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A trinitarian analysis on how
The United Nations Security Council
failed to protect Timor-Leste's
Independence and Human Rights
through political action 1960-1999

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to research how the United Nations (UN) through the Security Council (SC) failed to act politically to protect the independence and human rights of Timor-Leste 1960-1999. 1960 Timor-Leste was acknowledged by the UN as a non-self-governing territory and so remained until the referendum of independence 1999. A trinitarian theory and method has been applied to contextualise and demarcate the material; “international media and public opinion” containing articles from international news agencies, “the front line” a historiographic literature and “political action” with resolutions from the UN. The purpose is to analyse how the UN SC acted politically to fulfill the UN Charter relating to human rights and the right of independence in the case of Timor-Leste. This study fills a research gap because of the time span, most studies focus on the peacekeeping mission 1999-2002. The conclusion is that the UN was unable to act politically regarding Timor-Leste's independence and human rights until Indonesia and the United States (U.S.) as a permanent member of the SC with a veto vote and geo-political interests in Indonesia, gave their consent. I argue that the UN SC, Indonesia and the U.S. had to act in the 1990's. This due to the public opinion shaped by the international media outcry over the human rights violations in Timor-Leste demanding political action. The conclusion of this study is that the UN could not act politically without the consent of Indonesia and the SC.

Keywords:

Timor-Leste, East Timor, United Nations, Security Council, Independence, Human Rights, Colonialism, East Timor Question, Veto, International Relations

Abstract in Swedish

Syftet med denna studie är att undersöka hur de Förenta Nationerna (FN) genom säkerhetsrådet misslyckades med att agera politiskt för att skydda Timor-Lestes självständighet och mänskliga rättigheter 1960-1999. 1960 erkändes Timor-Leste av FN som ett icke-självstyrande territorium och förblev så tills folkomröstningen om självständighet 1999. En trinitarisk teori och metod har tillämpats för att contextualisera och avgränsa materialet; "Internationella medier och allmänhetens åsikt" som innehåller artiklar från internationella nyhetsbyråer, "frontlinjen" innehållande en historiografisk litteratur och "politisk handling" med resolutioner från FN. Syftet är att analysera hur FN:s säkerhetsråd agerat politiskt för att uppfylla FN stadgan om mänskliga rättigheter och rätten till självständighet i fråga om Timor-Leste. Denna studie fyller en forskningslucka på grund av tidsperioden, de flesta studier fokuserar på den fredsbevarande insatsen 1999-2002. Slutsatsen är att FN inte kunde agera politiskt angående Timor-Lestes självständighet och mänskliga rättigheter förrän Indonesien och USA, som en permanent medlem av säkerhetsrådet med vetorätt och geopolitiska intressen i Indonesien, gav sitt samtycke. Jag hävdar att FN:s säkerhetsråd, Indonesien och USA blev tvungna att agera på 1990-talet. Detta då den allmänna opinionen till följd av det internationella medieuppbådet angående kränkningarna av de mänskliga rättigheterna i Timor-Leste krävde en politisk handling. Slutsatsen av denna studie är att FN inte kunde agera politiskt utan medgivande från Indonesien och säkerhetsrådet.

*“Fatherland, fatherland, East Timor our Nation
Glory to the people and to the heroes of our liberation
Fatherland, fatherland, East Timor our Nation
Glory to the people and to the heroes of our liberation
We vanquish colonialism, we cry:
down with imperialism!
Free land, free people, no, no no to exploitation.
Let us go forward, united, firm and determined
In the struggle against imperialism,
the enemy of people, until final victory,
onward to revolution.”*

“Pátria” the national anthem of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Composed in 1975 by Afonso de Araújo, written by Francisco Borja da Costa, the anthem was adopted with the Restoration of Independence in 2002. ¹

¹ The Government of Timor-Leste, *National Symbols; National Anthem*, <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=34&lang=en>, accessed the 8th of January 2021.

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List of abbreviations

FRETILIN	The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor
GA	General Assembly
INTERFET	International Force East Timor
SC	Security Council
UN	United Nations
UNAMET	United Nations Mission in East Timor
UNTAET	The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
U.S.	The United States of America

1 Introduction

The United Nations has set out in their Charter to protect international security and peace, as well as the right of each state in the international community to self-determination, regardless if they are a member or not. Timor-Leste was officially declared independent on the 20th of May 2002. After hundreds of years as a colony to Portugal, they were decolonized 1975 following the carnation revolution 1974. Their independence lasted but nine days until Indonesia invaded their territory, making the at the time called East Timor their 27th province. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights reported in 1994 how 200 000 people had lost their lives in East Timor since the Indonesian invasion 1975, 100 000 of them reportedly killed by the Indonesian military and 100 000 had passed away due to starvation and diseases. In the year of 1960 “Timor and dependencies” were put on the list of non-self-governing territories by the United Nations General Assembly, but they were not given their independence until much later. In 1999 East Timor got to cast their ballots for freedom, in a referendum regarding independence from Indonesia. This is a study on how the United Nations failed to act politically to protect the independence and human rights of Timor-Leste from 1960-1999.

1.1 Problem, purpose and research question

The aim of this study is to research how the United Nations (UN) through the Security Council (SC) failed to act politically to protect the independence and human rights of Timor-Leste 1960-1999. The question that this study aims to answer is; what caused the action and the inaction of the United Nations to act politically on behalf of Timor-Leste’s independence and human rights through the United Nations Security Council 1960-1999?

