



**Centre for Democratic Institutions**

**Managing Transition in East  
Timor Workshop**

Australian National University

26-29 April 1999

**Background**

The resolution of the ongoing problems in East Timor remains a major challenge not only for Indonesia but also for neighbouring countries and the international community as a whole.

During the past six months, events in East Timor have moved rapidly. In February 1999 President Habibie offered to give the province special status within Indonesia, which would involve 'wide-ranging autonomy'. At the time the President ruled out the possibility of a referendum on the future of East Timor, saying instead that should the offer of special status be rejected, the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) would be asked to determine whether East Timor would remain Indonesia's 27th province or be given independence. This reversed long-standing Indonesian policy in relation to East Timor, and was the first indication that Indonesia might be prepared to let the province go. In ongoing talks held under the auspices of the United Nations, Portugal insisted that the East Timorese people should have the opportunity to determine their own future through a referendum five or ten years on.

By April 1999 a referendum asking East Timorese to decide between independence and autonomy seemed inevitable, but the likely timeframe was months rather than years. On 5 May Indonesia and Portugal signed an agreement that provided for a popular ballot to take place on 8 August 1999. East Timorese, both within the territory and outside, would be asked to vote on the following question:

Do you accept the proposed special autonomy for East Timor within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia? **ACCEPT**

Or

Do you reject the proposed special autonomy for East Timor, leading to East Timor's separation from Indonesia? **REJECT**

As the negotiations unfolded in Jakarta, New York and Lisbon, violence spiraled out of control in East Timor as human rights abuses and massacres occurred across the territory. Much of this violence was attributed to pro-integrationist militias claimed in some quarters to be armed and supported by factions within the Indonesian Armed Forces.

Whatever the outcome of the August ballot, be it independence or autonomy, the people of East Timor are facing a new political future while being subjected to ongoing and deep division, violence and intimidation. Against this backdrop, the need for dialogue among East Timorese is urgent.

### **The Managing Transition in East Timor Workshop**

In April 1999 a three-day workshop, held at the Australian National University, sought to contribute to resolving East Timor's ongoing problems and to explore possibilities for the future. The workshop was convened by the East Timor Study Group, a group of East Timorese academics committed to finding peaceful solutions to East Timor's problems, and was managed by the Centre for Democratic Institutions. The Faculty of Asian Studies and Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, both from the Australian National University, were associate hosts of the workshop. The workshop was co-funded by the Centre for Democratic Institutions and the Ford Foundation.

The ANU workshop was the fifth in a series convened by the East Timor Study Group. Previous workshops have been conducted in collaboration with the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, the Peace and Conflict Resolution Program in the School of International Service at the American University, Washington, and the Research Institute for Democracy and Peace, Jakarta. This approach is one of second track diplomacy. Those attending the workshops do so in their personal rather than their organisational capacity, with the aim of engaging in frank and open discussion of a range of sensitive and difficult issues away from the public spotlight.

The ANU workshop was attended by 31 participants: 25 East Timorese living in East Timor and in diaspora and six non-East Timorese Indonesians. The participants represented the spectrum of political views and included members of the East Timor Study Group, the Catholic Church, CNRT (Conselho Nacional de Resistancia Timorese, National Resistance Council for an Independent East Timor) and pro-integrationist activists.

During the first morning of the workshop, a number of people, largely members of the East Timorese community in Australia, gathered outside the venue to protest the inclusion of pro-integrationist activists, particularly those who may have been associated with militias, in the workshop. Members of the East Timor Study Group, CNRT and other workshop participants held discussions with the protestors in an effort to convey the objectives and the importance of the workshop. The protests demonstrated the levels of commitment, emotion and pain that shroud the problems in East Timor.

### **Issues and themes**

The overall theme of the ANU workshop was 'Managing Transition in East Timor'. As the workshop programme suggests, a wide range of topics and issues were discussed.

The first day of the workshop focussed on the latest political and economic developments in Indonesia, particularly as they relate to East Timor, in East Timor itself, and at the United Nations. The contribution and participation of Mr Mark Quarterman of the United Nations was invaluable and provided workshop participants with comprehensive and practical insights into the role of the United Nations and the negotiations taking place under its auspices.

