Re-Imagining the Empire: Portuguese Media and Politics and the Coverage of East Timor

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by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 5
Abstract 6
Introduction 6

Chapter 1 - Theoretical overview .................................................. 10
1.1 Identity, Nationalism and the Media ........................................ 11
   1.1.1 Theories of nationalism .................................................. 11
1.2 Some notes on Portuguese nationalism .................................. 16
1.3 The social construction of reality and the media .................. 26
   1.3.1 News stories as frames of organisation and interpretation .. 26
   1.3.2 News-making as a social process: institutions and practices .. 28
   1.3.3 The Media and the struggle over access and meaning ....... 30
   1.3.4 Challenging frames: the struggle over access and meaning .. 32
   1.3.5 Entering the media agenda ........................................... 34
   1.3.6 Summary ..................................................................... 36
1.4 The communication of politics, international relations and conflict ... 37
   1.4.1 The Media and foreign policy .......................................... 38
1.5 Conclusion ................................................................. 43

Chapter 2 - Methodology ............................................................... 45
2.1 A multi-dimensional project, a qualitative approach .......... 45
2.2 Depth hermeneutics: an interpretative approach .............. 46
   2.2.1 Social-historical analysis ............................................ 47
   2.2.2 Formal or discursive analysis ..................................... 49
   2.2.3 Interpretation/re-interpretation .................................. 56

Chapter 3 - East Timor and Portugal: history of a relationship .... 57
3.1 Portuguese settlement in East Timor .................................... 58
3.2 Timor under a colonial dictatorship ..................................... 60
3.3 Timorese nationalism in the context of Portuguese decolonisation . 62
3.4 The fall of the empire: domestic politics and colonial impact ... 67
3.5 Going global: East Timor and international politics .......... 70
3.6 Summary ...................................................................... 73
Chapter 4 - Giving meaning to East Timor: the politics, the NGOs, the resistance and the press

4.1 East Timor policy: changes and discourse

4.1.1 1975 to early 1980s: a non-issue

4.1.2 The 1980s: the slow awakening of the issue

4.1.3 The 1990s: East Timor enters the domestic sphere

4.1.4 Summary

4.2 The resistance

4.2.1 Changes in the political organisation of the resistance

4.2.2 Communicating politics: the resistance's struggle for access

4.3 The role of non-governmental organisations

4.3.1 Introduction

4.3.2 NGOs and the press: the struggle for access

4.3.3 Beyond access: East Timor as a mediated event

4.4 The media

4.4.1 Expresso, Diário de Noticias and an overview of the Portuguese press

4.4.2 The rise of East Timor in the media agenda: from non-existence to consolidation

4.4.3 Journalists as myth-makers: joining the cause

4.4.4 Reporting the unknown: difficult routines and unconventional sourcing

4.5 Conclusion

Chapter 5 - 1975 - Indonesia invades East Timor

5.1 Description of the event

5.2 Political and media context

5.3 Portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese

5.4 The relationship between Portugal and East Timor

5.5 International relations and East Timor

5.6 Conclusion

Chapter 6 - 1981 - East Timor secret report

6.1 Description of the event

6.2 Political and media context

6.3 Portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese

6.4 The relationship between Portugal and East Timor
10.5 International relations and East Timor .............................................................. 227
10.6 Conclusions........................................................................................................... 229

Chapter 11 - 1999 - The referendum on autonomy ................................. 234
11.1 Description of the event...................................................................................... 234
11.2 Political and Media Context.............................................................................. 234
11.3 Portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese....................................................... 235
11.4 The relationship between Portugal and East Timor................................. 241
  11.4.1 National symbols ......................................................................................... 241
  11.4.2 Defining East Timor through Portugal ....................................................... 243
  11.4.3 Historic relationships ................................................................................. 243
  11.4.4 The naturalisation of Portuguese language ............................................... 247
  11.4.5 Questioning 'the cause'............................................................................... 249
11.5 International Relations...................................................................................... 252
  11.5.1 Portugal versus the rest of the world .......................................................... 252
  11.5.2 Indonesia and East Timor as separate spaces ............................................ 254
11.6 Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 256

Conclusion 264

Life Cycles of the Issue of East Timor................................................................. 264
The struggle for access and meaning .................................................................. 265
Media representation of East Timor...................................................................... 270
  Portrait of East Timor and the Timorese ............................................................ 270
  The relationship between Portugal and East Timor.......................................... 271
International relations and East Timor............................................................... 273
Further questions .................................................................................................. 273

Appendix One.......................................................................................................... 276

List of Interviewees ............................................................................................... 276
Guidelines for interviews with political staff...................................................... 277
Guidelines for interviews with NGOs and resistance staff ......................... 277
Guidelines for interviews with journalists .......................................................... 278
Guidelines to interviews with editors ................................................................. 278

Bibliography 279
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Abstract

This thesis explores the impact of political discourses on the construction of the issue-culture of East Timor in Portugal, and analyses media representations of East Timor from 1975 up to 1999. The research looks specifically at the discourses and strategies of the state and those groups who challenged establishment views of the issue, namely NGOs campaigning for the territory and the Timorese resistance. On the basis of material gathered through media stories, political documents and interviews, the research argues that media coverage was driven by the political framing of East Timor; that challenger groups were more successful in defining the terms of coverage when they sought resonance with larger cultural themes; and that changing media practices impacted dramatically on the news narrative. It concludes that East Timor was legitimised once it was transformed into a domestic issue, and articulated with ideological versions of identity and history reminiscent of the Portuguese Empire.

Introduction

My interest in this area of study coincided with the period when the former Portuguese colony of East Timor secured its independence from Indonesia's 24-year occupation through a referendum. However, the refreshed confidence fostered by the referendum was soon shattered by a predictable campaign of violence mastered by pro-Indonesia militias. Most press and UN staff were flown out of East Timor at the height of that conflict, in September 1999.

In those post-referendum days Portugal was transformed. The former colonial occupant of East Timor submerged into weeks of collective and unseen forms of popular mobilisation. Demonstrators called for intervention in East Timor while the media covered the situation in East Timor with unusual intensity. Protesters joined hands with the Portuguese prime minister and organised hundreds of fundraisers, a novelty in a country with a poor tradition of institutional charity.

Despite this public wave of symbolism, links with East Timor had always been tame during the history of the Portuguese Empire and were certainly impossible during Indonesian occupation. What had produced this sudden wave of national union pro-East Timor? The relationship between Portugal and East Timor, and the ways in which the press had construed that relationship became of paramount importance to me. This is the story of how the research project begun.
Present paradigms of studies on Portuguese identity point to a dialectical relationship between the past and the present of the country. Trapped by the mythology of an empire which no longer exists, discourses on Portuguese identity fluctuate between the fear of decadence in light of a glorious past, and the aspiration for a future which will match those past expectations. Identity flirts constantly with conceptualisations of the centre and the periphery. East Timor was for centuries a neglected colony, yet its symbolic presence in the southeast of Asia fitted into the idea of a past defined by economic and political weight, a position that no longer exists in the European jigsaw of the 21st century. While East Timor topped the news media agenda in 1999, that certainly had not been the case in the past.

The project was guided by a set of research questions aimed at mapping the history of the issue in the Portuguese public space, as well as investigating the different meanings conveyed through the East Timor story. I was particularly interested in pursuing the following lines of enquiry:

- **What were the life cycles of the issue of East Timor?**
  If 1999 was a year of over-exposure for East Timor in the Portuguese media that had certainly not been the situation before. It was imperative to map the issue-culture of East Timor in the Portuguese public space, and the different contexts in which the issue changed from a status of non-existence, to other states of emergence, legitimisation and mobilisation.

- **How did actors define their struggle for access and meaning over East Timor?**
  I was interested in understanding the competing definitions promoted by different actors in the process, namely the Portuguese state, the East Timorese resistance and non-governmental organisations promoting independence and human rights for East Timor. The research writes the history of strategies and definitions used by challenger groups for a place in the public agenda and the legitimisation of the issue of East Timor. At the same time, it also draws attention to the way media routines and practices impacted on the social construction of East Timor. In asking this question I was ultimately interested in the relationship between the political and media discourse, and the movement exercised between these two spheres in building the maps of meaning for the territory.

- **How have the media framed the issue of East Timor?**
  Besides the strategies of different actors, I was particularly interested in understanding how those meanings surrounding East Timor were constructed in the press, how East Timor was represented and reflected upon during the
historical continuum of the 24-year period. In order to do so, I analysed seven critical moments of discourse and carried out hermeneutical analysis on these moments of intensified coverage, in order to extract the framing of specific dimensions. Those dimensions are: the portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese, the relationship between Portugal and East Timor, and international relations and East Timor.

- **How does the representation of East Timor play with contemporary discourses of Portuguese identity and its relationship to the rest of the world?**

Finally, the research relates the particular history and definition of this issue-culture to contemporary versions of Portuguese identity. I locate instances in which East Timor does not exist as a discourse in itself, and is instead utilised as a vehicle for wider discourses on Portuguese identity at large.

The research follows current paradigms in the sociology of journalism, political communications and theories of nationalism and identity. It points to the relationship between journalistic routines and practices and media output. It looks at the issue-culture of East Timor as a matter of competition between different actors for a place in the media’s agenda. It assumes that these processes are political, part of the larger dynamics of ‘contest among political antagonists for political control’ (Wolfsfeld, 1997, p. 3). It views the framing of East Timor as part of a wider struggle for access and meaning between different. At the same time, the research tracks the history of the issue through the repertoire of events (or critical moments of discourse) that have given it shape, and unravels the different ideological stands contained within the press discourse. Finally, the research places the issue-culture of East Timor within the perennial sphere of discourses on Portuguese identity.

In summary, the research treats its object of study in two interactive lights. On the one hand, it provides answers about the legitimisation of East Timor on the Portuguese political and news media agenda. On the other hand, it observes the discursive formations employed in the coverage of East Timor.

The thesis is organised into eleven chapters.

Chapter One is a theoretical overview of modern theories on identity in nationalism and their relation to contemporary discourses of Portuguese nationalism. It then moves on to explore social theories of the construction of reality and the media’s role in that process. It further points out the media’s organisational practices; it approaches the communication of politics and the relationship between political
discourses and media discourses. The chapter ends with considerations of media representations of international affairs and collective violence.

Chapter Two is a reflexive approach to methodological issues. It explores decisions regarding the qualitative analysis of news text, the work of interpretation, the selection of material, interviewing techniques and the gathering of various data.

Chapter Three provides an historical account of the relationship between East Timor and Portugal, from early Portuguese settlement up to Indonesian occupation.

Chapter Four investigates the strategies and discourses of actors in the framing of East Timor throughout the years. Through the analysis of policy documents, semi-structured interviews and bibliographical research this chapter maps out the shifts in the discourse of the Portuguese state and challenger groups. It includes material on media practices used in the coverage of East Timor, and how they impacted in that coverage.

Chapters Five to Eleven contain the empirical analysis of the critical moments of coverage. Finally, the conclusion summarises the main findings of the project.
Chapter 1 - Theoretical overview

The research project pursued different lines of enquiry and therefore used diverse bodies of theory necessary to answer the questions set out by the project. The exercise of theoretical conceptualisation in this chapter took into account the multidisciplinary demands of the realities under observation. None of the theories presented here fitted neatly in isolation with the corpus of material under study. This was not an exercise of hypothetical testing of one single model, but instead a qualitative exploration of the relationships of power and the sets of meanings at play in the Portuguese narrative over East Timor. What was needed was a range of theoretical work to open up the texts.

In addition, the research explored ways of accommodating what was as yet an unwritten history of East Timor in the contemporary Portuguese political and media corpus. Moreover, existing models of Anglophile media theory do not sit easily with the political and media structures of a semi-peripherical society such as Portugal. Besides, Portuguese media theory is an incipient territory which (unlike media research in Britain) lacks its own narratives on indigenous history and political economy of the media. As a result of that, the theoretical models presented here talk both to media theory as a whole but also to core texts of Portuguese social and historical theory. The research used both strands of thought in the conceptualisation of the project, and built upon the existing body of work by bridging these regionally distinct concepts.

Some research questions called directly to the media framing of issues, and the social actor's struggle for power in defining those frames, or sets of meanings. Consequently, this chapter includes a review of theories on the social construction of reality and the media. Furthermore, the framing and representation of East Timor opened another set of questions about the specific types of routines and practices of the Portuguese media, particularly those of East Timor correspondents. Here the use of theories on the media's organisational practices and the ways in which they engage with everyday reporting. As I demonstrate throughout the analysis of data, the representation of East Timor in the Portuguese media was greatly defined by the type of practices in place.

In trying to assemble a body of theory for the project, I also borrowed from the work of Wolfsfeld and Gamson, who provided useful guidance in articulating the struggle for access to the media, and the political construction of meaning. Their writings reflected on the dynamics of political and media discourses, and pointed to
the types of relationships I wanted to map through empirical analysis. The research further suggested points of connection with literature on the media and the reporting of conflict and international relations. Indeed, part of the constraints of covering East Timor related to its Indonesian occupation and armed conflict, and the wider framework of international relations at play in that region of the globe. A review of that body of work can be found later on in this chapter.

Finally, the research project asked questions about the representation of East Timor and its relation to contemporary discourses of Portuguese nationalism and identity. In many ways, this thesis demonstrates how the Portuguese discourse on universalism and identity rooted the media coverage of East Timor. Hence my point of departure in this chapter: a broad review of modern social and historical theory on nationalism and identity, followed by the Portuguese narratives of identity and its implications for contemporary political discourses.

1.1 Identity, Nationalism and the Media

Portuguese identity and nationalism were visibly played out in mediated discourse on East Timor. Thus, I briefly outline these theoretical concepts, and the ways in which they articulate with literature on Portuguese national identity. I follow on to discuss the ways in which nationalism builds the idea of collective identity, and how that identity tends to be "naturalised" in certain political discourses of the nation-state. Moreover, I present the types of contemporary rhetoric on the Portuguese nation-state, and how they relate to those "natural elements" of nationalism. Despite modernist academic views of nation as a political and symbolic construction, popular discourse still articulates the idea of nation as a perennial reality.

1.1.1 Theories of nationalism

The work of Gellner (1983) epitomises the modern conceptualisation of nationalism as a "theory of political legitimacy". Nationalism established the conceptual borders by which a political space is defined, transforming itself into an overarching idea of "belonging" to a category – the nation – under which a community was collectively organised. The modern state had a central role in this process. Its authority guaranteed, and politically legitimised, the organisation of the conceptual and physical space was understood as "the nation". This conceptual space became, according to Gellner, a political roof for culture, where culture is exercised, communicated and played out (I return to in due course). Crucial to Gellner's view of the development of nationalism was the shift operated in modes of production
across western societies. Gellner argues that the pressures on the workforce called for a different system when economies changed from an agrarian context to an industrial context. That system had to allow for the discontinuities which characterise modern economies: the specialisation and division of labour, increased mobility, an ability to communicate across communities and labour markets. None of this, Gellner argues, would be possible without a state-run education system able to reproduce a common culture understood by all, regardless of the specific set of social relations established by each individual. Only a standard education system could guarantee the demands of such an economy. The education system generates the literacy (or what Gellner calls the high culture) which provides the lexicon and symbolic references to the population. Unlike agrarian societies, where the status quo was maintained through the church and family blood lines, post-industrial societies relied on a shared code of cultural references and a language, without which this type of economy would be endangered. Standard mass education became a process of socialisation of individuals into national citizens, who shared a repertoire of values and who were able to define themselves as holders of a culture distinct from that of any other nation, the proprietors of a rather elusive "collective personality" (Smith, 1990). In this sense, national culture cannot be thought of without the state; it is the state which institutionalises national culture.

The idea of nation as a space underpinned in cultural and communicative transactions was also developed by Anderson (1983). In his study, Anderson considered the role of language in the development of nationalism. Most importantly, he saw the print-medium as a distributor of culture, and by analogy, the role of various means of communication in the reproduction of nationalism. Benedict Anderson famously defined nation as an "imagined community". In his words, nation is:

... an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the imagine of their communion (p. 6).

By imagining nations as limited, Anderson pointed out their exclusive character, to processes of differentiation and exclusion which turn the "other" into a foreign element who will not fit "naturally" within the national space. By highlighting the sovereign element of nations, Anderson marked the change in the paradigm of power: governance was no longer legitimised by the divine and dynastic realm, but instead was brought about by the humanism of the Enlightenment and the empowerment of the rational individual.
Anderson's theory is particularly relevant to some sections of this research, particularly the way in which East Timorese resistance at large reproduced nationalism. In the 1990s, Anderson (1993) raised the point that, in some ways, East Timor had disproved his theory: 'My theoretical writings on nationalism have focused on the importance of the spread of print and its relationship to capitalism, yet in East Timor there has been very little capitalism, and illiteracy was widespread' (p. 23).

Much of Timorese nationalism grew in opposition to the fierce, violent and dominant Indonesian state apparatus in East Timor, the intensity of which was not in any way near the tamed version of Portuguese colonialism. It was the opposition to this pervasive state that dictated the rise of nationalism in the island, with two curious consequences. One of them was that, as Anderson pointed out, Indonesia followed the same defeatist strategies that once made the previous Dutch coloniser lose Indonesia to the "natives": by ignoring local identities, the Dutch created resistance to their rule. By crushing the diversity of identities in East Timor - Anderson quite rightly predicted - Jakarta would never master the "Indonesiation" of that territory. The other irony, which this research suggests further on, is that by imposing a particularly violent regime that denied the display of colonial Portuguese symbols, Jakarta actually reinforced the importance of Portuguese heritage in defining the terms of the new Timorese nation, post-1999.

In addition, Anderson's work on the political nature of nations strongly reinforced the idea of nationalism and nations as symbolic constructions, as an imagined space drawn together for political purposes, or, in his own words, 'as cultural artefacts of a particular kind'. The standardisation of language and the growth of print-capitalism provided the medium for the display of a common set of stories shared by those who inhabited that political space. As Anderson wrote, 'it made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways' (p. 36). I now want to turn to this idea of a set of common stories which modernist theorists see as taking a central role in building the cultural artefacts, in shaping the common culture which constitutes the 'imagined' space and defines the 'collective personality'.

Hobsbawm and Ranger's theory (1992) on the invention of tradition deals with some of these symbolic narratives, or cultural artefacts, that give shape to nationalism. Hobsbawm emphasises the historical narrative as a construction which provides a set of traditions that constitute the fabric of what Smith called the "collective personality". In order to create an "immemorial past" of stories, the
perennial discourses of nationalism are built on a substantial amount of invented traditions:

"Invented tradition" is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (p. 1).

The authors take the view that those elements of a nation that common sense takes for granted – such as language, ethnicity, and costumes or other ritual "national" historical celebrations – do not naturally come to exist from immemorial times as naturalist and nationalist discourses proclaim. These elements were constructed to legitimise the administrative status of the state. For example, the idea of official language itself as a "criterion for nationhood" is one which comes out of a political construction formulated during late 18th-century France, at a time when vernaculars co-existed. Hobsbawm and Ranger presented this formulation as an example of "invented tradition":

Given that the dialect which forms the basis of national language is actually spoken; it does not matter that those who speak it are a minority, so long as it is a minority of political weight. In this sense, French was essential to the concept of France, even though in 1789 50% of Frenchmen did not speak it at all, only 12–13% spoke it correctly (p. 60).

This example illustrates the types of common ground on which a nation like France, taken as a state model that inspired other republics throughout Europe, was built upon. What is interesting about the invention of tradition theory is that it makes history an essential field of analysis and deconstruction for those who attempt to understand national discourses: 'all invented traditions use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion' (p. 13).

In the next section I look into discourses on Portuguese nationalism, where "invented traditions" (or the 'fashioning of time', as Anderson put it) and the construction of a particular version of Portuguese history become crucial. This particular version of history, which celebrates a distant past of achievements at a global scale, is central to the way East Timor is understood as a "Portuguese reality" in the media coverage. That version of history informs much of the Portuguese rhetoric on East Timor in the 1990s, as the research shows in chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11.

Smith argues (1999) these historical myths are uneven through time and space; that is to say, they get reinterpreted in different socio-economic periods, and are drawn upon different forms of documented history. For instance, when I tried to put
together a history of East Timor for the purpose of this thesis, it became clear that most of the western writing on the territory only accounts for its encounter with colonialism. Only now, after independence, is the oral history of East Timor being recorded. The idea of invention of tradition as historically located is particularly informative to the nation-building debate in East Timor.

That debate included choices over the official language of East Timor after independence. The Timorese élite, educated during Portuguese colonialism, pressed for a Portuguese-speaking country. It justified that choice with arguments of identity, history and tradition, when in fact only a minority of the country spoke Portuguese. Sections of the population contested that choice, particularly the younger generation, which is fluent in Tetum (the mainstream local vernacular) and Indonesian Bahasa. In the near future, these groups face the risk of being disenfranchised from political and public life, if they are not equipped with the linguistic resources claimed by the new nation-state.

Modernist theories of nationalism are relevant to the set of national myths currently presented in Portuguese rhetoric. That set of myths was precipitated into the public space through the mediated discourse on East Timor in the 1990s. In other words, the version of East Timor presented through the media ignored the plethora of takes on identity and nationalism. Nationalism theory draws attention to the unifying power of the nation-state rhetoric, and the ways in which it discards the struggles of distinct groups who do not fit into the grand narrative of nation.

The discourse on nation is presented as continuous, homogenous and uncontested. It does not accommodate the fragmented nature of historic narratives that might exist, nor does it fit easily with the plethora of groups who might not recognise their own particular stories within the wider definitions of identity set out by the state. Hall (1992) sees this narrative as one that places an emphasis on ‘origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness... The essentials of national character remain unchanged through all the vicissitudes of history. It is there from birth, unified and continuous, changeless through all the changes, eternal’ (p. 292). Hall stresses that this naturalist version of culture, drawn from primordial but dated historical periods, leads to the idea of a national culture ‘lost in the midst of, not “real”, but “mythic” time’ (p. 294) and also on the idea of a ‘pure, original people of “folk”’ (p. 295). In the next section I explore how the narrative of time is articulated in Portuguese identitarian discourse: the idea of a people destined for odysseys, an ethnic group defined by renaissance writings, a nation presented as innately able to merge peacefully with other cultures across the world.
Chapter One – Theoretical Overview

The discourse on ethnicity, and the particular understanding of a common ground of ancestry and culture, underpins these symbolic definitions. These definitions usually emerge from the élites, who define associations with the homeland and establish the degrees of solidarity for a given culture (Smith, 1999). Historically, élites have been involved in organising national discourse, mapping it with symbolic significance, excluding national defeats, unwanted communities and unglorified practices. It is up to the élites to produce a selective exercise of history, in order to boost, as Gellner (1983) claims, the sense of loyalty and patriotism. Gellner questions what the future would hold for nations if the producers of culture were to elaborate on the wrongs committed by their nation, as much as they dwell on the attacks committed by others against the nation. In the next section I explore the forms of intellectual thought that have contributed to the shaping of Portuguese discourse on national identity.

Much of the empirical work carried out in this thesis deals with translating cultural, social and political meanings contained in the language, and particularly the language of nationalism. East Timor was often portrayed as a subject that could only be mediated through Portuguese nationalism, the definition of a universal space where Portuguese culture is lived through, from South America to Africa and parts of Asia. Nationalism is acted out in everyday language, which serves as a permanent reminder of belonging and loyalty to the nation. Language becomes a display of what Billig (1995) called ‘banal nationalism’, a discursive resource used by politics as well as the media, who reproduce it with ‘prosaic, routine words, which take nations for granted and which, in doing so, inhabit them’ (p. 93). The banal nationalism of language was evident in the press writing analysed during this project, with the routine use of the pronoun ‘we’ in certain editorials and news stories alike. During the coverage of East Timor, the press constantly inhabits the nation by talking of a universal ‘we’.

1.2 Some notes on Portuguese nationalism

In this section I explore discourses on Portuguese national identity in order to answer the question of East Timor representation and its terms of engagement with these discourses.

The national identity discourse in Portugal was born out of a corpus of thought initiated in the mid-18th century, and defined around two central ideas. The first was the idea that the country’s history was rooted in the nautical expansion and globalisation of trade promoted by the Portuguese Discoveries of the 15th and 16th centuries. The second idea conceptualised the country in a state of decline, fading
in economic and cultural weight when compared to other European empires of the time. Despite the reinvention and reorganisation of this discourse on national identity throughout the 20th century, its roots remain stable. In this section I allude to the main narratives of that discourse and key historical moments in which those narratives were promoted by intellectual thought and state-sponsored debate.

One of the key narratives to this discourse lies with the 16th-century maritime epic poem *Os Lusíadas*. Author Luís Vaz de Camões portrayed the conquering of the seas as a super-human endeavour which called into action the sacred gods of Olympus. The Lusitan sea quest was constructed as an unstoppable order for the new world. Such was the conquest’s power and determination that even the mighty God Neptune himself feels threatened by the odyssey at some point in the epic. *Os Lusíadas* is a key text in the Portuguese school curriculum. The name of poet Camões features in the national holiday of June 10, when the country celebrates its foundation. According to historian Mattoso (2001), Camões’s work has contaminated historiography itself especially from the 19th century onwards, inspiring a series of historical texts that were built upon romanticised narratives of victory:

The imaginary [world] represented and strengthened by the poem acquires a force that would never cease to feed the most utopian dreams regarding national destiny, until the modern days. As a matter of fact, the idea of decadence, which was to become a true obsession of national history, at least since the second half of the 19th century, is in many ways the outcome of the internalisation of the idea that the national past had achieved such super-human proportions that any confrontation with present reality would necessarily have to be bleak (p. 36).

This relationship between ideas of social and economical decline in Portugal and the hyperbolic version of history is continually ‘banalised’ in Portuguese identity discourse and replicated across a number of forums: through the education system, numerous official celebrations and cultural policies. The discursive tension between hyperbolic past and present decline was coined by sociologist Sousa Santos (1994) as a symbolic movement between the ‘imagination of the centre’ and the ‘fear of the periphery’. Contemporary Portugal fluctuates between those two elements. As a semi-peripherical society it incorporates characteristics from both the first and third world. Whilst Sousa Santos acknowledges the mythical elements of the Portuguese identitarian discourse, he roots it nonetheless in the specific history of the country as both a coloniser and a colony itself (2004). Despite controlling a number of territories overseas, Portugal was for over a century an informal colony of Britain. During the 18th and 19th centuries Portugal exchanged a substantial share of its trade routes and colonial produce for British military protection, and effectively
paved the way for British domination of the Portuguese material base. Consequently, history forced the conceptualisation of Portuguese colonialism in different terms to other European colonialisms, by operating from a place where the country was both the master in Africa and the subaltern in Europe.

The 19th-century episode of the British Ultimatum to Portugal epitomised the discourse of the country's decline and exposed the peculiar situation of Portuguese geopolitics. Faced with losses in resources since Brazil's independence in 1822, the Portuguese crown planned to replace the imagery, weight and wealth of the former colony for a wider African space. That new colonial space had to be created between the areas already occupied by Lisbon in Angola and Mozambique. In 1886, Lisbon put its plans on paper by drawing what became known as the "pink map" – an area which stretched from the west coast of Angola to the east coast of Mozambique. The map represented the assumption that the territory would be part of its empire if it was occupied by Portuguese residents. The Portuguese monarchy moved civilians and a military force to the area, under the guise a mission of exploration. By doing so, Portugal effectively entered territories occupied by British interests. In 1890 the British crown acted against what it saw as a disguised attack to its territories by issuing an ultimatum: Portugal could either withdraw from the region or see its coastal colonial cities attacked by the British navy.

The ultimatum had repercussions over the political and cultural life of the country. Hundreds of pamphlets against British supremacy were printed and distributed across the country, and the story was retold in village halls. A number of works of literature written then by novelists Guerra Junqueiro, Gomes Leal and Eça de Queiroz reflected this atmosphere of discontentment with 'civilised Europe', so well encapsulated by the reactions to the ultimatum. The ultimatum exposed the fragile position of Portuguese authority across the world, and especially before its European counterparts. As Ribeiro (2003) puts it: 'on one hand [the ultimatum] created a conscience for the peripheral role of Portugal in Europe, and on the other hand, an awareness that the nation had sunk deep into decline' (p. 17).

The idea that the nation had sunk into decline crystallised at this point, and has been used ever since to exorcise fears of remaining on the periphery (Mattoso, 2001; Castelo, 1998; Real, 1998; Santos, 1994; Lourenço, 1999). Philosopher Eduardo Lourenço argues that current political rhetoric over a global Portuguese-speaking space – commonly referred to as Lusofonia – is no more than a post-modern manifestation of the 19th-century colonial pink map (Cahen, 1997). For Lourenço (1999), the key to deconstruct post-modern theories on Portuguese identity lies with the unravelling of this mythical fusion of the Portuguese national
space with a wider and imaginary global linguistic space. Santos (1994) presents a wider critique of the mythology on identity, and considers it to be the result of an absence of sociological and philosophical thought in Portuguese academia, by the dictatorial regime of the past, and presently struggling with chronic under-funding.

Both Santos and Lourenço's theories are particularly useful for answering the question on the contemporary discourses of identity in the Portuguese representation of East Timor. As I demonstrate later, East Timor becomes the imagination of the centre, and that goes hand in hand with the imagination of a global linguistic space.

The crystallisation of this discourse on Portuguese identity was evident in Portuguese literature from the turn of the century, which reinforced that narrative and reflected the intellectual debate of the time. The debate was framed between the idea of a modern and progressive Europe on the one hand, and romanticised versions of the past promoted by conservative, Catholic and traditionalist élites on the other. For instance, in the novel The City and the Mountains, author Eça de Queiroz opted out of the progressive debate: his hero renounced civilised Paris and relocated to the Douro Mountains, where he retreated safely to that essential, authentic, and romantic version of Portugal, thus regaining his macho vigour (Pina, 2003). Even the work of Fernando Pessoa, an author who sits firmly within the modernist movement, is often appropriated to illustrate the essentialist version of Portuguese history and identity (Lourengo, 1999). Pessoa equalled the Portuguese homeland to the language - 'My patria is the Portuguese language' --, he wrote. In a famous verse, Pessoa also asked for the country's awakening in light of its past: 'The Sea has been fulfilled, and the Empire undone, Oh Lord Portugal is still to be fulfilled'. Literature scholars argue that these lines were not referring to the collective identity of the country; instead, they were a tale of Pessoa's personal history as a migrant from South Africa, or an ironic reflection on the debates of the time. However, Pessoa's verses are often repeated in the essentialist ceremonies of the Portuguese state.

In the 1930s the identity discourse moved from the field of literature and social debate to the political sphere of government. The Estado Novo, also known as the dictatorial regime of Salazar, advanced further the hyperbolised idea of national identity as a discourse tied with the heritage of the past. The Ministry of Colonies embarked on the production of a version of history that enhanced a 'truly empyreal mystique, capable of rooting the love for the empire in all Portuguese and in doing so, contributing to the assertion of the Estado Novo' (Castelo, 1998, p. 47). The institutionalisation of this discourse at the level of the state was heavily influenced
by the work of Brazilian historian Gilberto Freyre. The state propaganda used Freyre’s natural-scientific reasoning in order to justify a type of colonialism that differentiated itself from the rest of European empires by claiming a multicultural approach. Some of Freyre’s books were commissioned and published by governmental bodies, and his arguments were used as a tool of political legitimisation for the Empire.

Freyre’s original research created a new field called *luuso-tropicalismo*, which was dedicated to the systematic study of a complex number of adaptations of Portuguese [culture] in tropical territories. Luso-tropicalismo reasoning originated when Freyre was doing research on the specific conditions of mixed ethnicities in Brazil. His theory was developed in the context of, and as a reaction to, the political racism in Germany and the US. Freyre’s initial aim was not to serve the Portuguese state, but rather to make a stance against harsher times for ethnicity in the Northern Hemisphere, and he pursued a positive statement about the benefits of inter-ethnic breeding in Brazil. He then extended his work to include studies on all Portuguese colonies which he judged as a ‘union of feelings and culture’ (Castelo, 1998, p. 33), and ‘a *luso-tropical* civilisation’ (p. 38). Freyre spoke of a ‘consciousness of species’ which united all those regions dominated by Portugal. Underpinning his writing was the idea of a communion of cultures based on mixed social, cultural and sexual relations – he believed miscegenation to be a unique trait of Portuguese colonialism, distinguishing the nation from other European colonial activity.

The Brazilian historian produced a psychological profile for the Portuguese nation: they were a people of particular mobility, miscegenation and adaptability to new climates. Freyre wrote of this unique inclination to mesh with other cultures, backing it with a history of Jewish, Visigoth and Muslim migrations into Iberia. He suggested the Portuguese people had unique tools of cultural translation, since they were geographically and culturally placed between Europe and Africa, and thus also quite tolerant of warmer climates (unlike other European colonisers). Portuguese colonisation was, in Freyre’s eyes, motivated by a certain type of fraternal Christianity and had inherited Muslim traits, such as the friendly attitude to polygamy and lack of barriers for inter-ethnical breeding. To summarise, Portuguese colonialism was not racist. Such was the lasting influence of Freyre’s work that the idea of the sexual encounter with the other as the denial of racism still stands today. It is often referred to in the discursive practices of everyday life, despite the marginal position Africans occupy in Portuguese society.
Even though Freyre’s work was no more than a fundamentally flawed piece of romantic anthropology, *lusotropicalismo* played a crucial role in articulating what then became the theoretical foundations of the Empire under Dictator Salazar. Freyre’s anthropology appealed to a variety of audiences and served a number of purposes: it united hard-core colonialists with those whose criticism of the Empire softened if presented under a humanist discourse for multiculturalism; it was systematically used at the United Nations to defend Portugal’s case against decolonisation in the 1960s; and it was obviously fed into the regime’s propaganda through its education system, political speeches and state events.

The contamination exercised by this type of work should not be underestimated, as Freyre was the first of a series of authors to embark on establishing identitarian myths under the guise of scientific research. In the fields of anthropology, philosophy, literature and history authors Jorge Dias, Agostinho da Silva, António Ferro and Natália Correia pursued this agenda. The heritage left by such a tradition of non-scientific analysis is, however, still felt today. Santos (1994) calls this current of thought a ‘mythical and psychoanalytical’ analysis, and blames the four-decade long dictatorship – and the regime’s suspicion and dislike of the social sciences – as the guilty party in the propagation of those interpretations. Cultural studies scholar António Pina (2003) attributes such mythology to the divorce between history and sociology.

Salazar’s ideology of the Empire was carefully crafted and incorporated in the state structure as well as in international diplomacy. In the post-WW2 years international pressure for decolonisation grew and the Empire came to feature with increased frequency in Salazar’s speeches (Gaspar, 2001). Domestically, the constitutional text of 1933 changed the definition of nation in order to include the colonial territories. The change meant that the regime was giving a unified legal status to regions of Portugal and overseas territories, creating a situation where the Algarve stood as an equal region to Angola or Mozambique. From the 1950s onwards international pressure for decolonisation increased once more, and Salazar changed the language again. Colonies were no longer colonies, just provinces of Portugal. However, the change of colonial semantics did not ease the United Nation’s protests, even if it worked rather well domestically for the state’s propaganda of an imagined community.

The construction of the mythical linguistic ethnoscape, or *Lusofonia*, to which Lourenço (1999) referred, is an issue perpetuated by contemporary democratic governments in Portugal. No other institution makes a better example of this state of affairs than the *Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa* [The Portuguese
Chapter One - Theoretical Overview

Speaking Community of Countries], or CPLP. I want to discuss the CPLP briefly in order to illustrate how the essentialist version of Portuguese identity (language included) is being incorporated into the institutional practices of the Portuguese state, in relation to itself and its former colonies, East Timor included. An understanding of these practices sheds some light on the types of political articulations of the Portuguese state regarding East Timor, which I analyse later on in the research.

The CPLP (Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries) was founded in 1996, after seven years of negotiation. Its members are all former Portuguese colonies turned states and the remit of the organisation is to promote international relations, cooperation and the Portuguese language. The group of nations was steered forcefully by Brazilian enthusiasm in driving the linguistic agenda forward. The Brazilian ambassadors for the project acted upon the idea that the community already existed in its essence - what was missing from it was an organisation to give it some shape. The initial discourses for the creation of CPLP drew upon 20th-century ideas of lusotropicalism, the Brazilian school of thought later appropriated by Dictator Salazar in order to build the ideology of the Empire. Apart from being inspired by the perennial idea of a cultural commonality between countries colonised by Portugal, the cultural assumptions used in the foundations of CPLP could not have been more misleading. CPLP invests heavily in its symbolic profile and has a poor record of activities while, in the meantime, former Portuguese colonies entertain other linguistic ambitions: Mozambique is now part of the Commonwealth and tied to the English language. Other nations such as Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tomé move closer and closer to the francophone space. These countries move away from the heritage of Portuguese culture as they approach other spaces of greater cultural and economic weight, but remain on paper affiliated to the elusive CPLP. Maintaining their status reinforces the symbolic existence of CPLP, especially in Portugal, even when the material base of the organisation seems increasingly less active.

Cahen (1997) points out how the founding discourse of CPLP is built around the luso-tropical texts of the mid-20th century, politically adjusted for the purposes of contemporary agendas. Such discourse values the Discoveries and colonisation to raise paradoxically Portugal’s view of itself as an ascending force in Europe. Through CPLP Portugal can imagine itself as a kernel of influence for the geographically wide community of (mostly) African member countries. For Portugal, CPLP represents the national ambition of commanding a wider space of influence rather than just being the sovereign state of the southern western tip of the European continent. For Portugal, the Brazilian initiative of pushing for the creation
of CPLP could not have been more convenient because, as Portuguese President Mário Soares explained in a 1996 interview: 'it could never be seen by our African brothers as having hidden neo-colonialist intentions' (Soares quoted in Cahen, p. 397). As to Brazil, a series of motivations have prompted the linguistic initiative: a desire for more power at the United Nations (and demands for Portuguese to become one of the organisation's languages); its international political ambitions, namely for a place amongst the G7 group; the potential market for the vast array of Brazilian cultural products across Portuguese speaking countries; the desire to extend links with Portugal, a competitor country in the bidding of contracts for lusophone Africa (Cahen).

The propaganda of CPLP stands out against the realities of the 'Portuguese speaking world'. As in many other countries where nationalist projects of education have not yet assimilated its people into the idea of the nation-state, so do the Third World former Portuguese African colonies appear as a conglomerate of dialects and languages, rather than countries of what CPLP calls 'Portuguese expression'. As de Brito and Martins (2004) point out regarding the particular cases of East Timor and Mozambique, these are countries where 'Portuguese is also spoken', rather than these being countries where solely Portuguese is spoken. In East Timor, in particular, less than 20% of the population speak Portuguese (The Asia Foundation, 2001). Most of that minority is likely to be male and over 40 years of age, a category which excludes women and the younger generations. A similar situation characterises Mozambique, where Portuguese is effectively a foreign language to 80% of the population (Cahen, p. 420).

CPLP became a tool of discursive propaganda in the face of the poor investment in the Portuguese language in these countries. The prominence of institutions such as the British Council and the French Cultural Centre, or of world media organisations like the BBC World Service or French International radio in areas like Mozambique or Guinea-Bissau are forces of significant cultural influence. Former Portuguese colonies in Africa are spaces where European influences are being negotiated, rather than monolithic nations united by the type of universal commonality argued by CPLP's foundations.

Moreover, the positions of the CPLP are far from the consensual shared culture invoked in its founding principles. And nothing makes a better example of CPLP's incongruity than the way in which its different member states acted before East Timor. Whereas up to the early 1980s former African colonies voted hand in hand at the United Nations for the independence of the territory, (making its policy more coherent than that of the Portuguese state), in the 1990s the situation was more
ambiguous. Brazil enjoyed significant diplomatic and trade relations with Indonesia, and so did, to a lesser extent, Guinea-Bissau. Mozambique, a country who supported a great number of Timorese dissidents, resumed diplomatic relations with Indonesia in 1992, when it nominated an honorary consul. In Angola, one of the few countries that acknowledged the 1975 Fretelin-proclaimed Democratic Republic of East Timor, President José Eduardo dos Santos said in 1996 that CPLP’s initiatives should not ‘compromise the relations each country maintains with Indonesia’ (quoted in Cahen, p. 406).

Commenting on the euphoric representations of East Timor in the Portuguese media in 1999, Cahen (1997) pointed out the confusion between Portugal and the idea of the universal in the nation’s discourse:

[Portugal] is unable to view that Timor cannot become the unifying ideal of the community, and that stems from one point: the idea that Portugal makes of that nation, the confusion between what is universal, what is “the community” and what Portugal itself is (p. 429).

I illustrate the confusion between identitarian spaces to which Cahen is alluding in Chapter 11 of this thesis, where I present the analysis of press representations of East Timor during a critical moment of discourse in 1999.

This section addressed some of the issues that influence Portuguese popular discourse on national identity at present, issues which came to the fore during the empirical analysis of the material for this research. The idea of ‘immemorial past’ is, in Portuguese national identity discourse, contaminated constantly by the literary narratives of the Discoveries period. This literature constructed an epopee of events whose influence extended beyond the cultural field, playing a major role in providing the narratives for Portuguese history and anthropology of the 19th and 20th centuries, in a nation where ‘history has been divorced from sociology’. It was up to the literary and self-styled romantic anthropological élite to define ideas around national identity. Their work contaminated the imagery of the Portuguese world heritage and is still a feature of populist state celebrations.

By the late 19th century, the hyperbolic discourse about the ‘great world destiny’ of the nation entered a dialogue with another idea, the idea of collapse and decline of the empire brought about by the loss of Brazil and the expansion of British power in Africa. This tension between the great past and the decline of the ever lasting present turned into a difficulty that the Estado Novo of Salazar desperately attempted to overcome. He did so by not allowing the discourse to spill onto the comparative benchmark of the decline – Europe itself. By revitalising the imagery of the Empire through the ideology of lusotropicalismo, the regime turned to Africa
and Asia instead, unifying Portuguese élites under the appeal of a humanist and non-racist version of colonialism. Moreover, by turning its back on Europe, the regime opened new ways of imagining its inner space - Portugal became a communion of provinces, rather than a ruler of colonies. Integrating Africa into this new spatiality allowed the nation to imagine itself as a wide field of cultural, economic and political influence, in light of its glorious past.

In a democratic and post-dictatorship society, the lasting presence of this space is felt through the "collective personality" still called upon by the 'Portuguese-speaking' space, in place of the old territorial claims. The idea of the Portuguese language as the idea of patria itself remains a key construction of the essentialist versions of Portuguese identity. Language is at the root of this ethnoscape where Portuguese identity is played out, regardless of how the idea of patria is 'imagined' from Portuguese-speaking country to country. Thus, the meanings of this Portuguese-speaking space might have connotations of power and worldly cultural weight in the political discourse of Lisbon and for a certain section of Brazilian élites. However, in countries like Mozambique or Guinea-Bissau, those ideological linkages are fragmented and not at the root of national identitarian discourses. A good example of contemporary pursuit of the perennial discourse of national identity in Portugal is the political embrace of CPLP, an organisation whose founding principles do not reflect the fragmented realities of former colonies. CPLP's distinct treatment of the East Timor issue actually goes against the agency's self-proclaimed communion of cultures of the former colonies.

The political legitimisation of the idea of a Portuguese-speaking ethnoscape runs through the coverage of East Timor, and seems to touch political responses. As I point out in chapter 11, images of the 1991 massacre in East Timor changed the state reaction to the event once Portuguese words were heard in the background.
1.3 The social construction of reality and the media

In this section I explore the block of theories which approach the media as key agents in the social construction of reality, the relationships between the news media and political actors and definitions, news-making as a production process with its own set of values, and some research regarding the role of media in issues of conflict and foreign policy.

The idea of news as the result of an active process of construction and production has been fundamental to the way in which researchers have, over the last few decades, investigated the dynamics behind the media's representation of issues. The construction of news is tied to the idea that the world has no inherent meaning, and that the ambiguous environment in which we live is a competing field where different groups and organisations try to ascribe values and interpretations to particular people, objects and events. The prevailing power of dominant interpretations – or what Stuart Hall calls definitions – build over time what we recognise as reality: except this reality is in fact a social order, a hierarchy of values and institutions that we take for granted as being natural, but which in fact have been socially constructed.

1.3.1 News stories as frames of organisation and interpretation

A number of scholars in media theory have drawn on the work of Ervin Goffman, who proposed that in order to analyse a given reality, one should look at the cognitive patterns that were employed in the organisation and representation of such reality. Such is the approach of Tuchman's (1978) research on news-making organisations, where she explored the role of frames in the organisation of news stories. Social order was not an intrinsic characteristic of reality, but rather built through frames or 'principles of organisation which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them. Frames organise strips of the everyday world' (p. 192). Tuchman further added that organising events is not an objective process, but rather a subjective act of involvement, where news-makers and news organisations build frames that 'turn recognisable happenings or amorphous talk into a discernible event' (p. 192).

Scholars like Stuart Hall, Gamson, Modigliani and Gitlin have written about the wider cultural frames in which news stories are constructed, and used spatial metaphors to illustrate the extent to which they are embedded in media discourse. Hall et al. (1978) considered the importance of "cultural maps" in representing the social context in which events are mapped onto, how sense is made out of
apparently "random and chaotic events". It is a process of contextualisation of an event that places within it 'a range of known social and cultural identifications... within the horizon of the meaningful' (p. 54). According to the authors:

The bringing of events within the realm of meaningful means, in essence, referring unusual and unexpected events to the 'maps of meaning' which already form the basis of our cultural knowledge, into which the social world is already 'mapped'. The social identification, classification and contextualisation of news events in terms of these background frames of reference is the fundamental process by which the media make the world they report on intelligible to readers and viewers (pp. 54 -55).

Media theory further argues that this code of "background frames of reference" is identifiable and shared by society at large, and as such it strikes a "cultural resonance" (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989) with audiences of news media. In other words, news stories seek cultural resonances with larger themes, increasing the potential appeal to a wider audience whilst 'turning the ears of journalists to symbolism' (p. 4). As I demonstrate during the empirical analysis of the project, the coverage of East Timor changes in intensity and meaning once it is framed within the wider cultural theme of Portuguese nationalism and its role in a post-colonial world. The symbolic use of references to the "Portugueseness of East Timor" strongly increased the appeal of the story and fed the spiralling coverage.

For Gamson and Modigliani, media frames are organised in what they call "media packages", or maps of meaning for making sense of otherwise "random and chaotic events". Moreover, packages that appeal to those wider resonances tend to be more successful, as the authors explain:

... certain packages have a natural advantage because their ideas and language resonates with larger cultural themes. Resonance increases the appeal of a package, they make it appear natural and familiar. Those who respond to the larger cultural theme will find it easier to respond to a package with the same sonorities (p. 5).

The success of the East Timor story, as I argue later, is partly due to the reinvention of the story within the larger "cultural map" of Portuguese heritage around the world, and the appeal to the frame of the Portuguese linguistic ethnoscape.

In addition, media frames are a production tool that not only allow media organisations to place events in the wider map of social and cultural meaning, but also serves as means of processing information in the ever-increasing rhythm of media output. Gitlin's research (1980) on mediated representations of the American New Left in the 1960s highlighted the extent to which framing became a professional tool that facilitated the production of news:
Chapter One - Theoretical Overview

Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organise the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports. Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organise discourse, whether verbal or visual. Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely: to recognise it as information, to assign it to collective categories, and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences (p. 7, emphasis in the original).

Thus, frames work in a dual process: they function as the interpretation schemata for audiences, but also play a crucial role in the industrial process of news-making, turning what could potentially be an investigative, organic task into a standardised, routine-bound methodology.

1.3.2 News-making as a social process: institutions and practices

Early studies on the production of news labelled it as a routine and mechanical activity, creating the idea of 'bias' as some sort of manipulative characteristic existent in the production of news. Research carried out in the 1970s and 1980s argued that, rather than deliberate manipulation, this was a matter of 'unwitting bias', that in fact journalism was the output of organisational practices, and as such, a profession surrounded by bureaucratic rules that logically affected its outputs (Elliot and Golding, 1979).

Tuchman (1978) approaches news as a social institution and proposes to look at how events in the world are transformed into stories occupying time and space in what she calls the newsnet. Both professional practices and organisational needs constitute this net where time and space combine to form news values. The element of space suggests a geographical conception in which events that occur within certain localities or regions, or the activities of specific organisations – namely those of institutional power –, are newsworthy. Accordingly, reporters are allocated to certain areas and institutions. Likewise, the element of time – or it could be said the lack of it – and the existence of deadlines result in the categorisation of news and the development of standard narratives, which are applied to new events.

As a result of this practice, new events are handled through existing narratives or frames that have been used before, and as a consequence of that the representations of reality made available by news organisations are replicated time and again. Time and space are also combined with what Tuchman calls the web of
facticity. Professional practices dictate that witnessing facts is not sufficient – journalists should actually verify them, engaging in a net of contacts with sources that are more or less legitimate according to their ‘institutional’ credibility. As far as journalists are concerned, facts are ‘objective’ and they constitute the stuff of which hard news is made, leaving no room for value judgements. But in the process of writing a story journalists make use of routines with which they are familiar and engage in subjective decisions. The typification of a story into a category, the search for responses from legitimate institutional leaders as a way of confirming and giving credibility to facts, the narratives used in the construction of arguments – all attest the presence of a newsnet, a series of practices acquired in the exercise of the profession. The existence of these practices seems to be taken for granted within news organisations. During Tuchman’s research, she invited journalists to provide descriptions of their practices, only to find out that they could hardly systematise them. They had become assimilated into the commonsense knowledge of everyday journalism and the difficulty seemed to lie in deconstructing taken-for-granted practices.

Being a social practice in itself, journalism then becomes a ground where issues of professional socialisation are played out, a place where the rules and ideology of journalism are learned and reproduced. News values – the norms that act as benchmarks for what constitutes or not a news story – are part of these sets of practices that go into the professional socialisation of journalists. Hall et al. (1978) define news values as the ‘criteria in the routine practices of journalism which enable journalists, editors, and newsmen to decide routinely and regularly which stories are ‘newsworthy’ and which are not’ (p.54). Although these criteria are not normally specified in writing, they are a ‘core element in the professional socialisation, practice and ideology of news men’ (p. 54). These journalistic practices are well rooted in the profession’s constructions over ‘what journalism is about’ and are casually learned and assimilated through journalists’ daily work in a media institution, where everybody else shares – at least to a certain extent – the same ideology and abides by the same rules.

Gans (1980) argues that these routines exist to pursue efficiency in the journalistic activity, although journalists do not consciously pursue efficiency, at least not in the way commercial or industrial efficiency is understood:

Rather, journalistic efficiency exists to allocate three scarce resources: staff, air time or print space and, above all, production time. News organisations must be efficient because they are expected to deliver the latest news to the audience at a prescheduled time (p. 283).
Research of journalism as a social process has also addressed the different roles journalists play in negotiating their positions within and outside the media organisations. Journalists are at the same time employees of organisations, holders of privileged contacts with sources (contacts which have the potential of bringing them additional status within the organisation), and competitors to their colleagues. Managing these different roles puts journalists in a position where they have to negotiate their day-to-day decisions in the light of these conflicting roles, a process which is in-built in the professional activity and impacts on the production process.

The roles journalists perform as conveyers of stories can gain wider dimensions with regard to the sort of discourses they facilitate, and the mediation they perform between different social actors and audiences at large. They are: leadership testers in election times; suppliers of political feedback when they reproduce official speak, transforming them into intergovernmental organs of communication; power distributors when they cover non-official groups; moral guardians playing the role of the 'watchdog' and scrutinisers of institutions of power. Metaphorically, they fill in as prophets and priests, mediating the almost-religious ritual of media consumption. They are storytellers and myth-makers, through their presentation of structured narratives on events and people; barometer of order, alerting audiences for natural, social and technological disorders; agents of social control, preventing people from acting and speaking in ways disapproved of by holders of power; constructors of nation and society, bringing the nation into being; and managers of the symbolic arena, the public stage where messages are made available to the audience. These categories pinpoint some of the roles journalists fulfil in the conducting of this profession. Again, these may not be conscious roles, but the product of routines (Gans, 1980).

Some of these roles are fundamental to understand the coverage of East Timor in Portugal. During the latter stages of the coverage, sections of the media fully embraced their role as constructors of the Portuguese nation or as perpetuators of the old myths of the nation.

1.3.3 The Media and the struggle over access and meaning

Scholars of media and communication have established the idea that the social construction of news maintains the ideological divisions of society through a series of professional practices which, by claiming to operate under the web of facticity and objectivity, lend credibility to the types of discourses (re)produced by the press. In fact, the choice of sources and voices selected by the media to confirm facts and "balance" the final story is one of those practices routinely used by
Chapter One – Theoretical Overview

journalists (Eldrige, 1995; Hall et al., 1978; McNair, 1998; Tuchman, 1978). In their daily search for facticity, journalists seek out the institutional, official, central voices of power (government and bureaucrats) in detriment of the dissent or dissatisfied, even when they are organised collectively through social movements and grass-roots organisations. The news media include in its net those institutions which it has identified as legitimate sources of information and governance, the primary sites from which stories are gathered (Tuchman, 1978). News then becomes one more institution that adds to our understanding of the social order as very much aligned to the status quo. The media play a part in acting as brokers of the status quo, by voicing “official” accounts of events in the public sphere and legitimising them in the process. In a way frames produce, but also limit, the amount of signification, or meaning, available to the public through the mass media. Research conducted by the Glasgow Media Group into television’s representations of industrial relations in Britain, in the early 1980s, became a classic example of how media privileges the framing of dominant groups. The story of the feud between industry chiefs, politicians, workers and trade unionists of a series of industries in crisis was ‘embodied in a specific way of understanding the social and industrial world’ (Eldrige, 1995, p. 86). The order of the economic system under which those industries functioned was hardly questioned. Instead, the root of the conflict was turned to strategies of trade unions and workers who refused to accept the agenda of the government and industry leaders – the economic and political dominant groups. The Glasgow Media Group study illustrated with clarity how the roles and political strength of different actors are reflected in the construction of events through the media.

In the case of East Timor, I document later how non-official voices remained excluded from the media until the late 1980s. During the 1970s and 1980s, access to the media was very limited for non-governmental organisations and Timorese political parties.

Research suggests that the media act as reproducers of meaning and consensus, as conveyers of the dominant frames in society, carrying assumptions which are embodied in journalistic practices. The existence of a shared culture, a system of values, and the idea of belonging and being part of a shared social unit is partly an explanation for why the media, more often than not, accept a single perspective on events. Hall et al. (1978) elaborate this argument:

... the process of signification – giving social meaning to events – both assumes and helps to construct a society as a “consensus”. We exist as members of one society because – it is assumed – we share a common stock of cultural knowledge with our fellow men: we have access to the same maps of meaning (p. 55).
Chapter One – Theoretical Overview

The shared code of assumptions, the authors go on to argue, constructs the idea that there are no major divisions or breaks between classes, gender or cultures in democratic industrial societies. The dominant groups and their dominant definitions are conceptualised by the authors as primary definers of social reality, i.e., those institutional definers who establish the initial interpretation or primary interpretation of a certain event. Hall et al. open the debate by arguing that the media act as secondary definers in the making of maps of meaning. If the media are acting in a secondary position, than the scope of critical interpretation left for the media comes into question. The command of the field of meaning becomes inevitably linked to the official voices that make up the primary definers:

... primary definers command the field of meaning in all subsequent treatment and set the terms of reference within which all further coverage or debate takes place. Arguments against a primary interpretation are forced into its definition of ‘what is an issue’ – they must begin from this framework of interpretation as their starting point (p. 58).

Thus, primary definers have the power to set the terms of debate by framing the problem or issue. They establish the consensus over that issue, which those groups who want to challenge dominant meanings will struggle to break through. I now turn to the process of challenging dominant frames.

1.3.4 Challenging frames: the struggle over access and meaning

A growing number of researchers have been looking beyond the dynamics that intertwine media and dominant ideologies in the social construction of reality. These researchers are particularly interested in the political and cultural struggles of those who do challenge the primary definitions through the media’s symbolic arena (Wolfsfeld, 1997; Ryan, 1991). I want to focus on these debates, since part of this doctoral research looks at the role of certain challengers (campaigning NGOs, the Timorese resistance) and their struggle to break through dominant meanings. This section looks at the political and media dynamics of those commonly referred to in the field as the dissenters, the challengers, the contenders, the antagonists – in sum, those who do not only bring a different language to an issue but are also actively engaged in promoting their frames in the public arena.

Challenger groups organise themselves around “issue cultures” (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989) so as to draw in the attention of an “unmobilised constituency”. Their aim is to gain influence beyond their existing and limited power, and to negotiate concessions and authority over those issues (Gamson, 1975). They
actively meet, fundraise and campaign in order to advance the cultural and political space occupied by the issues for which they care. Blumer (1971) believes social science academics often fail to identify and study these groups. He calls for more research into why certain instances of 'deviance, dysfunction and structural strain' (p. 300) do not succeed in being conceptualised as "social problems", whereas others reach this status.

Blumer's theorisation is concerned with strict social definitions, and one could argue that it leaves aside other dimensions of "problems", such as the political dimension. How, for instance, does this model play with the questions of this research project? East Timor is, in its nature, a political issue affecting decisions in Portuguese diplomacy. In that sense, it affects how internal politics are organised in the international arena. But, I want to borrow from Blumer's logic and argue around the cultural and symbolic dimension of East Timor in the Portuguese public debate over the different periods of analysis. By using Blumer's concept on the life-cycle of issues, the research highlights the shifts in discourse around East Timor that transformed it from a non-existent issue into a legitimate issue. Using Blumer's departure point, one can ask when does East Timor emerge with the status of an issue and how does it become legitimised within Portuguese public opinion?

By establishing that social problems go through different cycles in their lifetime, Blumer articulates different phases in the emergence, evolution and culmination of these problems. The first stage is the emergence of a social problem, when a given condition is picked out and identified as a social problem. The problem may have existed long before it was recognised as such, but it is this collective recognition that transforms it into a social problem. The second stage is one of legitimation, when the problem acquires 'social endorsement' in order to be taken forward, gaining entry into the public arena of debate. The third stage is mobilisation of action, the stage where the problem becomes a topic of discussion, with different sections making different claims that generate debate over the social problem. The fourth stage is the formation of an official plan of action, when a society decides how it will act upon the resolution of a certain problem, and negotiates those solutions through the official channels. The fifth and final stage is the implementation of the official plan. This implementation generates a new process of definition, deriving from the fact that different groups will work to push changes that will affect their interests. Both those involved in the social problem and those touched by the plan will negotiate concessions or insist on blockages that will bring adjustments to the resolution of problem, adjustments which were not initially anticipated.
With Blumer's definition of the life-cycle of issues in mind, I trace some of the changes in the legitimisation of East Timor as an issue in the Portuguese agenda.

1.3.5 Entering the media agenda

As I noted before, challenger groups deal with a different set of issues as far as their access to the media is concerned, and the framing devices to which they are subjected. Theories on the particular dynamics of challenger groups are useful to pursue the research question on how the claim-makers in this research project - namely the Timorese resistance and NGOs campaigning for the territory - negotiated their entry into the media agenda, as well as the set of meanings they carried across.

If these groups are not included in the 'taken for granted' social order and the status quo, as Tuchman (1978) noted, then what are the strategies used by challengers in order to access the competitive sphere of the media agenda?

This question needs to be addressed by taking into account the competitive nature of the agenda-setting process. Research on agenda-setting has shifted from asking 'who sets the public agenda?', to asking 'who sets the media agenda?' (McCombs, 1998). Whereas the early agenda-setting studies focused on the influence of news media on the public agenda, recent research has looked into the wider relationships between the public, the political and media agenda, whilst acknowledging the broader role of primary definers in the background. For the time being, I am concentrating on how agendas can be challenged by the "underdogs" of media representation, but later on I look at the complexities of relationships between the media and legitimised political actors like governments.

The agenda-setting process is best described as a competition among issues to occupy the highest hierarchy of public debate, the wider spectrum of public attention. Sponsoring groups, or challengers, use processes of influence, competition and negotiation in order to turn an issue of limited interest into a topic of concern to a wider and publicly acknowledged constituency. The claims brought into the discussion by different groups establish an ongoing competition for setting the terms, or frames, in which issues are discussed (Dearing and Rogers, 1996).

One of the measures of success for claim-makers is their power to influence not only the media agenda, but also policy and public agenda. It is when these agendas meet that issues go beyond the stage of legitimisation, as Blumer put it, invoking action to wider groups within society and affecting change by leading to policy measures and official plans of action. That does not necessarily mean that an
issue's career reaches its end, but it establishes the fact that the "struggle" was institutionalised. Institutionalisation of issues is the ultimate goal for challengers, since the entry of an issue into an area of public policy indicates the wider acceptance of that issue by the state, who will mobilise resources to address some of the problems it generates.

Media challengers face particular difficulties in controlling the terms in which campaign issues are framed, or discussed. Not only do challengers have to compete for newsworthiness, they have to do so in a way that acquires legitimisation. Legitimisation means constructing a status whereby they become accepted as sources and spokespersons on public issues, rather than just objects of what Ryan (1991) calls media hounds or clichés. Unlike organisations or personalities whose importance is institutionalised by media routines – such as the government or the scientific community – 'challengers face the double burden of the underdog: more difficulty getting access to the media, and more difficulty getting their views presented without distortion' (p. 8). The women’s movement of the 1960s is a good example of the use of distortions to fit news criteria: the use of images of bra-burning in the coverage came to epitomise what large sections of the public identified with the movement; as a cliché, it conformed to the portrayal of the rising feminist ideology.

Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) acknowledge the dual dynamics at play for these groups and define the relationship between the media and movements (or challengers) as one of 'competitive symbiosis'. Movements need the media for 'mobilisation, validation and scope enlargement', but they also provide the media with 'drama, conflict and action, colourful copy and photo opportunities' (p. 116). Challengers are more likely to control the symbolic language through which they are constructed in the media (thus avoiding the 'colourful copy' and 'clichés') when they present themselves in a naturalised way with wider cultural resonances of a given society; in other words when they negotiate their issue-claims with existing media frames (Ryan, 1991; Wolfsfeld, 1997).

The barriers ahead of challengers go beyond issues of access, transforming themselves into struggles for meaning, or signification. Wolfsfeld’s research (1997) on Middle East protests suggests that in very particular circumstances, and armed with the right resonances, challengers can indeed enter the media agenda:

The news media have a variety of frames waiting on the shelf for those activists who are skilled enough to construct an effective package and lucky enough to be promoting them at a time when the authorities are vulnerable to attack. In these cases the news
media can play a critical role by legitimating oppositional frames that increase the status, resources, and power of challengers (p. 55).

Wolfsfeld's model hands the power back to challengers. If they master the cultural resonances at large, and tap in to the media frames devised by the media, they become more likely to control the terms of access and signification.

1.3.6 Summary

Our knowledge of the world is socially constructed and, as such, does not have an intrinsic natural meaning in itself. Such meaning is the outcome of groups' experiences and actions carried out in the process of trying to make sense of that world. News is also a social construction, written through frames that map our understanding of reality, and which are embedded in the cultural and social resonances that unite the definition of a given society.

Media scholars have accepted that, rather than being objective, news is biased, and that bias – however unintentional - is hardly recognised by news professionals. Upon their entrance into media organisations, journalists undergo processes of socialisation into news routines and media practices. That process progressively dilutes their initial values into the 'commonsense knowledge of everyday journalism'. In trying to make the most out of scarce resources such as time, newsmen reproduce media practices and build the 'newsnet' – a combination of routines that make certain places, certain people and certain facts more likely to enter the media agenda than others. These are facts and people who are more likely to grab media attention and become primary definers, those who hold institutional power and whose political position grants them the status of legitimate sources within the 'newsnet'. In giving primary access to these voices, the media are also reproducing the establishment views, contributing to a consensual and united view of society.

The groups outside the newsnet sit at the other end of the spectrum. They wish to enter the public arena and legitimise their views there. They are the challengers to the establishment. Challengers fight a cultural battle in making their perspectives on events meaningful both to the public and official representatives. They sponsor activities in order to legitimise a certain issue, and seek the mobilisation of a constituency to widen the scope of their struggle. The media arena is one of the obvious spaces where challenger groups pursue this struggle. It is a two-dimensional struggle that faces the additional burden of seeking both access to the media but also the legitimisation of meaning produced on issues. Media and challengers operate a symbiotic but unequal relationship where the media play the
powerful role, and that is because challengers need media coverage more than the media needs challengers' copy. Challengers compete with an awful lot of suppliers in this struggle for media coverage, and many of those competitors are in institutional positions of power where legitimacy is granted automatically through media routines.

Challengers are more likely to enter the media agenda when they frame their positions within wider cultural resonances, articulating their messages with 'natural' ways of perceiving reality. The media are able to pick up on these effective packages and make them fit within existing frames which the world is understood.

1.4 The communication of politics, international relations and conflict

In this section I explore some of the scholarly work that deals with the relationship between communication and the politics of international relations and situations of conflict. East Timor was for some time considered an international affair by the Portuguese media, particularly in the first few years that followed the democratic regime. Weekly newspaper Expresso, for instance, covered the East Timor story in its international pages until 1986. So, when did East Timor become a national story, and how was that transition articulated both politically and in the media? I want to explore the question of whether the framing of East Timor shifted with the progress of the East Timorese conflict, and whether the exposure of some dimensions of that conflict contributed. How does conflict, and the media coverage of situations of conflict, interact with the wider political resonances of East Timor in Portugal? Theories of media and politics offer some answers to these questions.