To research this a trinitarian theory and method has been applied to contextualise and make a demarcation of the material that has been used. In order to investigate what was happening on the ground, what political action was taken and what the public opinion on what was taking place looked like. The study will consist of three parts based on mentioned theory and methodology, “international media and public opinion”, “the front line” and “political action”.

The aim of this study is to give an answer as to how the UN failed to act politically to protect the independence and human rights in the case of Timor-Leste. From the year of 1960 when they first acknowledged that the region was a non-self governing territory and what it was that took place to make the referendum of independence in 1999 a political reality decided upon in the UN SC.

1.2 Material and demarcation

I have chosen to research the years of 1960-1999. The reason for this is the relation to the UN and Timor-Leste when it comes to colonialism and independence. However, there is more research to be made in the area of human rights, independence, the UN, SC and Timor-Leste. Their independence and the continual presence of the UN since then by no means stopped the violence and the killings of the Timorese people. I have chosen this time frame because 1960 the UN put Timor-Leste on their list of non-self-governing territories, 2002 East Timor became an independent state with the name The Republic Democratic of Timor-Leste. This study fills a research gap because of the time span, most studies focus on the peacekeeping mission 1999-2002.

A well cited book when it comes to Timor-Leste's fight to become independent is *The UN in East Timor: building Timor-Leste, a fragile state*, by Federer, 2005. I have chosen not to include this study in my research since Federer focuses on the building of the state rather than an examination of the journey in getting there.²

The context of this study is not peacekeeping, it will be mentioned but not researched in depth. It will not focus on the making of the state of Timor-Leste in terms of rebuilding its law system, their infrastructure or any other practicalities in the making of the state since its independence of the referendum 1999. An investigation started regarding the events in Timor-Leste as crimes against humanity, by the UN after the referendum, this research will not mention this process as it is after the demarcated time. The year of 2000 the work of the now finished "Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor", will not be further researched nor a part of this study. Another demarcation is that it will not go into depths regarding local Indonesian or Portugese politics, although there will be a brief involvement of these two states in this research given their involvement in colonialising Timor-Leste during the chosen time period 1960-1999.

² Federer, Juan, *The UN in East Timor: Building Timor Leste, a Fragile State*, Darwin: Charles Darwin University Press, 2005.

It is not specifically a study in intervention, although this too will be mentioned, yet not studied as a political action in itself. It will mainly focus on the SC in the UN, although the “question of East Timor” has been brought up by other organs of the UN that will also be mentioned. Such are the General Assembly (GA) and the Economic and Social Council, they will be mentioned but not investigated further in relation to Timor-Leste as the SC is the main deciding organ in terms of political action.

1.2.1 Sources

The sources I have used for this study consists of three parts, the history and background of Timor-Leste, international and public opinion on Timor-Leste through a collection of articles in the international media and the political action formed by the UN resolutions in the SC.

Primary sources are divided into the three parts of this study according to the trinitarian theory and method. In relation to public opinion, news articles from international news agencies within the chosen time of 1960-1999 have been chosen. The history of Timor-Leste has been collected by the work of anthropologist professor Andrea Katalin Molnar and professor Frédéric B. Durand who is a member of the Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Solidarities, Societies and Territories. UN resolutions are drawn from the SC, but also a few from the General Assembly and a report from the UN Human Rights Commission, all of them in direct relation to Timor-Leste and the chosen time frame.

Secondary sources are chosen to get an insight into previous research on Timor-Leste and the UN, and to put this study into a theoretical and methodological framework. Michael G. Smith is the author of “Peacekeeping in East Timor”. He was the deputy force commander in the Australian led peacekeeping force in East Timor, he is a Professor at the Key Centre for Ethics, Governance and Law at Griffith University in Australia. It is chosen as a secondary source to this study because of its perspective of the peacekeeping mission that set in after the referendum 1999. This will not be further discussed, but the perspective of Smith will be discussed in relation to this study.

Another secondary source is “The United Nations Security Council in the Age of Human Rights” by international human rights lawyer Jared Genser and Bruno Stagno Ugarte who is currently the Deputy Executive Director at Human Rights Watch. Their book is relevant as it explains the structure of the SC in relation to human rights issues, and their chapter on Timor-Leste has been used as previous research in relation to the question of this study.

To contextualise this study a trinitarian theory and method has been applied that is in line with a study of Andreas Tullberg on the peacekeeping force led by Sweden through the UN in the Congo in the 1960's from the book "We are in the Congo now". The trinity consists of the media, the government and the military.

1.2.2 Criticism of sources

The sources I have chosen to research have been in English or Swedish, since these are the languages I read and understand. This may have caused local sources in other languages to have been missed. This may lead to a lack of depth in this research when it comes to other perspectives than the ones available in mentioned languages. It will also have cultural implications, given the sources used and the language and cultural background of the authors. This is to be considered when it comes to the sources of this study, as the study may have had other results had the sources looked different in their cultural background, their values and the language as well as gender. This has not been taken into consideration for this study, but sources have been chosen based on the question posed and the context they provide to the subject matter. Had it been taken into consideration, the results may have had another outcome.

The sources have all been available through the open online access of the UN library, and also through the University of Lund. Sources that would have needed to be shipped have been avoided, given the uncertainties of the current global Covid-19 pandemic and its implications on for example international interlibrary loans and shipping times. However, much of the information has been made available through other sources. It is therefore my argument that this research has not been affected in this case.

1.3 Research ethics and evaluations

The sources used in this research has been accessed through the official document system of the United Nations, through open access. Press and media has also been accessed freely. There has been no breach in safety or integrity of any person mentioned in this research.