Another important set of issues addressed on the first day of the workshop were those of relating to cease-fire and disarmament. Mr Rhys Puddicombe, who was closely involved in the Bougainville disarmament process on behalf of the Australian Government, provided workshop participants with an overview of the Bougainville experience. Mr Puddicombe noted that in Bougainville was disarmament symbolic of progress towards a peace settlement rather than an end in itself. It is one step in securing a return to law and order and normalcy, and was important for stability and confidence. The process of disarmament cannot be successful without the cooperation of those disarming. Lieutenant-General John Sanderson, formerly of the Royal Australian Army and Force Commander of the United National Transitional Authority in Cambodia, spoke on the experience in Cambodia and elsewhere. General Sanderson observed that a number of countries have gone through the difficult process of disarmament. In some countries, such as Zimbabwe, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mozambique, the process has worked. In others, such as Angola, Cambodia, Somalia and Rwanda, it has not. General Sanderson emphasised that the key to a successful disarmament process is trust. Also essential is an independent, neutral and high quality verifying organisation. The experiences and knowledge of Mr Puddicombe and General Sanderson provided the workshop participants with a basis from which to consider the challenges facing East Timor in the area of disarmament.

The second day of the workshop focussed on issues relating to transition. Mr Michael Maley from the Australian Electoral Commission provided a comprehensive overview of the United Nations experience in Namibia, where the elections were held from 7-11 November 1989 to elect a Constituent Assembly mandated to write a constitution for an independent Namibia. Mr Maley described the Namibia mission as arguably the United Nations' most successful multi-dimensional peacekeeping mission, and one which served as a model for the later transition in South Africa. The success of the Namibian operation was due to a number of factors:

- Independence was agreed upon by all parties;
- Negotiations had occurred over a period of the years;
- Negotiations had produced a high degree of mutual understanding and trust;
- Namibia received strong external support from a united Security Council;
- The UN had a strong mandate and enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy among the Namibian people;
- Namibia had well developed infrastructure;
- The timeframe within which the process had to be concluded was realistic.

Mr Maley's presentation allowed workshop participants to compare and contrast the factors that contributed to Namibia's successful transition with the situation in East Timor, and focussed attention on the possible challenges ahead.

Mr Juan Carlos Brandt, head of the United Nations Information Office in Sydney, then provided a briefing on the United Nations' involvement in situations of conflict and post-conflict elsewhere around the world. Dr Kjell-Ake Nordquist of Uppsala University gave an overview of the El Salvador experience, noting the centrality of trust building, consensus and reciprocal good will if conflict is to be resolved. Dr Nordquist also discussed workings of the weapons buy-back programme that was undertaken in El Salvador.

Reconciliation between the various parties is central to a peaceful future in East Timor, and Dr Michael Salla of the American University provided participants with an explanation of the ways in which reconciliation can come about and be successful. Dr Salla emphasised the long term and inclusive nature of successful reconciliation processes.

While East Timor's future is now in the balance, in Indonesia too there is a massive process of transition and transformation underway. The nation's first democratic elections in thirty years, held on June 7 1999, symbolise the changes taking place throughout the country. While East Timor is not an issue of major concern among the majority of Indonesian voters, the outcome of the elections will hold considerable significance for East Timor. Dr Hermawan Sulistyono from the Research Institute for Peace and Development, based in Jakarta, and Dr Greg Fealy from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet provided extremely useful overviews of possible scenarios and likely outcomes of the Indonesian elections, allowing participants to contemplate the implications for East Timor.

The third and final day of the workshop focussed on the issues, challenges and opportunities that will confront East Timor in a post-transition situation. Here the expertise of the East Timor Study Group came to the fore, with members providing discussion papers and leading the debate on a range of issues, including democratic institutions in East Timor and processes of institutional building; developing and utilising human resources; language policy; and economic viability.

