woolcott, as mentioned above.

### **Australian journalists’ visits to Timor Island**

In late August, after many failed attempts by Australian journalists to fly from Darwin or Kupang to Dili, an Australian television team from the Channel Nine Network, together with Dr John Whitehall and Bill Bancroft, two members of ASIAT (Australian Society for

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104 Editorial “Jakarta’s finger on the trigger”, *The Age*, 12 September 1975.

105 Bruce Juddery, “Mr Whitlam’s puzzling policy on Portuguese Timor”, *The Canberra Times*, 3 September 1975.

106 Bruce Juddery, “Are we about to watch a new show on the Vietnam theme?”, *The Canberra Times*, 17 September 1975.

107 Submission to Whitlam, Canberra, 19 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 427-9.

Inter-Country Aid-Timor), a private medical organisation which had organised the venture (as discussed later), and the skipper of the vessel and his friend, was successfully smuggled there by a former Japanese fishing vessel, *Konpiramaru No.15*. The Channel Nine team consisted of Kerry Packer, the person who controlled the company and agreed to pay \$6000 for the project on the condition that he be accompanied by news director Gerald Stone, Brian Peters, a cameraman who was to be tragically killed in Balibo in October, and Packer's Portuguese bodyguard. Leaving Darwin on the evening of 26 August, *Konpiramaru No.15* arrived offshore of Dili on the night of 28 August. On 29 and 30 August, the Channel Nine team engaged in filming and interviewing local people in Dili and, on 31 August, Packer and Stone returned to Darwin with their first-hand video footage on a RAAF aircraft which had landed on Atauro Island to drop off several ICRC people.<sup>108</sup> On his return, Gerald Stone authored an article on his trip which indicated that he suspected that exaggerated reports on atrocities during the civil war in the Australian media were "the product of a planned campaign to plant lies" by the three governments of Portugal, Indonesia and Australia "to make the situation in East Timor appear as chaotic and hopeless as possible". He also criticised Whitlam's "non-involvement" policy, describing it as "the act of passing the scene of a fresh car accident without stopping to see what you can do to help".<sup>109</sup>

On and after 11 September, when the Portuguese authorities started to reissue Portuguese Timor visas, many journalists flew to Dili and started gathering information;<sup>110</sup> for example, Stewart Richmond, a correspondent with AAP (Australian Associated Press), reported that President Xavier do Amaral had said that "the party was ready to fight to the last man if any

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108 For accounts of the voyage of the Channel Nine team to Portuguese Timor, see Gerald Stone, *Compulsive Viewing : The Inside Story of Packer's Nine Network* (Ringwood, Vic: Viking, 2000), pp. 114-28; Paul Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer* (Sydney: Bantam/ABC Books, 1993), pp. 162-6. According to Stone, Kerry Packer went to Dili to escape the tension of waiting for final circulation figures of *The Australian Women's Weekly*, the editorial policy of which he had just changed, to come in. See Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 126-7.

109 Gerald Stone, "Timor – Island of Tragedy", *The Bulletin*, 6 September 1975, pp. 46-9.

110 "Pressure on PM to tell Indonesia: Stay out of Timor", *SMH*, 12 September 1975.

nation invaded the country” at the ceremony for the one-year anniversary of the formation of Fretilin on 12 September.<sup>111</sup> In late September, after gathering information in Dili and Baucau, John Edwards, a correspondent with *The National Times*, authored a long article on the situation in East Timor under the control of Fretilin. Observing that “[a] brand new nation is emerging on our doorstep which is destitute, rife with disease and preparing for an Indonesian invasion”, he warned his Australian readership that “the more likely prospect is a new Vietnam-style war if Indonesia intervenes”. As for an alternative Australian policy, Edwards argued that “[a] far bolder, a far sounder approach, is for Australia to make every effort to support the position of the western-oriented faction within Fretilin by a major relief effort – far greater than the miserable \$100,000 advanced – that would involve not only food and medical supplies, but also the re-establishment of open communication between East Timor and the outside world”.<sup>112</sup>

Also, some Australian journalists flew to Indonesian Timor to gather information on the situation around Timor Island; for example, Michael Richardson of *The Age*, who had been prevented from flying from Kupang to Dili in August,<sup>113</sup> revisited Indonesian Timor in September. He reported from the border areas and took pictures of the entry without permission from the Portuguese authorities of three Indonesian warships into the waters of Portuguese Timor.<sup>114</sup>

### **Activities of interested people and José Ramos-Horta in Australia**

Interested individuals and groups in Australia continued to be involved in various supportive activities for the Timorese and, in particular, kept in contact with José Ramos-Horta of Fretilin. As many documents created by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation

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<sup>111</sup> Stewart Richmond, “We would fight to end: Fretilin”, *The Age*, 13 September 1975.

<sup>112</sup> John Edwards, “Timor : A New Vietnam?”, *The National Times*, 29 September - 4 October 1975.

<sup>113</sup> Michael Richardson, “Our man banned from flying to Portuguese Timor”, *The Age*, 21 August 1975.

<sup>114</sup> Michael Richardson, “Indonesian ships in rescue bid”, *The Age*, 20 September 1975; “Pressure on Indonesia to step in”, 22 September 1975.



(ASIO) suggest, Denis Freney and other CPA and leftist people were particularly active;<sup>115</sup> for example, at the request of Ramos-Horta,<sup>116</sup> two CPA members from Darwin, Brian Manning and Lai Con Liong, visited Portuguese Timor from 19 to 26 May to attend celebrations for the first anniversary of the foundation of ASDT/Fretilin on 20 May.<sup>117</sup> When José Ramos-Horta visited Australia during the period from 2 June to 11 September, Denis Freney again acted as a major contact.

During his three-month stay in Australia, Ramos-Horta lived principally in Canberra in accordance with his plan; he had written to Denis Freney in March that “I think that at this stage, it is very important for someone of Fretilin to stay in Australia...for permanent contacts with the Press and Gov...I am thinking of going to Canberra as it is close to the Gov. circles and also as I could take the opportunity to study for a while. Prof. Fisk, from ANU, had promised to arrange for me to study in Canberra for 2-3 months”.<sup>118</sup> Arriving in Canberra on 5 June, he actually enrolled at the Australian National University in an introductory course on ASEAN under the personal guidance of the Professor of International Relations, T. B. Millar.<sup>119</sup> Ramos-Horta also started to speak about East Timor to people in Australia; for example, on 10 June, after being introduced to about fifteen students by Jill Jolliffe at the ANU, he talked about the history of Portuguese Timor, explaining that Fretilin’s philosophy was different from those of Marxism and Stalinism. Then, he asked for their support for independence for East Timor.<sup>120</sup>

In response to Ramos-Horta’s activities, in Canberra on 26 June, a new organisation,

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115 In particular, this thesis refers to the four volumes of files entitled “Jose Ramos-Horta” available at the National Archives of Australia: NAA, A6119, 4407 – 4410 (hereafter referred to as the Ramos-Horta file).

116 Letter from Ramos-Horta to Neilley, 10 May 1975, NAA, Ramos-Horta file, Vol. 1.

117 Brian Manning, “Charlie India Echo Tango calling Timor Leste” in Phil Griffiths and Hal Alexander (eds.), *A Few Rough Reds : Stories of Rank and File Organising* (Canberra: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra Region Branch, 2003), pp. 15-6.

118 Letter from Ramos-Horta to Freney, 12 March 1975, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

119 President Ramos-Horta’s address entitled “ Democracy in Timor-Leste: Challenges and Prospects”, the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, 22 June 2010. Its record is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBpj3Ut61o4>.

120 ASIO Minute Paper, 17 June 1975, NAA, Ramos Horta file, Vol. 1.

Campaign for the Independence of East Timor (A.C.T.), was formed and about 25 people, including Ken Fry, Jill Jolliffe, Brendan O'Dwyer and Michael Griffith (acting as publicity persons) and John Sinnott (treasurer), participated in its inaugural meeting. Declaring "our support for an independent East Timor" and calling on "the Australian government and people to declare their open support for an independent East Timor", the organisation requested the Australian government to "press for assurances that the Indonesian government formally accepts the right of the East Timorese people to independence" and "cease all military aid to Indonesia, including joint military exercises". It also called for the re-opening of the Australian Consulate in Dili "[a]s a sign of the Australian government's goodwill towards the people of East Timor".<sup>121</sup>

Ramos-Horta often visited other places and communicated with many people during his stay in Australia; for example, in Melbourne in June, he had talks with Helen Hill, a Masters student at Monash University who had stayed in East Timor from January to March, and people from Community Aid Abroad and other aid agencies. He was allowed to address the Victorian Labor Party conference which also unanimously adopted a resolution supporting the right to independence for the people of East Timor.<sup>122</sup> In July, with the support of Denis Freney, Ramos-Horta travelled to New Zealand and Fiji.

The political crisis in Portuguese Timor, which led to the civil war between UDT and Fretilin, erupted during Ramos-Horta's stay in Australia. While waiting for a chance to fly back from Darwin to Dili, he sent telegrams to relevant parties in the hope of settling the crisis through talks. In a telegram to Foreign Minister Willesee, Ramos-Horta wrote that "I believe an urgent meeting between delegates of the Australian, Indonesian and Portuguese Governments

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<sup>121</sup> Jill Jolliffe's letter, [undated], NLA, Papers of Kenneth Fry (MS 5233), Box 102, Folder 1. See also Bruce Juddery, "Boycott of Timor talks defended", *The Canberra Times*, 28 June 1975. It should be noted that Campaign for the Independence of East Timor was a different organisation from Campaign for Independent East Timor formed by Denis Freney in Sydney in November 1974.

<sup>122</sup> Helen Hill, "Horta's back for more support", *The Nation Review*, 13-19 June 1975.

and all three major political groups in East Timor will contribute effectively in the settlement of the conflict".<sup>123</sup> Some ex-servicemen in Sydney expressed their support for Ramos-Horta's appeal on the grounds that his father had been an ally of theirs during the Second World War.<sup>124</sup> However, this appeal was finally rejected by Foreign Minister Willesee.<sup>125</sup> At last, on 11 September, Ramos-Horta was able to temporarily fly back to East Timor in an aircraft chartered by Northern Territory News with others, including its journalists and Jill Jolliffe.<sup>126</sup>

A notable aspect of the activities of Australians interested in East Timor during this period was that right-wing people also became involved in rivalry with the CPA and other leftists. In particular, the activities of ASIAT were remarkable. Its central members were Michael Darby, a businessman who had stood against Prime Minister Whitlam as a Liberal candidate in the Federal elections in May 1974, Dr John Whitehall, a pediatrician in Sydney, and Bill Bancroft. Also, some doctors and nurses were affiliated with it. Having succeeded in organising a medical mission to support Vietnamese evacuees from Saigon to Guam in April and May, they turned their eyes to East Timor which, in July, Whitehall and Bancroft visited for the first time to assess medical needs.<sup>127</sup> In August, facing the outbreak of civil war, ASIAT came up with a plan to sail from Darwin to Dili with some supplies on a vessel lent to them and enlisted the Channel Nine Network as their sponsor as seen above. Following Dr Whitehall's initial medical activities, ASIAT set up a clinic in Dili with a doctor and several nurses which continued to function until a few days before the Indonesian invasion in December 1975.<sup>128</sup>

However, despite its medical activities, ASIAT was not seen as a genuine humanitarian organisation. Gerald Stone, who sailed to East Timor in the same vessel, later wrote that

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123 Jack Taylor, "Plea to avert new bloodshed", *SMH*, 16 August 1975.

124 D. O'Connor et.al., "Australia's debt to the Timorese", *SMH*, 18 August 1975.

125 "Aust 'betrayed' Timorese", *SMH*, 23 August 1975.

126 Letter from Director General of ASIO to Director of JIO, 12 September 1975, NAA, Ramos Horta file, Vol. 2.

127 John Whitehall, "The Myths of Balibo", *Quadrant* 53:10, 2009, esp. p. 6.

128 John Whitehall, "Among the Quick and the Dead in East Timor, 1975", *Quadrant* 54:10, 2010.

“[w]hile I admired Whitehall and Bancroft for their initiative, I identified both as being Cold War right-wingers out to save East Timor from the red menace and had little time for what I consider to be their anti-Fretilin bias”.<sup>129</sup> Dr Whitehall also admitted that, although ASIAT maintained cordial relations with Fretilin, he “remained frightened by their ideology and was worried about their association with prominent communists in Australia” such as Denis Freney. The ICRC which, coincidentally, started its medical activities in East Timor in September, also regarded ASIAT as essentially political despite its efforts to be independent.<sup>130</sup>

### **Parliamentarians’ interest in East Timor**

Describing Whitlam’s statement on 26 August as the “bankruptcy of a foreign affairs policy”, the Shadow Foreign Minister of the Liberal Party, Andrew Peacock, continued to criticise the Labor government’s policy.<sup>131</sup> However, it is said that he changed his views behind the scenes through talks with Indonesian policymakers in April and September 1975. Firstly, according to an account by Ambassador Woolcott, who met him in Jakarta in late April when he visited President Suharto and Foreign Minister Malik, Peacock accepted the idea that “an independent Timor is unlikely to be in anyone’s long-term interests and that Australia’s present interests are best served by a less obtrusive Australian stance and a measure of political disengagement from the issue”.<sup>132</sup> Secondly, according to an Indonesian record, during his talks with Harry Tjan and Lim Bian Kie in Bali on 24 September, which had been prearranged by Indonesian Ambassador Her Tasning and himself in Canberra,<sup>133</sup> Peacock said that the Liberal Party “would not protest against Indonesia if Indonesia was forced to do something about

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<sup>129</sup> Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 120.

<sup>130</sup> Whitehall, “Among the Quick and the Dead in East Timor, 1975”, op. cit.

<sup>131</sup> “Onus on Lisbon, says Whitlam”, *SMH*, 27 August 1975.

<sup>132</sup> Letter from Woolcott to Feakes, Jakarta, 12 May 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 259.

<sup>133</sup> Cablegram to Canberra (O. JA2026), Jakarta, 24 September 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 14.

Portuguese Timor, for example to “go in” to restore peace there” but would criticise Prime Minister Whitlam in order “to fulfil his role as Opposition”. According to this record, he also said that “[b]asically he respects Whitlam’s policy in this Portuguese problem and he personally is of the same opinion” and that if he became the Foreign Minister “[h]e will continue to maintain good relations with Indonesia and allocate top priority towards Indonesia”.<sup>134</sup> While the authenticity of this record is controversial, an anonymous informant who later wrote to Ken Fry insisted that the outcomes of the talks even influenced President Suharto’s decision to begin military action a few days later, as will be seen in the next chapter.<sup>135</sup>

On the other hand, the six Labor parliamentarians who had travelled to East Timor in March 1975 (Gietzelt, Fry, Kerin, Gun, Clayton and McIntosh) continued to attempt to influence Prime Minister Whitlam’s thinking; for example, following Whitlam’s statement on 26 August, they wrote a letter in which they warned the Prime Minister that “the likely result of any Indonesian intervention in Portuguese Timor under any circumstances would be to prolong the fighting”, and argued that “an Australian initiative is essential to end the fighting and to restore peace in the region”.<sup>136</sup>

From 16 to 18 September, with the support of Michael Darby of ASIAT, Arthur Gietzelt and Ken Fry visited East Timor again and travelled to the towns of Dili, Baucau, Viqueque and Suai by aircraft.<sup>137</sup> Neville Bonner of the Liberal Party accompanied them on 16 September but flew back to Darwin the same day. After returning to Australia, Gietzelt and Fry authored a report in which they argued that “our tour around the island confirmed that the claims by Fretilin that they are virtually in full control of the situation” were true and that it

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134 Paul Kelly, “Intelligence leak against Minister”, *The National Times*, 2-7 May 1977.

135 Ken Fry, “Lest we forget East Timor”, in Jim Aubrey (ed.), *Free East Timor : Australia's Culpability in East Timor's Genocide* (Milsons Point, N.S.W: Vintage, 1998), pp. 32-72, esp. pp. 64-72.

136 Letter from Gietzelt et al. to Whitlam, 27 August 1975, NLA, Papers of Ken Fry (MS 5233), Box 102, Folder 2.

137 Ken Fry, *A Humble Backbencher* (Canberra: Ginninderra Press, 2002), p. 99; “Team to check Timor control”, *SMH*, 15 September 1975.

“appeared to have the overwhelming support of the local population”.<sup>138</sup> On 24 September, Ken Fry sent a letter to Prime Minister Whitlam enclosing this report and expressed the group’s concerns over a food shortage in Portuguese Timor and his wish to discuss the Timor question with Prime Minister Whitlam as soon as convenient.<sup>139</sup> However, Prime Minister Whitlam did not want to discuss the Timor question with them.<sup>140</sup>

## Conclusion

On the basis of his personal relationship with President Suharto, Prime Minister Whitlam exercised his dominant influence over Australian foreign policymaking concerning the question of the decolonisation of Portuguese Timor. Disregarding Foreign Minister Willesee’s opinion, he continued to implement as cooperative a policy with the Indonesian annexation policy as possible in the interest of Australian relations with Indonesia and the region. The Australian Embassy in Jakarta, headed initially by Robert Furlonger and then after March 1975 by Richard Woolcott, also supported Prime Minister Whitlam’s policy to advance and maintain good relations with Indonesia regardless of East Timor.

However, what Prime Minister Whitlam could not control, despite his and others’ considerable efforts, was domestic opinion and the activities of interested people outside the Cabinet and Departments. The Australian public’s concerns over Australia’s inactive policy towards East Timor and the foreseeable Indonesian military takeover of it became stronger, particularly after the eruption of civil war in East Timor in late August and the emergence of *de facto* control by Fretilin which was regarded with hostility by the Indonesian government. Following the Channel Nine Network’s success in smuggling people into Dili in late August,

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<sup>138</sup> Ken Fry, *Report on visit to Portuguese East Timor by Senator Gietzelt and K.L.Fry 16-18 September 1975*, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 14.

<sup>139</sup> Letter from Fry to Whitlam, 24 September 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 14.

<sup>140</sup> Fry, *A Humble Backbencher*, p. 102.

many journalists, two Labor parliamentarians and some aid workers visited East Timor to observe the situation with their own eyes. Their accounts reinforced public concerns about the Australian government's reaction to East Timor.

## **Chapter 5: Beginning of Indonesian military intervention in East Timor and transformation of Australian policy from late September to mid-December 1975**

This chapter examines Australian foreign policy in relation to the Indonesian annexation of East Timor from late September to the first half of December 1975. During this period, when Fretilin, East Timor's *de facto* ruler, was preparing for independence from Portugal, the Indonesian military gradually intervened and eventually launched a massive attack on Dili after 7 December 1975. In response to news reports of these Indonesian military activities, which also involved the killings of five journalists working for Australian television companies, the Australian public expressed its strong concern over Indonesia's intentions and demanded that the Australian government submit a protest. Under these circumstances, what policy did the Australian government carry out after having implemented as close a one as possible to that of Indonesian annexation during the leadership of Prime Minister Whitlam?

To analyse this question in detail, this chapter consists of the following three sections. Section 5.1 looks at Indonesia's annexation policy and, while dealing with the escalation of Indonesian intervention in East Timor, also pays attention to the diplomatic activities which had been undertaken between the parties concerned to November 1975. Section 5.2 examines Australian foreign policymaking towards the question of East Timor, with particular focus on the role of the DFA, when Australia's politics was suffering from its domestic crisis which led to the replacement of the Prime Minister on 11 November. Section 5.3 focuses on Australian public concerns over East Timor which, although some interest had been shown prior to the civil war in August, increased considerably during this period as seen in the opinions of the media and the



activities of interested groups.

## ***5.1 Indonesian military intervention in East Timor and end of diplomatic solution***

### **5.1.1 Beginning of intervention of Indonesian regular forces**

#### **Policy conflicts between President Suharto and General Murdani**

As seen in the previous chapter, the Indonesian military had already started its small-scale intervention in the territory of East Timor in September 1975. However, this did not succeed because of Falintil soldiers' counterattacks in defence of East Timor. Under these circumstances, senior Indonesian military personnel complained to President Suharto who had refused to authorise a massive intervention into this civil war in August because of his concerns of an anti-Indonesian guerrilla war, and the financial burden and international criticism against Indonesia which would result.<sup>1</sup> In late September, even Benny Murdani, who directed the Indonesian military operation in East Timor, complained to Ambassador Woolcott that “speaking as a soldier’ the President had been wrong” after telling him that President Suharto had said that he did “not want to carry the blame for the rest of his life” for an Indonesian invasion in East Timor.<sup>2</sup>

In the end, under constant pressure from the military, President Suharto made a decision to substantially increase military force and intervene in East Timor on 26 and 29 September. According to information delivered to Australian diplomats by Harry Tjan on 30 September and 13 October, the President approved a special budget and agreed with the redeployment of up to

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1 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 31 August 1975, in Wendy Way (ed.), *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000) (hereafter *AIIPT*), p. 366.

2 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 27 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 435-7.

3,800 soldiers from Java to Portuguese Timor to assist the anti-Fretilin forces. This was under the condition that the Indonesian military would avoid “outright Indonesian intervention”,<sup>3</sup> such as showing the Indonesian flag. During talks on 13 October, Harry Tjan also said that the Indonesian military operation, which aimed for the occupation of Dili by anti-Fretilin forces, would start on 15 October.<sup>4</sup>

During the evening of 15 October 1975, prior to the launch of the Indonesian military intervention the following morning, Major-General Murdani had talks with Ambassador Woolcott. Having returned from his travel to Indonesian Timor and Batugade, the border town on the north coast of East Timor which had been seized by the pro-Indonesian combined forces on 8 October, he observed that “Apodeti and UDT only had about 200 of what he would call good front line troops”, and insisted that “there was no alternative to a higher level of Indonesian assistance than the President wanted”. He again criticised the reluctance of President Suharto and told Ambassador Woolcott that “I am a soldier not a politician. If I had been authorised to do so, I could have tied up Timor in a week. But the old man hesitated and would not let us do what should have been done. He looks 50 years ahead when Indonesia will really be a major power and he does not want Indonesians then to look back on him as a President who could be called a bully or an aggressor”. In advance of the Indonesian military operation, Murdani explained his expectation that Indonesian “volunteers” would reach as far as “a line roughly from Liquica in the north through Aileu to Same in the south”, the areas surrounding Dili, by the end of October. In return for the provision of such sensitive information concerning Indonesia’s military plans, he asked Ambassador Woolcott to persuade the Australian government to refrain from criticising Indonesian military activities.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 30 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 439-40.

4 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 13 October 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 462. See also Desmond Ball and Hamish McDonald, *Death in Balibo Lies in Canberra* (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2000), pp. 65-7.

5 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 16 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 472-6.

## **Beginning of Indonesian military intervention**

Following the skirmishes with Falintil soldiers in Batugade on 8 October,<sup>6</sup> in the early morning of 16 October 1975, the combined forces started moving into border areas inside East Timor, successfully occupying some villages and towns. To cover up the participation of Indonesian regular forces, pro-Indonesian soldiers wore blue jeans and T-shirts and carried older weapons, such as AK-47 (Kalashnikov) rifles made in the USSR rather than US-made M-16 rifles. To obtain more AK-47 rifles, Murdani even asked Malaysia to return its stockpile of them which it had captured from the Indonesian military during the Confrontation period in the middle of the 1960s; these were soon sent to the field commander, Colonel Dading Kalbuadi.<sup>7</sup> During the Balibo attacks on 16 October, members of the Indonesian forces killed five journalists working for Australian television companies on the orders of Captain Yunus Yosfiah, as discussed later.

However, the combined forces could not significantly advance for more than one month despite their use of some advanced weapons and aircraft. On 18 October, US intelligence observed that “Indonesian troops attacking into Portuguese Timor have succeeded in occupying five border towns, but have bogged down in some areas after three days of fighting”. On 20 October, it reported that the “Indonesian military operation into Portuguese Timor has been temporarily blunted by surprisingly strong Fretilin resistance, by the poor condition of Indonesian war materiel, and by the effect of the wet season on transportation”.<sup>8</sup>

After 21 November, the Indonesian military restarted its activities in Portuguese Timor, while President Suharto was “still unwilling to agree to large scale Indonesian intervention or to admit involvement” and Murdani and Sugama were ““trying to find a way to convince the old

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6 Hendro Subroto, *Eyewitness to Integration of East Timor* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1997), pp. 60-5.

7 Kenneth J. Conboy, *Kopassus: Inside Indonesia's Special Forces* (Jakarta: Equinox Pub., 2003), p. 225; Kenneth J. Conboy, *Elite: The Special Forces of Indonesia 1950-2008* (Jakarta: Equinox, 2008), p. 27.

8 Dale Van Atta and Brian Toohey, “The Timor Papers Part Two”, *The National Times*, 6-12 June 1982, p. 16.

man' that Indonesia 'ought to move in'".<sup>9</sup> According to Hendro Subroto who was following a Marine landing team, the Indonesian forces began to use more advanced Soviet-made weapons, including PT-76 light amphibious tanks and BTR-50 amphibious armoured personnel carriers which had been commissioned by Indonesia in the mid-1950s for its military operation to integrate Netherlands New Guinea.<sup>10</sup> From 21 to 22 November, a submarine tender and an AC-47 gunship were also used to attack a few places in East Timor.<sup>11</sup> On 25 November, a B-25 bomber and a destroyer escort assaulted a military stronghold of Fretilin, Atabae, which was witnessed by two Australian journalists who were gathering information in East Timor, Michael Richardson and Jill Jolliffe.<sup>12</sup> Regardless of the Australian public's strong criticism, the Indonesian military continued its operations and captured Atabae on the morning of 28 November.

### **Military and diplomatic resistance by Fretilin**

Against the Indonesian invasion from the border areas, Fretilin, the *de facto* ruler of East Timor, resisted by both military and diplomatic means. As to its military power, observers commonly agreed with its substantial strength; for example, in early September, Major Mota, who had returned from Portuguese Timor to Lisbon, said that Fretilin had "approximately 15,000 semi-automatic G-3 rifles of Belgian or German manufacture" and about 12-15 81mm and 60mm mortars and some bazookas.<sup>13</sup> On 22 October, John Starey, an Australian DFA official who was gathering information on East Timor in Darwin, reported that the armed manpower available to Fretilin had been "augmented from a basic core of 3,000 regular soldiers to a total of around

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9 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 27 November 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 584-6.

10 Subroto, *Eyewitness*, p. 97. According to him, the Marine landing team was also equipped D-30 122mm howitzers, Katyusha multiple rocket launchers and medium-sized 81mm calibre mortars on its back lines.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

12 Michael Richardson, "Indonesians pound key Timor town", *SMH*, 26 November 1975; Jill Jolliffe, *Balibo* (Carlton North, Vic.: Scribe Publications, 2009), pp. 134-6.

13 Cablegram to Canberra, Lisbon, 4 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 384-5.

30,000 men, necessarily mainly composed of hastily armed and undertrained militia” and was “in possession of an extraordinary large supply of arms and ammunition”. Also observing that “Fretilin appears to have presented itself quite effectively to the people as the standard-bearer of nationalism, democracy and freedom from foreign domination” under the leadership of its Vice-President, Nicolau Lobato, Starey cautioned officials of the DFA that “[i]t would be imprudent to under-estimate Fretilin’s readiness to make sacrifices, its degree of popular support, or its ability to wage a prolonged guerrilla resistance in the rugged Timor terrain”.<sup>14</sup>

Fretilin increased its diplomatic activities by appealing against Indonesia’s invasion to the United Nations and other countries through many telegrams and the dispatch of its representatives overseas; for example, on 7 October when the Indonesian military was attacking Batugade, José Ramos-Horta wrote to the UN committee for decolonisation that “[t]his is an alarm to all countries and governments of the world. Indonesian troops violated yesterday the Portuguese territory of East Timor... The people of East Timor under Fretilin leadership will fight to the last man if any foreign power intervenes in our territory”.<sup>15</sup> After the Indonesian invasion began on 16 October, Ramos-Horta warned the UN Committee for decolonisation that “Indonesia has started a new Vietnam”.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Fretilin President Amaral sent a message to Indonesian President Suharto calling for him to hold talks in order to avert a protracted conflict.<sup>17</sup> While resisting the Indonesian invasion, on 26 October, the Central Committee of Fretilin decided to invite the Portuguese government’s representatives in Ataúro Island to visit Timor Island during the first fortnight of November to discuss with it a “form of transition towards independence for the territory of East Timor”.<sup>18</sup>

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14 Telegraphic message to Canberra, Darwin, 22 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 499-500.

15 Cablegram to Canberra, New York, 7 October 1975, NAA, A1838, 3038/9/1, Annex A.

16 Cablegram to Canberra, New York, 17 October 1975, NAA, A1838, 3038/9/1, Annex A.

17 Cablegram to Jakarta and Lisbon, Canberra, 20 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 495-6.

18 Cablegram to Canberra, New York, 28 October 1975, NAA, A1838, 3038/9/1, Annex A.

To stimulate the sympathetic interest of African countries, Fretilin sent Mari Alkatiri and César Mau Laka to Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania and other places during the period from October to November with the assistance of Denis Freney who planned the itinerary and a financial contribution of US\$ 4000 from the Angola Comité in Holland.<sup>19</sup> Fretilin also dispatched José Ramos-Horta to Australia. During his talks with Foreign Minister Willesee on 28 October, Ramos-Horta asked the Australian government to assist in restraining Indonesia. While arguing that “the wishes of the Timorese people and the ‘reality of the situation’ in Portuguese Timor had to be taken fully into account”, he did not rule out the possibility of Fretilin talking with UDT and Apodeti under the condition that Indonesia cease its military action.<sup>20</sup>

### **5.1.2 End of international diplomacy**

#### **Indonesian and Portuguese Foreign Ministers’ talks in Rome**

While Indonesian “volunteers” were intervening in East Timor, the Australian, Indonesian and Portuguese governments continued their diplomatic activities regarding the territory. Firstly, on 30 October, prior to the planned talks between the Indonesian and Portuguese Foreign Ministers in Rome, Australian Foreign Minister Willesee expressed Australia’s support for a “resolution of the conflict in Portuguese Timor by peaceful means through which the will of the people will be expressed”. He also announced that “the Government would be prepared to offer an Australian venue for round-table talks” under the condition it be accepted by the three Timorese parties.<sup>21</sup> This statement was passed by Ambassador Woolcott to Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik before he departed for Rome.<sup>22</sup>

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19 Letter from Director-General of ASIO to Director of JIO, 23 October 1975, “Ramos-Horta file”, vol. 2; Telegram from Angola Comité Mondlane Foundation to CIET, 4 September 1975, NLA, Papers of Denis Freney (MS 9535).