I have at times chosen to use the name East Timor instead of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste or Timor-Leste in my study. The reason for this is that the time frame considered is in the time when the state was named East Timor, among many other names that I have chosen not to mention.

Another name mentioned is Portuguese Timor, during the time the state was given this name in the Portuguese history of colonialism. However, I want to acknowledge and honor Timor-Leste's independence and name chosen since 2002. I will use the names Portuguese Timor and East Timor when mentioned before 2002, referring to that specific period of time and their current name then, and Timor-Leste when mentioned as a present or future tense. Therefore the heading of this study has been named using the present name of Timor-Leste. Given the hundreds of years not being given the right to their own name, I want to acknowledge the state of Timor-Leste in their independence.

It is again important to emphasize that the story line in this study is mainly from a Western perspective, and that the outcomes and outline of the story may have looked different if told by the people of Timor-Leste, Indonesia or any of the other states mentioned. Quotes and historic events commentated by the people of Timor-Leste have been used throughout this study.

This study is free from any specific political agendas, and free standing in that sense, the main focus being the question posed and the sources chosen to answer this question.

2 Previous research on the United Nations and Timor-Leste

Main focus of previous research on Timor-Leste relates to the referendum and the “5th May Agreement” 1999, and the events that followed in the making of a new nation with the assistance of the UN. Previous research also focuses on the relations between Indonesia, other nations and Timor-Leste. I have chosen to highlight a couple of authors who are well cited in the field of research on Timor-Leste, Michael G. Smith and Geoffrey Robinson. I have also chosen to include a less cited book that refers to the research of the UN and the SC in relation to East Timor since this is a relatively new book on the field from 2014.

This study focuses on a more generous time span looking into a timeline of events. Researching how the UN failed to take political action in favour of human rights and independence for Timor-Leste. From 1960 when “Timor and dependencies” was first mentioned as a non-self-governing territory through the Resolution 1514, until they were allowed independence through the referendum 1999.

A well cited book on the topic of Timor-Leste is named “Peacekeeping in East Timor” by Michael G. Smith. It refers to the peacekeeping mission in East Timor as successful. I think this is an unhelpful term to describe the long oppression of the Timorese people, and that the perspective of this book gives an insight to mainly the demarcated time of 1999-2002, without giving much background to the long atrocities of colonialism, massacres and failure of the international community to grant self-determination to East Timor, Smith only briefly mentions the history of East Timor's colonial past. To say that the peacekeeping mission of the UN was successful is to miss the mark of what really took place, in my opinion. As the mission itself left the people of East Timor defenseless after the ballot of independence had been casted. However, Smith also argues that the mission was not without flaws.³ He concludes by saying that “much of East Timor's tragedy was the result of foreign rule and international power politics. Ironically, its ultimate triumph will largely depend on strong international recognition and assistance”.⁴

The book “The United Nations Security Council in the Age of Human Rights” by Bruno Stagno Ugarte and Jared Genser from 2014 has a chapter focused specifically on Timor-Leste, written by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate José Ramos-Horta and Benedict Rogers. Ramos-Horta and Rogers too make an account of a larger time span in their remarks on Timor-Leste. They mention the early resolutions of 1975 and 1976, where the UN SC calls on the Indonesian government to leave East Timor and wants to see no more blood-shed, the later resolution some months later refers to the right of East Timor to be independent, with Japan and the U.S. abstaining to vote. The SC having passed these two resolutions on East Timor then goes on to day that they shall remain “seized of the situation”, then follows twenty three years of silence. Ramos-Horta and Rogers means that what took place in Santa Cruz with the massacre 1991, with many of the killed being teenagers, turned a page for East Timor due to the international opinion that now was formed. All because of a foreign journalist being there to record it all, and daring to release it to the world.⁵ But still, no political action was to be seen through the UN for eight more years. “The violence was not unexpected, given the record of the Indonesian military in East Timor, but what was surprising was the way the international community responded to the crisis”.⁶

³ Smith, Michael G. *Peacekeeping in East Timor: the path to independence*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2003, pg. 28.

⁴ Ibid. pg. 52.

⁵ Ramos-Horta, José & Rogers, Benedict. “Timor-Leste”, in *The United Nations Security Council in the age of human rights*. Genser, Jared (ed) & Stagno Ugarte, Bruno (ed). New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. pg. 320-322.

⁶ Ibid. pg. 322.

What eventually led to a political action according to the authors, was a mix of “the character and conscience of individuals in power; the influence of the media, activists, campaigners, and NGOs around the world; and a sense that not only was this a matter of moral imperative, but that the credibility of the United Nations (UN) was at stake”.⁷ They also emphasize the importance of Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the UN from 1997 as crucial to prevent more of the atrocities and killings of the Timorese people, the mission was to get to a place where Indonesia would give the UN their consent to intervene.⁸ U.S. President Bill Clinton pressures Indonesia to grant East Timor their right to independence in 1993 and told Indonesian President Suharto “If Indonesia does not end the violence, it must invite - it must invite - the international community to assist in restoring security” prior to the referendum 1999.⁹ Some of the keys mentioned by Ramos-Horta and Rogers that caused the UN to act politically on East Timor's behalf was that the UNs credibility was at stake, their staff in East Timor was directly affected and the international media is mentioned as one of the most crucial elements that led to change, shaping a public opinion that pressured the governments to act.¹⁰

Geoffrey Robinson means that Indonesia and President Habibie was pressured by the international community to act, and therefore the UN could act and send peacekeeping forces to East Timor. Robinson also makes the claim that international media pressured states as the U.S. making it almost impossible not to act.¹¹

Though we will never know the real intention as to why Indonesia changed their mind when it came to East Timor, accepting a referendum and eventually a UN intervention, the facts still remain that the UN could not act until they were given the consent of Indonesia. For some or perhaps many reasons, it became too costly for Indonesia to continue as they had. Pressured by the international community, their military partnership with the U.S being at risk and internal unrest with a President just recently overthrown, these are some of the reasons I mean may have contributed to the drastic change to allow East Timor a vote of independence.

