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A Diplomatic Counter-revolution: Indonesian diplomacy and the invasion of East Timor

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Abstract

This article reinterprets the Indonesian invasion of East Timor as a 'diplomatic counter-revolution'. Using the central archival records of the Suharto regime for the first time in English-language scholarship, it unearths a diplomatic campaign undertaken by agents of the New Order to secure international support for an Indonesian invasion of East Timor. This diplomatic offensive spanned Southeast Asia, non-aligned and Afro-Asian networks, Western capitals, international institutions and media circuits, and global capital markets. Its success tipped the balance of power in Jakarta away from advocates of restraint like Adam Malik and towards advocates of annexation like Ali Murtopo. The diplomacy behind Indonesia's invasion of East Timor reveals that the architecture of globalization, lauded by some scholars as inherently liberatory, was in fact agnostic, capable of being turned to counter-revolutionary purposes in addition to revolutionary ones. And it suggests that diplomacy itself had been counter-revolutionized, as geopolitical and geoeconomic change combined to make the international system, particularly the states of the Global South, far more hostile to state-making claims and transformative world-making projects.

Introduction

President Suharto beamed as he escorted his American counterpart, President Gerald Ford, to Air Force One, idling on the tarmac of Jakarta's international airport.[1] He had reason to smile: Ford's December 1975 visit to Indonesia marked the climax of Suharto's long campaign to secure international support for Indonesia's impending invasion of East Timor. And no country's acquiescence was more important than that of

[1] Contact sheet, 6 December 1975, https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/whphotos/A7505_NLGRF.jpg [accessed 3 December 2018].

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the United States of America, whose aid and investment bankrolled Suharto's programmes of military modernization, economic rehabilitation, and authoritarian consolidation.[2] In talks with Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger that morning, Suharto alleged that the most powerful political party in East Timor, which had seized control of the Portuguese colony in September and declared independence in November, was 'infected' with communism. He asked Ford's understanding 'if we deem it necessary to take rapid or drastic action'. The American's response, coming after months of evasion, was unexpectedly direct: 'We will understand and will not press you on the issue. We understand the problem you have and the intentions you have.'[3] The following day, Indonesian forces descended on East Timor, beginning an occupation that lasted 25 years and led to the deaths of up to 200,000 people—approximately one-third of the territory's population.[4]

Since it was declassified in 2001, the conversation between Ford, Kissinger, and Suharto has won infamy as a 'green light' for the Indonesian invasion. In the intervening years, historians have debated the rationale behind American policy and questioned whether or not Suharto required a green light before launching the invasion. Jussi Hanhimäki's insightful biography of Kissinger suggests that the Ford administration's desire to bolster American alliances in Asia after the Vietnam War led the president to offer 'quiet assent regarding Suharto's plans for an invasion', but it also casts doubt on claims that American pressure could have forestalled the assault because Indonesian troops 'were already poised to make their move'.[5] Bradley Simpson's impressively researched international history suggests that policymakers in Washington, London, Canberra, and Wellington possessed 'enormous leverage' over Indonesian policy and could have prevented the invasion, but their assumption that the East Timorese were 'too small and too primitive to merit self-determination' led them to endorse

[2] See Bradley Simpson, *Economists with guns: authoritarian development and U.S.-Indonesian relations, 1960–1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

[3] Telegram, Jakarta to State, 6 December 1975, Indonesia—State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE—NODIS (3), National Security Adviser—Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific (hereafter NSC-EA Presidential), Gerald Ford Presidential Library (hereafter GFPL).

[4] See *Chega! Laporan komisi penerimaan, kebenaran, dan rekonsiliasi (CAVR) di Timor-Leste* [Enough! Report of the commission for reception, truth, and reconciliation (CAVR) in Timor-Leste] (Jakarta: KPG, 2010).

[5] Jussi Hanhimäki, *The flawed architect: Henry Kissinger and American foreign policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 401–403.

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Suharto's predations on the territory.[6] The existing scholarship, in focusing on whether Western powers could have prevented the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, at once obscures Indonesian agency in laying the diplomatic groundwork for incorporation and ignores the roles of non-Western and non-state actors with whom Indonesian diplomats engaged in the period leading up to the takeover. Moreover, in stressing ideological, economic, geographic, and racial imperatives, most existing accounts also suggest the Indonesian invasion of East Timor was somehow overdetermined.

Using the central archival records of the Suharto regime for the first time in English-language scholarship, this article reapportions agency towards Indonesia, broadens the historiographic optic beyond Western capitals, and argues for contingency. A contentious debate over Indonesian policy towards East Timor erupted at the heights of the New Order as the territory emerged from centuries of Portuguese colonial neglect in 1974. While some civilian officials advocated independence, a cadre of military and intelligence officers began plotting annexation. Suharto at first refused to authorize efforts to extend Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor because he feared that doing so could jeopardize the international aid and investment flows upon which the stability of the New Order depended as well as undermine Indonesia's reputation in Southeast Asia and the wider world. To assuage the Indonesian strongman's concerns, advocates of annexation then mounted a diplomatic offensive to win international support for an Indonesian takeover of East Timor. Indonesian military and intelligence officials orchestrated a campaign of subversion inside East Timor designed to undermine pro-independence sentiment and bolster international enthusiasm for integration. They pursued diplomacy with Portugal to promote Indonesian interests in East Timor and prevent a direct transfer of sovereignty to an indigenous government. They met with their partners in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to dispel anxieties about Indonesian expansionism. They courted a wider array of Asian, African, and Latin American governments to preserve Indonesia's image as an anticolonial state. They manoeuvred in the United Nations to prevent East Timorese nationalists from finding a foothold in multinational

[6] Bradley Simpson, '"Illegally and beautifully": The United States, the Indonesian invasion of East Timor and the international community, 1974–76', *Cold War History* 5, no. 3, August 2005, pp. 282, 295.

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institutions. They made the case for annexation in regional and global media networks. They reassured capital markets that a takeover of East Timor would not disturb Indonesian economic-development programmes. And, finally, they extracted the imprimatur of Indonesia's most important international aid donors: the United States of America and Australia. The success of Indonesia's diplomatic offensive tipped the balance of power in Jakarta towards advocates of annexation. Only after securing the approval of the United States of America in December 1975 did Suharto finally authorize the invasion.

Indonesia's invasion of East Timor was thus a diplomatic counter-revolution. As Matthew Connelly has shown, the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) adroitly exploited the emergent architecture of globalization—international institutions, communications networks, and capital markets—to triumph over France without winning victory on the battlefield. Diplomacy was thus the pivotal arena of Algeria's independence struggle.[7] The same was true of the Indonesian annexation of East Timor. Few questioned Indonesia's ability to invade the territory and subjugate its population, although optimistic assessments of Indonesia's military prospects would turn out to be misplaced. Whether or not advocates of military intervention could marshal international support for their cause was less certain. Any number of global actors could have impeded Indonesian plans for an invasion of East Timor. But Indonesian officials manipulated the same infrastructure of globalization as the Algerians had employed to great effect decades earlier. The international institutions, communications networks, and capital markets that elevated the Algerians and challenged the French now supported the Indonesians and ignored the East Timorese. As the Indonesian invasion of East Timor shows, the new structures forged by globalization were agnostic, capable of being turned to counter-revolutionary purposes in addition to revolutionary ones. In other words, globalization has embedded within it no definite political teleology. The direction in which it bends ultimately depends on human agency.

In Connelly's elegant formulation, Algeria's 'diplomatic revolution' refers not only to the *tactics* of Algerian nationalists, but also to the paradoxical *consequences* of Algeria's independence struggle: it encouraged the proliferation of sovereignties, inspiring anticolonial revolutionaries across

[7] Matthew Connelly, *A diplomatic revolution: Algeria's fight for independence and the dawn of the post-Cold War era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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the globe to lodge state-making claims of their own, even as it eroded sovereignty itself, demanding that states justify their authority in either developmental or civilizational terms. But, as Jeffrey James Byrne has revealed in an equally penetrating account of the Algerian revolution and the remaking of the international order, the 'net result of decolonization was a dramatically more state-centric world order'.[8] Many erstwhile anticolonial nationalists, once the most vocal advocates of global revolution, now ruled over diverse polities, and they cooperated to contain revolution and reinforce the authority of postcolonial states. Their logic was at once political and economic. They feared that independence for small, potentially resource-rich territories like East Timor would inspire similar state-making claims, destabilizing their fractious postcolonial states and undermining their control over peripheral areas that served as focal points for extractive industries. The triumph of this political-economic logic over the imperative of decolonization reflected the authoritarian wave that crashed over the Global South in the 1960s and 1970s, the exhaustion of import-substitution models of economic development, and a commodity boom that fuelled discourses of resource sovereignty.[9] Though the East Timorese held a legitimate claim to statehood under international law, since theirs was a case of decolonization rather than secession, that distinction was cold comfort to many leaders in the Global South. If the Indonesian invasion of East Timor was a diplomatic counter-revolution, it also revealed that diplomacy itself had been counter-revolutionized.

End of an empire

Europeans first came ashore on Timor—an island in the sweeping chain spanning the southern reaches of the Indonesian archipelago—in the sixteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, the island was formally bisected by Dutch and Portuguese colonial rule. The Portuguese, who controlled the eastern half of the island and the small exclave of Oecussi, possessed no vision of Timorese development.

[8] Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of revolution: Algeria, decolonization, and the Third World order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 9.

[9] See Christopher Dietrich, *Oil revolution: anticolonial elites, sovereign rights, and the economic culture of decolonization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after empire: the rise and fall of self-determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

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Across centuries of imperial rule, their authority never exerted significant spatial or social reach. Rarely did colonial officials, who never numbered more than a few hundred, venture outside the capital, Dili. Instead, they exercised power indirectly, through a network of indigenous chieftains called *liurai*.[10] That Portuguese colonialism left such a light footprint meant the East Timorese possessed no overarching institutions or unifying experiences. No nationalist consciousness stirred as revolutions erupted elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The territory remained in Portugal's grasp—a colonial anachronism on the map of postcolonial Southeast Asia.

Until 1974, Portugal's government, dubbed the New State, was itself among the last of a dying breed: a fascist, imperial dictatorship in liberal, democratic Western Europe. Established in the 1930s by António de Oliveira Salazar, it survived the defeat of fascism in the 1940s and the crest of decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s. As decolonization gathered momentum across the world, Salazar and his successor Marcelo Caetano waged colonial wars to preserve Portuguese control over Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. These wars exhausted more than 40 per cent of the government's annual budget by the 1970s. Eventually, a group of left-leaning junior officers calling themselves the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) concluded that Portugal could no longer retain its overseas possessions. In April 1974, the MFA removed Caetano from power and installed one of its own, António de Spínola, at the head of the country's government—a coup that became known as the Carnation Revolution, so named for the red carnations that jubilant Portuguese citizens placed in the barrels of soldiers' rifles. But fractures within the MFA junta quickly emerged. Though Spínola favoured a commonwealth system rather than immediate independence for Portugal's overseas colonies, some members of the MFA began colluding with nationalist movements in Lusophone Africa to accelerate the pace of decolonization.

The Carnation Revolution did not make an independent state of East Timor. But the MFA did dismantle the colonial infrastructure of repression, including the secret police and censorship commission, and legalize the creation of indigenous political organizations. Three political parties emerged, each with a different answer to the question of who should rule East Timor. Those Timorese who had fared well

[10] For analysis of the colonial period, see Douglas Kammen, *Three centuries of conflict in East Timor* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

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under Lisbon's rule formed the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT), which advocated eventual self-government after an undefined period of continued Portuguese tutelage. A much smaller group of elites, located mostly near the border with Indonesia, believed their colony could never become a viable independent state and established the Association for the Integration of Timor into Indonesia. After concluding that integration was an unpopular position, they hastily changed their party's name—but not its platform—to the Timorese Popular Democratic Association (Apodeti). Other Timorese took inspiration from the burgeoning Portuguese left and the national liberation movements challenging Portuguese imperialism in Africa, and they formed an organization to demand immediate independence known first as the Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT) and later as the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin).[11] Though ASDT/Fretilin's urban, educated founders were a minority in East Timor, the party eventually won the support of the colony's rural, impoverished masses.