20 Record of conversation between Willesee and Horta, 28 October 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 15.

21 Statement by Willesee, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 46:10, 1975, pp. 653-5.

22 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 31 October 1975, *AIHPT*, pp. 536-7.

Secondly, on 1 and 2 November, Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik and Portuguese Foreign Minister Melo Antunes met and discussed the question of the decolonisation of Portuguese Timor in Rome. While there is no direct information available about these talks, it is known that the Australian Foreign Minister's statement was referred to and that Antunes rejected two Indonesian proposals, one for a joint peace-keeping force to maintain peace and order in the territory of Portuguese Timor and the other for an Indonesian escort for refugees fleeing from Portuguese to Indonesian Timor for their protection.<sup>23</sup>

On 3 November, the Portuguese and Indonesian Foreign Ministers publicised a joint press statement incorporating the two countries' basic principles. On the one hand, in line with Portuguese decolonisation policy in general, they "agreed that the fundamental responsibility for the decolonisation of Portuguese Timor lies with Portugal", "agreed on the urgent need to restore peace and order in the Territory, so as to enable its people freely to decide their own future" and "concurred on the necessity to convene, at the earliest possible time, a meeting between Portugal and all political parties in Portuguese Timor simultaneously". On the other hand, in accordance with the Indonesian intention to interfere, the joint statement mentioned that the two questions of "refugees from Portuguese Timor now residing in Indonesian territory" and "the 23 Portuguese nationals" detained by UDT, that is, virtually by the Indonesians, were "of urgent important to their respective Governments and therefore agreed on the need for their speedy solution". The two Foreign Ministers also "shared the view that in the implementation of decolonisation of Portuguese Timor it would be essential also to safeguard the legitimate interests of the countries of the region, particularly the interests of Indonesia".<sup>24</sup>

Thirdly, on 5 November, as a result of the Rome talks, the Portuguese government

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<sup>23</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Rome, 4 November 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 546-7. See also its footnote.

<sup>24</sup> Joint Press Statement Concerning Talks between the Foreign Ministers of Portugal and Indonesia Held in Rome on 1 and 2 November 1975, 3 November 1975, in Heike Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community: Basic Documents* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.39.

submitted a concrete proposal to hold talks between the Portuguese delegation led by Minister Vítor Crespo and the three Timorese parties of Fretilin, UDT and Apodeti, during the period between 15 and 20 November, in Australia. It also suggested that the agenda of the talks include the following three items: the establishment and maintenance of a ceasefire; the establishment of a mechanism for the transition to self-determination of East Timor; and the return of the refugees in Indonesia.<sup>25</sup> On 6 November, after sending invitations to the three parties, Portuguese Foreign Minister Antunes met Australian Ambassador Cooper and asked for the Australian government's agreement to the Portuguese proposal. He also mentioned his preference for Darwin as the venue for the proposed talks.<sup>26</sup>

### **End of diplomacy**

Following the Portuguese proposal, the governments of Portugal, Indonesia and Australia and the Timorese parties continued to exchange their views and information; for example, during his talks with Australian Ambassador Woolcott regarding East Timor on 12 November, Lieutenant General Sugama suggested that “perhaps Australia could use its links with FRETILIN to influence them to attend”, while also saying that “Indonesia could get UDT and APODETI to attend talks if they materialised”. However, with reference to Bangkok and other capital cities in South East Asia, he expressed his preference for holding the talks in a place other than Darwin because of the number of Fretilin supporters in Australia.<sup>27</sup> On 17 November, Akosah, of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, informed Allan Taylor that Portuguese Minister Vítor Crespo had told the Indonesian Ambassador to Portugal that Fretilin had accepted the Portuguese invitation. According to Akosah, the Portuguese Minister also expressed his plan to visit Australia

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25 Mário Lemos Pires (ed.), *Relatório Do Governo De Timor* (Lisboa: Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, 1981), pp. 359-60.

26 Cablegram to Canberra, Lisbon, 6 November 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 554-5.

27 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 13 November 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 571-2.



on 24 November in anticipation that the talks might take place on 25 November in Darwin, while also asking “the Indonesian Government to exert influence on UDT and Apodeti to get an early reply from them”.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, two Fretilin leaders, José Ramos-Horta and Alarico Fernandes, visited Australia and had talks with Graham Feakes of the DFA on 21 November.<sup>29</sup>

In the end, the talks proposed by the Portuguese government did not take place in late November. In this context, a secret message from Australian Prime Minister Fraser to President Suharto, which Ambassador Woolcott was asked to deliver on 20 November but was delayed until 25 November, should be noted. As discussed later, Prime Minister Fraser’s messages included that “he recognizes the need for Indonesia to have an appropriate solution for the problem of Portuguese Timor” and that “Ministers will not...receive Ramos Horta or any representative of FRETILIN should he come to Australia” pending the elections to be held on 13 December.<sup>30</sup> While not dealing directly with the Portuguese proposal for round-table talks, these messages suggested that the Australian government was not prepared to convene the proposed talks in Australia nor to persuade President Suharto and Fretilin leaders to be involved. In reply, President Suharto expressed his appreciation and implied an Indonesian intention to launch a larger military intervention, rhetorically saying that “Indonesia could ‘settle the situation very quickly’ but it was ‘not for Indonesia to do this’”.<sup>31</sup>

### **5.1.3 Fretilin’s declaration of independence and Indonesian full-scale intervention**

#### **Fretilin’s unilateral declaration of independence**

On the evening of 28 November, Fretilin’s President, Xavier do Amaral, unilaterally declared independence for the Democratic Republic of East Timor (DRET) in Dili, a few days

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28 Record of conversation between Akosah and Taylor, Jakarta, 19 November 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 16.

29 Record of conversation between Ramos-Horta and Feakes, Canberra, 21 November 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 16.

30 Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 20 November 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 579.

31 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 25 November 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 579-81.

earlier than initially planned because of the compelling military situation after the fall of Atabae in the morning. The ceremony was attended by a relatively small number of around 2000 people, including three Australian journalists, Michael Richardson, Jill Jolliffe and Roger East.<sup>32</sup> The next day, Francisco Xavier do Amaral was sworn in as the first President of the DRET.

After the declaration, the Central Committee of Fretilin sent the following telegram to UN Committee Twenty-four searching for international recognition of East Timor's independence; "[i]n the face of Indonesia's aggression against the territory of East Timor by land, air and sea, violating the chapter and resolutions of the United Nations and the right of our people to self-determination and independence, and because the Portuguese Government has constantly and abusively postponed the date for talks, showing a total lack of interest in achieving a correct solution for the decolonization of East Timor, the central committee of Fretilin, in defence of the paramount interests of the people of East Timor and its inalienable right to total and complete independence, proclaims at 0000 hours on 28 November 1975 the independence of East Timor, which becomes the Democratic Republic of East Timor".<sup>33</sup> However, most governments disregarded this unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) by the DRET, with only the following six governments recognising it; five African countries newly independent from Portugal – Angola, Capo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and San Tomé and Príncipe – and the People's Republic of China.<sup>34</sup>

On 29 November, the Portuguese government published a communiqué announcing its non-recognition of the UDI in Portuguese Timor. It stated that "Portugal, as administering Power, cannot accept claims of independence or of integration into third States that are not in accordance with the aforementioned fundamental principle of the decolonization process". At the

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<sup>32</sup> Jill Jolliffe, *East Timor: Nationalism & Colonialism* (St. Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1978), pp. 208-32; Michael Richardson, "Timor takes unsteady step into the world", *The Age*, 2 December 1975.

<sup>33</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, New York, 2 December 1975, NAA, A1838, 3038/9/1, Annex A.

<sup>34</sup> *Chega!*, Part 3, p. 58; Chapter 7.1, p. 40.

same time, with the Indonesian military intervention clearly in mind, the communiqué also mentioned that “Portugal also cannot fail strongly to repudiate and condemn any military intervention in the Territory of East Timor” and “will be obliged to resort to the competent international bodies in the hope that a peaceful solution can be achieved in harmony with the principles defined by the United Nations”.<sup>35</sup> On the same day, the Australian government also announced its non-recognition of the UDI declared by Fretilin.

### **Preparation for war against Indonesian invasion of East Timor**

On 1 December, Fretilin’s Central Committee appointed Nicolau Lobato as Prime Minister of the DRET and convened its first cabinet meeting in the absence of President Amaral. According to Ramos-Horta, one of the participants in the meeting, it dealt with the following items: (a) the deteriorating military situation and pending Indonesian invasion; (b) measures to be taken for the evacuation of the remaining civilian population; (c) the defence of the city in order to slow the enemy’s progress into the interior; and (d) the urgency of sending a delegation to the United Nations and the world at large to gain support for the DRET. This cabinet meeting also decided that three newly-appointed Ministers – Mari Alkatiri (State Minister for Political Affairs), Rogerio Lobato (Defence Minister) and José Ramos-Horta (Minister for External Relations and Information) – should leave East Timor and join three other Fretilin leaders overseas, that is, Abilio Araujo (State Minister for Economic and Social Affairs), his wife Guilhermina Araujo and Roque Rodrigues (Ambassador to Mozambique).<sup>36</sup>

On the morning of 2 December, members of Fretilin’s Central Committee, including Xavier do Amaral, Nicolau Lobato, Rogerio Lobato and José Ramos-Horta, convened its last

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<sup>35</sup> Communiqué issued by the Portuguese National Decolonization Commission, 29 November 1975, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>36</sup> Jose Ramos-Horta, *Funu: The Unfinished Saga of East Timor* (Trenton, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 1987), p. 100.

press conference which was attended by the remaining three Australian journalists. On this occasion, President Amaral emphasised Fretilin's determination to fight against the Indonesians, saying that "[w]e have repeatedly made it clear that we want good relations with Indonesia but not after they have taken over our country by force", "we have a well-prepared plan to wage a protracted guerrilla war of resistance in the mountains" and "[w]e will fight to the last man and the last bullet". Once again, he appealed to the Australian government "to send an observer delegation to East Timor" and "to make urgent representations to the Government in Indonesia to restrain Indonesia".<sup>37</sup>

On that evening, the last evacuations took place with the assistance of the Australian government which had warned of "the need for all Australians in Portuguese Timor to leave urgently" on the basis of an Indonesian request.<sup>38</sup> Subsequently, fourteen Australian nationals, including Michael Richardson, Jill Jolliffe, NGO staff, such as David Scott of CAA, medical staff from the ASIAT and two Swiss nationals working for the International Red Cross, left East Timor. However, Australian journalist, Roger East, declined the offer. On 4 December, at the request of José Ramos-Horta, the Australian government also helped evacuate three "Ministers" of the DRET by authorising a chartered airplane to fly between Darwin and Dili.<sup>39</sup>

### **"Balibo declaration" as part of Indonesian annexation policy**

In anticipation of Fretilin's UDI which it had prepared for since September,<sup>40</sup> Indonesian policymakers promptly reacted. On 28 November, the Indonesian government queried the Portuguese government regarding its policy towards the UDI. The Portuguese

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<sup>37</sup> Michael Richardson, "We'll fight to the last man and bullet...", *The Age*, 5 December 1975.

<sup>38</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 1 December 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 16.

<sup>39</sup> Record of telephone conversation between Horta and Feakes, Canberra, 3 December 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 16.

<sup>40</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 28 November 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 386; Record of conversation between Sunarso and Taylor, Jakarta, 6 February 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 701-2.

government replied that it would not recognise either it or integration, and also criticised the provision of Indonesian military assistance to UDT and Apodeti.<sup>41</sup>

On the following day, President Suharto and others convened an urgent meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee on Timor. According to Harry Tjan, “the participants reacted angrily at the news of Portugal’s response to the UDI” and “strongly condemned Portugal for its handling of the Portuguese Timor problem”. Then, they talked about some immediate measures they would take. Firstly, they decided to have the UDT and Apodeti issue “a declaration that Portuguese Timor is part of Indonesia” in which anti-Fretilin parties would “declare themselves citizens of Indonesia”, “request the Indonesian Government to accept their Declaration” and “call on the Indonesian Government to provide them with protection as citizens of Indonesia” on 29 or 30 November. Secondly, they decided to respond positively to the declaration of integration following a Foreign Minister Malik’s visit to Indonesian Timor. Thirdly, they agreed to back up the military activities of the anti-Fretilin forces aiming to control Dili.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, the leaders of UDT, Apodeti and the other two tiny parties of KOTA and Partido Trabalhista were covertly assembled in a hotel in Bali to sign a statement drafted in Jakarta in the presence of Indonesian officials.<sup>43</sup> On 30 November, the so-called “Balibo Declaration”, which was signed by Francisco Lopes da Cruz and Domingo de Oliveira (UDT), Guilherme Maria Goncalves and Alexandrino Borromeu (Apodeti), and José Martins (KOTA) and Domingos Pereira (Partido Trabilhista), was broadcast by a radio transmitter in Balibo.<sup>44</sup> According to a document sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, part of the declaration stated that, “[i]n the name of God the Almighty, we therefore solemnly declare the independence and integration of the whole former

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41 Cablegram to Canberra (O.JA3359), Jakarta, 29 November 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 588-9.

42 Cablegram to Canberra (O.JA 3360), Jakarta, 29 November 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 590.

43 Cablegram to Canberra (O.JA3359), Jakarta, 29 November 1975, op. cit. See also *Chega!*, Part 3, p. 57.

44 *Chega!*, Part 3, p. 57.

colonial Territory of Portuguese Timor with the Republic of Indonesia, which is in accordance with the real wishes of the entire people of Portuguese Timor” and “[w]e also urge the Indonesian Government and people to take steps immediately to protect the lives of the people who now regard themselves as Indonesians, yet are still suffering due to the terror and fascist practices of the FRETILIN gang, armed and supported by the Portuguese Government”.<sup>45</sup>

### **Indonesian preparation for war**

Indonesian policymakers stepped up preparations for massive Indonesian attacks against Dili. On 3 December, President Suharto convened a meeting concerning Portuguese Timor with Panggabean, Yoga Sugama, Benny Murdani, Sudharmono, Adam Malik and Mashuri, the contents of which are unknown.<sup>46</sup> According to Hendro Subroto, it was in a closed meeting held in Kupang on 4 December that Defence Minister Panggabean decided that Indonesia would embark on a full-scale attack against Dili on 7 December.<sup>47</sup>

On 4 December, the Indonesian government published a long statement in which it presented its understanding of the declaration mentioned above and justified its military action against East Timor as being for self-defence and humanitarian purposes. The Indonesian statement read that “[i]t will take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of its national territory, to defend the sovereignty of the State and to protect the population from external harassment. On the basis of the principles of anti-colonialism and imperialism and the principles of humanitarianism, the Indonesian government and people have the moral obligation to protect

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45 Joint Proclamation by APODETI, UDT, KOTA and the Partido Trabalhista [sic], issued at Batugade, 30 November 1975, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, pp. 40-1. Matsuno pointed out that this was “a completely revised text” and that the original English text of the “Balibo Declaration” considered to be translated from the Portuguese original one was full of shortcomings in English. See Akihisa Matsuno, “The Balibo Declaration: Between Text and Fact”, in Pedro Pinto Leite (ed.), *The East Timor Problem and the Role of Europe* (Leiden: International Platform of Jurists for East Timor, 1998), pp. 159-94.

46 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 3 December 1975, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 16.

47 Subroto, *Eyewitness*, p. 143.

the people in the Territory of Timor so that the process of decolonization can be realized in accordance with the aspirations and wishes of the entire people of Portuguese Timor”.<sup>48</sup> On the following day, Foreign Minister Malik summoned the Ambassadors of eight countries, including Australia, Portugal, the United States and the Soviet Union, to inform them that the Indonesian government considered the situation in East Timor a threat and to warn them not to be surprised by any steps the Indonesian government might take there.<sup>49</sup>

On 6 December, President Suharto had talks with US President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger who flew to Jakarta from China where they had been from 1 to 5 December. The aim of these summit talks was to strengthen the bilateral relationship between the two countries. Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik, Minister of State Sudharmono and US Ambassador Newsom also attended. After exchanging their opinions on Chinese policy towards South East Asia and other regional issues, President Suharto and President Ford discussed the decolonisation of Portuguese Timor. After insisting that this was a question of stability in the region, President Suharto said that “[i]t is now important to determine what we can do to establish peace and order for the present and the future in the interest of the security of the area and Indonesia. There are some of the considerations we are now contemplating. We want your understanding if we deem it necessary to take rapid or drastic action”. In reply, President Ford said that “[w]e will understand and will not press you on this issue. We understand the problem you have and the intentions you have”, while Secretary of State Kissinger added that “[y]ou appreciate that the use of US-made arms could create problems”. When Kissinger asked about the possibility of a protracted war in East Timor, President Suharto said that “[t]here will probably be a small guerrilla war”.<sup>50</sup> Thus, on the day prior to the massive Indonesian attack on

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48 Statement of the Government of Indonesia on the Current Developments in Portuguese Timor, 4 December 1975, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, pp. 41-2.

49 Michael Richardson, “Timor invasion hint”, *The Age*, 6 December 1975.

50 Telegram 14946 from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State, December 6, 1975, in Brad Coleman, David Goldman and David

East Timor, President Suharto told US President Ford directly of Indonesia's intention knowing that he would not intervene to prevent Indonesia's military activities in East Timor.

### **Start of massive Indonesian attack on Dili**

In the early morning of 7 December, Indonesian paratroops from Java and several warships and parties of marines began to attack Dili. Atrocities committed there by Indonesian soldiers were reported by Alarico Fernandes who was in charge of communication with Australian supporters of Fretilin in Darwin.<sup>51</sup> His messages included the following: "Indonesian forces have been landed in Dili. I repeat Indonesian forces have been landed in Dili", "[a]t least six or seven Indonesian warships are off Dili. They have been shelling in and round the town since 4.30 a.m.", "[m]ore than a thousand are already in the town. Small boats have landed hundreds of Indonesian soldiers from the warships", "[t]hey are killing indiscriminately. Women and children are being shot in the streets. A lot of people have been killed" and "[w]e are all going to be killed. I repeat we are all going to be killed".<sup>52</sup> It is known that the Indonesian soldiers targeted and killed Chinese ethnic people in particular.<sup>53</sup> This military operation also cost a number of Indonesian soldiers' lives not only because of the counterattacks by Fretilin but also their own lack of experience in undertaking a joint exercise. Benny Murdani, who flew to Dili on 8 December, later wrote that "[t]hese troops had no discipline at all. They shot one another...over all it was totally embarrassing".<sup>54</sup>

During the evening of 7 December, the Indonesian government announced that "the city of Dili was freed by the people's struggle headed by APODETI, UDT, KOTA and Trabalhista,

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Nickles (eds.), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-12, Documents on East and South East Asia, 1973-1976* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2011), Document 141.

51 Denis Freney, *A Map of Days: Life on the Left* (Port Melbourne: Heinemann, 1991), p. 354.

52 Michael Richardson, "'Children are being shot in the streets'", *The Age*, 8 December 1975.

53 Michael Richardson, "Reports claim Chinese killed", *The Age*, 9 December 1975.

54 Julius Pour, *Benny Moerdani: Profile of a Soldier Statesman* (Jakarta: Yayasan Kejuangan Panglima Besar Sudirman, 1993), pp. 333-4.



who received help from Indonesian volunteers”.<sup>55</sup> On 10 December, the Indonesian military also attacked Baucau, East Timor’s second largest city, and successfully took it over. On 14 December, Governor of Nusa Tenggara Timur Province El Tari announced the incorporation of Oecusse, the enclave of Portuguese Timor surrounded by Indonesian Timor.

On the other hand, Fretilin soldiers began to retreat from Dili to the mountainous areas in the south towards Aileu, about 30 km south of Dili, in line with their initial plan. Alarico Fernandes reported that “[s]oldiers of the Fretilin Independence Movement are trying to stop the Invasion...But they know they cannot halt such powerful forces. They are moving back into the mountains”. He also asked for Australian help by sending messages, including “[w]e appeal to the Australian people. This is an SOS. Please do something to stop this invasion”.<sup>56</sup>

While refraining from resisting the Indonesian attack against Dili by means of force, despite the presence of two corvettes belonging to the Portuguese Navy, *João Roby* and *Afonso Cerqueira*, in the offshore waters of Dili, the Portuguese government reacted sharply to the Indonesian military action through diplomatic means. After convening the Council of Ministers, the Portuguese government decided “to sever diplomatic relations with the Republic of Indonesia” and to appeal to the President of the Security Council to “convene an urgent meeting of the Security Council so that the military aggression by Indonesia may be terminated and conditions may be established to enable the decolonization process to continue, under the auspices of the United Nations and in accordance with the provisions of the Charter...”.<sup>57</sup> Following this decision, the Portuguese government’s efforts were directed towards finding a solution to the self-determination question of East Timor through the United Nations.

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<sup>55</sup> Subroto, *Eyewitness*, p. 176.

<sup>56</sup> Richardson, ““Children are being shot in the streets””.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, 7 December 1975, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, pp. 42-3.

### **First UN General Assembly resolution regarding East Timor**

The UN General Assembly quickly responded to the Indonesian invasion of East Timor and, on 12 December, adopted UNGA Resolution 3485 by a majority. “Deeply concerned at the critical situation resulting from the military intervention of the armed forces of Indonesia in Portuguese Timor”, the resolution called upon “all States to respect the inalienable right of the people of Portuguese Timor to self-determination, freedom and independence”. On the basis of this guideline, on the one hand, the resolution called upon Portugal, the administering Power, “to continue to make every effort to find a solution by peaceful means through talks between the Government of Portugal and the political parties representing the people of Portuguese Timor”. It also appealed “to all the parties in Portuguese Timor to respond positively to efforts to find a peaceful solution through talks between them and the Government of Portugal”. On the other hand, strongly deploring “the military intervention of the armed forces of Indonesia in Portuguese Timor”, the resolution called upon “the Government of Indonesia to desist from further violation of the territorial integrity of Portuguese Timor and to withdraw without delay its armed forces from the Territory in order to enable the people of the Territory freely to exercise their right to self-determination and independence”. This UNGA resolution also recommended that the Security Council take urgent action.<sup>58</sup>

As a result, seventy-two members of the United Nations, half of all its members at that time, voted for the resolution. These included Portugal, ex-Portuguese colonies in Africa (e.g., Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique), other countries in Africa (e.g., Tanzania and Uganda), some countries in Europe (e.g., Greece and Iceland), some countries in Central and South America (e.g., Brazil and Mexico) and some “communist” powers (e.g., the USSR, China and Cuba). It is remarkable that Australia also voted for this resolution, making itself an exception among

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<sup>58</sup> General Assembly Resolution 3485(XXX): Question of Timor, 12 December 1975.

capitalist powers in the region which shared strategic and economic interests with the Indonesian government under President Suharto. On the other hand, ten countries voted against the resolution and supported the Indonesian government, including four ASEAN members (Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines and Thailand), Japan, India and Iran. However, forty-three countries, including the other three Permanent Members of the Security Council (the US, the UK and France), New Zealand and Singapore, abstained from voting.

## ***5.2 Transformation of Australian policymaking towards East Timor***

### **5.2.1 Last days of the Australian Labor government**

#### **Role of DFA in Australian policymaking**

In September 1975, after having been sidelined by Prime Minister Whitlam and Ambassador Woolcott, the Australian DFA began reviewing Australian policy towards East Timor. What the Department had to take into account at this stage was the emergence of Fretilin's *de facto* rule in East Timor, the possibility of the Portuguese government appealing its case to the United Nations and the development of domestic pressures in Australia.

On 17 September, in anticipation of Secretary Renouf's upcoming press conference, Assistant Secretary Walter Miller prepared a paper for him on the basis of the recognition that the DFA faced the following two policy options – simply awaiting “events, which could include overt Indonesian intervention in East Timor” or attempting “to influence events in favour of Indonesia accepting, with whatever concessions, guarantees and safeguards it can obtain, the prospect of a Fretilin-dominated independent East Timor”. He argued the merits and demerits of both policies and then considered that “[t]he great advantage of the latter course is that a recognition that Fretilin has established itself as the dominant influence in East Timor would

appear to accord with reality, and the distinguishing mark of the Government's foreign policies since its election, and a point of success, has been its readiness to accept realities". In conclusion, Miller suggested that "we should consider *privately* urging the Indonesians to consider whether the problems of accepting the prospect of Fretilin dominating an independent East Timor would not be less than the problems of seeking to prevent this, and in effect setting out to deny what appear to be the realities of the situation".<sup>59</sup>

When reviewing Australian policy towards East Timor, the DFA also consulted with Ambassador Woolcott who continued to insist upon the importance of Australia's relations with Indonesia and ASEAN countries; for example, on 3 October, he wrote to the Department that "South East Asia is in many respects the main area of importance for Australia and that, within that area, Indonesia must continue to have some special emphasis in our policy formulation. We are not dealing with Indonesia and with Australian/Indonesian relations. Our response to the Timor situation will be seen to a considerable extent by other ASEAN countries as a measure of the sincerity of our identification with South East Asia and of our search for a role as a partner on the periphery of South East Asia. We need to avoid as far as we can setting Australia apart from the other countries in the region in which we are situated".<sup>60</sup>

In reply to the Ambassador, Secretary Renouf wrote that "[n]o doubt, as you say...our attitude to Timor will to some degree affect our relations with countries in the region beyond Indonesia in the next few years. But our policy must also take account of *principle* as well as of the need for good relations with Indonesia". In this context, he noted Australian public concerns over the Indonesian military action, writing that "because of the keen interest of our public opinion in the outcome in Portuguese Timor", escalation of the Indonesian involvement would inevitably lead to a "domestic pressure for the Australian Government to dissociate itself from

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<sup>59</sup> Minute from Miller to Renouf, Canberra, 17 September 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 417-9.

<sup>60</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 3 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 444-6.

Indonesian policy in Timor”. The Secretary also recognised that “FRETILIN is clearly in control in Portuguese Timor and arguments to the contrary will simply appear to the world at large as a quibble” and pointed out to the Ambassador that “[t]he Government has never accepted Indonesian claims that an independent Portuguese Timor could pose a threat to Indonesia”.<sup>61</sup> In this way, in advance of Indonesia’s military intervention, the DFA decided to take account of “principle” in Australian policymaking towards East Timor even, to some extent, at the cost of Australian relations with Indonesia and South East Asian countries.

The DFA also needed to coordinate with Prime Minister Whitlam’s policy. On 15 October, during his conversation with Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, Gough Whitlam stated that the Australian government was resisting Fretilin’s pressures to underpin its position in Portuguese Timor and also that “[p]reservation of the Indonesian relationship was much more important than relations with Portuguese Timor”.<sup>62</sup> In the DFA, the head of the Indonesian section, Michael Curtin, also insisted to Graham Feakes and Assistant Secretary Lance Joseph that “[w]e would have to work hard to maintain a distinction between support for principles and support for Fretilin, and also to secure understanding that our inability to support Indonesian military intervention is not inconsistent with our friendship with Indonesia”.<sup>63</sup>

When reviewing Australian policy towards East Timor, the DFA considered it necessary to “explain to the Indonesians what we would in fact like to happen”.<sup>64</sup> Regarding this, on 13 October, it wrote to Ambassador Woolcott that “our present thinking is still in terms of supporting talks between all parties, including, now, further Ministerial-level talks between the Portuguese and Indonesians...We have no exaggerated expectations of what any new round of talks might achieve. But nor are we wholly pessimistic. If it were to help the prospect of talks we might even

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61 Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 7 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 446-7.

62 Record of conversation between Whitlam and Tun Abdul Razak, Canberra, 15 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 466-8.

63 Minute from Curtin to Feakes and Joseph, Canberra, 15 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 464-6.

64 *Ibid.*

now be prepared to put to Ministers the idea of offering an Australian venue – something which hitherto we have been reluctant to consider because of the reduced flexibility it could entail for our future policy options”.<sup>65</sup>

On 17 October, the day after the launch of Indonesia’s military intervention, which involved the killings of five journalists, in a paper submitted to Foreign Minister Willesee, Secretary Renouf recommended that the Foreign Minister make a public statement declaring the government’s commitment to “the right of the people of Portuguese Timor freely to decide their own future” and “opposition to the use of armed force”. In addition, the Secretary also suggested that the Foreign Minister begin planning the evacuation of Australian people from Portuguese Timor. These recommendations were approved by Foreign Minister Willesee and endorsed by Prime Minister Whitlam.<sup>66</sup>

During the second half of October, the Department worked on drafting a Ministerial statement. In general, officials of the DFA were cautious not to unnecessarily damage Australia’s relations with Indonesia by issuing a statement critical of the possible military annexation of Portuguese Timor. Secretary Renouf wrote to Foreign Minister Willesee that “[w]e need to take care that a critical statement from the Government now may not increase anti-Indonesian feeling and reactions among interested groups in Australia, giving rise to pressure for further critical statements...Our aim must still be to *contain* damage to our relations with Indonesia”.<sup>67</sup> In this context, after talking with Secretary Renouf and Graham Feakes, Foreign Minister Willesee also agreed to the Australian Embassy in Jakarta continuing to receive sensitive information on Indonesian military activities in Portuguese Timor from Benny Murdani and Harry Tjan.<sup>68</sup>

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65 Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 13 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 459-61.

66 Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 17 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 477-9.

67 Submission to Willesee, Canberra, 28 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 518-9.

68 Submission to Willesee, Canberra, 27 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 516-7.

### Foreign Minister Willesee's statement on 30 October 1975

At last, on 30 October, two days before the upcoming Foreign Ministers' talks between Indonesia and Portugal, Foreign Minister Willesee publicised a major statement in the Senate concerning the question of Portuguese Timor in response to public concerns over Indonesia's military involvement in East Timor. Despite information about it having been delivered by Benny Murdani, Harry Tjan and intelligence organisations, Foreign Minister Willesee began his statement with the following sentence; "[t]he Government has viewed with concern widespread reports that Indonesia is involved in military intervention in Portuguese Timor".<sup>69</sup> Thus, the Foreign Minister pretended that the Australian government did not have detailed information on the Indonesian military's involvement in Portuguese Timor.