Too often empirical studies compartmentalise the political and the media spheres, effectively ignoring certain dynamics of the relationship between them. My research questions take into account that media representations of East Timor can not be dissociated from the political conceptualisation of East Timor in the Portuguese public space.

In Western societies, the media are the primary arena where politics are played out; it is through the media that the public find information about the role of institutional politics. Even if other politicised accounts might be excluded from the mediated public sphere, as is the case of challenger groups (mentioned in the previous section), it is certainly valid to say that those people and groups who have acquired institutional acknowledgement from the regulatory mechanisms of power
in societies have privileged access to the media, which they use as a platform for public debate and as a means to negotiate issues. Moreover, the media not only report on politics, but they are part of the environment where politics are exercised, publicising agendas and judging the political proposals on offer (McNair, 2003). Thus, in intensively mediated societies the mass media constitute a prime forum of public debate on political issues.

The history of discourses on East Timor through the media reflects a relationship of dependency between the political and the communicative dimensions of an issue. Several studies on the role of the media in situations of conflict have demonstrated how essential it is to include both perspectives in research of this nature. Sreberny-Mohamaddi and Mohammadi (1994) write of the impossibility of separating participation in the political process from participation in the communication process, whilst Wolfsfeld (1997) highlights the blinding effect the news media has had in research, some of which has lost sight of the political forces that run in the background of the media contest. This research brings the political dimensions to the fore, accounting for policy changes with regards to East Timor and political shifts in the (re)presentation of the Timorese resistance.

1.4.1 The Media and foreign policy

Research into the relationships between the mass media and foreign policy has followed a road which is not dissimilar to other areas of media studies. It has moved from an emphasis with establishing causal links between the two dimensions - the effects tradition - to consensus and acknowledgement that these relations exist, and are continuously being transformed by the breakdown of time and space brought forward by fast-moving technology (Malek, 1997).

The classic study on media and foreign policy by Bernard Cohen (1963) became a key text for a generation of scholars exploring the close symbiosis between the government and the media. Cohen not only demonstrates the ways in which the media support the government apparatus but also the processes through which the media participate in foreign policy-making, by questioning and criticising the elected decision-makers. This relationship of symbiosis is, like many other journalistic practices, characterised both by unconscious processes and rational decisions (Paterson, 1997; Malek, 1997).

Correspondents of international politics act as translators of political information which is otherwise distant from the public and therefore more difficult to grasp. This distance is obviously not only spatial, but most importantly cultural, for it is the lack of cultural resonances that brings on difficulties in understanding the wider social
and political history of diplomatic and military conflicts. This idea of cultural translation is particularly useful when looking at the media coverage of East Timor, where the narrative changes depending on whether the copy is being fed by Portuguese or international correspondents. The Portuguese media narratives often lacked international analysis and carved black holes in the coverage, contributing to a poor understanding of local political factions and the importance of Indonesian domestic politics. Those areas of information were neglected beyond a reasonable expectation of what might constitute an informed public debate about East Timor. However, this state of affairs is quite common in the coverage of international affairs and conflicts as Hallin (1996) points out. In his research of US coverage of the Vietnam War, Hallin was surprised to find that reporters had little knowledge of local history and social structures.

Times of conflict bring particular constraints to media operations, and the weakening of media access is one of them. Both the government and the military tend to want more control over what is reported during times of war, thus affecting public knowledge of foreign policy. Whether in government press briefings or in press pools at the frontline, the extent of the reality presented to the mass media is far more limited than in the domestic arena. In addition, journalists covering international affairs are often in positions where they have to negotiate what is judged to be national security and their sense of national identity with organisational goals of newsworthiness and their role as a voice of the "fourth estate". The political pressure put upon these professionals is considerably higher when matters of national prestige and security are involved, giving rise to a grey area where journalistic limit their criticism to policy far more than they would otherwise do (Graber, 1989). There is a case to argue that the coverage of international affairs amplifies the circumstances whereby the media have to deal with issues of political control, whether through external pressure, conflict of professional and national values, or through the detached nature of foreign policy and limited access to information.

Some authors have discussed at length issues of political control as a major force in the shaping of international news. Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (1988, 1996) stresses the imbalance of power in state bureaucracies, whereby the dominant elite filters out the news that threatens the political and economic order. The authors studied US foreign policy, focusing on media blindspots like Cambodia, East Timor and Nicaragua, and explained the silences over those territories where human rights abuses are ignored through the propaganda model. The model problematises the media as manufacturers of consent, agents of self-censorship, who frame reality in line with the country's official standing on international
conflicts. Chomsky argues that the media serve the interests of the dominant elite, which disguises itself from suspicion under the veneer of a democracy on the one hand, and an independent and privately owned media structure on the other. Consequently, state propaganda on foreign policy becomes a less than obvious device.

Most of the studies available in this area reflect the particular characteristics of American and British political culture and history of international relations. When revising such literature it is important to bear in mind that this doctoral research deals with the specificities of Portuguese media culture and politics, which have yet to be addressed by scholars of media studies in Portugal. Portugal's media studies departments have only been established over the last fifteen years, and research in the field has yet to produce the number of classics that underpins Anglo-Saxon theory.

The Vietnam War triggered a series of studies in the Anglo-Saxon tradition which raised interesting questions about the nature of the relationship between the media and international relations. The Vietnam War established a firm belief within American political and military institutions that the press had not only the power to change the public mood regarding war, but also the power to make governments lose or win wars (Kalb, 1994). By claiming that neither the government, nor the military (not even the enemy) were responsible for American defeat in Vietnam, the military concluded that the media impact significantly on the course of foreign affairs. Another consequence of this argument is its use in justifying limited media access to areas of conflict, and the implication that holds for the transparency of decisions on external affairs. Examples of controlled media access and state-sponsored misinformation at a time of war have been documented through research into the conflicts in the Falklands (Morrison and Tumber, 1998) and the Gulf (Morrison, 1992). Governments seem to hold the view that the control of negative images of war is crucial to maintaining the course of foreign policy they wish to pursue.

However, academics hold quite different views on the subject. Media research suggests that, more often than not, the media's portrayal of negative images and aspects of war, dissent and opposition to conflicts is not the driving force behind change. Change seems to occur when different constituencies organise themselves politically in questioning decisions regarding foreign policy and war; the media becoming an arena where those voices of dissent are played out. Over the last 30 years researchers have been arguing that it is the policy-makers, and not the media, who have the power to set agendas in times of conflict.
Reflecting on their study about media coverage of the Falklands War, Morrison and Tumber (1998) challenge the belief that the public display of horrors of war through the media will change foreign policy:

Historically, there is no evidence to suggest that showing the horrors of war acts as a brake on existing wars or indeed makes wars in the future less likely. Wars are ended by defeat and begun with the sure certainty that much horror will follow. The horror of the war is not some closely guarded military secret: civilians through the ages who have experienced war know its full horror and, more recently, through the visual media of television, so does most of the world. The point is that whether war is at close quarters or removed, the knowledge and portrayal of it makes no difference to a course whose causes rest outside the shock of events as they unfold (p. 347).

A significant amount of research suggests that when the media do indeed play a part in foreign policy, their part is limited and influenced by how coherent and strongly defined that policy is at the state level on the one hand, and which levels of consensus (or opposition) exist across society on the other hand. The areas for media intervention depend considerably on how the consensus over conflict fluctuates across society and its different actors.

Technological advances and the breakdown of time-space barriers have brought in new elements, one of them regarding the role of television news in the age of real-time coverage. The reinforcement of the belief in the almighty power of the media came about with the arrival of 24-hour news channels, and the intense newsbeat developed by the American television station CNN. The 'CNN effect' – understood as a loss of political control on part of policy-makers – has been dismissed by several studies which argue that the power of around-the-clock news coverage is limited. News organisations usually leave policy-framing and agenda-setting to the policy-makers, who used them to promote their framing devices on international issues (Strobel, 1996; Bennet and Manheim, 1993; Livingston and Eachus, 1995, Wolfsfeld, 1997). The US intervention in Somalia is one example where the media acted out the agendas of officials: it was the combined pressure from elements of the US government, the international community and crucial members of Congress that triggered the presidential decision to further US military presence in Somalia (Livingston and Eachus, 1995).

Strobel's research (1996) looked for the televised effects in recent international crisis where the US was involved, and concluded that official reaction to media images varied with the different stages of policy-making. In Bosnia and Rwanda, images had a limited power in changing US policy, because that policy was strongly defined. In Somalia the media did not set the agenda per se, pressure for
intervention came instead from the Congress, the Presidency and relief officials. In Haiti, intervention was led by the government, despite opposition voices in the news media. In Sarajevo, the images of the notorious marketplace massacre 'showed what seemed to be a dramatic change of policy was in fact an instance in which the media had an impact when policy was in flux, and thus official commitment to the old policy weak' (p. 373). In addition, Strobel's findings reveal that although US interventions are now more open to scrutiny through the presence of television, policy-makers ultimately control the framing of events. Television images do not trigger participation in conflicts where there is no obvious national interest. And, despite the additional pressure put on the government through broadcasting, the agenda is not triggered by the news organisations' images but rather through governmental and non-governmental relief agencies and US lawmakers who point the cameras in the direction of humanitarian crises. Moreover, news stories on foreign conflicts are more likely to impact on policy when that policy is poorly articulated or is in transition. And when real-time coverage affects policy outcome, it does so by contracting the time of official response, but not necessarily determining it.

Cohen's research (1994) of news handling during Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina accepts the success of television in mobilising the political institutions and American public opinion. Nonetheless it points to the ephemeral character of television coverage, and the secondary position humanitarian intervention takes within the wider range of conflicts. Once the military leave areas of humanitarian intervention, the issue falls off the agenda, where it first landed with very little reflection over causes and the implications of intervention.

Policy officials also acknowledge the privileged position of state institutions in setting the public agenda at times of conflict, particularly when invited to discuss the details of their relationships with news organisations. Despite their strong impulse to police and limit the access of news teams, a considerate reflection brings quite different complexities to the fore, as O'Heffernan's interviews (1991) with US policy officials demonstrated. The mass media operate in the foreign policy process through what O'Heffeman called an 'insider model'. The media inform the policy process, define what is acceptable performance, judge policy-maker's attention to goals, constrain the use of other outputs and set the pace of policy-making. By incorporating media techniques into the repertoire of the political rituals of communicating foreign policy - press conferences, editorial pieces, leaks, travelling pools, media tours and a variety of other rituals staged for the media - the media play an insider's role into the government machine.
In summary, research into the relationship between media and issues of foreign policy highlights the contradictory nature of journalists' roles, asks questions of access, and tightens perceptions of media power in affecting the course of conflict. The theoretical issues raised in this section are important tools for my research. They allow me to think about the relationship between Portuguese policy for East Timor and the ways in which the media has reinforced or criticised that policy. The idea of international correspondents as cultural translators provides clues to the ways in which correspondents perceived the East Timor story depending on their nationality. So, do the negotiation of journalists' values during conflicts, and the concessions made to the idea of national interest and nationhood affect the coverage of East Timor? Finally, this section looked at the debate between the military and political perception of the intrusive role of the media, and how it opposes the academic view of the media as an agent of limited power in the course of foreign policy. I am interested in judging these findings against my own research with regard to the question of how media exposure of East Timor affected the course of Portuguese foreign policy.

1.5 Conclusion

The review of literature allowed me to explore theories in the fields of nationalism and identity, the social construction of news, the dynamic relationship between the news media and challenger groups, and the relationship between policy-makers and the media during times of conflict. The literature contributes to this multidisciplinary project, which looks into media discourse as well as into the struggle for meanings and relationships set by different actors over East Timor.

Some of the models reviewed are particularly useful in the pursuit of my research questions. Anderson's theory (1983) on nations as imagined communities provides articulation with Santos' idea (1994) of Portuguese identity as a discursive political space that fluctuates between the 'imagination of the centre' and the 'fear of the periphery'. Additionally, Hobsbawm and Ranger's theory (1992) on the invention of tradition speaks to Lourenço's articulation (1999) of the Portuguese-speaking space as a symbolic project of creating a universal history; whereas Cahen's analysis (1997) demonstrates the ways in which that space is institutionalised in political practice. All of these models contribute to an understanding of the way in which the representation of East Timor ties in with contemporary discourse of Portuguese identity and its relationship to the rest of the world.

Models of social construction of reality and the sociology of journalism are useful to understand the ways in which the media have framed East Timor. Tuchman (1978)
and Gitlin's concepts of newsmen (1980), the web of facticity, the role of journalists, and the framing of news as an industrial practice open up ways of exploring how routines and roles have been negotiated by journalists and media organisations in the coverage of East Timor. The ways in which challenger groups can break through the status quo and establish their own terms of access to and meaning within the media have been imaginatively explored by Wolfsfeld (1997). I use his model to explore the dynamics of NGOs and the Timorese resistance in building relationships with the media.

The final section of literature reviews deals with the relationship between the media and the state in matters of foreign policy and conflict. Cohen's articulation (1964) of the symbiotic relationship between the media and the government apparatus contributes to the analysis of Portuguese governmental positions over East Timor and the media's articulation of those policies; as does the concept of international correspondents as "cultural translators". In addition, I contribute to the debate on the role of the media in foreign policy, and the extent to which it is judged to be influential, a debate which has been enlightened through a series of empirical studies reviewed here (Livingston and Eachus, 1995; Strobel, 1996; Cohen, 1994 and O'Heffernan, 1991).

ENDNOTES

1 Participating countries include Brazil, Portugal, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Vert, São Tomé e Príncipe, Mozambique. The state of East Timor joined the organisation in 2001.

2 Presently the use of the word 'colonisation' is avoided in political discourse. Instead, the Portuguese Empyrean past is often referred to as an "encounter between cultures".
Chapter 2 - Methodology

This chapter presents the processes of research and analysis of data used in the project. I begin by addressing areas of qualitative research that best suit the multi-dimensional nature of the project and explore the concept of depth hermeneutics used in the analysis. Afterwards I present the criteria for selection of documents, news stories, institutions and people from which material was gathered. I then explain how those materials are treated by using social-historical analysis, discursive analysis and the interpretation of data.

2.1 A multi-dimensional project, a qualitative approach

This project required a balancing act between different angles of explanation and interpretation. I wanted to look at the ways in which the media (re)produced narratives of East Timor. However I tend to agree with the view that media narrative alone provides an incomplete picture and can often exclude larger political processes. Media narratives are often the product of a contested field played by different actors for political control over frames of interpretation or maps of meaning (Wolfsfeld, 1997). I wanted to take into account those political relationships, in addition to looking at the media's framing of East Timor. Thompson (cited in Fairclough, 1995) draws from Bourdieu to call for political relationships to be brought back into the analysis of discourse:

It would be superficial (at best) to try to analyse political discourses or ideologies by focusing on the utterances as such, without reference to the constitution of the political field and the relations between this field and the broader space of social positions and processes... all such attempts [of discourse analysis]... take for granted but fail to take account of the sociohistorical conditions within which the object of analysis is produced, constructed and received (p. 177).

The project called for a multi-dimensional approach to the way East Timor had been constructed, not only in the press, but also by political actors such as the state and challenger groups who attempted to influence and change policy-making. In other words, I wanted to look at the broader political space referred by Thompson.

The emerging consensus in the field suggests that social research is not best served by hypothetic-deductive methods, but instead through multidisciplinary theories and research. Mass communications studies are increasingly making use of a variety of theories from social and human sciences, combining them to fit the interdisciplinary nature of projects (Jensen and Jankowski, 1991; Howarth, 2000).
This project is not looking at causal relationships between policy, the news media and challenger groups. Instead, the research triangulates the dynamics of these relationships, bringing together the framing, the strategies and the relationships between the state, the news media and challenger groups.

The research touches on principles of ethnographic approaches: the analysis grows out of the text in a constant dialogue and concertina movement between theory and material. This structure allows the research to be reflexive across units of material: sometimes news stories informed interviews with key actors in the process; at other times those interviews completed the interpretation of news stories. The research situates the material historically, and notes the shifts in language and emphasis that occurred with different governments and different challenger groups. It also sheds light on how critical moments of discourse reflected, contested or reinvented those changes. I agree with Alassutari (1995) in that only a multi-dimensional approach can grasp the full richness and complexity of qualitative material.

2.2 Depth hermeneutics: an interpretative approach

I was very aware that news stories on East Timor contained a plethora of symbolisms: they extended Portuguese borders into a unifying space of identity which cut across continents, and they depoliticised the Timorese and turned them into romantic heroes. There were clear signs of what Elliot (1980) called 'press performance as political ritual'. These stories used language that made use of, and spoke to, the historical and social circumstances of its time. The project needed a methodology that could articulate media discourses with social and historical analysis. History was paramount to understanding the discourse on national identity on the one hand; and the changes in the Portuguese media culture on the other hand.

Thompson's exploration of depth hermeneutics (1990) offers the possibility of looking beyond media discourse, and brings broader political and historical context into the analysis. He divides the methodology into three inter-related stages: the social-historical analysis, a formal or discursive analysis, and interpretation/re-interpretation. Thompson states that the aim of the first stage, social-historical analysis, is to 'reconstruct the social and historical conditions of production, circulation and reception of symbolic forms' (p. 282). I do this analysis through material gathered in bibliographical research, political documents and interviews. The second stage of this process is a formal or discursive analysis, which I carry out on seven critical moments of coverage of East Timor. The third and final stage is
what Thompson calls *interpretation/re-interpretation*, which involves a process of synthesis to make sense of the reality analysed. Thompson elaborates:

The methods of formal or discursive analysis (...) cannot abolish the need for a creative construction of meaning, that is, for an interpretative explication of what is said (p. 289)

Discursive forms have a ‘referential’ aspect: they mean something, say something, and it is this something that interpretation intends to grasp. Engaging with these three different stages of depth hermeneutics allows the researcher to create a dialogue between the text and the broader social and historical circumstances, and in the end interpret the ways in which symbolic forms of ideology and discourse are construed. Again, in Thompson’s words:

Depth hermeneutics provides an intellectual template, as it were, which enables us to see how symbolic forms can be analysed systematically and appropriately – that is, in ways which make justice to their character as socially and historically situated constructs which display an articulated structure through which something is represented or said (p. 291).

I shall turn now to describe in detail the materials and methods used in each of these three stages.

### 2.2.1 Social-historical analysis

Literature on the history of Portugal and East Timor is scarce. I investigated some of that history myself, by carrying out interviews and analysing documents published by political and civic organisations. Most of the existing bibliography was written either in the UK, Australia or the US by authors who had been in contact with East Timor in some shape or form, either as diplomats (James Dunn), journalists (Matthew Jardine, John Pilger, Jill Jolliffe), academics (Taylor) or activists (Constancio Pinto). Most of this bibliography is inevitably characterised by an Anglo-Saxon or Australian bias, and offers limited insight into the particular relationship between Portugal and East Timor. This insight is usually centred on the politics of 1974–5, the period between the end of dictatorship in Lisbon and the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. There seems to be a vacuum of historical and political analysis of this relationship during the 1980s and 1990s. Although it is not my aim to fully address that vacuum, the research manages to write some of the history of Portuguese politics for East Timor during the 1980s and the 1990s.

Resistance members have recently been publishing accounts of a life working for self-determination. I used Pinto and Jardine’s account of life underground (1997)
and Ramos-Horta's book on him as the Timorese's representative abroad. The Timorese have only recently been free to write their own story, and there are a number of ongoing projects to record the oral history of the Timorese. The history of Portuguese colonisation in East Timor is not vast either, yet Taylor's work (1999) offers interesting reflections on international perceptions of Portuguese occupation in the 19th and 20th centuries.

I complement the bibliographical research with material from presidential and governmental papers, party positions, parliamentary debates and other information gathered in the archives of NGOs. It clarified the terms in which East Timor was conceptualised in parliamentary debates, the political shifts in positions across the party spectrum, and the ideological terms in which it was discussed. It also provided a detailed history on specific events and on the activities of NGOs.

Finally, I carried out 24 semi-structured interviews with leading actors in the construction of the issues. Those included:

1) leaders of non-governmental organisations campaigning for East Timor;
2) Timorese resistance members;
3) representatives of the state (members of the presidential and prime-minister's office and diplomatic staff);
4) journalists and editors of the news media.

I wanted to build a map of the ways in which these actors viewed the relationship between Portugal and the territory. The interviewees helped to build a history that was absent from the bibliography and official documents. They had clear views about changes in political moods regarding East Timor, turning points in the history of the issue, and the "not so public side" of political dealings.

Some interviews presented ethical issues I had not anticipated. On a few occasions my interviewees provided answers which were politically sensitive. These were accounts of events outside the public realm of policy and which involved senior politicians. Some of those statements were volunteered without any constraints by the interviewees; others spoke of those events off-the-record. I had to judge those statements against the public role performed by those named, and I consciously deleted those statements from the interviews' transcriptions.

The interviews with NGO staff generated interesting reflections on how these organisations had been marginally treated by the media. The interviews contributed to the mapping of relationships between NGOs and the media. Sometimes I got insights to how this relationship was articulated with political institutions, but that
dimension did not form a solid block of knowledge for those specific relationships, as much as it did for the group of journalists and NGO leaders. In total, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 journalists, 5 NGO leaders, 5 political staff and 2 Timorese resistance members. Appendix One lists the names of these interviewees and the semi-structured interview schedule, whose content was inspired by Wolfsfeld’s work (1997) on the Middle East conflict.

Some of those interviewed were in my initial list of possibilities, others were brought in by a snowball-type effect, i.e., one interviewee led me to another one through their network of contacts. For instance, when I was interviewing President Sampaio’s political adviser, Carlos Gaspar, he told me Noble Laureate Ramos-Horta was due to fly into Lisbon the following day, and so put me straight into contact with his secretary. This was a fortunate coincidence, as trying to interview somebody who is about to become the foreign affairs secretary of a new nation is usually impossible! My work was immensely facilitated by those interviewees who opened other doors for me and I cannot thank them enough for that. Most of the interviews took place in Lisbon and were recorded on tape, and then transcribed directly into English.

Additionally, I corresponded by phone and e-mail with actors in Lisbon, Australia, the UK and East Timor, usually to clarify information gathered during the interviews. Sometimes these informal contacts were also made with journalists and resistance activists who were not initially included in my interviews, but who could bring relevant information at a later stage, when the analysis of newspaper articles was already under way.

2.2.2 Formal or discursive analysis

In this section I present decisions on sample selection (time frames and choice of newspapers) and explain how discourse analysis was used in the critical moments of coverage.

2.2.2.1 The sample

I looked at newspaper coverage of East Timor from 1975, the year Indonesia invaded the Portuguese colony, until 1999, the year East Timor gained its right to independence. I selected particular moments of intensified coverage over those 24 years for my sample. Chilton calls these instances of intensified coverage “critical discourse moments”, and explains why they become crucial when analysing the social construction of issues in the news media:
.... [they make] the culture of an issue visible. They stimulate comment in the media by sponsors and journalists. With continuing issues such as nuclear power, journalists look for 'pegs' – that is, topical events that provide an opportunity for broader, more long-term coverage and commentary. These pegs provide us with a way of identifying those time periods in which packages are especially likely to be displayed (Chilton quoted in Gamson and Modigliani, 1989, p. 11).

The selection of these moments was put to test with journalists I interviewed, who considered them representative of the coverage at large. Those critical moments of discourse are:

1975 – Indonesia invades East Timor
1981 – East Timor secret report
1982 – Overturning the vote at the United Nations
1991 – The Santa Cruz massacre
1992 – The Lusitânia Expresso Peace Mission
1996 – The Nobel Peace Prize
1999 – The referendum on independence

The time frame for each moment varied according to the nature of coverage itself. Rather than securing a single time formula for all moments, the research called for case-to-case analysis of moments themselves, how the events in those moments evolved, and the circumstances from which they arose. The selection of stories followed the natural duration of the issue in the press: for some that was a week, for others a whole month. For some moments it became crucial to look back a few weeks or months in time from the event itself, because the discourse that anticipated the event was significantly transformed by the event itself. Such transformation was in itself a symbolic field which required attention and reflection. For instance, the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre radically transformed the types of claims that were competing in the media agenda just a month before, when Portuguese parliamentarians were finalising details of a trip to Timor. By including the discourse that anticipated the main event of Santa Cruz, I was able to contrast discourses on Portuguese policy before and after the massacre.
The following table summarises the number of newspaper stories and periods of time included in the analysis of each critical moment of discourse:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Moments</th>
<th>Number of stories</th>
<th>Period of time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moment One</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18 Oct 1975 – 29 Dec 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moment Three</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14 Sep 1982 – 16 Oct 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moment Seven</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1 Sept 1999 – 4 Oct 1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I observed these critical moments of discourse through two newspapers. In order to keep the project consistent I selected titles that existed for the duration of the 24 years under analysis. This was all the more important in a democratic press environment that, unlike the British one, has existed for 30 years only and was thus marked by unusual moments of volatility. Issues of the 'specific and the local', and particular cultural and democratic developments latent in each society are of paramount importance for they impact on the media culture. As Blain, Boyle and O'Donnell (1993) wrote on their study of national identities across the European press, it is not possible to look at media discourses without establishing 'the kinds of media organisations and practices which develop in different regions and states' (p. 7).

The Portuguese media exist in the context of a recent democracy and that has implications for its organisational culture. Several newspapers have emerged and disappeared over the last 30 years, but both Expresso and Diário de Notícias, the two titles used for the research, fulfilled the criteria of longevity. I sample the stories for analysis from these two titles (see page page 4.4.1104 for an overview of Expresso, Diário de Notícias and the Portuguese media context).

The newspaper articles were collected at the National Library's newspaper archive. Titles in the sample prior to the 1990s were mostly accessible through microfilm. The remaining editions were accessed through printed newspapers and internet downloads. Additionally, I collected stories that fell outside the critical moments of analysis. Although those were not used directly in the analysis of media discourse, they informed the history of the issue itself. Again, access to these stories would not have been so causal was it not for the flexible attitude of the National Library staff, whom I thank greatly.
2.2.2.2 The analysis of text

Methodologies of discourse analysis are increasingly popular with the social sciences, no doubt due to what Howarth (2000) calls the "linguistic turn" in the field, or the 'growing dissatisfaction with mainstream positivist approaches to social science' (p. 2). The literature on discourse analysis is vast, and specific methodologies have been developed by critical analysts of media discourse (Fowler, 19991; Bell, 1999; van Dijk, 1988). I found most of them unsuitable for my research: they are often developed around the analysis of one particular text, and difficult to apply to the number of news stories I was dealing with; 214 in total.

I start from Fairclough's (1995) general framework for analysing media discourse, where he establishes that any media text is simultaneously representing, setting up identities, and setting up relations. According to Fairclough, the language of the media texts answers three basic questions about media output: 1) How is the world (events, relationships etc.) represented?; 2) What identities are set up for those involved in the story?; 3) What relationships are set up between those involved?. He refers to these forms of discourse as representations, identities and relations.

I overlapped Fairclough's general principle with the goals of my research inquiry, and identified three main themes relevant to the construction of East Timor in the Portuguese media agenda. The newspaper articles are discussed through these three different themes:

1) The portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese – This theme explores the representation of East Timor and its people and builds the picture of how this challenger group was represented. It includes references to day-to-day life in the territory, the organisation of the Timorese resistance, the portrayal of Timorese political leaders and the relationships between Timorese groups.

2) The relationship between Portugal and East Timor – This theme explores the relationships between Portuguese and Timorese realities and actors, and the representation of Portuguese and Timorese identities. It aims to understand how discourses of Portuguese identity engage with the Timorese reality. It includes references to Portuguese policy for East Timor, meetings between Portuguese, Timorese and other foreign state representatives, Portuguese dealings with supra-national institutions (the UN, the EU) regarding East Timor, positions from non-state actors in Portugal, and popular expressions of East Timor issues in Portugal or by Portuguese communities abroad.
3) **International relations and East Timor** – This theme explores the representation of international relations and aims at understanding the representation of the conflict at large. It includes international positions regarding East Timor (where Portugal is not directly involved), the politics of Indonesia towards East Timor, and other regional issues that affect the political balance in that area.

Those categories were fairly stable, and only occasionally offered marginal negotiation over where certain stories were placed in relation to others.

The issues raised by literature on discourse and news media provided a series of pointers that I used when reviewing each individual story. Discourse theory aims to unravel and interpret socially constructed meanings and seeks to identify particular systems of meaning, which I incorporated in my three main themes. It draws upon the historical specificities of the text and the rules and conventions that construe the production of meaning at particular times in history (Howarth, 2000). The hermeneutical analysis carried out aims precisely to outline the structures of meaning and social construction of issues.

News stories provide a rich medium for discourse analysis: ‘...language is not neutral, but a highly constructive mediator’ (Fowler, 1991, p. 1). The analysis looks at ways in which particular events were worded so as to identify the particular ideological constructions built in the framing of specific events. Different expressions carry different meanings; and the choice of language carries with it a particular constructed representation of reality. Language is the unconscious manifestation of ideological choices for certain issues: which actors play the leading role in those issues; which positions they occupy in relation to each other; and how they stand in the hierarchy of the social order. Again, Fowler clarifies:

> ... to display to consciousness the patterns of belief and value that are encoded in the language – and which are below the threshold of notice for anyone who accepts the discourse as “natural” (1991, p. 67).

Hall (1984) also explored the Gramscian route of language as the medium through which ideology is conveyed and reproduced; language as the medium through which meaning is given. Unravelling the discursive nature of the "natural", the "common sense", and the ‘taken-for-granted’ is crucial when establishing the maps of meaning around a particular issue:

> What passes for common sense in our society – the residue of absolutely basic and commonly agreed, consensual wisdoms – help us classify the outside world in simple but meaningful terms. Precisely, common sense does not require reasoning, argument, logic, thought: it is spontaneous, available, thoroughly recognisable, widely shared...
You cannot learn, through common sense, how things are: you can only discover where they fit into the existing scheme of things. In this way, its very taken-for-grantedeness is what establishes it as a medium in which its own premises and presuppositions are being rendered by its apparent transparency (p. 325, emphasis in the original).

The discourse analysis exposes the ideological assumptions around the issue in order to identify, in the words of Hall, the preferred meanings for the issue. The symbolic messages produced by the media are the relay of language, meaning, ideology and connotations. This type of critical assessment proved suitable to the material under analysis, which was varied, unique and rich within each corpus of moments chosen for observation. For instance, in the analysis of The Santa Cruz Massacre (1991), the meanings of the story change when the story shifts from a political framing to the wider cultural frame of Portuguese language. The pictures of civilians praying in Portuguese – broadcast one week after the massacre story first broke out – carried with it a series of ideological assumptions about how Portuguese foreign policy could change suddenly in the name of a Portuguese-speaking ethnoscape. This critical discourse analysis allowed the research to point out the tensions and contradictions in the news discourse just a month before the massacre, when stories projected a different scenario for Portuguese language and East Timor, and the tone of policy-making was rather less clear. Again, the juxtaposition of these constructions brings to the surface the instrumentality of the political discourse, and the symbolic elements of that discourse reproduced by the media. Another example would be the way the media discourse exaggerates a government recommendation for trading with Indonesia by headlining it as an embargo. As more careful analysis of the text shows, what exists is a series of recommendations for companies to reconsider their trade with Jakarta on a voluntary basis, since embargos can only be decided by the political institutions in Brussels. These and other conclusions are the product of such analysis, which exposes the uncontested realm of media discourse. As Gamson et. al (1992) put it:

An uncontested realm of media discourse is one where social constructions rarely appear as such to reader and may be largely unconscious on the part of the image producer as well. They appear as transparent descriptions of reality, not as interpretations, and are apparently devoid of political content (p. 382).

A great deal of the analysis evolved organically. I felt that the methodology had to leave room for the diversity and discursive wealth of the corpus of material to surface. Fundamentally, the role of the literature on media discourse was to point me in the right directions of enquiry. Issues of inclusion and exclusion, the
construction of cultural themes and counter themes, of contested realms of meaning, and of symbolic representations of the actors involved were of paramount importance to the research and are recurrently addressed by the literature (Gamson and Lacsch, 1983; Gamson, 1989; Gamson and al, 1992; Entman, 1993).

Those concepts made it possible to unravel the material and identify units of meaning within the three themes selected (The representation of East Timor and the Timorese, The relationship between Portugal and East Timor and International Relations and East Timor). For instance, it became possible to identify at which stages the Timorese were included and excluded in the representations of politics. It was only in the 1990s that the Timorese gained a political voice in the Portuguese press: political profiles emerged and no longer just victims, the Timorese were construed as politically active in the complex web of local relations.

Areas of exclusion were identified for instance through the differences between the writing of Portuguese journalists and that of pieces submitted by foreign journalists. For instance, in the aftermath of the Santa Cruz massacre, two foreign journalists criticised Portugal for cancelling their visit to East Timor, a story which was not pursued by the domestic press, which was entirely focused on the casualties of the massacre.

Part of the challenge of this analysis was to convey meanings that were produced in Portuguese into an English translation. I tried as much as I could to preserve the original meanings of the text. Just like translation studies themselves, my translation of those texts was (and still is) in evolution. Quotes that I had translated two years before needed to be changed when revisited, a reflection of my growing knowledge of the British language and culture. I suspect that when I look at them again, in two years time, there will be further room for improvement. Translation is not only a linguistic process but also a cultural process that requires bicultural competences (Guldin, 2003). Thus the data required a significant amount of context, which I write into the thesis in the form of an historical chapter and descriptions of particular political and media dynamics in the critical moments of discourse. I have tried to be faithful to the text, whilst acknowledging there will always be what Budick and Iser (quoted in Gulding, 2003) called 'a trace of untranslatability'. This incommensurability in the mutual understanding of cultures, the authors add, should not be seen as an obstacle to communication but as an energiser of the processes of comprehension.
2.2.3 Interpretation/re-interpretation

The research method relies on a continuous exercise of interpretation and re-interpretation, enabled by the constant dialogue and mediation between the methods of social-historical analysis and discursive analysis. The researcher observes reality in a new way, in relation to the socially historical context in which it was produced and developed. The stage of interpretation deals with the identification of symbolic forms and representations of social reality that are contextualised and understood in its different dimensions. It is, as Thompson (1990) points out, an exercise of synthesis, of 'creative construction of possible meaning': 'However rigorous and systematic the methods of formal or discursive analysis may be, they cannot abolish the need for a creative construction of meaning, that is, for an interpretative explanation of what is represented or what is said' (p. 289).

Thompson highlights that this is not just a one-dimensional process of interpretation, but often an exercise of re-interpretation, for the symbolic forms under interpretation have themselves been construed already by the discourse that naturalises them. It is also a re-interpretation in the sense that it creates room for different readings for different researchers employing different techniques. This is not a process without risks, as Thompson, once again, explains:

As re-interpretation of a pre-interpreted object domain, the process of interpretation is necessarily risky, conflict-laden and open to dispute. The possibility of a conflict of interpretation is intrinsic to the very process of interpretation (p. 290, emphasis in the original)

I was aware of these limitations during the interpretative work carried out. Sometimes I contacted my interviewees to clarify specific points that were open to misinterpretation. On other occasions, I talked informally with other specialists or actors to discuss contentious ideas and themes. Any methods carry their risks, but I was certain this approach provided the best tools to explore the multi-dimensional nature of the research project.
Chapter 3 - East Timor and Portugal: history of a relationship

In this chapter I review the history of East Timor in relation to Portugal, its colonial power for four centuries. Firstly, I draw on the beginnings of Portuguese settlement and occupation until the 20th century. Secondly, I touch on issues of the colonial regime that prevailed throughout the dictatorship of António Salazar, and how his rule impacted both on the Empire and in political movements at home. Thirdly, I focus on the emergence of nationalist movements in East Timor in the early to mid-1970s, until the territory was invaded by Indonesian forces. Fourthly, I place the events in Timor in the context of the democratic revolution in Portugal. Finally, I outline how East Timor evolved in the international arena after the invasion. Detailed research of the political changes in Portuguese policy for East Timor can be found on page 76.

Most of the written history of East Timor is driven by western perspectives. The information presented in this chapter reflects that reality: a reality moulded by colonialism, and an East Timorese identity shaped in opposition to Portuguese and Indonesian colonialism. As Taylor (1999) puts it:

Timorese exist only in their encounter with colonialism. Less well known is that, contrary to colonial assumptions, Timorese ethnography and anthropology present a rich tradition of oral history, recounting both the pre-colonial period and the varied development of Timor's kingdoms and regions during the 400 years in which Portuguese colonial influence was largely formal (p. 1).

It is not my aim to describe the complete history of East Timor, but instead to point out the events that contextualise the issue. Most of what is written in these pages is a western reading of East Timor, mainly because the narratives for this reading come from western-led conceptions of the fight for autonomy and independence. The reason why the western world acknowledges the two words 'East Timor' is simply because it came in contact with that territory, and in making that contact, the west assimilated this reality into its framework of geopolitics. Different countries and different times resulted in different ways of imagining East Timor: Portugal's writing of history is certainly different from Australia's. Accounts of events and historical developments by authors from different regions do obviously reflect different observations of the Timorese reality. In writing this chapter I use works by Western historians, journalists and scholars of international law. There is still not much work produced by the
Timorese, but I have included in here a number of recent titles published by native authors. I also use the work of Portuguese authors, equally scarce, and focus mostly on the politics of 1974–5.

3.1 Portuguese settlement in East Timor

Portuguese merchants arrived in East Timor in 1541. The Timor island was already part of a trading network centred on East Java, which had commercial links with China and India. The commercial patterns – most of them centred on the export of sandalwood – influenced the development of kingdoms in the northern and southern coastal areas and it was left to the kings to oversee the trading business with merchants from other territories (Taylor, 1999). Chinese and Arab merchants were amongst these, in what seems to have been a dynamic commercial route (Ramos-Horta, 1998). These kingdoms were formed by a mix of ethnic and culturally diverse people, as Pilger (1992) describes:

... the East Timorese have little in common with Indonesia and especially the Javanese who rule it. Descended from the Antoni people of the highlands, Malay and Melanesian immigrants and Chinese, Arab and Gujetari traders, they have over the centuries developed strikingly different languages and culture from what is now Indonesia. Whereas most Indonesians are Muslim or Hindu, the East Timorese are animist or Roman Catholic (p. 239).

Taylor (1999) outlines the political economy and social structures of Timorese kingdoms:

They combined loosely-knit localised territorial groups in a general hierarchy of clans, each related through exchange. Clans were ruled by chiefs who received tribute and organised marital alliances with neighbouring clans. Each clan paid tribute to the kingdom in which it existed. At all levels, then, an exchange of goods, people and sacred objects pervaded this system. Consequently, when these localised groups began to trade with the Dutch and Portuguese in the sixteenth century, their encounter with a relatively more developed economic system which itself operated through exchange, enabled this latter system to transform the clans’ ties with their kingdoms by directing their exchange systems externally. Chiefs who could organise labour to produce and trade in commodities such as sandalwood received in return from the Portuguese trade items such as cloth, guns and iron tools. This supply from the Portuguese enabled coastal groups to assert their identity over their erstwhile kingdom rulers. The resultant shifts in political control introduced major changes in the distribution of power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (pp. 2–3).

Timor became a point of trade for Portugal, a natural extension of the country’s influence in the region at the time. After securing control over the influential
trading port of Malacca in 1511, the Portuguese expanded east, to the islands of Flores, Ambon, the Mollucas and Solor, a neighbouring island to Timor. The Portuguese crown built a fortress and settled a Catholic mission in the island of Solor, paving the way for the formation of the élite that would come to rule over parts of Timor for the next two centuries: the Topassos or 'black Portuguese'. The Topassos were the result of mixed unions between sailors, soldiers, missionaries and local women. According to Ramos-Horta (1998), 'between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the Portuguese crown had little authority over East Timor, which was theoretically being ruled through Goa by a vice-king. The Topassos were the actual rulers of the islands and defied the vice-king representatives they disliked' (p. 68).

It was only in the early eighteenth century that Portugal sent a governor to Timor, the territory then becoming the political cornerstone for that group of islands. In the meantime, the Topassos kept the business of trade by managing their alliances between the Dutch and the Portuguese.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – and for most part of the twentieth century – Portuguese settlement was purely formal, based in coastal areas and much less so inland. Timorese opposition to Portuguese rule was another discouraging element that prevented the crown attempting military and administrative control over the whole of the island. In only two centuries, two significant rebellions were conducted by Timorese kings. The first of those, the Suai-Camenassa rebellion, erupted in 1719. It lasted fifty years, forcing the Portuguese to change the administrative centre of the colony from Lifau to Dili. Troubles erupted again at the end of the nineteenth century, when King Dom Boaventura directed the Manufhai rebellion. It lasted sixteen years, with the resistance fighting against forced labour and the introduction of heavy taxes by the Portuguese monarchy (Jollife, 1989; Taylor, 1999). Resentment of the Portuguese presence was witnessed by D. H. Kolff, a Dutch lieutenant travelling in the region at the time:

> Slaves were frequently offered to me on sale, the Commandant (of Dili), among others, wishing me to purchase two children of seven or eight years of age, who were loaded with heavy irons. These unfortunate people are kidnapped in the interior, and brought to Dili for sale. Many of the inhabitants of Dili expressed to me their strong desire to be freed from the hateful yoke of the Portuguese" (Kolff quoted in Taylor, 1999, p. 9).

In 1859, with the Dutch monarchy well established and its solid presence in the Javanese archipelago confirmed, the Dutch gave sovereignty of the east part of
Timor to the Portuguese monarchy (Leite, 1995), settling an old dispute between the two empires.

3.2 Timor under a colonial dictatorship

Portugal entered a period of dictatorship in 1933 that lasted until 1974. Dictator Salazar brought a systematic approach to colonialism, even if that approach was more about propaganda and ideological language than administrative efficiency. Portuguese colonies ranked as the poorest domains of European hegemony around the world, and East Timor was no exception.

Whereas the rest of Europe was developing an industrial economy, Portugal remained agriculturally based. While Portuguese landowners resisted the promises of the Industrial Revolution, European powers developed at an unprecedented rate. Portugal looked to its colonies to try to bolster a fading position in the world economy (Taylor, 1999). Timor had until then been no more than a trading post and the official destination for Portuguese political prisoners (Jollife, 1989), but it was about to be transformed.

The Lisbon administration re-organised its colonial policy by developing formal local structures. With the Colonial Act of 1930, colonies came under the direct rule of Lisbon, and the interests of the church and the administration were protected by dedicated legislative councils (Taylor, 1999). The Catholic Church developed its influence over an island that had been until then characterised mostly by animist practices. Its role was particularly felt in the colonial education system:

After 1941, education in the colonies was entrusted to the church under the tutelage of the state. (...) Timorese children subsequently learnt colonial values through a socialising encounter in Catholic missions (p. 13).

In the 1960s, the church controlled 60% of primary school education and was in charge of schooling those who would become the Timorese anti-colonial élite. This élite was assimilated into the administrative and clerical system. But despite the new colonial organisation, investment in education was very limited, as it was in the rest of the territory's infrastructures:

The period between 1945 and 1965 did not register any advancement worth mentioning in the development of the colony. Not a kilometre of road or bridge was built over the countless rivers that mark the territory and make travel during the rain season difficult. Dili had its first power plant built in the sixties, but the remaining administrative branches were still relying on oil lamps. (...) There was only
one high-school for the whole territory and only half a dozen Timorese had made it into the motherland universities (Ramos-Horta, 1998, p. 72).

The little investment that had been put in Timor was shattered during the Second World War, when the Dutch and Australian governments sent troops to the island in order to use it as a defence base for Australia, following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour. Japan sent 20,000 troops to East Timor and spent two years fighting the allies. As the war developed, Portugal remained silent and sent no military forces to the island, claiming its neutrality in the Second World War. Effectively, Portugal turned a blind eye to one of its colonies being turned into a war zone. When the allies finally left in 1934, 60,000 Timorese (or 13% of the population) had died as a result of the war. The Portuguese then returned to the island and imposed forced labour on the locals in order to rebuild the economy (Taylor, 1999).

The end of the Second World War resulted in a different scenario to the neighbouring islands – the emergence of a Javanese independence movement that resisted Dutch rule. The Dutch finally withdrew from the East Indies in 1952, and the state of Indonesia was formed. Contrary to what had been agreed with the Dutch, Indonesian President Sukarno and his advisers created a state run by Jakarta and the Javanese élites, lacking regional voices, and therefore not respecting the Dutch intentions of maintaining a federation of associated states with some regard to the different economic, linguistic and religious configurations within the archipelago (Davison, 1995).

During the 1960s, Timorese nationalism gained ground and paved the way for the formation of political movements that became established in the following decade. Taylor explains the conditions that led the Timorese élite into this process, and their use of both indigenous structures and colonial values in their politics:

From the mid-1960s onwards, three themes dominated the discussions amongst the newly recruited members of East Timor's élite: the potential for economic development; the lack of any social or political initiative by the colonial power; and the seeming eternity of Portuguese rule. ... It thus seemed possible that new social and political groups could emerge, with an ability to express their increasing knowledge of the values of national development in the framework provided by the values of the indigenous society. This, however, depended on two factors: the ability of Portuguese administration to plan a phased process of decolonisation, and the ability of the élites in Timor to develop viable rural-based political parties (1999, p. 18–19).
Nationalism grew as colonial impoverishment became unsustainable in the 1960s. Timor was the most neglected of all Portuguese colonies with a 50% mortality rate at birth and an illiteracy rate that ranged between 95% and 99% (Matos, 1999). Australian journalist Jill Jolliffe described the isolation of East Timor in the 1970s:

More than four centuries of Portuguese presence resulted in little transformation towards progress. The road network was practically non-existent and, out of ten existent roads, only one was paved and suitable to be used at all times (Baucau). There was only one harbour and connections with the metropolis were done three times a year, the journey to Lisbon taking, via Suez, about thirty days. (...) there were only 600 telephones in the entire territory (Expresso, 06.10.1981, p. 4).

While the infrastructure had not developed, the society was changing. By the 1970s, the Timorese élite was establishing contacts with opposition movements in other colonies, and preparing the way to independence.

3.3 Timorese nationalism in the context of Portuguese decolonisation

Timorese nationalism is better understood in the context of the democratic movement that was about to take place in the Portuguese mainland. Drained by the efforts of the colonial wars in Angola and Mozambique, a group of Portuguese forces orchestrated a coup to overthrow the dictatorial regime, which had survived against increasing opposition for the past decade. On April 25, 1974, the military overthrew the dictatorship and demanded independence for the colonies.

The state was left in a vacuum for several months, while a military transitional administration focused on solutions for the African wars. However, these did not include plans for East Timor, which was by no means under the same scale of conflict as territories in Africa (Pires, 1994:36). Moreover, the Lisbon revolution had left Timor without a governor for seven months, and therefore no clear political future or administrative organisation was defined by the provisional government. The expression of such uncertainty is well documented in the words of Almeida Santos, Minister for Territorial Coordination in August 1974:

...Timor is, shall we say, an immobile transatlantic, and a very costly one. Indonesia is not interested in replacing us in supporting East Timor financially. There are three main currents: one advocates total independence, which is highly unrealistic; the other defends a connection with Indonesia, but as I said before, she is not interested; another one sustains the maintenance of a connection with Portugal; and
the latter seems to be the fatal solution for the case, as there is no considerable room for larger theorisations (quoted in Pires, p. 46).

The Portuguese administration was not confident in the future of the island. Independence was 'unrealistic'. The 'Indonesian solution' had been considered but did not seem to generate interest from Jakarta. East Timor was a "costly transatlantic", in an economicist analysis of the territory, whose wording would have been highly condemned had it been produced in the Portugal of the 1990s. Colonel Lemos Pires, who was nominated governor of Timor in the late months of 1974, arrived in the island with the mission of preparing decolonisation, reorganising the administration and the military structure (Pires, p. 68). The Portuguese government had eventually prepared a strategy that, over the years, would create conditions for independence 'by promoting literacy, democratic processes, nationalist values and a basic development of the economic infrastructure' (Taylor, 1995, p. 33). The plan was never carried out due to lack of resources, the emergence of Timorese politics and Indonesian interference. Whereas the military stationed in East Timor saw Lisbon's newly convoluted politics as a stumbling block to the safe development of nationalism, local élites seized the moment to feed some dynamism into their own politics:

Associations and groupings that had led a shadowy, partial existence, amongst the indigenous members of the colonial elite rapidly emerged to put forward their ideas for independence and development. The coup had taken them by surprise, and the rather vague and general notions they had been discussing since the middle of the 1960s now had to be concretised in specific ideas for popular discussion (Taylor, 1999, p. 25).

Nationalist activity had been mounting for a while: opposition to the regime created confrontation between students and the military as early as 1973 (Ramos-Horta, p. 75). In May 1974, Timorese parties were founded and they represented a range of political affiliations: UDT (Timorese Democratic Union) argued for integration with Portugal in a federation system, Fretilin (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) advocated an independent East Timor and Apodeti (Timorese Popular Democratic Association) called for integration with Indonesia.

Indonesia then initiated a propaganda campaign backing up Apodeti, aimed at discrediting the other parties. Indonesian radio broadcasts reported that 70% of East Timor's population supported the integrationists of Apodeti, a statement that clearly contradicted the increasing sympathy that Fretilin was gaining on the ground (Taylor, 1999). On the other hand, pro-independence Fretilin constructed
a discourse on Timorese identity that would lead the resistance struggle and give shape to nationalism over the years that followed the Indonesian invasion in 1975. In using Tetum, the mainstream local dialect, and by spreading the ideas of independence through music, poetry and dance, Fretilin established a symbolic world that the average Timorese could connect with. Tetum became the language of independence and the word *maubere* was chosen to symbolise Timorese nationality.

Inspired by the liberation movement of other colonies like Angola and Mozambique, and through the growing influence of the Marxist-nationalist faction within the party, Fretilin soon gained the "communist" label, an argument heavily used by Indonesia in the age of the Cold War which benefited Jakarta in securing support from western countries.

In the meantime, Portuguese revolution was indirectly shaping the development of Timorese politics in the early days. This was clearly the case with Fretilin, the party that came to declare East Timor as an independent republic on the eve of Indonesian invasion. Although Fretilin combined an array of ideological positions, from social-democrat views to Marxist interpretations, the perception was that the latter was the leading force behind the party strategy in late 1975. The core members of the Marxist group, known as 'the Lisbon group' (Ramos-Horta, 1998, p. 98), were Timorese who had just returned from their university education in Lisbon, fired up by the communist undertones that followed the Portuguese revolution (Taylor, 1999, p. 48). The Lisbon group incorporated many of the traits of those Portuguese post-revolutionary politics into Fretilin discourse and action.

As Indonesian propaganda attacks on UDT and Fretilin increased, the colonial administration of Colonel Lemos Pires proposed a coalition of the two forces, and it was actually established in January 1975. The two movements agreed with the Portuguese administration on a three-year transitional period to local elections. But the coalition weakened the Indonesian strategy and soon Indonesians were trading influences within UDT. That, combined with the dislike for the left-wing of Fretilin, as well as some physical aggression that extremist Fretilin members inflicted on UDP partisans, led UDT to call off the agreement in late May.

Amidst a climate of growing tension between the political parties, the Portuguese government called a summit in June, inviting the three parties for talks in Macao. Fretilin refused to attend the meeting, allegedly because the integrationists of Apodeti would be present. The results of the summit were favourable to all parties except Fretilin:
Apopeti was able to present itself internationally as a viable party, UDT was free to criticise Fretilin in an international press arena; and the Indonesians were able to make political capital out of Fretilin intransigence. (...) But finally and perhaps, most importantly, the Macao episode confirmed UDT leaders' portrayal of Fretilin, and of East Timor, in its regional context (Taylor, 1999, p. 49).

Nobel Peace Prize winner Ramos-Horta, a member of Fretilin's moderate social-democrat faction, recalls with regret his party's position:

Politically, our absence from the Macao talks had a high price tag attached to it. We only fed into Indonesian propaganda against Fretilin. The paper A Voz de Timor, usually favourable to Fretilin, classified the talks as a victory for UDT and severely criticised the immaturity of Fretilin's leaders, and rightly so (Ramos-Horta, 1998, p. 106).

In August 1975 UDT leaders met up with Indonesian officials who stated that they would intervene in East Timor if Fretilin took power. This argument, coupled with rumours placed in Dili that Fretilin troops were organising themselves in the countryside, led UDT to organise an armed coup in order to neutralise Fretilin. A wave of violence spread through the territory for three weeks, with UDT and Fretilin troops fighting each other, before the apathy of the Portuguese military. Not only did they not intervene, but some were even taken as hostages by both parties, and their weapons fell to the hands of the opposing factions. The colonial ruler was held under arrest and promptly disarmed.

Having only one company of parachute troops, the administration headed by Colonel Lemos Pires withdrew from the main territory to the nearby island of Atauro, powerless before the wave of violence that was spreading across Dili:

The idea in Timor that Portugal, at a time of crisis, would not send military backup or any other support, did unfortunately prove to be true. During the August crisis, Lisbon sent nothing but a delegate of the President of the Republic, with no powers, and to whom Indonesia did not give passage to arrive in Dili (Pires, 1994, p. 261).

It was clear that Lisbon did not engage in a feasible strategy for East Timor. Anderson (1993) recalls the Portuguese attitude in a debate on the memoirs of General Costa Gomes, Portuguese President throughout the turbulent post-revolution years:

In his memoir, he wrote that he and his friends thought East Timor would be like Goa - that it would be peacefully and easily absorbed into big Indonesia, just as little Goa was absorbed into big India. He argued that if only Jakarta hadn't been so brutal, if the Indonesian army hadn't been so oppressive and exploitative, there would be no East Timor problem today (p. 24).
It seemed that on one hand, Indonesia perceived that she had obtained the support of Portugal to integrate East Timor into the rule of Jakarta, while on the other hand the Portuguese administration understood that this would only be done with the approval of the people of East Timor through an act of self-determination. In his review of Portuguese foreign policy, Gorjão (2001) concludes that there was a significant gap between the expectations of both administrations, and that Jakarta misread the signs that came from Lisbon:

In those years of turmoil in Portugal, Moertopo [head of Indonesia's Special Operations Command, and Indonesia's representative for talks with Lisbon] did not understand that because of the fragmented nature of the domestic political scene, Portuguese views 'tended to vary according to whom he was speaking to'. ... Indonesia never took seriously the possibility that Portuguese political leaders might wish to retain East Timor. However, the increasing power of the communists in the fledging Portuguese democracy was seen as a potential threat to Indonesia's interests since they were likely to offer unconditional support for East Timorese independence (p. 104).

By the end of August Fretilin had managed to turn the likelihood of the coup to its advantage: it controlled most of the territory after three weeks of continued fighting. By late September, UDT troops and the Portuguese military, who were escaping Fretilin, were captured by Indonesian forces on the border with West Timor. The Jakarta forces would allow them back into East Timor under one condition: that they sign a petition calling for the integration of East Timor in Indonesia. With the Portuguese military 30 kilometres off East Timor, in the small island of Ataúro, and UDP troops neutralised, Fretilin administration speedily took control of the territory. Australian delegations visiting the territory under the new administration reported great popular support and little hostility towards Fretilin, and witnessed the reconstruction work that the party was carrying out in the promotion of literacy and health programmes in the most remote villages. The party reorganised the trade and food distribution networks destroyed by the August conflict and managed to export the coffee crop.

But Indonesian forces stood by the border, and in October, they entered East Timor by Balibo, killing five foreign journalists who were there to capture some images of the Indonesian invasion. In mid-November, Indonesia boosted its strategy of claiming the eastern part of the island by occupying other towns, and bombarded Atabae, a town east of Dili. Such attacks prompted an isolated reaction from Fretilin, which declared the independence of East Timor on 28 November. Taylor (1999) describes the logic behind the decision of Fretilin:
Chapter Three - East Timor and Portugal: history of a relationship

The spectre of an Indonesian invasion which had haunted Dili for so long now seemed immediate. As a result, the Fretilin administration proclaimed independence unilaterally. Sensing that an independent state might have a more successful chance of appeal to the UN if it did not have to rely on its mentor in Lisbon, and persuaded by the intense feeling from the military front that, if soldiers were going to die, they would prefer to do so for a country that was actually theirs, the Fretilin administration transformed itself to the Democratic Republic of East Timor on 28 November (p.63).

On the morning of December 8, 1975, Indonesia invaded East Timor by sea and air.

3.4 The fall of the empire: domestic politics and colonial impact

At this point I want to elaborate on the political situation both in Portugal as well as in the colonies, right after the democratic revolution, as that becomes crucial to an understanding of how the African issue eclipsed East Timor.

The invasion of East Timor occurred 20 months after the end of the Portuguese dictatorship. At a domestic level, the political situation was clearly unstable. Between April 1974 and December 1975 – the month of invasion – six different provisional governments were formed and overthrown, amidst the politics of backbiting that ran through the Armed Forces Group (in charge of the provisional administration), the communist party and the socialist party. The spring and summer of 1975 were particularly troubled periods, with the communist party extending its control over the military, and progressively bringing more of its people to the government of the day. Although popular support for the communists at the time was seriously overestimated, not only by the party itself but also by western observers (Maxwell, 1999), there were reasons to believe that a communist coup could soon materialise. This belief led to an alliance of socialist and centre-right parties into an 'anti-communist movement', which was crucial in avoiding a communist take-over in November 1975. This was a turning point in the balance of political forces, and, for many international observers, the Portuguese case became a tester on whether communist movements would survive in Europe (Maxwell, 1999).

The eyes of the West, and especially of the United States, were fixed not only on domestic politics in Portugal but also on the nationalist movements which
emerged in the African colonies, and which, in the cases of Angola and Guinea-Bissau, were inspired by communist ideologies. At the height of the Cold War, the interest of the United States was to prevent the expansion of such movements, and the Nixon administration 'neutrally supported' (Costa Pinto, 2001, p. 13) the Portuguese wars in Africa and 'many NATO officials flattered Portugal, for its dedication in the fight against communism, expressing even admiration for the combat of the Portuguese in Africa' (p. 29).

The intense dynamics of 1974–6 politics, combined with a complex and ill-prepared process of decolonisation in the African countries, were at the top of both the political and the media agenda. Angola was the colony with most political resonance domestically and abroad, for it was also the wealthiest in resources and with large numbers of white settlers. Further increasing instability, the Angolan conflict was soon hijacked by the international military powers that supported the brutal civilian war. As the Cold War reflected itself in Angola, Portugal became sidelined as a political force. The interference of both the Soviet Union and the United States in the supply of weaponry to that country, which was rich in oil, boosted the international dimension of the country, in comparison with the remaining Portuguese colonies (Costa Pinto, pp. 76–77), East Timor being one of them.

It is interesting though to note how left-wing thinking influenced the entire tone of the press at the time of the revolution. The democratic coup had just ended nearly four decades of a fascist regime, and the models to look up to seemed to be coming from the opposite side of the political spectrum. The press reported often on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and its economic and social formulas. Both the agenda and the language of the media then were clearly shaped by left ideologies. But that also happened during the unstable years that followed the Revolution, when pro-communist groups took control of the media, particularly during the summer of 1975. Even though the communists controlled sections of the press, their power was not reflected amongst people's political beliefs. Instead, Jean Seaton and Ben Pimlot argue, media power was the site of contest for a political group 'for whom support from the masses was uncertain' (Seaton, Jean and Pimlot, Ben quoted in Mesquita, 1996, p. 403).

The political confrontation presented in the media was a reflection of the larger debate being held about the political model for the country. As Mário Mesquita (1996) puts it:
Faced with new options, in clear political instability, the Portuguese population with access to mass media looked in them for points of reference and paths for the future. In turn, they received a bath of ideology and political propaganda (p. 361).

Between the years of 1974 and 1976, and with the frame of decolonisation in the background, the political elite was divided between the Left and Right, and divided between the African and European debate. Once the communist threat had faded, a new conservatism emerged to redefine this change:

Even though with ideological reasons well differentiated, the crafting of nationalist identity discourses in reaction to the dissolution in the European space emerged in the Portugal of the 70s, with a type of conservatism that made use, in an instrumental way, of the exclusively Atlantic vocation of the country, on the one hand, and a more economist defence of the ‘interests of the national productive forces’ in face of the European capitalist, on behalf of the PCP [Portuguese Communist Party]. With the myth of the colonies closed, the democratic elite managed to consolidate in the public opinion the European option as the one that could recreate an important relation with the new Portuguese-speaking countries, with whom the economic relations had almost disappeared and the politics had deteriorated after the wave of independence in 1975 (Costa Pinto, 2001, p. 82).

The November coup broke out in Lisbon just two weeks before Indonesia invaded Timor, and the territory sunk to the bottom of the media agenda. But the November coup could not be the only reason for lack of interest. Lack of media interest was perhaps just one more consequence of the political apathy for the territory. Historian Costa Pinto called it ‘the most extreme case of crossroads of Portuguese decolonisation’ (Costa Pinto, 2001, p. 79).

East Timor played a role in embodying the idea of a great empire, which worked well in the domestic ideology of the colonial state. Timor was one more piece of the "imperial puzzle" that completed the imagery of a vast geographic empire, pinpointed across the world, stretching between Europe and Asia. In real terms, Timor represented only a third of the size of Portugal’s mainland, but its ideological dimension was much greater. One of the dictatorship favourite packaged lines on the empire – ‘the land where the sun never sets’ – was an example of that. In fact, and because of time differences, it was commonly held that ‘when the sun sets in Minho [north region of Portugal] it rises in Timor’. Maxwell (1999) sums up the symbolism of the empire:

The Portuguese were trapped by the mythology as much as by the reality of the Empire. The character of the old dictatorship was wrapped in historical romanticism, so carefully crafted that Portugal could not reject it without rejecting something that was essential to the continuation of the regime (p. 50).
3.5 Going global: East Timor and international politics

The invasion was followed by 24 years of Indonesian repressive rule, always fought against by the Timorese resistance. In 1999, after years of UN-supervised diplomatic rounds between Portugal and Indonesia, the latter agrees to hold a referendum on the autonomy of the territory. Eighty per cent of the population voted for independence, and, in September 2000, the UN took over the administration of East Timor, to initiate a process of transition that would culminated in full independence in 2002.

The referendum was the outcome of more than two decades of Timorese resistance, diplomacy and lobbying. However, in the early years of invasion, the geopolitics of the Cold War meant East Timor was interpreted as a struggle of the left:

Issues of justice, peace and human rights were all understood at the time through Cold War divisions and loyalties. Thus, at the UN, major Western powers like the US, Japan, and Australia defended Jakarta, while the rights of the East Timorese were briefly championed by China and the Soviet bloc. Not surprisingly, the EU member states did not stand with the Soviets and the Chinese (Ward and Carey, 2001, p. 55).

But the East Timor issue became part of the United Nations agenda. On December 12, 1975, General Assembly Resolution 3485 (XXX) stated that Portugal was still the "administrative power" of East Timor and proclaimed the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination, freedom and independence, while it "strongly deplored" the military intervention of the armed forces of Indonesia.

During the 1980s, East Timor remained on the agenda of non-governmental organisations but little action was taken by other parties. The Portuguese state not interested in the issue:

Portugal's only strategy concerning East Timor between 1976 and 1982 was to submit repeatedly the question of East Timor to the United Nations General Assembly. The resistance was virtually alone in the lobbying efforts at the United Nations (Gorjão, 2001, p. 105).

The church had a prominent role in the contacts with northern-based NGOs - throughout the 1980s bishops Carlos Belo and Martinho da Costa Lopes spoke out against Indonesian atrocities and actively campaigned with international organisations, the UN included (Baranyi et. al., 1997). In 1982, the General Assembly Resolution called on the Secretary-General to initiate a consultation
process between all concerned parties. But it took three years to organise a formal contact between the Portuguese and Indonesian governments, which finally took place in 1985. Baranyi (1997) explains the relative importance of this shift in diplomacy:

It was also during the 1980s that the government of Portugal took on a more proactive diplomatic role towards East Timor. It would be a mistake to exaggerate this shift in policy, yet once he became president, Mário Soares gave new impetus to Portugal's condemnations of the Indonesian occupation (p. 38).

President Soares' election and the country's entry to the European Union changed the tone of policy. Portuguese politicians were all too aware that their discretion towards the issue of East Timor, still labelled as a communist issue up to the mid-1980s, was part of the diplomatic package that allowed them to be members of the EU. Between 1982 and 1986 the country entered a degree of political and economic stability that left room for what were once seen as "secondary" issues of foreign policy (Ward and Carey, 2001).

In 1988, the Portuguese foreign ministry sponsored the first European Community 'Common Position' on East Timor. It was partly on the basis of this position that Portugal pressed Indonesia to accept a visit by Portuguese parliamentarians to the territory; scheduled for November 1991 (Baranyi, 1997).

