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International origin and development of nationalism: Generational transformation of East Timorese nationalism under Indonesia's occupation (1975–1999)

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Abstract

East Timorese nationalism experienced a unique generational transition during Indonesia's occupation hinging onto internationalism in the changing world. In contrast to the existing literature on nationalism, which is overwhelmingly focused on earlier construction of nationalism and post-independence nation building, this article offers a theoretical account of the transformation of nationalism from an older to newer generation through a socio-historical analysis. In light of interactions between nationalism and internationalism, it argues that while the older generation relied on a Lusophone cosmology of anti-colonialism derived from counterparts in Portuguese colonies in Africa in the 1960s, the younger generation took advantage of universal human rights advocacy in the 1990s in its aspiration for independence. In doing so, this study demonstrates both generational continuity and change in the construction, development and transformation of East Timorese nationalism.

KEYWORDS

anti-colonialism, East Timor, human rights, Indonesia, nationalism

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Nationalism has been understood as a broad term encompassing various ideologies and movements attached to nations. It is not only a radical right-wing ideology that destroys liberal order, wages wars and oppresses minorities but can also be understood as providing powerful ideological momentum for the greatest movements for freedom and justice in history (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). Scholarly understandings of nationalism have been changed, hinging on the historical development of ideas of the nation and state (Cox, 2021). While classic literature on nationalism explains how nationalism was *created* to construct the nation and state (Anderson, 1983; Breuilly, 1982; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1986), contemporary literature has elucidated how it is *consumed* within the stable modern nation state (Billig, 1995; Fox, 2018; Yoshino, 1992). Studies of nationalism have been diverse in focus and analysis concerning the historical development of the nation and state.

Nevertheless, literature on nationalism has been less informed concerning the transformation of nationalism in the process of nation building. Although various historical accounts have shown the ways in which different national visions often contest with one another over the creation of the nation (Anderson, 1972), conventional scholarship on nationalism tends to focus on the earlier construction of nationalism as opposed to decolonisation or post-conflict reconstruction of nationalism (Allman, 2013; Birmingham, 2008; Cooper, 2008; Jolliffe, 1978; Kahin, 1952). As a result, nuanced understanding of how nationalism has been contested, divided and transformed has been lacking within the primary literature on nationalism.

This study offers a theoretical account to understand the transition of nationalism during liberation struggles, specifically that from old to new generations in the independence struggle of the East Timorese from 1975 to 1999. The East Timorese independence struggle tracked a unique trajectory from independence from Portugal and the subsequent invasion by Indonesia in 1975, after which the East Timorese experienced a struggle for independence over 24 years, until 1999. This 24-year struggle created two distinct generations in East Timor: the old Generation of 1975 (*Geração '75*) who were educated during Portuguese rule and the New Generation (*Geração Foun*) who were culturally assimilated to Indonesia (Bexley & Tchailoro, 2013). These two generations were exposed to different global paradigms during and after the Cold War. Whereas the old leaders from *Geração '75* were attached to Afro-socialism, resonating with liberation movements in Portuguese colonies in Africa, the new *Geração Foun* was exposed to the post-Cold War political dynamics of human rights advocacy during the 1990s, which enabled East Timorese youth to work with Indonesian pro-democracy activists.

Based on the literature on historical interactions between nationalism and internationalism (Anderson, 2002; Sidel, 2021), this article argues that East Timorese nationalism transformed in relevance due to exposure to changing global narratives. Importantly, the transition of nationalism during the independence struggle was not only endogenous but also reflected exogenous changes in the global dynamism of internationalism that transformed from anti-colonialism in 1960s to human rights advocacy in the 1990s.

In contrast to the existing framework, however, this study further articulates the ideological *continuity* and *change* in nationalism over these two generations. It not only elucidates how East Timorese nationalism in each generation marched with internationally recognised discourse in each period but also reveals how the commonly shared ideological foundation of Marxist thought for emancipation from oppression was commonly shared between the old and new East Timorese nationalists. In doing so, this article offers nuanced theoretical accounts on nationalism and internationalism over different generations.

2 | NATIONALISM EXPLAINED

Conventional scholarship on nationalism from both modern and postmodern perspectives tends to overlook more nuanced transformations of nationalist movements in the process of liberation struggles and nation building. Whereas modernist scholars studying decolonisation have focused exclusively on the predominant discourse of nationalism

that initiated liberation struggles against colonialism and has been subsequently incorporated into the capitalist world system (Morier-Genoud, 2012; Wallerstein, 1983), postmodernist literature on nationalism has been more interested in everyday consumption of nationalism as a discourse in established democracies (Billig, 1995; Fox, 2018; Yoshino, 1992). As a result, critical and comprehensive analysis of how nationalism transforms during the nation building of emerging nations is absent from analysis in existing literature.

The primary interest of scholars on nationalism has traditionally been the ideological functions of nationalism that create the space of the nation-state. While Benedict Anderson's (1983) influential *Imagined Communities* offers a cogent framework for understanding how the people imagine the nation in creating the modern state, the primordial approach of Anthony D. Smith (1986) explains that nationalism derives from the ethnic origins or community called 'ethnie'. Meanwhile, Ernest Gellner (1983) and John Breuilly (1982) focus on state roles in enabling national mobilisation through industrial development and national politics. The puzzle for established scholarship has been the power of nationalism that fully mobilises people within a certain territory, and different scholars have offered various accounts of how people could create a nation-state through decolonisation and independence.

Studies on nationalism in the late twentieth century have moved in a different direction. Recent scholarship has studied the everyday consumption of nationalism as a discourse in established democracies (Özkirimli, 2017). Billig's (1995) idea of *Banal Nationalism* precisely reflects this new tendency in the literature. As independence struggles from colonialism have almost completed, scholarly interest has shifted from construction of nation-states through nationalism to contextualisation of nationalism within the fixed nation-state.