Indonesian officials did not anticipate the restiveness in East Timor, nor did they exult in the challenges posed by decolonization. Exactly how to manage East Timor's emergence from Portuguese colonial rule became the subject of contestation in Jakarta. Two strains of thought emerged: the first in Adam Malik's Foreign Ministry and the second in the New Order's national-security bureaucracies.

Adam Malik and the politics of decolonization

Malik at first welcomed the possibility of an independent East Timor. As early as March 1972, after a Jakarta daily published an inaccurate story about the rise of a pro-independence movement in the colony, Malik told the press that, if such a movement existed, 'We shall finance them and support them if they really wish it'.[12] When the Carnation Revolution made a reality of that hypothetical two years later, Malik

[11] Program of the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor (Fretilin), in *Facts about Fretilin: a collection of statements made by Fretilin itself* (Sydney: Campaign for an Independent East Timor, 1975).

[12] Submission to Whitlam, 30 May 1973, in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Australia and the Indonesian incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974–1976* (hereafter *AIPT*) (Carlton: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2000), p. 44; Policy planning paper, 3 May 1974, *AIPT*, p. 51.

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moderated his enthusiasm for sponsoring revolution in East Timor. 'Indonesia will give guarantees of not interfering in the determination of the future of East Timor,' he told *Sinar Harapan* in June 1974.[13] Two months later, Malik admitted to David Newsom, the American ambassador in Jakarta, that he actually favoured continued Portuguese rule over East Timor. If Portugal was determined to relinquish the territory, he continued, he preferred independence to integration.[14]

Why did Malik favour independence for East Timor? Indonesia was born of its own anticolonial revolution—the preamble to the country's constitution enshrined anticolonialism as its pre-eminent national value—and Malik was a lifelong devotee of that principle. He and other Indonesian youth kidnapped the nationalist leaders Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta in August 1945 to demand they declare Indonesia's independence rather than allow it to be granted by the Japanese.[15] Later, as an official in Sukarno's government, Malik travelled to Washington to negotiate the transfer of sovereignty over West Papua from the Netherlands to Indonesia.[16] (Unlike East Timor, West Papua lay within the borders of the colonial Dutch East Indies and the territory's reclamation represented, for Malik, if not for many West Papuans, the 'culmination of the physical revolution of the Indonesian people'.)[17] Malik's fealty to anticolonial principles persisted even after he was appointed foreign minister under the counter-revolutionary Suharto regime. In May 1966, he delivered a speech before parliament in which he first articulated the international outlook of the New Order. He demanded that 'the United States withdraw its military forces from Vietnam and hand over the solution of the Vietnam issue to the Vietnamese people themselves'—a striking statement for a foreign minister then seeking massive quantities of American aid.[18]

[13] *Sinar Harapan*, 17 June 1974.

[14] Telegram, Jakarta to State, 14 August 1974, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973–1979 (hereafter CFPF 1973–79), Electronic Telegrams (hereafter ET) 1974, Record Group 59 (hereafter RG 59), United States National Archives (hereafter USNA).

[15] Ruth McVey, 'In memoriam: Adam Malik (1917–1984)', *Indonesia* 39, April 1985, p. 146.

[16] David Webster, 'Self-determination abandoned: the road to the Webster Agreement on West New Guinea (Papua), 1960–62', *Indonesia* 95, April 2013, pp. 9–24.

[17] Adam Malik, *Mengabdi republik, jilid III: angkatan pembangunan* [In the service of the republic, volume III: the development generation] (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1979), p. 45.

[18] Adam Malik, *Politik luar negeri Indonesia dipimpin oleh falsafah Pantja-Sila: pidato Waperdam/menlu Adam Malik dimuka sidang DPR-GR pada tanggal 5 Mei 1966* [Indonesian foreign policy guided by Pancasila: speech of Vice Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Adam Malik in front

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Anticolonialism remained at the core of Malik's international outlook and it animated his approach to East Timor.

Other considerations also drove Malik to support East Timor's independence. As foreign minister, Malik managed Indonesia's relationship with two of its most important international constituencies: the Afro-Asian Movement (AAM) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).[19] Though these movements had weakened between the heyday of internationalism and the Carnation Revolution, they continued to espouse the principles of anticolonial nationalism.[20] As recently as September 1973, Malik joined other NAM delegates in Algiers, where they reiterated their support for national self-determination in Portugal's African colonies.[21] Malik feared that an Indonesian campaign to seize control of East Timor, to which Jakarta held no legal claim, risked leaving Indonesia an international pariah and fracturing developing-world solidarity just as decolonization and the oil crisis were presenting opportunities for the Global South to exert greater influence in the world's political and economic affairs.[22]

Malik also remained attentive to the domestic realm, where Indonesian internationalism held profound symbolic resonance. Indonesia's participation in the AAM and NAM represented key pillars of the country's *bebas aktif* (independent and active) foreign-policy doctrine. And perceived transgressions of the *bebas aktif* line had toppled governments in the past: in 1952, after Foreign Minister Subardjo had concluded a mutual security agreement with the United States of America, a spate of public protests forced the entire Cabinet to resign. Malik was particularly eager to demonstrate the New Order's fealty to traditional Indonesian foreign-policy principles of non-alignment and anticolonialism after the Malari incident of 1974, when young Jakartans staged violent demonstrations against the foreign domination of the Indonesian economy and the deepening corruption of the Suharto

of the DPR-GR on 5 May 1966] (Jakarta: Kementrian Penerangan Direktorat Visuil, 1966), p. 28.

[19] Suli Suleiman, *Garis-garis besar politik luar negeri Republik Indonesia* [Broad outlines of Indonesian foreign policy] (Jakarta: Direktorat Research Departemen Luar Negeri, 1973), pp. 27–28.

[20] Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow cold war: the Sino-Soviet competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2015); Lorenz Lüthi, 'The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War, 1961–1973', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 4, Fall 2016, pp. 98–147.

[21] 'Realigning against a common enemy', *Newsday*, 20 September 1973.

[22] Malik, *Mengabdi republik*, pp. 95–108.

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regime.[23] An Indonesian takeover of East Timor, Malik feared, would elicit protests from the NAM and AAM, contradict the *bebas aktif* doctrine, and further erode the legitimacy of the New Order at a moment of political crisis.

Regional consequences loomed large in Malik's calculus as well. The foreign minister worried that an Indonesian effort to seize control of East Timor would undermine ASEAN, founded less than a decade earlier. A long-time proponent of regionalism, Malik knew that Sukarno's campaign of *Konfrontasi* against the creation of Malaysia had stoked fears that Jakarta sought to unify the entire Malay world within a 'Greater Indonesia' and contributed to the failure of earlier drives towards regional agglomeration: the Association of Southeast Asia and Maphilindo. Malik worried that an Indonesian takeover of East Timor would revive Southeast Asian anxieties about Indonesian expansionism and deliver a setback to the regionalist project just as ASEAN was preparing for two milestones scheduled for 1976: the first meeting of ASEAN heads of state and the establishment of a permanent ASEAN secretariat in Jakarta.

Most important for Malik were financial concerns. Attracting international aid and investment had been the foremost task of Malik's Foreign Ministry since the earliest days of the New Order. Four years later, Indonesia remained profoundly dependent upon foreign capital. In 1969, the New Order unveiled its first five-year economic-development plan (Repelita I), which depended upon international aid for 60 per cent of its expenditures.[24] International aid consistently accounted for around 30 per cent of total government revenues between 1967 and 1974, when the quadrupling of world oil prices left the Indonesian state awash in petrodollars (see Figure 1).[25] And, even after the oil boom, international aid remained critical to the stability of the New Order. The Suharto regime's second five-year development plan (Repelita II), active from 1974 to 1979, envisioned relying on international aid for 30 per cent of its expenditures.[26] Malik feared that an Indonesian campaign to incorporate

[23] 'Katakanlah dengan senyum', [Say it with a smile] *Tempo*, 19 January 1974.

[24] Government of Indonesia, *Rentjana pembangunan lima tahun 1969/70–1973/74* [Five-year development plan, 1969/70–1973/74] (Jakarta: Kementrian Penerangan, 1969), p. 36.

[25] See the issues of Government of Indonesia, *Nota keuangan dan rancangan anggaran pendapatan dan belanja negara* [Financial note and planned revenue and expenditures budget] (Jakarta: Departemen Keuangan, 1969–80).

[26] Government of Indonesia, *Rencana pembangunan lima tahun kedua 1974/75–1978/79* [Second five-year development plan, 1974/75–1978/79] (Jakarta: Kementrian Penerangan, 1974), pp. 6–15.

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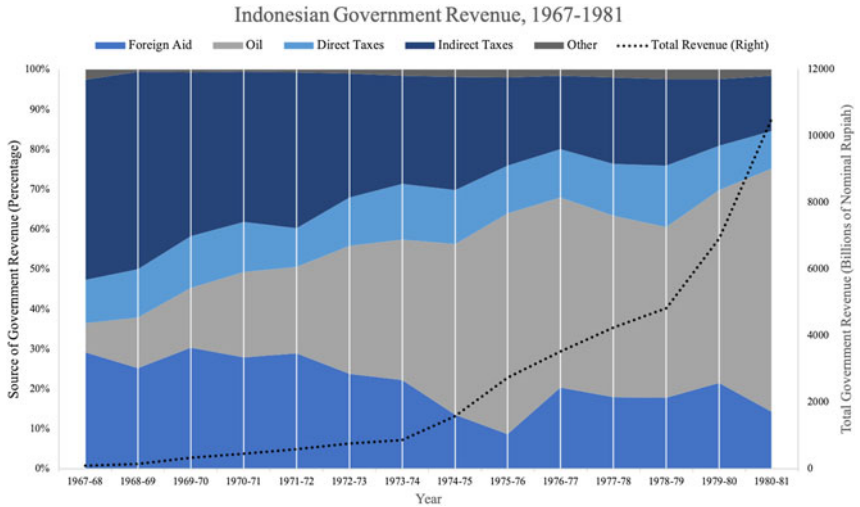

Figure 1. Indonesian government revenue, 1967–81. *Source*: Data compiled by author from Government of Indonesia, *Nota keuangan dan rancangan anggaran pendapatan dan belanja negara* (Jakarta: Departemen Keuangan, 1969–80).

East Timor would inspire harsh reactions in countries like the United States of America and Australia, and dam the aid and investment flows upon which Indonesian development relied. And, because East Timor was itself so underdeveloped and aid-dependent—Portuguese authorities claimed to spend tens of millions of dollars in the colony every year—Malik believed a takeover would siphon away resources necessary in Indonesia proper.[27]

Nor did Malik anticipate that skyrocketing oil revenues would undo Indonesia's dependence upon foreign capital. Just as the Carnation Revolution opened the possibility of East Timor's independence, a debt crisis threatened to bankrupt the Indonesian state oil company, Pertamina. General Ibnu Sutowo, the chief of Pertamina, had funnelled Indonesia's vast oil wealth towards all manner of development programmes, white-elephant projects, and simple corruption schemes.[28] Technocrats in the National Development Planning Agency and

[27] Telegram, Jakarta to State, 21 October 1974, ET 1974, CFPF 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA.

[28] Ramadhan K.H., *Ibnu Sutowo: saatnya saya bercerita!* [Ibnu Sutowo: it's time to tell my story!] (Jakarta: National Press Club of Indonesia, 2008), pp. 249–263, 337–348; for an early exposé of corruption within Pertamina, see the leaked Commission of Four report published in the 18–24 July 1970 issues of *Sinar Harapan*.