Then, the Foreign Minister expressed his "extreme disappointment" with the reports on this action and declared the Australian government's commitments to opposing the use of armed force and to supporting the right of the Timorese to self-determination. While an earlier draft of this Ministerial statement incorporated this kind of expression in its first paragraph,<sup>70</sup> in the middle part, the final statement contained the following sentences.

Were there substance in these reports, the Australian Government would be extremely disappointed and we have so informed the Indonesian authorities. The Australian Government has urged that Indonesia pursue her interests through diplomatic means. We have told the Indonesians that we remain opposed to the use of armed force. We have said that we are firm in the view that the people of Portuguese Timor should be allowed to determine their own future.

While making clear these principles in Australian policy towards the question of East

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<sup>69</sup> Statement by Willesee, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 46:10, 1975, pp. 653-5.

<sup>70</sup> Cablegram to Jakarta and Lisbon, Canberra, 29 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 530-2.

Timor, Foreign Minister Willesee stated that his expectations for the coming talks between the Indonesian and Portuguese Foreign Ministers in Rome, and those between the Portuguese government and the three Timorese parties of Fretilin, UDT and Apodeti were as follows.

The Australian Government strongly supports resolution of the conflict in Portuguese Timor by peaceful means through which the will of the people will be expressed. We have made numerous representations to this effect to the Portuguese, to the Indonesians, and to the representatives of Fretilin who have visited Australia. I have very recently instructed the Australian Ambassadors in Lisbon and Jakarta to reiterate to the Portuguese and Indonesian Governments our firm hope that the talks between these two Governments later this week result in a positive and constructive outcome. Were all the parties to wish it, the Government would be prepared to offer an Australian venue for round-table talks. (Emphasis in the original)

As can be seen, in support of the principle of self-determination and talks between the parties concerned, Foreign Minister Willesee also offered an Australian venue for discussions between Portugal and the three Timorese parties on the condition that the latter agreed. At the same time, he made it clear that the Australian government would not recognise Fretilin as the only legitimate representative of the Timorese as he continued to state that “[n]o more than Indonesia, can Australia accept any one party’s claim to be the only true representative of Portuguese Timor. Fretilin may have prevailed over its rivals in the initial round of fighting and skirmishing but it has established no right thereby to speak for all Timorese.” Foreign Minister Willesee concluded by saying that “[t]he Australian Government does not pretend to know what the people of Portuguese Timor want. But we do want them to have the opportunity to say what they want. The need in our view is to get all the parties round the table for talks. The Australian



Government is doing what it can to help such talks on their way”.<sup>71</sup>

Following this statement, on 2 November, Foreign Minister Willesee also announced that the Australian government would make a further contribution of \$150,000 to the ICRC for its relief programs in both Indonesian and Portuguese Timor.<sup>72</sup> As seen earlier, on 5 November, in response to Foreign Minister Willesee’s statement on 30 October, and as a result of the Foreign Ministers’ talks with the Indonesian government in Rome, the Portuguese government also made a concrete proposal to start talks with the three Timorese parties of Fretilin, UDT and Apodeti in Darwin sometime between 15 and 20 November.

### **5.2.2 Fraser caretaker government’s policy towards East Timor**

#### **Drafting of Prime Minister Fraser’s message to President Suharto**

Meanwhile, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, Australian domestic politics faced a serious crisis due to passage of the budget having been blocked by the Opposition in the Senate since the second half of October. At last, on 11 November, Governor-General Kerr dismissed Prime Minister Whitlam and appointed Opposition leader Malcolm Fraser as the Prime Minister of the caretaker government until a general election was held on 13 December 1975. On 12 November, Prime Minister Fraser designated Andrew Peacock as the Foreign Minister of this government. Observing the caretaker government, Ambassador Woolcott later recounted that “[p]reoccupied by a domestic political crisis of this magnitude, the government tended to shift its focus away from foreign policy issues”.<sup>73</sup> In this situation, Secretary Renouf and other DFA officials continued to submit policy suggestions to Ministers. He had observed that both Malcolm Fraser and Andrew Peacock were sympathetic to Indonesia’s integrationist aspirations

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71 Statement by Willesee, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 46:10, 1975, op.cit.

72 “Aid to Portuguese Timor”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 46:10, 1975, p. 656.

73 Richard Woolcott, *The Hot Seat: Reflections on Diplomacy from Stalin’s Death to the Bali Bombings* (Sydney, N.S.W.; London: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 161.

during their talks with Malaysian officials which had been held in the previous month.<sup>74</sup>

After the establishment of the caretaker government on 11 November, the DFA considered it crucial for Prime Minister Fraser to send a message to President Suharto in the interest of Australia's long-term relationship with Indonesia. There were two major reasons for this recommendation. Firstly, the Department was concerned about Australia's worsening relations with Indonesia, writing to the Foreign Minister that "[t]here has been a deterioration recently in our relations with the Indonesians over Portuguese Timor" caused by "the action of groups in Australia not directly susceptible to Government influence or control".<sup>75</sup> Therefore, to avoid further deterioration, it considered it appropriate for Prime Minister Fraser to tell President Suharto that the Australian caretaker government would not change the Whitlam government's policy at least until the result of the general election on 13 December was known. The Department also proposed a visit to Jakarta by the Foreign Minister after the general election because it "would seem the essential pre-condition to formulation by the new Government of policy", putting the emphasis on Australia's relations with Indonesia while still anticipating the possibility of an Indonesian attack against Dili in the near future.<sup>76</sup>

Secondly, the DFA also thought it desirable to communicate with Indonesian senior policymakers with respect to the Portuguese proposal of round-table talks between Portugal and the three Timorese parties in Darwin which also involved the Indonesian and Australian governments because of their potential influence over the Timorese parties. While having considered the possibility of contacting Fretilin leaders to convene round-table talks in Australia, DFA officials concluded that "the Department does not favour initiating direct and official contacts with FRETILIN to persuade it to the conference table...we should leave the running to

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74 Record of conversation between Renouf, Miller, Zaiton and Azraai, Canberra, 16 October 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 470-1.

75 Submission to Peacock, Canberra, 13 November 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 565-8.

76 Submission to Peacock, Canberra, 19 November 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 576-7.

the Portuguese and the Indonesians and, so far as is possible, limit Australian official involvement”.<sup>77</sup> The DFA’s main concern was that “an attempt at mediation by Australia is likely to put us on a direct collision course with the Indonesians”<sup>78</sup> and the other ASEAN countries. Thus, Secretary Renouf suggested to Foreign Minister Peacock that “[i]t would be quite proper...for the Government, as a caretaker, not to receive Horta (or any other representative of FRETILIN) at the Ministerial level should he come to Australia again before 13 December. Such a decision would be welcome to Indonesia and I suggest that it be taken and conveyed to Indonesia”.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, the Prime Minister’s message to President Suharto was mainly planned and drafted by the DFA. Malcolm Fraser later reflected that “[i]t really was put to me with the utmost urgency that it was most vital that I communicate to Suharto. On the one hand, I abhorred the incorporation. It was contrary to everything we believed about self-determination of peoples. On the other hand, I couldn’t change policy anyway in caretaker mode and Indonesia was our most important neighbour, and I was being told it was vital that I do this thing”. Despite his reluctance to follow the DFA’s recommendation, after making a phone call to Ambassador Woolcott, Prime Minister Fraser agreed to send a top-secret cablegram to the Ambassador asking him to pass a message to President Suharto rather than sending his letter. As to the content of his message, Fraser recalled that “I was trying to say as little as possible. The draft came to me, and I remember altering the words to try to weaken them”.<sup>80</sup> Having received this message and being concerned about “the text, especially the absence of any reference to the non-use of force”, Ambassador Woolcott asked John Menadue, the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, for some elaboration. Replying to the Ambassador on the

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77 Submission to Peacock, Canberra, 18 November 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 573-5.

78 Submission to Peacock, Canberra, 13 November 1975, op. cit., esp. p.567.

79 Submission to Peacock, Canberra, 19 November 1975, op. cit.

80 Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs* (Carlton, Vic.: The Miegunyah Press, 2010), pp. 450-1.

following day, Menadue told him that “[h]is words stood by themselves”.<sup>81</sup>

In the end, Prime Minister Fraser’s message to President Suharto included the following six points: firstly, that he attached great importance to Australia’s relations with Indonesia and should he be returned to power on 13 December, he would seek to build on them and establish close personal ties with the President; secondly, he recognised the need for Indonesia to have an appropriate solution to the problem of Portuguese Timor; thirdly, he was critical of the actions of Australian trade unions against Indonesian shipping; fourthly, should the present government be returned on 13 December, he would propose an early visit to Jakarta by the Foreign Minister for talks with Indonesian Ministers; fifthly, pending the elections, his Ministers will not receive Ramos-Horta or any other representative of Fretilin who might come to Australia; and sixthly, he wanted the Indonesians to keep the transmission and contents of these messages secret.<sup>82</sup>

On 25 November, after delivering Prime Minister Fraser’s message to President Suharto at his private residence, Ambassador Woolcott reported to Secretary Renouf that it “was well received by the President and could yield a useful dividend if the present Government is returned at the General Election. It may also have created some expectations and the President may look for some effort on the Government’s part, if it is confirmed in office, to moderate the growth of hostility towards Indonesia in the Australian community”.<sup>83</sup>

### **Fraser caretaker government’s reaction to Indonesian invasion of East Timor**

After sending the Prime Minister’s message to President Suharto, the Fraser caretaker government made some efforts to avoid conveying contradictory messages to the Indonesian

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<sup>81</sup> Woolcott, *The Hot Seat*, p. 161.

<sup>82</sup> Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 20 November 1975, op. cit.

<sup>83</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 25 November 1975, op. cit., esp., p. 581.

government, while maintaining the thrust of former Foreign Minister Willesee's statement of 30 October 1975; for instance, when Michael Richardson reported the Indonesian military involvement in the conflicts in East Timor in Australian newspapers on 26 November, the day after the meeting between President Suharto and Ambassador Woolcott, Foreign Minister Peacock said that "Indonesia's patience over the civil war in East Timor should be noted".<sup>84</sup>

The Australian government's reaction to Fretilin's UDI on 28 November was in line with former Foreign Minister Willesee's statement. On 29 November, Foreign Minister Peacock announced that "the Australian government would not recognise the unilateral declaration of independence for East Timor made by Fretilin leaders in Dili" on the ground that "[t]he Government could not accept claims by any one of the three main Timorese parties to be the only true representatives of Portuguese Timor". He went on to say that "Australia was bound to continue to recognise Portuguese sovereignty in East Timor, although it strongly supported the resolution of the conflict in Timor by peaceful means through which the will of the people could be expressed".<sup>85</sup> The Australian government's announcement of non-recognition of the UDI by Fretilin was "extremely well received by the Indonesian government" according to Harry Tjan.<sup>86</sup> However, it did not mean that the Australian government had begun to support Indonesia's policy of annexation of East Timor by force.

In early December 1975, when the Australian public reacted critically to Indonesian military activities in the territory, the Australian government expressed "its strong belief that the Timor question should be settled by diplomatic rather than military means".<sup>87</sup> While Ambassador Woolcott had insisted on "a pragmatic and realistic acceptance of what is going to happen and our longer term national interest" rather than "a moral and principled stand", his

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<sup>84</sup> "Indonesia's 'patience'", *SMH*, 27 November 1975.

<sup>85</sup> "No recognition by Australia", *The Canberra Times*, 1 December 1975.

<sup>86</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 30 November, *AIIPT*, pp. 591-2.

<sup>87</sup> "Indonesia warns of dramatic new move", *SMH*, 6 December 1975.

suggestion was less influential in Australian policymaking towards East Timor.<sup>88</sup>

On 7 December, in the face of the Indonesian military's massive attack on Dili, in a statement publicised by Foreign Minister Peacock, the Australian government "deeply regretted the course which events in East Timor had taken". The Foreign Minister's statement continued that "[w]hile the Australian Government fully appreciates the gravity of the problems posed for the Indonesian Government by the breakdown of administration in East Timor, the continuation of fighting by the competing parties, and the movement of 40,000 refugees into its territory, we had hoped – and have pressed – that there would not be a recourse to the use of force by our neighbour". It also expressed the Australian government's commitment to the Timorese right to self-determination. At the same time, the statement also suggested that the Australian government would not take substantial actions to realise the principles to which it was committed, adding that "[i]t is obvious that the initiatives open to the Australian Government are limited. The options have closed almost to vanishing point. We shall, however, continue our efforts to gain support for the United Nations resolution...".<sup>89</sup> Actually, soon after the Indonesia's massive invasion, Secretary Renouf discouraged Prime Minister Fraser from proposing that a UN peace-keeping force be deployed in East Timor.<sup>90</sup>

On 12 December 1975, the day before the general election, the Australian government voted for UNGA Resolution 3485. This "extremely disappointed" Indonesian policymakers who feared Australia's potential influence over other countries<sup>91</sup> and, on 17 December, the Australian Embassy in Jakarta received retaliation in the form of arranged demonstrations.<sup>92</sup>

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88 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 6 December 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 601-3.

89 Statement by Peacock, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 46:12, 1975, pp. 709-10.

90 Submission to Fraser, Canberra, 8 December 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 607-9.

91 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 12 December 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 626; Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 13 December 1975, *AIIPT*, pp.626-7.

92 Woolcott, *The Hot Seat*, p. 162.

Thus, the deterioration of Australian-Indonesian relations caused by the East Timor question reached its peak around this period.

### ***5.3. Development of the Australian public's concerns over East Timor***

#### **5.3.1 Development of Australian opinions concerning East Timor**

##### **Indonesian killings of six journalists**

A significant event that happened during this period which began to mobilise Australian opinion was the killing of six journalists in East Timor by Indonesian soldiers, five in Balibo on 16 October and the other on Dili wharf on 8 December 1975. As seen in the previous chapter, after the Portuguese authorities restarted issuing visas for visitors to East Timor in September, many Australian journalists began to visit the territory to report on the reality of the political situation there. Meanwhile, on 8 October, with the assistance of Indonesian “volunteers”, pro-integration UDT and Apodeti forces captured Batugade, the border village in East Timor. In response to Fretilin’s appeals to foreign journalists to protest against the Indonesian invasion, three Australian television companies – the ABC, Channel Seven and Channel Nine – and a Portuguese state-owned broadcasting company, RTP (Rádio e Televisão de Portugal), soon sent their crews to the border areas to film evidence of the Indonesian military activities. Balibo, a small mountainous village with an old Portuguese fort overlooking Batugade, was thought to be a desirable place to shoot such footage.

The activities of these television crews which lead to the deaths in Balibo were as follows; on 9 October, ahead of the other Australian television companies, the ABC team, consisting of Tony Maniaty and two other staff as well as AAP correspondent Rick Collins arrived in Balibo to film Fretilin’s attempts to regain Batugade accompanied by Chris Santos, a

Fretilin information officer, and a few tens of Fretilin soldiers. However, on 11 October, the ABC team hurriedly left Balibo, which was being attacked by artillery fire, as Maniaty thought that the Indonesians might have been targetting journalists. On the way to Maliana, the ABC team encountered the Channel Seven team, consisting of Greg Shackleton, Tony Stewart and Gary Cunningham, who had arrived in Dili on the previous day and were on their way to Balibo. Despite attempts by Maniaty and Santos to dissuade them because of the extreme danger, the Channel Seven team did not take the warning seriously. On 12 October, the Channel Nine team of Brian Peters and Malcolm Rennie also arrived in Dili in an aircraft chartered by the ASIAT. Although Malcolm Rennie was informed about the risks in the border areas by Maniaty who had returned to Dili, the Channel Nine crew followed that of Channel Seven. Thus, the Channel Nine team and José Ramos-Horta who guided them arrived in Balibo on 12 October and the so-called “Balibo Five” assembled. During the afternoon of 15 October, the five journalists met the Portuguese RTP crew in Balibo but declined their proposals to go to Maliana with them.

As seen previously, during the early morning of 16 October, the Indonesian Special Forces started attacking Balibo. While twice having been offered the possibility of withdrawing with the Fretilin soldiers, the “Balibo Five” chose not to retreat. In the end, having missed the time to withdraw, despite their signs of surrender, they were shot dead by Indonesians soldiers on the orders of Captain Yunus Yosfiah. It is understood that Major-General Benny Murdani and Colonel Dading Kalbuadi gave the command for these killings.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to the “Balibo Five”, there was another killing of an Australian journalist by the Indonesian military in East Timor. Roger East had stayed in East Timor at the invitation

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93 Dorelle Pinch, *Inquest into the Death of Brian Raymond Peters* (Sydney, N.S.W.: New South Wales State Coroner, 2007), pp. 49-58, p. 129. See also Tom Sherman, *Report on the Deaths of Australian-Based Journalists in East Timor in 1975* (Canberra: Australia. Department of Foreign Affairs, 1996), pp. 40-53. Of the “Balibo Five”, only two were actually Australians (Gregory Shackleton and Anthony Stewart). The others were a New Zealander (Gary Cunningham) and two British men (Brian Peters and Malcolm Rennie).



of José Ramos-Horta of Fretilin who had asked him to establish the “East Timor News Agency” during their talks in Darwin sometime in October. Although Tony Maniaty, who had returned to Darwin in early November, reminded him of the risks in East Timor, East flew to Dili and also declined the International Red Cross’s offer of 2 December to be assisted in evacuating from Dili to Atauro Island. While there were some conflicting witness accounts as to whether he was killed on 7 or 8 December, Tom Sherman, who investigated this case in 1996, concluded that “it is more likely than not he was summarily executed by an unidentified Indonesian soldier on the Dili wharf late in the morning on 8 December”.<sup>94</sup>

This five journalists’ deaths on 16 October in Balibo added another damaging factor to Australia’s relations with Indonesia. Afterwards, as seen briefly in the next chapter, the Australian public and media constantly called on the Australian government to communicate with the Indonesian government about its support for pro-integration forces in East Timor and to investigate the circumstances under which the five journalists died.

### **Pressure by Australian newspapers’ on Australian government**

During the second half of October 1975, when the Indonesian military escalated its intervention from the border areas into East Timor, Australian major newspapers strongly asked the Australian government to clarify its position and adopt a positive policy towards East Timor. On 20 October, *The Age* commented that “[a]bsorbed with its own problems, Australia has left the survival of the East Timorese (a matter which ought to be of deep concern to us) very largely to chance. Instead of seeking an active role for itself – for example, that of impartial mediator, a role for which Australia would be well equipped – Canberra has been content to observe the civil war in East Timor from the safe fence-top position it has occupied almost from

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<sup>94</sup> Sherman, *Report on the Deaths of Australian-Based Journalists in East Timor in 1975*, pp. 112-35.

the start”.<sup>95</sup> In expectation of the damaging effects of the activities of interest groups on Australia’s relations with Indonesia, Bruce Juddery of *The Canberra Times* warned that “[u]nfortunately for the comfort of Mr Whitlam and Foreign Affairs, not everyone in this country has been prepared to bury the moral issue under the consideration of national self-interest”.<sup>96</sup> On 30 October, prior to the announcement of Foreign Minister Willesee’s statement, *The Sydney Morning Herald* criticised the silence of the Australian government, writing that “there has been no public Australian demand for Indonesia to cease its involvement in the fighting nor any public protest from Canberra against Indonesia’s obvious frustration of Australia’s attempts to confirm the deaths of five of its citizens”. Calling for “a full statement to Parliament by the Minister for Foreign Affairs”, the paper insisted that the statement “make it clear whether Australia has abandoned, as far as the Timorese are concerned, its long-proclaimed commitment to the principle of self-determination”.<sup>97</sup>

The day after Foreign Minister Willesee’s statement was issued, a few Australian newspapers commented favourably on it. With reference to the offer of an Australian venue for talks, *The Age* stated that “it is a step forward and preferable to maintaining the stance of a concerned but uninvolved bystander” while deliberately noting that “[o]ffering Australia’s good offices is, of course, one thing: acceptance by all parties is quite another”.<sup>98</sup> *The Canberra Times* also appreciated the statement and wrote that “Senator Willesee has moved Australia away from its former tacit position, in which Jakarta was informally given carte blanche in Timor, towards a stronger affirmation of the principle of self-determination”.<sup>99</sup>

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95 Editorial “Timor fades from view”, *The Age*, 20 October 1975.

96 Bruce Juddery, “Australia’s policy serves nobody’s ‘national self-interest’”, *The Canberra Times*, 29 October 1975.

97 Editorial “Time to speak on Timor”, *SMH*, 30 October 1975.

98 Editorial “At last a word for Timor”, *The Age*, 31 October 1975.

99 Editorial “A policy shift on Timor”, *The Canberra Times*, 31 October 1975.

After Michael Richardson reported that “I watched an Indonesian bomber and at least one Indonesian warship attacking East Timor yesterday”,<sup>100</sup> Australian major newspapers urged the Australian government to take some action against the Indonesian military involvement there. *The Sydney Morning Herald* expressed that “Australia should condemn publicly the Indonesian invasion, urge Indonesia to withdraw and press the case for talks to resolve the Timor problem peacefully”<sup>101</sup> and *The Canberra Times* insisted that “it is essential...that the Government express its “extreme disappointment” at once, forthrightly and publicly.”<sup>102</sup> *The Age* deplored the Australian government’s past policy and wrote that “[r]ecently there was a positive effort to play a mediating role. But the offer came too late”.<sup>103</sup>

#### **Australian newspapers’ reactions to massive Indonesian attack on Dili**

On 8 December 1975, the day after Indonesia’s launch of a massive attack against Dili, all Australian newspapers dealt with the news on their front pages and continued to argue in their editorials for possible actions by Australia; for example, *The Sydney Morning Herald* stated that “we should express with force and precision our condemnation of an act of aggression” and that “we should not accept that this military solution is a fait accompli which renders academic the UN moves for negotiations”.<sup>104</sup> On 9 December, it published another editorial critical of the reduction in military expenditure under the former Labor government and wrote that “a sharp and frightening lesson for Australia” was that “if Indonesia – or any other power, for that matter – decided to take over by force of arms an area considered vital to Australian security Australia lacks the military strength to prevent it”.<sup>105</sup>

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100 Michael Richardson, “Indonesians pound key Timor towns”, *SMH*, 26 November 1975.

101 Editorial “Timor invaded”, *SMH*, 27 November 1975.

102 Editorial “Action and inaction on East Timor”, *The Canberra Times*, 27 November 1975.

103 Editorial “We fiddle and Timor burns”, *The Age*, 26 November 1975.

104 Editorial “Jakarta strikes”, *SMH*, 8 December 1975.

105 Editorial “Timor’s lesson”, *SMH*, 9 December 1975.

*The Canberra Times* forecast that “Australia’s appeasement of the more bellicose of Indonesia’s ruling generals” would cost it its friendly relationship with Indonesia because of the concerns that would be raised by interested groups. It warned that “[i]t is unlikely that all Australians will accept the corruption of Australia’s stated policy of self-determination as complacently as either Mr Whitlam or his successors. Already Indonesia has reacted strongly to the opposition by Australian individuals and groups to its cynical involvement in East Timor. A further deterioration of relations between Canberra and Jakarta appears inevitable”.<sup>106</sup>

With reference to a proposal by a group interested in the plight of East Timor, *The Age* stated that;

Now that Indonesia has thrown off all restraint and East Timor faces a bitter and bloody struggle, Australia must no longer stand aloof. Mr. Fraser and Mr. Whitlam should jointly condemn the Indonesian intervention and call for a United Nations peace keeping mission to be sent to Timor immediately to end the fighting. Our concerns for Indonesia’s interest cannot be stretched to condone the brutal suppression of a neighbouring community. At the same time – as suggested by the chairman of Community Aid Abroad, Mr. David Scott – Australia should immediately offer to send ships and aircraft to bring out refugees under the protection of the Australian flag. It is not our national interest or duty to take sides in the struggle for East Timor, but we can neither condone aggression on our doorstep nor abstain from providing humanitarian aid and refuge to its victims.<sup>107</sup>

### **5.3.2 Activities of interested people and organisation**

#### **Domestic pressures on Whitlam government’s policy towards East Timor**

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<sup>106</sup> Editorial “Slaughter in Timor”, *The Canberra Times*, 8 December 1975.

<sup>107</sup> Editorial “Timor: the day freedom died”, *The Age*, 8 December 1975.

A remarkable characteristic of Australian interest in East Timor during the period from September to December 1975 was the increase in the number of people who were concerned about the situation there, as evidenced by the numbers of letters and telegrams sent by many trade unions, branches of the Labor Party, humanitarian organisations and individuals to Ministers.<sup>108</sup> Also, an opinion survey conducted by the Morgan Gallup Poll of an Australia-wide cross-section of 1,694 people at the end of September 1975 reflected these growing concerns. The poll's three questions and resultant responses were as follows. The first question was "[i]n your opinion, should Portuguese Timor become independent or a part of Indonesia?" While 17% of interviewees supported Indonesia's integration of it, 39% was in favour of independence and 44% undecided. The second question was "[i]f a left-wing group gains control of Portuguese Timor, would you favour or oppose Indonesia taking it by force?" Although 23% agreed with the Indonesian military takeover of East Timor, 46% was against it and 31% undecided. The last question was "[d]o you think Australia should send troops to help keep the peace in Portuguese Timor or keep out of it?" 19% of interviewees favoured the deployment of Australian troops in East Timor, 68% preferred staying out of the conflict while 13% remained undecided. The poll also found that "ALP and Liberal-NCP voters gave similar answers to all questions".<sup>109</sup> These results, which were printed in a weekly magazine, *The Bulletin*, in late October, suggested that the number of Australians interviewed who supported independence for East Timor was more than twice that who supported the Indonesian annexation of East Timor. It should also be noted that, even before the journalists' killings in Balibo, nearly half the interviewees opposed the Indonesian military intervention in East Timor. In contrast, immediately after the Vietnam War, more than two-thirds of Australians were against the dispatch of Australian troops to maintain peace in East Timor.

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<sup>108</sup> See a series of files entitled "Correspondence relating to Portuguese Timor", NAA, A1838, 3038/10/1/1, pts 3-7.

<sup>109</sup> "Portuguese Timor should be free", *The Bulletin*, 25 October 1975.

Against the backdrop of the development of public concern over East Timor, Labor backbench parliamentarians continued to put pressure on the Whitlam government. On 30 September, Ken Fry, who had just returned from East Timor, addressed a demonstration attended by about 30 people outside Parliament House. On this occasion, he promised that he and other backbenchers would seek caucus support for demanding that Prime Minister Whitlam immediately grant aid and support to East Timor.<sup>110</sup> On 29 October, John Kerin, the Secretary of the Labor Caucus of Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, sent a letter to Foreign Minister Willesee concerning allegations of Indonesian involvement in the conflicts in East Timor and the five journalists' deaths. On the basis of the recognition that "[t]he continued public silence of the Australian Government is inconsistent with Government policy concerning the rights of nations to determine their own destiny and is contrary to the Federal A.L.P. policy", Kerin requested the Cabinet to "(1) publicly state the view that Indonesian activity in East Timor is prolonging hostilities and obstructing the process of decolonisation and self-determination"; "(2) take prompt action to recover the bodies of the journalists and determine the circumstances in which these five Australian citizens died"; "(3) increase official Government aid to East Timor"; and "(4) use its good offices to mediate between the parties involved in the dispute".<sup>111</sup> As seen previously, on the following day, Foreign Minister Willesee responded to public concerns by issuing the first major public statement in support of the self-determination of East Timor and in opposition to the use of force.

### **Activities of NGOs in support of East Timor**

In response to the development of Australian public concern over East Timor, many Australian NGOs paid considerable attention to its humanitarian situation and put constant

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<sup>110</sup> "UDT asks Indonesia 'to use force'", *The Canberra Times*, 1 October 1975.

<sup>111</sup> Letter from Kerin to Willesee, Canberra, 29 October 1975, *AIIPT*, p. 526.

pressure on the Australian government to actively support the people's aspirations for independence. On 26 September, the ACFOA convened a major meeting in Melbourne attended by thirty-five representatives of aid, development and interest groups. James Dunn, Helen Hill, Will Morris of the International Red Cross and Dr John Whitehall of the ASIAT addressed it. Also, José Ramos-Horta sent a message of greetings from East Timor. After the meeting, the ACFOA expressed its "grave concern at the Australian Government's lack of clear statements in support of self-determination for the people of East Timor" and declared that "there was a need for the Australian Government to act positively in the face of threats to East Timor's identity as an independent country". It also "called on the Australian government to urgently provide food and relief aid for East Timor...". As for its own activities, the ACFOA decided "to set up a Timor Task Force to survey the needs for short and long term assistance to Timor, and to coordinate such aid in conjunction with representatives of the Timorese people".<sup>112</sup> In early October, this newly-established task force made a decision to send a team to East Timor to assess "the urgent humanitarian needs of the area and the possible role of voluntary organisations in meeting this need" and "the longer term needs and possible contributions that can be made by voluntary organisations to the development of East Timor".<sup>113</sup>

On 16 October, the day the Indonesian military began intervening in East Timor, the ACFOA team – James Dunn (Director of the Foreign Affairs Group, Legislative Research Service, Parliament House), Neil O'Sullivan (Project Officer, Community Aid Abroad), John Mavor (Secretary, Division of World Christian Action, Australian Council of Churches) and Father Mark Raper (Director, Asian Bureau Australia) – flew from Darwin to Dili. It conducted several interviews with President of Fretilin Amaral, members of Fretilin's Central Committee,

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112 ACFOA, "Timor and Australian NGO's – The Future", 26 September 1975, Records of ACFOA, NLA, MS 9347, Box 8.

113 ACFOA Timor Task Force, *Report on Visit to East Timor for ACFOA Timor Task Force* (Canberra: Australian Council for Overseas Aid, 1975), pp. 1-2.