Geographers have dealt with the issue of generational changes of national identities, largely focusing on migrations and human mobilities. The literature indeed reveals the ambiguity of the national identities and subsequent identity (re-)formation in different societal settings (Graf, 2018; Jensen et al., 2011; Korzenevica, 2020). Such scholarship, however, is more likely to focus on individual identity formation than collective creation of nationalism as a communal identity. Although the literature explains the transformations and adaptations of young generations into new societal dynamics beyond territories, it does not necessarily provide cogent understandings of transformation and transition in nationalism that are more likely to be linked to national territory.

Against this backdrop, the East Timorese independence struggle offers a unique experimental case of generational transformation of nationalism from the old Portuguese-educated generation (Generation of 1975) to a new Indonesian-educated generation (New Generation) (Bexley & Tchailoro, 2013). Since the rise of the East Timorese nationalist movement in the 1970s, scholars have studied the East Timorese struggle for colonial emancipation extensively in order to understand its unitary ideological foundations (Dunn, 2003; Hill, 2002; Jolliffe, 1978; Leach, 2017; Matsuno, 2002; Nicol, 1978). In contrast, recent scholars have examined diverse patterns of nationalism among different nationalist groups within and beyond the territory of East Timor (Arthur, 2018; Bexley, 2007; Damaledo, 2018; Kamisuna, 2020; Tsuchiya, 2019).

The conventional literature on East Timorese nationalism has been, however, divided in focusing on either the old or new generation and, thus, comprehensive theoretical accounts of change and continuity between the two generations have been least likely. This article, therefore, provides a theoretical account of the generational transformation of nationalism, by analysing East Timorese nationalism throughout Indonesia's occupation.

3 | NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM IN TRANSITION

In order to offer such a theoretical account of the transformation of nationalism over generations in East Timor, this study examines how it was exposed to the changing climate of international discourses. While literature on nationalist theory focuses predominantly on the creation and development of nationalism internally within territories (Anderson, 1983; Breuilly, 1982; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1986), this study examines the construction and transformation of nationalism in relation to international discourses over generations.

In this respect, Marxist Scholar Perry Anderson (2002) offers a cogent framework to understand the inter-relation between nationalism and internationalism. Anderson introduces the concept of *periodisation* in capturing the

transitional relation between nationalism and international or universal discourses over time from the eighteenth century. Nationalism, or patriotism, in the early period, has marched with cosmopolitanism, anarchism against *anciens regimes* in the eighteenth century. In nineteenth century Europe, nationalism coalesced with the chauvinism of the *Belle Epoque* and was followed by fascism in the early twentieth century, anti-imperialism in the post-war period and, finally communism, during the Cold War period. Anderson's perspective broadly suggests that the transformation of nationalism per se could hinge on the transition of internationalism over periods and that, thus, nationalism took on different roles to define the relationship between the nation and the state over time.

Scholars of nationalism who share the Marxist historical perspective resonates with this framework. Benedict Anderson's (2005) late work deals precisely with the transnational dimensions of nationalism. His former student John Sidel (2021) further develops this argument through studying how nationalist revolutions were achieved through interactions with transnational ideologies such as communism, Islam and republicanism in southeast Asia. Filipino historian Vicente Rafael (2005) also elucidates how Filipino nationalism was consolidated through the Spanish language. Otherwise, the literature on third worldism has explained how anti-colonial nationalism was claimed as inter-national movements from the 1950s to 1970s (Byrne, 2016; Chamberlin, 2012; Malley, 1996). These studies suggest that the development of nationalism is not endogenous; rather, nationalism has been constructed and transformed through importing universal discourses that are universally accepted in the certain period.

This study builds on the argument concerning the interaction between nationalism and internationalism to explain the construction and transformation of East Timorese nationalism over generations. In contrast to the existing framework, however, it offers a more nuanced account of the *change* and *continuity* of nationalism over generations. While the old and new generations of East Timorese nationalists rested on different universal ideologies—Afro-socialism in decolonisation for the old generation and human rights advocacy for the new—both internally shared a fundamental Marxist discourse of emancipation from oppression.

Indeed, the idea of *Maubermism* that the old generation created to unify local East Timorese people for the anti-colonial struggle echoes the Indonesian *Marhaenism* that the revolutionary leader and first president Sukarno invented based on Marxist thought. Although the old and new generations of East Timorese struggles used different ideological languages, the spirit of *Maubermism* was transcended to the youths and enabled them to share the same vision with Indonesian pro-democracy activists who claimed to return to Sukarno's vision of the Indonesian nation. This article, therefore, demonstrates how nationalism travelled over generations and linked one form of nationalism to another through powerful international narratives over generations.

4 | OLD GENERATION, OLD NATIONALISM

4.1 | Decolonisation and the Lusophone cosmology in East Timor

The 1974 April Revolution in Portugal, which led to democratisation following Salazar's dictatorship, accelerated political movements in the colonies. Following the revolution, the Portuguese administration proposed three possible options for the decolonisation of East Timor: maintaining the link to Portugal with autonomy, integration with Indonesia and full independence (Jolliffe, 1978). In response, three major political parties were formed by the East Timorese: the UDT (Timorese Democratic Union), the ASDT (Timorese Social-Democratic Association, which later became Fretilin) and the APODETI (Timorese Popular Democratic Association). The UDT sought integration within a Portuguese-speaking community, while the ASDT supported independence from Portugal with a communist orientation. The APODETI was a pro-Indonesian party in favour of integration with Indonesia with autonomy, though support for this party was relatively limited. Each party represented a different national vision, based on their respective cultural and social positions. Indeed, the emergence of the three parties, before Indonesia's invasion, reflected the reality and idealism of the East Timorese nation. Disagreements between the parties concerning the nation's vision resulted in an anti-communist coup against Fretilin by the UDT in August 1975, which led to civil war.