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International Monetary Fund had worked to constrain the corruption associated with Pertamina by imposing caps on the company's medium- and long-term borrowing, but Ibnu eluded these strictures and continued to fulfil Pertamina's financial obligations to Suharto's developmentalist agenda by racking up massive quantities of short-term loans, which the general rolled over before they reached maturity.[29] Ironically, the oil boom that should have produced a windfall led to Ibnu's undoing. Soaring oil prices led to mounting deficits and tightening money markets in creditor countries, and Ibnu found himself unable to continue rolling over Pertamina's short-term loans. The oil giant failed to meet its tax obligations to the Indonesian government in October 1974 and to a private American creditor in February 1975. Ultimately, the Bank of Indonesia had to step in to guarantee the $10.5 billion in liabilities that Ibnu had accrued—more than two-thirds of Indonesian gross national product—and attract still more loans to finance the repayment of Pertamina's debts.[30] Malik worried that a forcible incorporation of East Timor risked attracting international ire just as Indonesia would once again require massive capital inflows to maintain its solvency.

Finally, Malik's opposition to an Indonesian takeover of East Timor stemmed from his relatively sanguine view of communism. He believed that the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China had curtailed their support for revolutionary groups in Southeast Asia in favour of pursuing diplomacy with the region's non-communist states.[31] And he believed that the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) had 'already been crushed' by the army-led politicide that accompanied Suharto's takeover in 1965–66 in which hundreds of thousands of Indonesians suspected of holding leftist sympathies were killed.[32] If communism posed little threat to East Timor, Indonesia, or Southeast Asia, Malik

[29] Radius Prawiro, *Indonesia's struggle for economic development: pragmatism in action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 104–108, 111–114.

[30] *The Witteveen Facility and the OPEC financial surpluses: hearings before the Subcommittee on Foreign Economic Policy of the Committee on Foreign Relations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1978), pp. 83–112, 178–181.

[31] See Rizal Sukma, *Indonesia and China: the politics of a troubled relationship* (New York: Routledge 1999), pp. 81–85; Harold Crouch, *The army and politics in Indonesia*, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 337–343.

[32] Malik, *Mengabdi republik*, p. 48; Geoffrey Robinson, *The killing season: a history of the Indonesian massacres* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Jess Melvin, *The army and the Indonesian genocide: mechanics of mass murder* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

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saw no convincing national-security grounds for an Indonesian takeover of the tiny Portuguese colony.

But Malik inhabited a weak institutional position. The military had usurped control over Indonesian relations with the United States of America, the Soviet Union, China, and most of Southeast Asia, leaving the Foreign Ministry with a dramatically reduced portfolio. And Malik's civilian allies had lost a great deal of their authority as a result of the Malari riots and the oil crisis, which tilted the balance of power within the New Order away from the economic technocrats in the civilian ministries, who counselled fiscal discipline and openness towards international markets, and towards the economic nationalists in the military, who favoured the mobilization of state resources for the creation of domestic industries.[33] Virtually alone among Malik's allies in the military was Lieutenant General Sudharmono, the bureaucrat-par-excellence who headed up the powerful State Secretariat. (Sudharmono grated against the '*ali baba*-ist' tendencies of many Indonesian generals, referring to their habit of pairing with ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs to build military-linked businesses, which he believed undermined the creation of a *pribumi*, or indigenous, capitalist class.)[34] With strong arguments but few allies, Malik would need to mobilize domestic and international opinion against annexation to prevent an Indonesian invasion of East Timor.

The military and annexation

Indonesian military and intelligence officials adopted an altogether more hawkish position. Already, in November 1973, General Sumitro had broached the subject with the American ambassador in Jakarta, probing the extent to which the United States of America would abide an Indonesian effort to annex the Portuguese colony.[35] Sumitro fell from grace shortly thereafter, but a quadrumvirate of military leaders continued to advocate forcible annexation. They were Major General

[33] See Richard Robison, *Indonesia: the rise of capital* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986); Jeffrey Winters, *Power in motion: capital mobility and the Indonesian state* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

[34] Inward Cablegram, Jakarta to Canberra, 16 September 1974, A1838 49/2/1/1, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA).

[35] Memorandum of Conversation, Sumitro, Sutopo, Suhud, Galbraith, and Monjo, 13 November 1973, POL INDON-US 10-13-72, Box 2377, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, RG 59, USNA.

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Ali Murtopo, Major General Benny Murdani, Lieutenant General Yoga Sugama, and Admiral Sudomo. Together they controlled Kopkamtib and Bakin, the military and intelligence cores of the New Order; Hankam, the Ministry of Defence and Security; Opsus, an extraconstitutional special-operations command; and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a military-linked think tank. Several had also belonged to the recently disbanded Aspri, a kitchen cabinet of long-time Suharto confidantes who wielded substantial though informal influence. All maintained close personal relationships with Suharto. 'Sudomo, Benny, and Yoga are closest to Suharto,' said a retired officer in 1981. 'They have personal relations, outside their official relations.'[36] The quadrumvirate thus occupied a significant personal and institutional base from which to promote forcible annexation.

Products of a national-security apparatus suffused by a paranoid anticommunism, the quadrumvirate promoted annexation primarily because they feared communist mobilization in East Timor. The communist takeovers of Cambodia and Vietnam in the spring of 1975 may have stoked Indonesian anxieties about a rising red tide, though the available evidence suggests that most Indonesian leaders, as Sumitro put it in his autobiography, 'were certain that a communist Vietnam would not endanger its environment'.[37] What Indonesian military leaders feared was not 'an open communist invasion from the North to the South, engulfing the other countries of Southeast Asia, turning by force the whole of the region into the hands of the communists', as Murtopo explained a year after the fall of Saigon. Instead, they worried that 'the communist victory in Indochina would likely serve as a moral support for such [subversive] elements in the other Southeast Asian countries, which may look upon the communist victory in Indochina as a model of success'.[38]

More threatening than Vietnam, in the quadrumvirate's eyes, were the Soviet Union and China. Moscow and Beijing would, they believed, work with East Timorese leftists to hijack the decolonization process and fashion

[36] Quoted in David Jenkins, *Suharto and his generals: Indonesian military politics, 1975–1983* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1984), p. 24.

[37] Ramadhan K.H., *Soemitro (mantan pangkopkamtib): dari pangdam Mulawarman sampai pangkopkamtib* [Soemitro (former Kopkamtib commander): from Mulawarman area commander to Kopkamtib commander] (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1994), p. 257.

[38] Ali Murtopo, 'Peace and security in Asia and the Pacific', May 1976, 211, Sekretariat Wakil Presiden Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX 1973–1978 (hereafter HB IX), Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (hereafter ANRI).

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East Timor into an Indonesian Cuba. A top-secret Kopkamtib report from 1972 characterized the Soviet Union as determined to sow revolution in Southeast Asia by launching campaigns of subversion.[39] Another 1972 report from Wanhankamnas, the National Defence and Security Institute, imputed similar motives to China, which it said would seek to mobilize overseas Chinese communities to extend its influence abroad.[40] Approximately 6,000 ethnic Chinese lived in East Timor working as merchants and, though most carried Taiwanese passports, their ethnicity and overseas connections rendered their loyalties suspect in the eyes of the quadrumvirate—a notion borne out by the fact that the community was targeted for disproportionate violence after the Indonesian invasion.[41] What's more, poverty-stricken East Timor was all but certain to depend upon external support, which raised questions for the quadrumvirate about how the colony's leaders would attract international resources. Western aid and investment seemed unlikely. The United States of America and the United Kingdom, whose economies were racked by stagflation, had recently announced withdrawals from Southeast Asia, and East Timor itself was so isolated, so lacking in fixed and human capital, that few productive investment opportunities existed there. Only Moscow or Beijing, the quadrumvirate assumed, would move to fill the political and economic vacuum in East Timor.

The possibility of a communist-controlled East Timor raised an array of other security concerns for the quadrumvirate. A communist enclave on Indonesia's eastern frontier could serve as a sanctuary for remnants of

[39] Memorandum, Sumitro to Cabinet Ministers, 12 May 1972, 1904, Menteri Negara Bidang Ekonomi, Keuangan, dan Industri, 1966–1973 (hereafter EKUIN), ANRI.

[40] Dewan Pertahanan Keamanan Nasional, Lembaran kerdja No. 006/1972: Apresiasi tentang pola hubungan super power dan usaha Indonesia mengamankan kepentingan nasionalnya [An appreciation of the pattern of superpower relations and Indonesia's efforts to secure its national interest], 1284, EKUIN, ANRI.

[41] The size of the ethnic Chinese community in East Timor is disputed. See Terence Hull, 'From province to nation: the democratic revolution of a people', in James Fox and Dionisio Babo Soares, eds., *Out of the ashes: destruction and reconstruction of East Timor* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2003), p. 31; for ethnic Chinese inhabitants of East Timor's connections to Taipei rather than Beijing, see 'Timorous Timor', *Wall Street Journal*, 10 February 1975; for their disproportionate suffering after the invasion, see John G. Taylor, *Indonesia's forgotten war: the hidden history of East Timor* (Atlantic Highlands: Zed Books, 1991), p. 91.

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the PKI, or as a transit point for foreign communists to make their way into Indonesia.[42] This particular anxiety traced to the quadrumvirate's belief that the PKI remained a 'latent danger', which they explained with the 'iceberg theory': the idea that, in spite of communism's minimal visibility, huge numbers of communists lurked below the surface.[43] The quadrumvirate also believed that the mere fact of East Timor's decolonization could inspire separatist movements elsewhere on the Indonesian periphery, such as those stirring in West Papua, Kalimantan, the Malukus, Sulawesi, and Aceh. Though these movements hardly posed meaningful threats to Indonesian sovereignty, their mere existence proved alarming to Indonesian military figures, who saw themselves as manning the ramparts against the perpetual threat of national disintegration.

Economic considerations bolstered interventionist sentiment among the quadrumvirate. The Timor Sea was believed to contain vast hydrocarbon reserves. Though the precise size of these reserves remained unknown, American diplomats noted covetously that oil literally bubbled to the surface on Timor, and the colony's inhabitants were known to harvest the seeps for fuel to burn at night.[44] The quadrupling of world oil prices in the five months preceding the Carnation Revolution made Timor an even more lucrative target, particularly for the generals who made up the quadrumvirate. Members of what has been called the 'political' or 'financial' clique of the Indonesian military elite, they had supported Ibnu's efforts to channel Indonesia's oil wealth into military-led development schemes and, by the mid-1970s, Pertamina had become a critical source of funding for the bureaucracies they inhabited.[45] An invasion of East Timor offered an opportunity to help Pertamina recover from its massive debt crisis and guarantee the continuing flow of petrodollars to the Indonesian military. If Malik saw the presence of poverty in East Timor, the quadrumvirate looked at the colony and saw the promise of plenty.

[42] 'Pendatang2 Cina masuk ke Indonesia dari Portugal', [Chinese migrants enter Indonesia from Portugal] *Berita Harian*, 24 June 1974.

[43] Risalah putusan-putusan dan petunjuk-petunjuk Presiden dalam sidang kabinet paripurna pada tanggal 27 Nopember 1973 [Minutes of the President's decisions and instructions in a plenary session of the Cabinet on 27 November 1973], 225, HB IX, ANRI.

[44] Telegram, SecState WashDC to All East Asian and Pacific Diplomatic Posts, 10 February 1975, ET 1975, CFPF 1973-79, RG 59, USNA.

[45] See Crouch, *The army and politics*, pp. 306–317.