Governor Pires, and members of the ICRC and the ASIAT and others, and travelled to more than ten villages and towns. While the team leader, James Dunn, stayed in East Timor until 2 November, the other three members returned to Australia on 28 October.

After their return, the team made some recommendations to the ACFOA Timor Task Force. A notable thing about its report is that, while assessing that “an amount of approximately 2,500 tonnes of foodstuffs would be required to be made available to East Timor over the next five months” and there were other necessities for eliminating the risk of famine in the territory, they also strongly recommended that “[t]he greatest humanitarian needs in East Timor at the present time are for the restoration of peace in the vicinity of the Indonesian border” and that there was “[t]he urgent need to reduce the threat of widespread bloodshed that would result from a full scale attack on East Timor”. In conclusion, the team called on the ACFOA and all its member agencies to urgently press the Australian government to “(i) publicly declare its support for the principle of self determination for the people of East Timor” and “(ii) [u]se its full diplomatic efforts in urging the Indonesian Government to desist from its active support and encouragement of military activities around the border area”.<sup>114</sup>

On 7 November, under the initiative of the ACFOA, the Timor Relief Appeal was set up with the aim of collecting \$ 250,000.<sup>115</sup> On 15 November, the first mercy ship sailed to Dili with “12 tonnes rice, 25 tonnes maize, 4200 meters cloth, 1 tonne milk powder, 2 tonnes caustic soda, 5 tonnes flour, 500 gallons petrol, and 2 tonnes diesel fuel” which cost \$48,000 in total.<sup>116</sup> Having collected more than \$100,000 in donations by late November, Australian overseas aid agencies planned to send a second mercy shipment of 100 tonnes of relief supplies to Dili.<sup>117</sup> However, this did not materialise because of Indonesia’s attack on Dili on 7 December.

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<sup>114</sup> ACFOA Timor Task Force, *Report on Visit to East Timor*, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> Press Release of ACFOA, 6 November 1975, Records of ACFOA, NLA, MS 9347, Box 8.

<sup>116</sup> Press Release of ACFOA, 14 November 1975, Records of ACFOA, NLA, MS 9347, Box 8.

<sup>117</sup> Press Release of ACFOA, 26 November 1975, Records of ACFOA, NLA, MS 9347, Box 8.



### **Direct protest activities against Indonesian invasion**

Some Australian people directly protested against the Indonesian policy of annexing East Timor by force. On 1 October, about 100 people in Canberra, most of whom were students, including the President of the ANU Student Association, Julius Roe, occupied the Indonesian Embassy for about two and half hours in protest at the alleged Indonesian interference in East Timor. Then, six of them went to Parliament House and asked the Foreign Minister's staff for more aid for East Timor, recognition of the *de facto* Fretilin government, return of the Australian Consul, support for an independent East Timor, and condemnation of Indonesian interference.<sup>118</sup>

On 3 November, more extreme protest actions were committed by a radical group of the Friends of Fretilin who painted the following words in red on the houses of all Indonesian diplomats and the military attaché of the Indonesian Embassy; "Hands Off East Timor You Fascists", "Fretilin Will Win", "Fascist Butcher", "A Free Timor", "Fretilin Must Win", "Independence For East Timor" and "Indonesia Out". Then, this group claimed responsibility, saying that;

The raid was in retaliation for the increasingly documented Indonesian invasion of East Timor. Five Australian press men have been killed while filming this Indonesian invasion yet the Australian government have not come out and condemned this invasion. Australian eyewitnesses have reported Indonesian warships, helicopter gunships, mortars and troops in the invasion. It has been reported that Indonesian forces have been forcing reluctant refugees to join their criminal invasion. There has been no eye-witness who has challenged the fact that the

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<sup>118</sup> "Embassy occupied in Timor demonstration", *The Canberra Times*, 2 October 1975; "Protesters invade Indonesian Embassy", *The Age*, 2 October 1975.

vast majority of East Timorese enthusiastically support Fretilin and are prepared to fight for independence. Fretilin will win! If the Indonesian invasion is successful then thousands will be massacred and imprisoned as the people of Indonesia were when the fascist generals usurped power ten years ago. If the Australian government will not defend the lives and independence of the 650,000 people who are our nearest neighbours then the Friends of Fretilin will continue to act.<sup>119</sup>

The Australian-wide trade unions' decision to place a ban on Indonesian ships in late October also undermined Australian-Indonesian relations; for example, on the basis of this decision, on 29 October at Darling Harbour in Sydney, waterside workers refused to unload Indonesian timber from an Indonesian freighter in protest against Indonesian military involvement in East Timor. In response, Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik warned that "any union action similar to the ban could endanger diplomatic relations between Australia and Indonesia".<sup>120</sup>

### **Establishment of more interest groups**

During this period, more groups interested in East Timor were established in Australia. One important event was the establishment of the *Timor Information Service* by "Melbourne activists connected to church and aid organisations" as "one of the first formal newsletters in English serving the information needs of the Australian and international East Timor solidarity movement". According to John Waddingham, one of its founding members, the TIS "aimed to present a regular, credible account of the rapidly evolving situation inside Timor". Compared

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119 Press release of Friends of Fretilin, Canberra, 3 November 1975.

120 "Wharf men put ban on Indonesian ship", *SMH*, 30 October 1975.

with Denis Freney's articles, its way of writing was less polemical.<sup>121</sup> On 11 November, the TIS published its first leaflet dealing with the history of East Timor, including Australia's relations with it, and Indonesia's military activities and the killing of five journalists there.<sup>122</sup>

Another important happening was the formation of the Australian-East Timor Association (AETA) in Melbourne on 7 December on the same day as Indonesia's massive attack against Dili. Its first President, Bill Roberts, stated in his letter to Foreign Minister Peacock that its aims were "to support all the hopes and aspirations of the East Timorese people in their struggle to maintain independence" and "to raise the conscience of not only Australians, but all people throughout the world". A number of resolutions were passed at the AETA's inaugural meeting on 7 December, including its recognition of "the Democratic Republic of East Timor, as initiated by Fretilin" and a decision to send a deputation "to lobby at the UN in support of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of East Timor".<sup>123</sup> In accordance with this decision, one member of AETA's steering committee, David Scott, who had returned to Melbourne from East Timor some days ago, was selected to be sent to New York to where he flew on 10 December after having met with Foreign Minister Peacock.<sup>124</sup> Also, by establishing some branches in other states and cities, the AETA tried to expand its activities in Australia.<sup>125</sup>

Traditional CPA members and its associates also continued their supportive activities for Fretilin, while preparing for the general election at the same time. An important thing that the CPA had done a few weeks before the Indonesia's invasion of Dili was a shipment of six radio transceivers to Dili by Brian Manning and others. After Indonesia's massive invasion, the

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121 John Waddingham, "Timor Archives", <<http://timorarchives.wordpress.com/2010/06/22/tis-online/>>.

122 *Timor Information Service* 1, 11 November 1975.

123 Letter from Roberts to Peacock, 18 December 1975, NAA, A1838, 3038/10/1/1, pt 7.

124 David Scott, *Last Flight out of Dili: Memoirs of an Accidental Activist in the Triumph of East Timor* (North Melbourne, Vic.: Pluto Press Australia, 2005), pp. 30-2.

125 For a detailed account of the establishment of the AETA, see Clinton Fernandes, "International Solidarity – Phase Two", *Companion to East Timor*, <[http://hass.unsw.adfa.edu.au/timor\\_companion/international\\_solidarity/phase\\_two.php](http://hass.unsw.adfa.edu.au/timor_companion/international_solidarity/phase_two.php)>.

two-way communication between Alarico Fernandes in East Timor and supporters in Darwin by means of the radio became almost the only contact between inside and outside of the territory of East Timor and thus played a vital role in keeping informing the outside world about the ongoing war in East Timor.

## **Conclusion**

In the face of the militarisation of Indonesia's policy of annexation of East Timor during this period, Australian foreign policy towards East Timor slightly but determinedly shifted from being under the dominant influence of Prime Minister Whitlam as discussed in Chapter 4. Through Foreign Minister Willesee's statement in the Senate on 30 October 1975, the Australian government clearly stated its commitment to the right of the Timorese to freely determine their future and to its opposition to the use of armed force. Certainly the DFA played a major role in recommending that Ministers publicise this statement but it should be noted that this decision was made against the backdrop of strong criticisms against the government's silence from the Australian public and media.

At the same time, it should also be mentioned that the Australian government, which had been suffering from its own domestic political crisis, remained reluctant to resolve the East Timor question despite its stated principles as indicated by Prime Minister Fraser's secret message to President Suharto on the recommendation of the DFA. After Indonesia's attack on Dili on 7 December 1975, the Fraser caretaker government explicitly protested against it by diplomatic means, as shown by its vote for UNGA Resolution 3485, but remained unwilling to conduct substantial policy to stop Indonesia's military activities against East Timor. The Fraser government continued to value Australian relations with Indonesia.

## **Chapter 6: Indonesia's forcible integration of East Timor and its non-recognition by the Australian government from mid-December 1975 to July 1976**

This chapter examines Australian foreign policymaking towards East Timor during the period from the middle of December 1975 to the end of July 1976. During this time the Indonesian government continued its military operations in East Timor regardless of UN Security Council resolutions and, on 17 July 1976, declared the incorporation of East Timor as its 27<sup>th</sup> province. After winning the Federal election on 13 December 1975, the Australian government led by Malcolm Fraser was released from caretaker mode and was able to conduct its own foreign policy. Taking this opportunity, what policy did the Fraser government implement towards Indonesia's annexation of East Timor?

This chapter considers this question in three sections. Section 6.1 looks at Indonesia's policy of annexation of East Timor after its massive military invasion in December 1975, paying particular attention to how the Indonesian government dealt with the involvement of the UN Security Council and also how it organised a series of acts purportedly of self-determination in East Timor. Section 6.2 examines the Fraser government's policymaking towards East Timor which took account of both the relationship between the Australian and Indonesian governments and domestic concerns over Indonesia's military annexation of East Timor. Section 6.3 provides an overview of the Australian public's reactions to the plight of the Timorese. In response to the information on East Timor flowing into Australia, the Australian media and public continued to express their concerns and there were very demands for the Australian government to clearly protest against Indonesia's annexation policy; this was a major determinant of Australian

policymaking towards East Timor.

## ***6.1 Process of Indonesian annexation of East Timor as its 27<sup>th</sup> province***

### **6.1.1 Intervention of UN Security Council in question of East Timor**

#### **Escalation of Indonesian military intervention and UNSC resolution 384**

While the Indonesian military was waging war on pro-independence forces in East Timor after 7 December 1975, some Indonesian diplomats and also the Foreign Minister attempted to justify this conduct in the arena of the United Nations. In this respect, debates in the UN Security Council concerning Resolution 384 and dealing with the Indonesian military intervention in Portuguese Timor provided an important opportunity for the Indonesian government to explain its policy. On 15 December 1975, at the beginning of the session, Portuguese Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN, Galvão Teles, called upon the Security Council to “condemn Indonesia for the aggression it has committed” and “demand the withdrawal of all occupation forces from the Territory of Timor”.<sup>1</sup> Countering these statements, Indonesian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN, Anwar Sani, asserted that “[t]he Indonesian people reacted in order to put out the fire started deliberately by FRETILIN. The combined forces managed to occupy Dili, the capital of East Timor, and to gain control of practically the entire territory with the co-operation of the people...What the Indonesian people did was to respond to the request of the majority of the people of East Timor, which can certainly not be termed an act of aggression...Indonesia will continue to participate in every *bona fide* effort to restore peaceful conditions to the Territory in order to enable the people

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<sup>1</sup> SCOR, 30th Year, 1864th meeting:15 December 1975, in Heike Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community : Basic Documents* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 60.

freely and democratically to exercise its right to self-determination.”<sup>2</sup>

Along with Sani’s presentation, other Indonesian policymakers appealed to some Timorese political leaders to establish a “government” in East Timor. On 17 December 1975, it was announced that representatives of Apodeti, UDT and the other two parties who had signed the Balibo Declaration in the previous month had formed a “Provisional Government of East Timor” (PGET), “to ensure the maintenance of government and the administration of law and order, so as to restore normal life to the people of East Timor”<sup>3</sup>. Arnaldo dos Reis Araujo, the President of Apodeti, having been freed from a Fretilin prison, assumed the position of its Chief Executive and Lopes da Cruz, the President of UDT, took the office of Deputy.<sup>4</sup> Regarding this “Provisional Government”, after his talks with Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik, who revealed an Indonesian plan to provide the “Provisional Government” with administrative assistance, Australian Ambassador Woolcott reported that “[i]t is clear that a major purpose of the provisional administration is to preempt any United Nations administration”.<sup>5</sup>

On 22 December, after a week of debates, fifteen members of the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 384.<sup>6</sup> In its operative paragraphs, this resolution called upon “all States to respect the territorial integrity of East Timor as well as the inalienable right of its people to self-determination in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV)”, required “the Government of Indonesia to withdraw without delay all its forces from the Territory”, recommended “the Government of Portugal as administering Power to co-operate

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2 SCOR, 30th Year, 1864th meeting: 15 December 1975, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, p. 63.

3 Letter dated 22 December 1975 from the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, The Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, *Decolonization in East Timor* (Jakarta: Dept. of Information, Republic of Indonesia, 1977), pp. 75-6.

4 *Chega!*, Chapter 3, pp. 68-9.

5 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 19 December 1975, in Wendy Way (ed.), *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000), (hereafter *AIIPT*), p. 643.

6 Membership of the Security Council in 1975 consisted of five permanent members – China, France, the USSR, the UK and the USA – and ten non-permanent members – Byelorussia, Costa Rica, Guyana, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Mauritania, Sweden, Cameroon and Tanzania.

fully with the efforts of the United Nations so as to enable the people of East Timor to exercise freely their right to self-determination” and urged “all States and other parties concerned to co-operate fully with the efforts of the United Nations to achieve a peaceful solution to the existing situation and to facilitate the decolonization of the Territory”.<sup>7</sup>

Its succeeding paragraphs noted practical measures that the UN Secretary-General was asked to take immediately. Its fifth paragraph requested “the Secretary-General to send urgently a special representative to East Timor for the purpose of making an on-the-spot assessment of the existing situation and of establishing contact with all the parties in the Territory and all States concerned in order to ensure the implementation of the present resolution”. Then, its sixth paragraph asked “the Secretary-General to follow the implementation of the present resolution and taking into account the report of his Special Representative, to submit recommendations to the Security Council as soon as possible”.<sup>8</sup> Thus, after the promulgation of UNSC Resolution 384, the focal point of the East Timor question moved to the visit of a UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative to East Timor.

However, disregarding UNSC Resolution 384, the Indonesian government continued its policy annexation of East Timor. In expectation of the visit of a UN mission to East Timor, Harry Tjan told Allan Taylor that “Indonesia would only allow visitors anyway, when the situation allowed. It would be easy to prevent visitors by getting the provisional government to say that they could not guarantee visitors’ safety, or the airport was out of action, or the like”.<sup>9</sup> On 26 December, in accordance with what Tjan had said, the “Provisional Government” actually requested postponement of the UN visit to East Timor. On the other hand, around the Christmas period, the Indonesian forces significantly reinforced their military operations in

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7 UN Security Council Resolution 384 (1975) of 22 December 1975, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and International Community*, pp. 53-4.

8 Ibid.

9 Record of conversation between Tjan and Taylor, Jakarta, 23 December 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 649-50.



various towns in East Timor; for instance, according to messages from Alarico Fernandes in East Timor, fresh Indonesian paratroopers attacked Dili and Baucau with the assistance of air and naval bombardments. In Jakarta, Hamish McDonald also reported that, since 7 December, about 10,000 Indonesian soldiers had been sent to East Timor.<sup>10</sup> By the end of the year, the Indonesian military gained control of Aileu, one of Fretilin's strongholds south of Dili, pushing Fretilin supporters further into the southern mountainous areas. Meanwhile, the "Provisional Government" was threatening that, if Australian volunteers help the evacuation of Fretilin supporters from the south coast of East Timor "[w]e will not be responsible for what happens to Australia if Australia intervenes in Timor".<sup>11</sup>

### **UN Special Representative Winspeare's visit to East Timor**

On 29 December 1975, in accordance with UNSC Resolution 384, Secretary-General Waldheim appointed Vittorio Winspeare Guicciardi, an Italian diplomat and Director-General of the United Nations in Geneva, as his special representative to East Timor. Also, three UN staff members – Erik Jensen, Gilberto Schlittler-Silva and Herald Smaage – were selected, to accompany his mission. Flying to New York on 5 January 1976, Winspeare discussed details of his mission with UN Secretary-General Waldheim and had talks with Galvão Teles, Anwar Sani and José Ramos-Horta. On 8 January, he visited Lisbon to meet some Portuguese policymakers, including Foreign Minister Melo Antunes, the Minister for External Co-operation, Vitor Crespo, and the Governor of Portuguese Timor, Lemos Pires.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, Indonesian policymakers accelerated their preparations for the

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10 "New attack on Timor", *The Age*, 27 December 1975. See also Alarico Fernandes's radio message on 26 December, *Timor Information Service* 5, 28 December 1975.

11 "Tirade from Dili tells Aust to 'keep quiet'", *SMH*, 1 January 1976.

12 Report by the Secretary-General in Pursuance of Security Council Resolution 384 (1975), 12 March 1976, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and International Community*, pp. 87-93.

coming visit of the Winspeare mission. Firstly, on 9 January 1976, Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik flew from Jakarta to Dili to inspect the town and, on his return, stated that Winspeare would not be allowed to try to contact Fretilin forces and his visit would be confined to the main towns for security reasons.<sup>13</sup> Tony Joyce, an ABC journalist who followed Malik's trip and found some clear evidence of the presence of massive numbers of Indonesian forces – such as tank tracks in front of the Government Office and a large number of Indonesian-looking soldiers in Indonesian-style uniforms in Dili – also forecast that Winspeare would have little chance of mingling with people and determining the true situation in Portuguese Timor.<sup>14</sup> After Foreign Minister Malik's visit on 13 January, the Indonesian government informed the Winspeare mission that the "Provisional Government" had agreed to receive his visit from 19 January in areas of East Timor under its control.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, on 14 January, four Indonesian key policymakers – Harry Tjan, Benny Murdani, Anwar Sani and Adenan of the Department of Foreign Affairs – travelled to Dili and Baucau to double-check the situation in East Timor. After returning to Jakarta, Harry Tjan told Malcolm Dan of the Australian Embassy that "everything was well under control in both towns".<sup>16</sup>

On 15 January, Winspeare arrived in Jakarta. While staying there both before and after his short visit to East Timor, he had a number of talks with President Suharto, Foreign Minister Malik, other senior officials and representatives of NGOs.<sup>17</sup> During these meetings, President Suharto insisted that he was being urged to accept the incorporation of Oecusse, and presumably the rest of East Timor, at the request of the local authorities. Ali Murtopo's affiliates also approached Winspeare with the intention of bribing or compromising him "in a crude and

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13 Hamish McDonald, "UN envoy faces difficult task, says journalist", *SMH*, 12 January 1976.

14 Ibid. See also Michael Richardson, "Indonesian farce camouflages Timor invasion", *SMH*, 16 January 1976.

15 Report by the Secretary-General in Pursuance of Security Council Resolution 384 (1975), 12 March 1976, op. cit., p. 90.

16 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 15 January 1976, *AIIPT*, p. 666.

17 Report by the Secretary-General in Pursuance of Security Council Resolution 384 (1975), 12 March 1976, op. cit., p. 90.

inappropriate fashion”, for example, by pressing him to accept expensive Indonesian paintings. On the other hand, Winspeare countered the Indonesians by warning Foreign Minister Malik not to downplay the UNSC resolution 384 which called for an Indonesian withdrawal.<sup>18</sup>

In the end, from 20 to 22 January 1976, Winspeare travelled to the territory of East Timor. Flying to Kupang on 19 January and telling representatives of the “Provisional Government” about his wish to visit as many centres in East Timor as possible, Winspeare travelled around the enclaves of Oecusse, Ataúro Island and Dili by chartered light aircraft on the following day. On 21 January, the Winspeare UN mission flew to Manatuto and Baucau by helicopter and finally left East Timor the next day.<sup>19</sup> During the trip, although observing no apparent Indonesian soldiers or “volunteers”, Winspeare was well aware that his movements had been tightly controlled. He was also told in Dili, privately, that representatives of pro-integration parties, including ex-Fretilin members, had reached common ground regarding integration into Indonesia and there was no room for the UN to act. His wish to visit as many places as possible was refused because of “security, weather or technical grounds”.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the Winspeare mission’s visit to East Timor was effectively managed by the Indonesians.

### **Winspeare mission’s failure to visit Fretilin-controlled areas**

From 22 January to 1 February 1976, in Jakarta, Winspeare continued to seek means and opportunities to visit Fretilin-controlled areas in East Timor. In the meantime, he received a message from José Ramos-Horta in New York through the UN Secretary-General’s office suggesting he land on an airfield in Same and then visit the three towns of Suai, Com and Viqueque. He was also advised to contact Tony Bello, a member of Fretilin in Darwin, to make

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18 Report by Miller, Canberra, 10 February 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 703-6.

19 Report by the Secretary-General in Pursuance of Security Council Resolution 384 (1975), 12 March 1976, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

20 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 24 January 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 673-6.

arrangements.<sup>21</sup> However, the Winspeare mission soon faced various obstructions and interference caused by the Indonesian and Australian governments; for example, on the morning of 25 January, when Tony Bello was trying to inform Alarico Fernandes about Winspeare's travel plans, he was pulled up and his two-way radio seized by the local police and Telecom officials in Darwin on the grounds that he did not have an appropriate licence issued by the Post Master General (PMG).<sup>22</sup> Because of this decision of the Australian government, Winspeare's contact with Fretilin members in East Timor was temporarily jeopardised. Furthermore, the Winspeare mission was unable to fly to East Timor because the Australian and Indonesian governments, citing security concerns, were not willing to provide an aircraft. More decisively, on 27 January, the Indonesian military launched a large-scale attack on the port of Betano on the south coast and landed a massive force which headed towards Same to prevent the Winspeare mission from landing.<sup>23</sup> In addition, on 29 January, Indonesian sources unilaterally announced that Timorese parties would be dissolved and integrated into a National Front. An officer of BAKIN, Sunarso, explained that its intention was "to bring the party set-up in East Timor into accord with the party set-up in Indonesia" prior to its official integration.<sup>24</sup>

From 2 to 7 February, Winspeare moved to Darwin and made final efforts to visit Fretilin-controlled areas in East Timor with the assistance of two Portuguese Corvettes docked in Darwin, with which he was in communication, and two Fretilin members, Tony Bello and José Ramos-Horta, who had visited Australia to assist his mission. However, the Indonesian military was determined to obstruct it, as indicated by Sunarso who told Peter Rodgers of the Australian Embassy that "a visit by Winspeare to a Fretilin controlled area would clearly not be

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21 Ibid.

22 Ken White, "Police Close Down Timor Radio", *The Northern Territory News*, 26 January 1976; "Radio seizure hampers peace bid", *The Northern Territory News*, 27 January 1976.

23 "Attack may stop UN's Timor visit", *The Northern Territory News*, 28 January 1976.

24 Record of conversation between Sunarso and Taylor, Jakarta, 6 February 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 701-2.

in Indonesia's interest" and that "Indonesia would do all it could to ensure that the visit did not take place".<sup>25</sup> At last, on the morning of 6 February, the Indonesian military bombed the four places nominated by Fretilin to be visited – Same, Suai, Viqueque and Com – and all harbours on the south coast. As a result, on the same day, because Fernandes announced that it would be impossible to guarantee Winspeare's safety<sup>26</sup>, Ramos-Horta officially asked Winspeare to call off the mission.<sup>27</sup>

Indonesian policymakers had to prevent the Winspeare mission from visiting the part of East Timor under Fretilin's control by any means because they were afraid that the fact that the "Provisional Government" was not yet able to exercise its influence over most of the territory and population, despite having been supported by the Indonesian military, would be revealed to the world. In this regard, the National Intelligence Committee (NIC) of Australia, chaired by Gordon Jockel, estimated in late January that anti-Fretilin forces in East Timor consisted of more than 20,000 personnel, including 2,000 East Timorese. At any one time, they were assisted by around a dozen Indonesian naval ships, several light bombers and gunships, and military and civilian planes for air transport. Despite this commitment of forces, the NIC observed that "Indonesian forces are experiencing operational problems" and that they control "probably over 100,000" of the Timorese, only about one-sixth of the population. A map drawn by the NIC on 6 February also showed that the Indonesian forces could seize only some scattered areas while most of East Timor was still out of their control.<sup>28</sup> In the same month, with reference to the fierceness of the war and the excesses of the Indonesian military at that time, Lopes da Cruz of the "Provisional Government" testified that more than 60,000 people had died in East Timor

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25 Record of conversation between Sunarso and Rodgers, Jakarta, 2 February 1976, *AIIPT*, p. 687.

26 Ken White, "UN Mission Off?", *The Northern Territory News*, 6 February 1976.

27 Russell Skelton, "UN envoy abandons plan for trip to Timor", *The Age*, 6 February 1976.

28 National Intelligence Committee, "Assessment of the Timor Situation", 27 January 1976, NAA, A13075,200/FAD.

during the previous six months.<sup>29</sup>

In this way, the Indonesian military successfully forced the Winspeare mission to give up its plan to visit Fretilin-controlled areas in East Timor. On 7 February, Winspeare travelled from Darwin to Sydney to fly back to Europe the following day. Before his departure from Sydney, Winspeare had talks with UN Secretary-General Waldheim who officially announced the UN's temporary abandonment of efforts to visit Fretilin areas in East Timor.<sup>30</sup>

### **Winspeare's report and UNSC Resolution 389**

In accordance with UNSC Resolution 384, Winspeare authored a report in association with concerned parties which was submitted to UN Secretary-General Waldheim on 29 February. In it, while admitting that "I went to certain places only and was unable to travel widely" and that "[a]ny accurate assessment of the situation as a whole remains elusive", Winspeare managed to conclude that "[a]s a first step, it might be possible to build on the slender common assumption that the people of East Timor should be consulted on the future of the Territory". On 12 March, enclosing this report, Waldheim submitted his own report to the UN Security Council.<sup>31</sup>

After 12 April, the UN Security Council resumed debate regarding the question of East Timor and a number of concerned parties made speeches from their perspectives. When it came

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29 "Timor death toll 60,000: leader", *The Age*, 14 February 1976.

30 "Timor: we defend stand", *The Age*, 9 February 1976.

31 Report by the Secretary-General in Pursuance of Security Council Resolution 384 (1975), 12 March 1976, op. cit. According to Winspeare's report, the four relevant parties of Fretilin or the "Government of the Democratic Republic of East Timor", the Portuguese government, the "Provisional Government" and the Indonesian government presented their views on the self-determination question of East Timor as follows: firstly, the "Government of the Democratic Republic of East Timor" proposed "a referendum with a simple choice between integration with Indonesia and independence under FRETILIN"; secondly, agreeing with a referendum in principle, the Portuguese Government preferred a choice "between integration with Indonesia and independence in consultation with all political parties in the Territory"; thirdly, without referring to the referendum, the "Provisional Government" suggested that "a People's Representative Council should either ratify the decision of the people for complete integration with Indonesia or formulate other suggestions for the future political structure of East Timor"; and, lastly, the Indonesian government, in support of the "Provisional Government", asserted that "since it is for the people of the Territory to determine for themselves the future of East Timor, the decision of the 'Provisional Government' for integration with Indonesia should be subject to ratification by the East Timorese people".

to the Portuguese government, Portuguese Ambassador Teles stated that “...although we are, *de facto*, prevented from exercising our powers and attributes as administrating Power, Portugal considers that in this case too it is its duty to do battle for respect for the free exercise by the people of Timor of its right to self-determination, without outside interference or pressure. Accordingly, Portugal continues to feel in complete solidarity with the people of Timor...”<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, Indonesian Ambassador Sani again asserted that the Indonesian presence was “upon the specific request of the large majority of people, to prevent their liquidation by FRETILIN armed elements only because they wanted to be integrated with Indonesia” and went on to say that “[o]ne should not forget that the people consider themselves already Indonesians and their territory an integral part of Indonesia...Nevertheless, the armed volunteers started to leave the Territory in February 1976”.<sup>33</sup>

On 22 April, after the debating sessions, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 389 by 12 votes to none, with abstentions by Japan and the United States.<sup>34</sup> Again, in its operational paragraph, the resolution called upon “the Government of Indonesia to withdraw without further delay all forces from the Territory”, disregarding Japan’s objection.<sup>35</sup> It also noted the belief that “all efforts should be made to create conditions that will enable the people of East Timor to exercise freely their right of self-determination” and requested Winspeare to continue his assignment under the previous UNSC resolution, 384, in consultation with the relevant parties. The resolution also asked Secretary-General Waldheim to submit a new report to the Security Council.<sup>36</sup> In this way, it was agreed that the UN Security Council would

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32 SCOR, 31st Year, 1908th Meeting, 12 April 1976, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and International Community*, p. 100.

33 SCOR, 31st Year, 1909th Meeting, 14 April 1976, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and International Community*, p. 103.

34 The twelve member states which voted for the resolution were China, France, the USSR, the UK, Guyana, Italy, Libya, Pakistan, Panama, Romania, Sweden and Tanzania. The other member, Benin, did not participate in the voting.

35 Japan proposed to amend the sentence to “[c]alls the Government of Indonesia to withdraw without further delay all its remaining forces from the Territory”, taking the insistence of the Indonesian Government into account.

36 UN Security Council Resolution 389 (1976) of 22 April 1976, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and International Community*, p. 93.

continue to be involved in the case.