⁷ Genser & Stagno Ugarte 2014. pg. 322.

⁸ Ibid. pg. 326.

⁹ Ibid. pg. 328.

¹⁰ Ibid. pg. 331-332.

¹¹ Robinson, Geoffrey. *If you leave us here we will die*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. pg. 236-238

3 Theory and method

In order to contextualize this study there are three areas that are involved, history and background of Timor-Leste, international media and public opinion in relation to this and the UN SC resolutions in reference to political action for independence and human rights issues in Timor-Leste.

An author who has also made a study in a somewhat similar trinity is Andreas Tullberg and his use of Clausewitz's trinitarian theory of war interpreted to be used for peacekeeping. Based on Clausewitz theory of war, Tullberg has shaped a trinity theory and methodology suitable for peacekeeping in relation to the UN, Sweden and Congo in the 1960s. The trinity consists of the media, the government and the military.

In understanding war, the theory of Clausewitz has divided his trinitarian understanding of it into two different trinitaries, according to Tullberg. One of them is for understanding the basis of war, the second one is in analyzing the different groups it affects. The first trinity then is about defining and understanding the foundations of war, according to Tullberg's interpretation the trinity contains "hatred and animosity", "probabilities and chance" and "politics". The second trinity, the one I will use for this study, is in analyzing war based on "the people", "the general and his soldiers" and "the government". Tullberg has changed the headings of this trinity made by Clausewitz in the 19th century, to suit his and coming studies. Below is the revisited trinity used to analyze the UN's peacekeeping mission with the Swedish military in the Congo in the 1960's.

1. "Media"

Targeted at Swedish media to find parts of the public opinion of what was happening in the Congo. The expression of the public opinion shaped the military and the government actions, according to Tullberg.

"The national media...are the expression of a public opinion that influences the other two actors: the military and the government."¹²

2. "The military"

The military of Sweden in this case acts as peacekeepers sent by the UN as their representatives.

¹² Tullberg, Andreas. *"We are in the Congo now": Sweden and the trinity of peacekeeping during the Congo crisis 1960-1964*. Lund: Lund University 2012. pg. 36.

3. “The government”

This represented the Swedish government in Tullbergs study and focused on their response to the UN and the peacekeeping mission, re-evaluating as the mission proceeded.¹³

This theory and methodology has been used to study Sweden and their response to the Congo in relation to being sent out as peacekeepers through the UN. This study does not focus on the peacekeeping mission of the UN in depth, nor a specific state and their military actions. But it's focus is the UN and their political action towards Timor-Leste and their right to independence and protection of human rights. Therefore the theory has been adjusted to suit this study. It is divided into three parts, as a trinity, with similar headings, but has been adjusted to fit in this study.

The theoretical and methodological tool for this study will analyze a material divided and chosen out of the three headings “international media and public opinion”, “the front line” and “political change”.

1. “International media and public opinion”

Taking a closer look into what was the public opinion in the international community according to international media. There were limitations in what East Timor was able to share about what was happening on the ground since they were under the administration of other states until 1999. To analyze the public opinion, this study has chosen media articles based on historic events in East Timor at the time, to then analyze public opinion and how this may have influenced how the UN acted politically.

2. “The front line”

Background of what was happening on the ground, on the front line of East Timor facing the international community and the UN. Looking into historical descriptions and previous research to find out what was going on in East Timor in the timeline of 1960-1999 to find out what the front line looked like.

3. “Political change”

From an international point of view and the UN resolutions specifically made by the SC, being the main deciding organ of the UN. What resolutions were made when in relation to the front line of what was happening in relation to international media and public opinion? A timeline with resolutions of the SC that led to political change.

¹³ Tullberg 2012. pg. 31-38.

The UN was formed as a result of the winners of WWII. They set out to protect peace for all, not just member states, using military action when needed to do so. The UN Charter also claims that the UN is to protect equal rights and independence for all. It is clear that there have been several conflicts in East Timor where the UN has failed to act upon what they have set out to do, seemingly favouring certain members and their political agendas over others. The reason why I have chosen to use a theory and method based on a peacekeeping mission through the UN in the Congo is because in its own context it is suitable for many other studies. It is suitable not only to research a state, a military and the UN and their outworking of a human rights mission to keep the peace of an area. I mean that this theory and method can also be used to examine how a timeline of similar events to a conflict, a war or a peacekeeping mission is related to the independence and human rights for East Timor, now Timor-Leste, through political action. Analyzing also what the public opinion looked like at the time of certain events in Timor-Leste's history. This theory and methodological trinity makes it possible to choose from a vast scope of material, narrowing it down to international media, the front line and political change to examine what happened locally in East Timor, what the world said about it, and what in fact happened politically. It is a suitable framework to make general analysis based on a timeline of events.