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And the quadrumvirate doubted that a campaign to seize control of East Timor would jeopardize the flow of Western aid to Indonesia. The 1972 Wanhankamnas report explained that Indonesia could exert enormous influence over American policy by threatening to shift towards neutralism or the communist bloc. Because 'an Indonesia under the influence of Moscow or Beijing' would threaten America's strategic posture in Asia, the report argued, 'Indonesia's bargaining position towards the United States is sufficiently strong'—in other words, 'the United States needs to keep our economic position stable'.[46] The quadrumvirate believed the American defeat in Vietnam would only render the United States of America more pliable. By raising doubts about the credibility of American commitments, Indonesia could all but guarantee the continuing flow of aid. The quadrumvirate could also take heart from the fact that American leaders had not raised too much of a fuss in 1961 following India's forcible annexation of Goa, another small territory under Portuguese colonial jurisdiction. They may have assumed that an Indonesian incorporation of East Timor would be greeted with similar Western resignation.[47]

A takeover of East Timor represented yet another opportunity for the quadrumvirate: to fashion ASEAN into an organization responsible for maintaining the stability of Southeast Asia. Though the body's charter restricted ASEAN to promoting social, cultural, and economic cooperation, the Indonesian government had long sought to introduce military cooperation. As the chief of CSIS remembered, 'The socio-economic "front" of ASEAN was just a cover for the strategic build-up of a force that could withstand communist pressure in the region', making ASEAN a quintessential example of the counter-revolutionary South–South cooperation that arose across the developing world in the 1960s and 1970s.[48] The quadrumvirate grated against the reluctance of other Member States to embrace a security role for ASEAN. As late as 1972, a confidential CSIS study remarked that 'what until now has not or cannot be produced

[46] Dewan Pertahanan Keamanan Nasional, Lembaran Kerdja No. 006/1972: Apresiasi tentang pola hubungan super power dan usaha Indonesia mengamankan kepentingan nasionalnya, 1284, EKUIN, ANRI.

[47] For aid to India in the period in question, see David Engerman, *The price of aid: the economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); for the annexation of Goa, see Andrew Rotter, *Comrades at odds: the United States and India, 1947–1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), pp. 180–186.

[48] Jusuf Wanandi, *Shades of grey: a political memoir of modern Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2012), Kindle locations 2879–2885.

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by ASEAN is a determination on behalf of member states to defend the region together'.[49] Instead, Malaysia had proposed that the superpowers guarantee the security and neutrality of Southeast Asia.[50] Indonesian officials made halting progress towards instituting ASEAN security cooperation in 1973 with the advent of annual Special Course (Kista) training programmes for senior government and military officials from across the region, and with early ASEAN moves towards the adoption of Indonesia's 'national resilience' defence framework. For the quadrumvirate, a solution to the East Timor issue that emerged from within Southeast Asia, without the involvement of the United States of America or any other superpower, would represent a significant step towards an Indonesian vision of regional self-reliance on security matters and affirm ASEAN as a guarantor of regional stability.

Personal idiosyncrasies, careerist ambitions, and political considerations also animated the quadrumvirate's thinking. Most came from intelligence organizations, which inclined them towards covert action. Murtopo had orchestrated Indonesia's annexation of West Papua in 1969, and his responsibilities in the New Order included intervening in all manner of elections to secure victory for Suharto's chosen candidates. Murdani was unusual in that his background lay in special operations, which disposed him to favour more militant solutions to East Timor. He was also a Catholic in Muslim-majority Indonesia, as were the major figures within CSIS, and they may have seen the annexation of East Timor, with its substantial Catholic population, as a kind of spiritual-cum-national project. Though their preferences about means sometimes diverged, the quadrumvirate remained united around a single end: a military-led incorporation of East Timor that would reinforce the authority of Indonesia's national-security bureaucracies just as Suharto was preparing to reinvigorate civilian institutions like the semi-official Golkar party in advance of the country's 1977 elections. Finally, Indonesian military and intelligence officials believed that seizing Timor would be quick and easy. They anticipated no resistance from a population they thought of as primitive, overestimated the extent of pro-Indonesian sentiment in East Timor, and believed

[49] Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Analisa previsionil: mengenai Asia pada umumnya, Asia Tenggara pada chususnya [Provisional analysis: about Asia in general, Southeast Asia in particular], January 1972, 2326, EKUIN, ANRI.

[50] 'Tun: the only way to peace', *Singapore Herald*, 16 December 1970.

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that they could establish complete control over the territory within three months.[51]

The diplomatic kick-off

Between Malik and the quadrumvirate sat Suharto. After the Carnation Revolution, he concluded that the 'best way for Portuguese Timor to achieve independence was through incorporation into Indonesia'.[52] But caution served as the watchword of his policy. If action risked a cutoff in military and economic aid to Indonesia and a repudiation of the New Order in the Afro-Asian world, inaction risked a communist takeover of East Timor and a resurgence of separatist sentiment elsewhere in the archipelago. Suharto therefore opted for a wait-and-see policy. In May 1974, he instructed his Council on Political Stabilization and National Security (Polkam) to 'take the required steps to ensure that developments in Portuguese Timor will not disturb Indonesia's security'.[53] Such broad guidance was all but meaningless, and it allowed the quadrumvirate and Malik to continue their manoeuvring.

East Timorese factions were hardly content to allow Suharto to wait and see. ASDT's unofficial foreign minister, José Ramos-Horta, travelled to Jakarta in June 1974 and secured an audience with Malik. The ASDT envoy insisted that an independent East Timor would seek a close relationship with Jakarta, adding 'We will always bear in mind Indonesia's interests'. Malik replied that he 'fully sympathized' with ASDT's aims, and he told Ramos-Horta that Indonesia would support the Timorese people's right to self-determination. At the end of their final meeting, Malik passed Ramos-Horta a signed letter endorsing self-determination as 'the right of every nation, with no exception for

[51] Joint Intelligence Organisation, Brief for Visit of Minister of Defence to Indonesia: Indonesian Attitudes to Military Intervention in Portuguese Timor, 4 December 1974, A1838 3038/10/1/2, NAA. Benedict Anderson, *The spectre of comparisons: nationalism, Southeast Asia and the world* (New York: Verso, 1998), pp. 132–133; *AIPT*, p. 129, fn. 1.

[52] Soeharto, *Pikiran, ucapan, dan tindakan saya: otobiografi seperti dipaparkan kepada G. Dwipayana dan Ramadhan K.H.* [My thoughts, words, and actions: autobiography as told to G. Dwipayana and Ramadhan K.H.] (Jakarta: Citra Lamtoro Gung Persada, 1989), p. 317.

[53] Risalah petunjuk-petunjuk dan putusan-putusan Presiden pada sidang Dewan Stabilisasi Politik dan Keamanan Nasional [Minutes of the president's decisions and instructions at a session of the Council on Political Stabilization and National Security] (hereafter Polkam), 14 May 1974, 567, HB IX, ANRI.

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the people of Timor'. Malik's letter disavowed territorial expansionism and maintained that 'whoever will govern in Timor in the future after independence, can be assured that the Government of Indonesia will always strive to maintain good relations, friendship, and cooperation for the benefit of both countries'.[54] Skilled in the art of bureaucratic infighting, Malik doubtless anticipated that Ramos-Horta would publicize the letter and thereby present the Indonesian security services with something of a fait accompli.

His rivals would not so easily concede. Already in June 1974, Bakin knew that the East Timorese preferred independence to integration by a large margin.[55] But, according to a semi-official account of East Timor's integration into Indonesia commissioned by Murtopo and Yoga, 'the first policy implemented in the effort to promote East Timor's integration into the Republic of Indonesia' was an effort to bolster pro-integration sentiment among the East Timorese population.[56] In that effort, El Tari, the Bakin-linked governor of East Nusa Tenggara province, which included the western half of Timor, took on a leading role.[57] El Tari was already a known quantity in Dili, having visited the capital in February 1974 to open transportation, communication, and cultural links between the two halves of Timor.[58] In June 1974, he invited an Apodeti delegation to travel to Jakarta to meet with Murtopo. The general responded favourably to the Apodeti envoys' appeals for support, and he sent a deputy on a clandestine trip to Dili to gather intelligence on the evolving political situation in East Timor. More ominously, Murtopo began offering Apodeti leaders advice on how to build a political organization, as well as some modest financial assistance.[59] As if to demonstrate that Apodeti was an astroturf organization with little grassroots support, the delegation's leader remained in Jakarta for the following two months.[60]

[54] José Ramos-Horta, *Funu: the unfinished saga of East Timor* (Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press, 1987), pp. 41–43.

[55] Memorandum to Canberra, 28 June 1974, *AIPT*, p. 60.

[56] Soekanto, ed., *Integrasi: kebulatan tekad rakyat Timor Timur* [Integration: the determination of the people of East Timor] (Jakarta: Yayasan Parisekit, 1976), p. 103.

[57] Report by Fisher, July 1974, *AIPT*, p. 75.

[58] Soekanto, *Integrasi*, pp. 103–109.

[59] Ken Conboy, *Kopassus: inside Indonesia's special forces* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2003), Kindle Locations 3305 and 3403.

[60] Inward Savingram, Jakarta to Canberra, 4 September 1974, A1838 49/2/1/1, NAA.

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The contending factions in Jakarta also engaged the outside world. Geography and history made Australia an obvious target for Indonesian diplomacy. East Timor formed part of Australia's northern strategic perimeter, and thousands of East Timorese had fought and died alongside Australian soldiers during the Second World War, affording the colony no small amount of attention in policymaking circles and goodwill in public squares. After the Carnation Revolution, a debate over the contours of Australian policy took place in the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). A minority of officials concluded that Australia should support East Timor's independence and dissuade Indonesia from pursuing annexation. They reasoned that Indonesia possessed no legitimate claim to the territory, that communism posed little threat to East Timor, and that the East Timorese preferred self-rule.[61] But most DFA officials argued in favour of Indonesian annexation. A May 1974 policy paper dismissed Portuguese Timor as a 'small and at present not economically viable colonial territory' and suggested that 'it would have no capability in the short-term to handle a self-governing or independent status. The logical long-term development is that it should become part of Indonesia'.[62] Overshadowing this analysis was a sense that Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's 'good neighbour' policy in Asia faced what one official called a 'test case'. Whitlam had made closer relations with Indonesia a key plank in his foreign-policy platform, and DFA officials feared that Suharto would interpret opposition to integration as 'an indication of declining Australian interest and sympathy'.[63]

The quadrumvirate thus found in Australia a receptive audience. Shortly after the Carnation Revolution, a Bakin official met an Australian diplomat in Jakarta and argued in favour of East Timor's integration into Indonesia.[64] Over the following several months, the quadrumvirate kept Australian officials abreast of their efforts to annex the colony. 'We are, in effect, being consulted,' one Australian diplomat wrote in July. 'They clearly expect a response from our side: a failure to do so will be taken by them, I fear, as tacit agreement.'[65] But the DFA

[61] See the documents in *AIPT*, pp. 57–71.

[62] Policy Planning Paper, 3 May 1974, *AIPT*, pp. 50–51.

[63] Gough Whitlam, 'Election speech', 1 October 1969, http://electionspeeches.moadoph.gov.au/speeches/1969-gough-whitlam [accessed 11 September 2018]; Cablegram from Furlonger to Whitlam, 2 September 1974, *AIPT*, p. 94.

[64] Cablegram to Canberra, 22 May 1974, *AIPT*, p. 56.

[65] Letter from Furlonger to Feakes, 3 July 1974, *AIPT*, p. 62.

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remained silent. Only in September, when Whitlam visited Indonesia for discussions with Suharto, did the quadrumvirate secure explicit Australian support for integration. Whitlam said in no uncertain terms that 'Portuguese Timor should become part of Indonesia'. He also muddied the waters on the matter of self-determination, emphasizing Australia's 'particular' interest in ensuring that the right be extended to Portugal's *African* colonies, but saying that, for East Timor, self-determination was important mostly for the sake of 'the domestic audience in Australia'.[66] Furthermore, Whitlam assured Suharto that Australia would continue to provide Indonesia with military aid after 1975, removing a principal source of Suharto's reluctance to authorize a takeover of East Timor.[67] Ali Murtopo later told the Australians that Whitlam's conversations with Suharto had 'crystallise[d] their own thinking and they were now firmly convinced of the wisdom' of annexation.[68]

The quadrumvirate also worked to prevent Malik and East Timorese nationalists from lobbying Australian opinion. A CSIS official warned Australian diplomats against meeting with Malik, whom he characterized as hostile towards Australia and 'isolated in this exercise'.[69] By all accounts, Australian diplomats engaged relatively little with Malik in the six months between the Carnation Revolution and the meeting between Whitlam and Suharto. Ramos-Horta found himself similarly isolated when he visited Australia in July 1974 to advocate for East Timor's independence. After Indonesian diplomats stationed in Canberra informed their Australian counterparts that Malik had exaggerated Jakarta's commitment to East Timor's independence, DFA representatives refused Ramos-Horta entrée into the halls of power in Canberra and told him that their government had not yet formulated a policy towards East Timor.[70] Sudharmono, who also sympathized with Malik, took a different tack, raising the spectre of an Australian-aid cutoff in internal deliberations. On 26 September, he

[66] Record of Meeting between Whitlam and Soeharto, 6 September 1974, *AIPT*, pp. 95–96.