### **6.1.2 Process of Indonesian integration of East Timor**

#### **Preparing for “the act of self-determination which would lead to integration”**

Without regard to the UN Security Council’s resolutions, Indonesian policymakers continued to implement a policy of integration of East Timor into Indonesia. In order to counter international criticism, from early March, Harry Tjan and other Indonesian policymakers planned purported act of self-determination in East Timor. Tjan explained the need for the “Provisional Government” to convene an early act of self-determination to make it much easier for the Indonesian government to prevent a UN initiative on an act of self-determination<sup>37</sup> and also “to provide funds through the Indonesian budget for expenditure there”. After formally declaring it, he also talked about Indonesia’s intention to disregard international criticism by asserting that “it was an internal matter”.<sup>38</sup>

In the middle of March, Benny Murdani made it known to Ambassador Woolcott that “a high level discussion” on “the act of self-determination which would lead to integration” had been convened in Jakarta. He said that its participants had agreed that “as internationally acceptable an act as possible should be conducted” on the basis of the assumption that “integration was inevitable”.<sup>39</sup> Benny Murdani also explained the following provisional plan for an act of self-determination, a draft of which had already been provided by Harry Tjan to the Australian Embassy on 4 March.

- (i) The 13 districts of East Timor would send elected representatives (probably between 40 and

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37 Memorandum to Canberra, Jakarta, 4 March 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 21.

38 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 8 April 1976, *AIIPT*, p. 734.

39 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 16 March 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 723-4.



50) to a meeting in Dili to determine whether East Timor should be independent or become a part of Indonesia. These representatives would include Fretilin (that is ex-Fretilin) supporters.

- (ii) If it chose the latter, the meeting in Dili would send representatives to Jakarta to convey to the DPR<sup>40</sup> and the Government of Indonesia its decision in favour of integration.
- (iii) The PGET would send invitations to the Committee of Twenty-Four to observe the meeting in Dili and perhaps the selection of representatives to attend that meeting.
- (iv) The DPR and the Government of Indonesia would send a team to East Timor to check with people (probably only those in the main population centres) whether they really wanted integration.
- (v) The Committee of Twenty-Four would also be invited to attend any debate in the DPR on the PGET's request for integration and any DPR and Indonesian government's representative's consultations with the people in East Timor.
- (vi) The DPR would discuss the findings of its team and if they favoured integration pass the Bill amending the constitution and declaring East Timor a part of Indonesia.
- (vii) The Government of Indonesia would accept the integration of East Timor, presumably in the President's speech to the Nation on 16 August.<sup>41</sup>

As seen above, Indonesian policymakers undertook elaborate attempts to make the procedure to integrate East Timor appear democratic and legal. In early April, Harry Tjan also suggested inviting more representatives from the UN and diplomatic missions based in Jakarta to observe the Dili meeting and the subsequent Indonesian mission. While not sufficiently optimistic to assume that many invitations would be accepted, Tjan still thought there would be

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<sup>40</sup> DPR is the abbreviation of *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* which means the Indonesian People's Representative Council.

<sup>41</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 16 March 1976, op. cit.

some merit in issuing them because “Indonesia would be able to say to its critics that an opportunity had been given to the international community to observe the act of self-determination”.<sup>42</sup>

### **Preparations for “People’s Representative Council”**

Under Indonesian guidance, the “Provisional Government” stepped up its preparations to convene “the act of self-determination which would lead to integration”. Firstly, in early April 1976, the “Provisional Government” sent a letter to Winspeare informing him that it had enforced an act concerning self-determination for the Timorese. The letter noted that “the right of self-determination according to principles of democracy” “is to be implemented in accordance with the traditions and identity of the people of East Timor, meaning a representative system by means of consensus and consent” with the exception of Dili where the representatives would be supposedly selected on the basis of one man, one vote.<sup>43</sup>

Secondly, from April to May, the “Provisional Government” and Indonesian policymakers approached many UN representatives and foreign diplomats to invite them to the “People’s Representative Council”, including the UN Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, the Chairman of the Special Committee of Twenty-Four and other UN representatives,<sup>44</sup> but paid particular attention to inviting the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative, Winspeare. In addition, they invited representatives of 23 countries (four other ASEAN countries, Australia, the NZ, Japan, the US and others) and the foreign media who worked in Jakarta;<sup>45</sup> for instance, in late May, with the assistance of Indonesian officials, the

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42 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 8 April 1976, op. cit.

43 Act Number 1/A.D. 1976 of “Provisional Government of East Timor” in the English version delivered to the Special Representative by Representatives of the “Provisional Government”, 2 April 1976, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and International Community*, pp. 51-2.

44 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 21 May 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 757-8; Hamish McDonald, “Timorese Parlt approves Indonesia merger”, *SMH*, 1 June 1976.

45 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 14 May 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 754-5. The 23 countries comprised four other ASEAN members (Thailand, Malaysia,

“Provisional Government” sent an invitation to Australian Ambassador Woolcott “to attend the session of the People’s Representative Council of East Timor on the exercise of the Right of Self Determination of the People of East Timor to be held in Dili on Monday May 31, 1976, 12:30 hours (local time)”.<sup>46</sup>

Thirdly, under instructions from the Indonesian government, the “Provisional Government” made various preparations to impress foreign visitors to the territory of East Timor. These were witnessed by Allan Taylor and two other Australian diplomats who were given the opportunity to fly from Kupang to Dili, Baucau and Viqueque between 29 April and 9 May in conjunction with their investigation into the Balibo affair which had been agreed to in the Indonesian-Australian Foreign Ministers’ talks in the same month. While being aware that “I saw little...that the Indonesians did not want me to see”, such as Indonesian military personnel in uniform, Taylor observed a lot of “[u]nmistakable signs of Indonesianisation”, including “the ubiquitous Indonesian flag”, “policemen in Indonesian uniforms”, “the use of rupiah”, “the change from driving on the right hand side of the road to driving on the left” and “the introduction of Bahasa Indonesia”. Looking at personal relationships, including that between Lopes da Cruz and Murdani, he recognised that “[t]here was no hiding the fact that the Indonesians were the boss”. On the basis of these observations, Taylor forecast that “[i]t was unlikely that any choice would be offered at the meeting of district representatives at Dili in the second half of May”.<sup>47</sup>

### **Meeting of “People’s Representative Council” in Dili on 31 May 1976**

In the early morning of 31 May, about 50 people, accompanied by six officials from

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The Philippines and Singapore), Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Japan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, Yugoslavia, Italy, The Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the USA, the USSR, France and Britain.

46 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 26 May 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 23.

47 Memorandum to Canberra, Jakarta, 19 May 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 23.

the Indonesian Department of Foreign Affairs headed by Adenan and two liaison staff from the “Provisional Government”, flew from Jakarta to Dili. However, despite the many invitations sent to UN representatives and diplomatic missions, only seven countries’ representatives in Jakarta accepted them. According to one of the participants, Allison Stokes, a New Zealand diplomat who authored a seven-page report the following day, the seven diplomats consisted of the Ambassadors of Iran and India, the Charge d’Affaires of Saudi Arabia and Nigeria and the Deputies of Thailand, Malaysia and New Zealand. Additionally, 36 journalists, with equal numbers of Indonesians and foreigners, joined the tour.<sup>48</sup> Among them, Australian journalist Hamish McDonald reported that Indonesian officials were particularly angry with the Australian government because they realised that the fact that it had declined the invitation influenced other countries, in particular, Japan and the United States, to also not attend.<sup>49</sup>

As always, the itinerary for the delegation’s visit to Dili was tightly controlled. When driving by car along the roads between Dili airport and the venue of the “People’s Representative Council” – a hall formerly used as a sports club by the Portuguese elite<sup>50</sup> – the delegation was welcomed by groups of people in the streets waving Indonesian flags in response to a cheer leader calling out “viva President Suharto, viva Indonesia, viva integration” and large English-language signs noting “welcome to Dili, capital of the 27<sup>th</sup> province” and “integration with Indonesia now”.<sup>51</sup> However, despite its importance, the “People’s Representative Council” meeting lasted for only about an hour. It was divided into two sessions separated by a 20-minute closed session during which observers of the meeting in an upstairs gallery were asked to go out to the street to watch the ongoing carnival. Inside the hall, there

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48 Memorandum to Canberra, Wellington, 2 June 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 23. This memorandum enclosed the full text of Allison Stokes’ report dated 1 June.

49 Hamish McDonald, “Timorese Parlt approves Indonesia merger”, *SMH*, 1 June 1976.

50 Hamish McDonald, “Staging the rites of integration”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 June 1976.

51 Memorandum to Canberra, Wellington, 2 June 1976, op. cit.

was a big Indonesian flag and a backdrop in the Portuguese language stating that the agenda of the meeting was the “integration of East Timor with the Republic of Indonesia”.<sup>52</sup>

During the meeting, facing the three executives, the Chairperson of the “People’s Representative Council”, Guilherme Maria Gonçalves, the Chief Executive of the “Provisional Government”, Arnaldo dos Reis de Araujo, and his deputy, Lopes da Cruz, the 28 Council members, comprising a representative from each district, sat at individual desks. After the opening of the Council, Guilherme Maria Gonçalves addressed the meeting by mainly reading the Balibo Declaration of 30 November 1975, and was followed by five representatives who reiterated that the only possibility for East Timor was integration with Indonesia. After the closed session, a sixth representative suggested that all representatives agreed with integration with Indonesia and that further talks were unnecessary.<sup>53</sup> Then, a petition addressed to Indonesian President Suharto was presented and signed by Arnaldo dos Reis de Araujo and Guilherme Maria Gonçalves. According to an Indonesian official monograph written in English, the petition read that “[w]e, on behalf of the People of East Timor, after having testified the decision of the plenary session of the East Timor People’s Representative Council held on May 31, 1976, which by nature was the manifestation of the wishes of the people as had been expressed in the Proclamation of Integration of East Timor on November 30, 1975, at Balibo, urge the Government of the Republic of Indonesia to accept and legalise in the shortest possible time the integration of the people and the territory of East Timor as a whole with the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia without a referendum”.<sup>54</sup> Finally, Arnaldo dos Reis de Araujo made concluding remarks and publicised the return visit of a delegation to Jakarta to present the petition to the Indonesian President. The meeting ended without any press conference being

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52 Ibid.; McDonald, “Staging the rites of integration”.

53 Memorandum to Canberra, Wellington, 2 June 1976, op. cit.

54 The Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, *Process of Decolonization in East Timor* (Jakarta: Department of Information, Republic of Indonesia, 1976), p. 36.

held and, after short drives around the town, all observers were taken to the airport to fly back to Jakarta.<sup>55</sup>

After returning to Jakarta, some foreign observers of the “People’s Representative Council” in Dili posed fundamental questions concerning its legitimacy; for example, having failed to understand the qualifications of the representatives of the Council, New Zealand diplomat Stokes doubted whether they really represented the wishes of the people. She also questioned that only one option for future political status – integration with Indonesia – was mentioned during the Council meeting.<sup>56</sup> Hamish McDonald also reported that “[o]bservers...had no opportunity to probe behind the ritual to see how genuinely the Timorese people had been consulted, if at all”.<sup>57</sup>

On 5 June, a fifty-member Timorese delegation visited Jakarta and, two days later, Arnaldo dos Reis Araujo presented the petition to Indonesian President Suharto in a ceremony attended by Panggabean, Malik, Yoga Sugama and others.<sup>58</sup> It is said that President Suharto accepted it “with a sense of humanitarian responsibility, responsibility towards history, towards the principles and ideals of Indonesian independence and towards our inner self” and “agreed to send an official delegation to visit East Timor to see for themselves the spontaneity and enthusiasm of the people to integrate with Indonesia”.<sup>59</sup> This ceremony marked the first official opportunity for President Suharto to link himself with Indonesia’s policy of integration with East Timor.<sup>60</sup>

### **Fretilin’s resistance strategy and Soibada meeting**

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55 McDonald, “Staging the rites of integration”.

56 Memorandum to Canberra, Wellington, 2 June 1976, op. cit.

57 McDonald, “Staging the rites of integration”.

58 Cablegram to Canberra (O. JA 7109), Jakarta, 8 June 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 23.

59 The Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, *Process of Decolonization in East Timor*, p. 37.

60 Cablegram to Canberra (O. 7114), Jakarta, 8 June 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 23.

On the other hand, during the period from 15 May to 2 June 1976, in Soibada, a town in the mountainous centre of East Timor, Fretilin held a meeting to determine its strategy of resistance to Indonesia's integration policy. As Allison Stokes and other visitors reported, Dili was empty, except for a couple of thousand people in the streets,<sup>61</sup> because a large number of people in urban areas had followed Fretilin and moved to mountainous areas after the Indonesian invasion. All over the territory, it is estimated that the number of displaced persons might have reached a maximum of around 300,000 during the period from 1975 to 1979.<sup>62</sup> Under these circumstances, the Fretilin leadership had to decide on its overall resistance strategy and its relationship with the displaced civilian people.

During the meeting, the Fretilin Central Committee decided to establish new national civilian and military structures. It divided the "liberation zones" (*zonas libertadas*) under the control of Fretilin into six sectors and created political commissar and other subordinate positions in each.<sup>63</sup> Within these zones, a structure of resistance bases, called *bases de apoio*, was implemented "as a mechanism to organise people so they could continue to fight in the war", as explained by Xanana Gusmão.<sup>64</sup> In each *base de apoio*, the civilian people who were encircled by Falintil troops, Fretilin militia companies and civil defence units<sup>65</sup>, provided a wide range of assistance to the troops, including the production of agricultural goods and medicines. They were also involved in educational and cultural activities "to encourage the spirit of nationalism and support the national liberation struggle". The Fretilin Central Committee even

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61 Memorandum to Canberra, Wellington, 2 June 1976, op. cit.

62 *Chega!*, Chapter 7.3, p. 17. The CAVR report summed up the complex relationship between Fretilin's resistance and the civilians evacuated from Indonesian military control as follows; "Some evacuations were spontaneous, others were organised by the Fretilin-led resistance. In a complex mixture of circumstances, many East Timorese who left their homes then found themselves caught between a fear of life under harsh Indonesian military rule and a resistance determined to keep them out of Indonesian control. The motivation of the Resistance here appears to have been a combination of a commitment of support and protection for the people, to meet the Resistance's own security needs in a time of war, a desire to retain control of the bulk of the population in order to launch its revolutionary social programme, and as evidence of the extent of its political support."

63 *Chega!*, Part 5, pp. 4-5.

64 Ibid., p. 9.

65 *Chega!*, Part 3, p. 71.

asked women to become involved in these activities and to produce items for military use, such as baskets and bags. It also created a sort of justice system to cope with various crimes, particularly identifying “having contact with enemy, cooperating with enemy, spying, betraying civilians to the enemy and treason” as serious offences.<sup>66</sup>

Importantly, these decisions concerning the resistance strategy, which involved a large number of civilian people, were not unanimously agreed by the Fretilin leadership. The CAVR report noted that dissidents “preferred to pursue a more purely military strategy...and thus would allow civilians to come down from the mountains and surrender”, for political, military, humanitarian, religious and other reasons.<sup>67</sup> These internal divisions within the Fretilin leadership accelerated the rise of Nicolau Lobato and the demise of Francisco Xavier do Amaral who also insisted on the need for foreign assistance.<sup>68</sup>

### **President Suharto’s signature on bill for integration**

Another event in East Timor to which the Indonesian government invited foreign observers was its “fact-finding mission” of 24 June. Once again, Indonesian policymakers attempted to gather as many international observers as possible to accompany its mission. In particular, Indonesia recognised that “Winspeare’s attendance was extremely important”, as Adenan stated to Australian diplomats on 10 June.<sup>69</sup> If Winspeare or other representatives of the UN organisations decided to attend the mission, the Australian and other governments following its decision, including the United States and Japan, would also dispatch their representatives to East Timor.

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<sup>66</sup> *Chega!*, Part 5, pp. 9-14.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*; *Chega!*, Chapter 7.3, p. 19.

<sup>68</sup> Xanana Gusmão and Sarah Niner (ed.), *To Resist Is to Win : The Autobiography of Xanana Gusmao with Selected Letters & Speeches* (Richmond, Vic.: Aurora Books with David Lovell Publishing, 2000), pp. 41-3.

<sup>69</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 10 June 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 787-9.



However, against the Indonesian intention, on 14 June, Chairman of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation Salim and, on 21 June, President of the UN Security Council Jackson and UN Secretary-General Waldheim declined their invitations.<sup>70</sup> By 21 June, it became clear that Winspeare would not attend the mission and, on the following day, he submitted another report to the UN Secretary-General noting that “it was not possible to assess accurately the prevailing situation in East Timor, particularly as regards the implementation of Security Council resolutions 384 (1975) and 389 (1976)”.<sup>71</sup> Following the decisions of UN representatives, the Australian and other governments also decided not to participate.<sup>72</sup>

On 24 June, the Indonesian “fact-finding mission” led by the Interior Minister, General Amir Machmud, and consisting of 36 Indonesians flew to East Timor. This time, the mission was accompanied by ten foreign diplomats (the Ambassadors of Malaysia, Iran, Syria and the Republic of Korea, the Charge d’Affaires of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Consul General of Panama, the Press Attaché of India, the Consul of The Philippines and the Vice-Consul of the Democratic Republic of Yemen) and forty Indonesian and foreign journalists.<sup>73</sup> Again, on the mission’s arrival in Dili, it was received by about 5000 people lining the streets, dressed in their best clothes and waving Indonesian flags, and enthusiastically chanting “viva Suharto” and “viva integração”.<sup>74</sup> Then, Amir Machmud received “a piece of local soil and a nugget of gold” as a symbol of “the return of East Timor to its motherland, Indonesia”, from Arnaldo dos Reis Araujo. Reportedly, Amir Machmud said that “[t]here is no doubt about the truthfulness of the petition, since it has really been democratically decided by the will of the whole people” and “therefore, this delegation has no intention to examine, to check or review the truthfulness of the

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70 See the Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, *Decolonization in East Timor*, pp. 83-92.

71 Report of the Secretary-General in Pursuance of Security Council Resolution 389 (1976), 22 June 1976, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, pp. 49-51.

72 Cablegram to Peking, Canberra, 21 June 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 795-6.

73 The Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, *Process of Decolonization in East Timor*, p. 38.

74 David Jenkins, “Countdown to birth of a province”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 July 1976.

petition”.<sup>75</sup> After spending some time in Dili, the delegation was split into three groups to visit Viqueque, Ermera and Balibo, as well as the enclave of Ocussi, which were again welcomed by people chanting the same things. David Jenkins, an Australian journalist who joined in the “fact-finding mission”, later wrote that “[t]he rallies attracted impressive numbers, but they were in no sense a faithful guide to East Timor’s political orientation; only five of the territory’s 13 districts were covered and only a token attempt made to ascertain the popular will”.<sup>76</sup>

On 29 June, five days after the Indonesian mission, President Suharto approved the integration of East Timor with Indonesia at a Cabinet meeting.<sup>77</sup> Subsequently, Indonesian policymakers decided to hasten the annexation of East Timor and complete the legal processes on 17 July, one month earlier than was initially planned.<sup>78</sup> It is assumed that this decision was linked to the development of the secret talks held simultaneously between Indonesian and Portuguese delegations, as discussed in the following.

On 17 July, two days after the Indonesian Parliament’s approval of it, President Suharto put his signature on the bill for the integration of East Timor into the Republic of Indonesia and for the formation of the Province of East Timor. On this occasion, the President also appointed Arnaldo dos Reis Araujo as the Governor of East Timor Province and Francisco Lopes da Cruz as the Deputy Governor. Afterwards, the Indonesian government began to insist that “the process of decolonisation...has been completed in accordance with the wishes of the people of East Timor” and that “[m]atters concerning East Timor have now become the internal matters of the Republic of Indonesia”.<sup>79</sup>

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75 “East Timor handover ‘symbolic’”, *The Canberra Times*, 26 June 1976.

76 Jenkins, “Countdown to birth of a province”.

77 Cablegram to Canberra (O. JA 7434), Jakarta, 30 June 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 24.

78 Record of conversation between, Lim Bian Kie, Dan and Taylor, Jakarta, 7 July 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 24.

79 The Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, *Process of Decolonization in East Timor*, p. 39-40.

### **“Secret” talks with Portuguese representatives in Bangkok**

From June to July 1976 in Bangkok, despite diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Portugal having been severed since 7 December 1975, Indonesian policymakers and executives of the “Provisional Government” secretly met Portuguese representatives. The Indonesian intention was to negotiate the sovereignty question of East Timor in exchange for the release of the 23 Portuguese prisoners held by pro-Indonesian forces since the previous August. To accelerate the releases, then Portuguese President Costa-Gomes appointed General Morais da Silva, who had lived and studied in East Timor, as his Special Representative. Morais da Silva also had close relations with General António Ramalho Eanes who was elected as the new Portuguese President on 27 June and took office on 14 July 1976.

An important point regarding the Portuguese-Indonesian talks was what role Morais da Silva could play in Portugal’s decolonisation policy. At a glance, it was apparent that the Portuguese government would not compromise the right of the Timorese people to freely determine their own future, as seen in statements made in the UN Security Council. An article of the Portuguese constitution which was enforced in April 1976 also noted that “Portugal shall remain bound by its responsibility, in accordance with international law, to promote and safeguard the right to independence of Timor Leste”.<sup>80</sup> Regarding Portuguese policy towards East Timor, the Australian Embassy in Lisbon analysed that “[f]or domestic political reasons the Portuguese government will continue to give at least the appearance of actively seeking the return of the prisoners, but not at the expense of abandoning their legal position over sovereignty”. It also observed that the Foreign Ministry headed by Minister Melo Antunes controlled the Portuguese decolonisation policy<sup>81</sup> but that General Morais da Silva had neither

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<sup>80</sup> Section 1, Article 307, Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, 2 April 1976, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and International Community*, p. 36. Section 1 was followed by Section 2 which noted that “[t]he President of the Republic, assisted by the Council of the Revolution, and the government shall be competent to perform all acts necessary to achievement of the aims set forth in the foregoing paragraph”.

<sup>81</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Lisbon, 8 June 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 781-2.

any mandate nor power to solve the question of sovereignty.<sup>82</sup>

On 16 June, substantial talks between the Portuguese delegation and the “Provisional Government” commenced. Having been supported by General Eanes but opposed by Foreign Minister Antunes, General Morais da Silva travelled to Bangkok and had talks with executives of the “Provisional Government”. Then, he visited Indonesia and East Timor for discussions with Indonesian policymakers, including Murdani and Tjan and executives of the “Provisional Government, and also to see the 23 Portuguese prisoners in Atambua in Indonesian Timor. On his return to Lisbon, in accordance with the agreement arrived at,<sup>83</sup> he publicised these meetings. However, on 28 June, the day after the Presidential election, a meeting of the Portuguese Decolonisation Committee, attended by Foreign Minister Antunes, Victor Crespo and Galvão Teles, released a communiqué stating that “there have been no significant changes which would lead to a reconsideration of the general policy followed in relation to the decolonisation process in Timor”.<sup>84</sup>

From 6 to 10 July, delegations from the Portuguese and “Provisional” governments again had talks in Bangkok. This time, the Portuguese delegation was led by the Director-General of the Foreign Ministry, Silas Boas, and the “Provisional Government” by Deputy Chief Executive Lopes da Cruz. While not official participants, Harry Tjan and other Indonesians also visited Bangkok and stayed in the same hotel as the Timorese delegation in order to provide its members with advice and correspond with Morais da Silva in Lisbon by telephone. The “Provisional Government” began the talks by requesting Portuguese recognition of the Indonesian integration of East Timor, the re-establishment of diplomatic relations and Portuguese support for the “Provisional Government” at the United Nations in exchange for the

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82 Cablegram to Canberra, Lisbon, 23 June 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 797-8.

83 Cablegram to Canberra (O.JA 7342), Jakarta, 22 June 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 23.

84 Cablegram to Canberra (O. LB 930), Lisbon, 29 June 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 24.

release of the 23 Portuguese prisoners, despite the Portuguese delegation having told the “Provisional Government” that the contents of the talks were restricted to “technical matters” and that the delegation did not have any mandate of a political nature. Then, the two delegations discussed a wide range of issues, including pensions for the Timorese military and civil servants, banking and currency matters, economic assistance, the establishment of a Portuguese language and cultural institute in Timor, and nationality. In the end, they agreed that the Portuguese government would return an aeroplane from Darwin and two vessels from Macau which had belonged to the colony and that the delegations would have further talks in principle.<sup>85</sup>

On 25 July, about a week after Indonesia’s official announcement of the incorporation of East Timor, final talks were convened in Bangkok. This time, the Portuguese delegation was led by General Morais da Silva, the Special Representative of Portuguese President Eanes, while the Indonesian delegation consisted of Lopes da Cruz, Murdani and Tjan.<sup>86</sup> At the conclusion of the talks, the two parties signed a secret agreement which began with the following sentence; “[t]he delegation of the people of East Timor...this time come on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, for since 17 July 1976 the territory of East Timor has been totally integrated with the Republic of Indonesia, de facto as well as de jure”. Then, it went on to state that “the delegation of the people of East Timor undertakes to...hand over the 23 Portuguese military personnel in East Timor unconditionally to the Special Representative of the President of the Republic of Portugal” and “grant permission for the repatriation of Portuguese nationals in East Timor”. In terms of the Portuguese delegation’s commitment, the agreement noted that “[t]he Special Representative of the President of the Republic of Portugal

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<sup>85</sup> Some information was gathered by the Australian DFA regarding the talks in Bangkok. For information from Harry Tjan, see Cablegram to Canberra (O.JA7768) Jakarta, 13 July 1976; for information from Magalhaes Cruz, the Director-General of Political Affairs, Portuguese Foreign Ministry, see Cablegram to Canberra (O.LB967), Lisbon, 14 July 1976; and for information from Reuters, see Cablegram to Canberra (O.JA 7758), Jakarta, 13 July 1976. All are available in NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 24.

<sup>86</sup> Cablegram to Canberra (O. JA8071), Jakarta, 29 July 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 25.

undertakes to...accept the above statement by the delegation of the people of East Timor and to accept all the 23 Portuguese military personnel and the arrangements to be made for their repatriation". The agreement also noted that "[t]he two delegations agree to continue negotiations for the settlement of other pending problems",<sup>87</sup> which implied that there were issues as yet unsettled regarding East Timor. In accordance with this Bangkok agreement, in Bali on 27 July, Morais da Silva received the 23 Portuguese military personnel as well as 113 civilian refugees from East Timor and flew back to Lisbon.

Literally, this agreement can be interpreted as a sort of Portuguese recognition of Indonesian integration of the territory of East Timor, depending on the meaning of "accept the above statement". Harry Tjan explained that what was meant by this phrase was intentionally left ambiguous to protect General Morais da Silva<sup>88</sup> but Indonesian policymakers insisted that Portugal had extended *de facto* recognition to East Timor's incorporation into Indonesia.<sup>89</sup> Apparently, Morais da Silva's also recognised the Indonesian integration of East Timor in some way, as he replied that "[o]f course, they must accept them" on the following day of the Bangkok agreement when asked if the Portuguese government would accept that Timor was now part of Indonesia.<sup>90</sup> In any case, without regard to the Bangkok agreement, the Portuguese government did not admit that it had accepted *de jure* recognition of the Indonesian integration of East Timor.

## ***6.2 Fraser government's policymaking towards East Timor question***

### **6.2.1 Policy conflicts between DFA and Australian Embassy**

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<sup>87</sup> Cablegram to Canberra (O. JA8072), Jakarta, 29 July 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 25.

<sup>88</sup> Cablegram to Canberra (O. JA8071), Jakarta, 29 July 1976, op. cit.

<sup>89</sup> David Jenkins, "Lisbon makes the break", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 August 1976.

<sup>90</sup> Memorandum to Canberra, Jakarta, 4 August 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 25.

### **DFA's suggestions regarding East Timor**

After the Federal election on 13 December 1975, the Fraser government needed to redefine its policy towards East Timor where the Indonesian forces continued military activities. Thus, on 22 December, on the day when the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 384, Secretary Renouf submitted a paper to Foreign Minister Peacock on Australian policy towards East Timor based along the following two lines.

On the one hand, Secretary Renouf suggested the Foreign Minister refrain from initiating positive and substantial policy towards East Timor, suggesting that “[w]e should accept that incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia seems fast becoming an accomplished fact”, therefore “accept it as probably now the best solution” and “continue to remain as detached as we can from the Portuguese Timor problem and avoid becoming a party principal”. The Secretary justified these policies on the ground that “[w]e cannot now alter the course of events in Timor” and that “[g]iven the importance of Australian relations with Indonesia, there seems no Australian interest in an independent Portuguese Timor which would justify Australian attempts to thwart the Indonesians in the pursuit of their objectives”.<sup>91</sup>

On the other hand, Secretary Renouf continued to insist that “self-determination should remain an important element in Australian policy” and “[w]e should continue to support publicly the need for a process of self-determination in Timor”. In defence of this policy, he listed the following four reasons; “[f]irst, international pressure for self-determination helps to guarantee some measures of decent treatment for the Timorese. It may help curb excesses by the Indonesian administration and armed forces. Second, it is important that the incorporation of Portuguese Timor with Indonesia should be effected in as legally correct and in as internationally acceptable a manner as possible. Third, the abandonment of self-determination

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<sup>91</sup> Submission to Peacock, Canberra, 22 December 1975, *AIIPT*, pp. 644-8.

as an Australian objective in Portuguese Timor would have a bad effect on Australian public opinion. Fourth, if the Indonesians were to meet with substantial prolonged resistance in Portuguese Timor...Australia would need to consider a new policy on Portuguese Timor, which...would place a greater emphasis on self-determination.”<sup>92</sup>

These somewhat ambivalent suggestions of the DFA were virtually a continuation of the existing Australian policy which had been already adopted by the caretaker government. In retrospect, it is notable that the Department considered the future possibility of initiating an Australian policy which could accommodate independence for East Timor as it went on to write that “we should be alive to the need to review our policies with a view to persuading the Indonesians to accept something less than the incorporation of Portuguese Timor and a more genuine process of self-determination”. Having received these recommendations, Foreign Minister Peacock accepted them in the main and commented that “I am not averse to decision making”. At the same time, he deliberately noted the need for a later consultation with other Ministers in Cabinet and made it known that he would refrain from making a unilateral decision.<sup>93</sup>

Afterwards, in response to strong domestic opinion, Foreign Minister Peacock issued a number of public statements on East Timor; for example, on 23 December, he welcomed UNSC Resolution 384 and expressed his “particular satisfaction” at its decision to appoint and dispatch a special representative of the UN Secretary-General to East Timor.<sup>94</sup> On 29 December, in the face of renewed Indonesian attacks in the territory of East Timor, he reminded the Indonesian government of Australian opposition to the use of force and urged it to permit the International Red Cross to return to East Timor. Also insisting that “Australia had indeed been more active

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, esp., p. 645.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> “East Timor: U.N. decision welcomed”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 46:12, 1975, p. 714.



than any other country, in the region or outside it, in trying to bring about a peaceful settlement in East Timor”, Foreign Minister Peacock attempted to impress on domestic audiences that this Australian government had a more positive commitment to peace in East Timor than had any other government.<sup>95</sup>

### **Ambassador Woolcott’s policy suggestions and leak of his cablegram**

On 5 January 1976, while Foreign Minister Peacock was issuing statements critical of the Indonesian invasion in East Timor, Ambassador Woolcott made policy suggestions to Canberra in expectation of the Foreign Minister visiting Jakarta in the near future. On the one hand, in line with the Department’s paper, the Ambassador recognised that “the reality on which Australia needs now to base its policy assumption is that, whatever the difficulties, Portuguese Timor will be incorporated into Indonesia”. On the other hand, his views still differed from those of the Department in that he did not agree with the Australian government’s public statements in support of the right of the Timorese to self-determination and critical of the Indonesian military action. Cynically calling these policies “Wilsonian idealism”, he favoured the Australian government taking advantage of “Kissingerian realism” in the interests of Australian relations with Indonesia and accepting “the inevitability of Timor’s incorporation into Indonesia, letting the dust settle and looking ahead, while taking what steps we can in Australia to limit the further growth of hostility towards Indonesia within the Australian community”.<sup>96</sup>

However, Ambassador Woolcott’s policy suggestions were not so readily accepted by the Fraser government as they had been during the Whitlam period. Importantly, on 16 January,

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<sup>95</sup> “East Timor: use of force opposed”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 46:12, 1975, pp. 714-5.