There has been many conflicts in the history of Timor-Leste, this theory and method is suitable to examine what took place on the front line for the Timorese people, what the public opinion was in terms of the many tragic events happening, and what the response was politically through the UN who had set out to protect peace, human rights and independence by force if so needed.

“Conflict is political and must be politically motivated in one way or another.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Tullberg 2012, pg. 35.

4 Historiography and background of Timor-Leste

“...the international community was closing its eyes to what was happening in East Timor.”¹⁵

Below follows a background of the historic events that has led Timor-Leste to the point of the referendum 1999. It is not an exhaustive historiography, but rather an overview that puts the region in a proper context. Also background and history prior to 1960 has been included. It is important to grasp some of the context of this limited region on the world map, to understand the different interests of the states of the world in order to analyse what has taken place in the international community through the UN and the SC when it comes to Timor-Leste's independence and human rights through their political action, and inaction. To then make a timeline of the events that led up to the vote of their independence 1999.

4.1 The island of Timor divided due to colonialism and economic interests

The first archeological findings of Timor-Leste is dated back 42 000 years ago¹⁶, long before any of the colonial wars of the region took place. Portugal sparked an interest in the region 1515 due to its vast richness in sandalwood.¹⁷ The Dutch also had an interest in the region for the same reason and the conflict led to Timor being divided into two parts, now Indonesian Timor in the west and Timor-Leste in the east.¹⁸ The Timorese themselves though, considered themselves as one.¹⁹ The east, then called Portugese Timor, had an increasingly pressured population with Portugal using forced labour and taxes. The Timorese resistance movement fought for their independence and this resulted in a war with Portugal 1911-1912 where 15 000 - 25 000 Timorese people lost their lives, over 5% of their population at the time.²⁰

¹⁵ Durand, Frédéric B. *History of Timor-Leste*. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2016. pg. 121.

¹⁶ Ibid. pg. 1.

¹⁷ Ibid. pg. 37.

¹⁸ Ibid. pg. 42.

¹⁹ Molnar, Andrea Katalin. *Timor Leste : politics, history, and culture*. London: Routledge, 2010.

pg. 33-34.

²⁰ Durand 2016, pg. 73-76.

Australia, being a neighbouring country of Portuguese Timor, saw their chance of gaining on the natural resource of oil in the Timorese sea and their oil companies explored the possibilities the year of 1926. Japan too explored the tiny region in terms of shipping and trade 1930.²¹

4.2 The Portuguese Timor's great loss of lives overlooked in World War II

The 7th of December 1941 Japan attacks Pearl Harbour in the U.S. and the 8th of February 1942 Japan bombs Dili, the capital of Portuguese Timor. The bombing was targeting social necessities such as telegraph stations and hospitals. Portugal declared to be neutral in the war and therefore they decided not to act on behalf of their overseas territory. Australia wanted to protect their borders, the possibility of Japan using Portuguese Timor to get to them was too high of a risk to wait passively as Portugal decided to do. They decided to act, together with the Dutch to protect themselves by protecting Portuguese Timor. Local Timorese helped the Dutch and Australia, facing an army twenty times greater than their own. The Timorese protested against the aggression of Japan, as well as the passivity of Portugal. Eventually Australia and the Netherlands retreated. It is estimated that 10-15% of the Timorese population died during the Japanese invasion 1942-1943. After this Japan attempted to impose its language and their currency in Portuguese Timor.²² The 6th and the 9th of August 1945 the U.S. dropped nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The 15th of August Japan unconditionally surrenders.

The winners of World War II then founded the peacekeeping organization the United Nations, the 24th of October 1945 with the goal to end war for all time. In 1946 an Australian commission was set up in Dili to investigate the war crimes committed by Japan 1942-1945. However, the investigators only took note of the Westerners who died. They did not take note of the majority who died, the Timorese, who got stuck in between the Allies and Japan overlooking the neutrality of the area declared by Portugal and invaded the territory. Australia lost 40 people, Portugal 75, Japan 1 500 and Portuguese Timor 45 000-70 000 out of a population of an estimated 450 000 at the time. An estimated 90% of all the buildings in Dili were destroyed.²³ In the treaty of San Francisco 1951 between the Allies of the UN- winners of World War II, and Japan, it was decided that Japan should pay for the restoration of the areas they had destroyed in Southeast Asia.

²¹ Durand 2016, pg. 89.

²² Ibid. pg. 88-91.

²³ Ibid. pg. 92.

Portugal made a claim for their overseas territory, but this was neglected by the Allies saying that Portuguese Timor had been neutral and did not partake in the war and therefore should not be a part of the restoration from Japan in the area. Therefore the reconstruction of Portuguese Timor was slow prior to World War II and their lives lost was not acknowledged in the reports of lives lost.²⁴

Portugal was interested in Portuguese Timor's restoration, prior to the invasion of Japan. But they did not protect the Timorese people from the many lives lost during the invasion, since they were “neutral”. Neither did the SC of the UN acknowledge the Timorese lives lost in their reports nor did they make sure that Portuguese Timor was rebuilt. The Portuguese Timor's great loss of lives and great loss of buildings and infrastructure was overlooked in World War II. Seemingly a “no man's land” when struck by destruction, only considered for its many potential financial gains, and only then worthy to be fought for. Who looked to the people of the Timorese island? Who acknowledged their right to independence and human rights? World War II left them solitude to those who had the power to restore, acknowledge and help, the UN SC.