The visit took three years to negotiate and was part of Indonesia's new policy towards East Timor, the so-called 'open-up policy' but was cancelled at the last minute by the Portuguese delegation. East Timor hit the international news agenda in the shape of the Santa Cruz massacre, filmed by Yorkshire Television's journalist Max Stahl. Images of the shootings, in which more than 200 East Timorese civilians were killed by the Indonesian army, were broadcast all over the world. The media coverage prompted a wave of international protest: the US senate passed a resolution calling for the review of military assistance and several western countries suspended aid programmes to Indonesia. The massacre broadened the international constituency for East Timor (Baranyi, 1997). In the USA, peace activists set up the East Timor Action Network (ETAN); Britain saw the creation of the British Coalition for East Timor (BCET); a group of legal experts founded the International Platform of Jurists for East Timor (IPJET); and the Philippines-based Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor (APCET) (Nair, 2000). At the same time, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were publishing frequent reports on East Timor.

CNRT, the umbrella structure for the resistance, capitalised on the international resonance of the massacre, and extended its network to a range of supporters in
churches, trade unions, human rights organisations and other international organisations. CNRT also widened its influence in the area, gathering support from NGOs in the Asia Pacific region. The upsurge in solidarity movements was so significant that US investors formed their own lobby group, the US-Indonesia Society, in order to contest the increasing success of pro-Timorese groups. Suharto and his foreign affairs minister Ali Alatas faced increasing embarrassment during international visits, where they were often met by protesters (Webster, 2003).

The massacre increased the level of lobbying from the Portuguese government, who initiated their presidency of the European Union in 1992, and used it as a line of attack against Indonesia. The first measure of strength by the executive was to block the signing of a planned EC-ASEAN co-operation agreement on July 1992 (Gorjão, 2001, p. 107).

In 1992 a UN envoy visited the territory and in March that year the Portuguese peace ship *Lusitânia Expresso* was forced by Indonesian warships to abandon a visiting mission to the territory. Xanana Gusmão, the resistance leader, was arrested and sentenced to life in prison in 1993. In 1996, the advocacy work of East Timorese leaders, NGOs and politicians from Scandinavia, Portugal, the USA and Japan culminates in the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Bishop Belo of Dili and Ramos-Horta (Baranyi, 1997). In that same year the EU called for the Indonesian government to implement UN decisions, and supported the tripartite talks between the UN, Indonesia and Portugal, as well as the intra-Timorese dialogue between all political parties, which had begun in Austria in 1995 (Ward and Carey, 2001).

The direction of the bilateral talks between Indonesia and Portugal also changed in 1997, under the renewed pulse of Kofi Annan. The new secretary-general adopted a pro-active stance by nominating a special representative for East Timor in his office and suggesting a new framework for negotiations. Annan wanted to break the deadlock by promoting measures of trust and possible solutions without prior commitments to definitions over the status of the territory (d’Oliveira Neves, 2000). Nelson Mandela made a symbolic visit to imprisoned leader Xanana in 1998 and established a parallel between two men fighting for the self-determination of their people.

In the meantime, Indonesia itself was on the brink of deep change in its ancient dictatorship and widely-praised economic boom. Many have argued before that East Timorese independence could only take place with the collapse of the old undemocratic regime of Suharto. The events of the late 1990s certainly matched
those views. Between 1997 and 1998 the country witnessed an unusual amount of demonstrations and acts of defiance by academic and military élites as well as student movements. In the transition from 1997 to 1998 the local currency rupee lost its value, to one seventh of previous levels. Economic instability prompted civil disorder. In May 1998 President Suharto had no other alternative but to resign and his vice-president Habibie became the new leader of the country (Magalhães, 1999). Against all expectations, President Habibie opened dialogue on a referendum on autonomy.

In August 1999 the UN-supervised referendum was held with a landslide victory of 80% for independence. In early September, pro-Indonesian militias orchestrated a campaign of organised violence in the territory. Under the threat of attacks, the UN mission withdraws from the territory in September 1999. After two weeks of violence, Indonesia finally allows a UN peace mission into the island to restore law and order. In 2002 the UN handed the sovereignty of the territory back to the East Timorese and a new country was born.

3.6 Summary

Portuguese settlers arrived in Timor in the 16th century, attracted by the trade network operating in the area. Up to the 19th century, Portuguese settlement was purely formal and based in coastal areas. It was only after the 1930s that the then dictatorial regime of António Salazar drew up a policy for the colonies: their position was to be bolstered by a systematic approach to the exploitation of those territories' resources. East Timor was, however, the most neglected of all colonies, with little investment on infrastructures.

In the 1940s, the Catholic Church took on the mission of establishing an education system in East Timor, shaping a religious identity that until then was primarily based on animist practices, and differed from the Muslim faith of its western neighbour, Indonesia. Indirectly, it contributed to the shaping of a separate identity to that of the Indonesian archipelago.

Timorese nationalism developed in the 1960s and gained ground in the 1970s. When the Lisbon revolution broke out in April 1974, East Timor received no instructions from Lisbon as to what the future situation would be, and the Timorese élite organised the formation of political parties. Fretilin, a Marxist-inspired movement which called for the independence of the territory led the campaign, but conflict arose with UDT, the party that called for a federation with Portugal. A civil war broke out between the two forces in the summer of 1975. In that autumn Fretilin had control of the territory, but the Indonesian military
began their first attacks on the island. Under the threat of a take-over from Jakarta, and with the withdrawal of the few Portuguese military stationed in East Timor, Fretilin unilaterally declared the independence of East Timor in late November. In December Indonesia commanded a full-scale invasion of the island, in what was to be a 24-year occupation.

In Lisbon, the turbulent two years that followed the revolution left no margin for East Timor in the political agenda. The spotlight of decolonisation was cast on Angola, the most resourceful colony with a high number of white settlers. Moreover, in 1975, the perception was that Portugal could fall to the hands of communist ideology. Movements such as Fretilin were part of the larger ideological group that Portugal needed to be disassociated with, in order to move into the European Union. Up to 1982, countries like China and the Soviet Bloc voted for the self-determination of East Timor at the United Nations assembly, making it an issue of the left. Only in the mid-1980s does East Timor gain a wider audience, Portugal included.

In 1988, Indonesia began its open-up policy, allowing international visitors into the territory of East Timor. It was within this policy that, over a three-year period, Indonesia and Portugal negotiated a visit of Lisbon parliamentarians, held in November 1991. The visit was cancelled, in a last minute decision by Lisbon. A few days later Indonesian military forces attacked East Timorese protesters; 200 of them died as a result. Several governmental bodies in different western countries issued votes of protest to Jakarta, and the resistance capitalised by developing a wider network of solidarity across the world.

In 1996, the Nobel Commission rewarded the resistance by awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to D. Ximenes Belo and Jose Ramos-Horta. In 1997, Indonesia fell into an economic crisis, which led to social unrest and the deposition of the long-ruling leader, General Suharto. His successor Habibie opened the way for democracy and launched a referendum for the people of East Timor on their independence. In September 1999, the majority of voters had their say for an independent country and in 2002 the state of East Timor was born.

ENDNOTES

3 The Dutch controlled a significant slice of the trade in the East Indies, mainly in the islands of Sumatra and Java. The state of Indonesia resulted directly from the colonial geography developed by the Dutch. Dutch presence was also felt in Timor together with Portuguese influence. Between the
eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both European empires fought on and off for the control of Timor (Ramos-Horta, 1998). The dispute ended in 1859, when the Dutch gave sovereignty over the eastern part of Timor to the Portuguese monarchy (Leite, 1995).

The purely formal character of Portuguese colonisation, with little administrative control outside the coastal areas meant that, in reality, most of the traditional structure of the Timorese society was preserved, even under colonial rule. Referring to such reality, Ramos-Horta (1998) wrote: 'Despite the abandonment and negligence, maybe the highest virtue of Portuguese colonialism was precisely its in-built inability, that led [the Portuguese] to leave alone, untouched, the traditional system. The people lived in peace in their (...) ancestral lands' (p. 62).

Maubere means 'my brother' in Tetum. Drawing on this point, Ramos-Horta refers to the work that anthropologist Elizabeth Traube carried out in East Timor during 1973/4. She concludes that 'the adoption of the maubere name as an instrument of political mobilisation was extremely efficient. (...) Only those who lived in East Timor during the brief period of decolonisation and the following years of colonisation could have witnessed that extraordinary phenomena of the forging of the Timorese nation, of national unity, through a single word, maubere. The name is consecrated both nationally and internationally' (p. 98).

Former Portuguese colonies were always supportive of Timorese independence and its nationalist movements served at times as a model for Fretilin politicians. Whenever there was a vote involving the destiny of East Timor at the United Nations, these countries consistently expressed their support for the territory's independence.

Fretilin brought together three different political factions: social democracy (led by José Ramos-Horta, Justino Mota, Alarico Fernandes, Xavier do Amaral), anti-colonial nationalism based on the African experiences (Nicoula Lobato) and Marxism (headed by Vicente Sa'he and Mau Lear).
Chapter 4 - Giving meaning to East Timor: the politics, the NGOs, the resistance and the press

This chapter explores the processes and relationships between different groups of actors who contributed to the framing of East Timor throughout the years. Through the analysis of policy documents, semi-structured interviews and bibliographical research, this chapter maps out the changes in governmental political discourses, in the strategies of claim-makers, and the ways in which the media institutions defined their routines and roles around a contested issue. I analyse the terms in which Portuguese foreign policy over East Timor is defined by the Portuguese state and identify key changes in discourse and practice. Based on material gathered in interviews with journalists and editors, I look into the practices and routines of East Timor coverage: the way policy has impacted on the agenda-setting and framing of the issue, the development of specific strategies of sourcing and framing through news media routines the changes in media institutions’ understanding of their role in the coverage of East Timor issue. I also look into the messages of challengers in the East Timor issue, mapping the claims and strategies of the Timorese resistance and NGOs campaigning for East Timor. Where possible, I identify the Portuguese political environment in which the strategies of these actors developed.

4.1 East Timor policy: changes and discourse

Portuguese policy for East Timor was characterised by inconsistency, conflicts between the different state representatives and actions that depended on specific people appointed to public office, rather than a solid, on-going strategy dictated by the Portuguese state. Below I offer a review of changes in discourse and policy for East Timor.

4.1.1 1975 to early 1980s: a non-issue

Instability and volatility characterised the political life of Portugal after 1974, the year in which the four decade old Portuguese dictatorship was overthrown. Short-lived governments characterised the initial decade of Portuguese democracy: nine different governments were formed and dissolved in just the same number of years. The constant changes in prime-ministers and cabinet posts impacted negatively on policy over East Timor, which was marked by inconsistency and deep ideological divisions between the Left and the Right. Changes in governmental
programmes’ discourse provide a good indication of East Timor’s low priority in the political agenda.

Historically, governmental policy for East Timor was never a stable pledge, even though article 306 of the 1976 Portuguese Constitution described the state’s responsibility in promoting and guaranteeing the right to East Timorese independence. The first democratically elected government of Portugal (in power from 1976 to 1978) did not specify policies to meet the constitutional remit, despite the fact that East Timor was Portuguese territory illegally occupied by Indonesia. Instead, the executive programme vowed to look at the circumstances of decolonisation, with emphasis on the cases of East Timor and Angola, the two greatest woes of the collapsed Portuguese empire. Decolonisation was at the time a site of political contest across the party spectrum, and East Timor existed only in this context, the context of the state’s abrupt withdrawal from African and Asian territories threatened by armed conflicts.

The second democratic government stayed in power for eight months only in 1978, but added political substance to the issue by proclaiming that ‘the resolution by political means of the Timor issue will continue to deserve the commitment from the Portuguese government’ (Programa do II Governo Constitucional, 1978). Government was soon occupied by another brief political coalition for four months, when East Timor completely disappeared from the programme. The fourth government, in power from December 1978 to July 1979, established that it would ‘try and resolve the problem of East Timor, in full cooperation with the United Nations’ (Programa do IV Governo Constitucional, 1978). But this international perspective on the issue would be lost again with the fifth government, which remained in power until early January 1980. East Timor had once more been deleted from the governmental charter mission. This surreal jigsaw of early democracy was the result of unmanageable party coalitions that had driven every single parliamentary house into a political cul-de-sac.

The absence of a Portuguese strategy for East Timor impacted on the international arena. Former Portuguese colonies had been steering the vote for East Timor at the United Nations since 1975, whilst the Lisbon diplomacy remained silent in the background. The Portuguese executive’s silence was seen as a passive form of political alignment with other Western nations, which were against the East Timorese struggle. Between 1979 and 1981 the Portuguese executive went as far as refraining from raising East Timor at the annual UN Human Rights Commission agenda.
Chapter Four – Giving Meaning to East Timor

Silence over East Timor existed across institutions of the Portuguese state. In the 1970s, President Eanes speeches omit East Timor, even when he addressed colonial issues. In his 1976 New Year’s televised message, the President confined colonial history to an African context: ‘...the reconciliation of the Portuguese with themselves and with their history requires us to overcome the African complexes and to re-establish relations based in mutual interests’ (Presidência da República, no date). In a 1990 interview Eanes spoke about the political feeling towards East Timor during his mandate:

For many years we were submerged in our own issues. On the other hand, there was a perception around that this liberation movement [the resistant guerrilla of Fretilin] was in its nature Marxist and influenced by the USSR. The facts would later reveal this misperception. We thought we had to carry a sort of active diplomacy, but not an aggressive one (Público, Razões do silêncio, March 16, 1990).

The ideological undertones of the East Timor issue had effectively blocked its emergence in the Portuguese agenda.

4.1.2 The 1980s: the slow awakening of the issue

Only in 1980 did East Timor became politically acknowledged as an issue, when the right-wing coalition Aliança Democrática took office in government. Their governmental programme read:

... the government will maintain the principle of considering Portugal as a state responsible for the East Timor territory and will not give up on fighting for the self-determination of its population. (Programa do VI Governo Constitucional, 1980).

Aliança Democrática was the first executive to take a position on the self-determination of East Timor, a right clearly established by the UN Resolution 3485 (xxxx) of December, 1975. This was the beginning of a change in official positions (even if not backed by matching diplomatic activity) at the heart of governmental culture. Even though the word self-determination would be dropped by subsequent executives, this was a written commitment to deliver the rights proclaimed by the UN resolution of 1975. The seventh government (January 1981 to December 1981) vowed in its mission ‘...to proceed at an international plan the convenient initiatives in order to allow the people of East Timor... the full realisation of their most legitimate rights and aspirations...’ (Programa do VII Governo Constitucional, 1981). However, these statements fell flat, as the Portuguese executive had very limited power to put their programmes’ into practice, and struggled to survive the turmoil of fragile political coalitions in parliament. The few political interventions felt detached from institutional contexts, and were sometimes driven by individuals
in office conducting the business of governance away from the framework of the state. An example of this unorthodox approach to policy-making is illustrated by the initiatives of prime-minister Pintasilgo (in office from August 1979 to January 1980). Unable to find support within the existent executive structure, she paid from her own salary for a secretary to manage the East Timor file (Magalhães, Lisbon, 2000)

The year of 1982 came to symbolise much of what had been happening in Portuguese policy towards East Timor since 1976. Fretilin was virtually alone in working its influence at the United Nations (Gorjão, 2001). Some argue that at the time Portugal considered the withdrawal of Timor from the United Nations list of non-autonomous territories, in exchange for a certain degree of autonomy from Indonesia and the respect for religious and cultural values (Carrascalão, 2002). In any case, Portugal risked losing the UN motion which condemned the Indonesian invasion, which reflected the country's lack of bargaining power before Indonesia, a country then exerting strong and continuous economic diplomacy with other UN member states.

Awakened by the threat of losing the vote at the UN General Assembly, the 1982 government tried to overturn the situation. It appointed a permanent ambassador for East Timor affairs at the Foreign Affairs Ministry, and nine members of parliament were sent around the world to negotiate votes with other states ahead of the UN session. This quick last-minute strategy also aimed to soften the contempt other nations had developed for Portuguese inaction.

Changes also took place in parliament when deputy Manuel Tillman set up the Committee for East Timor Affairs in April 1982. The committee organised a trip to meet the Timorese Diaspora in Australia, in preparation for the UN debate. Tillman became the first elected politician to voice strong views against the Portuguese diplomacy, which he saw as inactive and irresponsible (Dificuldades em defender na ONU a tese portuguesa sobre Timor, Diário de Notícias, 17.09.82). The significance of Tillman's attack is that it came from a deputy with the centre-right party ASDI. Whereas Timor had been previously hijacked by the far-left parties, Tillman opened up the arena of ideological contest and brought it closer to the centre of the political debate.

The changes in the presidential role throughout the 1980s are key to understanding the birth of East Timor in the public agenda. Constitutionally, East Timor was defined as a presidential responsibility, but there was a sense that this particular duty was not to be carried out in the public eye, but instead kept in the undisclosed sphere of policy. President Eanes (1976–1986) had been told by the 1980
government to hold back his plans for East Timor and wait for governmental action, which never took place. In 1982, a different government passed the ball back to President Eanes, who then hired a special adviser for the East Timor brief. President Eanes had allowed the struggles for power between different state institutions to push East Timor into a cul-de-sac. Raising East Timor with international counterparts was not a standard procedure in Eanes's presidency (Razões do silêncio, Público, 16.03.1990).

It was Mário Soares's election in 1986 that changed the profile of East Timor at the presidential level. Soares was elected just a few months after Portugal got its European Union membership, and this contributed to Soares's public display of the East Timor issue as a priority. Several nations in Europe and at the UN had often suggested that Portugal should keep a low profile on East Timor policy so as to guarantee its entry in the Union. Carlos Gaspar (political adviser to President Soares), and Barbedo Magalhães (NGO leader) spoke of the repeated warnings received by Portuguese institutions regarding this matter in the early 1980s (interviewed in Lisbon, 12.09.2000).

However, the awkwardness of debating East Timor publicly faded away once Portugal became a full member of the Union. When sworn into office, President Soares voiced what would become one of his political priorities:

According to the terms of the Constitution, Portugal continues to have responsibilities for East Timor. It is in the spirit of those principles and responsibilities that we will continue to vow and fight, as much as it is possible, for the invaluable right of the people of East Timor to self-determination and independence (Soares, no date).

Soares's understanding of the issue raised national ambitions and renewed the impetus to condemn Indonesia internationally (Baranyi, 1997). He gained new insights into the territory's situation through his regular meetings with Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopes, the East Timorese bishop exiled in Portugal during the 1980s. Soares contributed to the shift in framing East Timor as a human rights issue, a change in discourse that can be tracked both in Portuguese political activity as well as through the resistance's political reorganisation (details of this reorganisation are on page 89). Acknowledging that the human rights frame had wider cultural resonances than the plea for self-determination, the presidential team quickly instituted this new frame upon taking office in 1986. Carlos Gaspar, the political adviser to President Soares, said:

Human rights issues had a wider platform than a simple argument for self-determination; and so we brought this topic to the table as an innovation from 1986 onwards. This was a crucial strategy to naturalise the issue amongst our partners, to
mobilise public opinion and other parliaments, NGOs and the church itself. In 1988 we tried to democratise the resistance members themselves, putting pressure on them to adopt this line of argument (Lisbon, 25.09. 2000).

Soares raised the issue of East Timor in every state visit throughout his mandate, turning this practice into a presidential norm that was adopted by his successor President Sampaio. The press coverage of Soares’s state visits often generated headlines for East Timor, to the detriment of other issues on the agenda for those visits. Soares’s press officer, Estrela Serrano, recalled the way in which East Timor consumed other foreign affairs issues:

... Soares would always include a paragraph on Timor [in his speeches]. And I told him so many times to take out the paragraph, otherwise that would be headline news, rather than the topic we were trying to highlight during a certain state visit. The President was trying to pass a specific message, but from the moment Timor came up in a speech, then the message would be lost to Timor. And I told him often to create a moment on the side to talk about Timor, otherwise there will be no other subject in the press other than Timor. And the other thing was that if Timor was not mentioned in a speech, the President would be immediately criticised by the Portuguese press (Lisbon, 02.10.2000).

The presidential initiative reveals something about the way East Timor’s role in the political and media agenda changed from 1986 onwards. Serrano is saying that presidential visits became a compulsory area for East Timor discussions when this had not been the case previously. Eventually this relationship became somewhat symbiotic, as Serrano points out, with the media questioning the absence of East Timor in certain foreign discussions. But East Timor also played a crucial part in raising the presidential profile, a role which is constitutionally very limited. The Portuguese President’s remit is confined to the representation of the Portuguese Republic, the guaranteeing of national sovereignty, and the regular functioning of sovereign institutions. He has no executive power unless there is a state of emergency, whereas East Timor provided (with Macao) the only area of policy intervention for the President. Serrano contextualised the issue of East Timor as a crucial brief of Presidential power:

Back in the time of Soares’s presidency there were scandals in Macao’s administration and the governor he appointed for the territory was taken off the post. Timor ended up working the other way around, it brought great victories to the profiles and strategies of presidents, because it was one of the few sectors of national life that the president led. The government had a secondary position in this policy. In that sense, Timor contributed to the image of Portuguese Presidents (Lisbon, 02.10.2000).
Other staff in the presidential office shared this idea of East Timor as an important area of governance that raised Soares's profile (Carlos Gaspar, Lisbon 25.09.2000). Soares's presidential speeches framed East Timor as a matter of principle, responsibility and moral duty, and pointed to the historical links between Portugal and the former colony. Soares spoke of East Timor as a 'commitment of moral nature, based on International Law and solidarity, rooted in a long common history and in our respect for the right of self determination'. In a recent democracy where political divisions were rife, Timor was often referred to as a debate always conducted 'in an environment of great national consensus'. There were also hints about the quixotic nature of the issue: 'Is it a lost cause – some would ask? With effect, time goes by and the situations of force, created by the occupier, are inevitably consolidating'. Soares often touched on the same themes: a moral duty, the common history, an issue of national consensus, the lost cause (Soares, no date, p. 5).

The inaction of the Portuguese government had impacted on Portuguese credibility abroad before the tide began to turn with President Soares. From 1982 to 1986 Portugal had reacted minimally at the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations (UNHCHR), relying instead on the bilateral forum established with Indonesia, after the debates at the United Nations General Assembly ceased. The government acted cautiously for fear of disrupting international sensitivities and NGOs had frustrating experiences in their dealings with the executive up to the mid-1980s. One NGO member interviewed recalled the moment when a Portuguese diplomat asked not be seen talking to that NGOs member during one of the UNHCHR sessions, for fear of being associated with those campaigning for self-determination. Additionally, the Portugal-Indonesia negotiation round of 1986 was inactive, and the Foreign Affairs Ministry was left without a strategy or even staff to follow up the brief (Gomes, 1994-5).

However, in 1987 Portugal became a member of the UNHCHR, changing the state of diplomatic inertia that had existed until then. Portugal denounced human rights abuses at this international forum and changed other nations' perception of Portuguese commitment to human rights and East Timor in particular (Gomes, 1994-5). The government also intervened in the culture of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, and diplomatic practices improved from 1987 onwards. The UN mission and key embassies were staffed by a new generation of young and career-based staff, which members of the resistance saw as a qualitative step forward (Ramos-Horta, 1998, pp. 267-8).
Despite the move to firmer actions in East Timor policy, the issue was still a site of contest for different institutions of the state in the late 1980s. Whereas some parties wanted to take bolder steps, the government still acted conservatively in some areas. For instance, the social democrat government (1987–1996) had erased the pledge for self-determination from its programme. The social democrats worded East Timor policy in less ambitious terms by calling for a 'dignified solution' for the territory. A 'dignified solution' meant a compromise where sovereignty was no longer the priority. Instead the government was trying to guarantee respect for human rights in East Timor. The last time a Portuguese government had worded its intentions so carefully and so conservatively was in 1979. Prime Minister Cavaco Silva justified his decision by saying he was looking into 'realistic decisions, which take into account the history of the issue at the international level' (O sono dos governantes, Público, 16.03.1990).

The debate over self-determination, or the compromised version of self-determination in the shape of human rights protection, echoed in Parliament. When Parliament debated alterations to the constitution in 1989, the social democrat majority pressed for changes in article 297, which referred to East Timor. The social-democrats wanted to replace the terms of the constitution which stated that Portugal was committed to its 'responsibilities, in line with International Law, of promoting and guaranteeing the right for self-determination and independence in East Timor'. The social democrats' proposal insisted on dropping the word 'independence' from the text of the constitution. Speaking on behalf of his party, deputy Sousa Lara justified the change in wording in order to guarantee that a 'future solution is not compromised if we continue to maintain the present restriction in article 297, which does only accept a solution by means of independence' (Assembleia da Republica, 2000, vol. 1, p. 587). In other words, the social democrats were ready to accept the next best thing to independence, which was a degree of autonomy from Indonesia or a guarantee of human rights. However, the proposal failed when only a third of the house voted in favour. The Portuguese political debate on self-determination is crucial since it highlights the existence of different expectations and ambitions for East Timor. Moreover, it disproves the idea that East Timor was an issue of national consensus, an idea which was constructed in Portuguese political discourse and reproduced by the media.

The press continuously framed East Timor as an issue (and sometimes the only issue) that united the nation and its political institutions. And yet, a closer insight into policy measures and statements reveals that such policy was not always
consensual or certain. This particular moment of the late 1980s is one of such instances of non-consensus.

Political engagement with East Timor continued in the late 1980s through a variety of avenues. Portugal's membership in the European Union allowed a common position for East Timor in Brussels. At the same time, Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Alatas moved from a security agenda on East Timor to a diplomatic agenda (Gorjão, 2001), and invited Portuguese parliamentarians to the territory. Although the initiative was cancelled at the last minute, negotiations for that visit kept the agenda open between the two countries from 1988 to 1991. The Santa Cruz massacre, in which more than 200 Timorese were killed, would take place a few days after the visit was cancelled, in November 1991.

4.1.3 The 1990s: East Timor enters the domestic sphere

The images of the Santa Cruz massacre prompted considerable symbolic responses in Portugal. It was through the Santa Cruz massacre that the framing of East Timor as a Portuguese locale developed. As a cultural resonance, the association of East Timor to Portugal through bonds of culture, heritage and language, touched the larger themes needed for fitting in with existent media frames, thus fully breaking the issue into the Portuguese domestic space.

The images of the Santa Cruz massacre pictured peaceful unarmed civilians attacked by Indonesian machine guns, whilst in the background voices recited the Hail-Mary in Portuguese. Estrela Serrano, the presidential press officer, recalled President Soares’s reaction to those images:

When he watched the images of the massacre, he repeatedly said to me and to others that what had moved him most was to see the Timorese praying in Portuguese. That really moved him and he could not disguise that emotion. It created a sense of proximity, seeing them in Timor, praying in our language whilst under fire. Soares is an atheist yet that image really upset him, and that was a moment he never forgot (Lisbon, 2.10.2000).

Soares called for a national day of mourning after watching those images, and told the press about his shock when hearing the Timorese praying in Portuguese. The significance of Soares’s position is connected to the way in which his reaction changed dramatically upon watching that broadcast, for news of the massacre had already been known for a week. The massacre had firstly been reported in the print media a week before. However, it took another week before the images reached television stations. Whereas print news failed to trigger national mourning in Portugal, the images prompted a different political reaction. This episode illustrates
the cultural resonance of the East Timor as a site of Portuguese heritage, and shows how East Timor came to be framed as what Santos (1994) called "the imagination of the centre", a media package where language fulfils the idea of a Portuguese universal identity spread around the world. This frame was articulated at the highest level of the state, and encountered resonances with the media's established narratives (for a detailed analysis of this critical moment of discourse see page 170).

The presidential framing of the massacre also impacted on the positions of the social-democrat government. The debate that had been going on in the late 1980s over the political ambitions for East Timor ceased with the Santa Cruz massacre, as domestic pressure for self-determination increased. The government published a new programme four days after the massacre, including a full section on East Timor where the social democrats vowed to commit 'all political, diplomatic and legal means' in order to allow the Timorese a 'free and valid choice of their political destiny' and the exercise of 'human rights' (Programa do XII Governo Constitucional, 1991).

Portuguese diplomacy, which had been more active since 1987, gained renewed momentum in the early 1990s. Portugal held the Presidency of the EU in 1992 and drew a harder line on Jakarta. In July 1992, Lisbon used its power of veto to block the signing of a trade agreement between Europe and Indonesia. Portugal had finally imposed its foreign policy on EU partners, whereas before it had been lobbied into silence so as to gain entry into the Union. Portugal's harder diplomatic stance was also made possible by an international context under change. European countries had eased their attitude to Portuguese diplomacy towards East Timor, especially since the fall of the USSR and the rise of human rights agendas in international politics. European nations had observed Portuguese policy with impatience and incomprehension in previous years; and the European Commission had been actively hostile to Portuguese diplomacy (d'Oliveira, 2000).

The resistance recognised the impact of Portugal's renewed diplomacy that came with the Foreign Affairs Ministries of Durão Barroso (1992–5) and Jaime Gama (1995–2002). They developed a climate of trust between the Timorese and the Portuguese Government (Ramos-Horta, 1994, p. 271). Furthermore, financial support for Timorese human rights and cultural activities were better distributed between the different resistance parties (Carrascalão, 2002, p. 126).

Nonetheless, the UN-sponsored negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia registered little progress. The eight rounds of bilateral meetings held between 1992 and 1996 delivered poor results, as neither country was able to find an acceptable
solution (Gorjão, 2001). The bilateral political deadlock contrasted with increased popular mobilisation for East Timor, and with firmer Portuguese political rhetoric.

In 1996, newly elected Prime Minister António Guterres brought a new style of governance to East Timor policy. He engaged personally in bilateral contacts and held meetings with foreign governments and economic organisations. His interventions framed East Timor with the historical narrative of Portuguese universalism: ‘Portugal’s external policy in relation to East Timor builds upon the solidarity that runs through four centuries of shared history’ (Programa do XIII Governo Constitucional, 1995).

The executive of António Guterres was favoured by international changes, but it also benefited from a frank attitude of dialogue with Indonesia. Recently elected Prime Minister Guterres approached Suharto directly at the first Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in March 1996, the first time the two heads of the executive discussed East Timor face to face. Until then, the issue had always been handled through foreign affairs ministers. Guterres’s government worked to turn East Timor into what Foreign Affairs Minister Alatas described as a ‘thorn in the side for Indonesia’. Portugal lobbied for a European Common Position that pinned down the future of East Timor as tied to the aspirations of its people in 1996. From 1997 onwards, the Portuguese executive established regular contacts with the USA to report on the progress of bilateral negotiations (d’Oliveira Neves, 2000).

The plight of East Timor was internationally recognised in 1996, when the Nobel Committee awarded the Peace Prize to Ramos-Horta and Bishop Ximenes Belo. The international exposure of the Nobel helped the East Timor campaign, and also Portuguese diplomacy. The Portuguese presidential office had been campaigning for a Nobel Peace Prize for several years (Carlos Gaspar, Lisbon, 25.09.2000).

The 1998 bilateral meeting between Portugal and Indonesia benefited from Indonesia’s political instability and economic collapse. President Habibie placed the issue of the self-determination of East Timor on the table, and agreed to hold a referendum in which the Timorese would be asked to cast their vote for limited autonomy and independence.

More than 80% voted for independence, a result that led to Indonesian fury. Armed militias destroyed villages and cities in East Timor under the eyes of the United Nations. The Portuguese executive then played its highest card so far. Prime Minister Guterres threatened to withdraw Portugal from NATO (Gorjão, 2001). This implied a ban on US use of the Azores air base, an essential military facility that sits in the middle of the Atlantic. US Ambassador Gerald McGowan, head of the
American mission in Lisbon in 1999, recalled the day he spoke to Portuguese Prime Minister Gutterres about the escalating crisis in the island:

I was called into his office, and while I cannot tell you what the Prime-Minister told me, he made it clear how important the issue was for Portugal and that Portugal was going to carry on fighting to make sure the situation was rectified. I reported that back to the State Department and the White House and I think it became clear then that East Timor was not an Asian problem; it had become a European problem (McGowan, Lisbon, 02.10.2000).

Guterres’ audacious strategy effectively meant he was prepared to pull Portugal out of NATO for Timorese independence. By threatening to withdraw the Azores air base, he was potentially undermining American military power in Europe. In the face of mounting pressure, US President Bill Clinton used his influence in making a statement to the press and talking to President Habibie. On that same day Clinton turned to the television cameras, finger in the air and said: ‘President Habibie, you must, you must either stop the killings in East Timor or invite international troops in’. The pressure worked: UN troops landed in East Timor two weeks later.

4.1.4 Summary

East Timor was a non-issue in the political agenda during the 1970s. The actions of the state were incoherent and confused, due to a background of unstable domestic politics and constant changes in government. East Timor was hijacked by the far-Left and taken away from the middle ground of political affiliation. The issue was still the subject of political contention between the Left and the Right in the early 1980s, and was effectively being used to apportion blame for decolonisation at large. East Timor initiatives were carried on outside the public eye, and sometimes outside the structure of the state itself, as when Prime Minister Pintasilgo financed the brief from her own salary. Sometimes East Timor was caught in the political struggle between the presidency and different governments, as was the case with Eanes’ presidency.

East Timor opened up into the political spectrum for the first time in the early 1980s, when the right-wing government and centre-right parties spoke of the territory in terms of self-determination. Portugal’s entry into the European Union allowed for the slow emergence of the issue. President Soares (1986–6) redefined the role of the presidency, by discussing East Timor internationally and setting the agenda for the press. East Timor ended up shaping the presidential role itself, establishing a symbiotic relationship between the issue and the presidency. The issue gained further resonance across institutions of the Portuguese state.
throughout the 1980s, leading to diplomatic improvements in the later part of the decade.

The 1991 Santa Cruz massacre framed East Timor as a Portuguese locale, and created cultural resonances with the perennial identity of the country, boosting the discourse of a universal history. It framed East Timor as a Portuguese-speaking territory, and created a momentum for Portuguese diplomacy. In addition, Portugal's status as a member of the European Union opened new possibilities which had previously been contained by international pressure. Lisbon became more aggressive with Indonesia at international forums, even though bilateral policy made no progress for the large part of the decade. However, the collapse of Indonesia's economy and its political turmoil brought East Timorese self-determination to the table of negotiations in 1998. Civil unrest hit East Timor after the referendum, when Indonesian-sponsored militias proceeded to destroy the territory. At this point the Portuguese executive played its highest political card and guaranteed the support of the American executive which contributed to United Nations intervention in the peacekeeping of the territory.

I argue that East Timor could only become established in the status quo of Portuguese politics when it was finally reflected across the three sites of state representation: in parliament, at the presidential office and in government. That process began in the mid-1980s, but was only fully established in the 1990s. Furthermore, when East Timor was established in the political agenda it entered the terms of reference of what Hall et al. (1978) called primary definers (the state), thus gaining access to the newnet and the established institutions with the power to set media agendas. That process of political sedimentation of agendas within the Portuguese state would come to full completion after the 1991 massacre of Santa Cruz.

I also argue that East Timor was constructed politically as a site of national consensus, even when consensus was far from reality. The views of institutions of the state and political parties were sometimes distinct when it came to policy for East Timor, as the episode of constitutional revision in the late 1980s demonstrated. Political staff interviewed during this research believed in the idea of East Timor as a national consensus, yet the theory of consensus cracked when staff were asked about strategies in taking the issue forward domestically. Presidential press officer Serrano acknowledged that there were ‘people who were sceptical about East Timor’s importance, who had a different line on it, and those people never got much coverage’ (Lisbon, 02.10.2000). The President’s political adviser, Carlos Gaspar, reinforced this argument by saying that ‘the variations in public
positions were always disciplined and contained’ (Lisbon, 29.09.2000). *I argue that the idea of national consensus was constructed in Portuguese political discourse and reproduced by the media.*

4.2 The resistance

In this section I explore the strategies of the East Timorese resistance in their struggle to enter the media agenda. These strategies are related to changes both in the political organisation of the resistance and in their strategies of communication and publicity. This section traces the history of that process, points to key shifts in discourse and practice, and looks at the way these shifts affected the status of the resistance as a source of news.

East Timor was closed to the press until 1989, with rare exceptions. Few foreign journalists entered the territory, and when they did so it was either through a special visa or an undercover job. Press visits had to be cleared through Jakarta’s intelligence apparatus even after Indonesia declared an open policy toward the territory in 1989. Indonesia had indicated early on that its authority was not going to be threatened by the foreign press: five Australian and New Zealander journalists were killed during the civil unrest of 1975. East Timor was inaccessible and communications between the media and the resistance were difficult. The resistance worked hard at contacting the world outside the island.

Fretilin enjoyed the most visible profile of all resistance factions: it declared the unilateral independence of East Timor on the eve of Indonesian invasion, and exercised political control of the guerrilla movement Falintil. However, Fretilin had no political resonance in the west and its Marxist policies meant resistance to Indonesian brutality was seen as another Cold War conflict. In Portugal, Fretilin’s struggle was hijacked by far-left parties and UDP, a small communist party of Marxist roots, was the only political organisation that recognised the unilaterally declared state of East Timor (Assembleia da República, 2000, p. 64). Information on life in the territory was scarce, and news sources were confined to Timorese parties and the Catholic Church (Jolliffe, 1989).

4.2.1 Changes in the political organisation of the resistance

Xanana Gusmão steered the discursive shift of the Timorese struggle from the 1980s onwards, from a frame of Cold War politics into an issue of human rights. Xanana was the leader of the Marxist party Fretilin and commander of the Falintil mountain guerrilla from 1978. His leadership adjusted quickly to Indonesian political contexts, with whom he tried to negotiate. As a result of that, he agreed a
cease-fire with Indonesia in 1983, and drew a peace plan that included the organisation of free and democratic elections (de Magalhães, 1999, p. 136). This was the first sign that Fretilin was moving away from its Marxist manifesto, and closer to western ideas of democracy. However, the cease-fire was short-lived and Fretilin inconsistent in its political rhetoric. The party mission was defined through Marxism-Leninist ideology until 1987.

Nevertheless, Fretilin was active in adapting its structures of operation throughout the 1980s in order to extend its area of influence. The party widened the struggle from the mountains to the cities by creating underground cells of resistance. These were called the Clandestine Front. The resistance took its struggle from East Timor to Indonesia at large through the Clandestine Front, recruiting the young and urban Timorese who were learning Bahasa and studying at Jakarta's universities. Joining the resistance was an attractive option for the young generation, as an estimated 42,000 of them had become orphans since the invasion (Carrascalão, 2000). These young people's allegiances lay with those who were fighting against the occupier. Timorese discontentment had turned into a recruiting ground for the resistance, as repression, economic discrimination and cultural persecution characterised everyday life in Timor.

The resistance capitalised on the few tools of political socialisation that Indonesia allowed, the most important of which was the Catholic Church. Externato S. José was the only Catholic School permitted during occupation – it taught religious subjects, nurtured Timorese identity and culture and included some Portuguese teaching. Indonesia frequently took action against the school by cutting its operations and imposing limits to the teaching. Yet this only politicised the school even further. Many leaders of the Clandestine Front emerged from Externato S. José, which was entirely funded by Timorese families (Pinto and Jardine, 1997). The Timorese understood the role of the school as a ground for Timorese nationalism, and financed it against a background of poor resources.

In the late 1980s Xanana reframed the ideology of the resistance, moving away from Marxist references and opening up the structures to other Timorese parties. He effectively framed the Timorese struggle around themes of freedom and human rights, using broader cultural resonances that touched wider constituencies. Xanana began the restructure by disassociating the guerrilla Falintil from his party Fretilin in December 1987, thus guaranteeing the independence of the armed branch. A year later he resigned from the Fretilin party leadership and formed the Conselho Nacional da Resistência Timorense [Timorese Resistance National Council] (CNRT), an umbrella organisation which combined all parties and worked for a state
'based on the principles of law, democracy and a multi-party system' (Carrascalão, 2002, p. 335). CNRT operated in three fronts: the Armed Front of the Falintil guerrilla, lead by Xanana Gusmão; the Clandestine Front or underground urban cells, lead by Constâncio Pinto; and the Diplomatic Front lead by José Ramos-Horta, who lobbied for East Timorese independence around the world.

However, setting up this new political structure was not a straightforward affair. It was in fact a process marked by controversy and disputes between the two main parties, Fretilin and UDT, which had been deeply divided since the Timorese civil war of 1975. The Lusitânia Expresso visit to the Timorese Diaspora in Australia exemplified those divisions (a detailed analysis of this critical moment of discourse can be found on page 197). Nevertheless, the press representation of the East Timorese resistance as a single entity often failed to capture these divisions, building the picture of a monolithic and one-dimensional political movement.

By the end of the 1980s, Xanana had effectively engineered the most comprehensive and democratic restructuring of East Timorese politics to date. In October 1989 he declared that the state of East Timor would have ‘a multi-party system and a free market economy’ (de Magalhães, 1999, p. 138).

The reorganisation of the resistance increased access to the media. Journalists considered the new structure beneficial for turning the Timorese into sources of information. Increasingly, journalists were no longer speaking of Fretilin, UDT or the Falintil. They all became "the resistance" (see journalists statements on page 118).

The Clandestine Front played a significant role in developing contacts with the media. This network for dissemination of information included students, civil servants, merchants, the clergy and women’s groups. They acted as couriers of messages, food, supplies, ammunitions and money from the city to the mountains; and exchanged information between the Timorese and friends and families in Portugal and Australia. The Clandestine Front was a sophisticated structure with clear labour divisions. They infiltrated the Indonesian civil service and gathered intelligence, bought arms from corrupt military men, and used the telephone network of the civil service to take calls from the press. Members of the press themselves worked as couriers on occasion, when they entered East Timor undercover. Both Robert Domm and Mário Robalo carried donations from Portuguese NGOs into the territory (Carrascalão, 2002, p. 114).

The Clandestine Front played a crucial part in taking the East Timorese war into the heart of Jakarta. Their members were part of the first generation to grow up under Indonesian rule: they spoke Indonesian Bahasa, and continued their education in
Jakarta and Bali, where they connected with Indonesian opposition movements. East Timor was no longer a political conflict contained within Timorese borders. From the late 1980s onwards it had spread onto different political forums across Indonesia.

In 1992 Xanana Gusmão was captured and sent to prison in Jakarta. Xanana socialised with other political prisoners and consequently opened up his vision on opposition movements in Indonesia. He began to place the Timorese struggle in an Indonesian context and studied Bahasa in order to follow the political processes emerging from the centre of the Javanese regime. He realised that East Timor could only be free if the regime opened up to democracy (Radio National Australia, 2000).

4.2.2 Communicating politics: the resistance’s struggle for access

Here I explore the resistance’s struggle to gain access to the media. Access was particularly difficult as the Timorese lived under one of the most repressive and censored cultures in the world, with no access to technologies of western media cultures.

Unlike the Catholic Church in East Timor, whose status as an official source granted them instant credibility with the world’s media, the resistance had to overcome its ideological left-wing stereotyping. For instance, in 1989, Bishop Belo contacted the United Nations Secretary General to denounce the situation in East Timor: "We are dying as a people and as a nation," he wrote. As a member of the clergy, the Bishop was part of the establishment sources, and his letter was widely acknowledged around the world. However, the political resistance still had to struggle for access to the media.

The generation behind the Clandestine Front played a significant part in learning new methods of communicating with the outside world. In Externato S. José, the students learnt English and had daily access to shortwave radio networks. They regularly listened to the BBC World Service, Radio Switzerland, The Voice of America and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, activities decreed as illegal by the Indonesian invaders (Constâncio and Jardine, 1997). To become a challenger of the Indonesian establishment was a decision made at an early age. Zéquinho, a Timorese from the Clandestine Front, developed the habit of waking up at 4 a.m. so he could listen to the BBC World Service as a young boy: ‘I wanted to campaign for Timor across the world, and I knew that to take the struggle outside Timor, I needed to master English’ (Edinburgh, 25.11.2003).
The Clandestine Front organised demonstrations in East Timor and elsewhere in Indonesia. Their first demonstration took place during the Pope's visit to the territory in 1989. Constâncio Pinto learned about conventional demonstrations through the foreign media and planned to use these methods of protest during the Pope's visit:

None of us, since the times of invasion, had ever participated in any sort of demonstration, but we knew about the political effectiveness of demonstrations through what we learned from international shortwave radio and even from Indonesian public television about struggles in places such as South Korea, Israeli-occupied Palestine and Europe (Constâncio and Jardine, 1997, p. 107).

The Clandestine Front guaranteed their first headlines during that visit, by unfolding banners and shouting sentences of protest right in front of the Papal stand. Xanana moved to Dili, the capital of East Timor, in 1991, and this single event opened up media access. Journalists from Portugal, Japan and Australia interviewed Xanana during that year. He regularly contacted the press through letters and telephone contacts, as media interest in Xanana was increasing. He was building the status needed for the resistance to become a serious challenger.

NGOs and foreign governments aided the resistance's struggle for access. Portugal sent a satellite-telephone to East Timor through a messenger organised by Portuguese NGO Comissão para os Direitos do Povo Maubere (CPDM) (Soares, 2002), and video cameras arrived from Portugal and Japan. Previously trapped by lack of contact with the outside world, the resistance of the 1990s now had the equipment to communicate with the media and other international organisations, for instance, the Clandestine Front in Jakarta was in regular contact with the United Nations and Amnesty International.

The internet too turned into an important tool for the resistance, within East Timor and elsewhere in the world. Newsgroups, message boards and websites such as www.etan.org functioned as a central point for dissemination of information on abuses, campaign issues and threats to East Timorese security. According to Ramos-Horta, the 'clandestine network was using the internet long before the Indonesian regime. The Indonesian army used the internet with propaganda purposes as a reaction to the use the resistance was already making of the internet. In 1996 or 1997 there was a press conference in Jakarta where the militaries announced they were going to enter the internet war against the Timorese' (Lisbon, 28.09.2000).

The Clandestine Front staged events to grab international headlines. Their claims for political asylum in Jakarta's foreign embassies created embarrassment for
Indonesia. In 1999, more than 180 students gained asylum in Europe and the United States through this method (Ramos-Horta, 2000; Carrascalão, 2002). Most importantly, these actions were planned around dates of big mediated events in Jakarta. When US President Bill Clinton flew to Jakarta for an APEC meeting in 1994, he ended up having to take press questions over the embassy assaults. Ramos-Horta recalled planning the embassy assaults:

One or two months beforehand I alerted our university students that we needed something spectacular to take advantage of the hundreds of journalists that would be in Jakarta [for the APEC meeting]. Some students ran to the American Embassy and jumped over the walls. They had entered American territory and that carried a lot of drama. We always tipped off a foreign correspondent based in Jakarta. The Indonesians became suspicious of him, because he was always at the place where something was happening. And that was because we were giving him all the scoops (Lisbon, 28.09. 2000).

As a challenger group, the resistance learned how to supply the media with stories to feed the relationship of competitive symbiosis with the media (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993). Their strategies eventually paid off. In 1996, the Nobel Prize Committee awarded José Ramos-Horta and Bishop Ximenes Belo the prestigious Peace Prize for their contributions to peace in East Timor.
Summary

The Timorese resistance transformed itself politically and organisationally in order to gain access to wider political constituencies and fit in with existent media frames and routines. Its declaration of support for democracy and market economy, in 1989, built the cultural resonances needed to turn it away from divisive ideological agendas that had blocked international attention to the movement. Fretilin attempted some detachment from Cold War ideologies in 1983 and 1987, but only renounced its Marxist ideology in 1989. During the 1990s, both Xanana and the Clandestine Front benefited from connections with Indonesian opposition movements. Furthermore, Xanana’s restructuring of the resistance accentuated the perception of an increasingly legitimate and united resistance, gathered under the umbrella structure of the CNRT.

By the late 1980s the resistance had created a tight structure of three organised cells, each of them with clear divisions of labour: the guerrilla, the urban front and the diplomatic front. The resistance became more successful in telling their story to the media once they had access to technology and an organised network of sources. They had always invested in political socialisation and media literacy, and were now able to reap the rewards of an efficient communication structure. The resistance rose fully to the role of challengers in the 1990s, by staging demonstrations, organising interviews and feeding the media with copy that maintained the relationship of competitive symbiosis.

4.3 The role of non-governmental organisations

4.3.1 Introduction

Non-governmental organisations campaigning for East Timor were formed in the early 1980s. Those were CDPM (Comissão para os Direitos do Povo Maubere [Comission for the Rights of the Maubere People]), A Paz é Possível em Timor Leste [Peace is Possible in East Timor] and Paz e Justiça para Timor Leste [Peace and Justice for East Timor].

CDPM was founded in 1981 and its main goal was to 'turn Timor into a national issue' (Pereira on October 10, 2000), by gathering and distributing information, lobbying governments, and networking with other organisations. Paz and Justiça para Timor Leste, headed by Barbedo Magalhães, was set up in 1982 and focused on lobbying politicians in Portugal and abroad, and encouraged links between the Indonesian democratic opposition and Timorese activists abroad. A Paz é Possível
em Timor Leste came into the picture in 1982, the combined effort of a group of missionaries who had left Timor in the late 1970s. It had an ecumenical character and its main goal was to gather and distribute information, chiefly within its network of international charities (many of them Catholic), and provide support to the exiled Timorese community in Portugal.

These organisations formed between 1981 and 1982, precisely when the issue entered the public agenda under the politics of blame for the decolonisation process. They are the product of the momentum created by Catholic networks and exiled communities both in Lisbon and Darwin (Australia), and the political climate generated by the loss of support at the United Nations General Assembly.

NGOs campaigning for East Timor worked under two different dynamics. NGOs mentioned above were formed when East Timor was a non-issue, both in media and political agendas. They worked consistently and exclusively for Timor throughout the years and used conventional communication tools: bulletins, public meetings, lobbying and contacts with the press. They were the challengers of the Portuguese status quo in the 1980s, when the political establishment was only partially in tune with the issue.

The second group of NGOS analysed in this section (Lusitânia Expresso and Bloco de Esquerda/Olho Vivo) mushroomed after the Santa Cruz Massacre of 1991. Their aim was to increase awareness and stage media events for the promotion of East Timor in the public agenda. These organisations’ main area of activity was not East Timor; instead they associated themselves temporarily with the issue at times of high media exposure: in the aftermath of the Santa Cruz massacre of 1991 and during civilian unrest in East Timor in 1999. This second group was more successful in getting media coverage than the first group, and devised sophisticated media strategies. Their focus was to create "media events".

I look at both groups in order to establish the types of relationships developed between these organisations and the media. Here I explore the differences between organisations which were kernels of information on East Timor but not particularly media savvy, with those that turned media and symbolic strategies into the core of their activities.

4.3.2 NGOs and the press: the struggle for access

This section deals with the first group of NGOs founded in the early 1980s. Leaders of these NGOs expressed their frustrating experiences with the press and the difficulty in reaching wider audiences, despite believing that the press was essential
to their activities. Barbedo Magalhães, leader of *Paz e Justiça para Timor Leste* said of his experiences with the media:

We were always chasing the media, calling reporters, issuing press releases; we would invite journalists for symposiums. Sometimes we would change the day or hour of our debates, so that we would get coverage on prime-time news, but many times we had no success and the coverage was a total fiasco. I should say that after all these years I still have difficulties in dealing with the press (Lisbon 12.09.2000).

Ana Nunes, leader of *A Paz é Possível em Timor-Leste* expressed similar problems:

During the 1980s we would schedule press conferences and fax every news desk agenda. It was not only once, nor twice, nor three times when we had zero turnout. Nobody would attend the conferences. And we had information on situations that had happened in Timor to give to journalists! What I then realised was that, for instance, if there was one attack in the Kraras area and the famine the population was suffering, information on arrests and tortures with photographs - no matter what the content was, and we always had real information to announce to the press in every of these conferences - there was something we must have done wrong, because nobody ever showed up (Lisbon, 13.10.2000).

Luisa Teotónio Pereira, leader of CDPM, shared this view:

During many years we tried to get journalists to talk about Timor. The first few years were truly exasperating. I remember whenever we invited journalists for dinner, talks, when we tried to give information to them... they wouldn't pick it up. Nothing got published. When we managed to get stories in the press was usually because there were spicier details to it, and then the story would get totally distorted (Lisbon, 16.10.2000).

All NGO leaders identified the 1990s as a decade when their access to the media increased. They point to explanations for this change: a long learning process on media skills for both NGO staff and the resistance, the impact of the Santa Cruz massacre images and the more active stance of Portuguese diplomacy.

Ana Nunes, leader of APPTL, noticed changes in access when she changed the media strategy:

I established privileged relationships with journalists x or y - that is and was an important aspect to get journalists into our cause. We had to provide individual people with regular, exclusive and detailed information, and we had to be very persistent (Lisbon, 13.10.2000)

Luisa Teotónio Pereira, leader of CPDM, believed that change came when her organisation gathered information which was more media-friendly:
The truth is there were no fantastic news on Timor and that was one of our problems. What did we have to offer during the first years? We had letters from nuns and priests, which basically were letters of lament. And interestingly enough, the Timorese church - which had a fundamental role within the resistance - never had a great eye for sending information with news value. It lacked factual description and organised thought. They sent us one or two documents with position statements - and that had news value - but the majority of those were laments about their reality. And that was hard to publish. Another big problem we faced was the impossibility of cross-checking information, and that was a permanent problem - it happened throughout the years (Lisbon, 02.10.2000).

Luisa Teotónio Pereira believed CDPM became more successful with the media once it managed to put journalists in contact with Xanana, the Timorese guerrilla leader. The Portuguese press communicated with Xanana through CDPM. The organisation would send the press’s questions through the resistance’s clandestine network and get answers back to news desks. Later on the resistance was also sending CPDM audio and video materials containing Xanana’s statements:

I think Xanana had a crucial role in this relationship with the Portuguese press. He managed to give a face to the resistance.

Xanana became the institutional face of the resistance, and added a personal narrative to the news story. The media constructed Xanana not only as a guerrilla leader but also as a romantic hero who wrote poems and painted on canvas. In the 1990s the media featured his art in news pieces. Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Prize winner and the Timorese resistance representative abroad (1975–1999), acknowledged Xanana was a favourite item with the press, and talked about the use of Xanana’s image to attract media coverage:

The press made a priority of interviews with Xanana Gusmão. We used Xanana as the carrot for news stories with great effect. He had the potential to become a media character, he had charisma; he was a romantic character, the last of the warriors. I studied this strategy many years before, when Xanana took over the guerrillas in the mountains. I designed the strategy because I knew there was material there. He was a charismatic character, he had substance. And so we decided to turn him into a well-known character. And we arranged for the international press to meet him in East Timor (Lisbon, 28.09.2000).

Luisa Teotónio Pereira believed that the credit for successful placement of stories in the late 1980s/early 1990s belonged to the resistance. They learned media skills and slowly changed the format of the information produced:
I believe the resistance learned a lot, when it came to dealing with the media. For instance, they learned how to make videos. In the beginning it was very difficult. NGOs sent tapes and recording equipment to the Falintil [guerrillas], but nobody could go there and tell them how to use it; we just sent the instructions with it. And so they managed it in a purely technical perspective, that is, they could capture the image, but they had no idea of how to "construct a video". And I remember there was a dialogue between NGOs and the resistance about the material they sent out and how its format should be improved.

Xanana was a very fast learner. And that was also true of his men, who also learned how to deal with information. They realised the importance of images, and so that explains all those demonstrations they organised during the Pope's visit. They knew that images could be broadcast to the outside world and that had precious news value. And they learned how to use this. And that is why they wrote banners in English: they knew those images were going to go outside. They also learned how to gather and systematise factual information. That was a really long process and I remember that after the Santa Cruz massacre, Xanana sent teams out who risked their lives by visiting all the families that had been affected by the massacre. And these teams gathered information on who had been killed, who was injured, who had disappeared – with unbelievable rigour. And those lists were sent to CDPM. Xanana then realised there had been mistakes in the gathering of that information – which had been done right after the shootings in very difficult conditions – and he ordered the lists to be compiled again, one and half months after the first list was issued. And we received two lists with very systematic and very organised information. We got large, handwritten sheets, with all data listed in columns: the name of those dead, injured, disappeared, and who were the relatives – they even asked relatives to sign it! And they did, at a time when that was extremely risky, it was so dangerous to admit you’re son had been killed [by the Indonesian military]! Those who couldn’t sign used their fingerprint! Because the resistance realised the importance of having accurate, factual information to send to the press (Lisbon, 10.10.2000).

However, Barbedo Magalhães, head of Paz e Justiça para Timor Leste, saw media stories on East Timor as a direct consequence of changes in the Portuguese government’s policy:

I believe the success depended somehow on the evaluation the politicians themselves made of the situation and the general "feeling" in the air. If the political climate was more favourable, then it was worth talking about it. (...) I believe media outlets follow a bit of the surrounding political environment. If public opinion is tuned in, if politicians do not dislike talking about it, then there is more coverage.(...) [For a long time our work was not present in the press] because it didn’t matter to politicians. They thought it was only us plus one or two lunatic left-wingers who supported Timor in Portugal (Lisbon, 12.09.2000).
Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Prize winner and Timorese resistance representative abroad, believed the Santa Cruz massacre was a turning point, in that it "woke up" Portuguese public opinion:

It brought East Timor closer to Portugal but there was also this important detail, by which the Portuguese saw for the first time the Timorese being trapped, desperate, praying in Portuguese. From there on, there was no way back, there was no way people could forget (Lisbon, 28.09.2000).

Portuguese NGOs were kept at bay from the media’s agenda for many years. Only in the 1990s did they acquire the status of legitimisation referred by Ryan (1991), when they became accepted as sources or spokespersons for the issue culture of East Timor. The NGO staff expressed difficulties in generating press coverage up to the 1990s: virtually no return on their conventional media initiatives, which fed much of the industrial news-making process around the world, such as press conferences, meetings with journalists and press releases. Although the organisations used these techniques, they lacked the status to legitimise them as natural sources for the East Timor issue.

Overall, NGO leaders considered the 1990s as a turning point in access to the media albeit for different reasons: the Santa Cruz massacre and the cultural resonances it touched across the Portuguese society; the changes in the resistance’s formats of communication; and increased political acceptance of the issue in Portugal. The process of media education organised between NGOs outside the territory and the resistance in Timor is particularly striking. The resistance was largely unskilled in terms of the media routines of the western world, yet it managed to understand the importance of creating information that suited those media routines and practices. They focused on providing information that had both news value and authenticity — something which had always been a problem for the media at the receiving end.

In an age where media narratives depend increasingly on the nurturing of the individual status, the resistance used the image of Xanana to fit in with media frames. He was constructed as a romantic hero, and his poems and paintings were publicised by the Portuguese media. One NGO leader believed that increased access to the media in the 1990s could not be analysed without considering changes in the wider political community in Portugal, which had now legitimised the issue of East Timor within the state.
4.3.3 Beyond access: East Timor as a mediated event

I now turn to the second group of organisations who campaigned for East Timor when the coverage of the issue reached a peak, particularly during the Santa Cruz massacre in November 1991, and during attacks by the Indonesian militia in the post-referendum days of September 1999.

These organisations focused on the symbolism of their campaign and on devising forms of protests that attracted media coverage. Rui Marques, leader of Fórum Estudante and Lusitânia Expresso Peace Mission10 (1991–1992) explained the logic behind the operation set by the student magazine he edited:

We knew that the echo of the massacre on the international agenda was going to last for a while; we thought one week, maximum ten days, and then it would vanish. So, the first equation that we set out to solve was "How will we be able to make East Timor last on the agenda?". This was a crucial moment: how to turn East Timor into a continuous issue of attention? (Lisbon, 11.01.2000).

Marques believed their operation needed a symbolic narrative strong enough to appeal to pre-existing formats:

We all sat down and started putting pieces together, trying to understand which elements were important and recalling different experiences in putting issues on the media agenda. And one day, someone says 'why don't we do a Greenpeace-type operation?, and we all laughed at that idea. But when we stopped laughing we could see some sense in the Greenpeace model. That model worked in a maritime environment, with open space and great visibility, without touching territorial domains of foreign countries. There was also the mythical connotation: David against Goliath, the strong against the weak [Indonesian armed forces against peaceful students]. Greenpeace was associated with an international cause, the environmental cause; in our case we would use the same framework for the Timor cause. Besides, the sea is, to Portugal, an extremely important symbolic element. Students were an extremely important symbolic element as well. The peaceful motivation was another strong symbolic element'.

Arriving in East Timor by boat – the proclaimed goal of the mission – was not the ideal outcome the organisers had in mind. In private, the leaders of the mission favoured the scenario where they would be taken prisoner by the Indonesian military apparatus. They had anticipated three different scenarios for the final stage of the mission, but their expectations lay with a different ending than the one they had announced publicly:

One of the scenarios we anticipated was that the ship would be stopped before crossing Indonesian waters, as it was in the end. The other [scenario] was to be
allowed to reach East Timor, and fortunately, we were not allowed to do that. The third scenario was the being taken under arrest and sent to West Timor. That, to me, would have been the best solution, as it would have given us the most media coverage. (...) we knew that if something went wrong between us and the Indonesian authorities, we would have 23 embassies working together to release our passengers. Once again, in media terms, that would have had a great impact.

TSF Radio journalist Manuel Acácio, Timor correspondent since 1988, remembered that the Lusitânia Peace Mission struck a chord with the frame of colonial guilt:

When Lusitania Expresso peace mission took place, Timor gained a lot of visibility, and I was on the ship covering the whole thing and the impression I got was that people saw it as a psychoanalytical cartoon of the type 'these kids are going to save our honour by going to Timor and so, in that way, we forget that we have not spoken about those guys for years and years'. When the boat gets there and has to turn back, the idea shifted into 'bunch of cowards who don't have the guts to go there'. And so, in a sense, the boat did not release the weight on the country's shoulders (Lisbon, 20.09.2000).

Framing the mission as imperial guilt might not have fitted with the types of meanings the organisers had in mind. But in a way it still appealed to the wider cultural frame in which the narrative of East Timor was constructed: as a story of the lost empire, of post-colonial order and the role of Portugal in that order.

Bloco de Esquerda/Olho Vivo was another organisation who capitalised on the exposure of East Timor in the media to organise a campaign after the referendum of September 1999. Miguel Portas, one of the leaders of Bloco de Esquerda [Left Block] (BE) organised demonstrations in Porto that gathered around 50,000 people and went on hunger strike to draw attention to East Timor. He recalled the initiative:

BE was in Porto for a meeting to discuss local issues. And that night, 15 of the people at the meeting who went out for a meal decided to occupy the Liberdade Square. And these were not even the heads of BE (who were at another dinner), but just 15 members of BE, who proposed to occupy the square, simply because no demonstrations were being done in Porto. So we then decided to make a few phone calls during the next day, and together with Olho Vivo [NGO working for immigrants] and the Timorese community living in Porto, we managed to get around 200 demonstrators on the square that night (Lisbon, 14.09.2000).

Portas initiated his hunger strike as a form of protest the next day, but also as a way of turning Porto's main square into a centre for campaigning activities:
The vital element in Porto is the hunger strike that made it possible to turn the square from a night gathering point to a 24-hour activity centre, where different people/groups could gather spontaneously. There were the old men showing photographs of their military service in Timor, old women praying, schoolchildren drawing their paintings. (...) Hundreds, hundreds of people came to me in support of the hunger strike. They thought that was right, they said ‘that's the way to go’. And that is what is interesting about this whole thing...it was that during those days of September, when the country was protesting for peace in Timor, there was a release of emotions. It's like having a whole country involved in collective healing, a sort of escape for their frustrations. People felt that what they were doing could affect the United States' own decision more than diplomacy. The fascinating thing about these demonstrations was that its driving force was a great humanism, the kind of humanism that can only exist where guilt is present.

Portas was well aware of the media exposure his initiative was having, and worked hard in order to maximise it:

Television crews saw in us great copy. We tried to make our public statements around 8pm when prime-time news kick-started. We tried to schedule most activities in the evening. For instance, when people were coming out of the mass [a mass for East Timor celebrated the day after the first concentration in the square], we spread the word there for people to walk to the square and demonstrate. I called the media straight away and told them to show up at the square because a demonstration was about to happen there.

It is characteristic of this second group of organisations promoting East Timor on the public agenda that they entered the competitive environment of agenda-setting once the issue had been legitimised politically in Portugal. These organisations surface after – and not before – the Santa Cruz massacre, when East Timor gained wider constituencies and was framed, in the language of Gamson and Modigliani (1981), through cultural resonances that touched larger themes. Those themes appealed to the monolithic discourse of Portuguese national identity as a locale for the communion of cultures through the heritage of the empire. The religious heritage of Catholicism and Portuguese language transported those cultural resonances into the construction of East Timor. In Lusitânia Expresso, the sea voyage was, for project leader Rui Marques, ‘an extremely important symbol for Portugal’, as it appealed to the renaissance’s maritime discoveries. Thus they overcame the battle for meaning, as they fitted unproblematically with the media’s textual construction of East Timor as a Portuguese locale.

NGOs involved with the East Timor issue during the 1990s managed to strike that relationship of ‘competitive symbiosis’ defined by Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993):
both *Lusitânia Expresso* and the *Bloco de Esquerda/Olho Vivo* utilised the media for mobilisation, validation and scope enlargement in return for drama, conflict and action. Marques's agenda was clearly a media agenda, and he stated his objectives to be the extent to which he could attract the most media coverage, even if that meant dozens of students being taken prisoner by Jakarta and not fulfilling the goal the mission as publicised: to reach East Timorese land. The initiative of Bloco de Esquerda provided the news media with Portas's hunger strike. That, combined with the appeal it provided to a wider constituency to join in and express their support, and a close symbiosis with the media, placed the organisation's actions in the media's agenda.