In the context of economic viability, attention turned to the role of international economic assistance. CDI Director, Mr Roland Rich, provided an explanation of the workings and conditionalities of international aid, while Mr Fessehaie Abraham, former Eritrean Ambassador to Australia, provided an in-depth analysis of Eritrea's experience of and difficulties with international economic assistance, including an explanation of why that country eventually suspended assistance from non-government organisations.

Each of the sessions provided a range of models of transition, evaluated the lessons that can be learned from other situations and prompted considerable debate and discussion among the participants. At the close of each day, the East Timorese participants were involved in a closed caucus, designed to provide a space in which they could discuss among themselves the implications of day's sessions for East Timor and its people. The workshop revealed, once again, the schisms that exist among East Timorese but also highlighted the importance of dialogue as the only means by which East Timor can achieve a peaceful and prosperous future, whatever the territory's political status. In creating a space for dialogue to occur, the 'Managing

Transition in East Timor' workshop was a small step forward in what continues to be a long, difficult and often painful process.

### **UPDATE ON THE SITUATION IN EAST TIMOR:**

The popular consultation on the future status of East Timor was held on 30 August 1999.

On September 3 1999 the Secretary General of the United Nations announced the results: 21.5% in favour of autonomy within the Republic of Indonesia, 78.5% against autonomy within the Republic of Indonesia.

The East Timorese people voted overwhelmingly for independence. Yet as the UN Secretary General called on 'all parties to bring to an end the violence which for 24 years has caused untold suffering to East Timor' and 'to begin in earnest a process of dialogue and reconciliation through the East Timor Consultative Commission' members of pro-integrationist militias launched attacks on supporters of independence. In the days following the announcement, violence on the part of the pro-integrationist militias spiralled out of control. The Indonesian police, charged with responsibility for maintaining law and order, were widely criticised as failing to act to prevent the violence. International pressure for the Indonesian Government to act immediately to disarm the militias escalated, but the violence continued.

15 September 1999 the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1264, agreeing to the deployment of a multinational force in East Timor, to be replaced as soon as possible by a United Nations peacekeeping operation.

19 October 1999, the People's Consultative Assembly of Indonesia revokes its 1978 decision to incorporate East Timor into Indonesia.

25 October 1999, The UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1272 (1999), establishing the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) for an initial period until 31 January 2001. UNTAET has responsibility for the administration of East Timor and is empowered to exercise all legislative and executive authority.

## **Managing Transition in East Timor Workshop**

### **Participants**

Lela Madjiah Santoso  
Sembiring Meliala  
Hermawan Sulistyو  
Muhammad Rifqi Muna  
Bambang Harymurti  
Aristides Katoppo  
Aderito de Jesus Soaress  
Francisco da Costa Guterres  
Armando Maia  
Mauhudu (Jose da Costa)  
Francisco Soares  
Natercia Ozorio Soares  
Basilio Araujo  
Domingos Policarpo  
Hugo Aderito da Costa  
Domingos Sousa  
Jose Reis  
Joao Alves  
Milena Pires  
Carlos da Silva Lopes  
Filomeno Jacob Abel  
Joao Saldanha  
Marcelino Magno  
Jose Guterres  
Salvador Januario Ximenes Soares  
Helder da Costa  
Estanislau da Silva  
Emilia Pires  
Agio Pereira  
Dionisio Soares  
Organisers/Resource People  
Kjell-Ake Nordquist  
Michael Salla  
Jim Fox  
George Quinn  
Roland Rich  
Sharon Bessell  
Mark Quarterman  
John Sanderson  
Rhys Puddicombe  
Michael Maley  
Juan Carlos Brandt  
Greg Fealy

**Managing Transition in East Timor Workshop**  
**Australian National University**  
**26–29 April 1999**

Programme

Monday 26 April 1999

	Arrival of Participants
<b>7.00pm</b>	Welcome Dinner

Tuesday 27 April 1999: Current Developments

Chairs: Professor Jim Fox, Director, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies,  
ANU (morning session)

Mr Roland Rich, Director, Centre for Democratic Institutions (afternoon  
session)