<sup>96</sup> Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 5 January 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 652-60. As to its full text, see Richard Woolcott, *The Hot Seat : Reflections on Diplomacy from Stalin's Death to the Bali Bombings* (Sydney, N.S.W. ; London: HarperCollins, 2003), pp. 306-17.

the most significant part of Woolcott's cablegram, including the last sentence mentioned above, was leaked and exposed on the front page of *The Canberra Times*.<sup>97</sup> Inevitably, this caused strong public criticism of him and also of Australian policymaking towards East Timor in general. Therefore, on 18 January, in advance of the Foreign Minister's visit to Jakarta, Prime Minister Fraser commented that "[i]t is the Government that determines policy. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Peacock, has stated policy clearly in relation to Timor. I believe he has done it clearly and well".<sup>98</sup>

Finally, on 28 January, Ambassador Woolcott wrote an apologetic letter to Prime Minister Fraser, a copy of which was also forwarded to the Foreign Minister. In it, he expressed his regret for the leak "by some disloyal and misguided official" and admitted that "it is for the Government, not officials, to decide Australian policy towards Indonesia". At the same time, writing that "it is the duty of an Australian Head of Mission to tender to the Government the most competent, objective and frank advice he or she can", the Ambassador defended the content of his cablegram.<sup>99</sup>

This incident was the start of a succession of leaks of some of Ambassador Woolcott's other cablegrams during the Fraser period; for instance, on 31 May 1976 when the "People's Representative Council" meeting was held in Dili, the front page of *The Canberra Times* printed another cablegram dated 29 October 1975 in which Woolcott asked the DFA to weaken some phrases critical of Indonesia in Foreign Minister Willesee's statement prior to its publication the following day.<sup>100</sup> Although the person leaking the cablegrams was not known, it is not difficult to assume that his or her intention was to obstruct Ambassador Woolcott from exerting influence

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97 Bruce Juddery, "Envoy puts Jakarta's view", *The Canberra Times*, 16 January 1976.

98 Michael Richardson, "PM rejects envoy's advice", *SMH*, 19 January 1976.

99 Letter from Woolcott to Fraser, 28 January 1976, *AHPT*, pp. 676-7.

100 Bruce Juddery, "Do not accuse Jakarta: Ambassador", *The Canberra Times*, 31 May 1976. See also Bruce Juddery, "My Timor Story", in Jim Aubrey (ed.), *Free East Timor: Australia's Culpability in East Timor's Genocide* (Milsons Point, N.S.W: Vintage, 1998), pp. 73-82.

on the Fraser government's policymaking towards East Timor or, at least, to reduce his role from what it had been during the Whitlam period.

### **6.2.2 Fraser government's protest against Indonesian military invasion**

#### **First visit of Foreign Minister Peacock to Jakarta in January 1976**

In line with Prime Minister Fraser's message to President Suharto in late November 1975, Foreign Minister Peacock informally visited Jakarta from 19 to 22 January, after his attendance at the funeral of Malaysian Prime Minister Razak in Kuala Lumpur. In Jakarta, accompanied by Secretary Renouf and Ambassador Woolcott, Foreign Minister Peacock had talks with Indonesia's Foreign Minister Malik, Defence Minister Panggabean, President Suharto and others, thereby beginning substantial discussions with the Indonesian government.

During his meeting with Malik on 19 January, Foreign Minister Peacock expressed his disagreements with the Indonesian policy towards East Timor and proposed alternatives. With reference to the UNGA 3485 and UNSC 384 Resolutions, he stressed that "[t]he Australian government had never accepted that military control necessarily represented the desire of the people" and then urged the withdrawal of Indonesian forces. Questioning Malik's explanation of the timetable for this Indonesian policy, he expressed his doubts about whether it was feasible that "all East Timor would be pacified within six months" and that an act of self-determination and the return of Indonesian "volunteers" from East Timor could happen within one year. Alternatively, he suggested that "after the restoration of order and the withdrawal of Indonesian troops, Australia could be prepared to act with others with a view to arranging an act of self-determination".<sup>101</sup> During his talks with Suharto on 20 January, he also made a similar suggestion of a possible Australian contribution to a "policing order" with other friendly

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<sup>101</sup> Record of conversation between Peacock and Malik, Jakarta, 19 January 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 19.

countries, such as Malaysia, prior to an act of self-determination.<sup>102</sup>

At the same time, Foreign Minister Peacock made deliberate concessions so that Australia's policy critical of the Indonesian military action in East Timor would not contribute to an overall deterioration of its relations with Indonesia; for example, he told Foreign Minister Malik that "no one in Australia should denigrate a friendly government", he talked about his intentions to prevent further entry of Fretilin members into Australia, to refuse to support private aid groups' attempts to send goods to Timor and to close down an illegal radio receiver and transmitter in Darwin. He also pointed out to the Indonesian Foreign Minister that the Australian government had already refused to arrange an aircraft for Winspeare to fly to Fretilin-controlled areas in East Timor and to assist small vessels travelling to East Timor in response to Fretilin's evacuation request.<sup>103</sup>

After the Foreign Ministers' talks in Jakarta, on 25 January, the Fraser government actually closed down the transmitter in Darwin but encouraged Winspeare to make use of two Portuguese naval vessels in the Timor Sea which were in communication with Fretilin members in East Timor.<sup>104</sup> On 29 January, facing strong criticism from the Australian public, Foreign Minister Peacock published another statement emphasising "the need to promote the success of the mission to the territory of the United Nations Special Representative, Mr Winspeare-Guicciardi, as the only immediate alternative to further bloodshed". Although insisting on "a co-operative international effort, involving Indonesia and Portugal (as well as the United Nations and the political parties in Timor) as the parties most directly concerned in the first instance", Foreign Minister Peacock added that "Australia would be prepared to give whatever help was within its power".<sup>105</sup> On the following day, under the Foreign Minister's

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102 Record of conversation between Peacock and Suharto, Jakarta, 20 January 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 20.

103 Record of conversation between Peacock and Malik, Jakarta, 19 January 1976, op. cit.

104 "East Timor", Foreign Minister Peacock's statement on 28 January 1976, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 47:1, 1976, p. 42.

105 "East Timor", Foreign Minister Peacock's statement on 29 January 1976, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 47:1, 1976, pp. 42-4.

instructions, Secretary Renouf telephoned Ambassador Woolcott to tell him “to do everything possible to persuade Indonesia to allow Mr Winspeare to visit Fretilin-held areas in East Timor”.<sup>106</sup> However, this did not bring about any positive result. On 8 February, after the Winspeare mission gave up on the idea of travelling to Fretilin-controlled areas in East Timor, Foreign Minister Peacock stated that the Australian government had done what it could to assist the mission.<sup>107</sup>

### **Fraser government’s formulation of four principles with regard to East Timor**

On 9 February, at the request of Foreign Minister Peacock, the Fraser government convened a Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee meeting concerning the question of East Timor to which both the Foreign and Defence Ministers submitted papers.

Firstly, in his paper, Foreign Minister Peacock recognised that “Indonesian forces are already well on their way to integrating East Timor into Indonesia” and that “Australia’s capacity to alter the course of events in Timor was limited and is now very limited indeed”. However, for the sake of public presentation, he continued to argue that “the Government should not connive in a forceful Indonesian takeover” to show “that the Government opposes the use of force” and “that Australia upholds two of the cardinal principles of international relations (no use of force and self-determination)” thereby taking “account of that part of public opinion in Australia which is vocal upon this issue”. Despite his recognition that “it is discomfoting to Indonesia and possibly damages the overall relationship with that country”, he still insisted that it was better to continue to comment on the issue than to keep quiet. At the same time, he ruled out taking much stronger action, such as cutting off economic and military

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<sup>106</sup> Record of conversation between Renouf and Woolcott, Canberra, 30 January 1976, *AIIPT*, p. 679.

<sup>107</sup> “Timor: we defend stand”, *The Age*, 9 February 1976.

aid, given the importance of Australia's relationship with Indonesia.<sup>108</sup>

Secondly, Defence Minister James Killen expressed similar views in his paper which was submitted with the NIC's assessment on the military situation in the territory of East Timor. While recognising that "[f]or practical purposes, Australia is faced with an Indonesian *fait accompli*" and "Australia's strategic interest would be served by the territory's early integration into Indonesia", the Defence Minister also insisted that "Indonesia's use of force should not be disregarded and a firm Australian objection should be lodged with the Indonesian government, and made public, as the position of the new Australian Government".<sup>109</sup>

With these suggestions from the Foreign and Defence Ministers, the Committee agreed that "the policy followed by the Government to date should be continued" and that "the Prime Minister in his forthcoming discussion with the United Nations Secretary-General should restate the Government's position".<sup>110</sup> On the same day, the Foreign Minister met UN Secretary-General Waldheim and told him that "the Australian position on Timor was to call for a withdrawal of Indonesian troops and to seek an act of free choice", while adding that "Australia, however, had been unsuccessful to date in persuading Indonesia to agree to the Australian viewpoint".<sup>111</sup> Afterwards, the Foreign Minister and others continued to make some efforts to explain Australian policy towards East Timor to interested groups and key domestic 'opinion-makers', including influential journalists Peter Hastings<sup>112</sup> and Bruce Juddery<sup>113</sup>.

In the Parliament's House of Representatives on 4 March, Foreign Minister Peacock's speech explained Australian policy towards East Timor as well as foreign policy issues concerning ASEAN, Southern Africa and Angola. Having said that "[w]e have been active in

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108 FAD Paper No. 1 presented at Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee meeting, 9 February 1976, NAA, A12934, FAD1.

109 FAD Paper No. 2 presented at Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee meeting, 9 February 1976, NAA, A12934, FAD2.

110 Decision No. 200 (FAD), Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Canberra, 9 February 1976, NAA, A12934, FAD1.

111 Record of conversation between Peacock and Waldheim, 9 February 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 20.

112 Peter Hastings, "Timor: 'no real damage' to Indonesian relations", *SMH*, 1 March 1976.

113 Bruce Juddery, "Mr Peacock puts the Government's case on Timor", *The Canberra Times*, 1 March 1976.

trying to secure a peaceful settlement” and that “[i]t is a matter for regret that events have not moved more quickly towards that end”, he listed the following four principles to which the Australian government was committed in implementing policy towards East Timor;

A cessation of hostilities, thus putting an end to the bloodshed

A resumption of international humanitarian aid, preferably through the return to East Timor of the ICRC

A withdrawal of Indonesian forces

A genuine act of self-determination<sup>114</sup>

The Foreign Minister further said that “the Government will continue to put its view on Timor most firmly to the Indonesian Government”. However, as seen in his paper of February, he did not actually believe that these policies were feasible. Thus, he concluded his statement by saying that “I regret that Timor has become a matter almost of ideological dispute, generating some unreasonable demands and some unrealistic proposals, rather than – as it should be – a matter demanding a constructive and humanitarian approach directed towards the problem of Timorese suffering.”<sup>115</sup>

### **Peak of Australian government’s protest against Indonesian government**

In the middle of April, Australian policymakers again protested diplomatically against the Indonesian forceful annexation of East Timor. Firstly, on 14 April in New York, during the debates session in the UN Security Council concerning Resolution 389, Australian Ambassador Ralph Harry stated the government’s support for “a withdrawal of outside forces” and “a

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<sup>114</sup> “Minister’s foreign policy speech”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 47:3, 1976, pp. 145-7, esp., p. 146.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

process by which the people of East Timor can determine their own future”. In support of “some form of United Nations participation” in the process of self-determination for East Timor, the Ambassador also proposed the extension of “the mandate of the Special Representative to allow him to make a second visit to the Territory to assess the situation afresh and to ascertain the prospects for consultation among the parties”.<sup>116</sup>

Secondly, from 13 to 15 April, coinciding with the debates in the UN Security Council, Foreign Minister Peacock formally visited Jakarta. The DFA had briefed him that “good relations with Indonesia cannot be taken for granted”<sup>117</sup> and Australian-Indonesian governmental relations were certainly experiencing some tensions because of the Timor question. During his talks on 14 April with Foreign Minister Malik, which were attended by Australian and Indonesian officials, Foreign Minister Peacock reiterated the four principles of Australian policy towards East Timor that he had publicly stated on 4 March, emphasising that “Australia’s Timor policy remained the same” and that the principles were “important to Australia”. He also asked the Indonesian Foreign Minister to urge the “Provisional Government” to allow the ICRC to return to Timor and assist an embassy officer to investigate the circumstances surrounding the deaths of five journalists in Balibo and Roger East. He also raised the question of lifting the ban on entry into Indonesia of two Australian journalists, Michael Richardson and Bruce Wilson. On the same day, Foreign Minister Peacock also met Indonesian senior military officers, including Defence Minister Panggabean and Murdani. During their talks, he asked about the substance of “self-determination” and requested that “the overwhelming majority of Timorese be involved”. At the same time, with reference to the Australian plan to increase its economic assistance to Indonesia, he stated that “Australia’s

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116 SCOR, 31st Year, 1909th Meeting, 14 April 1976, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, p. 104.

117 Brief for Peacock, Canberra, April 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 738-40.



relations with Indonesia were far more important than their difference over Timor”.<sup>118</sup>

After this series of talks with Indonesian policymakers, including President Suharto, Foreign Minister Peacock reported on his visit to Prime Minister Fraser. While observing that “[t]here is no sign of any change in Indonesian policy and it is clear that they are proceeding, with the apparent support of the PGET, towards the formal integration of East Timor into Indonesia in August”, he stated that “I believe I have succeeded in maintaining our stand on principle in respect of Timor without doing unacceptable damage to our longer term relations”.<sup>119</sup>

### **6.2.3 Australia’s non-recognition policy of Indonesian annexation of East Timor**

#### **Australia’s decision on non-attendance at “People’s Representative Council” in Dili**

After the Foreign Minister’s visit to Jakarta, the focal point of Australian policy towards the East Timor question shifted to whether the Australian government would accept an invitation from the “Provisional Government” to attend “the People’s Representative Council” meeting in Dili on 31 May. Regarding this possibility, in his paper submitted to Foreign Minister Peacock on 13 May, Secretary Renouf argued both the merits and demerits of acceptance. As to its merits, he pointed out that the Australian government would have to come to terms with the inevitability of the integration of East Timor. He also noted the advantage of Australian policy being coordinated with those of the ASEAN and other countries which were sending their representatives. As to its demerits, Secretary Renouf mentioned that the government’s attendance could imply its official connivance in, or acquiescence to, a questionable process which would certainly not satisfy an internationally acceptable standard

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118 Record of conversation between Peacock and Panggabean, Jakarta, 14 April 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 741-5.

119 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 15 April 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 748-9.

for an act of self-determination.<sup>120</sup> On 27 May, after gathering information on the policies of some other governments, the Department reported to the Foreign Minister that the US, Japan and NZ might accept the Indonesian invitation providing the Australian government did. In view of Australia's influence with other governments, Foreign Minister Peacock deferred his reply to Indonesia until as late as possible.<sup>121</sup>

At last, on 28 May, the Foreign Minister decided not to send a representative to Dili because the Department did not believe that "a participant would be able to gain sufficient information or clear enough impression to allow the Minister to present a report that would satisfy Australian public opinion". In particular, the absence of UN observers and the shortness of the program were seen as being significant deficits of the "People's Representative Council".<sup>122</sup> On the afternoon of 30 May, the Australian Embassy in Jakarta informed the Indonesian Department of Foreign Affairs about this decision<sup>123</sup> and, as expected, the US and Japanese diplomats followed suit.<sup>124</sup>

On 1 June, the day after the "People's Representative Council" meeting, both Prime Minister Fraser and Foreign Minister Peacock spoke to the question of East Timor in the Parliament. In his first major speech on Australian foreign policy, entitled "World situation", the Prime Minister discussed Australia's relations with Indonesia and referred to Australian policy towards East Timor in this context. He stated that "[w]e support a genuine act of self-determination in Timor. The very fact that we have stated our view on Timor plainly is a mark of the underlying strength of the relationship [with Indonesia]. Despite differences, a major concern of our policy will be to continue the friendship we both value".<sup>125</sup> On the same

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120 Submission to Peacock, Canberra, 13 May 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 751-3.

121 Submission to Peacock, Canberra, 27 May 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 767-9.

122 Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 28 May 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 770-1.

123 Cablegram to Canberra (JA6917), Jakarta, 30 May 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 23.

124 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 30 May 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 771-2.

125 "World situation: Prime Minister's statement", *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 47:6, 1976, pp. 300-13, esp., p. 306.

day, Foreign Minister Peacock also replied to a number of parliamentarians' questions regarding the "People's Representative Council". In explaining the Australian government's decision of non-attendance, he mentioned the significance of some form of United Nations' observation and participation in a process of an act of self-determination for East Timor.<sup>126</sup>

### **Australian government's rejection of Indonesian annexation of East Timor**

Only a few days after the "People's Representative Council" met, Harry Tjan asked Allan Taylor about the possibility of the Australian government accepting an Indonesian invitation to join a "fact-finding mission" in the territory of East Timor.<sup>127</sup> Thus, Australian policymakers again had to consider whether the Australian government would accept an Indonesian invitation. On 7 June, Ambassador Woolcott informed the Department in Canberra of his and the Embassy's preference for dispatching someone to the mission in the interest of future relations with Indonesia despite their acknowledgement that it could attract Australian public attention to the mission which would require the issuing of a public comment. While disagreeing with Ambassador Woolcott, Foreign Minister Peacock instructed the Department to develop a policy.<sup>128</sup>

On 9 June, in a cablegram sent to the Australian Embassy in Jakarta and other posts, the Department advised that the Australian government would accept an Indonesian invitation under the following conditions: that the Australian government was reasonably satisfied beforehand that the process of consultation would involve some genuine element of choice for the people; and that Winspeare was prepared to attend and observe the process. These conditions were also based on the assumption that the mission would "spend a sufficient time in East Timor to allow

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126 "Dili absence explained", *The Canberra Times*, 2 June 1976.

127 Record of conversation between Taylor and Tjan, 5 June 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 774-5.

128 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 7 June 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 777-80. See also its editorial footnote No. 9.

an informed assessment to be made". While adding these strict conditions, the Department also instructed the Australian Embassy in Geneva to urge Winspeare to make a second visit to East Timor.<sup>129</sup> On 10 June, these Australian policies were explained to Adenan of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>130</sup> and, on the following day, the Department instructed overseas posts to work on other governments to collectively approach not only Winspeare but also his supervisor, UN Secretary-General Waldheim, in the hope of realising Winspeare's second visit.<sup>131</sup> Australian Ambassador to the UN Harry actually discussed it with the UN Secretary-General but was told only that Winspeare would not visit East Timor unless he could make contact with Fretilin.<sup>132</sup>

In the end, on 21 June, when Prime Minister Fraser, Foreign Minister Peacock and Secretary Renouf were visiting China, the Department finally decided that it would not send a representative on the Indonesian "fact-finding mission".<sup>133</sup> On 22 June, the Australian Embassy in Jakarta formally informed the Indonesian Department of Foreign Affairs of this decision.<sup>134</sup>

On 20 July 1976, against the backdrop of domestic opinion critical of the Indonesian official declaration of the integration of East Timor three days previously, Foreign Minister Peacock issued an official statement of the Australian government's policy towards the self-determination question of East Timor. After reiterating that "the process of decolonisation in East Timor should be based on a proper act of self-determination, preferably carried out with the observation and participation of the United Nations", he stated that "[t]he present situation is that Indonesia has moved, without United Nations involvement, to integrate East Timor as its twenty-seventh province". In conclusion, the Foreign Minister said that "in the circumstances

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129 Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 9 June 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 783-5.

130 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 10 June 1976, *AIIPT*, op. cit.

131 Cablegram to Posts, Canberra, 11 June 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 792-3.

132 Cablegram to Canberra, New York, 13 June 1976, *AIIPT*, p. 794.

133 Cablegram to Peking, Canberra, 21 June 1976, *AIIPT*, pp. 795-6.

134 Note No. 718, Jakarta, 22 June 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 23.

Australia cannot regard the broad requirements for a satisfactory process of decolonisation as having been met”.<sup>135</sup>

### ***6.3 Australian society and Indonesian war in East Timor***

#### **6.3.1. Domestic Australian opinion on East Timor as expressed in newspaper**

##### **Australian newspapers’ pressures on Fraser government**

In response to Australian public concern over the Indonesian military action in East Timor, Australian newspapers continued to urge the Fraser government to protest against it to the Indonesian government; for example, a few days after the Federal election on 13 December 1975, an editorial in *The Age* argued that “[t]he new Australian government must take a firmer stance, and continue to press for UN action which will acknowledge and underwrite the human and political rights of the East Timorese. It must do more in accepting refugees and offering humanitarian aid”.<sup>136</sup> After UNSC Resolution 384 was passed on 22 December, *The Age* insisted that “Australia must do more to support the initiative”, based on its recognition that “[w]ithout justice, there may well be no stability, as the stiffness of the Timorese opposition already suggests”.<sup>137</sup>

One of the notable aspects of Australian newspapers’ opinions immediately after the Indonesian invasion was that they positively and seriously responded to the appeals made by interest groups. In particular, they paid close attention to the proposals of Bill Roberts, Chairperson of the AETA (Australia East Timor Association), which he put to the Australian government on 28 December. These were as follows: “1. Arranging for and giving protection to

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<sup>135</sup> Foreign Minister’s statement entitled “East Timor”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 47:7, 1976, p. 395.

<sup>136</sup> Editorial “Timor: time to be firm”, *The Age*, 16 December 1975.

<sup>137</sup> Editorial “UN’s glimmer of hope for Timor”, *The Age*, 24 December 1975.

Australian ships and planes to evacuate women, children and old men from the fighting, and by supporting the establishment of neutral zones for the care of the wounded by International Red Cross; 2. Offering all assistance possible to ensure the speedy arrival of the U.N. Special Observer in East Timor; and 3. If so requested, supplying food and fuel to the Portuguese naval ships so that they can exercise their obligations to carry out mercy and observation missions in East Timor”.<sup>138</sup> Regarding this imperative, on 30 December, *The Canberra Times* commented that “Dr Roberts’ quixotic call for an unpractical Dunkirk-type operation...reflects the frustration felt by many Australians”. Then, it insisted that “[a] strong protest should be directed at the presumption of Dr Malik in blatantly denying the obvious. If honest dialogue on the question of East Timor is not possible, Australia has nothing to lose from recalling its Ambassador, Mr Woolcott, from Jakarta for ‘consultations’ – a strong, if not invariably effective, form of protest”.<sup>139</sup>

In January 1976, when the Winspeare mission and Foreign Minister Peacock visited Jakarta, Australian media increased their criticisms of the Indonesian annexation policy of East Timor while, at the same time, recognising that Australian protest would not influence it. Given this situation, *The Sydney Morning Herald* argued that “[a]t least we must not condone the ‘act of free choice’”<sup>140</sup> and *The Age* insisted that “[i]t may already be too late to prevent the rape of East Timor; but let us not condone it by silence”.<sup>141</sup> Australian newspapers also criticised Ambassador Woolcott’s suggestion of taking advantage of “Kissingerian realism” in his leaked cablegram; for example, *The Canberra Times* questioned whether it was appropriate to understand that the Australian government was facing the choice between “Wilsonian idealism and Kissingerian realism” and argued that “Great Powers may be able to afford such sophistries

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138 “Australia East Timor Association News”, 28 December 1975, *Timor Information Service* 5, 28 December 1975.

139 Editorial “Pleas for refuge”, *The Canberra Times*, 30 December 1975.

140 Editorial “Fait accompli”, *SMH*, 13 January 1976.

141 Editorial “Timor: uglier and uglier”, *The Age*, 16 January 1976.

but it is doubtful that “middle powers” such as Australia can do so”. On the basis of the recognition that “the maintenance of Australia’s credibility as a participant in good faith in international affairs is considered a worthwhile goal of national policy”, *The Canberra Times* insisted that Foreign Minister Peacock seek “an honourable solution to the Timor issue, preferably based on the United Nations’ call for Indonesia’s withdrawal and genuine self-determination”.<sup>142</sup> Regarding Ambassador Woocott’s view, *The Age* also wondered if “[t]he real question facing the Australian Government is whether a continuing friendship with Indonesia can only be bought by condoning an act of international brigandry? And, if so, is a friendship built on such disreputable foundations worth having?”<sup>143</sup> In response to the Australian government’s confiscation of the Fretilin radio, *The Age* also wrote that “[c]utting off the main – if not only – link between Fretilin forces in Timor and the outside world was an act of stupidity”.<sup>144</sup>

In the middle of April, when the question of East Timor was once again on the agenda of the UN Security Council and the Australian-Indonesian Foreign Ministers’ talks in Jakarta, Australian newspapers commented on it; for example, *The Age* argued that “Australia must not lessen its effort towards the most important goal of all: a controlled plebiscite on East Timor’s future” and expected that “diplomatic pressures will be strengthened” to encourage Winspeare’s prompt return to East Timor.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, *The Sydney Morning Herald* asked for the return of the International Red Cross and the UN mission to East Timor, and the realisation of an impartially monitored plebiscite.<sup>146</sup>

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142 Editorial “Timor: Time for decision”, *The Canberra Times*, 17 January 1976.

143 Editorial “Mr. Woolcott and realism”, *The Age*, 20 January 1976.

144 Editorial “Silence is not always golden”, *The Age*, 28 January 1976.

145 Editorial “Timor: a wee step forward”, *The Age*, 19 April 1976.

146 Editorial “Timor’s fate”, *SMH*, 19 April 1976.

### **Inquiry by Australian Journalists' Association (AJA) into deaths of the "Balibo Five"**

Meanwhile, Australian journalists remained concerned about the deaths of the five journalists in Balibo in October 1975 and continued to urge the Australian government to seriously investigate the case. In March 1976, criticising the DFA for its "inadequate, incomplete and incompetent" inquiry into the deaths, the AJA wrote letters to Prime Minister Fraser, Foreign Minister Peacock and Opposition leader Whitlam to call for a new public inquiry. In support of this initiative, Shirley Shackleton, Greg Shackleton's widow, started her active involvement in the Balibo affair by insisting that "I think that the fact that the Australian Government has made no separate attempt to find out what happened – whether it was an accident or whether they were brutally murdered – is absolutely disgraceful".<sup>147</sup>

In late April, disregarding the official investigation into the Balibo affair being conducted by Australian diplomat Allan Taylor, the Australian media paid greater attention to the new testimony of José Martins who wrote to the UN Secretary-General that he had completely changed his position from a pro-integration leader, who had signed the "Balibo Declaration" as the President of KOTA, to an advocator of the withdrawal of Indonesian forces and mediation by the United Nations.<sup>148</sup> In New York, he also began to talk about the five journalists in Balibo having been executed by troops under Indonesian command.<sup>149</sup> With this new testimony, Australian newspapers advocated a fresh investigation into the journalists' deaths; for example, *The Age* argued that "[t]he Australian public, above all, the families of these five men, have a right to know how they died"<sup>150</sup>, *The Sydney Morning Herald* wrote that "our national interest and self-respect were directly involved"<sup>151</sup> and *The Canberra Times*

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147 "AJA seeks probe on Timor five", *The Age*, 3 March 1976.

148 Letter from Martins to Waldheim, 29 April 1976, *Timor Information Service* 9/10, 6 May 1976.

149 Michael Richardson, "Newsmen 'executed'", *The Age*, 26 April 1976. As to testimonies of José Martins on the killing of the "Balibo Five" in April and May 1976, see also Jill Jolliffe, *Balibo* (Carlton North, Vic.: Scribe Publications, 2009), pp. 149-53.

150 Editorial "Time to lay the ghosts of Balibo", *The Age*, 26 April 1976.

151 Editorial "Five Australians", *SMH*, 27 April 1976.



asserted that “[i]t no longer is merely desirable but essential that a determined and unimpeachable inquiry be held into the circumstances in which five Australian newsmen met their deaths”.<sup>152</sup> Dissatisfied with the Australian Embassy’s investigation, *The Age* even wrote that the Foreign Minister “should send his diplomats back to their desks, and summon an independent, judicially qualified tribunal that by any measure stands as uncommitted”.<sup>153</sup>

In May, the Victorian branch of the AJA invited José Martins to Australia to inquire of him the circumstances under which the journalists were killed.<sup>154</sup> After listening to Martins talk about his deep resentment of Indonesian atrocities and the circumstances of the deaths on the basis of information he had obtained from pro-Indonesian forces in Balibo some hours after the killings, the AJA concluded that Indonesian troops were responsible for all the deaths. Finally, the AJA sent a submission to Foreign Minister Peacock calling for the Australian government to demand compensation from the Indonesian government for the deaths of the Australian newsmen.<sup>155</sup>

### **Australian newspapers’ protest against Indonesian integration of East Timor**

Australian newspapers continued to criticise Indonesia’s process for integrating East Timor; for example, in appreciation of the Australian government’s boycott of the “People’s Representative Council” meeting on 31 May, *The Canberra Times* commented that “[t]he Government is to be commended for its refusal to accept an invitation to help legitimise, through the presence of a diplomatic representative, the sham act of “self-determination” staged by the Indonesian authorities in Dili...and its preordained outcome”.<sup>156</sup> Regarding the

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152 Editorial “The truth of Balibo”, *The Canberra Times*, 28 April 1976.