### 4.4 The media

This section explores the context in which media organisations covered East Timor: the ways in which policy impacted on the agenda-setting and framing of the issue, the development of specific strategies of sourcing and framing through news media routines, and the changes in the media institutions' understanding of their role in framing East Timor.

First, I want to explore the media environment in which *Diário de Notícias* and *Expresso* operate. Both newspapers were used for the analysis of critical moments of coverage.

#### 4.4.1 *Expresso, Diário de Notícias* and an overview of the Portuguese press

The weekly newspaper *Expresso* was founded in January 1973, and followed the model of the British *Observer*. It emerged just before the rise of a new democratic society with a growing professional class. *Expresso* met the needs of this new historical context by targeting the élite and middle-class readers, and their increasing demands for cultural and political journalism after 48 years of censored communications.

*Diário de Notícias* was founded in 1864. It was nationalised after the democratic revolution of 1974 and it remained a public corporation until 1991, when it was finally returned to private ownership. Even though *Diário de Notícias* belonged to that section of the print press commonly known in Britain as the quality broadsheet, its state-ownership meant quite a different set of complexities for the history of the paper, post-1974. During the *verão quente* [hot summer] of 1975 the
communist party controlled some sections of public life, and *Diário de Notícias* was one of the titles partially under the communist wing. The story of *Diário de Notícias* is not an isolated case. The volatility of Portuguese politics in 1975 turned the media into a site of ideological struggle. The situation of the press of that time was characterised by Agee and Traquina as 'the frustrated fourth estate', due to the constant disruption of media routines either by political parties or politically organised groups of journalists and printers within the news media (cited in Mesquita, 1996).

The first decade of the Portuguese democratic press is a time remembered for its conflicts between private and state ownership of the media. This conflict is visible in the tension that developed inside political parties regarding media law, in the pressures to privatise existing titles and through the privatisation of the television market. In a news title like *Diário de Notícias*, issues of conflict with elected members of government were not uncommon, in a media environment where the state held a few stakes, even after the end of the 40-year long dictatorship (Mesquita, 1996). During the 1980s and for the initial years of the 1990s, *Diário de Notícias* was still seen as a quality paper, even if it was reluctant to cut ties with sections of its traditional working-class readership. Nowadays, its tone has slipped into a populist style, having moved from quality press values and closer to a tabloid editorial. However, it would not be accurate to describe *Diário de Notícias* as a tabloid; at least not just yet. It remains a hybrid title, with tabloid-style editorials, a mix of intellectual and populist columnists, and a variety of journalism styles that range between some quality analysis of issues and a string of populist stories. The Anglo-Saxon models are not applicable, but it seems that the pressures of privatisation, the increasing concentration of ownership and the competitiveness of the Portuguese press market, where populist titles are currently the majority, are not strange elements to this state of affairs. The generalist quality press is shrinking: the daily newspaper *Público* and the weekly *Expresso* are the titles that remain in that category.

Trends that surfaced in the 1980s are still valid to define the context in which the Portuguese print press functions. A rising number of populist titles, the decline of the evening press, and the emergence of weekly newspapers as agenda-setters are some of the traits of this new context. In the case of the weekly press, the dynamism felt during the 1980s and 1990s has regrettably evaporated in some ways. Titles like *O Independente* and *O Semanário* have lost their role as agenda-setters, with falling sales when compared to the figures of the early 1990s. It would be safe to say that *Expresso* is currently the weekly reference newspaper in
Portugal. However, the greatest setback for the Portuguese press is its low rate of readership.

Several press projects, both to the left and to the right of the political spectrum, emerged in the 1980s, only to be short-lived. The editors of those projects then moved from these failed publications to the most established titles, like the *Diário de Noticias*. The low survival rate of news newspapers demonstrates the fragility of a newspaper market with low circulation numbers in a 30-year old democracy which has not yet reached a stage of maturity. Moreover, the media institutions themselves have a very recent history of freedom of speech. The history of the Portuguese news media explains why the sector has yet to reach a stage of maturity, in comparison to other media structures across Europe.

During the years of dictatorship, media ownership was divided between the state, the oligopoly of private banking companies and the Catholic Church. All served instrumental functions, sustaining the state apparatus, the Catholic order and the economic interests of private finance (Correia, 1997). In March 1975, the far-left government nationalised the banking industry, and their media titles were transferred to the hands of the state. When the communist Prime Minister was overthrown later in that same year, his nationalisation laws remained in place. Remarkably, no government changed the structure of the media until the late 1980s, when the social democrats reprivatised some titles, opened radio frequencies and distributed new licences for audiovisual broadcasting (Pinto and Sousa, 1998, p. 4–5).

The rule of concentration that had operated during the dictatorship would return again after the privatisations of the 1990s, due to the ways in which governments have legislated media ownership. The high costs of production and marketing, and fierce competition do not sit well with low readership rates and a heavy dependency on advertisers. The consequence has not only been the concentration of the media in the hands of a few multimedia groups, but also the inevitable entrance of foreign capital to sustain such a fragile business model. After all these years, the state still retains a disproportionate participation in the media than would be expected in a western democracy. Through the control of shares in the communications giant Portugal Telecom, the government owns part of the largest media group, Lusomundo, who in turn owns *Diário de Noticias*. As Correia (1997) put it, there is still 'an intimate connection and communion of objectives between the political power and the dominant economic power' (p. 72).

Furthermore, the media environment suffers further from a lack of tradition in investigative journalism. Mesquita (1996) explained this characteristic through the
long history of dictatorial censorship, through a continental tradition of journalism that verges more on the literary and ideological than on the investigative, through the governmentalisation of the press during the first decade and a half of Portuguese democracy, and through the cash-poor nature of newspaper operations in Portugal. These are mainly cultural factors within a history in which independent and investigative journalism was long ago curtailed, either by state violence or by conflicts between the news media’s watchdog role and the dependency to its owner - the state itself. A lack of tradition in investigation is then a factor to take into account during the construction of the East Timor issue, which often relied either on state information (especially during the 1980s) or lacked the organisational culture to set the agenda by breaking stories from in-house research. In the moments of coverage analysed by this research, only one piece of investigative journalism sets the agenda, and that is in moment two (overturning the vote at the United Nations, p. 156), when current affairs television programme Grande Reportagem exposes the failures of the Portuguese state in the handling of East Timor. In the remaining occasions, the news media are for the most part reporting on events unfolding through the actions of other actors.

4.4.2 The rise of East Timor in the media agenda: from non-existence to consolidation

In this section I explore journalists’ experiences as bounded by the life-cycle of the issue, from non-existence in the 1970s to consolidation in the 1990s. The seventies were clearly a ‘tunnel of silence’ for East Timor, in the words of journalist Adelino Gomes. Difficulties in placing East Timor on the editorial agenda were commonly felt by journalists covering the issue throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Adelino Gomes, journalist with public broadcaster Radio Portuguese Television (RTP) during the 1970s and one of the correspondents who has been working consistently over East Timor, pointed out that the political message of the 1970s was that Timor was of no importance. He recalled how the military (who held some power during the stages of transition to a democracy) reacted to an interview given by a Timorese leader to the Portuguese media in 1974:

[The military] invited the media chiefs of staff to a meeting and their spokesperson, Major Vitor Alves, told us he had a message for us. The ... message was they thought we [the press] were giving far too much importance to Timor and they gave as an example the fact that Nicolau Lobato [Timorese leader of Fretilin], who had been to Portugal recently, was interviewed both by Diário de Notícias and RTP. And I will never
forget this: Major Vitor Alves said Timor was not worth 30 seconds of RTP time nor one page of Diário de Notícias (Lisbon, 06.09.2000).

This view of East Timor as a non-issue was also brought to light by RTP journalist Rui Araújo who has covered the issue right from the beginning. In 1983 he became the first Portuguese journalist to enter the territory after Indonesian invasion. In 1981 his televised programme Grande Reportagem published the secret report drafted by the military on the withdrawal of East Timor (for a detailed analysis of this critical moment of coverage see page 142). When Grande Reportagem ended in 1984, covering East Timor at the public broadcasting company became a very difficult proposition:

After Grande Reportagem, ‘selling’ Timor as a news item, even in RTP2, becomes really difficult. To put something in the air about Timor was nearly a favour they [the editors] were doing us [journalists]. But for many years, it was not easy to do Timor in RTP. Today it is really easy and even fashionable. I think things changed in the late 1980s, perhaps early 1990s (Lisbon, 04.10.2000).

Both Rui Araújo and Adelino Gomes represent the small group of journalists who followed the issue with interest from the outset. Only in the late 1980s would a new generation of journalists turn their attention to East Timor, a fact which resulted from the increased visibility of the issue within the domestic political agenda.

Manuel Acácio, journalist and editor for the private news radio company TSF, is a typical journalist to come out of that new generation. Acácio was given the brief when he entered TSF in 1988, and characterised his experience in positive terms, with none of the complicated internal negotiations alluded by Araújo:

In TSF I never felt that [Timor was not a feature] because TSF has always highlighted East Timor, and so I was fortunate in that sense. But sometimes I speak to other colleagues who tell me, mainly people who were working in the print press, ‘damn it, it was so difficult to get space to write a story on East Timor, it was a mess, nobody wanted it’ (...) I was very fortunate. But I am also an editor and so ultimately I have the power to decide whether a story goes on air (Lisbon, 20.09.2000).

Acácio’s experience is different to that of Gomes and Araújo, but then again he was reflecting on a different decade – the late 1980s – and a different hierarchical position; as an editor Acácio had the freedom to set his own agenda.

Other interviewees judged the editorial commitment of their news organisation as playing a crucial role in the way they reported on East Timor. Mário Robalo, of newspaper weekly Expresso, worked systematically with East Timor since 1989.
The political position of his news organisation facilitated the consistent coverage he was able to carry out:

Expresso, from the level of directors up to the level of the administration, faced it as a cause to embrace... Ramos-Horta [Nobel Peace Prize winner and Timorese resistance representative abroad], who was not considered worthy of an office by the Portuguese government, made many phone calls from Expresso to Timor and to political leaders across the world. Some Timorese would come here to call their families in Dili. Sometimes this would look like a Fretilin, or a resistance, or a Falintil, or whatever-you-like delegation, nearly a full-time delegation (Lisbon, 26.09.2000).

Robalo’s experience in news-making and East Timor began immediately before the 1990s, at a time when East Timor was becoming a legitimate issue in the Portuguese political agenda. His news organisation played its role in close proximity to the Timorese resistance, providing the organisation with resources and facilities one would associate more with a non-governmental organisation rather than a news organisation. This is a clear clue to the way in which news organisations extended, reinvented and reshaped their role as far as East Timor was concerned. They distributed resources to the challengers, the Timorese resistance.

When asked to identify the main stages in the media coverage of East Timor, most reporters interviewed highlighted the Santa Cruz massacre of November 1991 as a turning point in media awareness. They agreed that this was the moment that opened a window in the public arena for East Timor to be considered as an issue.

Rodrigues dos Santos, news director and journalist at the public broadcasting company RTP, stressed the amplifying effect produced by the massacre:

The massacre (...) is amplified by the media and it affects the course of action of the Portuguese government. And it makes the issue a national cause. The massacre is a classical moment (Lisbon, 18.09.2000).

Adelino Gomes also pointed to Santa Cruz as a turning point, not only in media coverage, but also on the diplomatic front, making the Lisbon government more outspoken at international forums (Lisbon, 06.09.2000). Manuel Acácio, TSF radio journalist and editor, agreed with these positions. He added that such impact was visible in the coverage of the Lusitânia Expresso Peace Mission, a high-profile media initiative lead by a group of international students who sailed to East Timorese waters as a form of protest (for a detailed analysis of this critical moment of coverage go to page 197). That moment was, in his opinion, the crystallising stage of the issue in the public debate:
There is a stage [post-1991] when interest increases, and that is when Portuguese diplomatic efforts begin and the diplomats are speaking [to the press] and interested in getting stories out because they wanted to show they were doing something about it [East Timor]. Timor then begins to gain more visibility. When the Lusitânia Expresso peace mission takes off it gains a lot of visibility... (Lisbon, 20.09.2000).

Many of the journalists interviewed outlined the importance of the press as an amplifier of the East Timor situation across the world. José Vegar, a journalist for weekly Expresso, believed that the presence of the press in the days of September 1999 was crucial, at a point when the United Nations Mission to East Timor (UNAMET) in Dili became surrounded by pro-Indonesian militias, and when most of the media staff decided to leave:

I think that if there are situations in which the press was determinant, this was one of them. Timor became a news item again after the Santa Cruz massacre, and so, during those years, the issue of East Timor survived thanks to the press. And in fact, during the referendum period, the press was fundamental. I recall UNAMET telling us all the time 'please don't leave, stay' and they wanted as much press as possible because the issue was only going to be resolved if there was great media exposure. And so, if there is an issue where the media were crucial this was one. And the referendum only really went forward because of UNAMET and the massive presence of the media, and then Timor only became independent and the UN forces came in, thanks to the media reporting on the atrocities that were taking place (Lisbon, 21.09.2000).

Vegar is alluding here to the role of journalists as constructors of events and storytellers. Had it not been for the presence of cameras in Santa Cruz the issue would not have been broadcast worldwide. He talks of the symbiotic relationship between the political actors and the press when referring to the outcome of the referendum. The rationale goes that if the press stayed behind then UNAMET stood a better chance of success.

According to the interviews carried out with reporters, the 1970s was a period of invisibility for East Timor. Journalists were still experiencing difficulties getting editorial backup for East Timor stories in the transition from the mid-1980s to the late 1980s. Journalists noticed a shift in the agenda-setting of East Timor after the Santa Cruz massacre, when the territory opened up to the outside and Portuguese diplomacy became increasingly active. Journalists believed that they performed an important role by keeping the issue alive in the media and felt that, ultimately, contributed to the independence of East Timor. Most interviewees perceived this role of the media as crucial at different points during the history of the issue.
4.4.3 Journalists as myth-makers: joining the cause

Journalists often referred to Timor as 'a cause' and some expressed an activist view of their role. Manuel Acácio, *TSF Radio* journalist, explained the reasons that attracted him to the story:

I fell in love with the subject. And, also, based on a slightly romantic idea, I knew this was a subject covered in deep silence, and so I thought that by speaking about Timor - and following the rules of activism - we could help somehow, we could try and change the world. It is after all a romantic conception of journalism, which was perfectly suitable to this situation (Lisbon, 20.09.2000).

Acácio defined his role as journalist to the extent in which he could change the society he reflected upon, and framed Timor within that mission, which he called somewhat 'romantic'. In a way, he was fulfilling Gan's description (1980) of journalists as priests, defining his role as a moral mission with evangelical undertones. Mário Robalo, journalist in weekly newspaper *Expresso*, highlighted his interest in the idea of a 'cause':

I see journalism in the good old American fashion: journalism should be committed and journalism has causes. Without losing from sight the ability to analyse, respecting ethic rules and [the different] sides involved. And I thought that the cause of East Timor had been lost by the world and it was a very hurtful reality (Lisbon, 26.09.2000).

João Fernandes, political editor for newspaper daily *Diário de Notícias*, referred to East Timor as a cause and a matter of human rights which had become a universal value in modern western societies:

Certain media themes could easily fall into that category of journalists who are writing about it as something of a cause. Timor is not an isolated cause. Most of the environmental journalists I know cover it as a cause, which is something slightly more disturbing to me. Timor is, after all, a national cause, more or less based in universal values like human rights (Lisbon, 15.09.00).

Fernandes defined what his criteria for East Timor stories were. Unlike the environmental campaign, East Timor was a national cause, based on universal values. It fitted easily with the media's role of nation-builder. He also assumed that the issue was shared by all Portuguese – thus it had national interest – unlike environmental issues.

José Rodrigues dos Santos, news director at public broadcaster *RTP1*, spoke of the press's militancy after the Santa Cruz massacre:
In Portugal it became a national cause, but not in other countries. I believe the press then became very militant. Basically I can tell you that in every assignment abroad, Portuguese journalists would bring it up. Any foreign leader that visited Portugal would be asked about it. The RTP correspondent in Washington, Mário Crespo, would go to state department press briefings, and every day he would ask something about the issue (Lisbon, 18.09.2000).

Rodrigues dos Santos also held the belief that the militancy of the Portuguese press would eventually put pressure on the issue and bring results in East Timor:

In the 1990s I was in Washington having dinner with a Portuguese academic who was at Georgetown University, and he said to me that Timor would never be resolved. 'It is as if it's already been resolved', I told him, 'it will pretty soon be resolved. The Portuguese press will never drop it, the press will be relentless. The issue will only be over when we [the press] decide it is over' (interviewed in Lisbon on September 18, 2000).

Rodrigues dos Santos believed that keeping the issue on the agenda at press conferences across the world would eventually contribute to its resolution. He referred to the press as "militants", which implied a degree of persistent activism towards a certain cause. Alternatively, this militancy could be called partisanship. In fact, some correspondents recalled instances where their colleagues or media organisations were manifestly biased. António Sampaio, the Diário de Notícias correspondent in Australia, spoke of the types of stories that his editors in Lisbon refused to commission:

There were stories that I wanted to write that got blocked by the editors and those were typically non-resistance stories, or stories about Indonesia. I remember not being given space to interview those Timorese who were in favour of integration with Indonesia. Once I wanted to write a story that questioned some aspects of Ramos Horta’s diplomatic policy and was told they couldn’t print that. I always had a lot of freedom to report on whatever I wanted, but that freedom ended when I wanted to broaden the debate to the Indonesian perspective (telephone interview, 14.10. 2004).

Manuel Acácio, TSF Radio journalist, touched on this idea of militancy, of East Timor post-Santa Cruz becoming an issue which had common points with the field of propaganda:

As the times of silence over East Timor were left behind, the issue turned into something else, into a stage of pro-Timorese euphoria. We received loads of information, and the stories gained a tone that was too pro-resistance and there was no detachment or distance covering East Timor. There was a propaganda tone to the stories, a tone of a cause being advocated (Lisbon, 20.09. 2000).
Acácio reflects upon the propaganda that became a deliberate strategy by media outlets during the crisis of September 1999, when armed militias were openly killing the civilian population in Timor. For instance, newspaper daily *Diário de Notícias* coined a new name for East Timor – ‘Timor Lorosae’ (Timor of the Rising Sun, in the local vernacular ‘Tetum’) – and used it as a header across its pages for several weeks in September. This editorial decision changed the language used to speak of East Timor during that period: *Timor Lorosae* quickly became the accepted designation for the territory across media organisations, opinion columns and demonstration banners. João Fernandes, political editor of *Diário de Notícias*, recalled the decision on these and other symbolic devices:

> We were using this type of pamphlet-like stuff. It came from a phrase used by Xanana that we quoted on top of all our pages. It was a bit in line with the spirit of our front pages those days. In August and September we carried first pages that were a bit pamphlet-like; there was really no news reflected on them. Front pages became more like billboards (Lisbon, 15.09.2000).

*TSF* news radio is another interesting example of the way in which the media redefined their role in the coverage of East Timor in the late 1990s. During two weeks in September, *TSF* ran 24-hour non-stop broadcasts on East Timor, cancelled advertising contracts and helped the promotion of a variety of demonstrations across the country. *TSF* became a manager of the symbolic arena in which East Timor was being defined; promoting catchphrases; gathering reactions from every possible personality in the country; and amplifying popular involvement in the streets of Portugal. Carlos Andrade, *TSF* director, refused the accusations of propaganda made at the time by a group of Portuguese intellectuals:

> Say, for instance, questions such as 'could journalists not take advantage of the Nazi barbarie [and turn it into news]?' We do not need those sorts of justifications; clearly this was a question between the good and the bad. And from our point of view, we opted for the good. That in itself does not compromise, from my point of view, the basic rule that distinguishes journalism from propaganda. There is an idea flowing around that *TSF* went into the Timor story to fight for a cause, but I do not take that line of argument (interviewed in Lisbon on September 20, 2000).

Timor became trapped in a simple morality between the good and the bad. Joining the good required joining the symbolic arena for East Timor. Andrade defined his organisation’s editorial decisions in terms of moral judgements between right and wrong, rather than engaging on the reflection of whether *TSF* was actually fulfilling its designated role of news-making. *TSF* itself became the object of news, with the
written press writing supportive editorials and in-depth stories that followed TSF's practices.

Journalists covering East Timor agreed that East Timor became an issue-cause for them. The way in which they valued such an attribute differed to the extent in which they thought it was within the accepted boundaries of the profession. Some spoke about their sense of mission and their belief in the press's militancy in order to change the situation in Timor. Others spoke about the romanticism in which they viewed their task ('falling in love with the subject', in the words of Acácio) or the school of investigative journalism. Some questioned whether their work had crossed over into propaganda; others actively pursued it, or justified their committed reporting through the morality of a good cause.

4.4.3.1 Media power and political change

I want to explore this relationship between journalists' belief in their own role as agents of change, and the actual course of events in the resolution of the September 1999 crisis. A few examples of my research expose the fact that the media more often than not followed the political process. Academic views on this relationship establish that change in the course of policy seems to occur when different constituencies organise themselves politically in questioning foreign policy, the media becoming an arena where those voices of dissent are played out. It has argued that the policy-makers, and not the media, have had the power to set the agenda at times of conflict for over 30 years.

For instance, the experience of those journalists who came to report on East Timor from the late 1980s onwards is clearly different from those described by Araújo and Gomes. These two journalists, who covered East Timor from the 1970s, recalled the times when the issue was silenced by either political pressure or editorial agendas. The experience of the second generation of journalists begins at a time when the issue was already legitimised and established in the three institutions of democratic representation (the Government, the President and the Parliament), and thus was already reflected in the media agenda.

The belief that the media were themselves the agents of change is often shared by those close to policy-making, like O'Heffernan (1991) has noted. Estrela Serrano, press officer to President Soares, was clear about that: 'I actually think East Timor was a cause of the media. The Santa Cruz massacre was a clear example of the media affecting policy. Had that journalist not been there, then President Soares would not have seen that image [images of the Timorese praying in Portuguese]. The media were always one step ahead' (Lisbon, 25.09.2000).
But is Serrano confusing the media as conveyers, or as their own name suggests, mediators of information, with the rather more determinant powers of ongoing policy-making? I have already established that President Soares was key in changing the exposure and openness of the Portuguese state's position in this matter of foreign policy. Previously seen as silent or uninterested, Soares was active in voicing the plea of the Timor people from 1986 onwards. His political stance towards the issue was receptive in calling for a day of mourning in Portugal after the images of the Santa Cruz massacre were broadcast. But would the state and the media react differently in a distinct political climate? Similar instances of violence in the 1980s did not get significant coverage, and I would argue that that was because East Timor had not been legitimised by the democratic institutions of governance in Portugal. As I have demonstrated above, the state's position did not change until the mid-1980s (see sections on pages 76 and 78). Previously it had been wrapped in the contorted structure of the fragile Portuguese democracy during its first decade of existence.

A good example to substantiate my case is provided by the Kraras massacre of August 1983. Although mentioned in between the lines, this massacre failed to make headline news, when in reality it had the same humanitarian implications that the Santa Cruz massacre was to have in November 1991. The Kraras massacre was a 'clean sweep operation in which 200 to 300 people were killed' (Gunn, 1994, p. 154). It never made headlines in weekly newspaper *Expresso* or in the television news programmes of public broadcaster *RTP*, according to research carried out by the author in archives. Unlike the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre, the killings in Kraras were not filmed but only photographed. The list of those killed and disappeared in Kraras also failed to make the news, unlike the list of human losses gathered by Fretilin in the aftermath of Santa Cruz. Ana Nunes, of NGO *Paz é Possível em Timor Leste*, recalls passing that information on to the news media only for it not to be reported.17.

Journalists also referred to September 1999 as another moment in which the media - and the encouragement it provided to civil mobilisation on the streets of Portugal, where dozens of demonstration carried on - changed the course of events in Timor. Many demonstrations aimed for international news coverage and further international pressure which did not materialise. In the US, East Timor was not the opening story in news bulletins. António Santos, the Portuguese Prime Minister's press officer at the time, dismisses the view that the press changed the course of events in September, and refuses to acknowledge the idea that the executive felt pressurised by the media: 'The media were one of the many sources for the Prime Minister, but often he knew a lot more than what was being reported on television.
Now, the media do not condition any sort of decision by the Prime-Minister’ (Lisbon, 27.09.2000). However, Santos did agree that televised images of the violence in East Timor often illustrated the telephone conversations between Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Guterres, working as a moment of communion, or shared experience, between the two leaders.

Santos recalled a moment when an international news channel broadcast the confusion in the streets of Dili, including a man who was being killed at that point, his blood oozing out of his body. In that instant, Portuguese Prime Minister Guterres called Bill Clinton, who had also watched the same image. Reflecting on that moment, Santos said:

What this image does is not so much make the American executive take decisions. What it means is that it turns Guterres into an irritating Prime Minister for the American executive. It makes him run to the phone and say to the American executive that ‘either you guys resolve this or we are going to create endless trouble’. But the Prime Minister was already on the phone to world leaders for 15 days, this does not change that, it just intensifies it (Lisbon, 27.09. 2000).

What Santos is describing goes in line with O’Heffernan’s (1991) descriptions of the ways in which the mass media operate in the foreign policy process: they inform policy and may set the pace of policy-making. But as press officer Santos explained, the Prime-Minister had already carried out 15 days of conversation with other state leaders at that point. One single mediated event does not change the course of ongoing policy, but becomes an iconic point of illustration for the motivation of that policy.

Another good example of the use of the media as an informer of policy, rather than a shaper of policy, is provided by US Ambassador Gerald McGowan. Of the continuous demonstrations at the American Embassy he said that he did not ‘feel any pressure to act in one way or another’ (Lisbon, 02.10.2000). And he shed some light onto how the media effectively informed policy, and accelerated the pace of it due to the electronic means through which information is easily transferred across the globe. McGowan recalled the day in which President Clinton sent the now famous message to President Habibie via television, asking him to ‘stop the killings in East Timor or invite the troops in’:

I remember it was a Thursday morning and I was reading the front page of the New York Times electronic edition and the headline was something along the lines of a senior administration official saying that Indonesia was a big and important country for the stability of Southeast Asia, and East Timor was not. And, as terrible as those deaths were, the US had to look at the big picture. I read that story and thought
immediately that I was going to have a problem in Portugal. Later that day I was called into the Prime Minister's office, and I cannot tell you what the Prime Minister told me but he made clear how important the issue was for Portugal and that Portugal was going to carry on fighting to make sure the situation was rectified. I reported that back to the State Department and the White House and I think it became clear then that East Timor was not an Asian problem, it had become a European problem (Lisbon, 02.10.2000).

Gerald McGowan received feedback from the White House, which he passed on to the Portuguese Prime Minister Guterres just before he was about to appear at a press conference with Portuguese President Sampaio:

I was able to speak to him and tell him to be aware that President Clinton was going to make a televised statement soon. What was so amazing was that ten seconds after I hung up the phone Guterres was speaking at a press conference with Sampaio and made a speech on how Portugal cared for Timor. He singled out Britain and France as allied countries in this moment and a journalist asked him 'what about the US?'. And he said something like 'special requirements means who they are and we are in a different, difficult position'.

Prime Minister Guterres was not going to decrease his pressure on the US until he saw changes in the public position of the American administration. Later that day, and in front of television crews, President Clinton asked President Habibie of Indonesia to change his position. What McGowan is implying here is that the media might have accelerated decision-making through their ability to convey information instantly. An off-the-record position in the electronic edition of the New York Times can be read by leaders across the world, and trigger a response that in any case goes in line with the policy already established for an issue. As I pointed out before, Prime Minister Guterres' policy for East Timor seemed to be marked by a bolder approach. By threatening to withdraw from NATO and effectively deny the US the use of a fundamental military resource – the Azores air base in the Atlantic – Guterres was breaking with old alliances established with the United States since the Second World War. In the Second World War Portugal had traded American military aid in East Timor (which was forcefully occupied by the Japanese) for an air base in the Azores (Sweeney, 2002). In 1999, that post-war agreement added an ironic twist to the crisis. The Portuguese government's position was not a media-induced reaction to the events, but the result of a bold policy that would not give up on East Timor's hard won independence.
4.4.4 Reporting the unknown: difficult routines and unconventional sourcing

Another question in this research related to finding out more about the specific media strategies for sourcing and framing East Timor. Journalists interviewed reflected on the reality of covering an island which, for many years, was closed to the press, especially if it held a Portuguese passport. The church had been the main source of information on East Timor during the early years. This web of facticity would later on be complemented by NGOs and the resistance, and the improvements offered by communication technologies impacted on the sourcing of information. Smuggling information to the outside world became an easier task for the resistance from the 1990s onwards.

Adelino Gomes, journalist of newspaper Público and a long-time correspondent on the issue, recalled that religious organisations were the most reliable sources of information in the early years:

These sources were either from religious organisations or human rights organisations or the Catholic Church itself. And organisations outside the territory that were getting their information through Catholic networks. The Catholic organisations were also the most independent. And those were the ones that, time and again, managed to filter some information — right after the invasion —, with the first news reports on the number of deaths. When the Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister is led to acknowledge publicly that the invasion caused about 60,000 to 100,000 deaths over the first few years, is he led to believe that based on the numbers journalists are putting before him, quoting Australian organisations that were relying on religious sources (Lisbon, 06.09. 2000).

Jill Jolliffe, an Australian journalist covering Timor since the early 1970s, highlighted not only the church, but also the left-wing Portuguese political party UDT (a supporter of Fretilin and their unilateral proclamation of independence for East Timor) as sources during the first years of war:

Between 1975 and 1982, UDT, the church and some private sources had the most credible information about the war. It is only when José Xanana Gusmão takes over as head of Fretilin in 1982, that he begins sending out detailed reports of the situation, making Fretilin sources more credible (1989, p. 82).

The far-Left Portuguese political party UDT, a strong supporter of Fretilin, was seen as a biased source, unlike the church. These were the types of ideological divisions of the 1970s and early 1980s which kept the issue away from mainstream political debate. For Mário Robalo, reporter for weekly Expresso, the church was the main
source of information during the first years of coverage, which, in his case, began in the late 1980s:

The Timorese church was always committed to free East Timor. I can tell you that it was the Timorese church that gave me most information before it became possible to get it from the resistance network (Lisbon, 26.09.2000).

Journalists referred to the role of Portuguese NGOs in gathering information and providing material to the press, particularly up to the 1990s, when access to news was scarce and difficult. The organisations CDPM, A Paz é Possível em Timor Leste and Paz e Justiça para Timor Leste, were seen as important middle-men with access to the East Timorese reality:

In the first few years, especially, they were a precious source of information: Luisa Teotónio Pereira, Ana Nunes, Prof. Barbedo [the leaders of the three main Portuguese NGOs]. These people looked for information and they chased the press. I remember the first time I heard Xanana's voice, it was through an audio tape that I got from Luisa Teotónio Pereira (Manuel Acácio, TSF journalist and editor, Lisbon, 20.09.2000).

Generally, the material would come through non-direct sources. CDPM, headed by Luisa Teotónio Pereira, was over 15 years our main source of information where news would come through (João Fernandes, political editor in Diário de Noticias, Lisbon, 15.09.2000).

Some journalists felt the impact of changes within the political structure of the resistance after 1989, and the impact of a better structure of communication with the organisation:

There was an approximation of people, a get-to-know-each-other between the press and the resistance at some point during the 1980s. And this also happened when the resistance began to unite; UDT and Fretilin [the two main Timorese parties] come together and stop fighting each other abroad. And so trust builds between those people (Mário Robalo, journalist in Expresso, Lisbon, 26.09.2000).

I frequently spoke to the Timorese leaders and other members of the diaspora in Portugal. There were also – and those were the most important to me – people whose phone numbers were given to me, in this sort of way 'look, there is this guy is in Dili, he is OK to pass information'. But these were resistance people, or people connected to the resistance. And, progressively, relations of complicity were established with these people (Manuel Acácio, journalist and editor at TSF Radio, Lisbon, 20.09. 2000)

The experience of João Fernandes, political editor for Diário de Noticias, is one of greater proximity with the resistance, especially after the Santa Cruz massacre, and the events that followed it:
Chapter Four – Giving Meaning to East Timor

There is this slight opening [of the territory] when Xanana goes to trial\(^20\). When Xanana goes to trial, some Portuguese journalists travel there to cover the legal procedures: Oscar Mascarenhas, Adelino Gomes. It was the first time in almost twenty years that Portuguese and foreign journalists went openly to East Timor. And that is when more direct information begins to appear, the resistance was also getting more information, their channels of communication were better oiled. And there were also sporadic visits by Portuguese journalists and other foreign journalists – people who get visas to go there or that just go there undercover. But mainly, the situation gets more and more reports coming from the Timorese resistance. And that carried an interesting change. It seemed to us the resistance was opening up but also that there was a greater deal of trust (interviewed on September 15, 2000).

The better ‘oiling’ of the resistance’s channels of communication meant that, post-Santa Cruz, the press gained greater access to sources in East Timor. Mário Robalo, journalist with weekly *Expresso*, recalled that stage of “increased trust” mentioned by other journalists:

I was given telephone numbers of people committed to the struggle and who were part of clandestine networks, and I would call them. But, because of time differences, it was mostly night work, and on the other hand, it involved many things: passwords, speaking to a succession of people to get confirmation on a one-to-one basis about certain attacks. I had to assimilate the resistance passwords, codes of behaviour without losing from sight the rules of the business. But this capital of trust increased with time and at a certain point I was the only journalist with a certain list of phone numbers and access to internal documents from the resistance. And this trust gave the resistance enough confidence to send information to other media, to enlarge their scope of transmission (Lisbon, 26.09.2000).

The complexity of building what Tuchman (1978) called the ‘web of facticity’ was particularly problematic in the case of East Timor, a territory closed to journalists until 1989, or 1999 if they were of Portuguese nationality. Rather than working with an established newsnet (Tuchman, 1978), Portuguese journalists had to build this net in close contact with different institutions: the church, NGOs, and finally, the resistance. That journey to find legitimate institutional leaders, narratives for the construction of the reality of East Timor and the typification of the story were in a way escorted by this growing net of actors.

The only early credible source was the Catholic Church. As a member of the establishment naturalised by the social order, the Church provided an accepted reputation on which to rely for news. Other supporters of East Timor, who were ideologically bounded to those Portuguese political parties to the far-Left were excluded from the newsnet. Later on, NGOs built a respectable flow of ‘newsworthy’
information. The union of the political forces of the Timorese struggle into a single organisation (the CNRT) allowed for the resistance to emerge as a single voice. The reorganisation of the challengers created a network of trust between the media and the resistance. They developed a relationship of competitive symbiosis when the resistance opened its communications to the media, guaranteeing them access to sources and codes of verification.

However, building this newsnet was not without its drawbacks. Journalists spoke of the anxiety felt when publishing information they could not confirm in conventional ways. In other instances, the impossibility of confirming data meant they discarded information altogether. Others felt they had been at times too partisan and had sided with the resistance.

Adelino Gomes described some of his anxieties regarding the news-gathering process:

Getting material was very rare and it came from non-confirmed sources, whether those sources were with the occupier, close to the guerrillas or with the resistance's representatives abroad who managed to get a few letters from the territory. But there was always this situation where we could not confirm whether the information corresponded to the truth (Lisbon, 06.09.2000).

Gomes spoke of his "anguish" when he travelled to the territory in 1993 to cover the trial of imprisoned resistance leader Xanana Gusmão, after years of writing about a reality that he really could not access:

I should say that when I went to Timor in 1993, one of the crucial doubts I was carrying with me - which was giving me some nervousness and anguish - was precisely this one: could it be that I had been writing about a reality that was imaginary and non-existent for the past 18 years? And so many times I had quoted letters attributed to Xanana Gusmão in the newspaper, but I had no guarantee; I had never seen Xanana Gusmão's signature; I had never been able to compare two signatures from Xanana Gusmão. How could I know if Xanana Gusmão was the person signing the letters? (...) I never resolved those questions, from a technical-professional point of view.

As the 1990s progressed, *Diário de Noticias's* correspondent in Australia, António Sampaio, became more aware of the problematic nature of his sources:

For the most part of those ten years covering East Timor from a distance the Timorese resistance was just about the only source I had. I acknowledge that I was used by a Timorese machine that functioned very well. When I finally set foot in East Timor in 1999 I verified that I had misrepresented some stories about very specific killings or arrests (Lisbon, 14.10.2004).
João Fernandes, political editor for Diário de Notícias, believed that lack of confirmation from sources caused imbalance in the coverage. He too considered that he might have neglected accurate information and published inaccurate stories:

We ignored information from Ramos-Horta many times – information on massacres and attacks. The information would arrive late and we had doubts. It is obvious that, among all that, there could have been some manipulation. We probably published stories in which the information was not totally accurate (Lisbon, 15.09.2000).

Manuel Acácio of TSF news radio believed that such situations provided a context in which there was some degree of partiality in the way information was broadcast:

One of the biggest problems was – and now looking back at things – we were partial in the way we broadcast information, and we need to acknowledge that (Lisbon, 20.09.2000).

The existence of such gap in the coverage – between what was reported and the presumed reality of events which could not be confirmed through the conventional practices of newsmaking – played a part in the relationship that developed between the Portuguese press and the resistance. Some journalists interviewed spoke of the awkwardness felt in “free” East Timor in 1999, a feeling of “being taken for granted” by the resistance there:

Sometimes it was really unpleasant the way the resistance took us for granted. Because we were Portuguese, they saw us as brothers, people who thought the same way they did. There was an enormous desire to relate to journalists, to build friendships with us, inviting us to their homes (Luciano Alvarez, Público correspondent, Lisbon, 07.01.2000).

Manuel Acácio, TSF journalist and editor, spoke of the perception of those members of the integrationist movement with Indonesia, which formed a minority of the population and who saw the press as a close “ally” of the resistance:

One of the difficulties I came across, from the first time I got into Timor and started speaking to the people, was that there was that myth, that idea that the Portuguese press was working for the resistance. ‘You are members of the resistance, so to speak, and you don’t speak to us’ [the integrationists would say]. And that was a really difficult task to say ‘we are journalists and we are speaking to everybody. Why don’t you start warning us on your actions and you can check it yourselves if you are covering it or not’ (interviewed in September 20, 2000).

Journalists’ experience of building a narrative of East Timor without a conventional web of facticity – a clear cut newsnet of sources and institutional speakers –
exposes the fragility of the mass media once the framework in which they normally operate is withdrawn. Some speak of their permanent anxiety regarding information they could not confirm and point out the results of that uncertainty – the discarding of legitimate information and the making of news that at times felt partial.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shed light not only on the struggles for meaning undergone by different actors involved in the representations of East Timor. In addition, it has provided an historical account of sorts. In researching the competitive symbiosis between challengers, the media and the state’s political actions, the project has also outlined what the unwritten history of how the issue has been articulated by different actors in the process.

Some of this knowledge was available but lacked organisation and coherence, and was scattered through a variety of sources. For the most part, the research has unveiled the path through which the issue took shape over the period of analysis: from non-existence to consolidation in the previously unstudied areas of media correspondents and non-governmental agencies workers.

It has also revealed how that movement has developed in parallel for some of these actors: it was not until the issue gained some legitimisation in Portuguese political circles that the press brought East Timor to the top of its agenda. That contradicts the perception of some sections of the press who felt their role was crucial in the campaign for East Timor self-determination. In fact, the research shows how the press only came to report openly on the issue once there was some degree of common ground between the representatives of the Portuguese state. It was not until President Soares made East Timor a recurrent topic of discussion during international visits that the press headlined the issue. Moreover, the press failed to lead the public agenda for East Timor on previous occasions, as with the Kraras massacre of 1983 which, unlike Santa Cruz, received no coverage.

The research points to a parallel movement between the agendas of different actors and what Blumer (1971) called the life cycle of the issue-culture. Both policy-makers and the press made half-hearted attempts to address East Timor in the early 1980s. Yet, it was not until the late 1980s that the issue was legitimised and ready to mobilise people into action. Legitimisation only occurred when Portuguese policy turned around and the resistance democratised and reorganised its structure, setting up a relationship with the media.
Some journalists judged the Santa Cruz massacre to be a turning point in the political and media agenda. With regard to this matter, the research explored how Santa Cruz allowed both press and politicians to frame East Timor through the wider cultural resonances of Portuguese perennial universal identity. That resonance came from a deeply mystified cultural resource: the Portuguese language. Moreover, the research points out that East Timor policy was already in motion when the massacre took place, reinforcing the theory that it was politics and not the media that placed East Timor on the public agenda. The media do not appear to have changed policy, but they did seem to play a part in accelerating the progression of East Timor in the public agenda.

The construction of the issue of East Timor in the press was carried on in a particular context of exclusion from the territory and difficult access to sources. News stories on East Timor emerged from an atypical newsnet that lacked the conventional practices of news-making. The research also shows how the media's agenda-setting and bureaucracy reflected the wider political context in Portugal: before East Timor became a legitimate issue, only two Portuguese journalists worked consistently on the story, often without editorial support. The number of correspondents for East Timor increased in the late 1980s. That change reflected a more sympathetic political context, and it benefited from the resistance's improved political and communications structure.

Whereas journalists were prepared to negotiate elements of conventional practice in order to cover East Timor in the 1990s, that does not seem to be the case in the 1980s. In fact, several correspondents pointed out that routines of coverage in the 1990s had become altogether easier, but did not resolve the uncertainties over confirmation, authenticity and reliability of sources. Whereas in the 1990s media organisations were prepared to negotiate the gaps in practice, that did not happen in the 1980s. As the NGO leaders have explained, information sourced by their organisations and prepared for the media was often ignored by journalists.

The analysis shows that both journalists and media organisations renegotiated their roles and practices as the coverage of East Timor changed. Media staff alluded to the propagandistic nature of coverage at times, and shared experiences of providing resources to challengers, as in the case of the newspaper Expresso. Some journalists were prepared to negotiate their roles in the name of 'the cause' they believed had been created, whilst a minority expressed concern over the media's mainstream discourse about East Timor.
ENDNOTES

8 Maubere is the Timorese designation for the people of East Timor, coined during the early Timorese nationalist movement of the 1970s. It signifies brother in Tetum, the mainstream dialect.

9 The massacre of Kraras was a 'clean sweep operation in which 200 to 300 people were killed' (Gunn, 1994, p. 154). The massacre did not make headlines in the Portuguese media.

10 After the massacre of Santa Cruz in Timor, on November 1991, the student magazine Fórum Estudante set up operation Lusitânia Expresso Peace Mission. Fórum Estudante was an interventionist magazine that represented the causes of students in the early 1990s. Year upon year, students contributed to the fall of several education ministers, mainly over the decision to charge fees at public universities. The magazine's founding group rented a ship to travel to Australia, the Lusitânia Expresso. Once in Australia, the ship would be boarded by a group of international students and press. They would sail to East Timor in order to lay flowers for those killed in the massacre of Santa Cruz. The ship arrived in Indonesian waters in early March 1992 and was ordered back by Indonesian military ships. As Lusitânia Expresso drew away without reaching its official destination, the Dili cemetery, passengers threw white flowers onto the sea.

11 As I was later told in the interview, Marques had information that the Timorese were preparing a popular welcome in Dili for the mission's participants, and that reprisals by the Indonesian military to the people were expected in case they took the popular demonstration forward. As he put it 'the last thing we wanted was to create more deaths' [amongst the Timorese].

12 There were 23 nationalities aboard on the ship.

13 Bloco de Esquerda is a coalition of left-wing parties associated with an urban and young electorate. Despite having only three deputies in parliament, its initiatives and opinions do get covered by the mainstream press. On August 31, when it became clear that the militia was taking control of Timor, BE announced the suspension of all its campaign activities for the parliamentarian election of October 5, 2002, a gesture of solidarity with the events in Timor.

14 In 2003, newspaper readership in Portugal was 25.5%. The European Union average rate readership for newspapers was 65% (source: www.inq7.net).

15 Grande Reportagem was a weekly current affairs programme with an editorial line close to BBC's Panorama.

16 RTP2, then the second channel of the public broadcaster, is the equivalent to BBC2, featuring issue-based programmes.

17 The bulletin produced by the London-based TAPOL, the campaign for the defence of political prisoners and human rights in Indonesia, is a good source-material for the events of 1983. See TAPOL Bulletin No. 68/Supplement, March 1985.

18 UDT (União Democrática dos Trabalhadores [Workers Democratic Union]) is a small Marxist left-wing party.

19 In September 1989, Xanana Gusmão, the guerrilla and Fretiin leader, founded the CNRM (National Council of the Maubere Resistance), a non-partisan umbrella organisation that incorporated both Fretiin and UDT Timorese parties, who previously had worked apart. The creation of CNRM was an effort to depoliticise the struggle and unite efforts within the resistance. The guerrilla – or Falintil – were no
longer under the command of the political party Fretilin, and became a branch of CNRM, which was headed by Xanana.

Xanana Gusmão, the resistance leader, was arrested by the Indonesian authorities in 1992 and taken to trial in 1993. The Indonesian government granted some visas for the press to cover the event, including Portuguese journalists.

José Ramos-Horta, leader of CNRT (National Council of the Timorese Resistance) abroad and representative of Xanana Gusmão.
Chapter 5 - 1975 - Indonesia invades East Timor

5.1 Description of the event

In the early hours of December 7, 1975, Indonesia invaded East Timor, a colonial territory under Portuguese administration. The military strike came during a period of political unrest in East Timor, which resulted in the Portuguese administration leaving the island after Timorese parties engaged in a brief civil war. The political instability in East Timor over that year reflected the wider volatility of the Portuguese regime. Portugal had just come out of a 48 year-old dictatorship and was preparing the decolonisation of Africa and Asia.

Fretilin, the Marxist Timorese party, had unilaterally declared the independence of East Timor on the eve of Indonesian invasion. Fretilin's leadership believed this would trigger United Nations intervention and avoid a full military offensive from Jakarta's troops. The stories analysed in this chapter run from November 3 to December 27, 1975.

5.2 Political and media context

The coverage presented during the period is set against a period of volatile politics in Portugal during the 18 months which followed the democratic revolution. The media reflected this reality; its content became pronouncedly partisan as a result of the increasing power of communist political groups in media organisations such as Diário de Noticias. Characterising the influence of ideological struggles in the Portuguese public space of the time, Mesquita wrote (1996): 'The sense of liberation felt by the Portuguese, in the months following the revolution, quickly gave way to the uncomfortable feeling of becoming victims of an ill-administered ideological vaccine (p. 361).

The turning point in the propaganda war of the period came with the coup d'état of November 25, 1975, when socialist and anti-communist groups united to oppose what they believed would be an eventual communist take-over of the government. Newspaper circulation was interrupted on November 25, due to the emergency state declared in the country. Diário de Noticias came back to the newspaper stands on December 22, and this gap in its publication is reflected in the analysis which follows.

(For a further discussion of the political unrest in Portugal during 1975 see page 67).
5.3 Portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese

The portrayal of East Timor covers themes of poverty, military conflict and international isolation, and reinforces the left-wing political agenda of the period.

Although the invasion of East Timor began publicly on December 7, the warning signs of what was about to happen came earlier, in mid-October. A brief news piece set the tone of instability in East Timor:

Several cities in East Timor are allegedly being harassed by Indonesian troops since the day before yesterday, with the sound of shots of heavy weaponry and the massacre of civilian populations. This is information from news agencies working in that territory, whilst the Indonesian army's newspaper Berita Yudha signals preparations to attack the nationalist forces of Fretilin(Exp)²².

By November, there was a clear picture of a territory at war. The conflict, started between different East Timorese parties in August 1975, had another element – an Indonesian invading force – thus creating a scenario of a country struggling to sustain its economy:

Timor faces lack of food supplies

A Fretilin leader declared there had been no answer to aide requests addressed to the international community. Dr José Gongalves, president of Fretilin's 'Commission for the Economy's Supervision and Control' declared that there was urgent need for 600 tons of rice and 550 tons of wheat. ... dr. Gonçalves, warned however, that the food issue in the territory could not be resolved while under military threat' (DdN) ²³.

Another piece reads:

Essential supplies scarce in East Timor

'Our economy has always been an economy of subsistence. The Portuguese imposed the monoculture of coffee, which represents 90 per cent of our exports. The land and the climate have made Timor a fertile land. It is a mix of Mediterranean, European and Tropical; despite that, we were forced to import rice, wheat and even cereal's', declared José Gonçalves to the ANOP news agency, saying that the Portuguese ignored the potential wealth of their country'(DdN).²⁴

Here, the lack of crops was blamed on colonial rule, with a warning that a situation of potential famine was being neglected by the rest of world. This is an example of the type of information sent from Timor at the time via Fretilin. Not only Fretilin had an active propaganda machine, but it also encountered significant cultural and political resonances with some sections of the Portuguese
press of the time, deeply intertwined with the ideological struggles of the left in Portugal. *Diário de Notícias* was one of the newspapers touched by those politics.

The partisanship of newspapers like *Diário de Notícias*, and an inherited culture of "parrot-journalism" brought about by the tight controls of a 48-year old dictatorship meant that the narrative style of the daily newspaper lacked critical enquiry. It is often said that the media reproduce meaning through their textual output. At this stage of infancy of journalism in a democratic context, the idea of reproduction becomes quite literal. Often, the stories about Fretilin were simply reproductions of material produced by the party itself: the text was keen to portray the political foundations of Fretilin, and in contrast to subsequent periods, there was a substantial deal of communist jargon in news stories. The very structure of the organisation was reflected in the way language was used to describe it: the economic department of Fretilin was entitled the department of 'economic supervision and control'. The party structure included a 'central committee': organisational structures and terminology reminiscent of Soviet-inspired organisations.

Fretilin's efforts to gather international support included a meeting with a Maoist party and another with one of the largest communist powers in the world, China:

Fretilin has been carrying out great diplomatic activity from which the highlights are a visit from a delegation from the East Timor Democratic Republic government to the headquarters of MRPP, on Saturday, and the present visit from accredited members of the Timorese patriots in the Popular Republic of China, the only country which, since the unilateral declaration of Independence in the former Portuguese colony, has acknowledged the government from the Frente de Libertagao de Timor Leste [Fretilin - East Timor Liberation Front] (Exp).

East Timor's political position was compared to Vietnam, a nation trapped in an ideological war of Eastern communism versus Western capitalism, the epitome of the geopolitical divides of the 1970s. In the same piece, the Fretilin spokesperson placed East Timor in a similar context to Vietnam: 'To conclude, the statement adds, 'we do hope that the solutions found do not turn our country into a mini-Vietnam and do not take our people to genocide' (DdN).

There were several attempts to ascribe authority and expertise to Fretilin, a group which did not have the usual characteristics of legitimacy naturally acquired by other official sources. Fretilin's members were young and inexperienced leaders trying to take a small territory into independence. For instance, the spokesperson Dr José Gonçalves, sees his authority confirmed by his degree as well as his role as a 'Fretilin economist who worked in Spain,
1975 – Indonesia invades East Timor

Portugal and Belgium before returning to Timor, presently occupying the position of head of Fretilin's Commission for the Economy's Supervision and Control' (DdN). Even Expresso, a newspaper with a degree of political independence from the mainstream ideologies of the post-revolution days, legitimised the party by naturalising their members as the natural representatives of Timorese interests. It referred to Fretilin's members as 'Timorese patriots', and for some time it referred to the territory with the terminology devised by Fretilin 'East Timor Democratic Republic [República Democrática de Timor Leste]'. This designation was not recognised by any other state, apart from China. Neither the UN, nor Portugal, recognised Fretilin's proclamation of sovereignty. But the press seemed to take the organisation at face value.

The press acknowledged the legitimacy of Fretilin by using their self-proclaimed titles. Fretilin leader Ramos-Horta, was the 'minister of information and foreign affairs' and Alarico Fernandes, the 'secretary for administration and security' (DdN). Information was quoted from 'the second military command of Fretilin' (DnN) and the military 'chiefs of staff' (DdN).

At the time, the propaganda machine of Fretilin held more resonance than any other party's with the Portuguese media. This might have been the result of a combination of media partisanship and the tools of propaganda used by the party. Fretilin created a news agency, ETNA that reported regularly on military offensives.

Different institutions presented distinct views of the conflict through the media text. Whereas Fretilin was "fighting for independence", Indonesia wished to safeguard the interests of "pro-indonesian Timorese". Australia was concerned with the "region's stability", and Portuguese officials professed their ultimate aim was for a "peaceful solution". The increased isolation of Fretilin's positions in the international arena became clear:

Two leaders of Fretilin... severely criticised Australia for its neutrality in the East Timor issue. 'The people of Timor feel betrayed by Australia. We defended our independence and we do not hear the Australian government pronouncing a single energetic word (DdN).

It appeared that Australia was just another state who refused to take a stand in the conflict. (In reality Australia had been sympathetic to the Jakarta government, and became the only state to recognise Indonesia's jurisdiction over East Timor.) But unlike other countries, and Portugal itself, the Portuguese press legitimised the process of independence put in place by Fretilin to a certain degree. Fretilin soldiers were referred to as 'Timorese patriots' (Exp) and Fretilin...
as 'the organisation of the Timorese patriots' (Exp). Thus, Fretilin became the organisation that, unlike the other two (Apodeti and UDT), governed their country in a way that was directed to its public welfare. Expresso continued to use Fretilin's terminology by calling the territory The East Timor Popular Republic (Exp), even after Indonesian invasion.

The picture of East Timor ended being primarily a picture of Fretilin: this is partly due to the propaganda machine of the party, but also a consequence of the cultural and political resonances Fretilin held in the contested ground of Portuguese politics in 1975. The influence of communist groups in media organisations such as Diário de Noticias partly explains this type of coverage. Both Diário de Noticias and Expresso legitimated Fretilin as the valid representative of the Timorese reality as a whole, a status not granted to the organisation by the international community.

5.4 The relationship between Portugal and East Timor

The voice of the Portuguese authorities does not ring out loudly or clearly during the crisis of 1975. In one of the few official statements, the Lisbon government defined the search for a peaceful solution as its main goal for the area:

To find a final solution via peaceful means, the National Commission for Decolonisation restates

... According to the statement issued the need to find, by peaceful means a definitive solution for the Timor crisis was reinstated, through conversations between the Portuguese government and political parties (DdN).

The Portuguese government saw the East Timor crisis as a civil war, and did not openly acknowledge Indonesia's military involvement. It sought to involve Indonesia in the search for solutions to this crisis, through talks and meetings in London, Rome, Lisbon and Jakarta. At the end of the Rome summit, Portuguese Foreign Affairs Minister Melo Antunes issued a statement:

Both Portugal and Indonesia will use their influence with the [Timorese] parties so that, in the shortest time possible, we can gather around the same table and study the methods of transition from the right to self-determination to independence, in a way that would stop the civil war - since there is, as a matter of fact, a clear situation of civil war - and to resolve peacefully the issue of East Timor (DdN).

But that stage of 'transition' would never be reached. Growing fearful of a full-on Indonesian invasion, Fretilin declared the unilateral independence of East Timor on November 28. The Portuguese administration refused to acknowledge such a
unilateral decision – in an official statement, the President claimed that Portugal '... as the administrating power, will not accept statements of independence, nor of integration into third states' (Exp). The statement refrained from mentioning Indonesia: 'Portugal can not but repudiate and energetically condemn any military intervention in the Portuguese Timor territory'(Exp).

Expresso moved East Timor into its international pages one week after the invasion. While it still referred to the territory occasionally as the East Timor Popular Republic (the Fretilin self-proclaimed state), there was a blunt acknowledgement of the territory's departure from Portuguese hands. Expresso criticised Portuguese inaction in face of a threatening Indonesian military structure:

Small miseries in the decolonisation of East Timor

Whilst Portugal carries on developing "symbolic" patrolling operations in Timorese waters from the base point of ilha de Ataúro, the United Nations have not yet been able to pronounce in a definitive way the status of sovereignty in what could already be considered a former colony, until recently administrated by Lisbon...(Exp).

For Indonesia it was now clear that East Timor was part of their sovereign territory, but the press did not think that was the case, and they created a new language to handle this undefined status of East Timor. Expresso called it ‘a former colony’, ‘a territory until recently administrated by Lisbon’. Portugal's administrative role turned into an act of 'symbolic patrol'. The whole affair was surrounded by the "small miseries" of the administration, and the small part Portugal could play at the United Nations, where it had 'little resonance'. The issue was now detached from domestic policy-making, and was shifted to the international pages of Expresso. Moreover, Expresso represented the Portuguese administration as rather hands-off:

Whilst Lisbon's IV Provisional Government carries on, in harmony with the politics of its predecessors, declining any responsibility for what has happened, the Timorese patriots sought refuge in the mountains, the point from which they will start the armed struggle for National Liberation against the Indonesian invasion. For the Portuguese authorities, the sovereignty of Lisbon remains as long as the odd corvette lingers, with a symbolic crew, at a distance from the nearly deserted Ataúro Island...(Exp).

The Portuguese administration appeared weak and lax, facing "declining responsibilities". Its tool against a military invasion was the "odd corvette with a
symbolic crew" floating around what was not even the main territory of East Timor, but one of its small adjacent islands.

Both Diário de Noticias and Expresso marked the symbolic change of banal symbols of nationalism in East Timor. Under the headline 'Timor: the fall of symbols', Expresso wrote:

Indonesian "voluntaries" sent to East Timor by the Jakarta government dismounted the Portuguese flag in the half-deserted Ataúro Island, where the so-called flagpole played a role little less relevant than the discoveries monument in Brazil more than a century ago(Exp).43

That piece closes the chapter on the Portuguese sovereignty of East Timor with a little irony. The removal of the flag was a process equivalent to Brazil's independence 150 years before, when Portugal was powerless in the face of the loss of one of its largest territories. Unlike Brazil's monument to the discoveries, a solid stone-built mark of Portuguese rule, East Timor saw its Portuguese symbols fall in the shape of one simple flag. Once again, Portugal had not defended for one of its territories.

This picture of a powerless and unworthy former colonial power was completed with news of a currency devaluation that was set to bankrupt anyone holding the Portuguese escudo on the island. Currency was the ultimate bastion of sovereignty: 'the provisional government of Portuguese Timor has established a new exchange rate for the Portuguese escudo, reducing it to just 0.6% of its previous value'(DdN).44

Expresso picked up on the weak statements issued by the Portuguese government: the state was seeking "a peaceful solution" for East Timor through international meetings with Indonesia and the Timorese parties. Whilst these statements were coming out, Jakarta was entering the borders of the Portuguese colony. Expresso was particularly critical of Portugal's symbolic reaction to the December invasion of Dili. It pointed out the 'symbolic' nature of its patrolling missions, the 'declining' responsibilities, and the 'little miseries' of Lisbon's colonial policy and landmarks.

5.5 International relations and East Timor

In the run-up to the December invasion, Indonesia played a tactical game of words with Portugal. Portugal tried to gain reassurances from Jakarta that it would respect self-determination and peace, whilst Jakarta replied in turn that it would respect the 'wishes of the people of East Timor' without tolerating
instability on its doorstep. Australia was officially playing a neutral role, but her interest lay with the happiness of neighbour Indonesia.

Portuguese and Indonesian Foreign Affairs departments held talks in order to discuss the civil war in Timor and the prospects of decolonisation. The Portuguese official was confident in Indonesia's respect for the self-determination of the territory. The minister declared to the press:

The first important conclusion we arrived at is that Indonesia agrees with the fundamental principle, which we have stood by all along during the process of decolonisation, [and that is for] the wishes of the people of East Timor to be respected by both Portugal and Indonesia, as far as their destiny is concerned (DdN).45

Indonesia remained clear about respecting the aspirations of pro-integrationists, while dutifully stating that it would not send its army across the border:

'If the aspirations of the people who wish for integration are not taken into account, Indonesia will certainly not remain silent', added Saleh Mashuri, restating, however, that his country will never send troops to Portuguese Timor, and continues to consider Portugal as the only legal authority in the territory (DdN).46

Diário de Noticias's normative treatment of these types of statements discouraged the critical analysis of Indonesia's positions. This uncritical editorial style overlooked the small print contained in Jakarta's statements. For instance, an earlier piece revealed that Indonesia was trying to obtain permission from Portugal to intervene in East Timor, so as to restore peace. Reporting on talks in Rome, Diário de Notícias wrote:

[Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister] Malik promised to help Portugal in scheduling a meeting [between Timorese parties], but added: 'We are not in this conflict.' This means that Indonesia has not been able to obtain a mandate to restore the peace in East Timor, has it had requested earlier to [Minister of Inter-territorial Coordination] dr. Almeida Santos, in a meeting held in Jakarta in September (DdN).47

Behind the scenes Indonesia was trying to find legitimate ways of entering East Timor under the pretext of 'restoring peace'. Australia, the largest democratic, western-connected white-power in the region had a shot at playing the diplomatic role, in the face of increasing instability:

Australia waits for answers from the three political parties to organise peace talks', a governmental official stated today. The talks aim to end a crisis of three months ... where Fretilin has been fighting the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) and Apodeti, both pro-Indonesian parties (DdN).48
1975 – Indonesia invades East Timor

The waiting game ended when Indonesia shifted its strategy. It upgraded its intervention, from small military incursions intooast Timor to a full-scale military invasion of the island on December 7. Fretilin reported on 'violent battles characterised through a fresh offensive by Indonesian troops' (DdN). One of its ministers claimed the Indonesian invasion was 'an act of despair by that country which, since invading Dili and until today, has not managed to occupy more than the harbour area of Dili' (DdN). However, the official Indonesian news agency presented a very different picture:

The pro-Indonesian forces, with the support of Jakarta, took control of Dili on December 8, expelling Fretilin forces and declared they have formed their own provisional government for East Timor... there have been two weeks of operations against Fretilin troops, who sought refuge in the mountains when they were expelled from Dili (DdN).

Fretilin warned that the situation could soon reach a critical point, as their loss of control in towns across East Timor drove them to 'directing the operations from the mountainous regions in central Timor' (DdN).

News pieces written after the invasion made clear the geopolitical alliances in the region. China jumped to the defence of Fretilin, accusing 'Indonesia of eliminating the people of East Timor, massacring children and women'. Its news agency stated that 'Fretilin controls most of the territory', and added that 'the Timorese resistance, ill-equipped, soon reacted to the invasion and wiped out in a short period around half of the 3,000 invading soldiers' (DdN). The North Vietnamese news agency joined in the support for Fretilin, condemning the 'extremely obvious and violent military intervention in East Timor' (DdN). East Timor had now become a political case of the Cold War.

Meanwhile, Indonesia claimed it was not part of the conflict, and had just operated as a supportive party of pro-Indonesian political groups in East Timor. Antara – the Indonesian news agency – constructed the following argument: 'The East Timorese pro-Indonesian forces have requested Jakarta to send troops to the territory, so as to enforce law and order' (DdN). These so-called pro-Indonesian forces, contacted the Indonesian government 'appealing for support against 'the remaining terrorists left behind by the Portuguese government' (DdN). Antara added to the argument by describing Indonesian soldiers as 'volunteers':

The appeal from Apodeti's president issued a few days ago asked all segments of the population to unite in fighting 'against the terrorists who are now on the run, chased by security forces supported by the brothers of the Indonesian Republic (DdN).
Indonesian fighters in East Timor were not only volunteers but also 'brothers', thus 'acting in the best interest of' the East Timorese. When the United Nations Security Council requested explanations from the Indonesian government about their act of invasion, Jakarta denied the use of its troops:

Indonesia denied the direct military intervention and stated it has no troops to remove from the troubled area, as it is requested by the United Nations Security Council.... The statement adds that the Indonesian stationed in Timor do not belong to the regular army and that, therefore, 'the Indonesian government cannot stop them in the Portuguese Timor' (DdN).58

East Timor became represented through the global conflicts of the time: communism versus capitalism, western-supported regimes versus eastern regimes. Through the analysis of the current political situation in this part of the world, Expresso anticipated a prolonged war in East Timor; a war run by the 'corrupt government' of Suharto's dictatorship:

A United Nations intervention seems unlikely, and a guerrilla war is expected to be developed by the Timorese patriots in addition to the one already going on in Molucas islands against the Suharto government, considered to be the most corrupt in the region since the fall of South Vietnam and the domestic resistance in Indonesia itself.59

The United States were portrayed as allies of Indonesia within the Cold War divide. President Ford's visit to Indonesia on the eve of the invasion was not, according to Expresso, the sign of an innocent relationship between the two countries:

.... The American President promised to Suharto the continuous support to those which fight against the advancing of communist forces in that continent [Asia]. Yet within this context, one should not lose sight of the statement issued by Kissinger that the United States would not recognise Fretilin. Which means the issue of East Timor was debated between Suharto and Ford (and it would have been unbelievable if that had not happened) and allows us to conclude that the Washington leaders gave president Suharto the "go ahead" which was missing to invade in broad daylight the Portuguese former colony, where a government of communist tendency had just finished proclaiming independence. Because it was not a matter of chance that the invasion of East Timor came 24 hours after the visit from Gerald Ford to Jakarta. And there is no point for the White House tenant and its secretary of state to say that they were not aware of details or they did not debate the issue in detail with Suharto, because a word to the wise is enough (Exp).60
1975 – Indonesia invades East Timor

The UN became the last resource of appeal for East Timor, and the press remained cynical as to the organisation's actual power in transforming the course of events. Although the UN resolution acknowledged 'the undeniable right of the population of East Timor to self-determination and independence in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter' (DdN), the organisation structure was seen as slow and inefficient:

...as has been customary in similar circumstances, the United Nations Security Council drags on the debates about the invasion of the East Timor Popular Republic by Indonesia, in the constant search for a yearned "conciliatory" formula which says nothing and satisfies everybody (Exp).62

*Expresso* did not think the UN could solve the crisis:

The issue of East Timor is already dragging at the United Nations, due to the ambiguities of a great number of countries who, having committed to the imperialist adventure, fear taking on a clear position about an issue which affects the ultra-sensitive region of the South Pacific (Exp).