The civil war in 1975, during the Cold War, was critical for the international community. Indeed, Indonesia's government recognised this war as a communist insurgency by Fretilin, which justified its invasion to East Timor on 28 November 1975 under the name of anti-communism in Southeast Asia (Simpson, 2005). Indeed, Indonesia and the United States had series of conversations on communist influence in Southeast Asia following the Vietnam war (1955–1975), as it was a serious security concern for the United States during the Cold War. Indonesia's President Suharto met President Ford in 1975 to explain the situation of communist influence in Southeast Asia after the end of the Vietnam War (The White House, 1975). The United States, therefore, provided a de facto permit to Suharto on 'Plans for Indonesian Invasion of East Timor' (Burr & Evans, 2001).

Although Fretilin members were highly influenced by socialist thought, their political aspirations were not straightforward. Since the prominent leadership spent years in Portugal and its former colonies in Africa, they shared a socialist outlook in their liberation movement against colonialism with their counterparts in Africa (Morier-Genoud, 2012). The 'group of returnees from Mozambique' including Mari Alkatri and José Ramos-Horta had learned the method of struggle from liberation movements in Mozambique and other Portuguese colonies in Africa (Gonçalves, 2021, p. 84). Sharing the common language of Portuguese, East Timorese leaders were easily assimilated in Mozambican society. Indeed, Fretilin established the first embassy of the Republic of East Timor in Mozambique, which was directly funded by the Mozambican government (Gonçalves, 2021). In creating their form of nationalism, therefore, the old Fretilin leaders heavily relied on the spirit of Afro-socialism.

During Indonesia's occupation, Fretilin established solid networks with former Portuguese colonies in Africa; for instance, it sent representatives to Guinea-Bissau, Portugal, Angola, Tanzania and Mozambique after the declaration of independence (Europe-Third World Research Centre, 1976). In 1982, José Ramos-Horta, who had engaged in external negotiations and diplomacy in Fretilin, wrote memoranda to Ministers of Foreign Affairs in four Portuguese speaking countries in Africa to confirm solidarity with the people of East Timor; that is, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique (Ramos-Horta, 1982). The diplomatic front of Fretilin was thus actively involved in establishing solidarity with the Lusophone world.

The culture of liberation movements in former Portuguese colonies in Africa, therefore, significantly influenced the independence struggle of East Timor. Amílcar Cabral's ideas of 'national liberation and culture' were particularly important (Cabral, 1970).¹ Drawing from Marxist tradition, Cabral's social thought informed Fretilin's leadership in terms of the spirit and method of national struggle against the Portuguese and later Indonesian occupation. Indeed, East Timorese scholar and former independence activist Antero da Silva (2009) articulates that Fretilin's ideas concerning agricultural development and youth mobilisation were influenced by Amílcar Cabral as well as Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. *Casa de Timor*, the first East Timorese student group in Lisbon that discussed their national liberation struggle, learned its method of struggle from Cabral's writings and speeches.² The actual popular mobilisation by Fretilin, therefore, reflects the methods of Afro-socialism derived from Amílcar Cabral.

Another influential figure, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970), worked on literacy development with local peasants in Northeast Brazil. His *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is one of the most influential books in the field of education and beyond. Fretilin developed its own literacy campaign based on his method (Capizzi et al., 1976). Fretilin's literacy manual *Rai Timor Rai Ita Niang* (Timor is Our Country) was created by prominent members including Antonio Carvarinho and Francisco Borja da Costa in Lisbon to (re)create *Maubere* by enlightening the East Timorese rural population who had been illiterate and ignorant under Portuguese colonialism.³

Indeed, a poem in the manual titled *Timor Oan Sei Hamutuk Hodi Ukun Rasik ita nia Rain* (Timorese will be united to rule our land) reflects the long-lasting cultural struggle of East Timorese under the colonialism as such:

The colonialists forbid us to speak our language.
Our nation is far from theirs.
They come from overseas.
They told us we have only one origin, but it is not true.
Our fathers are not like them,

we are different. We are a nation, we have a different language

The poem demonstrates how East Timorese are different from their coloniser and thus could form a single nation.

The manual further illustrates a picture of local East Timorese people holding hands and covering the entire territory of East Timor to show that the people are united to govern their own land (Leach, 2016). The idea of people's sovereignty resonates with Amílcar Cabral's writing on *unity and struggle*. Indeed, Cabral writes:

So, what was the question of unity in our land? Fundamentally it was simply this: in the first place, as everyone knows, union makes for strength. Right from the moment when there came into the heads of some sons of our soil the idea of eliminating foreign colonialist domination, there arose a question of strength, the strength necessary to be pitted against the strength of the colonialists

(Cabral, 1979, p. 30).

The efforts of the old leadership in East Timor in making East Timorese ideologically resonated with experiences of colonial liberations in Lusophone Africa. The ideological basis of Lusophone struggle against the western colonialism enabled East Timorese old nationalists to claim their universal rights of self-determination. Hence, the earlier form of East Timor or *Rai Timor* (Timor Land) in the 1970s significantly rested on their territorial claims against the colonial exploitations in the similar vein with their counterparts in Lusophone Africa in 1960s. Simultaneously, the nationalist leaders had to localise their struggle to mobilise local population through the literacy manual.

4.2 | Creating East Timorese

Another important aspect of the manual is that its distribution was part of the first national language policy by Fretilin. Resonating with Amílcar Cabral's 'national liberation and culture' that emphasises the strong indigenous cultural life preventing the penetration of foreign domination, Fretilin's literacy campaign was a strong cultural weapon against the colonial epistemological domination that has kept local East Timorese illiterate and ignorant. In this respect, Fretilin's use of the terms *Maubere* or *Mauberism* is particularly crucial. *Maubere* had been used by Portuguese colonial masters to disrespectfully label local East Timorese as illiterate and ignorant. The literacy campaign aimed to re-create the notion of East Timorese by transforming the meaning and use of *Maubere* to a term of pride.