[67] Polkam, 10 September 1974, HB IX, 567, ANRI.

[68] Cablegram to Canberra, 19 October 1974, *AIPT*, p. 119.

[69] Minute from Arriens to Furlonger, *AIPT*, p. 80; see also Frank Mount, *Wrestling with Asia: a memoir* (Ballan: Connor Court, 2012), p. 269 for the claim that CSIS was 'responsible for all diplomatic and political relations with Australia by-passing the Foreign Affairs Department'.

[70] Draft Submission to the Minister, Portuguese Timor: Visit to Australia of Ramos Horta, n.d. [17–19 July 1974], A1838 3038/10/1/2, NAA.

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sent a memorandum to Vice President Hamengkubuwono noting that, within the ruling Labour Party, there existed a left-wing 'pressure group' determined to use the issue of political prisoners (tens of thousands of whom continued to languish in Indonesian prisons) to disrupt the Indonesian–Australian relationship. An overt Indonesian campaign to take control of East Timor, he implied, risked inflaming anti-Indonesia sentiment and undermining the flow of military and economic aid from Australia.[71] Coming weeks after the Whitlam–Suharto meeting, in which Whitlam endorsed annexation and guaranteed the continuing flow of aid, Sudharmono's bureaucratic broadside made little headway.

As Whitlam assuaged Suharto's concerns about an aid cutoff, Suharto probed other Southeast Asian leaders' views on East Timor, emphasizing Indonesia's concern for regional stability while also disavowing territorial aggrandizement. Of particular concern to the Indonesian strongman was Malaysia, which still nursed anxieties about Indonesian expansionism held over from the era of *Konfrontasi*. Any Indonesian effort to take control of East Timor without Malaysian approval could harm relations between the two states and deliver a setback to ASEAN. On 9 September, Suharto travelled to the East Java resort town of Tretes to parley with Malaysian leader Tun Abdul Razak, who was en route to Bali for a vacation.[72] 'Regarding the future of Portuguese Timor,' Suharto later reported to Polkam, 'Prime Minister Tun Razak basically agrees with the views of Australia and Indonesia.'[73] Singapore, too, remained concerned about Indonesian expansionism, and the spectre of Indonesia swallowing a smaller, weaker neighbour made the leaders of the tiny city state understandably nervous. Suharto and the quadrumvirate worked to convince their Singaporean counterparts that they intended only to safeguard regional stability and prevent a communist takeover of East Timor. Their reassurance evidently proved convincing. By late September 1974, the state-controlled Singaporean media had begun airing Indonesian military accusations about Fretilin's communist sympathies. And, eventually, the Singaporean ambassador in Jakarta

[71] Memo, Asisten Wakil Presiden Urusan Pemerintahan to Bapak Wakil Presiden R.I. [Assistant to the Vice President for Governmental Affairs to the Vice President], 26 September 1974, 428, HB IX, ANRI.

[72] G. Dwipayana and Nazaruddin Syamsudin, *Jejak langkah Pak Harto, jilid III: 27 Maret 1973–23 Maret 1978* [The footsteps of Suharto, volume III: March 27 1973–March 23 1978] (Jakarta: Citra Lamtoro Gung Persada, 1992), pp. 155–156.

[73] Polkam, 10 September 1974, HB IX, 567, ANRI.

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told British officials that Lee had given Suharto '*carte blanche*' on East Timor.[74] Evidence that Suharto discussed East Timor with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos is more elusive, but Suharto did meet with both Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos in April and May 1974 to stress the importance of regional stability. He also helped Marcos to roll back the internationalization of the secessionist struggle in Mindanao—another diplomatic counter-revolution—which likely inclined Marcos to offer similar assistance on the matter of East Timor.[75] One anti-communist Australian journalist-activist remembered that, by mid-1975, of the influential personages he had interviewed across Southeast Asia, from Foreign Minister Carlos Romulo and Executive Secretary Alejandro Melchor in the Philippines to Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam and Security and Intelligence Division chief S. R. Nathan in Singapore, 'most of these people were telling me that the Indonesians should act urgently in East Timor'.[76]

Suharto also dispatched Indonesian officials farther afield. Indonesian delegations travelled to Western Europe, Eastern Europe, North America, South America, Africa, and the Arab world to offer their perspective on East Timor and argue for the necessity of integration.[77] The quadrumvirate devoted special attention to the African states that wielded considerable influence in the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, known as the Committee of 24, whose mandate included monitoring the transfer of sovereignty from colonial regimes to postcolonial states. In November 1974, General Otto Abdulrachman, a Murtopo ally, travelled to Africa, where he planned to visit Port Louis, Dar Es Salaam, Kinshasa, Lagos, Nairobi, Tananarive, and Addis Ababa. Though logistical challenges prevented

[74] For newspaper coverage, see 'Reds are blamed for Timor demo', *Straits Times*, 28 September 1974; 'Reds step up activity in Timor', *Straits Times*, 12 October 1974; for the statement to the British ambassador, see quotation in Lee Jones, *ASEAN, sovereignty and intervention in Southeast Asia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 70.

[75] See *Official Gazette*, 6 May 1974 and 10 June 1974; Sagisag ng Pangulo ng Pilipinas, *Diplomatic agenda of Philippine presidents, 1946–1985* (Manila: Foreign Service Institute, 1985); News Form, Pangkopkamtib to Wakil Presiden et al., 1973, 532, HB IX, ANRI; Laporan delegasi Indonesia ke Konperensi Tingkat Tinggi Islam kedua di Lahore, Pakistan, 18–24 Pebruari 1974 [Report of the Indonesian Delegation to the Second Islamic Conference in Lahore, Pakistan, 18–24 February 1974], 178, HB IX, ANRI.

[76] Mount, *Wrestling with Asia*, p. 273.

[77] Joint Intelligence Organisation, Brief for Visit of Minister of Defence to Indonesia: Indonesian Attitudes to Military Intervention in Portuguese Timor, 5 December 1974, A1838, 3038/10/1/2, NAA; Soekanto, *Integrasi*, pp. 155–157.

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him from reaching every capital on his itinerary, he met with representatives of several African governments and argued that decolonization *without* independence was the best possible outcome for East Timor. Most African governments rejected his arguments and continued to favour independence, revealing a schism between the African and Asian wings of the Afro-Asian Movement, but Abdulrachman claimed to leave the continent 'satisfied' with his effort.[78]

The most consequential veto player was the United States of America. American aid still constituted a significant portion of Indonesian government revenue, and the Indonesian armed forces remained profoundly dependent upon American military assistance. But the United States of America had its attentions fixed elsewhere after the Carnation Revolution. The collapse of the Salazarist regime in Portugal raised questions about American access to the Lajes Air Base, essential in plans to defend NATO and Israel, as well as the security of apartheid South Africa, the key Nixon Doctrine client on the continent.[79] Relative to these uncertainties, the fate of tiny East Timor paled in importance. There was also the matter of the Watergate scandal, which toppled the Nixon administration mere months after the Carnation Revolution, to say nothing of the ongoing debacle in South Vietnam. Though American diplomats stationed in Indonesia, Portugal, and Australia kept Washington abreast of the struggle over East Timor, the White House adopted a policy of reticence. To the quadrumvirate and Suharto, the Americans' silence doubtless spoke volumes.

Towards intervention

In these circumstances, Malik found his opposition to integration increasingly untenable. He attempted once more to stave off Indonesian annexation in September 1974, when he met with his Portuguese counterpart, Mario Soares, at the United Nations. Malik reaffirmed that Indonesia would not meddle in East Timor, while Soares reiterated Portugal's determination to hold a referendum in the colony in early

[78] Telegram, Jakarta to Port Louis, 22 November 1974, ET 1974, CFPF 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA; Telegram, Lagos to Jakarta, 13 December 1974, ET 1974, CFPF 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA.

[79] Odd Arne Westad, *The global Cold War: Third World interventions and the making of our times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 220.

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1975 to determine its future.[80] Upon his return to Jakarta, Malik briefed Suharto and Polkam on his conversations. After the foreign minister's presentation, Suharto affirmed that Indonesia harboured no expansionist designs and respected the East Timorese people's right to self-determination. But he emphasized that 'the future of Portuguese Timor must be seen in the framework of the stability of Southeast Asia in general and Indonesia in particular' and he concluded that an independent East Timor would inevitably threaten Indonesia's political stability and economic development. Suharto therefore shunted Malik aside and assigned responsibility for conducting diplomacy with Portugal to Murtopo, ordering him to work with Lisbon to promote pro-integration sentiment in East Timor.[81] A consummate political survivor, Malik then moderated his opposition to integration. Only two days after the Polkam meeting, American diplomats stationed in Jakarta detected a change in the foreign minister's tone and concluded that Indonesia would annex East Timor, 'with [the] only questions being how and when'.[82] And, in December, Malik told the press that only two possible futures existed for the colony: continued association with Portugal or integration with Indonesia.[83]

Weeks before Suharto entrusted Murtopo with authority over negotiations with Portugal, developments in Lisbon complicated the general's portfolio. Spínola resigned in late September, and the younger, more radical officers who supplanted him abandoned the idea of a commonwealth in favour of the rapid dissolution of Portugal's African empire. Simply piecing together what was happening in Portugal proved challenging for Indonesian officials. Sukarno had severed diplomatic relations with Portugal in 1964 over its colonial policies, and Jakarta had to rely on Washington and Canberra for insight into developments in Lisbon.[84] Murtopo arrived in the Portuguese capital in mid-October. He met the new president, Francisco da Costa Gomes, as well as the prime minister, the foreign

[80] Inward Cablegram, Jakarta to Canberra, 25 September 1974, A1838 49/2/1/1, NAA; 'Malik and Soares to discuss Timor', *Straits Times*, 20 September 1974; Cablegram to Canberra, 26 September 1974, *AIPT*, p. 113.

[81] Polkam, 8 October 1974, 567, HB IX, ANRI.

[82] Telegram, Jakarta to State, 10 October 1974, ET 1974, CFPF 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA.

[83] 'Where Timor's future lies—by Malik', *Straits Times*, 4 December 1974.

[84] See, for example, Telegram, Jakarta to State, 1 May 1974, ET 1974, CFPF, 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA; Letter from Joseph to Cooper, 29 January 1975, *AIPT*, p. 164.

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minister, and the minister for inter-territorial coordination. At each meeting, Murtopo stressed that independence for East Timor was impossible and argued in favour of integration with Indonesia. Gomes seemed to agree, citing independence as 'unrealistic' and continued association with Portugal as incompatible with his government's decolonization policies. But all of Murtopo's Portuguese interlocutors reiterated their commitment to self-determination in East Timor. Whatever the result of the referendum planned for March 1975, they said Portugal would respect the wishes of the East Timorese. Either these affirmations went over Murtopo's head or the general decided to mislead Suharto. Reporting back to Jakarta, Murtopo claimed that Portuguese officials had effectively endorsed the Indonesian annexation of East Timor.[85]

Meanwhile, developments in East Timor demanded renewed attention. In early September, ASDT rebranded itself as Fretilin and incorporated into its leadership several student activists recently returned from Lisbon, where they had absorbed the radical liberationist politics swirling in Portugal and Lusophone Africa.[86] Under the sway of these student leaders, the party's rhetoric grew more confrontational and its grassroots programmes more radical.[87] Officials in Jakarta watched these developments with alarm. In October, the military newspaper *Berita Yudha* published three front-page articles on alleged links between Fretilin and China, and Yoga told American officials that Bakin had identified at least one Chinese agent in East Timor.[88] Pro-independence sentiment in the colony only grew stronger as time elapsed. In January 1975, Fretilin sealed a coalition with UDT, united by a desire for eventual independence and a fear of Indonesian intervention. Together, they accused Apodeti of being 'neo-colonialist' and advocated a 'Mozambique solution' to East Timor, whereby Portugal would bestow sovereignty upon a self-proclaimed representative of the people without a formal act of self-determination.[89]

[85] Soekanto, *Integrasi*, pp. 116–135; Ali Alatas, *The pebble in the shoe: the diplomatic struggle for East Timor* (Jakarta: Aksara Karunia, 2006), p. 3.