The Cold War alliance was in charge of negotiations in the United Nation's corridors, and the US interests in the region meant stability – and therefore Indonesian supremacy – were key to the assembly's voting sessions. The topic of the 'imperialists of Washington' versus the 'communists of Moscow' was a recurrent in *Expresso*:

In any shape or form, nothing leads us to believe that the Portuguese protests against the invasion could have significant resonance in the United Nations to create bounding measures, since the countries in the orbit of Washington and Moscow are still not supporting the practical measures which could then sustain the self-determination and independence of East Timor... (Exp).64

There was no critical discourse about Indonesian threats by either the media or the state, despite the signs that indicated clearly Jakarta's intentions. If on the one hand official positions vowed to respect East Timor's right to self-determination, on the other hand these statements hinted at other issues: respect for the pro-integrationists in East Timor, and no tolerance for social unrest across the border. After the invasion, Indonesia used a series of euphemisms to disguise the presence of its military force: the invaders were not on an official mission, they were 'brothers' of East Timor who went in aid of the locals to rid the territory of 'terrorists left behind by the Portuguese government'. *Expresso* applied some critical judgement over these statements, whereas *Diário de Notícias* pieces remained neutral and uncritical.
International relations were treated in the context of the Cold War. Fretilin had the public support of North Vietnam and China, two communist countries in the region, whereas Indonesia's alliances lay with Washington, whose administration was seen as an 'accomplice' of the invasion. Expresso looked into the recent history of Indonesian imperialism in the region to conclude that there was little faith in the freedom of East Timor. Expresso reserved a pessimistic analysis for the United Nations, which it regarded as 'slow and inefficient', in the search for 'conciliatory formulas' which would never come to light.

5.6 Conclusion

This period presents the most atypical pattern of coverage, in comparison to other moments analysed. The discourse on Portuguese identity and the longing for a universal narrative to connect Portugal to its former colony were not featured in the media's construction of East Timor in 1975, as they did in subsequent moments.

Diário de Notícias's narrative was normative and uncritical, and consisted of reprinting statements issued by sources. This is partly due to the media's routines of that time, which were still imbedded in practices inherited from the dictatorship. Stories were either fairly dry or partisan to left-wing groups, due to the communist party controlling sections of the media.

The portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese was mainly sketched by Fretilin and its propaganda. The party became the primary source of information on East Timor, and was legitimised by the press and especially by Expresso. The coverage of the invasion relies on Fretilin to frame the events unfolding in East Timor, unlike subsequent moments of analysis when Fretilin was often excluded from the newsnet. Fretilin briefed the press on the humanitarian situation and military operations; its fighters and politicians were described by Expresso as "patriots" and thus the one organisation that sat above all other constituencies as the representative of the nation.

The relationship between Portugal and East Timor conveyed the sense of the colonial power's weak position in the face of an imminent invasion. Portugal was portrayed as a ruling power that had 'declined its responsibilities' and was confined to conducting 'symbolic actions' of sovereignty, such as sea-patrol missions (Expresso). The withdrawal from East Timor epitomised the fragile position of Portugal's military and political structure during the decolonisation process. According to Expresso, the East Timor episode illustrated the 'little miseries' of Lisbon's colonial policy.
The analysis of *International Relations and East Timor* presents insight into the background against which this political and military conflict was being fought. Indonesia's evident manipulation of words and language was, appallingly, overlooked by the press, especially by *Diário de Notícias*. However, *Expresso* engaged in a critical narrative of Indonesia's positions and constructed the Indonesian regime in light of its history of persecution against communist movements and other islands seeking independence from Javanese rule. The conflict was framed in Cold War narrative: Fretilin was politically supported by China and North Vietnam, two strong communist powers; whereas Indonesia was supported by the USA.

ENDNOTES

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22 *Expresso*, Timor invadido por tropas indonésias, October 10, 1975, pg. 2.


24 *Diário de Notícias*, November 14, 1975, p. 2

25 *Diário de Notícias*, November 14, 1975, p. 2

26 MRPP is a Maoist-inspired party and was founded in 1970. It became very active in the universities of Lisbon during the turbulent political years of 1974-1975.


29 *Diário de Notícias*, November 14, 1975, p. 2


33 *Diário de Notícias*, Membros da Apodeti presos em Dili, November 25, 1975, p. 2


36 *Expresso*, À sombra das Nações Unidas a Indonésia procura firmar-se em Timor Leste, December 20, 1975, p. 6.

37 *Diário de Notícias*, November 6, 1975, p. 3.

38 *Diário de Notícias*, November 6, 1975, p. 3.

39 *Expresso*, Portugal does not acknowledge the unilateral independence of East Timor, December 1, 1975, p. 16.
1975 – Indonesia invades East Timor

40 Expresso, Portugal does not acknowledge the unilateral independence of East Timor, December 1, 1975, p. 16.
41 Expresso, Pequenas Misérias da Descolonização de Timor, December 17, 1975, p. 6.
47 Diário de Noticias, Encontrar para Timor solução definitiva por via pacífica, November 6, 1975, p. 11.
54 Diário de Noticias, A indonésia desmentiu a intervenção militar directa em Timor Leste, December 24, 1975, p. 10.
55 Diário de Noticias, A indonésia desmentiu a intervenção militar directa em Timor Leste, December 24, 1975, p. 10.
56 Diário de Noticias, A indonésia desmentiu a intervenção militar directa em Timor Leste, December 24, 1975, p. 10.
57 Diário de Noticias, A indonésia desmentiu a intervenção militar directa em Timor Leste, December 24, 1975, p. 10.
58 Diário de Noticias, A indonésia desmentiu a intervenção militar directa em Timor Leste, December 24, 1975, p. 10.
60 Expresso, A "nova doutrina" americana... ou EUA em busca do tempo perdido, December 13, 1975, p. 6.
61 Diário de Noticias, O conselho de segurança deplorou a intervenção da Indonésia e decidiu pedir a retirada das suas tropas, December 23, 1975, p. 7.
62 Expresso, À sombra das Nações Unidas a Indonésia procura firmar-se em Timor Leste, December 20, 1975, p. 6.
1975 – Indonesia invades East Timor

64 *Expresso, Pequenas Misérias da Descolonização de Timor, December 17, 1975, p. 6.*
Chapter 6 - 1981 – East Timor secret report

6.1 Description of the event

In October 1981 the media raised questions over the role of Portuguese officials in the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. The current affairs programme Grande Reportagem revealed that the socialist government of 1975 might have been complacent or even an accomplice in the Indonesian invasion. The programme was based on a classified military report of 1976 – The Timor Report – leaked to the producers of Grande Reportagem in 1981. The report revealed that between 1974 and 1975 two secret meetings took place between Portuguese officials and the Indonesian head of the secret police. The programme claimed that in those meetings, Portugal succumbed to pressures by Indonesia, thereby putting at risk the future of East Timor. Under the circumstances, both the Prime Minister and President decided to declassify the report and authorise its publication.

6.2 Political and media context

This was the first time East Timor returned to news agenda since the invasion of 1975. The social-democrat government of Sá Carneiro vowed not to give up the fight of pressuring for the "self-determination" of East Timor in 1980. Even though the early 1980s did not bring dramatic changes in policy or media representations of East Timor, it was from this moment on that the issue slowly emerged on the agenda. The exposure gained by the East Timor secret report, as well as the debate at the United Nations in 1982 (which I analyse in the next critical moment of discourse) represent two moments in which East Timor emerged from the tunnel of silence of the 1970s.

6.3 Portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese

Few pieces on East Timor appeared during this period, and they were mostly letters from the territory or statements by Fretilin on situations of famine, corruption and military attacks. Expresso published one of these letters that spoke of life in the island. Under the title 'Nothing can be obtained without corruption', the headline wrote: 'How is life in Timor under Indonesian oppression? The letter we publish is a disturbing testimony, more so because we cannot reveal the name of its author. In Timor, freedom of opinion is paid with life' (Exp). The letter constituted one of the rare glimpses of Timorese reality:
the disappearance of people; the destruction of villages; the growth of concentration camps; the spread of famine and diseases; and the abuse of women.

The portrayal of the island was limited to these scarce descriptions since the news media had no news-gathering routine for the issue. Other representations of East Timor came through Fretilin, who accused Indonesia of strangling Timorese society by forcefully enrolling Timorese men into Jakarta's army, and warned another year of famine ahead. Diário de Notícias used Fretilin's statements to address the imminent attacks on the western villages of East Timor: 'In its statement, Fretilin alerts public opinion and all governments to the wave of famine which will hit, once more, the people of East Timor due to the lack of labour for farming during catch-crops and the food shortages facing the Timorese who are forced to join the Indonesian army' (DdN).66

Fretilin still held its status as a news source and voiced its reactions to the debate generated by the Timor Report. Fretilin stated that 'faced with the blanket of silence which covers the reality of suffering and the heroic struggle of the Maubere people, RTP's programme Grande Reportagem is a positive step' (DdN).67

6.4 The relationship between Portugal and East Timor

The controversy generated by the Grande Reportagem programme questioned the actions of the Portuguese socialist government at the time of Indonesian invasion. Those former members of government felt that the accusations of complacency in terms of dealing with the Jakarta regime were unfair. The debate was further ignited by the military, who asserted that their operations on the eve of invasion could not be analysed without taking into account the broader political situation. Summing up, Timor surfaced in the context of domestic politics and that was the focus of the argument: assessing responsibilities and the details of political decisions taken. East Timor became domestic politics.

The publication of the report was politicised by the war of words between the centre-right government of 1981 and the former socialist government. The military did not wish to be taken into the ideological field of the discussion, and asked for the issue to be addressed within the 'wider context of decolonisation':

In a message sent to their units, the Armed Forces Chiefs of Staff Council has considered the statements made about the military on the issue of East Timor as 'unfair and insidious'... the framing of the events which took place in that territory is
'complex, vast and affected by a set of fast-changing structures' occurring in our territory (DdN).68

The 'fast-changing structures' of the country were marked by the instability that took over state institutions in 1975. The centre-right cabinet also voiced its condemnation of the debate:

The cabinet met last night in Lisbon, and considered that the reactions from sectors of public opinion who tend to attack the armed forces in general were 'unfair and speculative' (DdN).69

The President of the Republic, General Ramalho Eanes, expressed his discomfort in releasing the Timor Report to the public: 'Ramalho Eanes is not particularly fond of publishing the report since he considers that documents which were elaborated for specific means and were classified for those who lack the authority to do it are now susceptible of being used in political battles' (DdN).70

There is an underlying tone of protection of the armed forces, for they had played a key role in overthrowing the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 and held the respect of the democratic leaders. Nevertheless, the communist party had infiltrated sections of the military during the 1975 transition to democracy, and this was still a sensitive issue for debate in 1981. Some politicians voiced stronger criticisms about the role of Portugal in East Timor and what this debate meant for the country. Ângelo Correia, minister of the social democrat government in 1981 and one of the personalities who campaigned for free East Timor during the invasion of 1975, stated to the press that:

... on a purely personal note, 'what the Portuguese have done in East Timor fills us with shame' adding that 'Portugal has betrayed the Portuguese and the Timorese' (DdN).71

Socialist Mário Soares was one of the Portuguese politicians in power at the time of Indonesian invasion; he reacted strongly against the accusations which implicate him in the invasion:

'for the history of overall process of decolonisation and the decolonisation of Timor, as a consequence of, but also as a requirement of the history of colonialism and war'(DdN)72.

The positions expressed above by the military, and present and past governments exposed the arguments for and against the blame game over decolonisation of Portuguese territories. The military detached themselves from the political framing in which the report was being presented; the present centre-right
government exempted the military from any blame (implicitly leaving responsibilities to the socialist government of 1975); whilst the socialists called for the decolonisation issue to be assessed, not within the context of Portuguese post-revolution days, but within the wider context of centuries of colonial occupation.

The positions of these actors became apparent through the text. The press attempted to take the debate further and asked questions on what could be done to repair the damage done by events of the past.

I now turn to analysis of how the press constructed the report once it was published, and how that construction informed the relationship between Portugal and East Timor.

Diário de Noticias pondered over Lisbon’s slow reaction in 1974/5, when Portuguese rule in East Timor was quickly disintegrating:

Timor's government messages to Lisbon expose a tragic situation in the summer of '75

The seriousness of the situation lived in Timor during the summer of 1975 surpassed everything the Portuguese public opinion could envisage at the time... the reactions of the Lisbon government to the appeals made from Dili show deep hesitation and a considerable gap between the speed at which the events succeeded and reactions took place... From August 1975 onwards, telegrams from Dili [to the Lisbon government] are sent day in day out, in a dramatic crescendo which is not echoed in Lisbon (DdN).73

The press framed the report as a confused process guided by indecision and inappropriate measures from Lisbon. The front page of Diário de Noticias highlighted three main conclusions in bold letters:

After contacts with the parties in government, the newly appointed governor departed to East Timor with the impression that this was an issue that needed to be 'sorted out'; in the London meeting Indonesia was explicit in its intention to integrate Timor, and assumed this was the Portuguese position too; according to the report, Portuguese negotiators tried to reconcile two opposing sides: the wishes of the population and the Indonesian position (DdN).74

The quote above mentions the London meeting, an event which had never been publicly acknowledged before. In 1974 Portuguese and Indonesian officials met in London to discuss the situation in East Timor, and the content of that discussion raises questions as to whether Portuguese ministers may have unwillingly consented to some form of Indonesian annexation. The Timor Report
substantiates the lack of governmental interest in East Timor by publishing an interview given by socialist Almeida Santos in 1975, when he was minister for inter-territorial coordination. In this interview, he denied any possibilities of independence for East Timor:

... Timor, say, is like a motionless transatlantic liner which costs us a lot of money. Indonesia is not interested in replacing us in the financial support of East Timor. There are three theories: one is for total independence which is utterly unrealistic; another theory is in favour of links with Indonesia, and the other sustains a relationship with Portugal. Frankly I, for one, would not like too see the balance of our former ex-colonial empire to be just a presence in Indonesia, occupying half of the Timor island (DdN).75

Almeida Santos's position caused negative reactions in East Timor and Portugal. This metaphor of East Timor as an expensive and useless piece of land, what sounds like 'a piece of real estate liability', only served to substantiate the image of Portuguese negotiators as lacking firmness, and that image extended to the events of the London meeting. Diário de Noticias explained how the uncertainty of Portugal's policies may have sent out the wrong signs to Indonesia:

... one can assume from the London meeting that Indonesia was very clear as to what her intentions were, always aiming at integration. Portugal maintained an attitude of lack of definition in trying to reconcile two contradictory sides: - the willingness of the people, to keep coherence with Portuguese and international public opinion, - the position of Indonesia, to whom it was suggested to intervene in order to guarantee the wishes of the population (DdN).76

The 'London meeting' became the a sore point in the debate of the Timor Report, and provoked strong reactions from former ministers who promptly issued press statements denying accusations of complicity with Indonesia. Expresso's own investigation on activities of both governments before the invasion reached a similar conclusion. Conducted by Australian reporter Jill Jolliffe, the investigation claimed the report had 'poor technical quality, confusion regarding the detail of certain facts, emphasis on certain facts in detriment of others, an over--simplistic view of events and the usage of controversial material' (Exp).77 Jolliffe built the story of a Portuguese government which was complacent to Indonesian advances:

By crossing several documents and information from different sources one realises that, since the moment Portugal got involved in secret negotiations with the Indonesians, the supposed decolonisers were caught in a trap. And so, they could no longer warn Portuguese or international public opinion about Indonesian intentions (Exp).78
Diário de Notícias claimed the report highlighted 'a series of facts which left the impression that East Timor was not of primary concern for Portuguese leaders, reinforcing, for the Timorese, the conviction that Portugal would abandon Timor' (DdN).79 Expresso's own review of the story claimed the report was hyped:

The Timor report: the mountain labours and brings forth a ridiculous mouse

Instead of shady truths and terrible treason said to be secret in the famous report, what we face is an extensive list of misunderstanding, incompetence and irresponsibility. Was there any worth in breaking the dignity of the state for this? (Exp). 80

Expresso assumed that there were those who tried to use the Timor Report for political gains against the socialists in power at the time of the invasion. It portrayed the publishing of the report as a non-event, and claimed that the political intrigue was useless:

For those awaiting sensational revelations these are no more than facts already known to the public or details which, however unknown, are irrelevant. Those who demanded the heads of 'traitors' and 'guilty' parties will have to do with the acknowledgement that those responsible for Timor were, ultimately, 'the political leadership under crisis and the state authority that was practically non existent'...(Exp).81

In the end, 'confusion and lack of interest' were, in the words of Expresso, the causes behind the Indonesian invasion:

Here lies the core of the Timor question: as much as Indonesia wanted to take control of Portuguese Timor, there would hardly be an attempt if only the Portuguese enforced the order and stability in the territory. It was precisely the absence of an effective Portuguese presence and our unfulfilled historical duties that gave Indonesia the pretext for intervention. Indonesia, a conservative state composed of an infinite number of islands and ethnic groups, living under the constant nightmare of separatist tendencies and revolutionary movements, could never accept an independent Timor, moreover if it was to be ruled by a clearly communist Fretilin (Exp).82

Both newspapers pointed to the lack of political authority and guidance, on the one hand, and an inefficient Portuguese presence in East Timor, on the other hand. However, the details of the report began a broader debate on the historical implications of colonialism and decolonisation. Expresso spoke of 'our unfulfilled historical duties', and extended the responsibility over East Timor to the Portuguese nation as a whole. The government itself justified the publication of
the report for the sake of the country’s “mental health”. In a statement published in *Diário de Notícias*, the government said:

The government has decided to publish these documents 'after considering how crucial it is to exorcise unhealthy speculations that can only traumatise Portuguese public opinion'...(DdN).

The framing of East Timor as an issue of dignity for the republic of Portugal surfaced with the publication of the report, that was voiced both by politicians and the press. When Portuguese Prime Minister Pinto Balsemão vowed to publish the secret report in 1981 he stated:

History cannot be shut down under the excuse that its protagonists are still alive... it is not only necessary to respect the individual interests of those who rightly or wrongly have built the history but also the dignity of Portugal (DdN).

The government's reasons to publish the report transformed East Timor into an issue that was brought into the heart of Portuguese domestic politics. Moreover, East Timor became a national issue to the extent that it invoked an act of "exorcism of national public opinion". Politically, the issue was construed in relation to wider cultural resonances. It became a matter of decolonisation and it had a divisive effect between the Left and the Right. The centre-Right government of 1981 saw in the report an opportunity to cleanse the history and dignity of the country. The Prime-Minister referred to former governments (and thus to the socialists) as 'the protagonists [of history] who are still alive', implying their actions had compromised 'the dignity of Portugal'. The government was echoing the accusations formulated in the *Grande Reportagem* programme.

*Diário de Notícias* focused on the blaming game that arose between the Left and the Right; and compared it to the debate held a couple of decades before on the occasion of the Indian invasion of Goa:

Whatever the case is, the 200,000 death total counted in the tragic genocide of East Timor and the historic responsibility of Portugal over a territory which is still theoretically under its administration demand for this theme to be taken forwards to a truly national perspective and not under the petty goal of fabricating scapegoats as it happened with Goa (DdN).

Is East Timor becoming another Goa?, asked *Diário de Notícias*. The Indian Union invaded the Portuguese colony of Goa in 1961, thirteen years before the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship. American and British intelligence services had been tipping off Portugal about a potential attack on Goa since 1954. Yet dictator Salazar did not take any action to secure or defend Goa, and preferred to rely on
its own intelligence which pointed elsewhere. The invasion of Goa created a stir of protest in Portugal: demonstrations across the country and inflamed reactions in press editorials. Nonetheless, Goa had been completely forgotten and withdrawn from the public agenda. Diário de Notícias warned against East Timor becoming the new Goa, where Portuguese public outcry soon fell into abandon. It called for a debate about the future, and not the past, of East Timor and argued against the political instrumentalisation of the issue. Expresso, too, reinforced the call for a debate about the real issues facing East Timor:

It would be incredibly negative that the explanation of historical facts would mount to a settling of accounts between Portuguese politicians, whilst in distant Southeast Asia, Indonesia carries on with the occupation of the territory of East Timor and practising the genocide of its people... There is something very clear here: the true culprit of the East Timor crime is the Indonesian state. Consequently, the national responsibility of Portugal is to do everything within its reach so that the crime of East Timor ceases to exist and its people may exercise the sovereignty to which they are entitled (Exp).87

Diário de Notícias maintained an historical perspective of decolonisation as the culmination of a non-sustainable project of occupation stretched by the Portuguese state until the 1970s. Its editorial recalled an episode that exposed the frailty of the empire – the 1941 Japanese invasion of East Timor. Portugal had not allocated sufficient military resources to East Timor and it was left to the locals to fight the Japanese side-by-side with the Australians. Dictator António Salazar did not defend East Timor, and effectively ignored the fact that one of the country's territories was being occupied by a foreign force:

Despite the theoretical maintenance of sovereignty, the people who were loyal to Portugal suffered all sorts of humiliations: their houses were pillaged and entire villages were burnt. Lisbon never cut diplomatic relations with Tokyo. And Portuguese troops only arrived in Dili after the Japanese empire surrendered... In order to analyse the Indonesian annexation of 1975 it is valuable to take into account the Japanese invasion of 1941. Both situations manifested intrinsic difficulties of a metropolis scarce of means to extend its authority to the vast territorial extension of its colonies. ... There are those who retain the verbal eloquence of the empire, whilst forgetting its weaknesses. And the mistakes of "decolonisation" were also the extension and the consequence of the fragile coloniser Portugal. If memory serves us badly we must revive it (DdN).88

The editorial called for an historical perspective to be involved in the discussion of the Timor Report. It stressed the invasion of 1976 was not an isolated act of
policy, but part of a long-term trend in which neglect and absence of military or administrative structures made Portuguese colonialism elusive.

The speed at which newspaper editorials called for an end to political scapegoats increases throughout the coverage of the secret report. An opinion column by a NGO leader in Expresso went as far as arguing that the right-wing sections of political and military institutions were using the Timor Report to question the decolonisation itself, judging it as a negative event in Portuguese history:

A final and general consideration: the incidents surrounding the Timor Report, which has been unexpectedly reopened to the public, may signify a wider process directed by right-wing forces against decolonisation. In a subtle way, an image is building up where decolonisation is an historical crime for which the leaders of the time have to be held accountable. Interestingly enough, the political actors of the time almost agree with that point of view, and are always in defensive mode, as if apologising for even being involved in the issue or, instead, they wash their hands of it (Exp).89

Diário de Noticias also explored this theme. According to its editorial, the level of criticism promoted by the debate questioned the very events – the end of dictatorship and the withdrawal from colonial territories in Asia and Africa – which paved the way for the new democratic regime:

Timor Guilt

Every time the random circumstances of Portuguese politics prompt the recollection of facts related to the process of decolonisation, the controversy quickly surpasses that specific side of post-revolution history, threatening to question the basis of the new regime that is today universally accepted.

Regardless of what the report states, the debate [over the secret report] has lain mostly around identifying the guilty parties, as if the tragedy [of Timor] had happened in the fringes of the last 50 years of history. This does not mean that in order to understand the facts one vehemently needs to recall previous circumstances which will acquit those responsible [for East Timor]. However, plenty of people are aware that there was no policy by Lisbon, even well before the revolution, for that territory. To ignore that fact only because of reasons of national unity, with the principles in which the empire was built and Portugal still kept its presence in Southeast Asia, is either to mystify history or to use it for instrumental benefits (DdN).90

The editorial argues against turning the debate into a questioning of decolonisation and democracy. Most significantly, the debate was excluding the history of Portuguese colonisation in East Timor. Unlike other western-ruled empires, Portuguese possessions around the world lacked not only a
comprehensive administrative strategy but also a systematic economic and technological legacy. The *Diário de Noticias* editorial went further in suggesting that the role of East Timor was greatly defined by the need to feed the ideological propaganda that kept the empire running in the minds of a domestic audience. In that sense, East Timor became more of a nationalist myth or a dot on the map, rather than a colony operated for economic or developing purposes:

During the dictatorship, Timor was to primary school manuals the ultimate patriotic glory and a symbol of Portuguese colonising efforts. What was more important than reality was the role of the ideology in which the regime fed itself. One only needs to read documents about what went on there during the last war [WW2] to realise the dramatic gap between the myth and the history of East Timor and to conclude that, in reality, what mattered was just to keep the Portuguese flag flying, no matter what concessions were made to justify that flag (DdN).91

*Expresso* called for action to be taken and condemned 'the noise surrounding the report'.92 Its editorial asked the state to take charge of its responsibilities with former colonies, in the same way Britain did in the past:

Portugal has historical responsibilities over East Timor the same way England had responsibilities over Rhodesia. Great Britain has faced up to those responsibilities, praise be made to Mrs Thatcher. She took charge of the problem, for which a solution was found. To blame x, y or z, those who participated in such a confusing process, can work very well as a draining mechanism for imperial-style frustrations, but it is not a realistic approach... Portuguese authorities are obliged to transform the phenomenon of East Timor into a national consensus and work for an international consensus over the issue... (Exp).93

In trying to move the debate forward, *Expresso* questions the state’s plans for the next round of votes at the United Nations. According to sources, the government was facing a 'lost cause'94 since it 'sees no possibility of the UN vote being favourable to Timorese aspirations'95. *Expresso*’s sources spoke of ongoing secret negotiations with Indonesia, raising doubts as to whether the Portuguese state would carry on promoting East Timor at the United Nations debates:

Now that the report has been published, will Portugal admit it has reached the final line of negotiations? If so, that means it has decided to abandon Timor to its own luck and to the wishes of Indonesia (Exp).96

*Expresso* pushed the boundaries of the public debate by requesting answers to forthcoming policy issues regarding East Timor, and revealed information that described tough times ahead for East Timor at the heart of the United Nations.
6.5 *International relations and East Timor*

Despite passing references to international influences in the past and future of East Timor, the main function fulfilled by the publishing of this report seems to be the transformation of East Timor into a domestic issue. Coverage of international relations and East Timor is practically non-existent during this moment of 1981. The exception is a small piece where the Tanzanian president calls for Timorese independence:

**Black Africa wishes independence for East Timor**

Julius Neyere, President of Tanzania, said at the end of his four-day visit to Indonesia he was not convinced of the arguments which led that country to the annexation of the former Portuguese colony of Timor.... he added he understood the importance of East Timor to Indonesia, although his and other countries of the African Union wished for the territory to be independent, based on the principle that no geography or history be used to deny independence to a former colony (DdN).97

This story, printed on the front page of *Diario de Noticias*, is a typical example of the wider exposure of the issue of East Timor, created by moments of increased reporting, such as the publication of the secret report. A storyline that might have slipped from the news agenda became a front page affair.

6.6 *Conclusion*

With the publication of the Timor Report both the military and the government warned against the temptation of politicising the actions of the military. They stressed the need to read the report as a military enquiry, separate from ideological judgement. However, the report's conclusions raised questions over the competence and independence of the military, and the current affairs programme *Grande Reportagem* suggested the socialist executive of 1975 might have been complacent or even an accomplice to the Indonesian invasion. The report documents how secret meetings between representatives of Portugal and Indonesia contributed to the thought that East Timor was, like one of the ministers in charge of the territories stated at the time, 'a real estate liability'. Complacency may have encouraged the invasion of East Timor, as well as confusion. *Expresso* read the publication of the report as a 'non-event' since it was more an exposure of incompetence than of dark and mysterious treason.

The report ignited the ideological divisions between the Right and the Left and their different narratives in the history of decolonisation. East Timor jumped to
the top of the media agenda because it caused division in the dominant strands of political discourse. Those discursive divisions between the Left and the Right lay strongly within the process of decolonisation, the politicisation of the state's structures (the military included) and the construction of Portugal's post-dictatorial and post-colonial recent history. The debate generated by the publication of the secret report touched on the foundations on which the nascent Portuguese democracy was built. This was a country which was finally accepted in the west after handing back its colonial possessions, and was struggling to master the use of its publicly accountable structures. In a sense, East Timor entered the agenda because it became domestic politics.

Thus, the relationship between Portugal and its former colony was framed as a domestic issue which divided the Left and the Right. It was discussed not because of the solutions that were viable for East Timor's future, but, instead, with regard to the political symbolism of decolonisation. This symbolic and ideological construction of decolonisation was visible through the reactions generated by the report: the centre-Right government called for the exemption of the military and attributed the failure of decolonisation to the socialists in power in 1975. The socialists reacted by calling for a wider discussion on the context of decolonisation and colonial history. The military stated that the report should not be read without considering the turmoil of Portuguese politics in 1974–5.

In comparison to the political debate, the press was much more active in constructing a progressive discourse. Whereas the Prime Minister justified the publication of the report for the "exorcism of speculations which can only traumatis public opinion", the press asked for the state to act internationally for East Timor. Both *Expresso* and *Diário de Noticias* published critical editorials calling for the interpretation of East Timor as a piece of Portugal's problematic and propagandistic colonial history. They situated the powerless colonial structure historically by recalling Goa, abandoned to the invasion of India in 1961; and the temporary Japanese invasion of East Timor during the Second World War to which the regime turned a blind eye. *Expresso* asked the political forces and state representatives to move forward and act internationally in order to complete Portugal's "unfulfilled historical duties". The press condemned the scapegoating fed by political parties in this period of 1981.

This was the first moment in six years that East Timor became a news story across the media. The portrayal of East Timor was very scarce – the only glimpse of life in East Timor was conveyed through an older letter that the press had received months before but not published. This situation exposed the low priority
of the story had it not been framed into a domestic issue of political division and post-colonial history.

ENDNOTES

65 Expresso, "Nada se consegue sem a corrupção", October 17, 1981, p. 21R.
67 Diário de Notícias, Posição da Fretilin sobre programa da RTP, October 11, 1981, p. 3
71 Diário de Notícias, Presidente da República não se opõem à divulgação do relatório sobre Timor, October 10, 1981, p. 3.
72 Diário de Notícias, Presidente da República não se opõem à divulgação do relatório sobre Timor, October 10, 1981, p. 3.
73 Diário de Notícias, Mensagens do governo de Timor para Lisboa provam situação trágica no verão de 75, October 17, 1981, p. 7.
77 Expresso, Negociadores Portugueses apanhados na armadilha da indonésia, October 17, 1981, p. 20-1R.
78 Expresso, Negociadores Portugueses apanhados na armadilha da indonésia, October 17, 1981, p. 20-1R.
80 Expresso, Relatório de Timor: a montanha que pariu um rato, October 17, 1981, p. 17.
81 Expresso, Relatório de Timor: a montanha que pariu um rato, October 17, 1981, p. 17.
82 Expresso, Relatório de Timor: a montanha que pariu um rato, October 17, 1981, p. 18.
This reflection resulted from a conversation with Portuguese journalist Diana Adringa, during a session of the 2002 Annual Sopcom Conference, Lisbon.


Diário de Noticias, África Negara deseja independência de Timor Leste, p. 1.
Chapter 7 - Overturning the vote at the United Nations

7.1 Description of the event

In September 1982, the recently created Parliamentarian Commission for East Timor pressed for more active policies, in light of the upcoming October vote at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The East Timor motion was put to the United Nations vote every year, yet in 1982 it risked failing due to lack of international support. The balance of votes was turning in favour of Indonesia: whereas in 1975 the UN assembly voted for Timorese self-determination by a difference of 60 votes, the gap between those for and those against self-determination had shrunk to just 30 votes in 1981. With Indonesia gaining political ground, the Portuguese state woke up to a last-minute strategy.

Parliamentary deputies visited Australia (home to the largest Timorese diaspora) and the USA to set up the case for East Timor. The President of Portugal and the Prime Minister came to an agreement over the political strategy for international pressure, which had not been consensual until then. As a result, the government sent Portuguese envoys to negotiate for votes in 40 different countries. The motion was passed in the end, by a very narrow margin of only four votes.

7.2 Political and media context

The year of 1982 came to symbolise much of what had been happening in Portuguese policy towards East Timor since 1976. Fretilin was virtually alone working its influence at the United Nations (Gorjão, 2001). Limited to submitting the East Timor resolution to the UNGA since 1976, and without the backup of consistent political lobbying, Portugal (according to the UN still the administrative power in the island) risked losing the position which condemned the Indonesian invasion. Such a fragile situation reflected Portugal’s lack of bargaining power in relation to Indonesia, a country exerting strong and continuous economic diplomacy with other United Nations member states.

Alerted by the threat of losing the vote at the UNGA, the Portuguese state institutions took some steps to overturn the situation. In 1982, it appointed a permanent ambassador for East Timor affairs at the Foreign Affairs Ministry. In Parliament, the first specialised committee was created – the Parliamentary
Committee for East Timor Affairs. Nine assembly deputies were sent around the world in October for emergency negotiations ahead of the crucial UNGA vote. In 1981 and 1982, campaigning work with public opinion began, as three major NGOs were set up in Portugal to work exclusively for the self-determination of the territory.

7.3 Portrayal of East Timor and the East Timorese

With East Timor entering the Portuguese media and political agenda, the media took the opportunity to shed some light on the specific circumstances of life in the territory. Expresso, for instance, printed a story on the famine in East Timor, where a quarter of the population was suffering from food shortages, based on reports from a Catholic organisation. The paper reflected on the difficulties of exploring the story any further:

The information – for which is practically impossible to obtain elements of confirmation or additional data, due to the "iron curtain" created by the Indonesian military occupation – is compatible with the latest account known through the few foreign visitors authorised to go into the territory. One of those visitors, Rod Nordland from the Philadelphia Enquirer, describes the situation as one of "famine" and "misery". Quoting information from Indonesian military sources, the same journalist announced that there were still, in the Timorese mountains, about 1200 Fretelin guerrilla men, who have been fighting against Indonesian troops for six years (Exp).98

The constraints to journalist routines at the time had virtually ended coverage on East Timor. The security apparatus of Jakarta blocked all foreign access to East Timor. Portuguese journalists were not allowed entry to Indonesia; other foreign journalists entered East Timor either secretly or through very rare visas. The acknowledgement of difficulties in getting first hand information was made obvious by the piece – the impossibility of cross-checking sources or obtaining information locally until the territory slowly opened up from the early 1990s onwards. The agenda-setting created by the UN debate turned usually rare items, such as accounts of life on the island, into the subject of news. Expresso published information on the guerrillas, whose existence and strength were still very much questioned in the early 1980s.

Another consequence of the political revival of the issue in the domestic agenda was the voicing of critical positions by Portuguese political sources safely contained within the status quo. Parliamentary assembly deputy Manuel Tillman
1982 – Overturning the vote at the United Nations

shared information about the situation inside Timor, the result of a fact-finding mission to Australia:

It is really a catastrophic situation. It has not rained for 4 years; the crops are down due to drought and the traditional Timorese agriculture is practically destroyed. There is a malaria epidemic in the island but no medicines. The Indonesian government has blocked all foreign aid, – it has only been a few months since Unicef managed to get into Timor... Genocide is not too strong a word to describe such methods: when suspecting the existence of guerrilla fighters in a village, Indonesia does not look for them – it kills all the locals. And it continues destroying all the mountain crops, killing the fighters by famine. Despite this state of affairs, there is still an active resistance, Tillman assured. And mostly, there is 'total aversion' to the invaders. 'If Indonesia opened a window, all the population would flee from Timor', concluded the MP (DdN).99

There was also some insight into another group which rarely made news – the Timorese diaspora in Portugal:

Six hundred Timorese holders of a Portuguese passport await in Dili their ticket to Lisbon... In Portugal there are one thousand Timorese, some two thirds of those which travel to Australia, generally with the goal of reuniting with relatives (DdN).100

The government's renewed intervention at the United Nations brought Fretilin voices to the front. The leaders of the party considered Portuguese Prime Minister intervention at the UN: 'Fretilin sees as positive the references made by the Portuguese Prime Minister Pinto Balsemão, at the UN Assembly General speech - we believe it's going to influence a great deal the position of several countries' (DdN).101

The minimal coverage of East Timor was once more defined by the conditions of production: i.e., no access to the island by Portuguese journalists and an inability to cross-check information. The information came through second-hand accounts, in this case through the American media. The fact-finding mission by parliamentary members brought some element of participation of the Timorese community into the political sphere: their voice came through as a reaction to the new strategy of parliament. This was still, however, a limited scope of participation: Fretilin was the only voice representing Timorese interests at the United Nations.

7.4 The relationship between Portugal and East Timor

The founding of the parliamentary committee for East Timor (CEASTL), in April 1982, agitated Portuguese foreign policy. The fact-finding mission by members of
CEASTL to Australia and the USA incorporated for the first time the input of the Timorese diaspora: 'One of the goals of the Australia visit – the consultation with Timorese refugees who reside there about the solutions they prefer - has found that the majority wishes the return to sovereignty as a starting point to begin a process of self-determination (DdN).'

The mission confirmed the lack of Portuguese initiative in building any bargaining power with the international community. Manuel Tillman, member of CEASTL and of Timorese origin himself, told the press about the 'generalised support to the people of East Timor, despite the "neglect" by the Portuguese government in not providing information about the situation in the former colony, in opposition with Indonesia, which does everything within her reach to maintain the votes of those countries who support her at the UN' (DdN).

The assessment highlighted the difference between the strong, organised and active Indonesian diplomacy and the lack of action, strategy or investment of Portuguese diplomacy. Under the title 'Difficulties ahead of the Portuguese defence at the UN', Diário de Noticias voiced the findings of the fact-finding mission:

... the defence of Portuguese positions on East Timor 'is very difficult', adds Tillman, anticipating a 'very dark situation'. According to Manuel Tillman, Portugal has not been 'diplomatically aggressive' in the handling of this issue. 'Whilst we send memos to ambassadors asking them to approach the issue, Indonesia sends envoys, missions and delegations,' Tillman said, adding that the process must be revised. 'We have to proceed in some other way, otherwise we look like choir boys when compared with the Indonesians. Tillman added that when Indonesia negotiates with any country it places Timor on the negotiation table right from the outset, acting according to the positions held by their counterparts' (DdN).

Evidence pointed to the contrast between the two approaches. Even memos sent by the Foreign Affairs Ministry to embassies around the world, calling for local exercises of one-to-one diplomacy, arrived 'one week before the annual United Nations debate on East Timor' (Exp). Of course, the Indonesian campaign was 'seven years ahead and counts with the support of third world Muslim countries,' (Exp) and played on the 'weapons of oil, the unity of Muslim countries and the anticommunist discourse' (Exp). The Jakarta diplomacy appointed 'one itinerant ambassador in South America and another one in Africa whose sole mission is the Timor issue' (Exp). Indonesia's strategy used its alliances at religious, economic and regional levels. The imbalance between Portuguese and Indonesian strategies
gave Jakarta the advantage, and also defined the first goal of the Portuguese mission:

To make sure the Timor process is not dropped down at the next UN General Assembly and that from there onwards our country may launch an international campaign to achieve the withdrawal of Indonesian occupation and the restart of the decolonisation process in democratic terms (Exp).109

Despite this gloomy scenario for Portuguese diplomacy, the parliamentary mission 'revealed the predisposition of the international community to support the Lisbon positions, as long as Lisbon sends them appropriately - and in a continuous way – to the majority of countries' (Exp).110 However, Tillman noted, Portugal was not using any of its negotiating tools: 'Portugal does not use its place in NATO and Europe, allowing, in a passive way, the United States to vote side by side with Jakarta and tolerating the absence of votes from EEC members. What is even more serious is that our diplomacy does not maintain any continuous campaign of information with the international community, about the genocide currently occurring against East Timor' (Exp).111

Whereas Indonesia used powerful and systematic tools, Portugal did not use effectively its place within military and economy supra-institutions like NATO or the EEC. Public exposure of the poor records in diplomacy sent the different representatives of the state into a knee jerk reaction, and the press reflected on the energised discourse that came out of it. Newspapers, for instance, reflected the new language of Prime Minister Pinto Balsemao, characterised by an aggressive lexicon typical of acts of confrontation: 'Prime-minister] Balsemao in America: the cards of the game' (Exp, 09.10.82); 'Diplomatic offensive in favour of the Timorese' (DdN, 20.10.82); 'Lisbon prepares new campaign for East Timor' (DdN, 10.10.82).

In the previous moment of coverage analysed – the secret Timor Report of 1981 –, the press and the political arena looked in two different directions: the press looked for answers to questions about the future of East Timor, whereas politicians focused on the assessment of past responsibilities and focused on apportioning blame. However, in 1982, the anticipation of a new strategy from Lisbon brought press and political discourse into a parallel course. This sudden governmental energy translated into a special ministerial mission to 40 different countries, ahead of the United Nations December vote:

Former ministers Álvaro Barreto and Vítor Crespo, and nine other ambassadors, are travelling to 40 countries in several continents to explain to those countries Portugal’s position in the East Timor question... The initiative, unprecedented in
recent Portuguese diplomacy, aims to avoid Portugal's position, which received great support at the United Nations, fading away in the aftermath of the campaign that Indonesia has been conducting over the last months in several areas of the world (Exp).\textsuperscript{112}

In anticipation of the annual October session at the United Nations, and weeks before the actual East Timor vote was being held, Portugal's position was made clear:

[Prime Minister] Balsemão will intervene today at the debate of the United Nations General Assembly with a speech which refers to East Timor by stating the human solidarity and the moral duty that our country holds with its former colony (DdN).\textsuperscript{113}

The 'campaign' began to bear some fruit with its Indonesian opponent:

Portugal has carried out endeavours with all countries with whom it maintains diplomatic relations in order to promote the voting of its motion in favour of Timor, which should be debated in November, according to a Ministry of Foreign Affairs source... The Indonesian president has arrived in Washington hours after the New York Times – whose editorial staff the Prime Minister had lunch with during his visit to the United Nations – published an editorial summarising the situation in East Timor and showing favour for Lisbon's positions... Meanwhile, Indonesia has suggested that Portugal sends envoys to its former colony of East Timor to verify the "progress" achieved since the annexation by Jakarta (DdN).\textsuperscript{114}

The government publicised its use of domestic politics and alliances in order to promote collaboration across the political spectrum: '[the Prime Minister has spoken to the leaders of the socialist Party and the communist Party] asking them to cooperate by exercising pressure with the international organisations with whom they have relations in order to concentrate the highest number of support for this diplomatic offensive and for voting the declaration of condemnation [of Indonesia]'\textsuperscript{115}

In October, Portuguese Prime Minister Pinto Balsemão finally spoke at the annual United Nations General Assembly. He stated it was up to the United Nations resolve the contentious issue of East Timor, whilst affirming that Portugal's responsibilities were contained within the realm of morality. Quoting the words of the speech, Diário de Notícias wrote:

It is the obligation of the international community to guarantee the right to self-determination of the people of East Timor, 'subjected to laborious conditions, to the violation of its cultural identity, to moral and physical suffering'... 'Portugal – which for seven years has not been allowed to fulfil its responsibilities of administering power for the domain of Timorese land to which history has connected it, which
today still lasts and is reflected in the acute awareness with which the Portuguese nation follows this issue and waits for a solution coherent with the international ethics and justice. The Portuguese state has repeated it over and over: nothing motivates us other than the pursuit of a national and moral duty (DdN).116

The duties of the state of Portugal to East Timor were understood as duties of the entire nation. This relationship defined East Timor as an issue which was part of the essentialist and perennial definition of Portuguese nationalism. Not resolving East Timor was, in this sense, creating a rupture with the history and honour of its former colonial power. The press played this political discourse in an uncontested way, unlike the previous moment of coverage, when it had been highly critical of the political debate. This time the tone was one of optimism and resolve in breaking the political deadlock at the United Nations. In his interview with Diário de Notícias, the Prime Minister admitted:

... he felt confident the diplomatic offensive now taken by Portugal would allow it to obtain a “favourable vote to our interest and our negotiating power (DdN).117

Expresso represented a few voices of dissent against this official optimism. Costa Alves, the president of NGO CPDM [Committee for the Rights of the Maubere People], and accused the Portuguese state of using more rhetoric than action, and asked whether the latest initiatives were enough to overturn years of political neglect:

The present stage of relative optimism by Portuguese diplomacy does not offer guarantees of a victorious outcome to the classic condemnatory motion, normally presented by a majority of African countries. It is not through the frantic pace of a month’s activity that Portugal will achieve goals which take time to reach, which require months of careful preparation, a lot of backstage work and public information, means and actions within its reach but that, until today, it did not want (for that is the correct word) to use. It will not be a surprise then, when news of the possible presentation of a truce motion appear, which will fundamentally be aimed at preventing the issue to be deleted from the General Assembly of the United Nations and its fourth commission. That is, effectively, the sense of the proposal which – in the event of being presented and voted favourably – will lead [the issue] to setback its starting point, and to the forwarding of the issue to the Hague’s International Court, with the question: ‘Was there an act of self-determination in East Timor?’118

Columnist Costa Alves envisaged the scenario of the motion failing at the UN Assembly, and the setback that that outcome would represent in international law. East Timor would no longer be part of a text which confirmed the illegality of Indonesian invasion, but would instead go back to the initial step of finding out
1982 – Overturning the vote at the United Nations

whether an act of self-determination was carried out (a formulation for which Indonesia had an affirmative answer, through manipulation of documents signed by prisoners on the eve of the 1975 invasion). A couple of sources warned against the public optimism of Portuguese officials, in case the resolution failed:

After the [diplomatic] offensive, and in the event of it not providing the desired effects - we have information that the government is willing to appeal to other international instances in order to obtain a dignified solution for the East Timor issue - as is the case with the appeal to The Hague or even to the Vatican. Nevertheless, according to several diplomats accredited at the United Nations, the issue [the unfavourable vote] is unlikely to be resolved by our country, since we have just started to play in the same field of Indonesia (Exp).119

Another piece shed light on the contradiction between the diplomatic activities of the Portuguese state and the actual expectations:

At a time when, contradictorily, Portuguese diplomacy has been showing some commitment to the issue, it is also facing the risk of, for the first time, not subscribing the East Timor motion presented by a group of countries, headed by former colonies, for considering it too 'backward'... this is due to the perception that United Nations members have over the possible defeat of the traditional motion which accused Indonesia of invading East Timor... (Exp).120

Despite the "diplomatic offensive" and the publicity surrounding the recent political drive to overturn the vote, sources at the UN indicated that this was a strategy with few chances of success.

One interesting instance of the issue of East Timor being turned into a domestic political issue, again a feature of the coverage of 1982 as much as it was in 1981, was the construction of the territory as a vehicle for "national union". Diário de Noticias published an editorial praising the effect East Timor had had on the workings of the state:

The East Timor issue, felt differently by diverse political forces, has gained suddenly, between us, a rare and unexpected consensus and triggered cooperation, which we believe to be unheard of, between the government, the president of the republic and the opposition parties, in order to obtain international support for the resolution... [the energy of the diplomatic offensive] constitutes a reason of satisfaction for Portugal, who cannot alienate - as much limited as its intervention capacity could be - the moral duties of human solidarity and political responsibility it holds with the East Timor population (DdN).121
Referring to the meetings and talks currently being held between Portuguese officials and other politicians, Prime Minister Pinto Balsemao also highlighted the climate of consensus and cooperation:

[the prime-minister has spoken to the leaders of the socialist party and the communist party] asking them to cooperate by exercising pressure with the international organisations with whom they have relations in order to concentrate the highest number of support for this diplomatic offensive and for voting the declaration of condemnation [of Indonesia]... 'It is a good example of cooperation between government, institutions and political parties', said [Prime Minister] Balsemao when commenting on the actions taking place to resolve the East Timor issue (DdN).122

There was a parallel between the discursive relationships established in the coverage of 1981 (with the publication of the secret Timor report) and the present moment of analysis. This relationship defined East Timor within the realm of domestic politics, and defined it as a symbolic function of political union. East Timor was framed as an issue which united the state’s institutions (the presidency, the government and parliament), a construction further accentuated by the volatile and politically divisive climate of Portuguese democracy in those early years of existence. Another example of the framing of East Timor as a symbol of national unity was presented by newspaper Expresso:

Referring to East Timor the Prime Minister declared that the problem because it is national, depends on the collective action of the government and the president of the republic, saying that both institutions of sovereignty are in harmony in the search of a solution for the existing situation in the former Portuguese colony (Exp).123

The idea of East Timor as a symbolic vehicle of national union was developed and expanded in the 1990s as further analysis shows.

### 7.5 International relations and East Timor

Expresso was once again the main voice of analysis on the role of international relations in East Timor. It looked at the increasingly political voice of the East Timorese Catholic Church and the implications of its position both locally and abroad. It acknowledged the unusual and protective status of the Timorese Catholic Church, which was independent from Jakarta and reported directly to the Vatican. The Timorese Church, which was one of the main sources of information about the situation in Timor in the early years, was itself under threat locally.
Indonesia tried to alter Timorese religious independence in direct negotiations with the Vatican:

The aggressive Indonesian diplomacy has, however, been unable to obtain permission from the Vatican to integrate the Dili into the Indonesian Episcopal Conference. The two meetings with the Pope, over this year, have not taken Rome to a change in position; the church of Dili has equally been autonomous from the Episcopal Conference of the invader. The position of the Vatican concerns, apart from respecting international law, the knowledge that the genocide carried on in East Timor by Indonesian troops and the diplomatic use that Indonesia could do with that integration. Besides, the muslimisation of the territory by the invaders is also of concern to authorities in the Vatican (Exp).124

This type of writing was a distinguishing feature of Expresso around the time. Unlike Diário de Notícias, Expresso demonstrated more access to sources and behind-the-scenes diplomacy. Another explanation might have lain with the weekly’s editorial line, by far more independent than Diário de Notícias’s, and thus more critical and politised in its writing. The Catholic Church, the main source of information at the time, became the voice of dissent, principally against humanitarian crimes:

After the public statements made by the bishop of Dili, Monsignor Costa Lopes, in defence of Fretilin members and denouncing the actions of the invaders, some recent letters from East Timor indicate that ‘Muslims use all means available to suppress the Catholic religion (...) promising money to those who convert to Islam (...) in other cases distributing food and clothing’. In this situation, and because many Timorese have been looking for shelter in the church and reporting to the bishop the massacres they have witnessed, it begins to be feared, in the interior of the country, that the 'Indonesian military intend to eliminate, discretely, the bishop and the priests (...) and they are setting up an organised campaign to slander the church and clergy (Exp).125

Other stories reported the international pressure falling upon Indonesia, especially due to the food crisis triggered by the military activity in the Timorese countryside. One UN report condemned Indonesia's policy in East Timor:

The UN document verifies the "regrettable" food situation, and that famine has reappeared. At the same time, the report describes the cultural asphyxiation of the Timorese people, who are forced to study only in Indonesian and have been banned from learning 'Tetum', their national language, or Portuguese (DdN).126

There was more information on the pressure exercised by members of the US senate on the White House, days ahead of Suharto's visit to the United States:
The senators ... asked the Reagan administration to put pressure on the Indonesian government in order that humanitarian and food aid be resumed, since it was suspended in 1981 (DdN).127

With the exception of Expresso's story about the role of the Vatican in East Timor, there was a shortage of stories on international policy for East Timor.

The international dimension of the East Timor story was open to Portuguese journalists, unlike the territory itself, from which they were banned. Yet, this theme is under-explored, thus suggesting the low hierarchy of East Timor on the agenda.

7.6 Conclusion

The year 1982 saw some stories on conditions of life in East Timor. They referred to Indonesia's methods of political violence, the local economy and culture, the situation of prisoners, public health, famine and the situation of the guerrilla fighters. This is not to say that there was major progress on the level of coverage in relation to the previous moment of 1981, but it did mean that there was an improvement on news stories, compared to the complete silence of previous years. The information was provided by sources from the Timorese diaspora, Catholic organisations and international press stories. The minimal coverage of East Timor was once more defined by the conditions of production: no access to the island for Portuguese journalists and thus an inability to source and cross-check information. The parliamentarian fact-finding mission allowed the Timorese community to participate in the political process. However, this was still limited: Fretlin's feedback on Portuguese interventions at the United Nations remained the sole organised voice representing East Timor.

The conditions of the East Timor debate at the United Nations raised alarm bells for its political survival. The parliamentary committee worked to save the debate at the eleventh hour, and severely criticised Portuguese diplomacy. The committee represented the middle-ground of Portuguese politics, a group which had never been so publicly outspoken for East Timor. The criticism took East Timor away from its left-wing constituencies and opened up the issue to the centre of the political spectrum. The positions of the committee were to a certain extent bound by its members' direct relationship with the territory: deputy Manuel Tillman was born on the island, and Ângelo Correia had lived in Timor. They spoke of 'neglect' by the Portuguese state and the 'dark and difficult situation' at the UN; and claimed that lobbying was confined to writing memos to other states and that Portuguese diplomats acted like 'choir boys'. In contrast,
Indonesia pursued a continuous campaign to secure allies for the annexation of East Timor, investing in special envoys, missions, delegations, itinerant ambassadors, exploiting economic and religious partnerships with other countries, and using Cold War alliances against Fretilin.

The 1982 moment was framed as a game of diplomatic power and strategy; largely perceived as a competitive and unbalanced scenario where Portugal's inertia and weak foreign affairs agenda contrasted with Indonesia's sustained and strategic diplomacy. The government reacted to this state of affairs by organising a series of diplomatic negotiations in order to secure votes at the UN. The press reflected on these last-minute efforts and talked of an 'unprecedented diplomatic offensive', 'a new campaign', saying that Portugal was finally bringing 'its cards to the game'. The anticipation of a new strategy by Lisbon actually bound the press and the political discourse together into a parallel movement. Whereas in 1981 the press had had a different agenda to that of politicians — the press had looked for answers to the future of East Timor and the politicians had focused on apportioning blame over decolonisation. What happened in 1982 was that the press and political agendas came closer together in their framing of East Timor.

Few voices contested the optimism felt during the 'diplomatic offensive'. One NGO leader accused the government of using rhetoric rather than action, and argued that East Timor could fall off the UN agenda. The Prime Minister's optimistic discourse made obvious the gap between the expectations hailed by the 'diplomatic offensive' and the real chances of the UN motion against Indonesia. United Nations sources in New York told Expresso how unlikely it was for East Timor to be voted favourably, even with last-minute lobbying.

East Timor was turned again into a domestic political issue, in similar ways to those observed in 1981. East Timor came to signify the political unity of state institutions (the president, the government and the assembly of the republic), at a time when political life in Portugal was still wrapped up in the deeply divisive conflicts of 1974—5. East Timor was framed as a bastion of national unity. The issue was invoked either to defend a precarious situation of unity — such as when political parties were bickering over decolonisation in 1981 — or to be paraded as a symbol of state institutions working together in 1982.

UN resolution 37/30 was voted for in the end, but by a narrow margin of only four votes. The motion was no longer submitted for discussion in the subsequent years in case it would be defeated. Instead, the 1982 resolution put the United Nations Secretary-General in charge of a consultation process between Portugal and Indonesia. This consultation process (which would last until 1999) included a
1982 – Overturning the vote at the United Nations

clause that excluded other parties from participation, namely East Timorese representatives such as Fretilin. This clause of exclusion – which banned East Timorese voices from the political process – was closely negotiated, and the 1982 motion would not have been passed without it. The consultation process aimed at 'a comprehensive settlement of the problem' (UN Resolution 37/30, September 23, 1982).

Despite the consultation process, discussions between Indonesia and Portugal did not include questions of sovereignty and never went beyond humanitarian issues during the 1980s. Portugal 'made little serious effort and, of course, at all stages Indonesia blocked all progress' (Taylor, 1999, p. 178). Portugal continued to act from a position of diplomatic weakness; that contrasts sharply with the state’s rhetoric of offensive in 1982 that I observe. Thus, East Timor's role as an element of domestic politics was beginning to emerge in the 1980s.

ENDNOTES

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100 *Diário de Notícias*, Timorenses aguardam passagem para Lisboa, October 4, 1982, p. 3.
101 *Diário de Notícias*, As Responsabilidades da ONU no direito à autodeterminação, October 2, 1982, p. 2.
102 *Diário de Notícias*, Apoio aos Timorenses debatido no Parlamento, September 14, 1982, p. 3.
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104 *Diário de Notícias*, Dificuldades em defender na ONU a tese portuguesa sobre Timor, September 17, 1982, p. 3.
107 *Expresso*, Pinto Balsemão na ONU modifica posição sobre Timor Leste?, September 25, 1982, p. 3.
108 *Expresso*, Deputados portugueses na Austrália e em Nova Iorque, September 18, 1982, p. 6
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113 *Diário de Notícias*, Lisboa prepara nova campanha a favor da questão de Timor, October 10, 1982, p. 3.
1982 – Overturning the vote at the United Nations

114 Diário de Notícias, Lisboa pede apoio à moção de Timor, October 12, 1982, p. 4.

115 Diário de Notícias, Situação de Timor dominará discurso de Balsemão na ONU, September 30, 1982, p.3.

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117 Diário de Notícias, Reforçar na ONU a posição de Timor, September 29, 1982, p. 3.

118 Expresso, Balsemão na América: as cartas do jogo, October 09, 1982.

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Chapter 8 - 1991 – The Santa Cruz Massacre

8.1 Description of the event

On November 12, 1991, Indonesian troops opened fire on unarmed civilians in Dili the capital of East Timor, killing 200 people. They were shot as they marched peacefully to the grave of Sebastião Gomes, a young man killed by the military at a church two weeks earlier. The attack was filmed by Max Sthal, from Yorkshire Television (a UK regional television company), and broadcast across the world one week later. The event became known as the Santa Cruz Massacre.

The Portuguese parliament had been negotiating a visit to East Timor since 1988. The date had been set for November 4, 1991, but the delegation cancelled the trip days before the massacre took place, on the grounds that Indonesia was refusing to grant a visa to one of the journalists in the press poll. The analysis of this moment includes stories written in late October regarding the cancellation of the visit, for it is crucial to approach Portuguese reactions to the massacre in light of the diplomacy that was being carried out just days before the killings.

The coverage of this critical moment of discourse takes place between November 2 and November 30.

8.2 Media and political context

The massacre of Santa Cruz was set against a very different political backdrop to that observed in the 1980s. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the configuration of relations that impacted on East Timor changed: Indonesia opened up the territory to foreign visitors; the Portuguese state had opened up the policy debate to the public sphere; and the Timorese resistance went through transformations in its policies and organisation so as to enter a wider variety of international forums. The media in Portugal changed too, shaking off the old state dependency and opening up to private initiative.

The mushrooming of new media operations, and the increasing competitiveness that came with it, encouraged a new style of journalism, no longer marked by the statement-led news pieces so typical of the 1970s and 1980s. In 1988 came new licenses for radio. TSF, a 24-hour news radio became one of the organisations to place Timor high on the agenda, with a dedicated reporter. In 1992 and 1993 broadcasting licences were given to two new private television channels, bringing a different dynamic to a television news panorama which was until then
dominated by the state-owned and highly politicised RTP. New daily and weekly newspapers came to the market, some with the clear intention of providing investigative journalism, such as weekly O Independente. Diário de Noticias was privatised in 1991.

In the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s, the Timorese resistance's communication networks and technology also improved. They gained access to satellite telephones, thus overcoming Indonesian surveillance of regular communications; they learned how to construct messages in a media friendly format and language, increasing their chances of entering the international public agenda. Politically, the resistance moved away from Marxist policies, thus increasing its appeal. Indonesia opened up the territory to foreign visitors (with the exception of Portuguese citizens).

In Portugal, diplomacy was gaining new avenues of influence. Entering the EEC gave Portugal the opportunity to use its power of veto where negotiations between Europe and Indonesia were concerned. Even if without progress, the dialogue between the two states was limited to annual meetings with the secretary general of the United Nations, which culminated in negotiations for a parliamentary visit to East Timor.

8.3 Portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese

The cancellation of the Portuguese delegation encouraged Timorese leaders to actively voice their concerns regarding Portuguese policy towards the former colony. In an Expresso headline, Fretilin leader Xanana Gusmão becomes the protagonist of the story, a status that during the 1980s had usually been reserved for Portuguese or foreign officials, but not for members of the resistance. In the headline, Xanana demanded answers from Lisbon:

East Timor visit was postponed or cancelled? Xanana Gusmão wants to know what is Portugal's position (Exp).128

In Diário de Noticias, under the title 'Timor visit suspended, Xanana let down', the newspaper wrote:

The leader of the Timorese resistance is disappointed and confused about the reasons that lead Portugal to suspend the planned visit of a parliamentary mission to East Timor... Xanana will soon send a letter to the President of the Republic, through which he will ask some clarification for details of Portuguese policy for East Timor (DdN).129

The Timorese party UDT made their view clear too:
1991 – The Santa Cruz Massacre

UDT argues against cancelling the visit, underlying that the news was received in Timor with 'a lot of sorrow and, to a certain extent, with anger (DdN).​130

Timorese party Fretilin, whose views were invited just whenever East Timor jumped onto the agenda, saw its press conference in New York covered:

Fretilin insists in convening the UN Security Council. Fretilin's representative in New York, José Guterres, appealed for the international community to press the United Nations secretary general, Perez de Cuellar, in order to take the East Timor issue to the Security Council (DdN).​131

Following the massacre of Santa Cruz the Timorese groups became a challenging voice within the news-media. The Timorese enter the web of facticity by becoming sources in their own right, legitimate representatives of the people of East Timor. For the first time, the Timorese become news-makers in their own right.

Unlike the moments of the 1980s analysed before, where the very few descriptions of life in the country came via letters smuggled via Catholic organisations and NGOs, the events of 1991 clearly show a higher degree of remote access to sources in the territory. The following account is a result of those changes in access and the development of communication networks through the resistance:

...Intel (the political police force) has placed undercover groups around the bishop's house, in order to pressure the bishop to walk outside and attract youngsters in his defence. Any attempts to contact D. Ximenes Belo (bishop), the Ecclesiastic Chamber or the priest Motael church, Alberto Ricardo, have been unsuccessful. When we try to make telephone calls, Intel shows its muscle: a pre-recorded message says the number is not in operation...

Meanwhile, detentions are being made every day. People are taken during the night to unknown places, questioned and tortured, and in the morning they are released. Thus, after six p.m. 'nobody can walk on the streets'. The situation is 'causing panic amongst the population, because there is no way of knowing who is going to be arrested', the same source says, adding that he found this week that the eighteen people arrested at Motael's church at dawn on October 25 are being 'cut with razors on the face and back' so as to trigger confessions about the names of guerrilla collaborators, 'particularly the names of priests'. We recall that, at the moment, Indonesian authorities are carrying out investigations in order to determine the connections between the Catholic hierarchy and Xanana Gusmão, whilst more than two dozen people are still hiding in the Motael temple (Exp).​132
The piece conveys the tension between the authorities and the Catholic Church: Indonesia was openly targeting the political role of the church, trying to undermine the protection it regularly offers to resistance members. This sort of account on acts of repression was not unusual.

These new communications structure of the 1990s allowed a gain in immediacy. East Timor had by then begun a policy of limited access to visitors, and the resistance itself was becoming increasingly organised. As the previous news piece testifies this translated into the possibility of establishing telephone contacts with the island, knowledge of the workings of the political police, and frequent updates and detailed descriptions of events taking place. Another example of the improved networks of communications and the wider acceptance of the resistance as a valid voice by the Portuguese press was a two-page spread in Diário de Noticias, which included the contents of a letter sent to Lisbon-based NGO CDPM by the commander of the armed resistance Xanana Gusmão. Written before the visit was cancelled, the letter outlines the political developments expected by the Timorese with this visit:

The crucial moment of our history of struggle is approaching. A difficult struggle, a struggle of 16 years of tenacious resistance by our people. The hour of freedom is getting closer, the hour of the truth, what we most wait for is approaching... The visit is a decisive opportunity... This is where our demands lie, with the visit of the DPP (Portuguese Parliamentary Visit). We wish to be considered as an interested party in the conflict and we are open to dialogue, with no pre-conditions, within the frame of the United Nations (DdN).133

Xanana’s words portrayed a vision of the Portuguese parliamentary visit as the beginning of a process in which the Timorese would finally become involved in discussions about the future of the territory. This dialogue had been maintained by Portugal and Indonesia, but it was closed to the resistance. Moreover, there was a clear feeling that this visit could be a turning point in the status of East Timor. But mostly, this piece gave the Fretilin leader the opportunity to present his views in a Portuguese media outlet. It was a full transcription of the political assessment he made of the situation, and his vision for the future. It was, in a way, a new image of the Timorese resistance, revealed now as a political force, with political goals. This was a marked departure from the military and human rights exposés of previous years. In his letter, Xanana concentrated on the political overview of the subject: the economic weight of Indonesia before other countries; the changes in the political world order, post-Berlin; the parallels between the invasion of Kuwait and East Timor; and the unequal reaction by
international forces; his wish for a democratic vote on the future of the nation; and the political goal for this visit – to play an official role in the UN talks. The guerrilla leader Xanana became a political agent as well as simply a face, since the story included photos of him writing the document.