The idea of *Mauberism* could have been ideologically inspired by Indonesia's Marxist thought *Marhaenism* (*Marhaenisme*) created by the Indonesia's first president Sukarno (Tsuchiya, 2019). Sukarno, as one of the first generation of freedom fighter for Indonesia's independence from Dutch colonialism, articulated *Marhaenism* as an ideology to unify local farmers in Indonesia who had suffered from colonial exploitation by Dutch colonialism (Tsuchiya, 1971). Originally, *Marhaen* referred to an impoverished rural Indonesian community consisting of labourers, peasants and small business owners. Sukarno regarded *Marhaen* as those impoverished by imperialism and called for their unity to overcome imperialism and capitalism (Sukarno, 1964). Indeed, Fretilin's *Mauberism*, which aimed to unify local East Timorese people in the anti-colonial struggle, echoed Sukarno's *Marhaenism*. Evidently, this resonance of Marxist thought would be an ideological integrated part of two different struggles between East Timorese and Indonesians, later when East Timorese youths from the new generation became active.

In addition to the literacy campaign, political education was another crucial stream in Fretilin's popular mobilisation. For his purpose, Fretilin published the *Manual e Programa Políticos* (Political Manual and Program) in 1974.

It primarily aimed to make East Timorese people understand the meaning of independence. The political manual, therefore, explains the idea of governing [*ukun*] their own land, *Rai Timor*:

FRETILIN wants to achieve true independence for Timor land [*Rai Timor*] with the Timorese Ridding colonialism from our land means transferring the power to the Timorese. Only Timorese will govern [*ukun*] Timor land [*Rai Timor*]

(Fretilin, 1974, p. 8).

Popular sovereignty is indeed deeply discussed in the writing of Amilcar Cabral. In his writing 'Struggle of the people, by the people, for the people', Cabral articulates that

Our struggle is for our people, because its objective, its purpose, is to satisfy the aspirations, dreams and desires of our people: to lead a decent and worthy life, as all the peoples in the world want, to have peace in order to build progress in their land, to build happiness for their children

Our people now do really feel that the struggle is theirs. Not only because it is their children who have the weapons in their hands. Not only because it is their children who study and are trained as cadres, nurses, doctors, engineers, technicians, etc. Not only because it is their children who lead. But also because even in the villages, the militiamen or civilian population take up what principally symbolises our struggle: weapons The more weapons there are for our supporters, the more certainty our population and our people will feel that the struggle is really theirs, and the fewer illusions there will be in the heads of our combatants and leaders that struggle is their exclusive concern

(Cabral, 1979, p. 77).

Fretilin's political education derived from Cabral's spirit and method of people's struggle to govern their own land, and thus, their political manual aimed to translate his ideas into their context and language.

For better understanding, therefore, the manual further describes how local life could be changed through independence. In this respect, primary education and agricultural development are functional to explain how the local standard of living could be improved:

Tilling the land for crops, in order for people to become better, means we search first to grow various crops in order to produce an abundance of food, so that East Timor people would not be starving anymore. Colonialism only seeks something that brings about more money for colonisers. In this manner, you see that they seek to plant only coffee, rubber and vanilla. They do not seek to grow food that people can eat. Therefore, we see the two types of hunger in the land of East Timor

(Fretilin, 1974, p. 15).

Fretilin's vision for independent East Timor that had consolidated through experiences in Portuguese former colonies in Africa was delivered to the East Timorese population through the literacy and political campaigns.

Older East Timorese leaders from Fretilin were the first nationalists who constructed the notion of East Timorese nationalism and mobilised local populations into the national liberation from Portuguese colonialism and, later, Indonesia's occupation. The initial political aspiration of the members Fretilin derived from their experiences in Portugal and Portuguese former colonies in Africa. Afro-socialism in Lusophone anti-colonial struggles, therefore, shaped the notion of East Timorese nationalism and the idea of self-determination. The East Timorese colonial elites, however, needed to mobilise their local population into their liberation struggles as their counterparts had done in Lusophone Africa. Hence, the translation from anti-colonial liberation to independence, or *ukun raik aan* in Tetum (governing for themselves), was the crucial process to create the people's struggle.

The literacy campaign and political education by Fretilin were functional in translating the spirit of afro-socialism into the local context of East Timor through using the *lingua franca*, Tetum. The term *Maubere* was successfully transformed from the colonial symbol of illiterate and ignorant East Timorese to the people of the struggle. In other words, Fretilin was able to localise Amílcar Cabral's 'the struggle of the people, by the people, for the people' into the East Timorese national struggle for popular mobilisation. A series of resistance slogans, such as 'Maubere brother' or 'the warriors of Maubere' (*Maubere asuwin*), illustrates how Fretilin re-created the people of East Timor (Hill, 2002, p. 73; McWilliam & Traube, 2011, p. 15).

4.3 | The role of the Catholic Church

In addition to the popular mobilisation by Fretilin, the Catholic Church played a crucial role in the development of East Timorese nationalism. Christianity was originally introduced to East Timor as a part of oppressive colonial institutions, and thus, it had never obtained genuine support from the East Timorese people (McGregor et al., 2012). The Church, however, provided emotional shelter for East Timorese as well as powerful critics of Indonesia's occupation after Portugal left East Timor (Kohen, 2000).

There were two consecutive transformations in the roles of the Church internationally and, subsequently, domestically. At the international level, the role of the Catholic Church gradually transformed from a colonial civilising mission to a universal promoter of human dignity beginning in the late nineteenth century through the Catholic Social Teachings (McGregor et al., 2012). This transformation led to the emergence of Liberation Theology movements in Latin America in the 1950s, which later spread and were uniquely developed in former western colonies, including those in Asia (Phan, 2000; Pieris, 1988). In the 1960, Vatican II Reforms further accelerated the Church's emphasis on social justice in impoverished and oppressed societies (Lundry, 2002).