[86] Ramos-Horta, *Funu*, pp. 36–37.

[87] Michael Leach, *Nation-building and national identity in Timor-Leste* (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 56–69.

[88] Telegram, Jakarta to State, 25 October 1974, ET 1974, CFPF 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA.

[89] Memorandum to Jakarta, 13 December, 1974, *AIPT*, p. 155; Telegram, Surabaya to State, 24 January 1975, ET 1975, CFPF 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA.

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Murtopo's diplomacy and Fretilin's radicalism accelerated plans for covert Indonesian interference in East Timor. In early July 1974, Harry Tjan Silalahi of CSIS submitted an article to Suharto advocating a clandestine operation in East Timor to promote pro-integration sentiment.[90] Another Murtopo deputy named Aloysius Sugianto travelled to Dili that month and began gathering intelligence on East Timorese political organizations.[91] By September, Silalahi told Australian sources that Suharto had approved a 'grand design' to bring about the integration of East Timor into Indonesia—all that remained was for Murtopo to translate that design into operational terms.[92] The result was Operasi Komodo—a multi-pronged covert operation designed to gather intelligence on developments in East Timor, to sway popular opinion in favour of integration with Indonesia, to cultivate international support for Indonesian annexation, and to prepare the groundwork for an invasion if armed intervention became necessary. The brainchild of Yoga and Murtopo, Komodo was modelled on Murtopo's experience orchestrating the 'Act of Free Choice' that secured West Papua's integration into Indonesia five years earlier. (Murtopo and his military associates spent years quashing dissent and then selected a group of 1,025 West Papuans to vote publicly—and unanimously—in favour of integration with Indonesia; not without reason has it been dubbed an 'Act of No Choice'.)[93]

Komodo operatives fed Jakarta a steady diet of alarmist reports about increasing communist influence in East Timor. Yoga authored a top-secret January 1975 memo that announced 'headway for communism in Portuguese Timor' and the 'rise of a threat to national security'. He suggested that Fretilin and UDT planned to stage a coup and surrender East Timor to Chinese control. As evidence of communist influence in Timor, Yoga pointed to Maoist slogans graffitied on public monuments. But much of this graffiti was actually the work of Portuguese soldiers who, eager to return home, hoped that signs of unrest might prompt the colonial government to hasten their repatriation. In February, Yoga wrote that Fretilin and UDT planned

[90] *AIPT*, p. 72, fn. 1.

[91] Conboy, *Kopassus*, Kindle location 3302–3310.

[92] Minute from Arriens to Furlonger and Dan, 30 September 1974, *AIPT*, p. 115.

[93] Peter King, *West Papua and Indonesia since Suharto: independence, autonomy or chaos?* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2004), p. 28; see also Pieter Drooglever, *An act of free choice: decolonisation and the right to self-determination in West Papua*, trans. Theresa Stanton, Maria van Yperen, and Marolijn de Jager (New York: OneWorld, 2009).

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to purchase arms through a conduit in Australia and use them to massacre Apodeti supporters—claims that Australian officials discounted as unsubstantiated rumours. Aware of the Suharto regime's zealous anticommunism, Fretilin attempted to assuage Indonesia's anxieties about a communist beachhead opening up in Timor. Party leaders promised that an independent East Timor would pursue good neighbourly relations with all countries, including Indonesia, and the organization's secretary general told the Jakarta daily *Kompas* that, 'If Fretilin embraces communism, Indonesia is welcome to invade'. These appeals fell on deaf ears: Komodo reports dismissed Fretilin's public repudiation of communism as disingenuous.[94]

Yoga's updates on Operasi Komodo detailed not only the unfolding situation in East Timor, but also the activities of his agents. Indonesian radio stations in Kupang beamed broadcasts into East Timor, aired in Tetum and other Timorese dialects, assailing Fretilin as communist and UDT as fascist. Hoping to use the East Timorese population's religiosity as an inoculant against communism and an 'asset to improve Apodeti's growth', Indonesian operatives coordinated with indigenous priests and bishops to warn congregants against supporting Fretilin. Yoga also dispatched Kopassandha (special-forces) units to each district of East Timor to 'give moral support to Apodeti' and 'work with Apodeti cadres to disrupt and thwart our opponents' strategy'. Most ominously, Operasi Komodo laid the groundwork for a militarization of political conflict in East Timor. Indonesian agents furnished both Apodeti forces in East Timor and anti-Fretilin cadres in West Timor with military weapons and training. Beyond Timor, the Indonesian army mobilized forces in East Nusa Tenggara and, in Sumatra, mounted exercises to practise an amphibious assault—actions widely understood as preparations for an invasion. If any of these operations were exposed in international media, Yoga wrote, Indonesia would defend itself by 'employing the theme of the growth of communist influence in Portuguese Timor'. Finally, the architects of Komodo also dispatched Bakin and Apodeti delegations to the United States of

[94] Yoga Sugama, Progress Report: Bulan Januari 1975 [Progress Report: January 1975], 29 January 1975, HB IX, 589, ANRI; Yoga Sugama, Progress Report: Bulan Januari 1975 ke-II [Second Progress Report: January 1975], 4 February 1975, HB IX, 589, ANRI; Cablegram to Canberra, 26 October 1974, *AIPT*, p. 113; *AIPT*, p. 150, fn. 3; Cablegram to Canberra, 18 March 1975, *AIPT*, p. 228; 'Timorous Timor: Portuguese to leave, and the colony isn't sure it wants them to go', *Wall Street Journal*, 10 February 1975.

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America, Portugal, Australia, and New Zealand to once again plead the case for annexation.[95]

Murtopo himself chaired one such delegation, travelling to London in early March 1975 to meet with Portuguese officials. MFA diplomats agreed that East Timor's integration with Indonesia was 'the most rational and convenient solution', but they insisted that it could occur only if it was 'the will of the majority of the people of East Timor'. They also warned Murtopo against open interference in the colony, though they said colonial officials would look the other way if Indonesia sought to 'intensify the cultivation of Apodeti in a covert and inconspicuous manner'. Shortly thereafter, Murtopo dispatched a team to Dili to collect additional information on the evolving political situation in East Timor and meet with representatives of each political party. Apodeti leaders complained that the Portuguese governor was providing support to Fretilin. For their part, UDT and Fretilin, still locked in a coalition, attempted to mollify Indonesia's security concerns by claiming to oppose communism and promising that an independent East Timor would pursue friendly relations with Indonesia. The Indonesian delegation came away convinced that the Fretilin/UDT coalition remained far more powerful than Apodeti.[96]

Indeed, on the ground in East Timor, Komodo operations only inflamed anti-Indonesia sentiment. Already in September 1974, some 4,000 East Timorese had gathered in Dili to stage a demonstration condemning Indonesian interference in the colony.[97] When the Portuguese colonial regime orchestrated elections for *liurai* in March 1975, the polls revealed overwhelming support for Fretilin. Some 90 per cent of the elected chiefs were members of Fretilin, and most of the remaining 10 per cent were aligned with UDT. Apodeti chose to boycott the polls and barely registered on the returns, winning only one

[95] Yoga Sugama, Progress Report: Bulan Januari 1975 [Progress Report: January 1975], 29 January 1975, HB IX, 589, ANRI; Yoga Sugama, Progress Report tentang Perkembangan Masalah Hankam di Timor Portugis [Progress Report Regarding the Development of Defence and Security Problems in Portuguese Timor], 17 February 1975, HB IX, 589, ANRI; 'Question mark over Timor as Lisbon prepares to quit', *The Times of India*, 5 October 1974; '33-year-old postal worker wants to be king of East Timor', *Hartford Courant*, 2 February 1975; 'Indonesia seen weighing invasion of Portuguese Timor', *Washington Post*, 11 March 1975.

[96] Soekanto, *Integrasi*, pp. 134–146.

[97] Telegram, Jakarta to State, 23 September 1974, ET 1974, CFPF 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA; 'Demo against merger', *Straits Times*, 22 September 1974.

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of several hundred elections.[98] Yoga himself had already admitted in January that 'the position of Apodeti is currently very weak' and Fretilin's 'influence among the people and indigenous military is comparably large if compared with other parties'. Explanations for Fretilin's popularity differ. The Indonesian military pointed to assistance rendered by the Portuguese colonial government, especially after the arrival of leftist MFA administrators in November 1974.[99] Ramos-Horta emphasizes the party's opposition to Indonesia and its grassroots efforts to inculcate nationalism among the East Timorese population.[100] Some scholars point instead to the party's social and economic programmes in rural areas, particularly its efforts at eradicating illiteracy, hunger, and disease, which compared favourably with UDT's reliance on traditional patronage networks and Apodeti's utter absence in most parts of the colony.[101] Likely all three factors contributed to Fretilin's soaring popularity, which destabilized the party's coalition with UDT and further marginalized Apodeti.

The ineffectiveness of Komodo operations to sway political opinion in East Timor tipped the balance of power within the quadrumvirate away from Murtopo and towards Murdani. Even Malik now advocated military action, guaranteeing that he 'personally could cope with the international repercussions that would flow' from forcible annexation.[102] The hawkish Murdani called a deputy and told him he wanted to establish a new operation in East Timor geared more towards military action than intelligence gathering.[103] Indonesia's shift towards a military footing came through in the press. In February 1975, the official state news agency *Antara* carried a series of alarmist reports from East Timor. One predicted an impending communist takeover and another alleged Fretilin had launched a 'hate Indonesia' campaign.[104] Likely at the behest of the Suharto regime, these stories appeared in every Jakarta

[98] Helen Hill, *The Timor story* (Melbourne: Timor Information Service, 1976), p. 6; Ramos-Horta, *Funu*, pp. 49–50; Memorandum to Canberra, 7 March 1975, *AIPT*, pp. 216–217.

[99] Yoga Sugama, Progress Report: Bulan Januari 1975 [Progress Report: January 1975], 29 January 1975, HB IX, 589, ANRI; Soekanto, *Integrasi*, pp. 140–146.

[100] Ramos-Horta, *Funu*, p. 38.

[101] See Geoffrey Robinson, *'If you leave us here, we will die': how genocide was stopped in East Timor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[102] Cablegram to Canberra, 13 February 1975, *AIPT*, p. 183.

[103] Conboy, *Kopassus*, Kindle locations 3336–3355.

[104] See the 23, 24, and 27 February 1975 issues of *Antara*, as well as the 26 February issue of *Berita Yudha*.

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daily. And, in early March, the military newspaper *Angkatan Bersenjata* published an editorial on East Timor asserting that 'We need to eliminate the source of danger for the sake of the security, order, and survival of our country'.[105] The misinformation in the state-controlled Indonesian press reverberated in the wider world. The *Christian Science Monitor*, *Washington Post*, the *Straits Times*, and even the *Times of India* repeated false or exaggerated Indonesian claims that communists had taken over much of East Timor and sent a flood of refugees into Indonesian territory.[106]

But Suharto continued to stave off the hawks' demands for overt military intervention. In February, reports about Indonesian meddling in East Timor circulated in the Australian press and caused a public outcry. Responding to the furore, Whitlam penned a circumspect letter to Suharto urging moderation. He went further in a conversation with the deputy chief of the Indonesian armed forces a week later, suggesting that the prospect of an Indonesian invasion of East Timor led him to wonder 'whether defence aid might be affected'.[107] To the newly arrived Australian ambassador, Suharto emphatically denied any intent to invade East Timor. He said he remained concerned about an invasion's possible effect on Indonesia's reputation, particularly among purveyors of military and economic aid.[108]

The diplomacy of civil war

Thus began a new round of diplomacy between Indonesia and its most important international donors and investors—more back-and-forths between the quadrumvirate and government officials, lawmakers, journalists, and entrepreneurs in the United States of America and Australia. Early talks between the quadrumvirate and American officials

[105] 'Tajuk rencana: Indonesia-Australia & Timport' [Editorial: Indonesia-Australia and Portuguese Timor], *Angkatan Bersenjata*, 8 March 1975.