4.3 East Timor freed from Portuguese colonialism but Indonesian intervention is supported by Australia and the United States

1960 the UN puts then called East Timor on the list of non-self- governing territories, the same year that Resolution 1514 was put into place, “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples”.²⁵

Portugal went from a communist state to a democracy through the carnation revolution of 1974 and thus began the plan of the decolonization of East Timor. Indonesia at this time had a dialogue with Portugal and the UN did not intervene when Indonesia launched attacks against Dili 1975. President Suharto of Indonesia got the support of the U.S. President Ford arguing that East Timor and their resistance movement "The Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor" (FALINTIL) were communists and would make the region unstable, something to be feared in the Cold War. The U.S. feared communism in the area having lost the Vietnam war 1975.²⁶ They were also supporting Indonesia with significant military aid, had geo-political and economic interests with shipping lanes. Enough reasons to support an Indonesian invasion of East Timor, it was decided.

²⁴ Durand 2016, pg. 96.

²⁵ A/RES/1514(XV), *Resolution 1514*, UN General Assembly, 14th of Dec 1960 & A/RES/1541(XV), *Resolution 1541*, UN General Assembly, 15th of Dec 1960.

²⁶ Durand 2016, pg. 103-104.

Australia supported Suharto's invasion due to interest in oil and gas in the Timorese sea. They had previously been promised two thirds of the sea instead of half of it and with Indonesian occupation Australia did not need to worry about Portugese invasion and the risk of losing some of the benefits of having two thirds of the sea rather than half of it.²⁷ “However, the dominant member nations of the UN did not act, since such action would not be consistent with their global political strategies and dealings. Good trade relations with Indonesia, and having an “anti-communist” Cold War allie in General Suharto, were two principal factors in this.”²⁸

The leaders of FALINTIL appealed to the UN SC, recognizing the sovereignty of Portugal to grant their independence making a way for a peacekeeping force to enter, but no action was taken. The 28th of November 1975 East Timor declared themselves as independent with the hopes of getting international support. And to some extent they did, by China, Cuba, Vietnam and previous Portugese colonies who acknowledged their independence, but the UN and the West did not. Two days later FALINTIL was forced to sign a document of incorporation with Indonesia as their 27th province. Days later several Timorese ministers reached out again for international support, without finding any.²⁹ The 7th of December 1975 Indonesia attacked and invaded Dili, and in doing so they drove out the last administrative staff of Portugal, without Portugal intervening in what was taking place.³⁰ The UN did not recognize Indonesian sovereignty in East Timor and on the 12th of December the General Assembly stated that they “strongly deplored the military intervention of the Indonesian armed forces in East Timor”. They called upon Indonesia to remove their military and acknowledge East Timor's right to self-determination, this was adopted through Resolution 384 by the SC.³¹

But no peacekeeping force was sent and the military presence of Indonesia in East Timor did not withdraw but grew to 40 000 people by the end of 1976.³² The majority of the Timorese people were forcefully placed into 150 camps and were struck with several severe famines as they were without opportunity to settle by choice where they could grow crops.³³ FALINTIL made it clear that they were only going to accept Indonesia's “transitional” administration with the promise of a UN peacekeeping force and the organization of them becoming fully independent.³⁴

²⁷ Molnar 2010, pg. 48.

²⁸ Ibid. pg. 50.

²⁹ Durand 2016, pg. 107.

³⁰ Ibid. pg. 111.

³¹ Ibid. pg. 112.

³² Ibid. pg. 113.

³³ Ibid. pg. 115.

³⁴ Ibid. pg. 119.

4.4 200 000 people lose their lives under Indonesian invasion and the eyes of the world are opened as the borders of East Timor open up

The invasion of Indonesia resulted in 200 000 Timorese losing their lives. “The massive human rights violations in East Timor...included random massacres, extra-judicial killings, starvation, deaths from preventable diseases, torture, forced movement of populations, coerced sterilization of women, rape and imprisonment without legal redress.”³⁵

In 1989 the borders to East Timor opened up and international media got an insight into the region for the first time in fourteen years. During the visit of the UN special rapporteur on torture, a young person from the resistance movement was killed. Thousands of mourners gathered for the funeral on the 11th of November 1991, many of them carrying banners with messages of independence for East Timor. After a memorial mass in the church, they went to Santa Cruz cemetery where the Indonesian military started to shoot into the group of people with machine guns. None of the mourners carried arms, and many were shot in the back as they were escaping the cemetery. All of this was caught on camera by journalist Max Stahl. Several states stopped their aid to Indonesia and the U.S. paused their military assistance. Indonesia reported that 50 people died, human rights organizations reported a different and even more grim reality with 271 dead, 382 wounded and 250 missing.³⁶ The world could no longer unsee what they had seen. The U.S. could no longer stand by their military provision and diplomatic support of Indonesia and their geo-political interests had to give way to a reality that could not be unspoken of nor unseen anymore.

The Nobel Peace Prize 1996 was given to José Ramos Horta, one of the leaders of FALANTIL and Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, Bishop of Dili for their pleadings with the UN and their bravery in pursuing East Timorese independence.³⁷ This was a great embarrassment for Indonesia.

³⁵ Molnar 2010, pg. 48-49.

³⁶ Durand 2016, pg. 122-125.

³⁷ Ibid. pg. 127.