Although the institutional impact of Vatican II Reforms was relatively limited, the shift of emphasis in terms of social justice was observed in the church in East Timor and fostered discussions of decolonisation from Portugal. Prominent members of Fretilin, including José Ramos-Horta, Nicolau Lobato and Mari Alkatiri, were educated at the seminary in Dare near Dili, which promoted the Catholic Social Doctrine and encouraged discussions of independence for East Timor. Likewise, the Catholic newspaper *Seara* became a space for the first nationalists to express their political opinions on self-determination without censorship (McGregor et al., 2012). Hence, the first nationalist leaders were able to articulate their political aspirations through the channel of the Catholic Church.

Domestically, Indonesia's government legally forced East Timorese to register as one of five religions including Catholicism under Indonesia's moral principal *Pancasila*, which, in turn, accelerated the *Timorisation* of the Catholic Church (Lundry, 2002). Because the Catholic Church employed the East Timorese language Tetum for Mass rather than the Indonesian language, the church became a cultural and spiritual epicentre of East Timorese people against Indonesia's occupation (Archer, 1995; Kohen, 2000). Through the Tetum language, the religious institution became an official representative of East Timorese nationalism. Until 1989, when East Timor was officially opened to foreigners by Indonesia's government, the Church was the only local institution capable of delivering the voices of East Timorese outside of Indonesian territory (Carey, 1999).

In sum, earlier East Timorese nationalism was formulated through the Lusophone cosmology and religious institutions of the Catholic Church. Fretilin's leadership wisely re-created the idea of East Timorese or *Maubere* by localising the thought of decolonisation. Their vision of nationalism did not, however, resonate with the international community at the time. While the Catholic Church was a powerful channel for the older generation, it was simultaneously the only legitimate local institution to communicate outside of Indonesia. Although the spirit and method of liberation movements in the post-colonial context accelerated the nationalist aspiration of East Timorese elites and the local population, it was too late to make legitimate claim in the international community that had been in transition to the Cold War and subsequently post-Cold War narratives. More precisely, the global climate had already transited from traditional anti-colonialism to universal human rights during the 1980s to 1990s. East Timorese nationalism,

therefore, entailed a new transformation to be fully recognised in the international arena. More efforts for international recognition were made by the new generation or *Geração Foun* who grew up under the Indonesia's occupation.

5 | NEW GENERATION, NEW NATIONALISM

5.1 | The Indonesianess of East Timorese youth

The old generation of East Timor successfully created the idea of East Timorese nationalism and mobilised local populations into their national liberation. Nevertheless, their national claim was not effectively recognised in the international community. While the East Timorese resistance had physically fought against Indonesian armed forces,⁴ the old generation's network was limited to the Portuguese speaking world. In the Cold War world context, the cosmology of anti-imperialism and colonialism was outdated for claiming the legitimacy of the construction of East Timorese state.

The new generation of East Timor, or *Geração Foun*, came from different cultural and backgrounds from those of the older generation, and thus, their independence struggle was developed in a different way. While the old leadership rested on the idea that liberation struggle is the integrated part of East Timorese against the colonial 'exploitation' or *exploração* in Portuguese, the struggle of the new generation was widely motivated by their 'suffering', or *terus* in Tetum, from their childhoods under the occupation (Kamisuna, 2023). Some activists from the new generation had spent their childhoods in the jungle, hiding from Indonesia's armed forces.⁵ Others had spent time with the Indonesian military in East Timor; for instance, a former East Timorese student activist Ruis Mendes had lived with the Indonesian military in East Timor, while supporting the military in his village. He first knew East Timorese guerrilla fighters when they were caught in the jungle by the Indonesian military.⁶ There are even other East Timorese youths who got to know the existence of East Timorese struggle through their lives as Indonesians (Carey, 2003). The childhood experiences of the new generation were based around encountering or discovering the *suffering* of the East Timorese under the Indonesian occupation.

East Timorese youths during the Indonesia's occupation were, therefore, culturally closer to Indonesians than the old leaders. They spoke the Indonesian language *Bahasa Indonesia* more fluently than Portuguese, while Tetum was the common language between the old and new generation. They learned Indonesian history and culture at Indonesian schools in order to be educated as 'true' Indonesians. Nevertheless, they experienced political aspirations towards the independence of their own nation. While the youngsters were the second generation of East Timorese struggle, they were the first to be welcomed by Indonesia to be Indonesians. A series of infrastructure developments and the education given to East Timorese youths by Indonesia's Suharto regime aimed to assimilate them into Indonesia (Tempo, 1991a, 1991b). However, unequal treatment in everyday life as 'Indonesians' and suppression of East Timorese culture rather accelerated their national identity as East Timorese (Carey, 2003). As a result, they began to involve themselves in the independence struggle.

The cultural exposure of East Timorese youths to Indonesia, however, led to a different strategy of claiming independence or *ukun raik aan*. In contrast to the older generation, the younger generation was more likely to work with Indonesian pro-democracy and leftist activists, beginning with discussion groups on university campuses.⁷ Eventually, the East Timorese youth organisation Renetil (*Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor-Leste* or National Resistance of East Timorese Students)⁸ conceptualised a political movement, *Indonesiação do Conflito de Timor-Leste* (Indonesianisation of conflict in East Timor), which was a counter-force against the Indonesianisation of East Timorese through development and education for cultural assimilation (Kamisuna, 2020).

The idea of Indonesianisation of conflict in East Timor was an alternative to the existing strategy of the older generation. Whereas the Fretilin leadership had *localised* the anti-colonial liberation struggle in the Lusophone world, youth activists in Renetil *externalised* their long-lasting struggle from their parents' generation towards Indonesian society and, later, beyond. Here, East Timorese *Maubermism*, which Fretilin's leaders had created, unexpectedly coalesced into Indonesia's *Marhaenism* through youth activism between East Timorese and Indonesians. Indeed,

author's interviews with former student activists from both East Timor and Indonesia reveal that they shared Marxist and socialist perspectives in their joint movements for referendums for East Timor and democracy for Indonesia.