153 Editorial “Between Balibo and ballyhoo”, *The Age*, 29 April 1976.

154 Neil Mitchell, “Timor man tells of five deaths”, *The Age*, 6 May 1976.

155 Neil Mitchell, “Indonesia should pay: AJA”, *The Age*, 13 May 1976.

156 Editorial “East Timor Merger”, *The Canberra Times*, 2 June 1976.

Indonesian “fact-finding mission” to East Timor on 24 June, *The Age* wrote that “[t]he meet-the-people...can only be regarded as a bizarre form of Indonesian junket”.<sup>157</sup> Deploing the fact that the international community did not take any effective action to prevent Indonesia’s forcible annexation of East Timor, *The Sydney Morning Herald* argued that “[t]he fate that has overtaken the 650,000 people of East Timor was not seduction but rape. The inability or unwillingness of other countries to prevent this rape, after a quarter of a century of moralising against colonialism and about self-determination, is a shaming comment on the efficacy of principle in our world”.<sup>158</sup>

On 20 July, a few days after Indonesia’s official announcement of its incorporation of East Timor, *The Canberra Times* insisted on the Australian government publishing a clear statement on its non-recognition of the Indonesian annexation. It argued that “[i]n the absence of any apparent intention by the Indonesian government to abide by the terms of the United Nations resolutions on East Timor, for which Australia has voted, it is unthinkable that this country can recognise any legitimacy in Indonesia’s claim to de-jure sovereignty in the territory”. With reference to the Fraser government cancelling recognition of the USSR’s sovereignty over the Baltic States, it also wrote that “to maintain any sort of consistency with its recent “de-recognition” of the Soviet Union’s absorption of the Baltic States...it is incumbent upon the Government to state quite unequivocally that in the present circumstances it can in no way accept the fait accompli implied by the President’s actions”. *The Canberra Times* demanded that the Australian government maintain its non-recognition policy “at least until it is possible for outsiders to freely visit East Timor, and to travel unimpeded within it to determine the real desires of its people”. Predicting the future, *The Canberra Times* forecast that Fretilin’s “only hope for victory must lie in a complete breakdown of the Indonesian State” while

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<sup>157</sup> Editorial “Timorese going home to mother”, *The Age*, 26 June 1976.

<sup>158</sup> Editorial “The rape of Timor”, *SMH*, 1 July 1976.

recognising that “[i]n the long term, the prospect for the Fretilin forces is not good”.<sup>159</sup> As mentioned earlier, on the same day, Foreign Minister Peacock issued an official statement concerning the Australian government’s non-recognition of the Indonesian integration of East Timor.

On 22 July, regarding the Foreign Minister’s statement, *The Age* critically commented that “[n]owhere in the statement does Mr. Peacock so much as mention the fact that East Timor was invaded by Indonesian troops. Nor does he point out that Indonesia has totally ignored two demands by the United Nations Security Council that it withdraw the many thousands of troops it has stationed East Timor”. In conclusion, *The Age* argued that “while we are relieved that Mr. Peacock has refused formally to recognise that East Timor is now Indonesia’s twenty-seventh province, we find his statement open to what we hope would be misinterpretation. Whether he intends to or not, Mr. Peacock gives the impression that he would like to forget all about that invasion and is disappointed because the UN has failed to give him an excuse for doing so”.<sup>160</sup>

### **6.3.2. Private Australian activities in support of Fretilin and Timorese**

#### **CPA’s radio communications with Fretilin**

Denis Freney and his comrades of the CPA, including Brian Manning,<sup>161</sup> continued to play central roles in supporting Fretilin members, particularly through communication with Alarico Fernandes in East Timor by means of a radio which had been designated unlawful due to it not having a licence issued by the Post-Master General. As almost its only means of communication between the outside world and the territory of East Timor, the Fretilin radio, which was managed mainly by CPA members, was of great significance for the activities being

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<sup>159</sup> Editorial “No right to recognition”, *The Canberra Times*, 20 July 1976.

<sup>160</sup> Editorial “The too tactful Mr. Peacock”, *The Age*, 22 July 1976.

<sup>161</sup> Brian Manning, “Charlie India Echo Tango calling Timor Leste”, in Hal Alexander and Phil Griffiths (eds.), *A Few Rough Reds : Stories of Rank and File Organising* (Canberra: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra Region Branch, 2003), pp. 12-26.

undertaken in Australia and around the world in support of the Timorese. According to Rob Wesley-Smith, who passionately supported the radio operation despite his non-CPA membership, multiple radios were eventually set up in Darwin to communicate with Fernandes in East Timor; the public receiver, the 'secret' public two-way radio and the 'Secret Secret' radio for the use of Fretilin only traffic which CPA members even hid from Wesley-Smith.<sup>162</sup>

In the initial period, Alarico Fernandes's messages were disseminated as follows; firstly, every second day, he would send his messages from East Timor to Tony Bello, a Fretilin member in Darwin, who would record them onto cassettes and send them to Freney's office in Sydney. Then, in a cubicle next to Freney's office, Chris Santos, a Portuguese who was married to a Timorese and had undertaken to be the Information Officer for Fretilin, would transcribe and translate them. Finally, Denis Freney would provide parts of them for public release and deliver the full texts by phone to overseas members of Fretilin, including Abilio Araujo in Lisbon, Rogerio Lobato and José Ramos-Horta.<sup>163</sup>

By means of this radio, in January 1976, Fretilin successfully made a request for the Winspeare mission to fly to the four places under the control of Fretilin. However, on 25 January, the Australian government confiscated the radio while temporarily allowing Winspeare and Fretilin members to use its outpost radio until 11 February.<sup>164</sup> To reinstate communication with Fernandes, in late February, the CPA installed another radio in a more isolated place south of Darwin to avoid easy detection. Freney also replaced Bello, who was reluctant to continue his job, with another Fretilin member, Estanislau da Silva, who visited Australia from Lisbon with Abilio Araujo to participate in protest rallies in March.<sup>165</sup> In April, to solve the financial

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162 Rob Wesley-Smith, "Radio Maubere and Links to East Timor", in Jim Aubrey (ed.), *Free East Timor : Australia's Culpability in East Timor's Genocide* (Milsons Point, N.S.W: Vintage, 1998), pp. 83-102, esp., pp. 90-1.

163 Denis Freney, *A Map of Days : Life on the Left* (Port Melbourne: Heinemann, 1991), p. 357; David Scott, *Last Flight out of Dili: Memoirs of an Accidental Activist in the Triumph of East Timor* (North Melbourne, Vic.: Pluto Press Australia, 2005), p. 40.

164 Wesley-Smith, "Radio Maubere and Links to East Timor", p. 90.

165 Freney, *A Map of Days*, p. 358-61.

problem of managing communications, CPA member Mark Aarons visited Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, to receive \$40,000 in traveller cheques from FRELIMO officials which he successfully brought into Australia.<sup>166</sup>

### **Australia's supportive activities in United Nations**

To support Fretilin and the Timorese in the United Nations with the help of some Australians, including Richard Tanter and Sue Roff, two Australians flew to New York after the Indonesian invasion. Firstly, during the period from 10 December 1975 to 2 February 1976, David Scott, a member of the AETA and the chairperson of Community Aid Abroad (CAA), who had visited East Timor before the Indonesian invasion, stayed in New York and backed up the activities of José Ramos-Horta and Abílio Araujo by, for example, making press statements,<sup>167</sup> and, after they left in search of international support following the adoption of UNSC Resolution 384, working as the contact for Fretilin members and Denis Freney. In particular, when the Australian government confiscated Fretilin's radio in Darwin on 25 January, he wrote a telegram on behalf of José Ramos-Horta to UN Secretary-General Waldheim requesting that he protest most strongly to the Australian government on behalf of the Winspeare mission.<sup>168</sup> Having received this telegram, the UN Secretary-General actually asked Australian Ambassador Harry for "Australia to allow the radio to operate and permit a flight from Darwin".<sup>169</sup>

Secondly, in April 1976, Labor parliamentarian Ken Fry visited New York to attend a meeting of the UN Security Council. His visit was requested by the ACFOA and encouraged by

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<sup>166</sup> Mark Aarons, *The Family File* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2010), pp. 279-83.

<sup>167</sup> Scott, *Last Flight out of Dili*, pp. 36-7.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

his fellow parliamentarians, including Senator Arthur Gietzelt.<sup>170</sup> Having been assisted by Helen Hill in the drafting of his speech<sup>171</sup>, Fry addressed a session of the UN Security Council on 14 April. On the basis of his observations in East Timor during his two visits the previous year, he spoke about “the strength of the mass support for FRETILIN” and “the strong desire for independence by the large majority of the East Timorese people”, while accusing “the Provisional Government” of its lack of popular support.<sup>172</sup> After this address, Fry worked on lobbying activities until 22 April when voting on UNSC Resolution 389 was held.<sup>173</sup>

After returning to Australia, both these people continued to play central roles in supporting the Timorese. In Canberra, Ken Fry insisted the Australian government be more critical of the Indonesian military annexation of East Timor, saying that “[w]e should be applying for more pressure through our aid program, we could threaten to cut off a certain class of military aid and we should try to get more humanitarian aid into Timor”.<sup>174</sup> In Melbourne, as the chairperson of CAA, David Scott also influenced other activities in support of the Timorese, such as collecting donations.

### **ACTU executives’ visit to Jakarta**

To protest the Indonesian military annexation of East Timor, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) also made some decisions. On 19 February 1976, expressing “its strongest possible support for the right of the people of East Timor to independence and the continuing right to determine and control their own future”, its executives welcomed UNSC Resolution 384, condemned the Indonesian government, deprecated the Australian

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170 Ken Fry, *A Humble Backbencher: The Memoirs of Kenneth Lionel Fry* (Charnwood, ACT: Ginninderra Press, 2002), p. 108.

171 Ibid., p. 110. Hill had already published the following monograph on Timor. See Helen Hill, *The Timor Story* (Fitzroy, Vic.: Timor Information Service, 1976).

172 SCOR, 31st Year, 1909th Meeting, 14 April 1976, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, p. 107.

173 Fry, *A Humble Backbencher*, pp. 108-10.

174 “Call for pressure on Indonesia”, *The Canberra Times*, 26 April 1976.

government's failure to refer the matter to international bodies and endorsed bans put in place by the maritime and waterfront unions on dealing with Indonesian-registered vessels. They also decided to send a delegation to Jakarta to ensure their views on East Timor were made known to Indonesian policymakers.<sup>175</sup>

From 20 April, Bob Hawke, the ACTU President, and Jim Roulston, its Vice-President, who had travelled around East Timor in March of the previous year, flew to Jakarta. During their visit, they asked Foreign Minister Malik, Lieutenant General Murtopo and others to withdraw Indonesian troops, realise an act of free choice for East Timor under United Nations supervision and hold an independent inquiry into the journalists' deaths.<sup>176</sup>

### **“East Timor Moratorium”**

After the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, interest groups – in particular, CIET in Sydney, AETA in Melbourne and Friends of East Timor in Perth – sought to cooperate and work together to further stimulate critical Australian public opinion. For this purpose, on 10 and 11 January 1976, the CIET organised a national conference in Sydney, which was attended by about 70 people, at which the participants agreed to organise an “East Timor Moratorium” similar to the “Vietnam Moratorium Campaigns” held in 1970 and 1971, in various cities in Australia from 18 to 20 March. Adopting the following brief versions of slogans for the event – “All Indonesian troops out now”, “Indonesia – no aid, no trade”, “Recognise the Democratic Republic of East Timor”, “Solidarity with FRETILIN” – the conference also decided to produce 100,000 broadsheets and thousands of badges, posters and car stickers to mobilise people.<sup>177</sup>

On 28 and 29 February in Melbourne, AETA convened a national consultation to

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175 “Decision of A.C.T.U. executive relating to Timor”, 19 February 1976, *Timor Information Service* 8, 1 March 1976.

176 Record of conversation between Malik, Hawke and Roulston, 23 April 1976, and other relevant records of Hawke's meetings, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 22; Hamish McDonald, “Jakarta unions back Hawke”, *SMH*, 24 April 1976.

177 Campaign for an Independent East Timor, “Press Release”, 11 January 1976, NAA, A6121, 2394.

prepare for the “East Timor Moratorium” with the participation of CIET members and Abílio Araújo from Lisbon who was invited to attend by Denis Freney.<sup>178</sup> However, during the conference, disagreements between interested groups began to appear; for example, critically observing the activities of Abílio Araújo who wanted to gather people who were exclusively in support of Fretilin, David Scott expressed to Sue Roff in New York the opinion that “the vital task is to get the murdering Indonesian Generals out of East Timor and anyone who may help should be recruited”.<sup>179</sup>

In the end, despite two months’ preparation and invitations to two Fretilin members, Abílio Araújo and Estanislau da Silva from Lisbon, the “East Timor Moratorium” held in March did not gather as many people as Denis Freney wanted; 600 in Sydney, 1,000 in Melbourne and 500 in Adelaide. Reflecting on this event, Freney attributed its failure to the media which tended to report on Timor as though its “integration into Indonesia was a *fait accompli*” after the Winspeare mission.<sup>180</sup>

### **Australians’ unsuccessful attempts to sail to East Timor**

Although it seems that, in response to Fretilin’s desperate appeals for assistance, no attempts succeeded, some Australians boldly planned to sail to Timor Island with aid and medical goods to help the suffering people. This attempt was considered important because, in the face of the massive Indonesian invasion of East Timor, many Australian people felt that some actions were needed to help the Timorese. Thus, around the Christmas period, many NGOs – such as the Australian Catholic Relief, the Australian Council of Churches, Austcare, CAA, St Vincent de Paul, UNICEF and World Vision – appealed to all parties concerned that

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178 Campaign for an Independent East Timor, *Timor Bulletin* 2:2, 17 February 1976. See also “Ramos Horta file”, Vol. 3.

179 Letter from Scott to Roff, 4 March 1976, Scott, *Last Flight out of Dili*, pp. 84-5.

180 Freney, *A Map of Days*, pp. 358-9.



“safe passage be guaranteed for a boat or boats to transport its relief supplies from Darwin to Dili without interference or impediment”.<sup>181</sup>

In January 1976, another concrete plan to sail to Timor Island was drawn up by Dr John Whitehall and Bill Bancroft, the two members of ASIAT who had successfully been smuggled into East Timor in August 1975, in cooperation with a surgeon and a radio operator. Their intention was to establish a hospital in Same for the civilian refugees evacuating from Dili and also to provide medical supplies. With the financial support of CAA, in Darwin, the ASIAT team hired another barge, *Alanna Fay*, on which they were again, to be, accompanied by Gerald Stone and a Channel Nine cameraman. However, hours before their departure, and against their will, their plan was revealed and broadcast nationally by a newsman which led to their venture ending up in a fiasco because of *Alanna Fay*’s “broken engine”.<sup>182</sup> After they returned to Darwin, Foreign Minister Peacock stated that the Australian government disagreed with ASIAT’s intention.<sup>183</sup>

In addition to the *Alanna Fay* affair, because many humanitarian organisations and trade unions felt obliged to ship the goods and medical supplies purchased with the tens of thousands of dollars donated by the public, there were at least two other planned attempts to sail to East Timor in the second half of May. The first was by the Australian Catholic Church with intending to transport medicines and the second by a trade union group seeking to ship with food.<sup>184</sup> However, because of the Australian government’s refusal to protect relief ships against Indonesian attack, these plans were not carried out.

## Conclusion

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181 John Izzard, “Crumbs of Compassion: The ‘Dawn in Darwin’ Affair”, *Quadrant* 54:3, 2010, pp. 26-30, esp., p. 28.

182 John Whitehall, “Among the Quick and the Dead in East Timor, 1975”, *Quadrant* 54:10, 2010, pp. 28-37, esp., pp. 36-7.

183 Foreign Minister Peacock, “Timor: Entry of Australian barge into the war zone”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 47:1, 1976, p. 41.

184 “Timor death warning as bishops plan aid”, *SMH*, 17 May 1976; “Bishops plan to send aid to Timor”, *The Canberra Times*, 17 May 1976.

During the period from mid-December 1975 to July 1976, the Indonesian military waged a war in East Timor to remove Fretilin members and other pro-independence groups from Dili and other regional centres in order to allow the UN mission and foreign observers to visit and observe these cities. Then, under the instructions of Indonesian policymakers, the “Provisional Government of East Timor” organised an artificial act of self-determination at a “People’s Representative Council” meeting at which it was decided to integrate East Timor into Indonesia at the end of May. Finally, having accepted its petition on 17 July, the Indonesian government officially announced its annexation of East Timor. However, neither the Portuguese government nor UN organisations recognised this integration process as legitimate.

Throughout this period, the Australian government expressed its disagreement with, and non-recognition of, the Indonesian annexation policy of East Timor more clearly than ever through a number of statements made by Foreign Minister Peacock and Prime Minister Fraser. These statements seemed to disregard Ambassador Woolcott’s suggestion in his leaked cablegram to adopt “Kissingerian realism”. Against the backdrop of strong domestic concerns over East Timor, Australian Ministers, officials of the DFA and the public thought it necessary to continue to protest against Indonesia’s policy while, at the same time, recognising that it would be almost impossible to reverse the annexation of East Timor. In this situation, in the interest of Australia’s relations with Indonesia, the Fraser government began to attempt to obstruct the activities of domestic interest groups; for example, it confiscated the Fretilin radio managed by the CPA in January.

## **Chapter 7: Road to Australian *de facto* recognition of Indonesian annexation of East Timor from August 1976 to January 1978**

This chapter briefly examines how the Australian government shifted its policy towards East Timor during the period from August 1976 to January 1978. While having clearly announced that it did not recognise the Indonesian annexation of East Timor on 20 July 1976, one and half years later, Foreign Minister Peacock publicised the Australian government's *de facto* recognition of East Timor as part of Indonesia on 20 January 1978. Why did the Australian government change this policy during this period?

To consider this question, this chapter provides a brief overview of some factors contributing to Australian foreign policy towards East Timor in the following three sections. Section 7.1 considers Indonesian policymakers' attempts to have the Indonesian annexation of East Timor seen as a *fait accompli* both inside and outside the territory. Section 7.2 looks at how the Fraser government implemented Australian policy towards East Timor, taking into account both Australia's relations with Indonesia and public concerns over East Timor. Section 7.3 deals with the Australian public's concerns over East Timor, as expressed in Australian newspapers and manifested in the activities of interested people.

### ***7.1 Indonesian military operation in East Timor and its diplomacy***

After the declaration of East Timor as Indonesia's 27<sup>th</sup> province on 17 July 1976, the Indonesian military continued its operations against FRETILIN under the direction of its field

commander, General Dading Kalbuadi. It is known that, after August 1976, the Indonesian military began to use US-supplied OV-10 Bronco aircraft to assault Fretilin from the air. Nevertheless, the larger part of the territory of East Timor remained out of Indonesian control until the middle of 1977.<sup>1</sup>

While little information on the situation in East Timor under the Indonesian military occupation is available, a summary authored by Cavan Hogue and Peter Rodgers, two diplomats at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta who travelled to some towns in East Timor by helicopter under tight Indonesian control from 27 to 30 April 1977, provides some insights into it. According to them, in terms of the security and control situation, the territory of East Timor was divided into three areas: “(a) The towns and environs which were completely and directly controlled by the provincial authorities. People could move as they wished and regular security precautions seemed minimal. (b) Small areas in the hills which were controlled by Fretilin. (c) A kind of “no man’s land” throughout which was scattered the rest of the population. Government forces could move into these areas if they wanted but so could Fretilin make raids for food”. As for the Indonesian administration in East Timor, the two diplomats observed that “Timorese were employed in the public service carrying out routine administrative tasks but with the assistance of Indonesian technicians and supervision of the Indonesian authorities. The lack of a common language was a current problem”. Their overall impression was that “Integration (with Indonesia) appeared to be a clearly irreversible fact”.<sup>2</sup>

After September 1977, the Indonesian military intensified its activities in the territory of East Timor.<sup>3</sup> The operation was often called “encirclement and annihilation” and lasted until early 1979. During this period, the Indonesians denied Fretilin and its supporters’ access to food

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1 *Chega!*, Chap 3, pp. 73-4.

2 “East Timor : Visit of Australian Embassy officials from Jakarta” in NAA, A1838 3038/10/1/ pt 53. Its contents were also made public. See Michael Richardson, ““Jakarta’s rule a fact””, *The Age*, 16 June 1977.

3 Tony Walker, “Indonesia gears for new Timor offensive”, *The Age*, 31 August 1977.

and supplies in order to have them surrender or starve to death. This Indonesian operation also brought about internal divisions and conflicts within the Fretilin leadership which led to the imprisonment of Francisco Xavier do Amaral in September 1977 and his replacement as president by Nicolau Lobato the following month. A year later, in September 1978, the Indonesians captured Alarico Fernandes who was in charge of radio communications with Australia and, on 31 December, killed President Nicolau Lobato. The Indonesian military declared the pacification of East Timor on 26 March 1979, although Xanana Gusmão and other independence fighters were able to escape possible arrest. In this way, the Indonesians expanded their control over the territory of East Timor towards the end of the 1970s.

In terms of Indonesian diplomatic activities, while implementing various internal policies to “Indonesianise” East Timor, the Indonesian government accepted several foreigners’ visits to East Timor to convince them of Indonesia’s *de facto* control. In addition to the two Australian diplomats mentioned above, in April 1977, two US Congresspersons, William Goodling and Helen Meyner, visited East Timor after which, in accordance with Indonesian policy, the latter commented that “[u]nion with Indonesia makes good sense and the people want it”.<sup>4</sup> In July, Australian journalist Richard Carleton also visited East Timor, as seen later. From 5 to 9 January 1978, New Zealand’s Ambassador to Indonesia, Roger Peren, travelled to East Timor with New Zealand’s Defence Attaché. After returning to Jakarta, Ambassador Peren told Australian Ambassador Woolcott that “the situation as of January 1978 was that the Indonesians had got their military and administrative structure right” and “integration is irreversible”.<sup>5</sup>

In the arena of the United Nations, Indonesian diplomats struggled to increase the number of votes against the General Assembly’s (UNGA) Resolutions regarding East Timor. As

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4 “Congressmen back takeover of Timor”, *The Age*, 18 April 1977.

5 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 16 January 1978, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 29.

a consequence, the number of countries opposing the Resolutions steadily increased and, while only 10 countries were against them in 1975, 46 were in 1982. On the other hand, the number voting for them declined from 72 in 1975 to 50 in 1982. Because of Indonesian diplomatic pressure, Singapore, the only ASEAN member country to abstain from voting in 1975 and 1976, also turned against the Resolutions after 1977. In addition, the Resolutions' contents were modified to be less critical ones of the Indonesian government; for example, although, in 1976, UNGA Resolution 31/53 had called upon "the Indonesian Government to withdraw all its forces from the Territory",<sup>6</sup> the next year, Resolution 32/34 no longer explicitly demanded the withdrawal of the Indonesian forces while rejecting "the claim that East Timor has been integrated into Indonesia, insomuch as the people of the Territory have not been able to exercise freely their right to self-determination and independence".<sup>7</sup> However, despite its diplomatic efforts, the Indonesian government could not always alter other countries' decisions on East Timor. In particular, a number of countries belonging to the Eastern bloc and some located in Africa continued to oppose the Indonesian integration of East Timor. The Portuguese government, East Timor's former colonial power, also remained "undisposed to recognise *de jure* the integration of East Timor within the territory of another State as a result of a unilateral decision", as it stated prior to voting for the Resolutions in 1976.<sup>8</sup>

Indonesian policymakers also approached individual governments. Given its influence over other Western countries, the Australian government's critical attitude was the greatest concern for Indonesian policymakers. Thus, not only did President Suharto raise this question during his talks with Prime Minister Fraser in October 1976 and August 1977 but also

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6 General Assembly Resolution 31/53: Question of Timor, 1 December 1976, in Heike Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community : Basic Documents* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 123-4.

7 General Assembly Resolution 32/34: Question of East Timor, 28 November 1977, Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community*, pp. 124-5.

8 Memorandum to Canberra, New York, 10 December 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 27.

Indonesian senior officers, particularly General Murdani, regularly discussed the issue with Australian diplomats. During their talks, General Murdani sometimes threatened to sever the political ties between Indonesia and Australia unless the Australian government changed its policy towards East Timor; for example, on 2 August 1976, Murdani even suggested the postponement of the summit talks between Suharto and Fraser in early October, implying that, from the Indonesian perspective, the countries' political relationship was of little importance.<sup>9</sup> After the summit talks in October 1976, the solution of "family reunions" – a problem between Indonesia and Australia concerning the Timorese refugees fleeing from East Timor to Australia without their families during the civil war in 1975 – emerged as another diplomatic issue between the two countries. However, Murdani and other Indonesian officers remained unwilling to start substantial negotiations with their Australian counterparts on this question on the basis of Australia's non-recognition of the Indonesian annexation of East Timor.<sup>10</sup> State Minister Sudharmono also linked the change in Australian policy towards East Timor with a future visit of President Suharto to Australia.<sup>11</sup> In this way, Indonesian policymakers constantly put diplomatic pressure on the Australian government.

## ***7.2 Australia's gradual policy shift***

In terms of Australian policy, in August 1976, only a few weeks after Foreign Minister Peacock's statement on 20 July, the Fraser government began to consider modifying its policy critical of the Indonesian annexation of East Timor. On 6 August, Roger Holdich, a senior officer in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, against the backdrop of pressure being

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9 Cablegram from Jakarta, Canberra, 2 August 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 29.

10 For example, see Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 28 October 1977, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 28.

11 From Woolcott to Parkinson, Jakarta, 1 December 1977, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1, pt 29.

applied on the Australian government, advised Prime Minister Fraser of the following events. Firstly, as seen above, on 2 August, Benny Murdani cautioned Ambassador Woolcott about the East Timor situation. Secondly, on 3 August, on the front page of *The Age*, Michael Richardson reported that, during the Prime Minister's visit to the United States in late July, "[t]he US has warned Australia not to allow further deterioration of relations with Indonesia over Timor" because it "could hinder US strategy for balancing Russia's military might". The article also pointed out the strategic importance of the deep-water Straits of Ombai-Wetar to the north of Timor Island through which US nuclear submarines could pass between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.<sup>12</sup> Despite the DFA's denial,<sup>13</sup> Australian policymakers might have considered this article. Finally, it was apparent that an early announcement of the change in Australian policy prior to the summit talks with President Suharto in October would be beneficial for Australian-Indonesian relations. Thus, Holdich wrote to Prime Minister Fraser that "[u]nless we change gear soon we might expect our relations with Indonesia to deteriorate substantially, possibly also affecting our relations with South East Asian states. In this we risk losing the initiative and influence in perhaps the most important aspect of our foreign policy". At the same time, he recognised that "[p]ublic opinion in Australia will be the most difficult problem to overcome should the Government decide to relax its attitude on Timor".<sup>14</sup>

In the end, the Fraser government rejected the idea of an early announcement of Australia's recognition of the Indonesian annexation of East Timor in August 1976 prior to the summit talks as it felt this would be inappropriate so soon after the Foreign Minister's statement

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12 Michael Richardson, "'Don't anger Jakarta'", *The Age*, 3 August 1976.

13 Michael Richardson, "Canberra says PM not told", *The Age*, 4 August 1976. The question of East Timor was not mentioned during the summit talks between Ford, Fraser, Kissinger and Peacock on 27 July 1976. See Document 62: Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, 27 July 1976, in Brad Coleman, David Goldman and David Nickles (eds.), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973–1976* (United States Department of State, 2011).

14 Submission to Fraser, Canberra, 6 August 1976, in Wendy Way (ed.), *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974–1976* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000), (hereafter *AIHPT*), pp. 825–7.



of 20 July and it would give the public the negative impression that President Suharto was being placated.<sup>15</sup>

Instead, Prime Minister Fraser made some other efforts to create a favourable environment in advance of his talks with Suharto; for example, under the direction of the government, on 16 September, Customs and Defence officials in Darwin prevented four men – Robert Wesley-Smith, James Zantis, Harold Morris and Manolis Mavromatis – from sailing to East Timor on a fishing vessel named *Dawn* on the basis of prior information. The four men were soon arrested on the grounds that “weapons” (only six guns for personal protection) and “drugs” which were prohibited for export (actually, large supplies of medicines for the Timorese) were found inside the vessel.<sup>16</sup> In addition, on 27 September, with the approval of the Prime Minister, Telecom officials and Commonwealth Police again confiscated an illegal Fretilin radio in Darwin, which was in communication with Alarico Fernandes, and arrested two people, including a pro-Fretilin Timorese, Estanislau da Silva.<sup>17</sup> Prime Minister Fraser publicly justified the confiscation saying that “I would have thought that that radio would have embarrassed all Australians”.<sup>18</sup>

From 7 to 11 October 1976, when Australia was paying a great deal of attention to East Timor, Prime Minister Fraser visited Indonesia with Foreign Minister Peacock. However, their joint communiqué issued on 10 October at the conclusion of the visit only noted that “Australian policy on the East Timor question had been clearly set out by the Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr Peacock) in the Parliament”.<sup>19</sup> While it was clear that the Prime Minister

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15 Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Cabinet Minute - Submission No 1865 : East Timor - Australian policy - Decision 4485(FAD), Canberra , 17 January 1978, NAA, A12909, 1865.