[106] 'Portuguese shockwaves reach Timor Sea', *Christian Science Monitor*, 7 March 1975; 'Timor seen as threat to Indonesia', *Washington Post*, 9 March 1975; 'Red threat in Timor', *New Nation*, 27 February 1975; 'Hard choice in an island troubled by freedom', *Times of India*, 27 March 1975.

[107] Letter from Whitlam to Soeharto, 28 February 1975, *AIPT*, pp. 200–202; Record of Conversation between Whitlam, Surono, and Her Tasning, 4 March 1975, *AIPT*, pp. 208–209.

[108] Telegram, Canberra to State, 10 March 1975, Australia—State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE–EXDIS, Box 2, NSC-EA Presidential, GFPL.

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commenced in late 1974, when Yoga told Newsom that an independent East Timor would inevitably 'threaten the security and political stability of Indonesia'.[109] Though Indonesian leaders reassured their American counterparts that they would avoid military action, American diplomats soon caught wind of the push for armed intervention.[110] In December, the Indonesian defence attaché in Washington probed W. R. Smyser of the National Security Council staff about the US 'attitude regarding Portuguese Timor (and, by implication, our reaction to a possible Indonesian takeover)'.[111] The Ford administration made no response, concluding that 'we should not try to prescribe the manner in which Suharto should proceed'.[112]

Silence proved insufficient to satisfy Suharto. In periodic meetings with American officials during the first half of 1975, the quadrumvirate harped on communism and credibility, working to extract a guarantee that an invasion of East Timor would not result in an aid cutoff.[113] Suharto visited the United States of America in July 1975 and made a similar case. He warned Ford that the communist victories in Indochina would inspire leftist insurgencies across Southeast Asia, including the 'Communist-influenced' Fretilin. Integration with Indonesia, Suharto insisted, was 'the only way' forward for East Timor. Ford pledged to increase American assistance to Indonesia, but he did not endorse an Indonesian takeover of East Timor.[114] For Kissinger, the discussion confirmed the inevitability of annexation. 'It is quite clear that the Indonesians are going to take over the island sooner or later,' he explained at an August staff meeting, endorsing a deputy's recommendation that 'we should just do nothing'.[115] And, for Suharto,

[109] Telegram, Jakarta to State, 25 October 1974, ET 1974, CFPF 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA.

[110] Telegram, Jakarta to State, 6 November 1974, ET 1974, CFPF 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA.

[111] Memorandum, Smyser to Kissinger, 30 December 1974, Indonesia (1), Box 6, NSC-EA Presidential, GFPL.

[112] Memorandum, Smyser to Newsom, n.d., Indonesia (2), Box 6, NSC-EA Presidential, GFPL.

[113] Telegram, Jakarta to State, 31 March 1975, Indonesia—State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE–EXDIS, Box 6, NSC-EA Presidential, GFPL.

[114] Memorandum of Conversation, Ford, Suharto, Kissinger, and Scowcroft, 5 July 1975 —Ford, Kissinger, Indonesian President Suharto, Box 13, National Security Adviser—Memoranda of Conversations, GFPL.

[115] The Secretary's Principal's [*sic*] and Regional Staff Meeting, 12 August 1975, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/doc2.pdf [accessed 11 September 2018].

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the visit all but guaranteed American support. Shortly after his return to Jakarta, he issued his first public statement ruling out independence for East Timor.[116]

As the Ford administration articulated a hands-off policy, the quadrumvirate sowed instability in East Timor. During their April 1975 visit to Dili, Murtopo's deputies invited delegations from UDT and Fretilin to Jakarta. Though the pro-independence, anti-Indonesia coalition between the two parties remained active, Murtopo's men separated the delegations when they arrived in the Indonesian capital. Ramos-Horta and his Fretilin comrades met Murtopo's deputies and proposed the Finlandization of East Timor. But the Fretilin delegation had little opportunity for substantive discussions and was instead ferried between factories and museums for photo ops, the purpose of which Ramos-Horta surmised was to 'discredit … me in the eyes of the [East Timorese] population'.[117] The gambit succeeded, and Ramos-Horta's authority within Fretilin waned as radical leaders less enamoured of the coalition with UDT challenged his authority. Meanwhile, Murtopo himself promised the UDT envoys that Indonesia would embrace an independent East Timor if its government excluded leftist elements, encouraging conservatives within UDT to move against Fretilin.[118] According to Agence France-Presse, the UDT representatives departed Jakarta after 'reassessing their anti-communist platform and pledging to cooperate with the colony's pro-Indonesian APODETI party'.[119] Bakin also began subsidizing trips for UDT officials to other anti-communist beacons in Asia, including Taiwan, South Korea, and the Philippines, reflecting the growing international ties between the region's right-wing authoritarian governments.[120] The resulting polarization between UDT and Fretilin rendered the already fragile coalition unsustainable and the parties split in May 1975.

The rupture soon devolved into open conflict, once again encouraged by Indonesia. UDT leaders returned to Jakarta in July and asked Murtopo for 'concrete aid' should the party 'be forced to fight against the communists' in Fretilin. The general responded that, in the event of

[116] *Angkatan Bersenjata*, 10 July 1975.
[117] Ramos-Horta, *Funu*, p. 66.
[118] Hunt, *The Timor story*, p. 10.
[119] Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily report*, 24 April 1975, p. N3.
[120] James Dunn, 'The Timor affair in international perspective', in Peter Carey and G. Carter Bentley, eds., *East Timor at the crossroads: the forging of a nation* (London: Cassell, 1995), p. 63.

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conflict between UDT and Fretilin, 'Indonesia will just close its eyes'.[121] Some sources indicate that Murtopo also warned UDT that Fretilin was preparing to stage a coup, though documentary proof of this point remains elusive.[122] Sensing an opportunity, UDT party leaders orchestrated a coup d'état of their own shortly after returning from Jakarta to Dili. Forces loyal to UDT seized control of Dili's communications centres, airport, police station, and government offices. Unwilling to fight for a territory they had already agreed to relinquish, Portuguese forces retreated to an island off the coast. But they left thousands of Timorese troops in the barracks, and these men quickly declared for Fretilin and joined the party's guerrillas in East Timor's rugged interior. Fretilin steadily chipped away at UDT positions, reclaiming control of the capital in September and achieving de facto control over the entirety of East Timor shortly thereafter.[123] During the brief civil war, Fretilin cadres perpetrated numerous atrocities that resulted in approximately 2,000 deaths and sent a deluge of refugees associated with UDT and Apodeti into Indonesian territory. The violence led the quadrumvirate to once again demand military intervention.[124]

But Suharto still refused to authorize an invasion. On 18 August, the CIA reported the Indonesian strongman had again postponed military action because he 'continues to fear an adverse reaction from Washington if he authorizes an invasion'.[125] Australian sources indicated 'concern for Australia's reaction to such a move' represented another source of Suharto's apprehension.[126] That Suharto refused to approve overt military action even amidst the chaos of late August and early September, when he could have made a compelling case for Indonesian intervention on national-security and humanitarian grounds, reveals the extent to which he desired explicit American and Australian approval of an invasion.

[121] Soekanto, *Integrasi*, p. 198.

[122] Helen Hill, *Stirrings of nationalism in East Timor: Fretilin 1974–1978: the origins, ideologies and strategies of a nationalist movement* (Sydney: Otford Press, 2002), p. 139; Hamish McDonald, *Suharto's Indonesia* (Blackburn: Fontana, 1980), p. 205.

[123] Fretilin, Press Statement, 13 September 1975, in *Facts about Fretilin*.

[124] James Dunn, *Timor: a people betrayed* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1996), pp. 146–183.

[125] The President's Daily Brief, 18 August 1975, Central Intelligence Agency Electronic Reading Room (hereafter CIA ERR), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0006014878.pdf [accessed 11 September 2018].

[126] Note from Willesee to Whitlam, 20 August 1975, *AIPT*, p. 320.

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The quadrumvirate grated against Suharto's reluctance. Murdani later complained to Australian officials that 'If I had been authorized 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'.[127] As Fretilin consolidated its position in East Timor, Yoga once again sought clarification of the American and Australian positions. In Canberra, the Indonesian ambassador received assurances that Whitlam would 'not be in a situation of seeking to exercise a veto' over Indonesian foreign policy.[128] In Jakarta, Yoga met with Newsom, who, under instructions from Kissinger, told the Komodo chief the 'main American interest is in [the] impact of any change in Portuguese Timor on US relations with Indonesia' and Washington had 'no objection to [the] merger of Portuguese Timor with Indonesia', though he added mealy-mouthed caveats about the importance of self-determination. Newsom also reminded his interlocutor that the newly assertive US Congress might act to halt military assistance if the Suharto regime opted to forcibly seize control of East Timor, especially if Indonesian troops used American-supplied weapons.[129]

Suharto had already dispatched a team to Washington to curry favour on Capitol Hill. Having acknowledged in a Polkam meeting that the 'balance of power between the executive and legislative' branches of the American government now tilted towards the Congress, he ordered the creation of a team that could 'present our views … both to the executive and the legislature, both through diplomatic channels and conveyances to other groups'.[130] The team, led by Murtopo and Murdani, travelled in October 1975 to Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Washington, New York, and Ithaca, where they met with White House officials, lawmakers, entrepreneurs, and scholars. In a private memorandum to Suharto, the Indonesian ambassador in Washington reported that the delegation had persuaded influential senators and representatives that Indonesia represented 'a guardian of stability in Southeast Asia' deserving of American support.[131] During the trip,

[127] Cablegram to Canberra, 16 October 1975, *AIPT*, p. 474.

[128] Cablegram to Canberra, 14 August 1975, *AIPT*, p. 307; Cablegram to Jakarta, 26 August 1975, *AIPT*, p. 346.

[129] Telegram, Jakarta to State, 21 August, 1975, Indonesia—State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE–EXDIS, Box 6, NSC-EA Presidential, GFPL.

[130] Polkam, 10 June 1975, HB IX, 567, ANRI.

[131] Memorandum, Roesmin Nurjadin to Suharto, 30 October 1975, 203, HB IX, ANRI.

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Murtopo also sat down with Kissinger's deputy, Brent Scowcroft, whose talking points indicated that the United States of America had 'no intention of involving ourselves in your affairs' on East Timor.[132] The quadrumvirate also devoted special attention to American investors. After the Malari affair, Indonesian officials reported that there was 'restlessness' among investors, who were questioning the value of sending capital to Indonesia.[133] In September and October, two delegations led by the deputy chair of the Foreign Investment Coordinating Board, A. R. Soehoed, travelled across the United States of America in partnership with the American Indonesian Chamber of Commerce. The delegation met with entrepreneurs, bankers, scholars, and diplomats, and concluded that Americans still wanted to invest in Indonesia. A report on the trip went so far as to assert that 'the role that Indonesia can play in stabilizing the situation in Southeast Asia' can 'strengthen that desire'.[134] The diplomatic tours made the quadrumvirate all the more confident of success. 'Don't worry, it will be over in a few weeks,' one member of the military and intelligence delegation told Cornell University's Benedict Anderson.[135]

Military preparations proceeded apace with efforts to lay the diplomatic groundwork for an invasion. Suharto dispatched almost 4,000 Indonesian troops to the East Timor border area in late September.[136] A week later, Indonesian forces helped their Apodeti clients, now allied with UDT, to retake the border town of Batugade—the first major engagement on East Timorese soil in which large numbers of Indonesian soldiers participated.[137] Indonesian forces pressed eastward from there, engaging in periodic skirmishes with dug-in Fretilin defenders. One

[132] Memorandum, Barnes to Scowcroft, 23 October 1975, Indonesia (3), Box 6, NSC-EA Presidential, GFPL.