A transition within Indonesian society is also crucial to understanding the coalescence of the two nationalist movements. Beginning in the late 1980s, Indonesia had also experienced a generational transition of Indonesian nationalism in leftist movements. A new generation of NGOs had emerged with more radical and provocative political perspectives than those of the previous generation of pro-democracy activism (Uhlen, 1997). While conventional NGO activism in Indonesia had focused on development, the new social activism was more politically oriented. The younger generation pursued a more progressive form of the nation as an alternative to the state's national vision. As the result, youth radicalism in Indonesia envisaged a 'new image of political visibility' (Aspinall, 2005, p. 89). Against the oppression of Suharto's authoritarian regime, Indonesian youths began to pursue an alternative or original form of the Indonesian nation that their founding father had attempted to realise upon independence from Dutch colonialism.

Hence, the chemistry between East Timorese and Indonesian youth was not a coincidence. It was rather the historical consequence that the different streams of *Mauberism* and *Marhaenism* coalesced between the new generations of East Timorese and Indonesian youth over the generations. Impressively, an Indonesian solidarity group supporting the referendum for East Timorese *Solidamor* (Solidarity for Timor-Leste Peace Settlement) called the charismatic leader of East Timorese resistance, Xanana Gusmão, 'East Timor's Sukarno' (*Bung Karno-nya Timor Timur*) (Siswawihardjo and Susanto, 1999, p. 17). The East Timorese spirit of *Mauberism* successfully translated to Indonesian *Marhaenism* through youth activism between two nations.

5.2 | Nationalism and human rights

The youth nationalism of East Timorese was further consolidated during the 1990s amid the post-Cold War transition of international discourse from self-determination to human rights. A striking incident occurred in East Timor on 12 November 1991. Indonesia's armed forces fired on East Timorese demonstrators at the Santa Cruz cemetery in East Timor's capital city of Dili. One reliable source reported that the death toll of the massacre reached 271 with 250 missing and 382 wounded (Peace is Possible in East Timor, 1993, p. 3). The massacre was captured by British journalist Max Stahl and immediately exposed to international media for the first time in the history of the East Timorese struggle. The post-Cold War global climate was responsive to this incident. Former UN official Francesc Vendrell explained the impact of the massacre on UN communities to the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor (CAVR) as such:

The Santa Cruz incident was a major historical event for East Timor and brought the whole issue of East Timor back to the political scene at the United Nations. Therefore we should think of those who died in the Santa Cruz Cemetery as heroes of the independence struggle for East Timor

(Quoted from CAVR 2013, p. 265).

Indeed, East Timorese youth had understood the risk of conducting demonstration. East Timorese activist in Dili Gregorio da Cunha Saldanha who organised the demonstration at Santa Cruz knew that there was risk in this action:

Xanana [the East Timorese leader of the independence movement from the old generation] tried to stop the demonstration, but it was impossible. People knew that something might happen during the demonstration. However, they were willing to give their lives for independence.⁹

The bloody demonstration by East Timorese youth, therefore, reflected their *suffering* (*terus*) under Indonesia's occupation, and this patriotic *suffering* was successfully delivered to the international community.

In the aftermath of the incident in Dili, solidarity actions for East Timorese were immediately taken by East Timorese, Indonesian and international activists. Solidarity campaigns for East Timorese were organised in Portugal, Ireland and Australia, which in turn led the international criticism of Indonesia's Suharto regime (Fernandes, 2011). In this respect, East Timorese youth activist Naldo Rei who was active in Australia told the author that although the Santa Cruz massacre was not big in scale, it received special attention only because the international community witnessed the killings.¹⁰

In Indonesia, over 80 East Timorese students participated in demonstrations in Jakarta on 19 November, and roughly 70 students were arrested by the police (Matsuno, 1992). Prominent Indonesian human rights organisations such as LBH (*Lembaga Bantuan Hukum* or The Legal Aid Institute) and NFIGHT (Indonesian Front for the Defense of Human Rights) criticised the Indonesia's military and preferred immediate investigation of the incident in Dili (Matsuno, 1992). Indeed, the impact of the Santa Cruz massacre on the Indonesian pro-democracy and human rights movements was politically significant. Some Indonesian activists were aware of the impact of the East Timorese struggle on the international community, while the Indonesian struggle for human rights had been less successful in capturing international attention. Former Indonesian student activist Rachland Nashidik explains the struggle of Indonesian human rights activists against authoritarian rule and the impact of East Timorese struggle as such:

There was a long struggle conducted by generations of Indonesian activists trying to overthrow the dictator. But, we always failed [B]efore we were acquainted with the East Timorese struggle, we did not realise that international pressure was so effective. You know, to push for the openness of Indonesian politics in Indonesia, we admit that only by using the East Timorese struggle, Indonesian politics could be opened up After a long struggle to promote human rights, we were helped, ironically enough, by the suffering of the East Timorese It was really because of the East Timorese struggle for independence that we became aware that the democratic movement in Indonesia should, or must, go side by side with the East Timorese struggle for independence because we faced the same enemy: the dictator.¹¹

Here, young Indonesian youth pro-democracy and human rights activists became able to articulate their long-lasting struggle for human rights to the international community through the East Timorese struggle for independence. After the Santa Cruz massacre, Indonesian human rights activist Helmi Fauzi (1992), for instance, spoke at the Australian Parliament in January 1992 on behalf of Indonesian pro-democracy and human rights youth groups. In his testimony, he described the Indonesian struggle for human rights and democracy against Suharto's dictatorship as parallel with the Santa Cruz Massacre in Dili. Thus, Indonesian activists had realised that they should work with the East Timorese to promote democracy in Indonesia.