The resistance was using its power to challenge the media constructions. As these new meanings were being construed by the Timorese resistance, other Timorese personalities emerged in the text, challenging what was once a rather monolithic view of the Timorese, taken as they were as a group without political nuances. One of them was Timorese Mário Carrascalão, the Indonesian-appointed local governor and Timorese who often tried to soften down the violence in the territory by using his position within the Indonesian hierarchy. Governor Carrascalão’s critical voice came from the heart of the Indonesian hierarchy: ‘Carrascalão admits peace in Timor "is rotten”’,134 was the headline in Diário de Noticias. In another title – 'Carrascalão threatens to quit' – those political traits become clear:

The Indonesian governor of East Timor, Mário Carrascalão, threatened to quit his position last night in case Jakarta’s authorities do not take ‘drastic measures’ against the authors in the Dili massacre... Carrascalão admitted that the massacre in the Santa Cruz cemetery brings him ‘a big problem’ in his relationship with the population of the territory as well as with Jakarta’s authorities. ‘I am absolutely distraught... for me all this is very difficult...’ said Carrascalão, in a tone of voice which displayed anxiety and worry in relationship to what is going to happen over the next days (DdN).135

Bishop D. Ximenes Belo is another figure whose challenging status came through the coverage. He became a political actor in the struggle, whether he was protecting potential victims in the Motael church or demanding access to victims in the post-massacre days. Belo’s activities stretched from assessing the number of victims in the territory, to lobbying at the official inquiry into the massacre. Realising the violent implications that the occasion might bring to the population, the bishop revealed his concern for the visit:

In an interview with the radio, the bishop said it would be better for the visit not to go ahead in case Portugal had not previously prepared 'an international force' to prevent deaths (DdN).136

The harassment of the population hiding in the church over those few days culminated with the killing of student Sebastião Gomes by Indonesian soldiers. Some 3,000 to 5,000 Timorese marched to the Santa Cruz cemetery in peaceful
1991 – The Santa Cruz Massacre

protest, whereupon they were met by an unprovoked armed response by hundreds of Indonesian soldiers.\(^{137}\)

The first accounts of the massacre, published a week before the film reached television studios across the world, were provided by foreign journalists who were in East Timor at the time, waiting for the Portuguese visit. Those descriptions focused on the ‘brutality’ of Indonesian authorities and the experiences of the witnesses. Here, \textit{Diário de Notícias} wrote about American journalists Allan Nairn and Amy Goodman’s experience:

\begin{quote}
Massacre of Dili was deliberate

Two American reporters saw death close by in Timor. What saved them was to scream repeatedly they were American and journalists, but not even then did they escape being hit by Indonesian soldiers and the confiscation of all their photographic equipment. They have no doubts about who was responsible (DdN).\(^{138}\)
\end{quote}

Allan Nairn wrote in his own news story:

\begin{quote}
It was, clearly, a mass murder, deliberate and planned. An execution of unarmed and defenceless civilians. The soldiers did not hesitate once when walking towards the crowd. They did not give any warning nor did they fire a single shot in the air. There were no provocative acts from the Timorese, not even a single throwing of stones (Exp).\(^{139}\)
\end{quote}

Details surfaced when the press finally got hold of information on the situation on the ground from the resistance and Catholic sources. Those sources spoke of ‘burial sites’, of the fate of the disappeared, of the increased surveillance in the territory, as the following examples illustrate:

\begin{quote}
Death tool in Dili’s massacre may be higher than 200 (DdN).\(^{140}\)

The Jakarta regime isolated East Timor. The telephone lines of D. Ximenes Belo, the International Red Cross, the seminar and the governor’s palace cannot be reached (Exp).\(^{141}\)

Some 70 men, women and children were, in the first hours of yesterday morning, executed by an Indonesian platoon armed with M16 automatic weapons, said a resistance source in Dili yesterday (DdN).\(^{142}\)

Military vehicles are continuously leaving Dili, heading to Taci-tolo, where corpses are buried (Exp).\(^{143}\)
\end{quote}

In the aftermath of the massacre, the violence continued, and so did the persecution of the Catholic Church:
A vigorous blackout is in place, and starts daily at 6 p.m. 'Those who disrespect it will be killed by beating, as was the case with two young men, whose bodies were found in Dili', said Fretilin's militant Ramos-Horta. Now, soldiers are confiscating the religious images and rosary in 'true confrontation with the population's Catholic faith', he adds (Exp).¹⁴⁴

Although never clearly addressed as such, several pieces shed light on the disenfranchisement of Timorese youth, its dissociation from the Indonesian regime they grew up in and their role within the resistance. This is the description provided by Diário de Noticias about a young man who got hold of a tape on which the Indonesian Minister of Defense instructs officers in Timor to 'crush everyone who tries to build an autonomous state and the growth of the independence movement':

Two weeks later, at a Dili hotel a Timorese young man handed a tape with the contents of the meeting to an Australian journalist. The tape was handed over by a young man who knew all too well the price to pay for defying Jakarta and not stop dreaming of an independent and autonomous Timor. That child had already paid his price for the war, when Indonesian soldiers shot and killed his brother and uncle during the bloody battles which followed the invasion of 1975. He is now one of the new Timorese, part of a generation deciding not to give up (DdN).¹⁴⁵

This type of account reflects the growth of one of the essential arms of the resistance in the 1990s – the underground movement, the urban and youth branch of Timorese liberation. This group was essential in taking the East Timorese war to Jakarta, in organising protests and in seeking status for political refugees abroad. Many of them travelled the world campaigning for independence.

8.4 The relationship between Portugal and East Timor

The particular relevance of the Santa Cruz massacre for understanding the way the relationship between Portugal and East Timor was conceptualised lies with the manner in which television footage changed the reaction of Portuguese officials to news of the massacre. In the week that followed the massacre no images were available. The evidence on which press coverage of the massacre was based during this first week came solely from testimonies by American journalists Allan Nairn and Amy Goodman, witnesses of the attack, as well as from resistance sources both in Timor and abroad.
1991 – The Santa Cruz Massacre

Based on those testimonies, politicians expressed their concern, but not with the sense of urgency and horror that would emerge one week later, when images became available. At this point in time there is still a moderation in tone. For instance, *Diário de Noticias* writes about the Prime Minister's reaction: '[Prime Minister] Worried Cavaco follows the situation. The Prime Minister "follows with concern" the situation which, "if the news from Timor are confirmed", is being lived in that territory' (DdN).146

When footage was finally released, it showed a group of unarmed civilians under the fire of Indonesian military, people running for their lives, others holding the wounded and dead, the sound of screams, whilst in the background ran the sound of prayers said in Portuguese by a group of women. It was at this very moment that Portuguese officials turned to the media, in televised speeches and interviews, publicly demonstrating the gravity of the massacre.

The use of Portuguese language at a moment of particular horror triggered President Soares to declare a day of national mourning in Portugal. The footage added no factual information to the massacre, the details of which had been already known for a week. However, the sound of Portuguese religious hymns playing in the background brought back some sense of colonial guilt. Portuguese flags were flown at half-mast; schools told respect a day of national mourning. The story was told in *Diário de Noticias*:

Women praying in Portuguese upset the President – Soares is writing to John Paul II about the Indonesian massacre in Dili

Mário Soares, who expressed the solidarity of the Portuguese people with the people of East Timor, revealed he felt 'profoundly emotional and increasingly indignant' at the images of the Santa Cruz massacre broadcast by *RTP* [Portuguese Radio Television]. 'When I saw those images of Timorese women praying in Portuguese, throughout the massacre that took place in the cemetery, I asked the Portuguese government to declare a day of national mourning...', he said (DdN).147

There was a great deal of criticism directed at the Portuguese authorities for waiting a week before commenting. A survey taken around that period shows that 68% of the population believed the Parliament, Government and the President had not reacted 'swiftly enough'148. 'Praying in Portuguese', an editorial in *Expresso* reflected this idea:

It is not well understood the amount of time that has been taken between the slaughter at Dili's cemetery and the reaction from Lisbon's authorities. In reality,
only after the first images were broadcast around the world, did the Portuguese state react – as if it did not have its own information channels and as if it only noticed what was going on through the television. Let’s face it: it was a bit ridiculous (Exp).\textsuperscript{149}

Another example of the change in the sense of urgency prompted by the language, in which those prayers were said, is visible in the following excerpt:

PS’s [Socialist Party] secretary-general said yesterday, after a meeting with the prime-minister in which they debated the problem of Timor, that ‘one of the most terrible feelings’ of his life was ‘to see people under machine-gun fire praying the Hail-Mary in Portuguese’ (DdN).\textsuperscript{150}

The images struck a chord with the construction of the ‘universalist’ role of Portugal; the idea of a worldly identity that was united under the Portuguese language. The pace of official reactions reflected the political symbolism of the moment. The way in which those official reactions tied in with the construction of commonality between the two identitarian spaces Portugal and East Timor – language being the nationalist tool here – was a valid representation of the tensions embedded in the relationship between the two nations.

To illustrate how this relationship was instrumentalised, a piece published by Expresso a month earlier made a good point. It is a background story about the living conditions of East Timor, and references to the usage of Portuguese language built a picture of a resource under extinction, unlike the post-massacre representations:

To find someone from the 1960s generation who speaks Portuguese is virtually impossible. Even the eldest struggle to maintain a conversation in Portuguese, a consequence from the lack of practice. And whilst Tetum is learnt at home, with the family, Portuguese is only taught at the Externato de S. José in Dili, a school managed by the church, and which Jakarta does not recognise, in order to discourage parents to send their children there (Exp).\textsuperscript{151}

Whereas in some instances Portuguese was a rarity, such as in the above description, in others it became an essential trigger for political action, as when national mourning was declared after the massacre. Such is the contradiction between the mediated portrayal of reality on the ground and the political interpretations of national bonds between the two nations.

In another Diário de Notícias piece, an interview with a Timorese writer exiled in Australia revealed the true function played by the Portuguese language in East Timor:
The people of Timor have the Portuguese language as a password for its freedom struggle, said Maria Alice Casimiro, a Timorese writer exiled in Australia... The Portuguese language, marking four centuries of history and culture, 'is vital for the struggle of the Timorese, it is in Portuguese that the Australian exiled in Australia contact with Timor daily, through networks organised by the community'. It is also in Portuguese that the guerrilla fighters in Timor send their messages, instead of using Tetum, a dialect which would be easily decoded by Indonesians (DdN).

According to this piece, the Portuguese language was a tool for the resistance; it worked as a communication code through which the resistance's network could develop while under Indonesian surveillance.

**Before the massacre struck – criticism to Portuguese positions**

Before images of the massacre overtook the news agenda, important debates were taking place. Those related to the cancellation of the visit by Portuguese parliamentarian deputies and occurred before the Indonesian army's attack on mourners at the Santa Cruz cemetery. There were two sides to this debate – the accounts by foreign journalists expressing the confusion and disappointment about Portuguese policy; and the editorials by the Portuguese press which tried to flesh out reasons for the failure of this visit, whilst condemning other foreign powers and organisations for not hardening their stance towards Indonesia. The divide seemed to outline a tension between the views of the domestic press on foreign responsibilities, against the not so often addressed Portuguese responsibilities, in turn being pointed out by foreign journalists.

According to the Portuguese Parliament, the visit was cancelled because the Indonesian veto of one journalist in the press pool risked the integrity of the mission and questioned the principle of an independent assessment of the living conditions of the Timorese. Other sources had different views on the reasons behind that decision. They pointed out the passivity and irresponsibility of Portuguese diplomacy in conducting of the affair. A piece by Allan Nairn, an American journalist at the scene of the massacre, was an example of a voice denouncing Portuguese negligence. It contrasted with the prevalent criticism of other national state’s administrations addressed within the Portuguese press. These are some extracts of Nairn's account of the affair a few days after the massacre:

In Washington, Portuguese diplomats do not carry out any sort of lobbying and, in contacts with the American press, they leave the impression that international
response to the massacre does not exist and that only Portugal cares for the issue (Exp). 153

Nairn then revealed that senior Portuguese officials had said to him in October that Portugal had accepted 'a gentleman's agreement' under which Indonesia had the right to veto the foreign press list proposed by the Portuguese. He concluded: 'If this is true, Portugal's protests are insincere, to say the least' (Exp). 154

Expresso's US correspondent Tony Jenkins also wrote about foreign criticism of the Portuguese state after the massacre, with sources in the US Congress and at the United Nations asking why Portugal had:

... not raised the issue with the UN Security Council. A member of Congress criticises Portugal for not being on the case in Washington, its ambassador is away in Lisbon, losing the opportunity to press for change while the heat of the events is still felt (Exp). 155

As for the Timorese themselves, the deception became evident in several pieces, for the visit had been seen in East Timor as a sign of changing times ahead. Aware of the risks they were taking in allowing this flirtation with the former occupier, the Indonesian army and political police had intensified persecution of the population in order to prevent contacts between the Timorese and Portuguese parliamentarians: 'According to the local clergy, Timor has been living in a state of terror since the visit was officially announced... Indonesian soldiers who I spoke to confirmed the testimonies of the Timorese, including the instructions they received to mark down the identity of all people who spoke to Portuguese deputies' (Exp). 156 For instance, one Dutch reporter wrote about the terror felt in Timor, and the disappointment caused by Portugal, after the risks taken by locals in preparation for the visit:

The atmosphere of terror and disappointment felt by the Timorese in the aftermath of the cancellation of the Portuguese visit marked the dramatic account of the massacre of Dili, yesterday presented by a Dutch reporter recently arrived from the territory. Saskia Kouwemberg did not hide her emotions in telling her colleagues about the shots, the persecution, the brutality and the feeling of abandonment noticed among those who risked talking to foreigners, questioning themselves of the role of Portugal in the future of the territory (DdN). 157

Allan Nairn, again, wrote about the deception felt amongst the population:

Shortly before the massacre, I spent time talking to a Timorese that had spent weeks planning, together with his friends, ways of accessing the delegation. At the time of our conversation, it was already known that the visit by Portuguese deputies
- scheduled for November 4 – had been endlessly postponed. When I asked him how he felt, the reply was "There were lots of us crying". He felt sad and infuriated by Indonesia's attitude. But he did not hide either his bitterness for the Portuguese position. To him, as to many other Timorese, Portugal had found a surreptitious way of selling East Timor...When the crowds got together outside the Motael church, during the morning of November 12, some people exhibited slogans criticising Portugal for abandoning Timor to its own fate (Exp).158

Clearly, the Timorese were risking a large number of lives by organising clandestine contacts with the Portuguese mission, and the risks they were taking had fallen flat with the cancellation of the visit. Other organisations expressed their disappointment with the way the visit was conducted. CPDM warned that Portugal had not taken care of its relations with the Timorese resistance; Timorese party UDT claimed that the cancellation of the visit was met with a certain degree of rage.

Those were the positions of foreign voices and Timorese organisations regarding the cancellation. I want to turn now to another dimension – the reactions presented by Portuguese officials and the ways in which the press interpreted the cancellation of the parliamentarian visit. According to sources close to the President and the head of the parliamentarian mission, the reasons for not travelling to Dili were 'the intransigence of Indonesia and the absence of a clear strategy by the Portuguese parliamentary delegation'(Exp).159 The same sources pointed outcome that both men saw no positive outcome of such a visit other than serving Indonesia's propaganda machine. In some ways this was a blunt statement of the lack of vision from Portuguese authorities in carrying on negotiations for a visit they had never believed in.

At the time, the cancellation was received with criticism but also understanding by the press. Expresso's editorial writes that 'the Portuguese authorities were already determined not to send parliamentarians to Timor and were only waiting for an alibi to announce that' (Exp).160 But it later acknowledged that such a solution was the only one possible: 'Cancelling the trip came as a correct decision. It surprised only by the timing in which it was decided. The truth is, all impending factors were known for a long time. They were known when the visit was decided'.

The understanding of the decision was not only legitimised by Diário de Notícias, but constructed in a new way which places what could have been a defeat – the cancellation of the visit – to a certain diplomatic victory, confirmed by the support of some international institutions:
After obtaining an agreement between Portugal and Indonesia on the visit of Portuguese deputies to East Timor, that is, after having, in some way, gained a battle which was to be able to witness visually the Timorese drama, we were on the verge of losing, following the suspension of the trip to Timorese territory, for reasons we all know, part of what we have achieved with international bodies in favour of Portuguese positions.

The first reaction comes from the Committee to Protect Journalists, with headquarters in New York, which sent a message of protest to the head of the Indonesian state in which it exhorts its government not to discriminate against journalists due to the topics of their stories. It should be added that the message is subscribed to by the editors of the world's biggest newspapers, such as the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times and The New York Observer. This is to say that we have some of the biggest names in international journalism understanding the Portuguese positions (DdN).161

The editorial listed other messages of protest – from Amnesty International to the Parliamentarians for East Timor. The underlying discourse was that, because international voices were speaking for Timor, then not all was lost, and what seemed like a political failure from Lisbon, had now become evidence of Indonesia's dictatorship and its miscalculation in 'evaluating the international impact of vetoing one journalist' (DdN).162 The discourse attempts to rewrite the failure by levelling Portuguese positions with a number of NGOs, and attempts to argue against the loss of political credibility from Portugal.

Another instance of this type of discourse – the re-writing of the visit's suspension – is brought about in an interview with a Timorese writer living in Australia. During the interview, reporter Antonio Sampaio seemed to be asking writer Maria Casimiro for 'forgiveness' after the cancellation:

Timor is a distressing process. Is it possible, with time, to understand the situation and to say there is no resentment between the people of Timor and Portugal? (DdN)163

The underlying questioning tone indicated the points to the assessment of the feelings of the Timorese towards Portugal despite the negative impact of recent events, in an effort to preserve the 'universalist' discourse that linked the two nations.

Expresso later argued that Timor was nothing but a romantic venture: 'Portugal does not have any material or objective interest in continuing to fight for the quixotic cause of the people of East Timor' (Exp)164 –, wrote Joaquim Vieira in an
editorial. The plight of Portugal for the freedom of Timor was seen as a romantic enterprise, a quixotic affair, which, like D. Quixote's, is detached from reality, embedded in fantasy and illusion, and doomed to fail. It continued:

Just a very strong sentimental relationship – perhaps stimulated by the affection of the Timorese for the remote headquarters of the old empire and for their admirable example of resistance – can explain the stubbornness with which the Portuguese authorities insist on carrying this heavy burden.

And it was as well an affair of emotions more than diplomacy: 'the very strong sentimental relationship' described in the text constrained political institutions in Lisbon to act upon emotion and not reason:

'With emotion in triumph, Portugal now nurtures the defence of the basic rights of the territory in the same way it protects a pet plant that wears away but refuses to die. It was emotion which determined the decision for a Parliament delegation to go to Timor, a trip that, to be carried on the terms announced, was perhaps not advisable by the most elementary political logic'.

Once again, the argument that the decisions in Lisbon were taken at a level driven by the uncertain, apolitical and spontaneous realm of emotions, at odds with the strategic thinking that characterises diplomacy, was the main point made here. The editorial constructed the Timorese as driven by 'affection for the remote headquarters of the old empire', a portrayal which derives from the realm of the private, rather than from the collective political action of one group. The Portuguese, on the other hand, showed their stubbornness in protecting the fragile Timorese – a 'pet plant' which 'refuses to die'.

Another interesting aspect is the initial reaction of the government when news of the massacre first broke. Similar to what happened previously in moment three, the United Nations vote for East Timor, there was some sense of diplomatic action, and a great deal of attention was being paid to the announcement of Portuguese positions concerning the events in Dili, particularly in Diário de Notícias, as the following extract shows:

The entire diplomatic corps listened to Lisbon's appeal

The fact that the entire diplomatic corps was meeting in S. Bento [the Prime-Minister's official residence] to attend the welcoming session to Cape Verde's President facilitated the impact of an action triggered by Lisbon in reaction to the Timor massacre: representatives from all countries with which Portugal maintains diplomatic relations were there and then summoned to a meeting with the Foreign Affairs Minister deputy sub-secretary... (DdN)165
The language of this piece attempts to imprint some sense of diplomatic special
mission to this somewhat snormal reading of a note on the position of the foreign
affairs ministry ('an action triggered by Lisbon' or the summoning 'there and
then'), read by a not very high-ranking officer (the Foreign Affairs Ministry deputy
sub-secretary).

This type of urgency was used in several instances. For example, under the
headline 'Trade between Portugal and Indonesia suspended', Diário de Notícias
wrote:

The presidents of Agriculture, Trade and Industry Confederations responded
positively to the government's request for those bodies to advise their members to
suspended, on a voluntary basis, the trade relations with Indonesia, due to the
events in East Timor (DdN).\footnote{166}

What was just a request for the suspension of trade relations on a voluntary basis
was transformed by the title, in a misleading way, as de facto policy which
Portugal could not decide unilaterally. As a member of the European Union, trade
embargoes depend on the agreement of all member states, a policy therefore out
of Portuguese jurisdiction. Despite that, the press carried on referring to the trade
embargo as if it were a short-term prospect. Another example of this type of
discourse was published in Expresso:

Meanwhile, the Portuguese government is preparing to cancel trade relations with
Indonesia. In a meeting with economic agents, the Trade Minister, Faria de Oliveira,
analysed the terms in which a trade embargo should be adopted (Exp).\footnote{167}

Another dimension of this shifting relationship between Portugal and East Timor
was the emergence of fundraising activities and symbolic acts of collective
mourning in memory of those who died in Santa Cruz. Every event seemed to be
publicised by the press, regardless of its scale (even donations by small local
shops became news). The transformation of collective fundraising into a news
item was a trend which increased throughout the 1990s, and was particularly
apparent again in the donations that came in the post-referendum period of
1999. The news media actually engaged in drawing up lists of small fundraising
operations, in what became more of an accountancy exercise than news analysis.
This exercise occurred within the same symbolic space where collective mourning
was carried out. The mourning of East Timor entered the national space and
defines it from within, with the help of the iconic symbols of banal nationalism. An
example of this was the decision to erect East Timorese flags in every Portuguese
constituency as a reminder of Indonesian invasion. On December 7, 1991, and
just a few weeks after the massacre, Portugal's 305 municipalities raised the East
Timorese flag as if the two territories were united, as if Portugal had become East Timorese soil.

**8.5 International relations and East Timor**

When news of the massacre broke out, *Diário de Noticias* covered the reactions of foreign states and other international organisations: 'Massacre of Timorese leaves Indonesia isolated', was the front-page headline. The consequences of the massacre were measured according to international response to events, with particular attention being given to the reactions of the United States and Holland, Indonesia's former colonial power.

Other headlines demonstrated the focus on international reactions:

- European Community condemns Indonesia (*Diário de Noticias*, 14.11.91)
- East Timor massacre condemned in Canberra (*Diário de Noticias*, 15.11.91)
- European Council condemns Indonesia (*Diário de Noticias*, 16.11.91)
- US State Department expresses concern for East Timor (*Diário de Noticias*, 16.11.91)

All these newspapers presented a common sub-theme; and that was the idea that the more international responses there were to the abuses committed in East Timor, the higher the chances were of turning around the political support that for the time being gave advantages to Indonesia. The following editorial illustrated this sub-text:

**Repercussions of a massacre**

The international reaction to the Dili massacre is extending to some countries who, up until today, have remained distant to the Portuguese positions, whenever it denounced human rights violations in East Timor (*DdN*).170

Another example of this theme:

**Massacre of Timorese leaves Indonesia isolated**

The massacre of more than one hundred Timorese – according to the latest information – near a cemetery in Dili has brought Indonesian authorities to a sense of isolation in the international scene, well expressed in the positions assumed by the US and Holland (*DdN*).171
The close scrutiny of international reactions by the Portuguese press made every detail count in Jakarta's credibility account balance:

The awakening of Australia

The resolution of the Australian Labour Party, condemning the actions of Indonesian troops in East Timor, shows how Jakarta's position has been weakened over the last two weeks. This is the first time, in 16 years, that a ruling party, in Australia, takes the position of criticising and condemning harshly Suharto's military regime (DdN).172

Symptoms of change within political organisations, such as this one by the Australian Labour Party were the subject of extensive reporting. In a way they served as reassurance about the possibility of East Timor's interests being undertaken by foreign governments.

This sort of 'international observatory' multiplied into different areas of analysis of the political arena, and became a framing device to cover the political agenda of Portuguese officials in visits around the world. During President Soares' official visit to Canada, 10 days after the massacre, East Timor became the theme, erasing the rest of the Portuguese agenda: '[President] Soares's praises Canada's stance on Timor' (DdN).173 This was one of many instances in which the Portuguese foreign policy agenda became, under the framing of the press, limited to one single issue - East Timor.

But there was also an acknowledgement of the limitations of international response, an awareness of the political economy under which Indonesia secured the illegitimate control of East Timor, whilst dealing with major trade issues with countries around the world:

Silences that compromise

The international receptivity before human rights violation cases varies according to geographical coordinates. Or, to be precise, according to commercial and industrial interests at stake (DdN).174

Comparing the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991 with the invasion of East Timor by Indonesia, the editorial continued:

What separated Kuwaitis from Timorese, was, however, not exactly geographical distance, but the [existence of] trade relations between the 180 million Indonesians and the West (DdN).175
Expresso was more detailed than Diário de Noticias in highlighting details of the political economy of different countries, and how their trade relations with Indonesia explained the more moderate criticisms of some countries in the aftermath of Santa Cruz. Examples:

Germany does not want to irritate Indonesia (Expresso, 23.11.91)

France: the weight of business (Expresso, 23.11.91)

Those pieces also dwelled on the implications of the massacre to US-Indonesia relations. Tony Jenkins, US correspondent, wrote:

Washington refuses to suspend military aid to Suharto

There are signs that the end of the 'cold war' and the resurgence of a New World Order may finally be catching up with Indonesia. After the Santa Cruz massacre last week, it was thought things would follow the usual path: some condemnations from the US and the EC and then, everything would be forgotten again (Exp).176

Jenkins analysed both the increasing discomfort felt by different members of Congress and the US State Department regarding the good relations between the US and Indonesia. He added that, this time around, the issue may have opened some room for future changes in policy, as well as raising important questions with the media.

The display of actions of protest by civilians against the Indonesian regime was another key theme in the coverage of the period. This type of coverage fitted within the larger frame that the discourse tried to draw: a framing map where the number of states and groups pro-Timor around the world could overturn the advantage presently held by Indonesia.

This is an example of that type of construction:

Wave of repulsion hits public opinion

Profound indignation concerning the massacre of Dili surfaces in Australia, a country which, until recently, ignored the 'East Timor case'. A demonstration of students by the Canberra parliament and the wave of public indignation make us believe that God moves in mysterious ways. ... For almost 16 years Australia has maintained herself simply as an observer in the East Timor case... However, the description of the horrors of the massacre of Santa Cruz have now created in the public opinion a wave of disgust and rancour against the closest and most powerful neighbour of Canberra (DdN).177
Australia was regarded as a passive observer of the situation, with a limited view on the forms of local political debate. It is a fact that the official Australian positions 'towards post-War Portuguese Timor ran the gamut from dismissive to contemptuous' (Dunn, 1994:91) and that Canberra was the first government to acknowledge the annexation of Timor by Indonesia, carrying on military and trade relations with their neighbour throughout the occupation. But the construction of the massacre as an awakening of public opinion was a somewhat biased view, for other instances of political thinking and debate have always been active in Australia, more than anywhere else. Those active forums of political participation included the work of the Timorese diaspora and Australian-based NGOs, the critical stance of the Australian press in covering relations between both countries, and a substantial amount of academic work and published titles in the history and politics of East Timor.

The idea that the rest of the world ignored East Timor whilst Portugal endlessly campaigned for it was represented here by American journalist Allan Nairn:

In Washington, Portuguese diplomats do not carry out any sort of lobbying and, in contacts with the American press, they leave the impression that international response to the massacre does not exist and that only Portugal cares for the issue (Exp).178

The media interest in international responses to the massacre prevails over any other theme in this section; it becomes the preferred meaning in construing international relations and East Timor. In a way, that legitimises the careful positions taken by the government of the day, who insisted that Timor was a matter of international responsibility, implicitly sidelining Portuguese responsibilities in the resolution of the occupied territory. The following extract is an example of this discourse:

East Timor is an international problem

The Prime-Minister said last night that he did not understand the position of the USA, adding, that both himself and the Portuguese would like to see a 'more energetic condemnation' of the events by the Catholic Church.

Prime Minister Cavaco dismissed the possibility of a telephone contact with President Bush, even though the official position of the White House on East Timor is not the most favourable. He recalled that Portugal condemned human rights violations across the world but that the Americans are not following our country in the East Timor case.179
There is stark criticism to the reaction of the Vatican to the events, which according to the press took longer than it should have:

Vatican says it is 'touched' by the events in Dili

The Vatican issued yesterday an official statement where it underlines that the recent events in East Timor 'have touched profoundly the Holy See'. This 'formal diplomatic gesture' broke the silence which has been criticised in several instances and is complemented by the line that the Holy See has 'used all adequate and timely' measures to immediately react to the events through appropriate channels 'condemning violence' and asking 'the appropriate authorities to investigate the facts' (DdN)."}

The political role of the Vatican came under scrutiny. Diário de Noticias editorial fixed on the role of the Vatican in the conflict, and criticised the Pope for not condemning the Indonesian abuse of human rights in East Timor, unlike other parts of the world where the Vatican denounced abuses of power. Unusually for the press of the time, Diário de Noticias shed some light on the reasons behind the Vatican's silence, in fact explaining the relations between the Indonesian regime and the Roman Catholic authorities:

Although a minority in Indonesia, the dictator regime's political superstructures have many Catholics who hold considerable representation within the political class. In reality, the Church often "bows" before those who hold the power, so as to keep away from problems and, specifically, so as to maintain certain privileges (or to move in direction to those), as an institution (DdN)."

The role of the Vatican was addressed, but like many other issues which deal with the relations within the Indonesian archipelago, it concentrated on the silences of the Vatican, rather than on explaining the relations of power of the Catholic Church.

The lack of understanding or lack of approach to the way in which Indonesian imperial policy worked within its own borders, and a general trend to write on East Timor as if it was a reality which could be dissociated from the larger conceptualisations on which the Indonesian state was built was still very present. Some understanding of the repression in East Timor became clear through the news pieces on the massacre, but on the whole, Indonesia is still a political identity waiting to be mapped by the press of the period. This silence over Indonesia's separatist movements within the archipelago and beyond East Timor was rarely broken. Only once, in a background piece about the decolonisation of East Timor, run by Expresso as a review piece of a book just published by the last
Portuguese governor of the island, were there references to conflicts in other Indonesian provinces like Irian Java, Molucas, and Ache (Exp).\textsuperscript{182}

8.6 Conclusion

The parliamentary visit prompted Timorese reactions that consistently elevated its different political factions – Falintil guerrilla leader Xanana Gusmão, UDT and Fretilin parties – to the status of legitimate sources, where they became part of the web of facticity, firmly established as representative voices for the Portuguese media’s news-gathering routines. The Timorese gained a political voice, and their views were considered before and after the parliamentary visit’s cancellation. This new context of access to the newsnet brought some Timorese political profiles to the news agenda. Xanana Gusmao emerges as a leader, D. Ximenes Belo’s political role shaped up, as well as Carrascalão’s, the governor of Dili. Xanana's manifesto was printed in \textit{Diário de Noticias}, making him no longer ‘just’ a guerrilla leader, but a man with a solid political agenda for the Timorese.

Access to sources in 1991 was, despite the remote access, no longer the impossible task described by journalists during previous years. This gain in immediacy was not only a result of changes in the resistance’s access to technology, but also the consequence of the resistance’s knowledge of news media routines. The resistance built relationships with the press, and became a sophisticated source of news. Sometimes those changes were also produced by shifts in the news media’s own organisational practices – better allocation of staff and resources impacted on the news output: \textit{Diário de Noticias} appointed a correspondent in Australia, thus guaranteeing coverage of information held by the Timorese diaspora in Darwin; and \textit{TSF} news radio had a dedicated East Timor correspondent on its Lisbon news desk.

However, these changes were not necessarily the result of concerted editorial strategies but, as in the case of \textit{Diário de Noticias}, they became the product of circumstances which had unexpected effects. The story of how António Sampaio came to be \textit{Diário de Noticias}’s correspondent is a good example of how the Portuguese news media operated: it lacked resources to invest in stories, journalists’ careers were poorly structured and editorial guidance was weak. This is still the situation. António Sampaio, an Australian-based Portuguese, called \textit{Diário de Noticias} international news desk in 1989 asking if they were interested in buying stories on East Timor, since he had access to the Timorese diaspora in Darwin. \textit{Diário de Noticias} jumped at the opportunity, without realising that Sampaio’s mature voice was hiding a 17-year old adolescent temping as a courier.
1991 - The Santa Cruz Massacre

at an Australian news organisation. His journalistic experience was limited to illegal radio broadcasting. The desk never met Sampaio, and interactions between them were limited to telephone conversation and Sampaio’s inexperience came through in his writing. Besides, he received no editorial guidance and it was up to him to decide which stories to write and how to write them. It was only when Portuguese television company TVI asked Sampaio to do a story for them in 1993, that Diário de Noticias’s editors realised they had signed a 17 year-old to report on one of their major stories. Moreover, Sampaio was never given a contract during the ten years he worked for Diário de Noticias and was instead paid per piece. (Sampaio, telephone communication, 14.10.2004). Diário de Noticias could only sustain a correspondent in Australia under this precarious editorial, professional and financial structure. His story indicates the Portuguese media’s lack of resources for news gathering, and how it seriously compromised the coverage of a crucial political issue such as East Timor.

The coverage of 1991 portrayed the Timorese in a wider fashion. They were no longer just victims of abuse from Indonesia, but also political agents with active voices in a complex web of local relations. Other aspects of the conflict came through as well: photographs of guerrillas and their routines and even a few faces of Indonesian generals.

The Santa Cruz massacre became a defining moment for the relationship between Portugal and East Timor, as politicians and the media framed the event with essentialist versions of Portuguese identity. The broadcasting of the massacre featured the sound of Portuguese prayers in the background, establishing a bond between East Timor and Portuguese universalism; the ideology that was once at the service of Dictator Salazar’s mythical empire. The sound of those prayers in Portuguese changed the political positioning of the government and the President – both leaders asked for a day of national mourning in Portugal after watching those images, a decision which, significantly, had not been taken when the news of the massacre first broke one week earlier. Timorese flags were raised all over Portugal and fundraising operations ensued. The underlying tone was that collective mourning and fundraising were necessary actions to protest against human rights abuses in a territory where ‘Portugueseness’ was alive.

This representation of East Timor as a Portuguese speaking territory through the events of the massacre was misleading. Some Portuguese religious hymns existed in East Timor, but a substantial amount of the Catholic liturgy was carried in Tetum, the local vernacular. Moreover, the use of the Portuguese language had been banned by Indonesia in 1981. Ironically, the ban forced the development of
Tetum, now the most widely spoken language, which the Church helped to develop by translating Portuguese biblical and liturgical texts into Tetum. Had the Indonesians not banned Portuguese, the pace of development for Tetum – an important aspect of the development of Timorese nationalism – might have been slower. Nevertheless, the sound of Portuguese prayers was part of a loose collection of Portuguese religious hymns which still persisted in oral tradition, despite the overall banning of the language in terms of religious texts. These included 'melodies, motifs, the connection between verses and stanzas and the syllabic rhythm of the Portuguese tradition' and combined 'national languages with Portuguese in the celebratory chants, even after the adoption of Tetum in the liturgy' (de Carvalho, 2003).

As I point out on page 176, reactions to the massacre contrasted with the tone of news stories written a month before, which expressed the difficulties of finding a Portuguese-speaking person in East Timor. The types of framing in operation when the visit was cancelled clarified the terms in which the relationship between Portugal and East Timor was imagined. Both newspapers questioned the timing of the cancellation, but accepted it was a 'realistic' option, and embarked on a campaign to justify or disclaim the negative impacts of cancelling the visit. *Diário de Noticias* took relief in the criticisms issued by a number of NGOs towards Indonesia, whilst *Expresso* labelled the intended visit as a romantic adventure, a matter of emotion rather than diplomacy, driven by the 'Portuguese stubbornness' to protect the Timorese 'affection to the headquarters of the old empire'. The parliamentary delegation, however, admitted frankly that the visit, under negotiation for four years, lacked 'clear vision'.

The strength of political reactions to the massacre contrasted dramatically with the lack of political vision from the parliamentary delegation just weeks before. A good example of this contrast was the announcement of trade sanctions with Indonesia, headlined by the press as an embargo. In reality, this was no more than a recommendation for companies to reconsider their trade with Jakarta on a voluntary basis. Another example of overstating public policy was illustrated by the piece in which the Foreign Affairs sub-secretary read a 'message' to the diplomatic staff in Lisbon, a symbolic political gesture which was hailed as a sign of serious international diplomacy.

The press supported the state apparatus when it came to the cancellation of the parliamentary visit. In the words of Cohen (1964) this is a characteristic of foreign policy reporting, when journalists might act in a less critical fashion and negotiate their national identity against news stories. However, the foreign press
was less understanding of the reasons for that cancellation. American journalist Allan Nairn spoke of the lack of Portuguese lobbying in Washington, and questioned the absence of the Portuguese ambassador in the capital at such a crucial moment; Tony Jenkins reported how UN and Congress sources were surprised at the lack of diplomatic activity in the United Nations; and Saskia Kouwemberg referred to the feeling of abandonment expressed by the inhabitants of East Timor, who were eager to turn the visit into a political benchmark. The critical framing of the story by foreign journalists contrasted with the Portuguese discourse on policy as reflected by the Lisbon media. The Portuguese press presented a strong scenario of diplomacy whereas the foreign press exposed the weaknesses of that diplomacy abroad.

The press's construction of a strong Portuguese diplomacy worked in reverse logic as well. There were constant references to countries that had not condemned the massacre strongly enough, in what read like a simplistic balance book of ethics and morality for human rights across the world. They were juxtaposed with Portuguese reactions in order to sustain the idea of a contrasting and strong Portuguese policy. *Diário de Notícias* criticised Australia's public opinion for 'waking up late', when in reality civic organisations in Australia had always been strong campaigners for East Timor. *Expresso* contributed to an informed debate of international relations by analysing the political economy of Indonesia. It also mentioned the privileged relationship of the Vatican with the Indonesian political élite, but failed to explain the importance of that relationship to East Timor.

There was an overall lack of explanation of the workings of Indonesian imperial policy, and a general trend to frame East Timor as if it was a reality detached from the larger conceptions on which Indonesia was built. The press ignored key aspects of Indonesian East Timor: how the Javanese imperial policy worked in territories which faced similar situations (Aceh, Molucas and Irian Java) and the importance of armed conflict in Indonesia as a safe keeper of the military power structure.
1991 – The Santa Cruz Massacre

ENDNOTES

128 Expresso, November 9, 1991, p. A16

129 Diário de Noticias, Suspensão de visita a Timor deixa Xanana decepcionado, November 2, 1991

130 Diário de Noticias, Suspensão de visita a Timor deixa Xanana decepcionado, November 2, 1991.


132 Expresso, Xanana Gusmão quer saber posição de Portugal November 9, 1991.

133 Diário de Noticias, Xanana apostava muito forte na visita de deputados portugueses, November 18, 1991.


135 Diário de Noticias, Carrascalão admite existência de ‘paz podre’ em Timor Leste, November 30, 1991.


137 These estimates are based on Allan Naim’s account in Expresso, Os campos da morte November 30, 1991, p. 29-30R.


139 Expresso, Os campos da morte, November 30, 1991, p. 29-30R.

140 Diário de Noticias, Mortos do massacre de Dili podem ter sido mais de 200, November 17, 1991.


142 Diário de Noticias, Indonésios fuzilam 70 Timorenses, November 18, 1991.


146 Diário de Noticias, Cavaco preocupado acompanha a situação, November 13, 1991.

147 Diário de Noticias, Mulheres a rezar em português emocionam o presidente – Soares escreve a João Paulo II sobre o massacre de Dili, November 19, 1991.

148 Expresso/Euroexpansão poll, Expresso, Maioria culpa políticos e igreja, November 30, 1991


157 Diário de Noticias, Muito terror e desapontamento dominam a população Timorense November 16, 1991.


159 Expresso, Soares e Ângelo cancelam visita a Timor, October 26, 1991.


161 Diário de Noticias, Ainda a tempo, November 02, 1991.

162 Diário de Noticias, Ainda a tempo, November 02, 1991.


164 Expresso, A razão e a emoção, October 19, 1991.


169 Diário de Noticias, November 13, 1991

170 Diário de Noticias, Repercussões de um massacre, November 16, 1991.


174 Diário de Noticias, Silêncios que comprometem, November 21, 1991.

175 Diário de Noticias, Silêncios que comprometem, November 21, 1991.


177 Diário de Noticias, Onda de repulse atinge opinião pública, November 15, 1991.


179 Diário de Noticias, Timor Leste é um problema internacional, November 20, 1991.


183 The constant delays in opening up the broadcasting frequencies in Portugal led to a boom of illegal local radio stations in Portugal during the 1980s.

184 Referring to the president's reaction, Estrela Serrano, his press officer, recalls in an interview with the author (2000) the moment when the head of the country watched the footage of the massacre: 'he kept saying repeatedly that what impressed him the most was to see people saying the Hail-Mary in Portuguese. That really upset him, and that feeling was something he could not disguise. That was
the one moment he never forgot, the image of people praying in Portuguese'. According to de Carvalho (2003) some of those hymns and chants are 'embedded in the medieval tradition of Portuguese romance'. They are extinct in Portugal but have kept on living in the oral Timorese tradition, which is 'keeping them alive in another form of identity affirmation'.
Chapter 9 - 1992 - The Lusitânia Expresso Peace Mission

9.1 Description of the event

In March 1992, a group of about fifty students of 23 different nationalities travelled aboard a Portuguese ship to East Timor, in order to lay flowers for those killed in the massacre of Santa Cruz of November 1991. Designed as a symbolic peace operation, the Lusitânia Expresso peace mission was organised by the student-based Fórum Estudante magazine. The mission’s real aim, the organisers would later reveal, was to extend the presence of the East Timor issue in the media’s agenda, maximising the international attention created by the recent Santa Cruz massacre of November 1991. As the ship made its journey towards East Timorese sea borders, Indonesian navy defence units threatened the use of force unless Lusitânia turned back. Lusitânia then sailed back to the nearby harbour of Darwin, in Australia, never making it to East Timor soil. As a symbolic gesture, the passengers laid flowers on the sea instead.

9.2 Media and political context

The context in which this mission took place is in many ways similar to the wider political and media climate introduced in the previous moment of coverage, the massacre of Santa Cruz, in November 1991. Post-massacre, Portuguese democratic institutions voiced their condemnation of Indonesia with renewed energy. In July 1992, Foreign Affairs Minister Durão Barroso effectively blocked an agreement between the EU and Indonesia. Domestically, the profile of East Timor had increased in the public display of policy. For instance, the state-declared day of national mourning in November had a snowball effect into other areas of public life. Civil organisations promoted fund-raising activities; the Lusitânia Expresso initiative by Forúm Estudante magazine was born out of that momentum of campaigning work in the public space.

Fórum Estudante, a student magazine, was founded in the early 1990s, when students of higher education brought their movement to the heart of the political debate, demonstrating for changes in the system. Students were campaigning for free education, a larger number of university places, and changes in methods of entry into university. Forúm Estudante capitalised on the feverish political
activity and the prominent media profile of that generation. If East Timor had been detached until then from the memories of the first generation to be born in a post-imperial setting, Lusitânia incorporated that same generation (the only one not to have experienced dictatorship and imperial nationalism) into the past memory and present cultural resonances of East Timor.

The Lusitânia Expresso peace mission was also the first NGO and claim-maker to truly explore the symbiotic relationship with the media, an important dimension for challengers wanting to enter the media agenda. Until 1992, NGOs working for East Timor had not enjoyed a good relationship with the media. Unlike them, the Lusitânia Expresso mission was defined in terms of the extent to which it could affect the media agenda. When I interviewed the director of the mission, Rui Marques, eight years later, he said how he still had to clarify to the ‘teenagers and twenty-somethings’ who supported Lusitânia Expresso that the ship had not ‘failed’ to reach Timor: ‘They did not understand, and I did not explain to them but one day I will, the real aim of the mission. The mission was designed and conducted in a strict manner to gain media attention. And backing away as we did was not to lose but to reach the goal we had in mind’. Marques added that his goal had never been to reach East Timor, as stated publicly. His ideal scenario was to be taken prisoner by Jakarta’s authorities, as that would create maximum media coverage and international interest.

Lusitânia Expresso also benefited from a very different media environment. In 1992 the Portuguese media had entered a much more competitive relationship: several newspapers had been privatised, including Diário de Noticias, the state had granted private broadcasting licences, and a series of innovative weekly and monthly titles were entering the market. Competition for a good story such as Lusitânia Expresso, which ensured good images and copy, meant that the mission was accompanied by a supportive Portuguese press.

9.3 The portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese

The Lusitânia Expresso peace mission brought the spotlight on to the Timorese diaspora in Australia. This focus stemmed from the fact that the pool of international activists boarded the boat in Darwin, and also from the fact that Diário de Noticias, which I use as a source of news writing throughout this analysis, benefited from the use of its own permanent correspondent in Australia. The focus on the closest and one of the most active Timorese diasporas in the world carried with it the breaking down of ‘the Timorese’ as a single category – as the suffering, resistant, religious Timorese – to a series of sub-groups with
different political and ethnic affiliations. It is in this moment of coverage, more than in any other, that the different and divided 'Timorese' factions came to the fore.

In the coverage of this moment, the Timorese no longer came through as a monolithic single entity, but as different groups with different agendas. The Timorese, as a category previously defined by their goal for independence, gave way to several groups of different Timorese with different political agendas, divided through ideology and the history of conflict between them. They embodied a larger struggle for power that existed amongst the Timorese élite, but one that was seldom acknowledged in the construction of East Timor issue by the press.

In this Australian diaspora of 3,000 to 6,000 Timorese, there were four different community organisations, with different agendas: The Portuguese and Timorese Social Club (pro-UDT), the Timorese Northern Territory Club, or Lafaek (pro-Fretilin), the Timorese Chinese Association and the Portuguese Social Club. Before the arrival of the Lusitânia Expresso ship, there was a dispute between the pro-Fretilin and the pro-UDT organisations. They both scheduled their separate welcoming parties for the mission's participants on the same day and hour:

... the small but active luso-timorese community is involved in a situation of great tension. Rivalries between the main political forces who have fought for the control of the former Portuguese colony (UDT and Fretilin) before the Indonesian annexation of December 7, 1975 – and which have left many hundreds of deaths on the ground and deep wounds that have not yet healed –, have been laid bare (DdN). The peace mission reacted, threatening not to participate in any welcoming session unless there was a single, united celebration. Diário de Notícias celebrated what it saw as a new achievement for this mission, the role of facilitator of the Timorese union:

Lusitânia near Darwin reconciles Timorese factions

... the agreement ceases the initial divisions which existed at the heart of the community and the mutual accusations directed at each group and represents, for the first time, in Darwin, a formal and public union of the different Timorese factions.... According to Alfredo Ferreira, the divisions have always existed, but the Timorese community is united in its support to the mission and to Lusitânia Expresso (DdN).

Through the mediation of the mission, the usually fragmented Timorese community dissipated, creating a symbolic partnership of union for the mission.
Lusitânia Expresso became not only a vehicle for peace in East Timor, but also, through this construction, a mediator of the relationships between the Timorese factions.

In line with previous moments of coverage, Expresso tended to portray life in Timor and the Timorese themselves as bounded by the institutions and social relations at play in the territory. Its text tended to take into account the larger context of dynamics within Indonesia, especially the power of the military in the regulation of everyday life. This time, Expresso reported on new concentration camps built in the aftermath of the Santa Cruz massacre, and the overall tightening of security in the territory since that point. There was detailed information on human rights abuses and the specifics of illegal trials against the Timorese for their participation in the Santa Cruz demonstration. The tension built up on the island:

Meanwhile, on Monday, 'three battalions of Indonesian soldiers' (more than two thousand men) flooded Dili'. According to the resistance, the streets of the city 'have turned green'. In the meantime, five surveillance ships patrol the coast from Dili to Kupang, in the Indonesian side of the island. This is all in order to 'avoid the approach of Lusitânia Expresso', the same source added (DdN).191

Expresso published a piece by Jakarta-based journalist Peter Goodman, who had recently travelled in Timor. Goodman addressed the internalisation of the struggle and what that implied for those Timorese who were fighting for independence:

Nobody feeds the illusion that independence is close. Many accept with resignation the destiny of martyrs. Fighting for independence has become not only an objective in itself, but just the continuation of a process, a type of ritual. The hatred for Indonesia, per se, does not look like it can explain all, since the Timorese have resigned to die for a goal they may never achieve. 'You must remember that the deceased are very important for these people', a western observer has pointed out to me, referring to the animist beliefs that underpin the Timorese Catholicism. Traditionally, the Timorese believe that their ancestors live with them in spirit, and therefore their wishes should be consulted and respected. So, a Timorese who abandons the struggle for independence is betraying his family, the living as well as the deceased. If he stops fighting, he will be blamed for dismissing the suffering of his relatives.

In Goodman's eyes the struggle was also part of the wider schemata of social relations that sustained Timorese culture. The struggle gained broader anthropological interpretations, informed by the cultural structures that sustained Timorese society; the struggle is presented as being beyond politics, as a central element of defence for the memory of those deceased, tied in with the traditional
practices of the island. In contrast to this type of understanding of the practices as rooted in Timorese ancient culture, stood Diário de Notícia’s text which defined the Timorese as an extension of Portuguese culture. It is as if the Timorese could not exist as a discursive object in itself, other than through the mediation of the colonial past:

Dili gets ready for the welcome

'The Portuguese should come as soon as possible, but if they manage to get here they should stay and help to solve the serious problems we face in the present', said yesterday by a member of the resistance in Dili, who with hope and emotion told us about all the risks everybody faces to welcome Lusitânia. The contact made from Darwin, just 600 kilometres south, approached in some way Portugal and East Timor and the 440-year alliance does indeed seem to exist. A child who answered the telephone runs to her mother shouting the phone call was from Portugal, and the joy she felt when she heard Portuguese made us remember the reason behind this mission (DdN).192

The text about the resistance’s arrangements for welcoming the mission transformed the political into the emotional, detaching the mission from its implications and consequences. The text almost skips over the risks of the mission and how they might affect local population through increased surveillance and repression which could potentially lead to more deaths. Instead, the voice of a child saying Portugal on the phone triggered a morally-bound judgement about the worthiness of the mission. This piece operated on the ideology of the colonial shared cultural heritage – language –, turning it into a positive valuation ('the reason behind this mission'), in what reads like an euphemistic strategy of symbolic construction. This construction dissimulated the fact that the Lusitânia Expresso mission could have provoked another wave of violence by the Indonesian military.

The fear of a mission which, just like the parliamentary visit, may have failed, and bring an attack on the islanders was a concern expressed by some. However, it did not become a headline-grabbing theme. An example of that type of construction was:

Be it in Australia or in East Timor, the Timorese show optimism – just as before, with the possible visit of Portuguese deputies – but now fear that an interruption to the trip could end up in another November 12 [date of the Santa Cruz Massacre]. Despite the number of people arrested and questioned – around two hundred over the last two weeks - and the fact that the youth in charge of welcoming the Lusitânia
was arrested, the Timorese are, once more prepared to salute the Portuguese (DdN).  

The effective increase in repression due to the upcoming visit did not raise notes of alarm, but rather reinforced the idea that the willingness to salute 'the Portuguese' stood higher than the political violence underway by then. For instance, governor Carrascalão was quoted as saying that the Lusitânia Expresso initiative was creating 'false expectations' and that it would create 'new problems' amongst the population (DdN). A resistance source in Dili told Expresso that:

... the military have begun a campaign of misinformation: they spread the rumour that the Lusitânia Expresso is about to arrive to check who is moving in the circles [of the resistance]. This sort of strategy has led to several arrests, including the chief of the Santa Cruz village, Jacob Fernandes (Exp).

The preferred framing embraced by the press, especially by Diário de Notícias, universalised the positive aspects of the mission for East Timor (publicity) and its risks to the passengers of Lusitânia Expresso (retaliation by the Indonesian navy) but it passively downplayed and failed to headline on the risks to the Timorese living in the territory.

9.4 The relationship between Portugal and East Timor

The framing of the peace mission was constructed in romantic discourse, portrayed as an adventurous journey of a young group of people, 'armed with hope and generosity' who, in the name of human rights, were facing a disproportionate and 'mighty' entity: the Indonesian state. In a way, it is a narrative around the ancient myth of David and Goliath: the peaceful demonstrators versus the military apparatus of Indonesia. The following piece illustrated that point, when it described the passengers who flew to Australia, where they would board Lusitânia on its journey to East Timor:

That Sunday flight ... took ... a very special cargo of hope and adventure: the 80 members of the Timor peace mission. It is a group as lively as any other, but united under a different spirit. Between hope and apprehension they were preparing to challenge Indonesian authorities and take a little to the martyred Timorese people a bit more hope and solidarity they are so much in need of (DdN).

The romantic discourse of a peaceful group running in aid of the 'martyred Timorese people' is recurrent throughout the coverage of the mission. When the ship was departing from Darwin towards East Timor, the packaging of Lusitânia Expresso ensued. It was framed as a story of peace versus war; the story of a
courageous group of people willing to take risks in the face of the military machine of Indonesia:

All passengers in the Timor Peace Mission are aware that this last stage is not free from risks, especially before the uncertainty of Jakarta's authorities reaction to the generosity gift of these students from 28 different countries (DdN). 197

When the ship failed to get into Timorese waters, Diário de Notícias's front page presented the romantic headline 'Flowers against cannons' (DdN). 198 The weekly Expresso called the mission the 'Lusitan version of the "Live Aid" concert and Greenpeace's demonstrations' (Exp). 199 The character of the head of the mission, Rui Marques, was dissected in a piece entitled 'The navigator'. 'The Navigator' is Prince D. Henrique's nickname in the history books; he was the son of King John I, monarch of Portugal in the fifteenth century. The text explained that both men shared a devout Catholic background. D. Henrique was a scholar with a desire to keep up with the chivalric traditions and the knightly honours of the time. He was the first explorer to systematically survey and build alliances during his voyages around the west coast of Africa and established methods that other explorers adopted. This title of 'Navigator' is evocative of those roles: the Christian, the knight, the explorer. The attributes of D. Henrique acted as a metaphor for the romantic construction of the peace mission and its director, Rui Marques. In doing so, Expresso brought a powerful historical narrative to the framing of this moment; a map of meaning that legitimised the ship's mission, calling in the cultural resonances of the Portuguese identity as one of epic sea battles. Previously a radio DJ with a Catholic broadcasting organisation, Marques came to personify the 'national emotion':

'[he traded] the hertzian waves for the ocean waves to interpret the national emotion caused by the Santa Cruz massacre, launching an audacious communication operation drawn to awake the world to the Timor drama' (Exp). 200

Marques himself reinforced the cultural resonances with the imperial project, in a later interview with Diário de Notícias:

I see this mission as the most beautiful thing done by the Portuguese since the Discoveries (DdN). 201

The gathering of students and press for departure from Darwin provided another locus for the media stories where the relationship between Portugal and East Timor was explored. The descriptions of those moments focused on emotional experiences and stressed the cultural links between different locations where 'Timoreseness' was lived through. In a way, the text transformed those
relationships and events into a Timorese locale, a physical setting where the collective experience of 'feeling Timor' was carried through:

Emotion transformed Darwin into Dili

The cry of Timor, the Portuguese language and the joy mixed with tears in the face of the Timorese overflowed through the audience in the room where yesterday the first part of the reception for the Lusitânia delegation took place (DdN).²⁰²

The text pursued instances where Timorese and Portuguese identities could be united, in a single discourse - through the territory, the language, the common thread of emotion. Even though the mission was presented by its organisers as a legitimate peace operation of international nature, represented by citizens of 23 different countries, Diário de Noticias stressed the Portugueseness of Lusitânia Expresso. Upon the arrival of the ship in Darwin, the paper headline was 'Portuguese and [Lisbon football club] Benfica²⁰³ flags welcomed Lusitânia in Darwin' (DdN).²⁰⁴ Another discursive strategy used by the text was the universalisation of the experience of being Timorese, transforming it into an experience that extended to all those present, the press included:

The audience was quiet, and amongst them were journalists who forgot their appointment notes and united in spirit with the Timorese (DdN).²⁰⁵

Diário de Noticias correspondents actually broke the conventional distinction between their roles as observers and the object or relations they observe - which they consistently referred to as being part of. For instance, journalist António Sampaio was no longer just a manager of the symbolic arena in which Lusitânia Expresso is taking place; he is sharing the feelings of the mission's participants. On the eve of departure from Darwin to the sea of Timor, Sampaio wrote:

...the future is still a question mark, for all of us here in Darwin the future is now and despite being conscious of what we are facing, nervousness and a certain fear are in the air (DdN) [my emphasis].²⁰⁶

The blending of roles and frontiers was as visible in the journalist's textual object as it was in his language. There was a significant negotiation between the conventions of journalism style and operation in the Diário de Noticias texts. Upon the arrival of the ship to Darwin, for instance, Sampaio wrote:

On the boat and on the harbour, where we met Lusitania, waves of great emotion spread through the Timorese, sounding stronger than the waves crushing on the sea, which itself calmed down at the time of greeting the boat (DdN).²⁰⁷

Another example of this literary style:
Just like me, all the press stood there for a while admiring the boat that many had seen but that, here in Darwin, seemed a thousand times more real and close, the ship in which the voyage to be made will become, for certain, an integral part of contemporary Portuguese history (DdN).208

Armando Rafael, another Diário de Noticias journalist, commented on the arrival of the mission back in Lisbon:

In an atmosphere of great emotion, joined by one single member of government – youth secretary Nuno Ribeiro da Silva –, a banner stood out amongst the others, summing up, in a way, the feeling of people waiting for the return of the mission. 'Thank you for your courage' read the sentence, carefully scribbled on a small and simple piece of cardboard (DdN).209

These varieties of discursive practices reveal that the roles and identities played out by participants and journalists merged into one blurred, less defined category. The peace mission then became one more piece of the larger cultural map of the struggle, one more event to be encapsulated in the media package of the struggle for the 'future of the homeland of Timor':

In the harbour, Timorese and Australians waved, indifferent to the rain and wind, standing there praying for the success of a journey and for the future of a homeland which they have not been able to call theirs (DdN).210

When the mission failed to reach Timorese waters, and the 'adventure and hope' were finally over, Lusitânia Expresso became a symbol of Utopia, of two 'brotherly nations', Portugal and East Timor, sharing the same culture:

For some days, hope was experienced, and perhaps there was more Utopia than there was hope, carried by a bunch of young people, and those accompanying them, that they could give a brotherly hug to a nation that still keeps in their arks the Portuguese flag, who prays and speaks in Portuguese, who still count the bodies of those deceased, fighting for their freedom and resisting the Indonesian occupier (DdN).211

Against the proclaimed international nature of the peace mission, the text construed Lusitânia as an event exercised just between the two ‘brotherly’ nations of Portugal and East Timor. East Timor, the brother nation, existed once again in its Portugueseess: through the flags hidden through Indonesian occupation and through the language. The naturalisation of Portuguese as a language spoken in East Timor was a recurrent misconception with which the press engaged. I have argued before and will argue at length later that this was not the case – only a minority of people ever spoke Portuguese in East Timor.
The debate on Portuguese policy for Timor became intertwined with the progress of the mission. Whilst *Diário de Notícias* was celebrating the courage and achievements of the mission, the Portuguese government and some parliamentarians were carrying out negotiations at the United Nations Commission for Human Rights and in Washington. Those, however, were not as central to the coverage as the symbolic object that the *Lusitânia Expresso* became.

Both *Expresso* and *Diário de Notícias* run one piece each on the annual United Nations human rights session in Geneva. Rather than a resolution condemning Indonesia, which would be legally binding before the eyes of international law, the commission settles for a declaration instead, which omits the human rights abuses in East Timor. *Expresso* analysed the deception of this outcome through the web of international relations:

> Due to the lack of support by the twelve [member states of the European Union] and the USA, Lisbon's diplomacy was forced to negotiate with Indonesia a "declaration" of consensus where it laments the "violent incident" of November and shows "profound concern" for the situation in the territory (Exp).212

In the same piece, Ramos Horta, the resistance's international representative, argued that this solution was 'too consensual' and Abílio Araújo, the Fretilin leader, said he was 'surprised and disappointed' (Exp).213 However, *Diário de Notícias* saw the defeat for Portuguese diplomacy in a different fashion:

> Portugal and Indonesia reach a consensus

The Portuguese and Indonesian delegations at the United Nations Human Rights Commission yesterday reached an agreement regarding the contents of a declaration of the Commission's president. In a statement to Lusa [Portuguese news agency] the chief of Portuguese delegation, Ambassador Gonçalo Santa-Clara Gomes, clarified that the statement... contains measures similar to those of the proposal for resolution sponsored by Portugal. According to the ambassador this is a 'very positive' agreement... (DdN).214

The gap between the intensity of the coverage for the peace operation and the comparatively little attention paid to the details and politics behind another United Nations session were evident in this moment of coverage. If the United Nations represents a site where nations can lobby for enforcement of their foreign policies, then this would be a strong actor to take into the Portuguese media routines for the coverage of the East Timor issue. But the press chose instead to follow the symbolic process rather than the policy process. In the symbiotic...
relationship between claim-makers and the media, *Lusitânia Expresso* succeeded enormously for it dominated the news agenda in Portugal. *Lusitânia Expresso*’s rich symbolic structure turned it into a primary source of information, over the coverage of policy proper, which revealed a very different reality to that that was being written on the sea. *Diário de Notícias*’s editorial attempted, once more, to play down the diplomatic victory for Indonesia:

The truth of the matter is that opinions vary – what for some represents the odd victory, even if tenuous and fragile, for others it is no more than (another) setback ... Even though considering the text as too soft (which clearly did not please Fretilin or other Timorese forces) it has, at least, the benefit of proving that Jakarta can no longer ignore, as easily as it would have done some months back, that the world has the eyes set upon East Timor (DdN).  

*Diário de Notícias* searched for justification of a weak Portuguese stance. It concluded that even without an agreement, Indonesia’s repression attracted more international attention than before. The discourse changed negative perceptions and replaced them with positive assessments. It dismissed the fact that the increasing global perception of East Timor (this becoming the positive outcome) was happening already, before the Geneva meeting, with the media exposure of Santa Cruz.

Policy-making was addressed again by the newspapers, when an official source admitted that the Portuguese government was open to a ‘third-way’ solution for the territory. The third-way solution had always been understood as a form of autonomy for East Timor, that would still see the territory under Indonesian sovereignty. It had been on the negotiation table several times before, even thought it had never been publicly admitted by the representatives of the Portuguese state:

Portugal considers an intermediate political status

Portugal is open to considering a political status for East Timor that would not be strictly independence or annexation, official sources told DN. This position has been made known to the UN Secretary General... The greatest novelty in the proposal is the acceptance of a ‘third way’ to the status of East Timor, in which the self-determination can be achieved in the framework of an intermediate solution between independence and the strict annexation by the occupying power (DdN).

The ‘autonomy solution’ was an issue politically contested by presidents and governments, depending on who was occupying those positions. There was a school of thought within Portuguese politics which strongly supported autonomy,
for this was seen as a realistic option, which would gather more international support than the sometimes lonely struggle for sovereignty. There are documented examples of these disagreements, and how they reflected in changes to governmental programmes. Those programmes either vowed to work for independence or seek other solutions, even though those solutions contradicted the constitutionally stated goal of independence for East Timor (for a detailed discussion of those political nuances go to page 76).

A recurrent theme of the policy discourse on Portuguese policy is the sense of ‘diplomatic action’ which arose from the Portuguese democratic institutions when reacting to external events. I have noted this before in moments such as the threat of defeat to the 1982 vote at the United Nations or during the coverage of the massacre of Santa Cruz whose framing changed dramatically once the story was tied in with broader cultural resonances of Portuguese identity.

This sense of diplomatic urgency transpired once more, in reaction to a statement by the US State Deputy Secretary for the Asia Pacific region, Kenneth Quinn, in which he assured the press that the relations between the United States and Indonesia will not be changed by the East Timor issue. When a few days later the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote a letter to the American Embassy expressing Lisbon's protest for the Bush administration's position, Diário de Notícias's headline was 'Lisbon protests in Washington against Quinn's statement' (DdN).217 The newspaper extrapolated the diplomatic initiative, framing it in a higher hierarchy of international policy: instead of a letter to the US Embassy, the syntax implies an initiative at the heart of the American government and carries with it connotations of ‘active diplomacy’ which recurrently became a discursive practice.