4.5 The people of East Timor finally gets their own say in a referendum of independence 1999 but riots breaks out from those put in charge by the UN to protect them

Internal unrest in Indonesia led to the overthrow of President Suharto 1998 and vice President Habibie was appointed President. Habibie instituted a special status for East Timor giving them a right to vote about their own independence.³⁸ The 5th of May 1999 Indonesia, Portugal and the UN signed the “5th May Agreement”, an agreement for a referendum in East Timor regarding if they would like to be independent or not from Indonesia. This was to take place with no foreign military to ensure the safety of the Timorese people, but the peace and security of East Timor for the referendum was placed by the UN in Indonesia. Indonesia were to make sure that the Timorese people were protected and safe during the process regarding independence from the very ones that were to protect them.³⁹ The “5th May Agreement” took place without including East Timor in their discussions. Indonesian military set out their mission of protecting East Timor in the referendum, the assessment was given to them by the UN moments before carrying out a “program of terror” to discourage the Timorese to vote for independence. They carried out this program with murders, abductions and burning of villages leading up all the way until the day of the Timorese to cast their ballots for independence. There were also threats about coming battles should the Timorese vote for independence.⁴⁰ The UN did not and could not intervene without the consent of the SC and the permanent five members agreeing to make a military intervention to protect the people of East Timor, something FALANTIL had been asking for a long time. The SC did not make this decision and a peacekeeping force was not provided for the people of East Timor during the referendum.

In spite of all this terror, an astonishing 98% of the Timorese turned out to cast their ballots the 30th of August 1999. People of all ages queued for hours to partake. But before the ballots had been counted, the promised battle of the Indonesian military began. An estimated 250 000 East Timorese were displaced against their will in West Timor, hundreds of thousands others fled to the mountains. They were left as “refugees” in camps without sufficient food. The 4th of September the votes had been counted by the UN with a huge majority of 78,5% voting for independence. Indonesian military responded by destroying a majority of all the buildings in Dili. The UN commissioned UNAMET who had been hosting the referendum escaped in the riots, leaving the people of East Timor without defense.

³⁸ Durand 2016, pg. 129.

³⁹ Molnar 2010, pg. 55-56.

⁴⁰ Ibid. pg. 56-58.

Indonesia did not live up to their promise to the UN to protect the Timorese people during the referendum, and the UN could do nothing without their consent to enter with a peacekeeping force.

Indonesia finally agreed to accept UN peacekeeping forces into the area of East Timor after almost three weeks of riots after the referendum. The Australian led UN peacekeeping force, INTERFET, entered East Timor the 20th of September 1999, along with UNAMET who previously fled the riots.⁴¹ The UN stays in East Timor to establish a new state. The 20th of May 2002 The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste finally became independent after hundreds of years facing massive human rights atrocities.

5 The United Nations political actions for Timor-Leste's Human Rights and independence 1960-1999

5.1 The Security Council's foundation, responsibility and implications in the United Nations and the international community

The UN was birthed out of World War II, by the winners of the war, with the goal of securing international peace after a war that had cost them all too much. Human Rights in combination with State sovereignty has always been a challenge for the UN⁴² as they set out to protect both in their Charter. The Charter of the UN makes it clear that the SC's primary responsibility is to maintain international peace and security.⁴³ The SC is the main and paramount organ with sole influence to make decisions.⁴⁴ With its permanent five (P5) members - China, France, Russia, Great Britain and the U.S., all having the right to a veto vote. They were the founders of the UN, winners of World War II, and this is still the foundation of the UN today. The SC is the paramount organ making decisions for international peace and security and any of the P5 has the right to vote veto in any decision.

⁴¹ Molnar 2010, pg. 59.

⁴² Genser & Stagno Ugarte 2014, pg. 3.

⁴³ UN Charter, "Chapter V: The Security Council", 26th of June 1945, Art. 24:1.

⁴⁴ Genser & Stagno Ugarte 2014, pg. 5.

This means that if the United States, for example, votes with their veto regarding any international peace and/or security question raised in the SC, their vote stands against any of the other votes regardless if this would bring great harm to international peace and/or security. Simply because this is the foundation of the UN and the SC giving their P5's the right of the veto vote. There are ten other member states that get chosen to be a part of the SC each year, but they do not have a veto vote. Any decision made in the SC must make nine out of the total fifteen votes in order to be accepted by the SC and for actions to then take place through the UN and in the international community. Any state that is "a party to a dispute under consideration by the Security Council", either if they are members of the UN or the SC or not shall be "invited to participate, without vote, in the discussion relating to the dispute."⁴⁵ The UN's purpose is also to "fulfill self-determination for all peoples"⁴⁶. Chapter XI of the Charter specifies how members of the UN should act in non-self-governing territories, ensuring international peace and protection against abuse.⁴⁷ Chapter VII of the UN Charter gives the SC the rights to use armed forces to secure international peace and security.⁴⁸ Only the SC can make this decision. Article 25 in the UN Charter makes it clear that all members of the UN abides by the decisions made in the SC.⁴⁹

In 1961 the Great Britain made a remark in the UN regarding the situation in Angola about the SC and its implications for human rights, "it is not, in the first place, to deal with a crisis that the Security Council has primary responsibility, but to maintain international peace and security...this Council has no power to act whatever other features any supposed crisis may have or whatever may be the extent of any abuse of human rights"⁵⁰

The General Assembly wanted to ensure that breaches were not made in using the veto when it came to important questions for the international community and therefore made a resolution in 1950 called "Uniting for peace". The resolution affirmed the importance of the SC to "exercise restraint in the use of veto" for the sake of international peace and security.⁵¹ The resolution concluded that if the SC failed in their mission to make decisions as such, the UN still remains responsible for what it has set out to do, as a reaction and a result of the outbreak of the Korean war. Failure of unanimity amongst the SC, will according to this resolution allow the General Assembly to step in. But so far the SC has hindered any attempt from the General Assembly to invoke this resolution.