Evidently, the strength of youth nationalism in East Timor was its use of the universal language of human rights in the post-Cold War climate in making their nationalist claim for independence. Historian Geoffrey Robinson (2014, p. 34) argues that the East Timorese struggle 'combined demands for human rights and national self-determination, and employed both the rhetoric of revolutionary war and the discourse of human rights morality'. East Timorese youths were able to Indonesianise and subsequently internationalise their nationalist struggle by amalgamating their patriotic *suffering* for independence with universal demands for human rights protection. The countless anonymous calls from the youth for liberation from Indonesia's occupation resonated with struggles of Indonesian youth who had sought an alternative form of Indonesian nationalism.

Some prominent Indonesian activists even projected their own independence struggle from Dutch colonialism onto the East Timorese struggle from Indonesia (Kamisuna, 2020). A letter that Indonesian leftist activist Wilson sent to his East Timorese comrade Puto (Naldo Rei) from prison illuminates how Indonesian radical nationalism could link the East Timorese struggle and their own historical struggle against colonialism:

... since I came to know Puto and his history of struggle, I feel like I am living in the past, at a time when the colonialism of the western countries was still in full swing, fifty years ago. And through Puto's story, I have become embarrassed at my own country; that a country that had won freedom through a long struggle against colonialism was now taking the same position as its colonial masters in that previous era Maybe such a person as this had existed in Indonesia during the nationalist struggle against the colonialism of the Dutch and Japan. It was true. Puto had reversed the wheels of my political history to the former colonial period

(Rei, 2007, p. 309).

As the result, Wilson (2010) speculated about an alternative to the existing official nationalism dominated by the Suharto's authoritarian state as such:

[The] East Timorese did have an impact on the definition of nationalism, specifically from conservative to progressive nationalism. Some radical groups tried to give a new definition to Indonesian nationalism because of East Timor.¹²

The territorial expansion of Suharto's Indonesian state precisely reflected the concept of 'official nationalism' in which the state (re-)creates national characteristics in favour of state rule (cf. Seton-Watson, 1977). The occupation and inclusion of East Timor were a part of this official national project of the Indonesian state. The introduction of the moral principle of Indonesian people *Pancasila* aimed to create a 'national personality' for Indonesians (Tsuchiya, 1995), while infrastructural development justified the territorial expansion of the Indonesian state. In this way, Indonesians, including East Timorese, were expected to be officially 'Indonesianised' (Moertopo, 2003). The series of recessionist movements in Indonesia during the 1990s, including the East Timorese struggle, were counter-claims from peripheries against such a state-led official nationalism (Bertrand, 2004).

Indeed, Indonesian pro-democracy activists in Jakarta distinguished their own pro-democracy struggle against the regime from other separatist movements from peripheries. Nevertheless, they had sought alternative forms of Indonesian nationalism against Suharto's official nationalism. The East Timorese youth struggle successfully showed Indonesian youth an original and genuine form of nationalism that universally seeks liberation from colonial oppression, by unintentionally revisiting Sukarno's *Marhaenism* through East Timorese Mauberism.¹³ The unfinished struggle of national liberation travelled from time to time and one place to another over the generations. As a result, a series of join-actions between East Timorese and Indonesian youths symbolically took place at the Russian and Dutch Embassies, the Indonesian national parliament and Foreign Affairs office beginning in the mid-1990s towards 1998, the year of Indonesia democratisation and the referendum for East Timorese (Kamisuna, 2020).

The language of human rights was powerfully transnational. International solidarity for East Timor experienced a massive expansion beginning in the mid-1990s. In 1994, the series of solidarity actions was eventually crystallised in a conference of the Asia-Pacific Coalition for East Timor (APCET) in Manila in the Philippines. The conference included more than 500 participants in forming a coalition for East Timorese self-determination (Indonesia Solidarity Action, 1994). Indonesian human rights activist Rachland Nashidik also participated in this conference and expressed solidarity with the East Timorese, saying that '[w]e are here in this conference because we cannot refuse to see that East Timor is part of the democratic and human rights struggle in Indonesia' (Indonesia Solidarity Action, 1994, p. 4). APCET conferences were also held in Kuala Lumpur in 1996 and Bangkok in 1998. Thai national newspaper *the Bangkok Post* assessed the conference in Bangkok as a 'significant achievement' for regional human rights advocacy in the Asia-Pacific region (Ashayagachat, 1998). Evidently, the decade after the Santa Cruz massacre witnessed a massive transformation and expansion of the East Timorese independence struggle beyond the territory.

6 | DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL TRANSITIONS

While the older generation of East Timor constructed East Timorese nationalism in terms of decolonisation, which was outdated by the 1970s after most of the Asian and African colonies had gained independence, the new generation successfully articulated their nationalism in terms of universal human rights in the 1990s. In the late Cold War period, there was a discursive transition related to the internationalisation of nationalism at the global level; that is, from anti-colonialism to universal human rights. Samuel Moyn (2012) explicitly captures the transition from anti-colonial struggle to the struggle for human rights over the late Cold War period. Anti-colonialism was a powerful discourse against imperialism after the Second World War that often marched with communism in Asia and Africa. The combination of anti-colonialism and communism created international solidarity in Asia and Africa could be seen at the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia, where nationalist leaders from former western colonies in Asia and Africa gathered and declare their internationalism and self-determination. The East Timorese old generation claimed nationalism in terms of anti-colonialism or anti-imperialism, which was outdated in the 1970s.

The global climate of internationalism had, however, been shifting towards universal human rights towards the end of the Cold War, which is, according to Moyn (2012), different from anti-colonialism. The human rights movement is different from the anti-colonial struggle simply because the former does not include the right to self-determination. While anti-colonial struggles explicitly articulated the right to self-determination, as the old East Timorese leadership had strongly claimed against Portuguese colonialism and Indonesia's occupation, they rarely claimed 'human rights'. Meanwhile, human rights campaigns do not aim collective liberation against racial inequality and the legacy of colonial exploitation (Moyn, 2012). Indeed, the language of human rights became more powerful at the global level, hinging on the triumph of liberalism and capitalism over communism in the Cold War (Cmiel, 2004). This shift resonates with the transition of the dominant institutional system from the empire to the nation (Moyn, 2012). Whereas anti-colonialists claimed the collective right to self-determination to establish nation-states against western imperialism, human rights activists tend to fight the authoritarian or oppressive rule of nation-states.