<b>9.00– 9.30am</b>	<b>Opening Remarks</b> Director, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU Mr Roland Rich, Director, Centre for Democratic Institutions Mr Joao Saldanha, East Timor Study Group  <b>Introductions and Expectations</b> All Participants
<b>9.30– 11.00am</b>	<b>Current Developments: Indonesia</b> Dr Hermawan Sulisty, Research Institute for Democracy and Peace (RIDEP), Jakarta Mr Aristides Katoppo
11.00– 11.15am	Morning Tea
<b>11.15am– 12.45pm</b>	<b>Current Developments: East Timor</b> Francisco Guterres, East Timor Study Group Armindo Maia, East Timor Study Group
12.45– 2.30pm	Lunch
<b>2.30– 4.00pm</b>	<b>Processes of Cease-fire and Disarmament: Cambodia and Bougainville</b> Lieutenant-General John Sanderson, formerly Royal Australian Army and Force Commander, United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia Mr Rhys Puddicombe, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
4.00– 4.15pm	Afternoon Tea
<b>4.15– 5.30pm</b>	<b>Current Developments: Negotiations at the United Nations</b> Mr Mark Quarterman, United Nations
<b>5.30– 7.00pm</b>	<b>East Timorese Caucus</b>

Wednesday 28 April 1999: Transition

Chairs: Dr Michael Salla, American University (morning session)

Dr Sharon Bessell, Centre for Democratic Institutions (afternoon session)

<b>9.00–10.30am</b>	<b>UN Experience in Transition: Namibia</b> Mr Michael Maley, Australian Electoral Commission
10.30–10.45am	Morning Tea
<b>10.45am– 12.15pm</b>	<b>UN Involvement in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations</b> Mr Juan Carlos Brandt, United Nations Information Office, Sydney
12.15–2.00pm	Lunch
<b>2.00–3.15pm</b>	<b>UN Experience in Transition: Central America</b> Dr Kjell-Ake Nordquist, Uppsala University
<b>3.15–4.30pm</b>	<b>Reconciliation</b> Dr Michael Salla, American University
4.30–4.45	Afternoon Tea
<b>4.45–6.15pm</b>	<b>The Indonesian Elections: Possible Scenarios and Outcomes</b> Dr Hermawan Sulisty, Research Institute for Democracy and Peace (RIDeP), Jakarta Dr Greg Fealy, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
<b>6.15–7.30pm</b>	<b>East Timorese Caucus</b>

Thursday 2 April 1999: Post-Transition

Chairs: Mr Muhammad Rifqi Muna, Research Institute for Democracy and Peace (RiDeP), Jakarta (morning session)

Dr George Quinn, Faculty of Asian Studies, ANU (afternoon session)

<b>9.00–10.30am</b>	<b>Toward a Democratic East Timor: Institutions and Institution Building</b> Mr Joao Saldanha, East Timor Study Group Mr Francisco Guterres, East Timor Study Group
10.30–10.45am	Morning Tea
<b>10.45am–12.30pm</b>	<b>Presentation of Issue Papers and Discussion:</b> <b>Human Resources:</b> Mr Armindo Maia, East Timor Study Group <b>Language Policy:</b> Mr Dionisio Soares, ANU <b>Information and Communications:</b> Mr Marcelino Magno, East Timor Study Group
12.30–2.00pm	Lunch
<b>2.00–3.30pm</b>	<b>Economic Viability of East Timor Revisited</b> Mr Joao Saldanha, East Timor Study Group Mr Helder da Costa, East Timor Study Group
3.30–4.00pm	Afternoon Tea
<b>4.00–5.30pm</b>	<b>International Economic Assistance</b> <b>International Perspective:</b> Mr Roland Rich, Centre for Democratic Institutions, ANU <b>The Eritrean Experience:</b> Mr Fessehaie Abraham, former Eritrean Ambassador to Australia
<b>6.30–7.00pm</b>	<b>Closing Remarks</b> Dr George Quinn, Faculty of Asian Studies, ANU Mr Roland Rich, Centre for Democratic Institutions, ANU Mr Joao Saldanha, East Timor Study Group
7.30pm	Farewell Dinner