Another example of this practice is the headline '[former Portuguese President] Ramalho Eanes agrees to take the Timor High Commissioner post' (DdN).218 Reading through the article, it becomes clear that Eanes is indeed 'available to take the post' if it were offered to him. The job, which is included in the text of the Portuguese Constitution, was only put into place in 1999, to aid the transition of Timor into independence and was thus never on the cards before that time. Just a few months before, during the coverage of the Santa Cruz massacre, Diário de Notícias had written a similar headline for D. Manuel Martins, Bishop of Setúbal, in Portugal. The newspaper had asked him whether he would take a job that in reality had, despite its constitutional framing, never materialised as a democratic institution. The operationalisation of this discourse is actively initiated and carried through by Diário de Notícias: the search for a High Commissioner is
initiated by \textit{Diário de Notícias}, creating a story about an institution that does not exist. In this sense, it is (re)creating the same type of 'unfounded enthusiasm' that transpires from diplomatic initiatives, reinforcing the construction of 'active diplomacy' category.

Contrast the mismatched discourse of active diplomacy with the news that several members of Portuguese parliament were expressing their concern for the ongoing Foreign Affairs agenda. The parliamentarians were protesting against a lack of activity by Portuguese diplomats, the secrecy surrounding the government's strategy for Timor, or even the failure of the latest lobbying activity – a parliamentary delegation visit to Washington. Under the headline 'Opposition parties criticise foreign affairs strategy for Timor',

the parliamentary sketch reveals that members of the Portuguese press in Washington criticised the effectiveness of the delegation: some of them were unable to express themselves in English; there was a badly organised press conference; and most felt that this was a missed opportunity for contacting the key-players. There was a significant trend in the naturalisation of political discourse, which the press endorsed and sometimes led (as in the case of \textit{Diário de Notícias}), about Portuguese diplomacy. This naturalisation hyperbolised any diplomatic gesture which differed significantly from the reality of events at the key sites of policy making.

\section*{9.5 International relations and East Timor}

The blurred nature of Portuguese policy observed in the previous section contrasted with the historically active Indonesian diplomacy. In the aftermath of the massacre, and during the week that \textit{Lusitânia Expresso} was to depart, the Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Alatas travelled around Europe cementing trade and military agreements, some of which had been put on hold since the massacre of November of the previous year. \textit{Expresso}, whose editorial line pursued analysis of the political economy of Indonesian relationships with the western world, wrote of the latest initiatives by Jakarta:

On Tuesday, Alatas began in Paris his second 'cosmetic trip' around Europe. In the French capital the Indonesian minister guaranteed that his country would react strongly to stop the ship (\textit{Lusitânia}) from violating international law, whilst a source from the French foreign affairs ministry stated that the meeting between Alatas and his counterpart was 'fruitful'. And if Paris congratulated Jakarta for applying sanctions against those [military] responsible for Santa Cruz, the truth is that the French government, as far as \textit{Expresso} has learnt, has already begun talks with Suharto to sell Indonesian Mirage fighter-jets and to enter the Timor oil race. France is the country in the European Union which has been selling most weaponry to
Indonesia... And whilst on Wednesday Holland made it clear to Alatas that it was necessary for the Indonesians to respect the human rights in East Timor, the truth is that its annual aid programme to Jakarta (200 million dollars), which had been suspended in November, has been reinstated. Yesterday, in Madrid, the Suharto minister was, according to diplomatic sources, 'greeted in discreet fashion and according to protocol by the Spanish government'...(Exp).220

Jakarta was also at the time launching a particularly effective propaganda campaign in its domestic media, against the Lusitânia Expresso peace mission. The campaign raised the theory that the ship was carrying explosives and was thus far removed from peaceful goals. In turn, this propaganda was seen by the Portuguese media as tactics, Indonesia playing down international retaliations in case it decided to fire against the ship. In the event of an armed confrontation, Indonesia would justify its attack as self-defence.

Both newspapers followed with particular attention the pressure put by Indonesia, Australia and other countries on the mission's participants. Because the international passengers were boarding Lusitânia Expresso in Darwin, which was effectively the point of departure for the mission, Australia became a focus of last-minute diplomacy and press activity. Diário de Notícias was particularly interested in these stories, which were fed by their Australian correspondent, the only Portuguese permanent correspondent in that country:

The Australian ambassador in Jakarta, Phillip Flood, said yesterday that his government will take strong measures against Lusitania Expresso, if it thinks the mission will bring problems to the relations between Australia and Indonesia. 'Australia will not sacrifice the good relations it now has with Jakarta and which are better than ever before.' According to the ambassador, the Australian government is under warning for any activity that might affect the 'excellent relations with Indonesia', during the ship's stay in Australia (DdN).221

Another example:

The Australian foreign affairs minister has once again warned the participants of the Timor Peace Mission that they are risking serious confrontations with Indonesia and that the trip will risk the passengers' lives...(DdN).222

The international pressure eventually paid off for Indonesia. Some journalists and participants decided not to board the Lusitânia at the very last minute, due to pressures imposed either by the organisations they represented or by their countries of origin:

Ready to board Lusitânia, three journalists stayed on land, as their employers decided they should not carry on with the journey... Meanwhile, it was also
confirmed that some ten foreign students, including a Belgian and two Greeks, decided not to participate, after contacting the governments of their countries (DdN).223

The pressure put upon the press and participants was a demonstration of strength by the Indonesian authorities and their international alliances. For instance, one of the Jakarta-based Reuters correspondents, who was ready to board, pulled out at the eleventh hour after the Suharto government threatened to shut down the Reuters offices in the Indonesian capital224.

Expresso published some information on other states' foreign policy on East Timor. For instance, the Vatican decided to create a second diocese in East Timor, indirectly reinforcing East Timor's independence from Indonesia, at least under the Vatican's understanding of their own 'world order':

Papa "denies" Indonesia control of church of Timor

... Since the invasion, in December 1975, Indonesian bishops have been pressing the Vatican to grant them canonical jurisdiction of 600,000 Timorese. John Paul II, however, has been deaf to the "demands" made by Jakarta's bishops, which were repeated in October 1989, during his visit to Dili. It should be noted that this diocese remains an exception: it depends directly from the Pope, and D. Ximenes Belo is its single representative. The new [second] diocese will have its headquarters in Baucau, on the eastern sector. This fact - the existence of two bishoprics: Dili and Baucau - will allow the creation of an Episcopal Conference in East Timor, making it impossible for the Indonesian bishops to "annex" the Timorese church (Exp).225

Whilst the Vatican reinforced the status of the Catholic Church in East Timor, the US State Department's annual report on human rights accused Indonesia of 'numerous violations of human rights' during and after the Santa Cruz massacre. In a long piece, Expresso (CHECK SOURCE) dissected the latest document presented to the US Congress: 'The United States government considers unjustified the use of 'deathly violence', during the demonstration of November 12, in Dili. Deputy Secretary for Human Rights, Richard Schifter, states that 'the existing evidence indicate that the violence exercised' by the military was proved to be 'clearly disproportionate to the situation'.

9.6 Conclusion

The moment set around the Lusitânia Expresso mission is perhaps the most charged in its usage of symbolic constructions. In Portugal, the Lusitânia Expresso campaign and fundraising epitomised the months that followed the massacre.
Another noticeable change was the blurring of borders between the role of correspondents and campaigners in the mission. This is especially true of *Diário de Notícias*, whose correspondent broke the conventional distinctions between reporter and the object or relations under observation – not only the writing done using the pronoun ‘we’, but the style also evoked a universalisation of the experience of the peace mission, into which journalists, participants, and, by and large, the Timorese, joined under the encompassing category of Portugal’s universal identity.

The perception to the Timorese identity changed from a single identity – as the suffering, religious, oppressed Timorese – into different factions with their own political agenda, and rooted in the Timorese politics of the past. Even though this dimension of Timorese politics was only touched on lightly by the press and not explored in great depth, it opened a new window that made sense of the vivid divisions felt since the civil war of 1975.

*Expresso’s* coverage was more balanced in that it constructed the Timorese through the social relations at play within their community. I argue that the fact that *Expresso* bought pieces from foreign correspondents with direct access to the territory was beneficial to that sort of coverage. I add that the writing of East Timor by foreign journalists was detached from the ideological discourse about the dissemination of Portuguese culture in other regions of the world.

In contrast, *Diário de Notícias* defined the Timorese as an extension of Portuguese culture, as if the Timorese could not exist as an object of discourse other than through the mediation of their colonial, Portuguese past. For instance, when reporting the divisions in Timorese diaspora in Australia, *Diário de Notícias*’s preferred framing was the resolution of conflict through the mediation of a Portuguese actor, the *Lusitânia Expresso*. That discursive strategy is pursued, contradicting the self-proclaimed international nature of the mission, with the press turning the *Lusitânia* Peace Mission into a Portuguese initiative. Another example of these discursive strategies was the coverage of the departure from Darwin. Then, the headline focus is on framing Darwin as a Portuguese locale (‘Portuguese and Benfica’s flags welcomed *Lusitânia* in Darwin’). To a certain extent, the preferred framing of *Diário de Notícias* legitimised the courageous attitude of participants and promoted the publicity of the mission, whilst at the same time passively downplayed or failed to address the risks faced by the Timorese in light of the mission (the likelihood of increased repression, arrests, torture).
Both papers embraced the narrativisation of the *Lusitânia Expresso* mission, the linking of elements of the project into stories of the past, as if the present became part of the timeless cherishing of Portuguese renaissance. The text drew upon discursive practices which stemmed from romanticism: the aspects of chivalry and honour; the courage of the peaceful demonstrators against the mighty and disproportionate military apparatus of Indonesia. The head of the mission, Rui Marques, 'became' the explorer D. Henrique, and considered this journey as 'the most beautiful thing done by the Portuguese since the Discoveries'.

The contradictions between the weight put upon the achievements of the peace mission, a civilian operation, and the progress of Portuguese policy for East Timor at international sites of diplomacy-making, came to the fore. Whilst the mission was glorified, the policy was sidelined and even, in the case of *Diário de Notícias*, euphemised. A defeat at the United Nations Human Rights Committee was headlined as 'Portugal and Indonesia reach consensus'. The same event was labelled as a "very positive consensus" by the Portuguese government, with Timorese parties disagreeing and expressing dismay at Indonesia's poll of support from United Nations members so shortly after the massacre. *Diário de Notícias* recent history as a state-owned paper was an element of the non-critical approach it took regarding all matters of the state, including Portuguese policy for East Timor (further context on the history of *Diário de Notícias* can be found on page 104). Criticism of Portuguese policy was an ongoing debate in some political forums, but *Diário de Notícias* did not reflect this reality. In Parliament, the opposition pointed out the executive's complacency. Both the right-wing CDS (Centro Democrático Social) and the centre-left PS (Partido Socialista) parties criticised the government in power for lack of diplomatic activity, the secrecy surrounding the strategy for Timor, and even the failure of the latest lobbying activity: a parliamentary delegation visit to Washington (Assembleia da República, 2000, p. 326—336).

Despite such a level of contestation, *Diário de Notícias* focused instead on the symbolic representations. I argue that there was a naturalisation of the discourse on Portuguese policy towards East Timor: whenever the Portuguese state engaged in international negotiation the newspaper treated it as a positive step, regardless of the real achievements secured. Whatever the outcome of any initiative was, editorials saw those outcomes as successful. When *Diário de Notícias* described the UN Human Rights Committee final text as 'too soft', it quickly justifies it as having 'at least, the benefit of proving that Jakarta can no longer ignore, as easily as it would have done some months back, that the world
1992 – The Lusitânia Expresso Peace Mission

has its eyes set upon East Timor. Another example it the newspaper’s judgement of the peace mission as a reality isolated from the operation’s established goals – global publicity and entering East Timor soil. In the face of failure, Diário de Notícias found victory in the realm of private emotions: 'The way in which passengers and crew were welcomed in Darwin... constitutes, in any way, an anticipated success. A success even if Jakarta physically interrupts, there and then, Lusitânia's route' (DdN).

The coverage of Lusitânia Expresso accentuated the tensions between the public and the private at certain points of the history of the issue in the Portuguese media. The peace mission had a public character: it involved representatives from the civil society (it even carried aboard former Portuguese President Ramalho Eaanes and the daughter of the then President Mário Soares); it aimed to enter the international media's agenda; and it wanted to involve the international political agenda in some shape or form. However, the press (particularly Diário de Notícias) framed the mission through the use of a private dimension, dwelling on thoughts and feelings that were superimposed on the mission's construction. In a way, the mission was separated from its traditional public/political dimensions, that is, the observation of the right of the boat to sail in Portuguese waters according to international law, the peaceful nature of the demonstration, or how the mission tied in with other international or Portuguese policies. Instead, the mission became almost solely constructed through its private/interior dimension – the emotion and courage demonstrated by passengers, the affectionate welcoming reception in Darwin, and the breaking of categorical distinctions between journalist and activist.

At the level of international relations, the Indonesia Foreign Affairs Minister was reported to be continuing his rounds of diplomacy in Europe, in order to reaffirm cooperation with countries which had condemned Jakarta, or in the most extreme cases, suspended trade and military flows with Indonesia. Again, those contrast with Portuguese low-key initiatives at international forums. The international pressure to stop the mission was particularly strong in Australia and Indonesia. The fact that Indonesia managed to stop the Reuters correspondent from boarding the mission by threatening to close the news agency's office in Jakarta demonstrated its strength. Meanwhile, the press noted, the Vatican continued its "silent" policy, whilst at the same time reinforcing East Timorese religious independence before Indonesia's Episcopal Conference.
1992 – The Lusitânia Expresso Peace Mission

ENDNOTES

192 Diário de Notícias, Díli prepara-se para a recepção, March 03, 1992.
196 Diário de Notícias, Esperança e solidariedade para o povo de Timor, March 03, 1992.
197 Diário de Notícias, Lusitânia heads towards the Indonesian naval force, March 10, 1992.
198 Diário de Notícias, , Flores contra canhões, March 03, 1992.
201 Diário de Notícias, Esperança e solidariedade para o povo de Timor, March 03, 1992.
203 Benfica is a Lisbon-based football club, and one of the most popular teams in the country as well as with the Portuguese diaspora. In some ways, it is as much used as a sign of Portuguese identity, especially with the diaspora, as any other symbolic resource.
1992 – The Lusitânia Expresso Peace Mission

214 Diário de Notícias, Portugal e Indonésia chegam a consenso, March 5, 1992.
219 Diário de Notícias, Partidos da oposição criticam estratégia do MNE para Timor, March 16, 2004
222 Diário de Notícias, Camberra não trava "Lusitânia" mas receia novas confrontações, March 4, 1992.
223 Diário de Notícias, Marinha Indonésia espera o barco da paz, March 10, 1992.
226 Diário de Notícias, Preocupações e ameaças, March 06, 1992.
Chapter 10 - 1996 – The Nobel Peace Prize

10.1 Description of the event

On October 1996, the Nobel Peace Prize Committee awarded their annual prize to two East Timorese: Bishop Ximenes Belo, head of the East Timorese Catholic Church, and José Ramos-Horta, the resistance movement’s international representative. The analysis covers both the announcement of the Nobel Prize in October 1996 as well as the Nobel Prize ceremony in December 1996.

10.2 Media and political context

The media context of 1996 was not significantly different to the context of 1992. The competitive nature of an extended broadcasting environment (with more radio and television licences) had gained ground in the Portuguese public space, a trend initiated in the early 1990s.

On the political front, 1996 was somewhat different to previous years. The executive leadership was headed by a different style of governance to that of austere Prime Minister Cavaco Silva. The newly appointed socialist Premier, António Guterres, adopted a direct and open attitude towards Indonesia. He approached Suharto at the first Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in March 1996, to discuss solutions for East Timor. Until then, the issue had always been discussed within the ministerial brief of foreign affairs, through bilateral encounters. After the dramatic events of the 1991 massacre, and until 1996, the Portuguese and Indonesian governments held eight rounds of meetings with little progress.

After the Nobel Peace Prize, the Portuguese government addressed East Timorese leaders as equals. The Timorese Resistance representative abroad, Ramos-Horta, was welcomed to Lisbon’s presidential palace for a dinner in his honour.

10.3 Portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese

The Nobel Peace Prize was a moment when attention turned to the Timorese leadership, here represented by their religious leader and human rights campaigner, D. Ximenes Belo, and Ramos-Horta, a former Fretilin officer who turned into Xanana’s diplomatic representative abroad, after the structural reorganisation of the resistance in 1989.
Bishop Ximenes Belo, who became head of the Timorese Church in 1988, had first made the headlines in 1989. He then wrote to the United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali asking for a referendum on the future of the territory. Aside from his religious duties, Belo concentrated on human rights issues and aid for the deprived population of the island.

Bishop Belo is portrayed through the symbolic narrative of his religious career. He is portrayed as a prophet-like leader leading his congregation to salvation. Under the headline 'A prophet in the path of the promised land', Diário de Notícias creates a fictional study about Ximenes Belo's birth:

Domingos... and Ermelinda, Timorese farmers, rejoiced when their son was born, and named him Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo. The happiness brought by the little child certainly had them dreaming and wishing good luck for little Carlos: a happy life, better than that the world had reserved for him. As beautiful as their prayers might have been, they were far from imagining that the prophet of the East Timor people was rising before them (...) Just like Abraham and Moses, D. Ximenes Belo, a prophet of our time, knows his voice speaks for the future. However, sometimes there is someone listening to prophets in the present, and this time it was in Oslo. That is why, yesterday in East Timor and around the world, the force of good has succeeded. D. Ximenes: he is the seed which will blossom and bear fruits (DdN).

Later, he is described as the 'last prophet of the 20th century':

His words are followed by the Timorese with the same faith that the primitive Christians followed the first bishops that God tested in the catacombs of Rome. To the Timorese, Ximenes is the last prophet of the 20th century and Jakarta knows that. He is the Pope of Timor (DdN).

Expresso acknowledged the political role of the Bishop, and interpreted his religious post as an exercise of balanced diplomacy:

The enormous diplomatic skill in which he thrived on every occasion, balancing himself on the edge of the knife, so that no pretext could be invoked by Jakarta to get him away from Timor (DdN).

[He is] a discreet man when it comes to political intervention, but determined in the efficiency of his actions. As a man of the Church, he went beyond the borders of what was destined to him and became the image of the uprising of the Timorese people (Exp).

The press also profiled the other Nobel Prize nominee, José Ramos-Horta. He was 25 years of age and a prominent leader of Fretilin when the island was invaded. Since then Ramos-Horta had been campaigning for East Timor around the world,
lobbying the US democratic institutions, the United Nations, Portugal and various countries in Southeast Asia. In 1989 he became the international representative for Xanana Gusmão, the council leader of resistance.

The ceremony was created as the stage in which Ramos-Horta would prove his leadership skills, a transitional ritual in which he would be transformed. No longer just a spokesperson of the resistance, he was perceived by the press as a leader of the Timorese with statesman like qualities. For instance, *Expresso* wrote of the ceremony that 'Ramos-Horta came out as a statesman'. He was portrayed by a variety of traits: astuteness, diplomacy, having 'manoeuvring skills', as the following piece shows:

> He is literally the opposite of the Bishop. A politician, a diplomat, used to backstage manoeuvres and to making statements around the world.... Years of diplomatic work do not prevent Ramos-Horta from surprising the international community (Exp).

The paper clearly stressed the difference between the 'serene' and 'discreet' Bishop and the less spiritual and more aggressive political traits of Ramos-Horta. The politics of the two men were defined in polarised, oppositional terms. Whereas the Bishop's diplomacy was safely ensconced within the evangelical configuration of his role, Ramos-Horta's style of diplomacy was on the contrary portrayed as lying within astute political strategy. The nature of this strategy and 'backstage manoeuvring' is private, implicitly mysterious and unaccountable.

Another example of Ramos-Horta's Nobel rite of passage into the role of statesman:

> Ramos-Horta projected an image of firmness and political sense which may have surprised those who viewed him as just the ambassador of a people and the spokesperson of a leader. What we see in him is the promise of a statesman (Exp).

Judgements on his 'style of diplomacy' reinforced the idea of a man who achieved political goals by being, as the popular expression goes, 'as cunning as a fox'. *Expresso* wrote about his style as one of 'perverted creativity', a style that carries an amount of persuasive intelligence. These descriptions wrote a specific history for Ramos-Horta, the history of the 'young radical rebel' who matured into a statesman:

> Little by little, when he toned down the most controversial militant reflections of his late adolescence, Ramos-Horta secured a place as leader of the Timorese with total loyalty for the chief in prison, Xanana Gusmão, to whom he offers the laurels [of the Nobel Prize]. The weight of his 40 years [of age] have emphasised his ability,
astuteness, and the flow of his argumentation, things that matter for politicians
(DdN).235

Diário de Noticias reinforced the stereotype of his unconventional political profile;
it portrayed him as a ‘cowboy’, as a man who made use of bold moves in order to
guarantee his goals: ‘This is the man that both admirers and critics called ‘the
man with the lasso’, until yesterday’ (DdN).236 This wording implied, once again,
that the Nobel Peace Prize changed Ramos-Horta from the radical ‘man with the
lasso’ to a politician in his own right.

Ramos-Horta’s style is described as ‘tough and arrogant’, very unlike the western
understanding of ‘smooth’, gentleman-like, Foreign Service diplomacy. This
certainly seemed to be Diário de Noticias’s opinion:

Ramos-Horta may well be a persona with difficulties in generating spontaneous flow
of empathy. His firm style bears the risk of, here and there, being confused with
arrogance, but only in bad faith or ignorance could one contest the fairness of this
Nobel (DdN).237

The construction of Ramos-Horta as a cowboy, a tough and arrogant man,
dominates the reality of his internationally acknowledged CV and list of contacts.
This is, after all, a man who holds several masters degrees, has been a research
fellow at Oxford and moves at ease within most circles in the USA and Southeast
Asia. The press framing dismissed the life of fundraising and campaigning that
Ramos-Horta successfully began as a 25-year old, building relations with an
international establishment from which he did not originate. He was classified by
his roots as an unorthodox character and the Nobel Prize framed as his ticket into
the established milieu of international politics, what the press understands as
‘acknowledged leadership’.

Diário de Noticias reflected on the absence of another Timorese leader – Xanana
Gusmao. The head of the Timorese Resistance Council was then back in prison:
‘One man will be absent from the ceremony, but present in the heart of all:
Xanana Gusmao’ (DdN).238 Later, it added: ‘even though he has not attended the
ceremony, Xanana, who is in Cipinang jail, has realised that not everything has
been lost and that it is worth fighting (DdN).239

By giving Ramos-Horta the new status of statesman the press effectively secured
him increased media attention, which in turn opened up space for discussing the
resistance’s own proposals for resolving the gridlock of negotiations between
Portugal and Indonesia. Entering the ‘establishment’ of world politics through
winning the Nobel Prize allowed Ramos-Horta to receive special honours in Lisbon. *Expresso* calls his visit a 'state visit':

The 'state visit' of Ramos-Horta

Portugal welcomed the Nobel Peace Laureate with honours of a head of state, and did not deny him any of the support now demanded (Exp). 240

Although the piece is mainly led with Ramos-Horta and his actions and policies for East Timor, the headline chooses to frame it in a way that highlights the sumptuous reception prepared for him by the highest representatives of the Portuguese state. Ramos-Horta asked Portuguese leaders for another strategy for moving forward, an alternative to the talks at the UN, which were achieving nothing. He suggested putting a new motion forward to the United Nations, but requested that Portuguese envoys were sent around the world to negotiate the votes. Ramos-Horta’s title of Nobel Peace Laureate placed him in the media’s hierarchy of institutional sources and allowed him to expand on the resistance’s own peace plan for the territory. In just one paragraph, the same article listed the resistance’s proposals:

'... reducing the armed forces in the territory, freedom for political prisoners, freezing Indonesian transmigration, a fifty per cent reduction in Indonesian civil servants, the reinstatement of freedom of expression and right of association, as well as the right of UN specialised agencies to enter the East Timor (Exp). 241

Ramos-Horta’s new status imprinted on the resistance an increased sense of institutionalisation, and acceptance before Portuguese democratic institutions. For instance, the city of Lisbon presented him with an office in which he could carry out his work when in Portugal. Some other commitments from Portuguese officials were, for the first time, made public as the executive revealed it would aid the resistance’s non-military activities:

The Prime Minister António Guterres, as well as other parliamentary leaders promised Ramos-Horta the inclusion of a sum in the Treasury’s budget, aimed at aiding the resistance... The foundation of peace and democracy will donate IT equipment and broadcasting equipment to the clandestine branch of the resistance (Exp). 242

The reactions of the Timorese community at large were addressed by newspapers. *Diário de Notícias* reported on the atmosphere felt in Dili after the Prize was announced:

Bishop of Dili welcomed enthusiastically by the population
Some 3,000 people welcomed Bishop Ximenes Belo in a climate of great enthusiasm, when he arrived in the Church of Motaél, Dili, one day after being awarded with the Nobel Prize (DdN). It also reflected on the boost given to the resistance in the territory:

Resistance prepares demonstration

In Dili, after D. Ximenes Belo and Ramos-Horta were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize there is expectation surrounding the arrival of the Bishop. Thousands of sweaters with the Bishop’s photo were being sold on Thursday in East Timor’s capital (DdN).

Meanwhile, in Lisbon, the tone of celebrations at Espaço Timor (a social club for the Timorese) was described by Diário de Notícias:

Xanana’s day will arrive

To the mellow rhythm of tebe songs, traditional music and a glass of port wine in their hands, some dozen Timorese shouted cheers to D. Ximenes Belo, Ramos-Horta and Xanana Gusmão (DdN).

10.4 The relationship between Portugal and East Timor

The press digested the impact that the prize would have on Portuguese diplomacy. The papers revealed that this was the third time Portuguese diplomacy had suggested the name of D. Ximenes Belo to the Nobel Committee:

After the rehearsal [the first year his name was suggested], an organised campaign was put together in 1995. The general tone for the campaign was given, as early as January, by the then Foreign Affairs Minister, Durão Barroso, who recommended the nomination of the Bishop to the Norwegian Committee... Surrounded in discretion, Portuguese diplomacy – which never ceased to work in the shadow of the promotion of Monsignor Belo – chose to keep to ‘low profile’ behaviour (Exp).

But while some pieces celebrated the discreet victory of Portuguese diplomacy, Diário de Noticias’s diplomatic analyst Carlos Albino exposed the inefficiencies of foreign policy diplomatic channels. He highlighted the fact that the apathy of Portuguese missions abroad could no longer co-exist with the Nobel Prize:

... present internationalisation of the East Timor issue will be demanding of Portuguese ambassadors in the several foreign capital cities, who should quit their excuses for maintaining a low profile role [which they do] in order to dissimulate their omissions and even negligence. For example, it needs to be said that it was only recently that the important Mexican foreign office received extensive
information about East Timor and that, [as one other example] the Portuguese diplomacy has not shown strength by calling to the attention of the important Brazilian foreign office their ambiguities regarding this matter (DdN).247

Albino emphasized the idea of negligence by recounting how the Portuguese Foreign Affairs Ministry was genuinely surprised at the nomination of Ramos-Horta – not lobbied for by Lisbon – and would not confirm the information even after it had been broadcast in news services around the world. Reflecting on the government’s disbelief over the announcement, Albino wrote:

It is not the case that Ramos-Horta does not deserve it [the Prize], but that the ministry was not aware that his name was part of a list of nominees. As a matter of fact, a Nobel Prize is not won without a proposal backed up by appropriate argumentation. Either the embassy in Oslo was distracted and did not inform Lisbon about what was happening in the Norwegian capital, or if it did, the central services at the ministry played down the information (DdN).248

Political analyst Vasco Rato acknowledged that even though there was no longer room for excuses, the government was failing yet again to capitalise on the public impact brought about by the prize:

It is not understandable why a diplomatic offensive against Indonesia was not launched once the prize was given. At a time when international news corporations, Time Magazine, Newsweek and others placed the issue of Timor with the world's public opinion; and when Bill Clinton is hit by the ‘Indonesian connection’ scandal, the Government opted for silence, and in that sense, it wasted an historical opportunity to promote Portugal’s position around the world (DdN).249

Editors pressed on these very same issues. Diário de Noticias stressed that ‘there are no more excuses’ for Portuguese diplomacy not furthering the issue in the international agenda:

From now on Portuguese ambassadors no longer have a motive to claim ‘lack of international awareness’ to achieve a true internationalisation of the issue of Timor, as many of the them have claimed whenever they are requested to promote the process (DdN).250

Expresso's editorial points out the increased responsibility of the prize for Portuguese policy-making: ‘To the people of East Timor the prize will serve no good if we stick only by happy appraisals (Exp).251

The debate emerged on whether the peace prize would actually set back the negotiations between Indonesia and Portugal. The Prize damaged Indonesia’s human rights record, and Jakarta could well choose to react to this by delaying
procedures at the United Nations. *Diário de Noticias's* editorial pointed out that ‘it is likely that this Nobel will become a factor of disruption and delay the Portuguese-Indonesian dialogue about the future of Timor (DdN).’

Indonesia had failed to comply with the previous agreement with Portugal, where it was decided that Jakarta would build a cultural centre in Dili, for the preservation of Timorese heritage. Given this situation, Portugal was pushed again into a weak position, according to Ramos-Horta:

> Since there has not been any progress, it is politically unsustainable for the Foreign Affairs Minister to go to New York to meet his Indonesian counterpart. The situation has not improved; quite the contrary, it has worsened (DdN).

Indonesia was showing some signs of wanting to change its strategy – immediately after the announcement of the Nobel Prize, Jakarta revealed it was willing to consider a ‘special autonomy’ status for East Timor. However:

> ... the future status of East Timor, in case the President of the Republic wishes to ratify it, will not allow the regional government any decision in matters of foreign policy, taxing and military defence (Exp).

Ramos-Horta said the resistance was willing to discuss a solution for autonomy but only if it was not constrained by Jakarta’s pre-conditions:

> The Maubere resistance is not pleased with the news. It has made known through Ramos-Horta that the ‘autonomy proposal’ can only be an object of discussion if it is not subjected to the acceptance that East Timor is the 27th province of Indonesia (Exp).

The effect of the Nobel Peace Prize on Portugal’s exposure in the world was used as a framing device on a few occasions. Several articles singled out the Portuguese dimension of the issue or the high profile of its leaders. For instance, when describing a television interview for CNN with the Nobel Laureates, the Portuguese President and Indonesian representatives, *Diário de Noticias* singled out the performance of the Portuguese head of state:

> [Portuguese President] Jorge Sampaio was the only individual, out of all interviewees, to deserve applause from the audience (DdN).

Such discourse highlighted the position of Portuguese representatives over all others. One could also interpret the President’s performance based on his proficiency in English, which, of course, demanded no translation from the applauding American audience. Unlike the other interviewees, Sampaio was born
to a British mother and his command of English was as proficient as that of a native speaker.

A similar type of construction was presented on the front page of Expresso. Under the headline ‘Ramos-Horta invites the whole of Portugal to Oslo’, the newspaper wrote:

Ramos-Horta, co-laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize with D. Ximenes Belo, has sent to Oslo the name of eighteen Portuguese politicians who, in his understanding, should be invited to attend the Nobel ceremony (Exp).257

The text universalised the invite as if it were directed to the ‘whole of Portugal’, as if the hierarchy of those 18 politicians contained the collective nation in them. Several texts framed the event with the wider cultural resonance of language as a cultural space where both cultures – Portugal and East Timor – became a symbolic representation of the Portuguese identitarian space in Oslo. Expresso’s editorial, entitled ‘A Portuguese feeling’, explored this framing:

The ceremony of the Nobel Peace award to D. Ximenes Belo and Ramos-Horta was touching. Not only because this was an award for Timor and the fact that the two laureates were Portuguese citizens. But because all countries that speak Portuguese were represented in the audience.

The communion of all Portuguese-speaking people around the Nobel awarded to D. Ximenes Belo and Ramos-Horta was one of the most interesting aspects of Tuesday’s ceremony in Oslo. In the manor room of the city building, where the celebration took place, there was a ‘Portuguese way of being’ in the air.

What happened in Oslo demonstrates two points worth underlying. Firstly, the proof that countries who once belonged to the Portuguese colonial empire have overcome prejudices and misunderstandings and today they take their history proudly. Secondly, it shows that the Portuguese-speaking community has potential worth stimulating and exploring (Exp).258

The editorial stressed the ‘Portugueseness’ of the ceremony and transformed the Oslo event into a locale where the language and culture were dominant; an act of communion between former colonies. ‘Their history’ was defined as the history mediated by Portuguese colonisation and also, the empirical evidence that the ‘prejudices and misunderstandings’ of past exploitation were erased at the time of this ceremony. The editorial interpreted the event as a sign of emancipation from resentful post-colonial politics, and at the same time it erased all differences and united those countries under the discursive arm of the colonial heritage: the language, the indefinable mythical trait of the ‘Portuguese way of being’.
However, others stressed that the history of colonialism was an ‘unresolved’ matter in contemporary Portuguese society. The tone for this debate was set by *Diário de Noticias*:

The guilty conscience of the political power shows its true colours here and there every time the media reveals unbelievable acts by government institutions concerning East Timor. The negligence and the temptation of business is, so many times, stronger than the morals and national imperative of defending people who insist on speaking in Portuguese. It is worth remembering the fate of the public appeal by former Commerce Secretary who called for an end to all imports from Indonesia. The Santa Cruz massacre was alive in the memory of all and [Commerce Secretary] Faria de Oliveira ‘asked’ retailers and consumers to close their doors to anything ‘made in Indonesia’. It was short-lived.

The colonial war remains ill resolved in the Portuguese conscience. The fall of the empire likewise. The only territory that remains in Portuguese hands is Macao, only until 1999, as well as East Timor who will give their lives to defend their culture, their language, which happens to be ours, and their dignity. And these motives are more than enough for Portugal to mobilise and demonstrate this cause as our cause as well. At home, as well as abroad. And because examples should begin at home, perhaps this is a time to look at the Timorese who live in our country. Without shame or a miserable attitude (DdN).  

The editorial condemned the false embargo invoked around the *Lusitânia Expresso* peace campaign (the previous moment of coverage in this analysis) and how it fell flat shortly after its proclamation. Portugal’s declaration of embargo was legally impossible, since the country was bound by EU law on international trade policy. The editorial interpreted a sort of ‘conscience’ that was hanging over the resolution of East Timor, once again used to appeal to the wider cultural resonance of a shared history and language. Portugal getting involved with East Timor would involve the resolution of an ‘ill conscience’. It finally touched on an important point, hardly ever present in the press: the poor conditions in which the Timorese community lived in Portugal, politically under-represented and under-reported, matched the state’s tiny contribution to this small diaspora.

In line with what I had observed in the previous moment of coverage (the *Lusitânia Expresso* peace mission), there was a campaigning tone surrounding the press’s reports of the Nobel Prize. *Diário de Noticias* manifested it not so much through the text, but more through material in its inner pages, in the form of self-congratulatory adverts signed by the paper itself. This style of promotion gained a new form and verged on self-praise for the media organisation itself. For
instance, *Diário de Noticias* printed a one-page photograph of a Timorese displaying the V-sign, indicating victory, with the headline:

We hope that from today onwards newspapers across the world start doing something which we have been doing for many years: dedicate their front page to the East Timor issue (DdN).²⁶⁰

In another instance, *Diário de Noticias* printed a banner which read:

Ramos-Horta and D. Ximenes Belo, may one day not only the Peace Prize, but true peace be with you (DdN).²⁶¹

This campaigning tone surfaced now and again throughout the coverage: at the peak of celebrations, *Diário de Noticias* headlined its front page with slogans such as: 'The future of a nation passes through Oslo today';²⁶² and 'Long live free East Timor'.²⁶³ *Expresso* also indulged in some self-congratulation. Under the title 'Us and the Nobel', the editorial explained how this was also a prize for the newspaper:

... the first interview given by the Bishop of Dili to a news organisation was published, in May 1989, in *Expresso*. ... José Ramos-Horta, Xanana’s restless i.e. ambassador is a regular visit to the *Expresso* news room. All these reasons lead *Expresso* to congratulate itself in a special way with the Nobel Peace Prize (Exp).²⁶⁴

10.5 International relations and East Timor

The press saw the Nobel Peace Prize as the opening of a window to the world, an opportunity to further the cause of East Timor on the international political stage. *Diário de Noticias* explored this sub-theme by headlining 'Nobel shows Timor to the world'.²⁶⁵ East Timor as a vehicle for international publicity was explored in other texts:

An alert for the entire world

The Nobel Prize ceremony could not have been more beautiful nor touching. Ximenes Belo and Ramos-Horta, with their medals and diplomas in hand, have shown the entire world the value of a simple word: freedom.²⁶⁶

Later, an editorial pursued this topic again:

After the acknowledgment in Oslo, the international community cannot ignore the appeal of a whole people who wants peace.²⁶⁷

The extent to which surveillance, threat and restriction of speech were imbedded in the Indonesian apparatus became very clear during the Nobel ceremony, when
two Indonesian agitators were arrested by the Norwegian police in Oslo, and the Bishop was constantly followed by security forces who prevented him from meeting in private with Ramos-Horta. Under the title ‘Indonesia wrecks Ramos-Horta but spares Ximenes Belo, *Expresso* noted:

Indonesia has reacted by launching furious criticisms to the choice of D. Ximenes Belo and Ramos-Horta for Nobel Peace Prize winners. The Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister, Ali Alatas has even said that Ramos-Horta is a ‘nobody’ and that the choice... (Exp).2 6 8

Foreign minister Ali Alatas reacted to the prize by discrediting the international representative of the resistance. Alatas stated that Ramos-Horta is a ‘political adventurer. He only represents himself, but is a clever manipulator who has the support of the neo-colonial policy of Portugal’ (DdN).2 6 9

Compared to previous periods, there seemed to be less attention devoted to the political economy of the relations between different countries and Indonesia. However, Norway, the host country is considered hypocritical by *Diário de Noticias*:

This year’s Nobel is almost as embarrassing to the Norwegian government as it is shocking to Indonesia’s. The relationship between Oslo and Jakarta is a classic example of diplomacy being business as usual. If this year’s Nobel Prize is a shot in the aspirations of Indonesia to annex East Timor, the prize is also a slap in the face of Norway’s diplomacy (DdN).2 7 0

The trend to keep an account of international reactions or developments for the future of East Timor, in this case the reaction to the Noble Peace Prize, persisted, but it occurred less frequently when compared to other moments. In the piece ‘Violent blow to Jakarta’ (DdN),2 7 1 the usual overview of the world’s press was still a feature, with particular attention being paid to those countries that did not present favourable reactions. *Diário de Notícias* singled out the reaction by the German government. Under the headline ‘Bonn reacts coldly to the Nobel Peace Prize’, the text scrutinized the wording of the official statement, which ‘respects’ the decision by Oslo committee. In a sense, the discourse expurgated any country which did not strongly support East Timor. By doing so, it reinforces the self-righteousness of the Portuguese discourse and reaffirmed the position in the hierarchy of Portugal in the ‘crusade’ for East Timor, even when that discourse was strongly symbolic and not matched by actual policies.
10.6 Conclusions

With the Nobel Peace Prize, the portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese turned its attentions to the two leaders: Bishop Belo and the resistance’s international representative, Ramos-Horta. The Bishop was portrayed in the light of his spiritual role. *Diário de Notícias* referred to him as a ‘messiah’, or ‘the last prophet of the 20th century’. On the other hand, *Expresso* acknowledged the political undertones of his role – he was ‘the image of the uprising of the Timorese people’, a man with ‘enormous diplomatic skill’. The political nature of the Nobel was evident with the representation of Ramos-Horta: the operational discourse at play here was one of displacement, of highlighting the negative perceptions associated with Ramos-Horta in the domestic circuit of Portuguese politics. He was referred to as the ‘man with the lasso’, an ‘adolescent rebel’ involved in the early days of 1970s politics. He was a persona, *Diário de Notícias* wrote, ‘who sometimes has difficulties in generating empathy’. However, he was also the man with a solid list of contacts in the corridors of US democratic institutions, European parliaments and Southeast Asian countries, who constantly travelled the world lobbying for East Timor. In a sense, the discourse over Ramos-Horta saw his Nobel Peace Prize as a ‘graduation’ into the world of ‘establishment politics’.

Ramos-Horta was given some state honours when visiting Lisbon and offered an office by the Mayor. His voice had resonance with the press when he spoke of the resistance’s proposals for overcoming the apathy of negotiations at the United Nations, and the resistance’s own plans for peaceful transition into independence. The two personas were described in oppositional terms. On the one hand we had a superlative, evangelical version of the serene Bishop; on the other hand was the portrayal of a politically manipulative Ramos-Horta. I argue that this was done to reinforce the status of Ramos-Horta as someone who for a long time was not allowed into the corridors of Portuguese diplomacy, and, by doing so, the discourse legitimised that exclusion from the ‘established world of politics’. *Expresso* noted that in the mid-1980s Ramos-Horta did not have access to the higher levels of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. When international news reports on the Nobel for Ramos-Horta, whom Portugal apparently did not nominate, came through, the disbelief in the official milieu became a manifestation of the unexpected international status of the man. The Nobel Prize also legitimised the official participation of the Portuguese state in the resistance’s activities, with the government promising Ramos-Horta some funding for humanitarian aid and publicity.
With regard to the relationship between Portugal and East Timor the debate focused on the role of diplomacy in the Nobel nominations. Whilst *Expresso* explained the low-profile campaign by the Foreign Affairs Ministry for the Bishop’s nomination, *Diário de Notícias’s* diplomatic correspondent stressed how removed Foreign Affairs were in the process, for they missed out on Ramos-Horta’s nomination and even ignored it or played it down after the announcement.

At the height of international publicity created by the Nobel editorials stressed the need for Portuguese democratic institutions to push the agenda forward. One analyst stated his dismay at the ‘lack of a diplomatic offensive against Indonesia’ after the Nobel. But the reality of policy seemed to be quite different to the spirit of the Nobel. The award was expected to delay negotiations at the United Nations, while Jakarta tried to bank some credit by suggesting a solution for autonomy, promptly declined by the resistance unless the offer was presented without pre-conditions.

Discourse on the role of Portugal during and after the Nobel constructed a symbolic universalisation – by inviting 18 Portuguese politicians to Oslo, Ramos-Horta was effectively inviting, according to *Expresso*, the ‘whole of Portugal’. Reporting on an interview given by the awardees to CNN, *Diário de Notícias* singled out the applause triggered by the intervention of the third guest of the panel, the Portuguese head of state Jorge Sampaio. Portugal and the Portuguese head of state were thus superimposed over the Timorese space; they became the universal space in which Timorese issues could exist.

The eternalisation and naturalisation of what the press called the ‘shared history’ of Portugal and its former colonies at Oslo created a Portuguese locale where ‘Portuguese language and culture are lived through’. There was an array of interpretations on offer for this shared history. *Expresso* saw the event as an emancipation from resentful post-colonial politics; *Diário de Notícias* commented that colonialism was an ‘unresolved matter’ in the conscious of the nations. Overall, both newspapers naturalised the ‘shared history, language and culture’ which symbolised the link between East Timor and Portugal.

I argue that these types of interpretations read as if post-colonialism in Portuguese mainstream discourse represented the handing back of sovereignty to the people. This handing back of the physical space does not mean that the cultural or linguistic space can be handed back. It is a limited understanding of sovereignty, bound by cultural colonial conceptions which have been symbolically appropriated into the mainstream discourse. Thus, the former colonies will always
be understood not as cultures on their own, but as spaces that exist under the over-arching umbrella of Portuguese heritage around the world.

There was also a tone of self-congratulation by the press, as if the media were self-proclaimed agents of change in the process of East Timor. *Diário de Notícias* printed adverts asking the international press to do ‘something we have been doing for many years: dedicate the front page to the East Timorese issue’; whilst *Expresso* wrote of Bishop Belo’s first interview as being to their newspaper, and described how Ramos-Horta was a regular visitor to *Expresso*’s news room.

Other pieces on international relations brought insight into Jakarta’s surveillance machine, usually fixed in Timorese everyday life. There were reports on restrictions imposed on the Bishop’s movements in Europe, and threats made to Ramos-Horta and his family. There was also the usual round of international press coverage, pointing the finger to those countries with less favourable reactions to the Nobel, such as Germany. Criticism was also directed at Norway, both the host country for the Prize but also a buyer of oil extracted from the Timorese sea by Indonesians and Australians. In a way, the discourse expurgated any country that was not a strong supporter of East Timor, and by doing so reinforced the self-righteousness of the Portuguese state, even if that discourse became purely symbolic because of the lack of consistent policies. It was also incredibly unbalanced, for whilst the press exposed Norway for buying oil from Indonesia, it completely ignored Brazilian dual diplomacy with Indonesia. Brazil and Indonesia carried out a high volume of trade. But, Brazil was part of CPLP, the Portuguese Speaking Community of Countries, and thus safely ensconced in its institutionalised discourse over language and heritage.

ENDNOTES

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228 *Expresso*, Um profeta a caminha da terra prometida, October 12, 1996
229 *Diário de Notícias*, O último profeta do século XX, December 10, 1996
230 *Expresso*, Só se morre uma vez, December 12, 1996
231 *Expresso*, Um prémio para a mesma causa, October 12, 1996
232 *Expresso*, Só se morre uma vez, December 14, 1996
233 *Expresso*, Um prémio para a mesma causa, October 12, 1996
234 *Expresso*, Só se morre uma vez, December 12, 1996
235 *Diário de Notícias*, Verdadeira máquina diplomática com o dom da ubiquidade, October 12, 1996.
1996 – The Nobel Peace Prize

Diário de Notícias, Verdadeira máquina diplomática com o dom da ubiquidade, October 12, 1996.

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Expresso, A 'visita de estado' de Ramos-Horta, October 26, 1996

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Expresso, Indonésia já admite autonomia de Timor, October 19, 1996.

Diário de Notícias, Oportunidade para os Timorenses, December 11, 1996.

Expresso, Ramos-Horta convida Portugal inteiro para Oslo, October 26, 1996.

Expresso, Um sentir português, December 14, 1996.

Diário de Notícias, A festa acabou, a luta continua, December 11, 1996.

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Diário de Notícias, Um alerta para o mundo inteiro, December 11, 1996.

Diário de Notícias, Viva Timor Leste, December 11, 1996.

232

269 *Diário de Notícias*, Indonésia arrasa Ramos-Horta mas poupa Ximenes Belo, October 12, 1996.


272 *Expresso*, Quando Gama recusou recebê-lo, October 26, 1996.
Chapter 11 - 1999 - The referendum on autonomy

11.1 Description of the event

On August 30, 1999, a UN-supervised referendum was held in East Timor to decide whether the Timorese agreed to Indonesia’s proposals for autonomy, accepting that if the offer were rejected, Indonesia would offer independence instead. A total of 98.6% of the registered voters cast their ballot, and an overwhelming 78.5% rejected Indonesian autonomy, effectively paving the way for independence. Following these results, Indonesian-sponsored militias stirred up a campaign of violence against the population, which led to the evacuation of journalists, UN and other agencies workers. On September 15, the UN authorised an emergency peace force to operate in East Timor.

11.2 Political and Media Context

The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Ramos-Horta and Bishop Ximenes Belo in December 1996 was the international consecration of East Timor as an issue of human rights that stood above the politicisation of previous years. The international exposure of the Peace Prize played into the hands of all who campaigned for East Timor - the Portuguese diplomacy included. Kofi Annan’s mandate at the UN as of 1997 brought with it a new improved framework of bilateral talks between Portugal and Indonesia. Kofi Annan promoted a forum of discussion where no pre-conditions were brought to the table.

In the meantime, Indonesia itself was on the brink of deep change in its ancient dictatorship and widely praised economic boom. Between 1997 and 1998 the country witnessed an unusual amount of demonstrations and acts of defiance by academic and military élites as well as student movements. In the transition from 1997 to 1998 the value of the local currency, the rupee, dropped to one seventh of previous levels. Economic instability prompted civil disorder. In May 1998 President Suharto had no other alternative but to resign, his vice-president Habibie becoming the new leader of the country. When in December 1998 the two foreign affairs ministers met to discuss possible avenues for the autonomy of East Timor, nothing indicated that president Habibie would actually put self-determination on the table. But, in response to the domestic political and military
crisis in his government, Habibie did so, by asking for the people of East Timor to choose in a referendum between limited autonomy and independence.

As far as the media environment in Portugal was concerned, the late 1990s saw a consolidation of trends that had been forming throughout the decade: an increasingly competitive environment; the popularisation of the media; and the growth of the tabloid market. Several weeklies died in this tough environment, whilst lifestyle media and the celebrity press boomed. These effects were also felt in the two newspapers under analysis.

Diário de Notícias’s dual editorial style, noted previously, was accentuated in the coverage of the post-referendum days. It consisted of a populist editorial line mixed in with the odd reference piece of reportage. It was difficult to place at a specific end of the market, and better to understand it in its duality. Despite its populist tones, Diário de Notícias commissioned a series of established columnists from science, literature and politics.

Expresso maintained its position as the weekly reference title, in an environment where most other quality weekly paper had disappeared. By 1999, the weekly had made some concessions to changing market trends, namely increasing its lifestyle and celebrity sections. However, it remained an agenda-setting title for larger themes or political stories. But the structure within which its East Timor correspondent operated during that period is a testimony to the precarious financial and labour environment of Portuguese media companies. José Vegar, one of the most experienced war correspondents in Portugal, was being paid as a freelancer due to lack of funds to sustain contracts at Expresso.

11.3 Portrayal of East Timor and the Timorese

The initial euphoria felt by the media in the days that immediately followed the referendum was quickly shed after the serious attacks perpetrated by Indonesian sponsored militia in Dili. The reporting of these violent days was framed around attributes of resilience of the Timorese people in general: they are portrayed as icons of martyrdom and suffering, subject to silent and humble suffering. The ability to suffer and be humble was interpreted by the press as a sign of the collective honour of the nation during this tragic event. What this also demonstrated was the existence of an undercurrent of religious Judaic-Christian discourse which permeated the portrait of the Timorese. The idea of martyrdom itself became a meta-theme for captioning the article’s pieces. For instance, Diário de Notícias used the theme of suffering as a headline to its main piece of
the day, an exact quote from a recent speech by resistance leader Xanana to his people:

'To all of you, brothers and sisters, who are suffering'.

Other pieces used this framing for either descriptions of the situation in East Timor, or even interventions of Timorese personalities abroad, as the next example shows:

D. Ximenes has lunch with the Pope

D. Carlos Ximenes Belo is in the Vatican today to transmit to the Pope what he, after all, already knows. The Catholic church of Timor was significantly wounded. That is why it is necessary to do something to save the hope that still beats in the hearts of the Timorese and, with them transformed into living stones of a church in ruins, to raise what minor Indonesian officials have destroyed.

Of the Timorese who sought refuge at the United Nations compound in Dili when the city was under siege by the militia, José Vegar, Expresso correspondent wrote:

They sat down and began their prayers. I understood I was looking at a defenceless people. But I also understood that I was looking at people who would never capitulate no matter how bloody and prolonged their siege is.

This idea of a nation with an endless ability to resist and suffer was further reinforced by Ana Glória Lucas, correspondent for Diário de Notícias in Timor during the siege:

The hope of the Timorese is endless. Their ability to resist suffering is also endless. As well as their willingness to become a nation in charge of their own destiny and with the ability to always depart from the starting point. Every time one speaks to them one realises how they adapt to the constant dangers.

And Álvaro Morna, correspondent with Diário de Notícias, calls the capital Dili the 'martyr city':

And the anger one feels for not getting a serene last glimpse of Dili, the martyr city.

The discourse on the Timorese as a defenceless, martyred people is reminiscent of Rousseau's classical construction of the 'bon sauvage', mixed in with Christian interpretations of suffering as a virtuous pursuit. The East Timorese were being represented through their naivety and 'inherent goodness'. This characterisation
1999 - The Referendum on Autonomy

was also present in interviews I carried out with journalists about their own experiences on the island.

The media celebration of this Christian martyrdom contrasts with the very nature of the Timorese resistance. The Timorese had not been defenceless for the previous 24 years, for they had relied on the strategically organised, albeit under-armed guerrilla movement and were supported by a civilian network. And the resistance was a group prepared to defend itself, or attack those who hit it. In fact, the resistance’s revenge killings of militia members in late September demonstrated this, at a time when the United Nations multinational force was already operating in the island. The front-page headline in Diário de Notícias was an example of such events: ‘Resistance executed the murderers of religious order – Falintil have killed the militia responsible for the massacre of seven people between Baucau and Los Palos’ (DdN).278

I have argued before that the media were unable at times to conceptualise the Timorese politically, and the coverage of the post-referendum violence highlights this dimension once again. The visualisation of a clearly identifiable and graphically violent Indonesian enemy naturalised this idea of the Timorese as an ‘inherently good people’, decontextualised from their encounters with the Indonesian-imposed structures.

The coverage of the post-referendum opened up a terrain that had been experimented with by the media in 1996: the focus on the Timorese leadership through personalities. Attention now turned to Xanana Gusmão, the leader of the Timorese Resistance National Council (CNRT). After more than a decade fighting in the mountains, and eight years behind bars, Xanana was free to speak openly to the press for the first time. Previous descriptions of Xanana had tended to cast him as a romantic warrior, a poet and painter (two of his hobbies, the latter taken up whilst in prison). Xanana had always been defined in a humanist light, not as a warrior. The strategic and military attributes of Xanana were dismissed in light of his ‘art’: whether it be photography, painting or poetry.

This discourse stemmed from the romantic period: the descriptions of chivalric-like fighters of noble causes and crusades. Such endeavours are humanised under the goal that justifies them. Xanana’s name was often used in media metaphors that compared him to Che Guevara and Nelson Mandela. These men became two highly significant symbols in the recent history of discourse about ideological struggles, which were embodied in the representation of one individual, the charismatic, romantic leader.
This sort of description was found in abundance during September 1999, when the press finally had formal access to interviews, press conferences and photo-ops with the leader. The romantic characterisation of Xanana had never been as dominant and heightened as it was in the post-referendum days, when he was released from prison. Even when Xanana discussed policy and the future of Timor, the media’s preferred framing fell into the romantic discourse.

Clear references to Che Guevara’s fighting ground were made. Xanana was nostalgically viewed as the precious last specimen of a political persona under extinction – the Marxist revolutionary:

The last romantic hero

At a time when the great myth of the revolutionaries seems to have dried up, he [Xanana] relaunched the image of the romantic warrior. The mountains of East Timor were his Sierra Maestra (DdN).279

Another parallel between the Timorese mountains and Cuba’s Sierra Maestra was made in this description of a group of Timorese seeking refuge in the mountains:

A long walk through the mountains ensues. A vertiginous, steep descent, through rocks and ravines. One hour of trekking, guided by a young security man from Fretilin, in his red beret, walkie-talkie in one hand, knife in the other. There is an aroma to Sierra Maestra in the air, with Timorese tones (DdN).280

The perpetuation of Marxist ideals and the revival of Che Guevara’s fighting ground in these media stories carried on throughout 1999, even though Xanana had already abandoned communist policies in the 1980s.

Assumptions about Xanana’s political future did not receive a diverse or in-depth discussion. Instead, most of the media material analysed stated that he was already the President of Timor or was about to take that post, despite the fact that elections for those positions would only take place two years on from the referendum. References to Xanana as being ‘the President’ were also made by some political sectors in Portugal. The naturalisation of Xanana’s future as the president of Timor was done in spite of him stating several times he was not willing to take on that responsibility. Diário de Notícias wrote about Xanana: “I have no ambition to become the president of Timor’, Xanana repeats once again. But nobody can envisage him in any other role’ (DdN).281 Journalist Maria João Rocha wrote in Diário de Noticias of ‘...space Commander Xanana Gusmão, the future president of Timor...’ (DdN).282 Political actors also framed the resistance leader in this light, as Portuguese Prime Minister António Guterres and President
Jorge Sampaio refered to him in a press conference as 'Presidente Xanana' (DdN).283

The idolisation of Xanana was taken to quasi-evangelical status. This was particularly true in the case of Diário de Notícias which borrowed quotes of a almost literary nature from his speeches to print them as headers and headlines during August. Xanana's photograph and autograph took up the whole of the front cover in the October 1 edition. The iconic status of Xanana extends to Diário de Notícias editorial decision of commissioning several articles by journalists and politicians describing their first meeting with Xanana. NGO leader João Crisóstomo, Foreign Affairs Minister Jaime Gama, and two of the paper's own journalists - who interviewed Xanana whilst he was in prison - Manuela Paixão and José António Santos write their own account of 'meeting Xanana'.

Xanana was most of the time portrayed through aspects associated with the private realm of his life - his emotions, gestures, and poems - rather than through the public aspects of policy-making that leaders tend to be accountable for. I had noted this trend in other moments: when the Lusitânia Expresso Peace Mission headed to East Timor in 1992, policy analysis was sidelined by the media. Diário de Notícias was recurrently framing the mission as an event mediated by the private emotions of those who participated. This is yet another instance where the media seemed to be unable to understand the East Timor issue politically.

Diário de Notícias came to master the discursive strategy of 'evangelical Xanana' in the choice of headlines during his visit to Portugal in early October 1999:

Beautiful dreams for Timor to forget the past (DdN).284
Cheering in an ocean of tenderness (DdN).285
Xanana's suave meeting (DdN).286
Sending a hug to Xanana (DdN).287

Regarding Xanana's visit to the Assembly of the Republic [the Portuguese parliament], the newspaper described the moment not as a public state ceremony, but again, as an event which was privately defined:

Yesterday's afternoon at the Assembly of the Republic will remain in history as one of those rare moments in which backstage realpolitik gives way to emotion (DdN).288

The visit to the Prime Minister's office was equally a meeting constructed away from the political realm:
When Xanana spoke, the official moment turned into something else. He began by giving thanks for the solidarity. ‘When we cried, we knew the Portuguese people were crying too’ [he said]. After finishing [the press conference], the Timorese leader stepped outside to the street, and the whole of Portugal was waiting [for him] (DdN).289

The media perpetuated this evangelical discourse about the naturalised, non-elected (already a president), almost divinity-inspired persona of Xanana, who stepped to the streets to the ‘sight of a whole country’ waiting for him. The metaphor built a picture of a country waiting for the arrival of its Messiah. It played with the essentialist version of the Portuguese collective nation waiting for a salvation and reawakening that could only be done through the memories of the defunct empire. East Timor came to signify the symbolism of such imperial reasoning. The rhetoric of the Timorese naturalised connections with Portugal, and, particularly in this case, the symbolic dimension of Xanana’s presence in Portuguese soil is brought forward:

The president of CNRT [National Council for the Timorese Resistance] came to Portugal to thank the Portuguese for their solidarity. He spoke of reconstruction and cried too. Somebody asked him about his feelings of being in Lisbon, welcomed as a hero. The ex-commander, who lived a complexity of feelings, said ‘emotion, longing, everything’ (DdN).290

During a ceremony at the Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa headquarters (CPLP, or Portuguese-Speaking Countries Community), Diário de Noticias framed the story around a two-verse poem Xanana wrote in the guest book. Once again, the political dimension of the visit was completely ignored: the newspaper failed to address issues of cooperation, language policy and the status of East Timor amongst other Portuguese-speaking countries. The language policy agenda, which would prove so politically crucial for the Portuguese government and the future East Timorese administration, was not of as much importance as the construction of ‘Xanana, the poet’. The headline ‘Xanana improvises and Sophia approves it straight away’ (DdN),291 tells the story of how Sophia de Mello Breyner, a prominent poet present at that ceremony, gave top marks for Xanana’s spontaneous gesture.

One of the consequences of such a discursive strategy was the inability to conceptualise Xanana as a political leader. He was portrayed as a leader in a divine conceptualisation of the word, a natural arrival at the post. He was seen as somebody who now needed to prove his ability to use the discourse and the tactics of modern western leaders.
This inability to portray Xanana as a political leader was apparent in the patronising way Oscar Mascarenhas, from Diário de Notícias, reported from the press conference given by Guterres, the Portuguese Prime Minister, and Xanana. Journalist Mascarenhas wrote smugly that he was throwing into the Q&A session a 'booby-trapped' question, as he called it. Mascarenhas asked what type of relations the Timorese Resistance National Council (CNRT) would maintain with other independence movements in the Indonesian provinces of Aceh, Molucas and Papua. In what sounded like a test for Xanana's statesmanship, Mascarenhas explained the objective of his question: 'A man who was in a guerrilla [group] does not get trapped when he has to move on to diplomacy and statesmanship...'. When Xanana finally answered, he said, rather predictably, that he would support all democratic movements in Indonesia, choosing instead to highlight the plight of the entire Indonesian nation. Mascarenhas then gave him the verdict of a statesman: 'This is how one can truly comprehend the talent and conviction of a diplomatic guerrilla fighter and a statesman' (DdN).292

The real policy issues of relations between Portugal and East Timor in a post-referendum context – such as aid, cooperation and other agreements which were addressed in meetings with representatives of the Portuguese state – were barely covered during Xanana's visit, establishing again a pattern of coverage which was apolitical and nationalistic.

11.4 The relationship between Portugal and East Timor

11.4.1 National symbols

During the aftermath of the referendum, and the subsequent civil unrest, Diário de Notícias was particularly keen to see Portuguese currency and military – symbols of Portuguese sovereignty – in East Timor. But the discourse on Portuguese symbols in East Timor also extended to a vision of other national institutions that, according to the same newspaper, should play a role in the territory – namely NGOs and media organisations. The newspaper often headlined on Portuguese institutional missions going into East Timor, even when it was just a possibility rather than an actual fact.

The decision to send neighbouring Australian troops on the first days of the peacekeeping force, followed by a United Nations multinational military mission did not include Portuguese troops from the outset (although they would join later). This did not stop Diário de Notícias constructing a scenario whereby Portuguese military presence appeared as a request from Timorese actors:
Portugal could march into Timor soon (DdN).293

Xanana wants Portugal in the peace force (DdN).294

Falintin Commander wants Portuguese troops (DdN).295

Speculation about the monetary control of East Timor in the transition period (from an UN-administered territory to an independent state) became rife. A story about Banco de Portugal’s (the Portuguese Central Bank) initiative to draw up a plan for sustaining the monetary policy of East Timor during the transition stage struck a chord with Diário de Noticias’s nationalist narrative. Reporting on this monetary plan, not necessarily in line with the United Nations overall transition plan, journalist Luis Naves wrote the piece ‘Portugal prepares the defence of East Timor’:

The likelihood of speculative attacks on and financial siege in the East Timorese economy has appropriate defined reactions: all directions point to the fact that the Portuguese escudo may be used during a brief and transitional period, as the currency for the new nation... If necessary, the central bank is available to support the currency of the new country (DdN).296

Portugal appeared to be the guardian of defenceless East Timor. Other headlines stressed the symbolic importance of monetary control of East Timor. On the news that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had called the Lisbon administration to work in managing the list of foreign donations to East Timor, which Portugal tops as the major contributor, Diário de Noticias’s headline was ‘Lisbon Chosen to [go to] Timor’ (DdN).297

The process that required Portuguese NGOs, as any other NGOs, to request access to East Timor from Australian senior military personnel in the initial stages of the multinational operation was curious to some. Journalist João Pedro Fonseca wrote in a rather defeated and ironic tone: ‘It is now up to Australia to decide when the Portuguese are going in’ (DdN).298

Anger about the level of authority granted to Australia further deepened when the first pool of journalists to land in Timor with the Australian troops excluded Portuguese professionals. The exclusion clashed with the interpretation generally accepted by the Portuguese media of the naturalised relationship between Portugal and East Timor. It also contradicted the self-belief that sections of the Portuguese media held with regard to their key contribution to the Timorese independence process. Regarding this matter Diário de Noticias’s editorial stated:
Interestingly, there are no Portuguese journalists amongst this group of 25 journalists, when Portugal is still, according to UN law, the administrative power [of East Timor]. It is worth recalling that Australia was the only state to ever recognise Indonesian sovereignty in the territory of East Timor (DdN).299

11.4.2 Defining East Timor through Portugal

Diário de Notícias’s editorial line was particularly keen to construct meta-themes defined by the Portuguese dimension of the story, even when the elements of that story which referred to Portuguese institutions or personalities did not occupy more than one paragraph in the text, and were therefore not the common thread that linked the narrative together.

The headline for the story covering Xanana’s first meeting with the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was ‘Xanana would like to go to a Benfica [football] match – Timorese leader will finally visit Portugal, listening to him made [foreign affairs minister] Jaime Gama emotional’ (DdN).300 Reporting on the arrival of Portuguese medical equipment and personnel, journalist Ana Glória Lucas headlined ‘Portuguese flag in Dili: National colours return to the streets of Dili 24 years after the invasion’ (DdN).301 When writing about President Clinton’s speech pressurising Indonesia to allow peace forces in East Timor, the chosen formula for the headline was ‘[Portuguese President] Sampaio invites Bill Clinton’ (DdN).302 This did not reflect the subject of the piece, yet it became the meta-theme for what was just one sentence in the text, which mentioned the Portuguese President’s invitation to Bill Clinton to visit Portugal.

Turning Timor into a Portuguese locale, where the realities of its people and events can only be conveyed through the Portuguese dimension, even if that dimension represents just a fraction of the wider complex realities and actors involved, was a feature of Diário de Notícias’s editorial line in the 1999 coverage of East Timor. It was as if East Timor could not be imagined as a nation per se, even after securing independence. Diário de Notícias could only imagine East Timor through a socially constructed narrative of that territory as a Portuguese space, occupied by Portuguese symbols.