The independence struggle of the new generation in East Timor precisely fit with this transition to the human rights paradigm. Their patriotic sacrifice in the Santa Cruz Massacre in 1991 was indeed coincidental with the end of the Cold War and subsequent prevalence of the neo-liberal order, which aligned the tragedy in East Timor with the series of humanitarian crises in Rwanda, Kosovo, Iraq and the West Bank. The linkage to human rights, therefore, enabled East Timorese nationalism to stand out as powerfully patriotic in the international arena during the 1990s. In other words, the human rights discourse was able to assert the claim of a self-determining 'people' as a universal rather than nationalistic one (Gutmann, 2001).

Overall, East Timorese youth were able to articulate their nationalism in terms of human rights, whereas the old generation used the rhetoric of decolonisation. Although both powerful narratives were universal and transnational, the nationalist claim of the new generation fit better with the *periodisation* of the post-Cold War global climate in which individual human rights were more predominant than the collective right to self-determination. Indeed, Fretilin's leadership from the old generation had devoted its efforts and resources to localising their national struggle, by translating East Timorese nationalism into the right to self-determination against colonial exploitation. Nevertheless, their ideological cosmology of the Lusophone world was not powerful enough in the 1970s, when most Asian and African colonies had already gained independence from western colonialism. The transition of nationalism to the new generation enabled East Timorese nationalism to be Indonesianised and internationalised through contemporary human rights language, albeit with the patriotic sacrifice of the youth.

7 | CONCLUSION

This article theoretically explains the transition of nationalism, hinging on the transformation of international discourses, by empirically analysing the relation between East Timorese nationalism and internationalism. While

conventional literature on nationalism has largely focused on the modern invention and post-modern consumption of nationalism, this study elucidates a transition of nationalism in the process of nation building. Through capturing both the generational transition of East Timorese nationalism from the old Portuguese-educated generation to the new Indonesian-assimilated generation and the transformation of international discourses from anti-colonialism to human rights advocacy, it demonstrates how nationalism has been constructed and transformed to be exogenously related to internationalism.

It also exhibits the ideological *continuity* between the two generations of East Timorese national liberation. Although the old and new generations rested on different universal claims, both shared a Marxist ideological perspective, which the old leadership of Fretilin learned from anticolonial thought in the Lusophone world, whereas the East Timorese youths absorbed it through interactions with Indonesian leftist youth. The internationalism of Marxism was represented in different local terms: that is, *Maubereism* in East Timor and *Marhaenism* in Indonesia. The chemistry took place when East Timorese youths met Indonesian youths and Indonesian nationalists became able to recognise *Maubere's* struggle as a universally acquired form of nationalist struggle that *Marhaenism* attempted to realise. Eventually, joint actions of two nationalist groups were symbolically took placed in Indonesia.

Overall, this article demonstrates the changes and continuity of two generations of national struggles, by recounting in parallel the development and transformation of nationalism and internationalism. Although the East Timorese independence struggle is a single unique case of nationalist movements, the analysis potentially expands the scope of nationalism by linking the process of the development to transitions to internationalism. The construction and development of nationalism are, therefore, not only endogenous, but the process entails exogenous factors to be successfully transformed.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Amílcar Cabral (1924–1973) is an African intellectual and nationalist leader who led liberation movements in Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde. His ideas have been broadly recognised in Lusophone African nationalist movements.
- ² There have been some student groups organised by students from African colonies active in Lisbon and Coimbra since 1940s (Gonçalves, 2021). These include *Casa de Moçambique* and *Casa de Angola* and *Cosa de Timor*.
- ³ For the details analysis of the literacy manual, see my forthcoming chapter from Routledge (Kamisuna, 2023) as well as Leach (2016).
- ⁴ Fretilin organised its armed wing Falintil (Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste or Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor) to fight against the Indonesian military.
- ⁵ Author's interview with East Timorese activist Demetrio do Amaral de Carvalho on 5 January 2015. Amaral was a former leader of the East Timorese student organisation in Indonesia, Renetil (*Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor-Leste* or National Resistance of East Timorese Students). Others also experienced suffering in the jungle in their childhoods. See for instance Rei (2007).
- ⁶ Author's interview with Ruis Mendes on 12 December 2014. Later, Mendes became a member of Renetil in Indonesia.
- ⁷ Author's interviews with East Timorese activist Ruis Mendes on 12 December 2014 and Indonesian activist Helimi Fauz on 14 January 2015. Fauz was a student activist working on democracy in Indonesia and the right of self-determination of East Timorese. During the 1990s, he supported the independence struggle of the East Timorese in Indonesia.
- ⁸ Renetil was a student-led organisation by East Timorese youths in Indonesia. It was established in Denpasar in Indonesia in 1989 by prominent East Timorese activists who were studying in Indonesia's mainland.
- ⁹ Author's interview with Gregorio da Cunha Saldanha on 15 November 2014.
- ¹⁰ Author's interview with Naldo Rei on 10 November 2014.
- ¹¹ Author's interview with Rachland Nashidik on 27 January 2015. Nashidik is a former member of the Indonesian human rights organisation INFIGHT and former chair of pro-democracy and human rights group *Pijar*.
- ¹² Author's interview with Wilson on 22 January 2015.
- ¹³ In the context of anti-colonial struggles, liberation from exploitation and suffering is a cardinal part of nationalist aspiration. Indian liberation leader Mahatma Gandhi (1997, p. 86), for instance, called himself a fierce nationalist without devising 'to harm any nation or individual'. Likewise, Nelson Mandela (2018, p. 44) in South Africa was 'a nationalist but by no means a racist'. Sukarno in Indonesia was also nationalist by no means a Marxist or Islamist (Tsuchiya, 1971).

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