16 “Note for file”, 17 September 1976, and other documents in NAA, A4090, 757/2/1.

17 Russel Skelton, “Fretilin radio link seized in Darwin”, *The Age*, 2 October 1976. See also David Scott, *Last Flight out of Dili : Memoirs of an Accidental Activist in the Triumph of East Timor* (North Melbourne, Vic.: Pluto Press Australia, 2005), p. 173; Denis Freney, *A Map of Days: Life on the Left* (Port Melbourne: Heinemann, 1991), p. 361.

18 “Fraser says Fretilin radio link had to go”, *The Age*, 4 October 1976.

19 “Prime Minister’s visit to Indonesia”, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 47:10, 1976, pp. 525-40, esp. p.539.

was referring to the Foreign Minister's statement on 4 March, he did not repeat it. Then, the communiqué further stated that "the important thing now was to look to the future, and to alleviate, so far as possible, the human suffering which had come with the fighting and associated disruption in the territory" and made it clear that the Australian government had made \$330,000 available through the Indonesian Red Cross. In fact, this indicated a slight shift in Australian policy because, previously, it had preferred the provision of aid to be through the International Red Cross. The joint communiqué also noted that "[t]he President and the Prime Minister agreed that officials of their two countries would be meeting to resolve the problems" of "the refugees who had gone to Australia without their families"<sup>20</sup> which had become a major issue between Australia and Indonesia.

After the summit talks with Indonesian President Suharto, the Fraser government gradually weakened its policy critical of the Indonesian annexation of East Timor. In the Parliament on 20 October, Foreign Minister Peacock stated that "[t]his Government has not recognised Indonesia's incorporation of East Timor. On the other hand for quite practical reasons such as the provision of humanitarian aid and the reuniting of families, we have to accept certain realities".<sup>21</sup> In the middle of November at the United Nations, the Australian government abstained from voting at the Fourth Committee and did so again regarding UNGA Resolution 31/53 on 1 December. Foreign Minister Peacock explained the first abstention by saying that "the resolution failed to make a balanced appeal for the avoidance of further bloodshed" but "[t]here were...points of principle in the resolutions which...are fundamental to Australian Government policy as consistently stated".<sup>22</sup>

The Fraser government also attempted some measures to disconnect the ties between

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Cablegram to Jakarta, Canberra, 20 October 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 27.

<sup>22</sup> Peacock's statement at the National Press Club, 18 November 1976, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 27.

Fretilin and the Australian people. Firstly, on 17 November, it prohibited Telecom from passing on messages from Fretilin leaders in East Timor to recipients in Australia.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, it intensified its surveillance of the Timor Sea in order to prevent Australian assistance being provided to Fretilin based on the experience of the *Dawn* affair in September.<sup>24</sup> Thirdly, after refusing to issue a visa for Rogerio Lobato, the Fraser government rejected Fretilin representatives' visits to Australia which meant that José Ramos-Horta could not visit Australia until 1984.<sup>25</sup>

However, despite these efforts, the Fraser government could not easily marginalise the question of East Timor in terms of Australia's relations with Indonesia. In particular, for a few months after January 1977, James Dunn's activities, which aimed to uncover Indonesian atrocities in East Timor, as discussed later, developed into a significant diplomatic problem. On the one hand, on 14 March, Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik summoned Ambassador Woolcott and threatened him that the Indonesian government would "permit demonstrations and other mass actions" against the Australian Embassy in Jakarta to counter Dunn's activities.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, in the Parliament on 15 March, Foreign Minister Peacock stated that Australia's interests would be best served by finding a balance between the Australian concerns of achieving good relations with Indonesia while considering the interests of the Timorese and their opposition to outside intervention.<sup>27</sup>

In May 1977, in order to avoid any further deterioration in relations between Australia and Indonesia, Ambassador Woolcott suggested that Nicholas Parkinson, who became Secretary of the DFA in February 1977, take several concrete steps towards the Australian government's

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23 Editorial "Lid closes on Timor", *The Canberra Times*, 19 November 1976.

24 "Surveillance of the Timor Sea", 19 November 1976, and other documents of the Department of Defence available at NAA, A4090, 757/2/1.

25 "Horta criticises Fraser Government visa refusal", *Timor Information Service* 23, February 1978, p. 5.

26 Tony Walker, "Indon threat on Timor", *The Age*, 16 March 1977.

27 "Australian Foreign Minister's policy statement", 15 March 1977, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record* 48:3, 1977, pp. 131-46, esp. pp. 138-9.

*de facto* recognition of Indonesia's incorporation of East Timor as early as possible.<sup>28</sup> However, Secretary Parkinson replied that the Foreign Minister "must maintain the line that he has been pursuing until now" on the basis of the Secretary's recognition that "[t]he East Timor issue and its impact on our relations with Indonesia has become as much a domestic political matter as it has a foreign affairs matter and has had a detrimental effect on our relationship".<sup>29</sup>

A moment for an Australian policy shift arrived when the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister visited Kuala Lumpur to attend the post-ASEAN summit talks in August 1977. On this occasion, according to Ambassador Woolcott, Prime Minister Fraser "told the President that he would like to see Timor buried as an issue between the two countries as soon as this could be done in Australia" when informally talking with President Suharto.<sup>30</sup> By early September, the Fraser government had made up its mind to change the Australian policy towards East Timor as an officer of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet informed Ambassador Woolcott that "[t]he political will at the highest level is quite decided on the matter... It is just a question of the moment".<sup>31</sup> On 27 October, the Fraser government again decided to abstain from the coming vote on the UNGA Resolutions regarding East Timor.<sup>32</sup>

About five weeks after the victory of the Liberal and Country Party in the Federal elections on 17 January 1978, the Fraser government convened the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee which agreed that "Australia should no longer sustain its public objection to the integration of East Timor into Indonesia". A paper submitted by the Foreign Minister listed several reasons for supporting this Australian policy shift. In terms of bilateral relations with Indonesia, the Foreign Minister's paper pointed out that "the point has been reached where our

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28 Letter from Woolcott to Parkinson, Jakarta, 3 May 1977; Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 19 May 1977, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 28.

29 Letter from Parkinson to Woolcott, 24 May 1977, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 28.

30 Record of conversation between Fraser, Peacock and Woolcott, Jakarta, 8 August 1977, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 28.

31 Note by Woolcott, Jakarta, 5 September 1977, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 28.

32 Cabinet Minute (Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee) - Decision No 4224(FAD) - Timor - Without Submission, 27 October 1977, NAA, A13075, 4224/FAD.

continued refusal to accept fully and formally the reality of the situation in East Timor could damage the relationship". It also argued for the significance of strengthening the personal relationship between Prime Minister Fraser and President Suharto who was expected to come to Australia during 1978. In terms of the future of East Timor, the paper recognised "no prospect of the Indonesians allowing an international act of self-determination to take place in East Timor", while observing that "the issue is fading as an international one". When it came to domestic aspects, the paper pointed out the decline of domestic interest as indicated by reductions in the number of letters received on, and newspaper and television coverage of, the matter over the last six months as well as an anti-Indonesian attitude sometimes being observed in interested groups in Timor.<sup>33</sup>

In a press release on 20 January 1978, Foreign Minister Peacock publicised the Government's decision on East Timor. Having stated that "Australia will need to continue to deal directly with the Indonesian Government as the authority in effective control" with reference to the family reunion question and the rehabilitation of Timor, the Foreign Minister announced that "[a]ccordingly, the Government has decided that although it remains critical of the means by which integration was brought about it would be unrealistic to continue to refuse to recognise *de facto* that East Timor is part of Indonesia".<sup>34</sup> On the same day, after reading this statement and describing it as "a positive development", Acting Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar expressed his appreciation to Australian Ambassador Woolcott.<sup>35</sup>

In November 1978, following this decision and against the backdrop of continuing pressures from the Indonesian government as well as exploration companies with permits in the Timor Sea area, the Fraser government made another decision to start delimitation negotiations

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33 Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Cabinet Minute - Submission No 1865 : East Timor - Australian policy - Decision 4485(FAD), Canberra, 17 January 1978, op. cit.

34 Department of Foreign Affairs News Release, Canberra, 20 January 1978, *AIIPT*, pp. 838-9.

35 Cablegram to Canberra, Jakarta, 20 January 1978, NAA, A10463, 801/13/11/1 pt 29.

of sea and seabed boundaries adjacent to East Timor with the Indonesian government, amounting to *de jure* recognition of Indonesia's incorporation of East Timor.<sup>36</sup> On 14 February 1979, the Australian government commenced the negotiations and thus extended its *de jure* recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor.

### ***7.3 Persisting concerns of Australian media and interested people***

Regardless of the Indonesian government's declaration of the annexation of East Timor in July 1976, the Australian media, interested people and parliamentarians continued to be involved in, and concerned about, the self-determination question and humanitarian situation in East Timor, especially until around the first half of 1977.

As for Australian newspapers' opinions, in October 1976, they criticised Prime Minister Fraser's ambiguous words on East Timor during his visit to Jakarta. *The Canberra Times* reported that "[i]t is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the remarks of the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser...amount to a de-facto recognition of Indonesia's claim to sovereignty over East Timor".<sup>37</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald* argued that "Mr Fraser referred publicly to "differences" between the two countries and declared that Mr Peacock had set out Australia's viewpoint. He did not, however, spell out that viewpoint...and implied that was the end of the matter".<sup>38</sup> Touching on the Opposition's defeated no-confidence motion which accused the government of an inability to express a coherent and principled policy towards East Timor, *The Age* deplored it by saying that "[i]f yesterday's Timor debate proved anything it is that humbug is strictly bipartisan. What a sorry tangle of doublespeak the Government, and no less the Opposition,

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36 Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Cabinet Minute - Submission No 2707 : Australia – Indonesia – Delimitation Negotiations - Decision 7157 (FAD), Canberra, 15 November 1978, NAA, A12909, 2707.

37 Editorial "Timor fades away", *The Canberra Times*, 11 October 1976.

38 Editorial "Closed chapter?", *SMH*, 12 October 1976.

have got themselves into over their Timor policies”.<sup>39</sup>

In 1977, Australian newspapers wrote a series on James Dunn’s activities which led to Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik’s intimidating remarks about the Australian Embassy in Jakarta on 14 March. In response to this, *The Age* commented that “the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mr Malik, is behaving in a particularly nasty way over a particularly nasty issue”.<sup>40</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald* rebuked Australian foreign policymakers for their overbearing attitudes, writing that “[o]ur Indonesian policy has been conducted, and continues to be conducted, not only in a nationally humiliating way but also in a singularly unskilful and counter-productive way”.<sup>41</sup>

In August, an article written by Richard Carleton, a former TV and radio commentator and the only Australian journalist allowed to travel to East Timor on an Indonesian visa during this period, stimulated Australian public sentiment. Although his six-day visit to East Timor in July was, as always, tightly controlled by the Indonesians, he managed to elude his escorts and talk four times with Timorese informants on whose testimonies he based an article. According to Carleton’s article, with reference to the Indonesian invasion in December 1975, one of the Timorese said that “I can’t be precise but I saw at least 150 lined up on the wharf and shot. It took about 40 minutes. As each shot was fired a body fell into the water and they all eventually floated out to sea”. The informants also talked about the ongoing deaths of people from disease and malnutrition.<sup>42</sup> However, with the exception of this article, the Australian media’s concerns over East Timor declined towards the second half of 1977.

In response to Foreign Minister Peacock’s statement on 20 January 1978, all major Australian newspapers reported it on their front pages and commented on it in their editorials.

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39 Editorial “Time to end the Timor humbug”, *The Age*, 13 October 1976.

40 Editorial “Mr. Malik, don’t be so rude”, *The Age*, 17 March 1977.

41 Editorial “The appeasers”, *SMH*, 4 April 1977.

42 Richard Carleton, “Timor-and a story of massacre”, *The Age*, 10 August 1977.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* took a fairly sympathetic position to the government's decision, writing that "[o]ur gestures of disapproval, adequate or not, achieved nothing: our continued disapproval can change nothing – though it would harm a relationship of the utmost importance to us. Recognition may leave sour thoughts in the mind: at least it acknowledges that we must live in the world as it is".<sup>43</sup> *The Canberra Times* expressed more critical opinions, cynically writing that "let us not mask our no doubt practical abandonment of principle by protestations of humanity. Let the Australian Government honestly say that it believes this final solution to be in the best interests of Australia".<sup>44</sup> *The Age* also disagreed with the Foreign Minister's announcement, writing that "[t]he Government's decision to give de facto recognition to Indonesia's takeover of East Timor cannot be welcomed. As a matter of principle it is wrong and as an exercise in pragmatism it is premature...The proponents of *realpolitik* will say that recognition was inevitable and that Australia's national interests dictate good relations with a populous and potentially powerful neighbour. However, we do not accept that a too hasty bowing to the inevitable is necessarily in our best interests, particularly if the region thinks we are prone to make a habit of it – and we wonder if it was in the interests of the unfortunate Timorese".<sup>45</sup>

Along with Australia's major newspapers, newsletters of interested groups, including AETA and CIET, and the *Timor Information Service* continued to be printed and circulated among many people. Many unions remained interested in East Timor and, in particular, the maritime unions retained their ban on shipping carrying the Indonesian flag until the ACTU executive made a decision to have it lifted after the disastrous defeat of the Labor Party in the Federal elections in December 1977.<sup>46</sup>

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43 Editorial "Timor", *SMH*, 21 January 1978.

44 Editorial "End of A Charade", *The Canberra Times*, 23 January 1978.

45 Editorial "Realities of recognition", *The Age*, 23 January 1978.

46 Gavin Cantlon, "Executive move to get trade bans lifted", *SMH*, 14 December 1977; Editorial "Union trade bans", *SMH*, 16 December 1977.



As for radio communications with Alarico Fernandes in East Timor, Denis Freney and other members of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) continued to play central roles although one of their two-way radios in Darwin was confiscated in late September 1976. In May 1977, without regard for a warning from a senior officer, they even set up a “public radio” through which Ken Fry and many journalists communicated directly with Fernandes.<sup>47</sup> In the end, the initial radio operation lasted until September 1978 when Fernandes surrendered to the Indonesian military.<sup>48</sup> Also, from February 1977, Denis Freney published a fortnightly periodical, *East Timor News*, containing information on East Timor.<sup>49</sup>

While creating friction with the CPA, Community Aid Abroad (CAA), chaired by David Scott, and other humanitarian organisations were actively involved in East Timor.<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that CAA was the major financial contributor to the four men’s failed attempts to be smuggled to East Timor on the *Dawn* in September 1976, providing \$13,000 from its Australia-wide East Timor Relief Appeal to the venture, the total cost of which was around \$25,000. In defence of their humanitarian objectives, David Scott later insisted that “[w]e believe that if the only way we could help sick and hungry people was through unorthodox methods then that is what we would have to do”. In May 1977, the four men’s convictions were finally quashed.<sup>51</sup>

James Dunn’s visit to Lisbon to conduct interviews with Timorese refugees from 5 to 23 January was also funded by two NGOs, CAA and Australian Catholic Relief. For this reason, despite his official position as the Director of the Foreign Affairs Group of the Legislative Research Service, he conducted his investigation as a private person. After interviewing about

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47 “MP defies Timor radio ban”, *The Age*, 9 May 1977.

48 Freney, *A Map of Days*, pp. 361-3, 369-72.

49 Back issues of *East Timor News* from February 1977 to November 1979 are available at <<http://chartperiodicals.wordpress.com/2010/09/01/etn/>>.

50 For the accounts of tensions between East Timor supporters in the 1977, see Scott, *Last Flight out of Dili*, pp. 186-213.

51 Sally Wilkins, “Timor ship aground on legal reefs”, *The Age*, 9 June 1976; “Timor mission: how and why”, *The Age*, 10 June 1976; Scott, *Last Flight out of Dili*, pp. 174-84.

200 Timorese refugees, on 11 February, he completed a report. According to it, there were approximately 1500 Timorese refugees in Lisbon, almost all of whom were UDT supporters who had moved from East Timor to Indonesian Timor since September 1975 and been repatriated to Portugal during the period from July to October 1976, in accordance with the secret Bangkok agreement of 25 July 1976. Importantly, there was another group of about 25 people who had moved to Indonesian Timor after the Indonesian invasion of Dili, about half of whom Dunn was able to interview. In conclusion, he wrote that “the plight of these people might constitute, relatively speaking, the most serious case of contravention of human rights facing the world at this time. Reports that one sixth of the population may have been killed are impossible to assess, let alone authenticate, but the fact that such reports persist serves to highlight the magnitude of the tragedy of Timor”.<sup>52</sup>

James Dunn’s report, which was submitted to Foreign Minister Peacock and circulated among interested people in February, not only attracted Australian attention but also became an international issue as Indonesians reacted strongly to it. In Washington on 23 March, James Dunn was also given an opportunity to testify at the joint sitting of the international organisation and Asian and Pacific affairs sub-committees of the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations.<sup>53</sup> However, because of Indonesia’s consistent diplomatic activities refuting the claims in Dunn’s report and the Carter Administration’s interest in strengthening US relations with Indonesia, this report was not seriously considered by US policymakers. The visits of the two US Congresspersons, William Goodling (Republican) and Helen Meyner (Democrat), to East Timor in April also ended up with them endorsing Indonesia’s views.

On 10 and 11 May, following Dunn’s investigation in Lisbon, John Dowd, the President of the Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists, an influential organisation

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<sup>52</sup> James Dunn, “The East Timor Situation - Report on Talks with Timorese Refugees in Portugal”, *East Timor News* 5, 21 April 1977, pp. 4-5.

<sup>53</sup> Creighton Burns, “Jakarta used our arms for Timor invasion, say US officials”, *The Age*, 25 March 1977.

of lawyers concerned with laws and human rights, as well as a member of the Liberal Party in the Parliament of New South Wales Legislative Assembly, visited Lisbon to interview the Timorese refugees which confirmed the credibility of Dunn's report. In July, Dowd authored a report in which he concluded that "[w]hatever the difficulties may be in relation to the future of an independent or semi-independent East Timor, it is clear that it is the fundamental right of those people to make a proper decision for themselves to determine their own future". Then, he sent copies of this report to Foreign Minister Peacock, the Indonesian Embassy in Canberra and the press.<sup>54</sup>

Reflecting the concerns of the media and the public, a number of Australian parliamentarians remained concerned about East Timor, irrespective of their party affiliations. In January 1977, Gordon Bryant, a former Minister of the Whitlam Government and the Chairman of the Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee of the Labor Party in the Parliament, visited Lisbon and interviewed the Timorese refugees with James Dunn.<sup>55</sup> There, Gordon handed a letter to Portuguese Prime Minister Mário Soares which pressed on him the need to reject all demands by Indonesia for his approval of the integration of East Timor into Indonesia.<sup>56</sup> In March, when Dunn's report stimulated Australian opinion, 90 members of the Australian Parliament put their signatures on a petition to US President Carter drawing his "attention to the mounting and disturbing evidence that innocent civilians in Timor have been detained without due process and killed as a result of the activities of Indonesia". They further requested the US President to "use his good offices as a matter of urgency to seek assurance from the government of Indonesia" so that "it shall comply with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and "allow the International Red Cross to resume humanitarian activities in East Timor".<sup>57</sup> However,

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54 Letter from Dowd to Peacock, 13 July 1977, NAA, A1838, 3038/10/1 pt 53. See also "MLA wants inquiry on East Timor", *SMH*, 23 May 1977.

55 Mike Steketee, "Bryant cites new evidence of war crimes in Timor", *SMH*, 14 January 1977.

56 Letter from Bryant to Soares, 12 January 1977, NLA, Papers of Gordon Bryant (MS 8256), Box 59.

57 "Parliamentary Group – Amnesty International Petition to the President of the United States", NAA, A1838, 3038/10/1 pt 51.

this did not bring about any significant change in US policy towards Indonesia.

The East Timor question created tensions in the Australian Parliament and political parties. From the end of March to May 1977, Foreign Minister Peacock was criticised for his past talks with Harry Tjan and Lim Bian Kie in Bali on 24 September 1975 and, on 3 May, an opposition motion calling for his resignation over East Timor was introduced.<sup>58</sup> Despite the Liberal government's intention to stay out of East Timor as far as it could, Michael Hodgman of the Liberal Party and other backbenchers applied for Indonesian visas to investigate the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975. This was categorically rejected by the relevant Indonesian authority.<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, within the Opposition Labor Party, Leader Gough Whitlam and Deputy Leader Tom Uren sharply disagreed on a future Labor government's policy towards East Timor. With respect to this, on 8 July 1977, the ALP national conference endorsed Uren's motion with minor amendments and disregarded Whitlam's preference for Australia to continue its military aid to Indonesia.<sup>60</sup> Having called on "Indonesia to withdraw from East Timor immediately in conformity with United Nations resolutions", the adopted resolution declared that a future Labor government would "[s]uspend Australian military aid to Indonesia until all troops were withdrawn from East Timor", "[r]ecognise a government of East Timor if independence was the choice of the East Timorese after a genuine act of self-determination" and "[r]e-open Australian communication facilities to representatives of the Democratic Republic of East Timor".<sup>61</sup> In September, Leader Whitlam was even called on to resign by several Labor parliamentarians because his remarks on East Timor contradicted the ALP's policy.<sup>62</sup> In either

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58 "Parliament 'not misled over Timor'", *The Age*, 4 May 1977.

59 "Hodgman refused visa to Timor", *The Mercury*, 11 August 1977.

60 Michelle Grattan "Timor: Whitlam balked", *The Age*, 9 July 1977.

61 "Resolution adopted at the National Conference of the Australian Labor Party – Perth, July 1977", NAA, A1838, 3038/10/1 pt 53.

62 Michelle Grattan, "Resign call to Whitlam", *The Age*, 22 September 1977.

case, as a consequence of the rout in the Federal elections on 10 December 1977, both the Leader and Deputy Leader of the ALP were replaced by Bill Hayden and Lionel Bowen.

## **Conclusion**

After August 1976, in the face of the almost irreversible situation of the Indonesian incorporation of East Timor, the Fraser government considered announcing Australian *de facto* recognition with the aim of improving Australia's relations with Indonesia. Indonesian policymakers also exerted constant diplomatic pressure on the Australian government to change its policy towards East Timor. However, against the backdrop of the Australian media's critical attitude and the activities of various interested groups and individuals, the Fraser government was unable to announce this as early as it wanted. With the gradual decline in Australian public interest in East Timor, on 20 January 1978, about forty days after its overwhelming victory in the Federal elections, the Fraser government finally announced its decision with some reservations, followed by its *de jure* recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor next year.

## Chapter 8 : Conclusions

Australian foreign policymaking towards the East Timor question from April 1974 to January 1978 went through an intricate process due to the two incompatible policy objectives being simultaneously pursued by the Australian government. On the one hand, so as to adjust Australian foreign and defence policy to the changing character of international politics in South East Asia in the 1970s, both the Whitlam and Fraser governments were disposed to make Australia's closer relations with Indonesia under the leadership of President Suharto a major priority. Frequently asked by Indonesian policymakers to understand its annexation policy of East Timor, Australian Prime Ministers tended to be receptive to the idea of Indonesia's incorporation of East Timor given the importance of the role of the head of the government in determining relations with Indonesia. On the other hand, Australian Foreign Ministers who were required to explain Australian foreign policy to the public had to consider responding to domestic opinion critical of Indonesia's coercive annexation of East Timor and its refusal to respond to United Nations demands regarding that annexation. As the Indonesia's policy became blatant, the Australian media, parliamentarians and interest groups in association with José Ramos-Horta of Fretilin vigorously called on the Australian government to support the right of self-determination and independence for East Timor.

As to the actual policymaking process, as a number of existing items in the literature have already pointed out, Prime Minister Whitlam exercised his strong influence over Australian policymaking towards the East Timor question after his talks with President Suharto in September 1974 during which the two leaders agreed with Indonesia incorporation of Portuguese Timor in accordance with "the will of the people", the meaning of which was uncertain. As seen in Chapter 4, in April 1975, while being aware that the Indonesian military

had started preparing for a military intervention into the territory since October 1974, Prime Minister Whitlam reiterated in talks with President Suharto his understanding, albeit with some reservations, of Indonesia's annexation policy towards East Timor. In the face of the eruption of the civil war in East Timor in August 1975, Prime Minister Whitlam maintained Australia's non-involvement policy despite knowledge of the Indonesians' intention to intervene East Timor. When making these decisions, Prime Minister Whitlam relied on policy advice from the Australian Ambassadors to Indonesia who always placed first priority on Australia's relations with Indonesia rather than on the right of self-determination for East Timor. Prior to his informal talks with Suharto in September 1974 Prime Minister Whitlam accepted Ambassador Furlonger's suggestions on this score and, later, in the face of the civil war in East Timor he agreed with Ambassador Woolcott's similar advice.

However, even though Prime Minister Whitlam's determined policy to dissuade the Indonesian government from overt militarily intervention into East Timor might have brought about a completely different outcome of the East Timor question, it seems not correct to conclude that he controlled all relevant aspects of Australian foreign policy. As discussed in Chapter 3, from the beginning, with the support of Secretary of the DFA Renouf, Foreign Minister Willesee committed to a genuine and internationally acceptable act of self-determination which clearly included a future option of an independent East Timor while also recognising the importance of Australian relations with Indonesia. The DFA's suggestions to Prime Minister Whitlam regarding his talks with President Suharto in September 1974 were made on the basis of this policy. Having understood that "self-determination is likely to yield a result other than the association of Portuguese Timor with Indonesia", in February 1975, the DFA also attempted to orient Indonesian and Australian policy by organising in collaboration with the Department of Defence the sending of a Prime Ministerial letter to President Suharto to

encourage him to start talks with the pro-independence UDT-Fretilin Coalition in East Timor. Prior to his informal talks in April 1975, the DFA again suggested to Prime Minister Whitlam to persuade President Suharto of the logic of this proposal. It is true that these suggestions from the DFA only received Prime Minister Whitlam's cursory attention but at least the DFA's basic policy in support of the right of self-determination for East Timor finally became the Australian government's policy. As seen in Chapter 5, in the Senate on 30 October 1975, against the backdrop of growing domestic pressure, Foreign Minister Willesee stated that "we remain opposed to the use of armed force" and that "we are firm in the view that the people of Portuguese Timor should be allowed to determine their own future".

On 11 November 1975, following the dismissal of Prime Minister Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, the leader of the Liberal Party, was appointed as the head of the caretaker government pending the general election on 13 December. Because of this abrupt establishment of the Fraser government and its caretaker role prohibiting it from initiating new policies, DFA officials having participated in the Whitlam government's policymaking continued to play significant roles in the Fraser government's approach towards the East Timor question which faced its pivotal moment. Thus, on the one hand, on the advice of the DFA, Prime Minister Fraser sent secret messages to President Suharto in the interest of Australian relations with Indonesia. On the other hand, in line with the former Foreign Minister's statement on 30 October, having refused to recognise Fretilin's declaration for independence, on 12 December the Fraser government voted for the UNGA resolution 3485 which condemned Indonesia's intervention with overwhelming military force in East Timor after 7 December.

Having won the Federal election on 13 December, the Fraser government became qualified to make its own policy. However, as seen in Chapter 6, it continued to carry out the existing policy which had been already implemented; while condoning Indonesia's forcible



annexation policy of East Timor in practice, the Fraser government continued to call on the Indonesian government to implement “a withdrawal of Indonesian forces” and to respect “a genuine act of self-determination” in East Timor as articulated during Foreign Minister Peacock’s diplomatic activities. A few notable aspects with regard to the Fraser government’s policymaking at this time were the declining influence of Ambassador Woolcott and the direct participation of Prime Minister Fraser in denouncing Indonesia’s coercive annexation policy; on 1 June, the day after the meeting of the “People’s Representative Council” at Dili, Prime Minister Fraser stated that “we support a genuine act of self-determination in Timor”. On 20 July, after Indonesia’s official announcement of its incorporation of East Timor, Foreign Minister Peacock reiterated the Australian government’s non-recognition of that measure, saying that “the process of decolonisation in East Timor should be based on a proper act of self-determination, preferably carried out with the observation and participation of the United Nations”.

However, as discussed in Chapter 7, the Fraser government was not willing to continue explicitly to oppose Indonesia’s policy for a prolonged period in the interest of Australian relations with Indonesia. In this connection, following Prime Minister Fraser’s talks with President Suharto in Jakarta in October 1976, the Fraser government took some measures to deflect domestic opinion and to obstruct the activities of interest groups in support of Fretilin; for example, it placed a ban on the entry of the Fretilin leadership into Australia. By the second half of 1977, the Australian media’s coverage of the East Timor question began to decline. In the end, having held another round of talks with President Suharto at Kuala Lumpur in August and having won another Federal election in December 1977, Foreign Minister Peacock announced on 20 January 1978 the Fraser government’s recognition of Indonesia’s *de facto* integration of East Timor. Even then the Foreign Minister stated that the government “remains

critical of the means by which integration was brought about”.

As has been the main argument of this thesis and as has been restated in this conclusion, Australian foreign policy towards the East Timor question during the middle of the 1970s was not simply guided by Australian policymakers’ concerns over Australian relations with Indonesia. Against the backdrop of growing critical Australian domestic opinion, both the Whitlam and Fraser governments found it necessary to make clear their commitments to a proper and genuine process of self-determination in East Timor. In this context, Foreign Minister Willesee’s consistent disagreement with Prime Minister Whitlam’s policy and his statement in the Senate on 30 October 1975 should be rightly acknowledged as not only the first noticeable statement critical of the Indonesia’s annexation policy from Australia but also perhaps from any major party in the world. Having almost abandoned its support for the right for self-determination for East Timor after 1978, the Australian government under the leadership of Prime Minister Howard began to restate the principle after January 1999. In retrospect, it can be said that critical elements of Australian foreign policy towards the East Timor question during the 1970s were the result not only of the activities of Prime Minister Whitlam and others who were disposed to accept Indonesia’s annexation of East Timor but also of the Foreign Minister Willesee and others inside and outside of the Australian government who questioned the Whitlam’s policy and supported an appropriate solution on the basis of a genuine will of the people in East Timor. The event of 1999 should be seen, in some respects, as a re-emergence and eventual triumph of the latter perspective.

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