[133] Memo, Sudharmono to Hamengkubuwono IX, 18 February 1974, 563, HB IX, ANRI.

[134] Badan Koordinasi Penanaman Modal, Laporan Perjalanan ke Amerika-Serikat pada akhir bulan September 1975 dan pada akhir bulan Oktober 1975 [Report on the trips to the United States at the end of September 1975 and October 1975], 10 November 1975, 412, HB IX, ANRI.

[135] Benedict Anderson, 'Exit Suharto: obituary for a mediocre tyrant', *New Left Review* 50, March–April 2008.

[136] Cablegram to Canberra, 29 September 1975, *AIPT*, p. 437; Cablegram to Canberra, 30 September 1975, *AIPT*, p. 439.

[137] 'Big Indonesian attack in Timor reported', *New York Times*, 8 October 1975.

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highly placed Indonesian official told Australian officials that the military planned to retake Dili by mid-November.[138] In public, however, Indonesian officials continued to deny intervening in East Timor.[139]

They also prevented the United Nations from taking up the matter of East Timor. The Committee of 24 discussed East Timor in June 1975. But, after the Indonesian representative delivered a speech belabouring the ethnic and cultural links between the two halves of Timor, reflecting the increasing prominence of culturalist arguments in Global South diplomacy, the committee limited itself to a bland statement expressing 'hope that the necessary steps will be taken as appropriate to enable the people of that territory to attain the goals set forth in the Charter of the United Nations'.[140] Indonesian diplomats then blocked the committee from further discussions of East Timor and Fretilin began aiming its demarches elsewhere.[141] In October, Fretilin sent a series of missives to the Security Council protesting against Indonesian aggression in East Timor and sounding the 'alarm to all countries and governments of the world'.[142] Predictably, the Security Council refused to intervene. Amidst this jostling at the United Nations, Komodo operatives attempted to establish a monopoly on information by denying journalists and non-governmental organizations access to East Timor. Fretilin's 'diplomatic revolution' this was not.[143]

[138] Submission to Willesee, 14 October 1975, *AIPT*, 463; Cablegram to Canberra, 16 October 1975, *AIPT*, p. 473.

[139] 'Indonesia denies attack into Portuguese Timor', *New York Times*, 9 October 1975; 'Timor not UN problem, says Malik', *The Irish Times*, 13 October 1975; Cablegram to New York, 10 October 1975, *AIPT*, pp. 559–561.

[140] Cablegram to Canberra, 13 June 1975, *AIPT*, pp. 276–277; for the ways in which culturalist arguments inflected Global South discourses of human rights, see Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the evolution of human rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

[141] Telegram, U.S. Mission U.N. to State, 30 September 1975, ET 1975, CFPF 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA.

[142] Telegram, U.S. Mission U.N. to State, 11 October 1975, ET 1975, CFPF 1973–1979, RG 59, USNA.

[143] Samuel Crowl, 'Indonesia's diplomatic revolution: lining up for non-alignment, 1945–1955', in Christopher Goscha and Christian Ostermann, eds., *Connecting histories: decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945–1962* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009).

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Endgame

It was instead a diplomatic counter-revolution. Fretilin declared the independence of Timor-Leste on 28 November 1975. The party appealed in vain to the international community to support their state-making claim. Meanwhile, the Suharto regime accelerated its military operations in East Timor. After Apodeti leaders demanded immediate integration with Indonesia, Malik travelled to Timor and told reporters that diplomatic efforts had failed and the only solution to the question of East Timor's future lay on the battlefield.[144] Murdani drew up plans for an invasion without informing the operational staff of the army—a clear sign that the quadrumvirate anticipated minimal on-the-ground resistance.[145]

In Australia, Indonesian interference in East Timor fuelled public outrage. Opinion polls revealed that a majority of Australians favoured the colony's independence, even if it meant an East Timor under Fretilin rule. Anti-Indonesia sentiment reached fever pitch after the mysterious deaths of five Australia-based journalists in Balibo, just east of Batugade, on 16 October. Stevedores at Australian harbours began refusing to load or unload cargo on Indonesian ships—a gesture of solidarity that evoked Australian dockworkers' Black Armada campaign against Dutch shipping during the Indonesian revolution.[146] The public outcry led officials within the Whitlam government to propose that the foreign minister should issue a 'formal expression of disapproval' of Indonesian interference in the colony.[147] In Jakarta, Malik warned the Australian ambassador that criticism of Indonesia's position on East Timor would 'cast doubts on the strength of Australia's stated wish for close friendship with Indonesia'.[148] But the domestic pressure proved too powerful for Whitlam to ignore. Australia publicly denounced Indonesian military interference in East Timor on 30 October, although DFA officials also made private assurances to Malik that their criticism did not imply any intent to halt

[144] CIA East Asia Brief, 2 December 1975, CIA ERR, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP86T00608R000300010087-4.pdf [accessed 11 September 2018].

[145] Jenkins, *Suharto and his generals*, p. 24, fn. 22.

[146] Hunt, *The Timor story*, p. 13.

[147] Submission to Willesee, 16 October 1975, *AIPT*, p. 472.

[148] Cablegram to Canberra, 19 October 1975, *AIPT*, p. 489.

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the flow of military and economic aid.[149] The eruption of sympathy for East Timor's plight in Australia could have scuttled Indonesia's plans, but the opposition-controlled Senate's refusal to pass appropriations bills soon provoked a constitutional crisis that resulted in the dismissal of Whitlam's Labour government in favour of a caretaker Liberal administration. Australian attentions focused inward, muting much of the public acrimony over East Timor. The new conservative government adopted a sceptical outlook towards Fretilin. In late November, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser sent Suharto a secret message saying that he 'recognizes the need for Indonesia to have an appropriate solution for the problem of Portuguese Timor' and that he 'regrets … irritants to Australia's relations with Indonesia'.[150]

In the United States of America, no comparable eruption of anti-Indonesia sentiment occurred. The Ford administration worked to strengthen Indonesia's position as a bulwark against communism by cementing a US–Indonesian joint consultative arrangement and proposing a twofold increase in American military and economic aid to the Suharto regime.[151] It also complemented its speak-no-evil policy on East Timor with a see-no-evil policy, instructing the American embassy in Jakarta to cut down its reporting on the territory.[152] Ford planned to travel to Indonesia in early December, which Kissinger argued would serve as a 'dramatic reaffirmation of the significance we attach to our relations with Indonesia'.[153] It was at that fateful meeting that Ford and Kissinger offered Suharto a green light. The following morning, shortly after Air Force One had departed for Washington, Indonesia launched its invasion of East Timor. Civilian casualties, American intelligence reports suggested, were 'substantial' and Scowcroft complained that Indonesian troops had behaved 'abysmally'.[154] Indonesian forces

[149] Cablegram to Jakarta and Lisbon, 29 October 1975, *AIPT*, 530; Submission to Willesee, 31 October 1975, *AIPT*, pp. 536–537.

[150] Cablegram to Jakarta, 20 November 1975, *AIPT*, p. 579.

[151] Memorandum, Barnes to Scowcroft, 23 October 1975, Indonesia (3), Box 6, NSC-EA Presidential GFPL; Memorandum, Kissinger to Ford, October 30, 1975, NSDM 311—U.S.–Indonesia Consultative Arrangements, Box 61, National Security Council Institutional Files, GFPL.

[152] Cablegram to Canberra, 17 August 1975, *AIPT*, p. 314.

[153] Memorandum, Kissinger to Ford, n.d., President Ford's Trip to the Philippines and Indonesia, December 1975 (1), Box 18, NSC-EA Presidential, GFPL.

[154] Telegram, DIA to DINOZ, 8 December 1975, Indonesia (5), NSC-EA Presidential, GFPL; Memorandum, Barnes to Scowcroft, 30 December 1975, Indonesia (6), NSC-EA Presidential, GFPL.

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remained in East Timor for the next 23 years, waging what has been called a 'genocidal counterinsurgency'.[155]

Conclusion

Indonesia's diplomatic campaign to secure international support for forcible incorporation was a necessary precursor to the carnage in East Timor. Advocates of annexation made the case for an Indonesian takeover in bilateral meetings, regional organizations, international institutions, and global media and capital networks. By harping on their concerns about communism and credibility, they extracted promises that the incorporation of East Timor would not jeopardize the flows of aid and investment to Indonesia. And, by emphasizing their desire for stability and development, they received guarantees that the invasion would not undermine Indonesia's position in ASEAN or the broader developing world. The quadrumvirate's success was often the product of timing rather than talent. Had the dissolution of the Portuguese empire not coincided with the end of the Vietnam War, a constitutional crisis in Australia, and broader political and economic changes across the Global South, Indonesian diplomats in all likelihood would have encountered an international environment far more resistant to forcible annexation. The Indonesian takeover of East Timor was thus contingent—the product of individual choices and historical conjunctures across the globe rather than an inevitability of geography or the Cold War.

The contingencies of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor also cast new light on the nature of the international system. Scholars have long regarded the architecture of globalization—international institutions, communications networks, and capital markets—as conducive to national liberation movements.[156] The diplomacy behind the Indonesian takeover of East Timor shows that the structures of globalization could be

[155] Ben Kiernan, 'War, genocide, and resistance in East Timor 1975–99: comparative reflections on Cambodia', in Mark Selden and Alvin Y. So, eds., *War and state terrorism: the United States, Japan, and the Asia-Pacific in the long twentieth century* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 224.

[156] See Connelly, *A diplomatic revolution*; Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The global offensive: the United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the making of the post-Cold War order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Ryan Irwin, *Gordian knot: apartheid and the unmaking of the liberal world order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

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harnessed for counter-revolutionary purposes in addition to revolutionary ones. Globalization thus contains within it no certain political teleology. Whether it serves the cause of justice or injustice, liberation or oppression, depends first and foremost upon human agency.

And, just as the FLN's diplomatic revolution in Algeria revealed that diplomacy itself had been revolutionized, shaped by renascent forces of globalization, so too did the New Order's diplomatic counter-revolution in East Timor reveal that diplomacy had been counter-revolutionized. As the promise of national liberation devolved into the reality of authoritarianism across much of the developing world in the 1960s and early 1970s, postcolonial leaders generally abandoned their ambitious 'world-making' agendas and retreated to a decidedly counter-revolutionary imaginary that privileged the defence of sovereignty above all else.[157] Moreover, as import-substitution schemes groaned under the weight of corruption and inefficiency, the same postcolonial leaders sought to establish greater control over peripheral areas that often served as focal points for extractive industries in the oil, gas, timber, and mineral sectors, whose outputs could be mobilized for export-oriented economic-development programmes. These phenomena had already become evident four years earlier, as many governments in the Global South lined up against Bangladesh's state-making claim.[158] Though the East Timorese could legitimately claim that theirs was a movement for decolonization rather than secession under the rubric of international law, this distinction meant little to postcolonial leaders who envisioned a destabilizing cascade. They believed the emergence of an independent East Timor risked engendering similar state-making claims by smaller political communities or resource-rich territories, whether in Aceh or West Papua in Indonesia, in Mindanao or Sabah in Southeast Asia, or in Nagaland or Kashmir or Western Sahara farther afield.[159] Indonesian diplomats could therefore rally much of the Global South, especially the ASEAN states, against East Timor's state-making claim. In that sense, they revealed nothing less than the demise of the Third Worldist project. Once suffused with tremendous liberatory potential, the world had become far more hostile to transformative political projects.

[157] Getachew, *Worldmaking*, pp. 176–181.

[158] Srinath Raghavan, *1971: a global history of the creation of Bangladesh* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[159] Lydia Walker, 'Decolonization in the 1960s: on legitimate and illegitimate nationalist claims-making', *Past & Present* 242, February 2019, pp. 227–264.

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