11.4.3 Historic relationships

The post-referendum coverage also presented multiple references to the relationships between East Timorese history and Portuguese history. More to the point, and picking up on the last section, these were references to the dimensions of East Timor history as defined by the once occupying Portuguese
administration. Such constructions are a site of contradiction, for, if on the one hand, the troubles of the Portuguese administration in East Timor were well documented historically (repression, civil rebellions, poor administration and lack of investment in the local economy and education), on the other hand, those did not surface in the overall discourse produced by journalists and opinion columnists alike.

Under the headline 'Timor has always been a topic of convergence', former minister Joaquim Ferreira do Amaral explained in Expresso the shaping of the Timorese nation through a helping 'Portuguese hand':

... East Timor in the third millennium is now a newborn nation which has been taking shape for several centuries, held by a Portuguese hand, but [also] a state born [out of] 24 years of nameless sacrifices and acute crisis' (Exp).303

This idea of a solid, shared history through several centuries was again reproduced in a Diário de Notícias editorial, entitled 'Thank you':

Portugal had five centuries of old debt with Timor. In the past few weeks, that debt has been substantially increased... As if pushed by a powerful spring, the Portuguese mobilised themselves, in spontaneous and unstructured fashion, for a cause which is very much related to our collective memory of the past centuries... Thank you Timor (DdN).304

In the piece 'The roots of a colony', journalist Marina Pinto Barbosa produced an historical account of East Timor, explaining the main events which took place, from the arrival of traders in 1514 up to the present day, but ignoring the Timorese rebellions against the Portuguese administration (DdN).305 Expresso, on the other hand, declined this strategy – it included local revolts against the colonial administration in its chronological account of the history of East Timor. Expresso's editorial line engaged in the common myths of the nation but was substantially distant from the nationalist discourse which permeated the Diário de Notícias coverage, as well as most media outlet's coverage during that period. I shall turn to these distinctions later on.

The instrumentalisation of the historical discourse was taken further when East Timor was elevated to the hierarchy of the most important events in Portuguese contemporary society and politics. A clear example of urging the nation to acknowledge the distinct moment of September 1999 was the popular discourse developed by the media around demonstrations and collective campaigning taking place in Portugal during that month. The wave of popular demonstrations was compared to the 1974 democratic revolution which brought the four-decade
dictatorship to an end. Thus, campaigning for Timor on the streets of Portugal became a form of revolution whereby Portugal could be taken to a new political and cultural stage, just like in 1974. Comparing Xanana’s first visit to Portugal to the return of Portuguese politicians from exile in 1974, Diário de Noticias wrote in its editorial:

With Xanana’s visit to Portugal, many Portuguese political leaders must feel themselves coming back home. Twenty-five years ago they returned from exile, from hiding... (DdN).306

Reflecting on the series of public demonstrations in favour of a UN intervention taking place across Portugal, another editorial elaborated on the reawakening of the country, comparing it to the democratic revolution of 1974:

Portugal was in need of something like this. Not of a tragedy but of a cause which would make us think. And, in that sense, Timor is a therapy. Finally, the country has woken up again. Just like in that liberating morning, 25 years ago, which devolved the reality through the dream to a nation exiled from its own time; so can this nightmare now take us to the discovery of our role in the global world (DdN).307

East Timor became the vehicle for exercising the imagination of a political role for Portugal at a global scale in the contemporary world. The public crowds that awaited D. Ximenes Belo on his visit to Portugal were also drawn in as a comparison to the revolution:

The brief and candid speech by the Bishop of Dili was interrupted by the crowd, who screamed: ‘Timor is a friend, our people shall be with you!’; ‘Timor will win!’ as if, all of a sudden, we were back in the days of 1974 (DdN).308

Still dwelling over the popular movement, columnist João Carreira Bom wrote:

We [the Portuguese] needed a sanctuary to forever redeem ourselves of the colonial past, without glory... A catharsis... Portugal Lorosae is the April 25th of our bad conscience, the supreme moment in which each Portuguese feels like Salgueiro Maia, the release of self-esteem. It resembles the PREC in its innocent stage, with almost everybody willing to engage in activities... May God protect the Timorese. Long live Portugal of the rising sun.309

This time around, Portugal became an East Timorese locale, with the country gaining the Tetum symbolic name Lorosae. Portugal came to embody East Timor by becoming the land of the rising sun, in the original Tetum. Lorosae was the name coined by the media for the territory, a name appropriated from one of Xanana’s speeches in which he referred to the territory as Timor Lorosae. The popular movements were, according to the text, a second revolution comparable
to the first one of April 1974, when military captain Salgueiro Maia led his troops in the overthrowing of the regime. The crowds of the post-referendum in Portugal resembled the PREC (Undergoing Revolutionary Process), an acronym for the months which followed the revolution, when the state became paralysed by a series of coups and counter-coups. Thus, East Timor merged into the political identity of the Portuguese history, even though the histories of both countries are dramatically different and their shared histories arguable. A further use of East Timor as a vehicle for Portuguese essentialist discourse of Portugal was its comparison to another moment of recent history which excited the media and political discourse about Portugal's national projects. Expo '98, the World Fair held in Lisbon, served to rehabilitate an abandoned industrial area of Lisbon, and was compared to the project facing Timor:

It is time for Portugal to take in its hands the rebuilding of East Timor, as it did with rebuilding Lisbon's East Side. Expo-Dili/2000 is the great project defying our collective imagination (DdN).

The rhetoric over the timeless and naturalised relations which existed between both nations was taken beyond than the historical dimensions. It was reflected across different types of journalistic constructions, from descriptions of events to judgements over policy, spilling on to the discourse of the commentators themselves. It was as if the historical connections with East Timor extended to every Portuguese national, regardless of their generation or standing in the social structure of the country. In a way, it became a discursive strategy of unification of people who otherwise were not related within the Portuguese nation. East Timor became a tool of nationalism. The text was rich with such examples.

For instance, in 'The shame of betraying the Timorese', Isabel Stillwell, director of the Sunday magazine in Diário de Notícias addressed the 'national guilt':

Right now, betrayal and shame are the cause for the rage and indignation that keep me awake. I am thinking about the fact that death, the slaughter of the Timorese, is caused by a betrayal, which does not let me sleep...(DdN)

This sense of collective guilt, originally attributed to the patterns of Portuguese colonial and post-colonial administration, was thus transferred to and expressed at an individual level by different commentators. Columnist Manuela Goucha Soares wrote in Expresso:

Portugal has an historical debt towards East Timor: the mobilisation of resources around one of the most important issues of the century, which is the self-determination of East Timor... It is because of this pain that the Portuguese united
their hands in a human chain never seen before, that is why they have held 3 minutes of silence, that is why they have covered buildings and windows in white flags' (Exp).\textsuperscript{312}

To parliamentarian deputy Manuel Alegre, writing in \textit{Expresso}, Timorese independence also meant Portuguese independence from 'colonial guilt':

The occupation of East Timor by Indonesia was the occupation of its own soul. That was the soul that was set free on August 30, the East Timor soul, which is also a bit of our Lusitan soul (Exp).\textsuperscript{313}

It was as if the Timorese independence was defined, rather evangelically, in terms of its 'soul', which again, was taken in paired with the 'Portuguese soul', or a sense of collective Portuguese language.

\subsection*{11.4.4 The naturalisation of Portuguese language}

The media consistently stressed the heritage that linked Timor to its former colonial empire, and one of the traits most commonly referred to was the sharing of a common language, Portuguese.

Plenty of stories are tied in with the sub-text of East Timor as a Portuguese-speaking territory; there was constant reference to the construction of East Timor as a Portuguese-speaking land. Even the opposition leader's proposals to make one foreign language compulsory in Portugal from as early as primary school managed to appeal to a wider cultural frame, as the following editorial from \textit{Diário de Notícias}'s made evident:

Interestingly, Durão Barroso's proposal comes at a moment in time when global television channels are explaining to the world that the Timorese resisted Indonesian invasion for so many years precisely because they prayed in Portuguese (DdN).\textsuperscript{314}

And literary editor Francisco José Viegas wrote:

\begin{quote}
From now onwards, today's Portuguese – those who did not live through the colonial war, those who did not live through other terrors – are aware of the barbarism imposed upon people who speak our language and who suffer with our words (DdN).\textsuperscript{315}
\end{quote}

\textit{Expresso} also engaged in this discursive strategy. On its front page, it printed the headline 'Xanana: our language will be Portuguese',\textsuperscript{316} a meta-theme based not on the content of the interview by and large, but based on one of the many answers given by Xanana in a long interview. No opportunity to stress the language link was missed. Under the headline 'Being able to speak Portuguese
after so long', *Diário de Notícias* revisited an old piece printed in 1998, when Xanana was interviewed in prison by one of their journalists. In that piece, the journalist revealed the first impressions she got from Xanana, and highlighted a passing comment the resistance leader had made about languages:

To the *Diário de Notícias* reporter, Xanana also spoke of how the time wasted in Cipinang [the prison] was gained in learning Bahasa, Indonesia's official language 'because nobody spoke to him in Tetum or Portuguese'. Even though behind bars, he commented ironically: 'It has been so long I have heard someone speaking Portuguese ... some of the words even escape me' (*DdN*).\(^{317}\)

Xanana’s reflection on languages was one amongst many, yet the headline transformed spoken Portuguese into a meta-theme for the entire piece, phrasing a sentence Xanana never actually said in the main text. However, the title read as if Xanana's overwhelming emotion was determined by the opportunity to speak Portuguese. As the text shows, Xanana used it in rather apologetic terms, adding ironically that he was catching up with Bahasa, the language spoken by the educated youthful population of the Timorese capital Dili.

When language was not a meta-theme pronounced in the headlines of newspapers, but instead just a proposition contained in the body of the text, the contradictions of the press discourse came to the fore. In those rare occasions, journalists wrote into the news text the difficulties they were experiencing in communicating in Portuguese. In a story about a patient who could not be properly treated due to difficulties in communication, a *Diário de Notícias* reporter wrote: 'The problem with this patient is communication, since she speaks a dialect nobody knows in Dili' (*DdN*).\(^{318}\) Ironically, that statement belonged to a news piece titled 'Portuguese doctors in demand'. And when writing about the symbolism of East Timor in the narrative of the Portuguese nation, the daily newspaper's editorial stated: '[philosopher] Agostinho da Silva, who shortly before dying learnt Tetum so that he could better understand the Timorese, always maintained that the island was a type of emotional back-up for the nation lost in history' (*DdN*).\(^{319}\)

What the press consistently failed to address was that Portuguese had never been a mainstream language in Timor. Despite that, it tried to portray language as the long-lasting link between the two nations. This anomaly is particularly puzzling when taking into account that even reporters on the ground were fully aware of this falsity. *TSF News Radio* East Timor correspondent Manuel Acácio explained how he had to call different people in East Timor until he found a source that spoke Portuguese, whenever he wanted to confirm a story.\(^{320}\) Daily *Público* East
1999 - The Referendum on Autonomy

Timor correspondent, Luciano Alvarez, said when interviewed about his experience on the ground in 1999:

Only the eldest speak Portuguese, those above 38 years. The young activists attending Dili University speak very poor English. Whenever travelling through Timor, we had a Timorese driver who spoke Portuguese, making communication easier with those who didn't speak it.321

Portuguese was the language of administration before 1975, learnt by the very few who attended school, in a territory with an adult illiteracy rate that ranged between 95 and 99 per cent in the 1970s. Those numbers hardly make a Portuguese-literate population. The very few who learnt the language happened to become the elite behind the Timorese resistance, and their use of Portuguese in messages and documents was a means of bypassing Indonesian intelligence.322

According to a recent report by The Asian Foundation (2001), only 20 per cent of the population speaks Portuguese, the majority of those being male and over 35 years old. Nearly 91 per cent of the population understands Tetum, the mainstream Timorese vernacular language.323 Of those under 25, 83 per cent speak Bahasa, a significant number when taking into account the high percentage of youths in East Timor, demographically in line with Third World population patterns.

11.4.5 Questioning 'the cause'

One of the consequences of such disproportionate and unfocused coverage was that the mainstream discourse of journalists, editors and commentators merged into a rhetoric which became unquestionable and was constructed as a single monolithic bloc for human rights and civic participation. Diario de Notícias was an absolute builder of this rhetoric, which became a green card for sidelining not only critics, but also the forthcoming Portuguese parliamentarian election taking place the following month. The public space became too shrunken to accept voices of dissent regarding the nationalistic tones of East Timor coverage. It also proved too narrow for the domestic political debate concerning the elections.

Timor’s quasi-absolute control of the public debate impacted on the parliamentary elections campaign taking place in Portugal at the time. Diário de Notícias justified its lack of campaign coverage for the elections:

Slowly, the reality is surfacing on the media. Is it worth asking how many news items were sacrificed in the name of Timor? How many political facts were left
behind over the last few weeks? How many sources dried up so that the tears came to flow desperately on the first page?... As for the rest, Timor was also an excuse to wash the Portuguese soul. As a fair cause, it worked. Even in a Freudian way, to forget a few elections which the voters would forget if they could. But they cannot. The [election] televised debates begin, in general, with Timor and then bring us back to domestic politics, which has returned from a prolonged holiday (DdN).324

I have noted before the inability of the press, and particularly Diario de Noticias, to imagine East Timor as a political space. In the editorial above it becomes a psycho analytical space through which politics can be forgotten: the politics of decolonisation ('an excuse to wash the Portuguese soul') and the civil obligations of living in a electoral democracy ('which the voters would forget if they could').

A limited number of commentators argued for a more balanced debate about East Timor, questioning the frequency with which it was covered, the absence of historical insight, lack of critical policy analysis, and biased coverage of the popular movements demonstrating on the streets of Portugal. One of the earliest critics of established consensus in the coverage and public discourse over East Timor was MEP José Pacheco Pereira:

Whoever says Timor and not Timor Lorosae is suspected of being an Indonesian agent. Whoever does not dress in white is eyed with distrust. Whoever criticises the government is told to shut up. Whoever expresses a doubt is hit with the 'national consensus'. Whoever wishes to debate, to analyse, to think, is on the side of militias. Whoever is not 'for' Timor Lorosae is not a good Portuguese citizen. This is what we have come down to.325

Nobre-Correia, professor of media studies, wrote in his Expresso column against the 'patriotic blindness' which had spread through the media coverage:

The Portuguese media have fallen into deep unanimity, emptied of any sense of criticism. The demonstrators stupidly wave the Portuguese flag. They wrap themselves around it. They ignorantly sing the Portuguese anthem. Summing up, giving a good conscience to the tragic and miserable history of colonialism. And the media seek 'comfort' in this good conscience (Exp).326

Historian Vasco Graça Moura was one of the few in the public space who expressed discomfort with the coverage:

We vibrate with the [East Timorese] referendum; we unquestionably support the independence and the intervention of a peace force. But when it was time to adopt a similar process for Africa, many of those who today cheer for East Timor were at the time absolutely against it and won. If in the 15th and 16th centuries we opened an era of trade on a global scale, five hundred years later we did not escape our
irresponsible contribution in turning many great areas of the world into huge cemeteries (Exp).327

_Diário de Notícias_ reacted strongly against critics. Several editorials condemned the 'voices of dissent':

Timor has shown to many intellectuals that the Portuguese hold values and are able to fight for great causes... Regardless of the opinion of some gentlemen's own sense of self-importance Timor will not only carry on the front page, it will also serve as a trigger for great changes in Portugal. Dear politicians and intellectuals, after Timor nothing will remain the same. As became obvious during this campaign, the people are tired of the court. And the jokers who serve the court (DdN).328

The extraordinary example Portugal is giving to the world is upsetting a few minds. They criticise journalists' lack of impartiality, speak of propaganda, lament the lack of interest for domestic politics and exhaust themselves repeating banalities about the behaviour of the Portuguese people. They are bitter men, supposedly opinion leaders, who for centuries have been trying to be important and who, now, watch dazzled and remain seated whilst a nation is being reborn. It is true. The rebirth of a nation. Portugal, ladies and gentleman, did not need your wise advice in order to dress up in white, stop for three minutes and drown the world in its indignation. If Timor Lorosae cannot wait, you might as well remain seated (DdN).329

The text alludes to symbolic gestures adopted more or less by different groups throughout the country in showing solidarity for East Timor: dressing up in white for a day as a call for peace, a three-minute silence homage to the victims. Another editorial dwelled on the anguish the critics would have felt in face of the public demonstrations in Portugal:

There is anguish and a sense of guilt for not participating and fighting vehemently in the extraordinary wave of commotion and solidarity with Timor Lorosae. The [parliamentary election] campaign has started, will be going on the road for a few days, but will be interrupted so that Portugal can welcome Xanana Gusmão. The Portuguese, with or without party, will show once again that they are decisively and without any self-interest by the side of the Timorese, however tough that might be for some, whether it upsets the minds watching over the luso people.... Timor is once more a national cause. A cause through which Portugal is reborn...(DdN).330

However, _Expresso_ set itself on the margins of the mainstream discourse, and criticised the prominent consensus in its editorial:

It is important to keep in mind that, no matter how crucial some causes are, no matter how fair and humanitarian they present themselves to be, the _national causes_ are dangerous. They are dangerous because they shut down all doubts and
stigmatise the critics. The seed of totalitarianism lies in the national causes [emphasis in the original] (Exp).331

The orthodoxy generated in the post-referendum days was successful in guaranteeing a platform of symbolic display which was permanently mediated. Live TV broadcasts, continuous 24-hour radio special editions on East Timor, public announcements of collective actions – demonstrations, fundraising, collective behaviour of a symbolic nature, such as dressing up in white – occupied the public space almost totally. The forthcoming Portuguese parliamentary election scheduled for the month that followed the referendum became sidelined.

However, the shrinking of the public space was not only a creation of the media. Some political parties cancelled their parliamentarian political campaign to turn their attentions to East Timor. For instance, Bloco de Esquerda, a left-wing coalition with few deputies but substantial media appeal, began their own campaign activities for East Timor.

The blurring of conventional borders between the political campaign and the series of collective solidarity events further reinforced this perceived space as one which was unified, uncontested and, therefore, universalised to a national level. Thus, contesting the symbolic attributions of the discourse on East Timor at the time turned into a denial of the very foundations of the Portuguese nation. Dissent was harshly criticised and publicly limited, as Diário de Notícias editorials prove it.

11.5 International Relations

11.5.1 Portugal versus the rest of the world

The coverage of international relations and how that impacted on East Timor was polarised. On one side Portugal was perceived as an absolute advocate of East Timor’s right to self-determination; on the other side the whole of the international community – taken as a single, monolithic entity with no regional, political or national variations – was oblivious to the plight of the Timorese nation. This strand of public discourse found a natural avenue in the pages of Diário de Notícias, and became a favourite theme amongst commentators. Writer Ruben de Carvalho said in Diário de Notícias:

[I am in] an airport three hours away from the atmosphere of emotion and commitment currently in Portugal. The newspaper pages or the TV images in other countries and other languages make it brutally clear that, even if it is true that
Timor has never been so talked about, we are far from assuming that the Maubere people’s tragedy has changed profoundly the cold cynicism and aggressive selfishness [of the] very same ‘international community’. (DdN)\(^{332}\)

The lack of widespread outrage in other capital cities was to this commentator a sign of the calculating nature of international relations as a whole. A headline about a pro-Timorese demonstration in Brussels expressed surprise when that the participants included other nationalities: ‘Cheers and Candles for Timor in the heart of Brussels – In front of the Indonesian Embassy, in the centre of Brussels, the end of the massacres was called for and not only by the Portuguese (DdN).\(^{333}\)

Crime writer Francisco Moita Flores interpreted the number of public demonstrations in Portugal as a sign of a different type of political culture, above and beyond the usual patterns of strategic diplomacy characteristic of the contemporary regime of international relations: ‘It is good to know we are still humans. After all, the cynicism of empty words, of hard-policy making, has not destroyed us’ (DdN).\(^{334}\)

The rhetoric of a simplistic, stable logic which divided diplomatic active Portugal from the rest of the world could not be more misleading. As I have noted before (see page 76), Portuguese policy was always inconsistent, both in its discourse and practice, and fluctuated between non-existence and middle-ground solutions for autonomy without independence. This sort of discourse was tied in with another strand of public opinion: the idea that it was Portuguese diplomacy, the media, and a two-week period of demonstrations in Lisbon that made independence possible. An example of these underlying beliefs was provided by a Diário de Notícias editorial urging collective action in order to change the course of events in Timor: ‘Portugal cannot go to sleep. That is why Portugal has to, once more, go back to [the streets and] cause indignation in the world. That is why Portugal has to say stop to the speed at which everything is being destroyed [in Timor] (DdN).\(^{335}\) Another editorial wrote: ‘... those who survived the genocide set up by the murderers of Jakarta, deserve everything from Portugal and that unqualifiedly international community who watched, from the benches, the brutal cleansing operation set up by the Indonesian army’ (DdN).\(^{336}\)

Sometimes this type of construction appeared disassociated to its juxtaposition to Portuguese positions, addressing other western nations and their roles as a whole body of policy. Another example of this was:

The Timorese people have deserved to be happy for a long time. Now they have the legitimacy to demand energetic measures from the hypocritical, civilised and wealthy world (DdN).\(^{337}\)
Columnist João Pereira Bastos also wrote:

Let the world powers, turned into powerless, remain aware of their interests, but then do not let them speak to us about human rights (DdN).\(^{338}\)

The segregation of international actors in this wide and linear representational space created by the press, and in particular by *Diário de Notícias*, led to the articulation of judgements about specific organisations with international powers, such as the United Nations, or the international peacekeeping force in East Timor. Commenting on the UN's resolution to send a peacekeeping force to East Timor just two weeks after the civil unrest started – a record decision in the history of United Nations practice –, *Diário de Notícias* wrote that 'the security council has given Timor a treatment of exception, deciding more effectively than would be usual (even though the reaction has not been as speedy as the Timorese deserved and Portugal would hope for)' (DdN).\(^{339}\)

This sort of discourse brought many contradictions to the fore. Despite the many unfavourable editorials and columns about the American administration, the factual reporting of events in New York and Washington sometimes contradicted the anti-American stance of mainstream opinion:

Richard Hoolbroke’s [USA ambassador in the United Nations] voice, who pressed Indonesia to change its conduct immediately, was a precious ally of Portuguese diplomacy at yesterday’s meeting. Hoolbroke accused the head of the Indonesian army of being directly responsible for the massacres (DdN).\(^{340}\)

11.5.2 Indonesia and East Timor as separate spaces

I have hinted before at the incomplete landscaping of Indonesia by the media under analysis. I have also touched on how lack of understanding of the complex relations competing at the heart of the Indonesian modern state seriously undermined the coverage of East Timor. Assumptions made by the media, particularly in the news stories produced by *Diário de Notícias*, constructed a picture of East Timor as a nation disconnected from the political complexities under which the formation of the Indonesian state came about. Apart from isolated stories about specific events or decisions taken by the Indonesian state and the military regarding East Timor, or generalisations regarding the economic dynamics between Indonesia and the developed world, the press by and large ignored the status of East Timor as one of the many sites of conflict co-existing in the Indonesian archipelago. These unreported and yet critical spaces of understanding included the portrayal of the Indonesian government and an
appreciation of the complex and distinguished political, religious and social aspirations in different islands within the archipelago.

Mostly, the Portuguese press failed to address East Timor as one of the many territories in Indonesia struggling for self determination (others included Aceh, Irian Jaya, Molucas, Sulawesi, Borneo), and overlooked the fact that the whole of the Indonesian nation lived under the repressive regime inherited from the long-standing dictatorships of Sukarto and Soharto, instead juxtaposing the oppression of the East Timorese against a collective, non-defined, but stigmatised 'Indonesian' nation.

An opinion column by writer Francisco Moita Flores tackled these reflections:

[Xanana] has told us of his great solidarity towards the Indonesian people who, according to Xanana, is suffering much more than his own people. And we feel a bit uncomfortable. We, who have objectified that same Indonesian people in the cynical face of Alatas [Indonesian foreign minister], who have imagined them in the brutal military coldness style of General Wiranto [the armed forces general], who have felt them to be murderers, barbarians and cruel [people], [however] they deserve from commander Xanana words of forgiveness and fraternity. Nobody has taught us to be that pure (DdN).341

The text acknowledged the types of generalisations constructed about the Indonesian people as a whole, but yet again declined the possibility of framing this as political analysis. Instead, it turned the mainstream discourse on Indonesia into a text which was dependent on private and moral judgements. Thus, when Xanana highlighted the oppression of the Indonesian people he was not making a political statement, but instead demonstrating his great qualities of humanism and reconciliation ('forgiveness and fraternity'), something nobody taught 'us', the Portuguese nation.

Another instance of this type of construction came through José António Santos, journalist for Diário de Noticias. Santos published an open letter to Xanana, thanking him for broadening the journalist's perspective on the conflict, in an interview he had done with the Timorese leader in prison years before. In 'A hug to Xanana', he wrote:

I want to thank you for what I have learnt with you in the Cipinang prison: the detached and deep insight which I then learnt to use to think about the problem of Timor and its relationship with Indonesia (DdN).342

Journalist Santos further reinforced this point, when he himself was interviewed by another Diário de Noticias reporter on his experience of meeting Xanana:
Despite being detained, he has helped me understand Indonesia better, the need to build bridges. Xanana Gusmão has an ability to look further, deeper. When my daughters learnt I was going to Cipinang [prison], they 'warned me' that they did not want presents made in Indonesia. Xanana smiled. Serenely he said to me 'we cannot choose our neighbours (DdN).  

A sense of the inability of the journalist and the commentator to pursue this analysis of relations between East Timor and Indonesia emerged. Xanana took the role of enlightening and clarifying what would seem to be fairly basic notions of international relations and the political working of societies to the men in charge of relaying those realities to the public – the journalists and the commentators.

Contrast the positions in *Diario de Noticias* with the broad scope of stories about Indonesia in *Expresso*. These included a story about the independence movements in Aceh and Irian Jaya. There was a piece about the unfair treatment of Catholicism across the country: the violence against civilians in some regions contrasted with the high status enjoyed by the Catholic Church in the education system and amongst the Indonesian elites. Another piece explored the forthcoming elections for the Indonesian popular assembly and the different forces that made up the Indonesian opposition. The striking difference between *Expresso*’s editorial line and that of *Diario de Noticias* can not only be explained through *Expresso*’s alignment with more established conventions of broadsheet journalism, but also seems to result from its practices. *Expresso*’s staff for the East Timor story included José Vegar, a journalist with previous experience of reporting from war zones and Tony Jenkins, a New-York based international correspondent for established organisations like the BBC. What this indicated was a strong difference between the investments both media companies were prepared to make in news production. Whereas *Diário de Notícias* relied on in-house journalists from a range of non-specific backgrounds, *Expresso* got its copy from journalists whose careers reflected a global perspective on local affairs, experience with Anglo-saxon schools of journalism (as in the case of Tony Jenkins) and a proven record of war reporting (as in the case of José Vegar).

**11.6 Conclusion**

During the violent days of post-referendum East Timor, the *representation of East Timor and the Timorese* was constructed through the impact the conflict had on the people. Factual reporting focused on disappearances, murders, and the situation of refugees, building a discourse about the endurance of groups under
oppression. In this case, the Timorese were persistently seen as sufferers, even martyrs, as a defenceless and powerless people who would always reserve a smile for ‘the foreigner’, a discourse reminiscent of Rousseau’s mythical construction of the ‘bon sauvage’.

In spite of facts showing the ability of the Timorese to fight back strongly against their oppressor – such as the revenge killings against the militia in September – the post-referendum days presented yet another instance where the media were unable to construct the Timorese politically. The depoliticisation of the East Timor story stretched its boundaries to engulf those with obvious political roles, such as the resistance leader Xanana Gusmão. Xanana, who inspired the ideological conversion of the resistance in the late 1980s and led the guerrillas for around ten years, before becoming a political prisoner, could not be conceptualised in the public space as a political actor. During his visit to Lisbon, the press described him through intimate, humanist traits: Xanana the poet, Xanana the man unable to speak ‘realpolitik’, Xanana the man who ‘spoke emotion’. He was also portrayed as a romantic, Che Guevara-like leader, and evangelically as the natural leader of the Timorese: a messiah, a divine icon in Portugal. Xanana was watched by the press as he graduated from ‘poet and guerrilla fighter’ to ‘statesman’. The real policy issues of relations between Portugal and East Timor in the post-referendum context – such as aid, cooperation and other agreements which were addressed in meetings between Xanana and representatives of the Portuguese state – were barely covered during his visit, establishing again a pattern of coverage which was apolitical and propagandist. Sometimes the naturalisation and evangelisation of Xanana was not solely a product of the press – both the Prime Minister and President of Portugal addressed him as President Xanana in official functions.

As to the relationship between Portugal and East Timor, there was a great deal of attention paid to the display of Portuguese national symbols in East Timor. Diário de Noticias stood out in this campaign, in opposition to Expresso, whose editorial line refused to join the bandwagon of nationalist nostalgia. Diário de Noticias created stories that used the symbolic arena where Portugal was imagined through East Timor: there were headlines about the Portuguese escudo becoming a transitional currency; the time that would take for different Portuguese organisations to join the United Nations forces, including the military, the press and aid organisations. None of these were facts of any consequence, simply news pieces created by the paper to feed the nation-building dimension of the East Timor story.
Considering that Portugal became the second largest donor to East Timor (the first was Japan), the early headlines in Diário de Noticias indicated a reluctance to be outdone by other countries in the process of reconstruction. The daily newspaper often transformed symbolic elements of Portuguese culture – such as language, flags or Portuguese nationals in the territory – into meta-themes headlining its pieces, even when those headlines did not reflect the real subject of those pieces. It also omitted, unlike Expresso, the history of revolts against Portuguese colonisation, and reinforced the idea that the history of East Timor was carried through 'Portuguese hand' It compared the arrival of Xanana in Portugal to the arrival of Portuguese political exiles in the country following the Lisbon democratic coup of April 1974. The popular demonstrations which ensued on the streets of Lisbon in September 1999 were compared to 'that morning of the revolution' of 1974. Through semantic transformations, Portugal became Portugal Lorosae in Diário de Noticias. The addition of this Tetum name further extended the symbolism. This time around, it was not just East Timor that was imagined through its Portuguese dimension. This time Portugal too could only be celebrated in collective union through East Timor (as in when Diário de Noticias declared that East Timor was a 'catharsis' for Portugal). The discourse thus moved in and out of these two spaces, Portugal and East Timor, in terms of ideas of national identity.

The public outcry on the streets of Portugal was interpreted as an event for a world audience, aimed to attract international attention for the crisis in East Timor. It was also compared to Lisbon’s Expo '98, an international event which excited the nationalist discourse that year. The shape in which this space was imagined used other non-political attributes: they were labelled by commentators as 'catharsis', 'Freudian moments', 'liberation' and 'awakening' of the 'national soul', as if the country could be conceptualised only through a psychological dimension rather than a sociological or political one. It was as if the historical connections with East Timor extended to every Portuguese national, regardless of their generation or social standing. In a way, it became a discursive strategy of unification of people who otherwise were not related within the Portuguese nation. East Timor became a tool of nationalism. The democratic revolution of 1974, Expo '98 and the post-referendum violence in East Timor in 1999 were united and related to each other despite their very different political meanings. They only worked together to the extent that they provided a concrete defined space for imagining the nation of Portugal.
Another dimension of the way the relationship between the two countries was imagined explored the Portuguese language in East Timor. This relationship (whose construction had begun at the time of the events of The Santa Cruz Massacre) had definitely matured in 1999. The linguistic link was often used in headlines, and was commentary to substantiate the unquestionable identitarian and historical connections between the two nations. Outside those construed headlines, opinion-making texts and editorials, the press consistently failed to address the fact that Portuguese was never a mainstream language in Timor. In spite of that, it tried to portray language as a powerful and enduring link between the two nations. The situation was particularly puzzling when journalists on the ground and long-time correspondents of East Timor became aware of the limited use of Portuguese on the island through their day-to-day news-gathering routines. Journalists interviewed by the author expressed the difficulty of finding Portuguese-speaking interlocutors, and statistics showed that only between 11% and 20% of the population was speaking Portuguese in 2001 (The Asia Foundation, 2001). Most Timorese expressed themselves through Tetum and several other local dialects. Presently, the population of the East Timor enjoys diverse linguistic resources: their sentences are permeated with Bahasa, English and Portuguese semantics (Brito and Martins, 2004).

The possibility of presenting alternative readings during the press coverage of the post-massacre days was sidelined, as was the presentation of linguistics in the territory. The very few commentators who expressed concern for the consensual, non-critical and apolitical nature of the coverage, on the eve of a parliamentary election in Portugal, became a reinforcing symbol of the universalisation of East Timor as a Portuguese cause. Thus, contesting the symbolic attributions of the discourse on East Timor at the time turned into a denial of the very foundations of the Portuguese nation. Dissent was harshly criticised and publicly played down, reinforcing the propagandistic tone that made newspapers, political parties and institutions jump on the East Timor bandwagon. Expresso set itself aside from this sweeping nationalist wave, claiming ‘national causes’ were too close to ‘totalitarianism’.

The editorial lines on interpretations of international relations and East Timor were unequal between the two newspapers used in this analysis. Diário de Notícias pursued a polarised view of those relations. On the one hand Portugal was taken as an absolute advocate of East Timor’s right to self-determination, and on the other hand the whole of the international community – taken as a single, monolithic entity with no regional, political or national variations – was
portrayed as oblivious to the plight of the Timorese nation. International relations in this sense were driven by a simplistic, stable logic which divided diplomatic, active Portugal from the rest of the world. This view could not be more misleading. As I noted in Chapter Four, Portuguese policy was mostly inconsistent both in its discourse and practice, and sometimes fluctuated between non-existence and middle-ground solutions for autonomy without independence. Besides, this take on international relations had already been a pattern in the coverage of the *Lusitânia Expresso* Peace Mission.

The monolithic interpretation of international relations also concealed the contradictions that existed within the symbolic Portuguese space celebrated by the media text. That same space, rather than promising an arena of Portuguese communion around the world (in the sense that East Timor was pictured by the press) actually contained incoherent positions. For instance, Brazil had a delicate position in relation to East Timor – it supported Portugal’s stance, but it also benefited from a substantial economic trade with Indonesia.

This sort of discourse was tied in with another idea that it was Portuguese diplomacy, the media, and a two-week period of demonstrations in Lisbon that made independence possible. Indonesia itself was not fully comprehended as a large political empire in Southeast Asia and a site of permanent regional and political conflicts. Sitting on the other end of the spectrum, *Expresso* demonstrated proficiency in making this discourse available to its readers, whereas the assumptions lying at the heart of the news stories produced by *Diário de Noticias* constructed a picture where by East Timor became a nation completely disconnected from the political complexities that underpinned the Indonesian state.

I noted before that *Diário de Noticias*’s editorial style mixed both elements of tabloid and broadsheet journalism, and as such it would be wrong to classify it strictly as a tabloid title. However, *Diário de Noticias* was a good barometer for the increasing number of populist titles in Portugal, a trend that leaked into television news. In some ways *Diário de Noticias* represented the increased populist public space.

Populist versions of international relations reflected the work carried out by *Diário de Noticias*: apart from isolated stories about specific events or decisions taken by the Indonesian state and the military regarding East Timor, or generalisations regarding the economic dynamics between Indonesia and the developed world, press interpretations by and large ignored the status of East Timor as one of the many sites of conflict co-existing in the Indonesian archipelago.
ENDNOTES

273 Diário de Noticias, 'A vós todos, irmãos e irmãs, que estais sofrendo', September 13, 1999.
274 Diário de Noticias, D. Ximenes almoça com o papa, September 13, 1999.
275 Expresso, O último dia no inferno de Dili, September 11, 1999.
276 Diário de Noticias, The endless hope which unites all Timorese, September 28, 1999.
277 Diário de Noticias, Adeus a uma cidade à beira de renascer das cinzas, September 28, 1999.
278 Diário de Noticias, Resistência executou assassinos de religiosos, September 28, 1999.
279 Diário de Noticias, O último herói romântico (Suplemento A história de um povo mártir – Timor), September 30, 1999.
280 Diário de Noticias, Um café quente nas montanhas de Dare, September 27, 1999.
281 Diário de Noticias, Xanana: a luta continua, October 01, 1999.
282 Diário de Noticias, Aplausos num oceano de carinho, October 02, 1999.
283 Diário de Noticias, A sabedoria que se ganha na prisão, October 02, 1999.
284 Diário de Noticias, Sonhos lindos de Timor p'ra esquecer passados, October 02, 1999.
285 Diário de Noticias, Aplausos num oceano de carinho, October 02, 1999.
286 Diário de Noticias, O suave encontro de Xanana, 02.10.99.
287 Diário de Noticias, Um abraço para Xanana, October 02, 1999.
288 Diário de Noticias, Aplausos num oceano de carinho, October 02, 1999.
289 Diário de Noticias, O suave encontro de Xanana, October 02, 1999.
290 Diário de Noticias, O suave encontro de xanana, October 02, 1999.
291 Diário de Noticias, Xanana faz improviso e Sophia aprova de imediato, October 02, 1999.
292 Diário de Noticias, A sabedoria que se ganha na prisão, October 02, 1999.
293 Diário de Noticias, Portugal pode avançar mais cedo para Timor, September 26, 1999
294 Diário de Noticias, Xanana quer Portugal na força de paz, September 14, 1999.
295 Diário de Noticias, Comandante das Falintil querem tropas portuguesas, October 04, 1999.
296 Diário de Noticias, Escudo prepara a defesa de Timor, October 03, 1999.
300 Diário de Noticias, Xanana gostava de ver um jogo do Benfica – Líder Timorense vai finalmente visitar Portugal, September 29, 1999
301 Diário de Noticias, Bandeira Portuguesa em Timor, September 29, 1999.
302 Diário de Noticias, Sampaio convida Bill Clinton, September 22, 1999.
1999 - The Referendum on Autonomy

303 Expresso, Timor sempre foi um tema de convergência, September 25, 1999.

304 Diário de Notícias, Obrigado (Suplemento A história de um povo mártir – Timor), September 30, 1999.

305 Diário de Notícias, As raízes de uma colónia, (Caderno A história de um povo mártir – Timor), September 30, 1999.

306 Diário de Notícias, A metamorfose de Xanana, October 02, 1999.


308 Diário de Notícias, E o povo votou pela folha do tabaco, September 22, 1999.


310 Diário de Notícias, A metamorfose de Xanana, October 02, 1999.


312 Expresso, Em nome de uma dívida, September 11, 1999.


314 Diário de Notícias, Editorial, September 01, 1999.


316 Expresso, A nossa língua será o Português, October 02, 1999.

317 Diário de Notícias, Poder falar Português ao fim de tanto tempo, October 01, 1999.

318 Diário de Notícias, Médicos de Portugal são cada vez mais procurados, October 03, 1999.

319 Diário de Notícias, A metamorfose de Xanana, October 02, 1999.


323 There are some 15 vernacular languages in East Timor (Hull, 2000).

324 Diário de Notícias, Timor Freudiano, September 22, 1999.


327 Expresso, Mais um grande cemitério sobre a história, September 11, 1999.

328 Diário de Notícias, Os bobos da corte, October 04, 1999.


330 Diário de Notícias, Votar sabiamente, September 27, 1999.


332 Diário de Notícias, Timor visto lá de fora, September 10, 1999.
333 Diário de Notícias, Aplausos e velas por Timor no centro de Bruxelas, September 15, 1999.
334 Diário de Notícias, A grandeza dos ofendidos, September 14, 1999.
335 Diário de Notícias, Timor vale tudo, September 24, 1999
336 Diário de Notícias, Lutar até ao fim, September 13, 1999.
337 Diário de Notícias, Respeito, September 03, 1999.
338 Diário de Notícias, As medidas que se impõem, September 12, 1999.
339 Diário de Notícias, Castigar os criminosos, September 21, 1999.
340 Diário de Notícias, Indonésia cada vez mais perto do ponto de não retorno, September 12, 1999
341 Diário de Notícias, Grandeza dos ofendidos, October 04, 1999.
342 Diário de Notícias, Um abraço para Xanana, October 01, 1999.
343 Diário de Notícias, 'Não se podem escolher os vizinhos', October 01, 1999.
344 Expresso, Um país dividido, August 28, 1999.
345 Expresso, Escolas e hospitais expulsos com a igreja, September 18, 1999.
Conclusion

Life Cycles of the Issue of East Timor

The research project pursued the question of how the East Timor issue-culture broke into the public space and the stages it went through before it became fully legitimised. Both press coverage and political discourse over East Timor were virtually non-existent during the 1970s, when the issue was blocked by its ideological undertones. According to Blumer’s definition of the life cycle of issues (1971) (see page 32), East Timor went through an uneven and slow process of emergence in the 1980s, when fluctuations in political commitment jeopardised its legitimisation. Governments of the 1980s acted between policy statements that either spoke of full independence for East Timor or the less ambitious terms of autonomy from Indonesia. However, presidential commitment to East Timor changed from 1986 onwards, when newly elected President Mário Soares included the issue in his speeches and day-to-day practices. As noted before, East Timor became intertwined with the presidential profile in very public terms, a fact which certainly contributed to East Timor’s placing in the media (see page 78). This emergence was reflected in other areas of political life, with a parliamentary committee for East Timorese affairs being set up in 1982 and an improved diplomatic machine.

Around the same period, three different non-governmental organisations were set up to lobby for the independence of East Timor, inscribing the issue into the agenda of civic forums. In addition, the slow but progressive alignment of state institutions (the presidential, executive and legislative offices) around East Timor established a mode of consensus for the territory. However, I argue that this consensus was more a discourse of national propaganda than a coordinated effort between state institutions. The research points to instances where these institutions disagreed over policies for East Timor (as with the social democrats’ attempts to delete the ‘independence of East Timor’ from the constitution in the late 1980s); it highlights the inconsistency with which the issue was handled politically; and it gives clues to situations where dissent was politically contained in order to reinforce the idea of national unity (this containment would also occur later on in the press discourse).

Press coverage of East Timor was scarce throughout the 1980s, and the number of dedicated correspondents was limited to two journalists who, without editorial
or political support, struggled to follow up on the story. East Timor's place in the media agenda was still far from the top. For instance, *Expresso* only moved East Timor from its international to national pages in 1986.

The massacre of Santa Cruz in 1991 precipitated the *full legitimisation of the issue* of East Timor, which had until then been stuck between a stage of emergence and partial legitimisation. It ultimately led to a third stage of the life-cycle of the issue-culture defined as *mobilisation for action* (Blumer, 1971), when East Timor became a topic of discussion for the public at large and generated debate. These stages followed the political positions taken in Portugal in the aftermath of the Santa Cruz massacre, which resulted in the state's most public position until then: the presidential office declared a day of national mourning with all Portuguese flags at half-mast. The massacre generated a degree of widespread mobilisation within new constituencies, particularly when the *Lusitânia Expresso Peace Mission* organised major fundraising events.

The final stages of Blumer's life-cycle (1971) do not apply quite so neatly to the issue-culture of East Timor. The *official plans* of the Portuguese state for East Timor fluctuated again between surges of diplomatic action and moments of no activity whatsoever. In addition, *official plans* and the *implementation of those plans* depended largely on progress in negotiations with Indonesia, something over which Portugal had only partial control. Nonetheless, the Portuguese state proved to be more ambitious after 1991. In 1992 it blocked a trade agreement between the EU and Indonesia, and it continued to lobby for a Timorese Nobel Peace Prize which finally materialised in 1996. In 1998, the Portuguese government seized the opportunity opened by the collapse of Indonesia's regime and negotiated directly with Jakarta. The *implementation of plans* — which was ultimately a state of independence for East Timor — finally concluded when Portugal pressurised the United States executive into talking Jakarta out of East Timor.

**The struggle for access and meaning**

By defining East Timor as an issue-culture (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989), the research looked at the ways in which different groups acted to gain authority over the terms in which East Timor was framed. The project also took Wolfsfeld's view (1997) that issue-cultures are a matter of competition between different actors for a place in the media's agenda. It assumed that media representations are related to the contest for political control, and looked at the strategies and meanings devised by different sets of actors in the definition of those
representations. I analysed the discourse and strategies of the Portuguese state establishment, as well as resources utilised by challenger groups like the Timorese resistance and non-governmental organisations. I also incorporated elements of the media's practice and routines in the analysis, since those had an effect on the construction of East Timor.

In the previous section I outlined the progressive establishment of the issue-culture of East Timor within the Portuguese state structure and its presidential, executive and legislative ramifications. But how was the issue understood by these institutions before its legitimisation? East Timor was for long represented through the post-dictatorial divisions between the Portuguese left and right. In 1970s Portugal, East Timor was seen as an issue of the Marxist left-wing fringe party dynamics, and not regarded as the national issue it would later become. The understanding of the Timorese struggle was confined to the politics of Fretilin, the Timorese Marxist party. But the resistance moved towards less divisive politics throughout the 1980s. Fretilin exchanged its Marxist manifesto for social democracy and gave control of the guerrilla forces to an over-arching movement of resistance that included all parties – thus, the National Council for Timorese Resistance (CNRT) was born. These changes resulted in the Portuguese state’s institutional acceptance of the resistance; in turn, the resistance benefited from better contacts and aid. As a challenger group, the resistance effectively changed its message in order to strike cultural resonances with larger themes. It constructed a media package that had wider resonance with the media. It changed a Cold War story into a human rights narrative, and it did so in quite deliberate ways. An example of that was the way in which the resistance represented Xanana as the 'last of the great romantic warriors' and maximised his exposure to the media. Xanana fitted in well with the ready-made media frame of the under-resourced mountain leader who single handily leads his men against a powerful military machine, and so he fed the media's appetite for individual and charismatic narratives. In many ways, the research shows that East Timor could only be legitimised, and framed, outside the political divide. In other words, East Timor could only be framed as an apolitical issue.

By transforming the ideological struggle into an issue of human rights, the resistance was also able to work in contact with the Portuguese state. In this sense, Wolfsfeld’s model for challengers might be applicable not only to the field of political communications, but also to the realm of political institutions themselves, in that frames of understanding have the potential to change relationships between actors.
Conclusion

In addition to restructuring its political message, the resistance benefited by challenging existent frames related to organisational changes and division of labour in campaigning, communications and media activities. Both NGOs and the media pointed to gains in access to sources and stories brought about by these changes. By organising demonstrations, creating video messages and staging embassy assaults in Jakarta, the resistance engaged in a relationship of competitive symbiosis with the media.

The struggle of the resistance was not only a struggle for meaning, but also, and quite literally, a physical struggle for access to the media. Tight political surveillance and a territory closed off to the world meant a long, learning process of media literacy and technology. The resistance’s experience suggests that challengers of the status quo can benefit quite dramatically from access to technology and media education.

The research documents the relationship between the media and another set of challengers – Portuguese NGOs campaigning for East Timor. It concludes that the challenger’s success was largely dependent on the professionalisation of their media activities and that, in the words of Wolfsfeld, its chances of accessing the media increased when they used effective media packages. That was the case with the second and most successful group of NGOs analysed (Lusitânia Expresso and Bloco de Esquerda/Olho Vivo) which demonstrated what Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) call a relationship of competitive symbiosis: they utilised the media for mobilisation, validation and scope enlargement in return for drama, conflict and action. These NGOs gained immediate access to the media agenda, whereas the first group of NGOs founded in the early 1980s faced a long battle for media recognition.

The first group of NGOs used conventional media techniques (press conferences and press releases) to little effect, and struggled to get information about East Timor printed in the media, even though they held contacts for sources and stories. These organisations noted that access to the media changed with the Santa Cruz massacre of 1991 and with the legitimisation of East Timor in Portuguese politics. I suggest this change came about for two reasons, which in the end benefited the second and most successful group of NGOs as well. Firstly, from the 1990s onwards the political and media discourse in Portugal created a frame for East Timor that, in the language of Gamson and Modigliani (1981), used cultural resonances that touched larger themes, such as the discourse on Portuguese identity and world heritage. Secondly, the Portuguese policy on East Timor in the 1990s had legitimised the issue and turned it into a matter of
national consensus, providing the context for the media’s agenda-setting of East Timor. This relationship confirms current scholarship on media and issues of foreign policy, and the view that policy makers are the main agents in triggering the coverage and framing of international issues (Strobel, 1996; Bennet and Manheim, 1993; Livingston and Eachus, 1995; Wolfsfeld, 1997). As O’Heffernan (1991) suggests, the media informed policy and might have at times set up the pace of policy-making, as with the events of September 1999, but the coverage of East Timor and international intervention occurred because policy was already in the making (see detailed discussion on page 114).

The research also considered media framing in the wider context of the routines and practices of the Portuguese media in the coverage of East Timor, and the relationship of the media with other actors in the political contest for the representation of the territory. Whereas during the 1970s and for the most part of the 1980s only two correspondents followed the issue of East Timor, the numbers increased in the transition to the 1990s. The context had changed, and conditions for reporting improved: Indonesia had opened the borders of East Timor to foreign visitors; the resistance had improved its networks of communication to the outside world; and the Portuguese state had legitimised the issue in the policy agenda. The combination of these factors helped to build what Tuchman (1978) calls the web of facticity and brought members of the Timorese resistance into the network of news sources. The situation changed dramatically: the high number of stories in the media during 1999 contrasts with the silence of the 1970s, and the difficult editorial negotiations experienced by the two journalists covering East Timor back then.

A number of journalists to whom I talked during my research held strong opinions about the role of media organisations and individual journalists in promoting self-determination. That perception builds a picture in which it was the media, and not the politics, that changes the story. I argue the opposite. For the majority of the coverage analysed, the media reflected the political framings produced by members and institutions of the state over East Timor. There is an exception, or nuance, to this finding. In 1975 and 1981, the press showed signs of being more progressive than the state in their representations of East Timor. Expresso reproduced the maps of meaning produced by the challenger group Fretilin and their proclamation of independence, when the state refused to do so. And, in 1981, both newspapers tried to move the debate away from the political blame game of 1974—5 politics, to a discussion over the history of colonisation and the long-term future of East Timor.
Conclusion

The research shows that media organisations were prepared to negotiate their routines, and that journalists redefined the deontological boundaries of the profession from the 1990s onwards. These negotiations allowed journalists and editors to print non-confirmed stories, campaign for East Timor and write a larger number of their own personal narratives on the story. They justified these practices through their sense of mission, through the romantic pursuit of ideals, through the nature of investigative journalism, and by defining the terms of editorial decisions through humanist morality (even if that turned media organisations and journalists themselves into subject of news, as it did in 1999).

Redefining boundaries is not a strategy particular to the Portuguese media system. What is significant here is the contrast between these negotiations in the 1990s and the media’s reluctance to break East Timorese sources into their web of facticity during the 1980s, at a time when they pursued conventional routines instead. I am not trying to argue that the Portuguese newsnet is a cynical structure, intentionally geared towards deception; what I am claiming is that the unevenness in which East Timor was portrayed was due to contradictory and changing media practices, rather than motivated by the media’s self-proclaimed quest for the freedom of East Timor. As I noted before (see media power and political change on page 114), the media’s belief in their own power is negated by the omissions in reporting the Kraras massacre in 1983. In addition, the organisational belief in campaigning for East Timor peace in September 1999 further highlights the differences in practices between the 1980s and the 1990s.

Furthermore, the experience of these journalists raises questions about the narratives the media built to represent issues without what Tuchman (1978) called the conventional web of facticity – a clearcut newsnet of sources and institutional speakers. It also exposes the fragility of the news media once the framework in which it was conventionally structured is withdrawn. If, on the one hand, coverage became problematic due to lack of physical access to East Timor, one the other hand, the research shows that if the cultural resonances of an issue are strong enough, the news media will do away with conventions in order to fit their off-the-shelf frames on the story.

This problematic type of coverage results directly from organisational bureaucracies and the structure of media industries (Elliot and Golding, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). The low levels of resources and specialisation in the journalistic profession had an impact on stories. These conditions mean that stories could float according to the circumstances of the moment, rather than being the output of clear editorial strategies. For instance, Diário de Notícias’s appointment of
António Sampaio as the Australian correspondent resulted in one of the biggest stories of the 1990s being handed to an inexperienced 17 year-old. Another example came through the differences in narrative between the stories bought from foreign correspondents by Expresso, and those written by Portuguese reporters. Whereas pieces by Jenkins and Nairn framed East Timor in the context of its region and voiced criticisms of Portuguese foreign policy, Portuguese writing on East Timor was ethnocentric and often failed to capture the Indonesian context and inefficiencies of Portuguese foreign policy. In the language of Gans (1980), Portuguese journalists were over over-zealous in trying to fulfil their role as builders of the nation. These findings also confirm Graber's views (1989) on additional pressures faced by correspondents of international affairs, in that they negotiate national security and their sense of nationhood against news stories. In the case of East Timor, this was not so much a case of national security, but the idea of a national reputation getting in the way of critical reporting.

**Media representation of East Timor**

**Portrait of East Timor and the Timorese**

The representation of Timorese politics in the press is uneven throughout the years. Whereas in 1975 the Timorese party Fretilin had an established position as a news source - largely because it held resonance with Marxist sections of the Portuguese media - its voice disappeared in the 1980s, with the odd exception for reactions to United Nations debates.

*The Timorese would have to wait for the 1990s to emerge again as a legitimate voice. However, the representation of Timorese politics was again uneven, and actions of legitimate Timorese leaders were often represented in a de-politicised narrative.* In the latter part of the 1990s, when critical moments of discourse intensified, the public initiatives of leaders like Xanana Gusmão, Ramos-Horta and Bishop Belo came second to the contextualisation of their private personas. Thus, Xanana Gusmão was represented as a messiah and a poet on his visit to Portugal; Ramos-Horta defined as 'the man with the lasso' or a 'rebel adolescent' upon receiving the Nobel Peace Prize; and Bishop Belo portrayed as a prophet. Nonetheless, all three men embodied the sphere of the political: Xanana was in regular contact with the press and political leaders across the world during the 1990s; Ramos-Horta was the diplomat with no state; and the Bishop’s activities were defined by constant defiance of Indonesian authorities.
This narrative effectively changed the status of these leaders once they came into official contact with Portuguese leaders. Thus, Ramos-Horta's dinner in Lisbon as a Nobel Laureate marked his entrance into the 'established world of politics', and Xanana Gusmão's visit to Portugal in 1999 became a ritual whereby he proved his statesmanship. It was as if these men could only graduate into the realm of state politics once they had received the blessing from their former colonisers. In the language of Santos (1994) Portuguese politics are imagined here as the centre, as the country holds the power to institutionalise leaders of the so-called Portuguese-speaking world.

Timorese politics were often represented as a monolithic entity rather than a diverse and often contested territory. When Lusitânia Expresso arrived in Australia, Diário de Noticias reported on Timorese party divisions that had existed since the 1975 civil war. This was a rare glimpse into the contested field of Timorese domestic politics. The discourse of the populist press, which as I have noted became a dominant force in the Portuguese media panorama (and was certainly visible through the narrative of Diário de Noticias), painted the picture of the Timorese as a unified group of people on the way to independence. That sort of synecdoche blocked the effective exploration of political divisions that are presently shaping democratic development in East Timor, a country which sings to many political tunes.

The relationship between Portugal and East Timor

The research pursued the question of how pervasive the relationship was between contemporary discourses of Portuguese identity and media representations of East Timor.

As I noted in the analysis of critical moments of discourse East Timor could only enter the agenda again once it had been turned into a domestic issue. For instance, the 1981 secret report on East Timor was politically framed as a debate between the Left and the Right and their different versions of history for the decolonisation. As a result, this was not a debate on East Timor per se. The United Nations debate on East Timor in 1982 was another example of this domesticisation: it was framed politically as a diplomatic affair between Portugal and Indonesia, and as an example of a good working democracy operating under national consensus, and not so much centred in East Timor. The transformation of East Timor into a domestic issue gained a new dimension in the 1990s. East Timor became a domestic issue in the sense that it provided wider cultural frames of reference that linked East Timor to the larger narrative of Portuguese identity.
These representations of East Timor could not distinguish between what Santos (1994) called the imagination of the centre and the realities of the country itself; blending all elements into a wide spreading Portuguese speaking space. Or, in Anderson’s words (1983), Portuguese nationalism was imagined through East Timor, in that it provided the arguments for the communion of identity as an extension of the past empyreal project.

I observe at length how this discourse was articulated in the analysis of the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre, during the 1992 Lusitânia Expresso peace mission, during the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony and again during the post-referendum days of 1999. The permanent references to East Timor as a Portuguese-speaking nation were misleading; in reality less than 20% representation of the population spoke Portuguese (according to the most conservative data). In this sense, the press played an active role in the building of Lusofonia, what Lourenço (1999) referred to as the contemporary equivalent of colonialism. Moreover, it contributed to the imagination of Portugal as a centre of universal culture and political weight, allowing the country to fight its fears of being on the periphery of Europe’s economy and its political decision-making. In addition, the linguistic narrative is an active process of invention of history, in the words of Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992).

The press’s re-imagination of the Portuguese Empire through East Timor borrowed from the luso-tropical ideology of colonialism developed during the Salazar years. Cahen’s work (1997) looked at the institutionalisation of the luso-tropical ideology in present days through the Community of Portuguese Speaking Territories, or CPLP. The research suggested that this ideology was also practised in the current day-to-day media discourse. For instance, Diário de Notícias represented East Timor as a territory in comfortable co-existence with its colonial past, by printing historical chronologies which omitted mentioning local rebellions against Portuguese rule. The newspaper often turned Portuguese projects, language and heritage into meta-themes for news pieces.

I pointed before to the framing of East Timor as an issue of national consensus in Portugal. This line emerged in 1982, and has been repeated by politicians and editorials ever since. Its origins are historically located, when turmoil in Portuguese politics called for a unifying narrative. East Timor was permanently used as a bastion of national union, even when the terms in which that union was expressed were unequal. As I noted before, any dissent related to the East Timor euphoria of 1999 was harshly dismissed by press editorials and columns. Besides, and as some of the interviewees noted, criticisms of policy was kept at bay from
the state institutions themselves. *East Timor could only be represented by the media as a national cause.*

*Consequently, the media representation of Portuguese policy became progressively synecdochic.* The representation of the symbolic was superimposed on the representation of actual policy on a number of occasions, particularly by *Diário de Notícias*. For instance, the outcry for a nation that “prayed in the same language” was superimposed on the badly managed cancellation of the Portuguese parliamentarian visit to East Timor and the slow reaction of Portuguese officials after the massacre. Similar processes occurred during the 1982 United Nations debate and the 1992 *Lusitania Expresso* Peace Mission.

**International relations and East Timor**

The coverage of international relations and its impact on East Timor was not prominent, and was generally detached from the Indonesian context. Nonetheless, coverage of international issues seemed to increase from the 1970s to the 1990s. This increased coverage did not necessarily represent a step forward, as *Diário de Notícias’s* narrative on international relations demonstrated. Often this resulted in considerations over ‘good’ and supportive Portuguese policy versus ‘bad’ or dismissive positions by other countries, a discursive strategy used to legitimise the Portuguese state higher moral ground in campaigning for East Timor. Again, this discourse was reminiscent of the Empyreal period, when the country framed its colonialism as a form of humanism and used it to profess its superiority in face of international isolation. In contrast, the international coverage of *Expresso* benefited once again from its different routines, and the way in which it often relied on foreign correspondents’ pieces to build an international perspective.

The independence of East Timor was hard to envisage without wider changes in Indonesia, and that made the absence of Indonesian themes particularly critical. The negotiation for a referendum was only possible when Suharto left office and the country entered an economic crisis that jeopardised its international relations. And yet, East Timor was, for the most part, seen as a separate process, detached from the larger process of Indonesian democratisation.

**Further questions**

I offer some final considerations on questions generated by the research’s findings. I noted that Portuguese essentialist discourses had a strong presence in
the day-to-day writing of the media, which could be partly be explained by recent
history and the regime's ideology for sustaining a dictatorial and empyreal
ideology. What seems more problematic is the way that discourse is still rooted at
the heart of institutions. It is equally unsettling that the 30-year old Portuguese
democracy has not been able to interact creatively with these discourses.

The research shows that essentialist versions of identity and the imagination of
the centre actually increased from the 1970s to the 1990s. This discourse was not
confined to the press (and to semi-populist titles like *Diário de Notícias*). It
encountered powerful ramifications in the journalistic culture of television news;
partly explained by the present Portuguese media environment, whose diversity
has been affected by harmful media policies over the last 20 years. The vibrancy
of new broadcasting channels and press titles experienced in the early 1990s was
short-lived; the present media environment has been shrunk due to excessive
concentration in media ownership. Some media companies are indirectly owned
by the state, in what seems like a setback for the media's independence. I
propose further research into the relationship between a less diverse media
panorama and the increasing prominence of an ethnocentric discourse on
identity. The Portuguese media case sheds light on the risks of badly shaped
media policies in countries with recent democratic histories.

The structure of the media industries also seems to be amplifying the role of
Portuguese journalists as nation-builders. The representation of East Timor as a
vehicle for imagining the centre of political control appears to be at play in other
instances of international exposure. There is scope for research into recent events
where these strategies were in place, namely Lisbon's World Expo in 1998, the
European Football Championship in 2004, and the recent nomination of Prime
Minister José Barroso as European Commissioner.

The research opened up arguments about the way colonialism and post-
colonialism are reinvented when nations fluctuate between different forms of
occupation. Anderson (1993) once noted that East Timor had disproved his theory
on print capitalism as the driving force behind nationalism. East Timor is not a
capitalist society and literacy is low; its nationalism rose against the fierce
Indonesian occupation and fostered the development of the mainstream local
vernacular. Paradoxically, Indonesian persecution of Portuguese symbols
increased the importance of those symbols in the wider sense of cultural identity
of the Timorese. This was not the case in the 1960s or 1970s, when Timorese
nationalism developed against Portuguese occupation. The elite of the new
independent nation selected Portuguese as its official language in 2002 (alongside
Tetum), on the basis that it would provide a 'natural' cultural distinction from its mighty neighbour Indonesia. This case suggests specific research into the dynamics of territories under successive occupations, and how those occupations can change the maps of meaning on colonialism and post-colonialism.

The development of the East Timorese resistance structures and communications engages with themes of globalisation and the media in new ways. Whereas the most pessimistic strands of discourse on international communications highlight the dominance of western cultural frameworks and media genres in the Third World, the Timorese resistance's relationship with those media open up different possibilities. International information systems play a substantial role in societies under tight political surveillance, and enable the supply of important sources of non-censored information about the world. The Timorese resistance used western broadcasting services and on-line content as tools of information about their political strategy. Access to that information was critical in a political campaign which needed up-to-date and uncensored information on world affairs. In addition, international broadcasting services operated as tools of media literacy, and provided knowledge on forms of democratic speech and protest. Current debates about the reform of the public broadcasting system in Britain cannot ignore the positive role institutions like the BBC World Service play in those areas of the world still fighting for their universal rights. The story of the East Timor resistance puts forward the case for transnational media as an important sphere of citizenship and human rights.
Appendix One

List of Interviewees

Political Staff


NGO Staff


Resistance Staff


Journalists

Adelino Gomes, chief feature writer, Público, Lisbon, 06.09.2000.
Rui Araújo, journalist, RTP Television, Lisbon, 04.10.2000.
Maria de Lurdes Vale, political sub-editor, Diário de Notícias, 15.09.2000.
Guidelines for interviews with political staff

Policy and diplomacy
Could you describe the policy for East Timor?
How do you characterise shifts in that policy?
How do you relate different policies to different governments/presidencies?

Press relations
What strategies/guidelines were in place for communicating with the press?
How would you describe the relationship of your office with the press?
Would you say journalists were dependent on you for information on policy and diplomacy?
Do you think your message got across to the news media?

Role of the news media
Can you think of situations where the media affected the course of policy?
How important do you think the media were to the government regarding this policy?

Guidelines for interviews with NGOs and resistance staff

Organisation
What is the story behind the founding of the group?
What types of activities did you organise?
Did you have somebody assigned to deal with the news media?
How was your organisation funded?

Messages and strategies
What was the central message of your campaign?
How do you compare your message to that of other groups?
Did the group debate the role of the media and group strategies to access the media?

The relationship between the news media and the group
To what extent did the media have an influence on the groups and its activities?
To what extent did the presence of reporters influence what happened during your activities?
Do you think the media influence decisions made by the group?

Which lessons have you learned from dealing with the news media? From your experience, which strategies succeeded which didn’t when you were working with the media?

Guidelines for interviews with journalists

Organisation

Could you describe your experience as a journalist?

For how long have you been covering East Timor? How has your experience of coverage changed over the years? Which stories did you cover directly from East Timor?

The newsnet

How did you get information on what was happening in the territory?

How would you describe your relationship with the Timorese?

Were there specific people appointed by the Timorese to deal with the press?

Which other groups or institutions were providing you with information?

What was your relationship with these organisations?

What was the relationship amongst reporters?

The coverage

What type of constraints did you face in the coverage of the story?

In what way did these constraints interfere with your coverage?

What kind of guidelines did you have from editors?

To what degree would you say East Timor was used as a political platform?

Do you think there were moments in which the coverage of the media affected the way events unfolded?

To what extent did you identify with the subject you were covering?

Guidelines to interviews with editors

How was the coverage of East Timor organised over the years? (Please specify routines, number of people assigned, investment in resources, etc.)

What directions did you give to journalists for this story?

Did you, as an editor, maintain contacts with different organisations involved in the issue?

To what extent did you identify with the subject you were covering?


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