⁴⁵ UN Charter 1945, Art. 3.

⁴⁶ UN Charter 1945, Art. 1:2.

⁴⁷ UN Charter 1945, Chapter XI.

⁴⁸ UN Charter 1945, Chapter VII.

⁴⁹ UN Charter 1945, Art. 25.

⁵⁰ Genser & Stagno Ugarte 2014, pg. 10.

⁵¹ A/RES/377, *Resolution 377A*, UN General Assembly, 3rd of Nov 1950.

A resolution that could have been a solution to prevent the P5 in the deadlock of veto leading to breaches of human rights, and distortion of peace and security - for which the UN exists to protect.⁵²

The U.S. is the member of the SC that has vetoed the most times where the draft for the vote contained “human rights”, they have vetoed this term 52 times in the SC between 1970-2011, which is almost the same amount of veto votes as all of the other four members combined. But there is also a “silent veto”, where some things are not voted about but talked about in the corridors of the UN and does not make it to the voting table.⁵³ Human rights becomes a priority for the SC when pressure is added from the international community, but not until then. Not because of a lack of information, but rather because the SC is not built to handle questions on human rights mainly, means Stagno Ugarte and Genser.⁵⁴ “For the most part, as Genser and Stagno Ugarte argue, the Council has “not been in the lead” when it comes to human-rights-related issues in general, but has rather been “reacting and responding to pressure from outside”.⁵⁵

5.2 The United Nations resolutions and political actions in Timor-Leste 1960-1999

In this section I have penned out the resolutions and political actions taken by the UN and my main focus is the SC since they are the main deciding organ within the UN when it comes to global political action. In doing so I have gone through the resolutions from the SC 1960-1999. This is the material that is analyzed according to the trinitarian method and theory named “political change”.

1960 the Resolution 1514 was adopted through the GA; “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples”. Giving the right to each state to be self-governing and for colonization to end on the basis of human rights and the equal value of humanity. The UN considers their own important role in “assisting movement for independence in... Non-Self-Governing Territories”. The resolution was also made on the basis of the growing tension and potential risk to international peace when these territories did not gain independence.⁵⁶ The UN GA adds “Timor and dependencies” to the list of non-self-governing territories.⁵⁷ East Timor continues to be administered by Portugal as their overseas territory, until Portugal becomes a democracy 1974.

⁵² Genser & Stagno Ugarte 2014, pg. 464-465.

⁵³ Genser & Stagno Ugarte 2014, pg. 25.

⁵⁴ Genser & Stagno Ugarte 2014, pg. 26-27.

⁵⁵ Brooks in Genser & Stagno Ugarte 2014, pg. 66.

⁵⁶ A/RES/1514(XV) 1960.

⁵⁷ A/RES/1541(XV) 1960.

The 28th of November 1975 East Timor declared themselves as independent. Nine days later Indonesia invaded and occupied East Timor as their 27th province. This was neither accepted nor condemned by the UN. On the 22nd of December 1975 the UN SC made their first resolution when it came to “the situation in Timor”, in response to a letter by Portugal regarding the situation.⁵⁸ The SC declared the right of East Timor for self-determination and independence in the resolution made and numbered 384, referring to Resolution 1514 from 1960 and asked Indonesia to leave the area immediately and for all states to cooperate with the UN in the decolonization. Portugal was criticised by the SC for not living up to their responsibility according to Chapter XI in the Charter as “administering Power”.

“The Situation in Timor” is now a heading used in the UN agendas. The Secretary-General made a report after a visit to the area and the SC responded with Resolution 389 the 22nd of April 1976. It is similar in content to the previous resolution, asking Indonesia to withdraw from the area immediately and claiming the Timorese rights to independence. It was adopted with 12 votes to none with Japan and the U.S. abstaining.⁵⁹

The SC then remained quiet with resolutions on the topic until the 7th of May 1999, with Resolution 1236 when an agreement had been made, “the 5th May Agreement”, between Portugal, Indonesia and the Secretary-General of the UN. The agreement was regarding East Timor's right to vote for or against autonomy with Indonesia. The SC stresses the facts mentioned in the agreement and decides to “remain seized of the matter”.⁶⁰ The SC also mentions four resolutions made by the GA. They are numbered 1514 “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples”, 1541 that lists East Timor as a non-self-governing territory, 2625 containing headings such as “States shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means” and “The principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples”⁶¹. The SC finally mentions 37/30 to be noted with extra concern, where Portugal is acknowledged as the administering power with a stated commitment to uphold the right of East Timorese independence and “requests the Special Committee...to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples”.⁶²

Then followed five more resolutions in 1999 from the SC regarding East Timor. In Resolution 1246 the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) was launched. UNAMET was to set up and ensure a fair referendum, Indonesia was to ensure peace and security.⁶³ The SC then decided to postpone the referendum due to the lack thereof.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ S/RES/384, *Resolution 384*, UN Security Council, 22nd of Dec 1975.

⁵⁹ S/RES/389, *Resolution 389*, UN Security Council, 22nd of Apr 1976.

⁶⁰ S/RES/1236, *Resolution 1236*, UN Security Council, 7th of May 1999.

⁶¹ A/RES/54/164, *Resolution 2625*, UN General Assembly, 24th of Oct 1970.

⁶² *Resolution 37/30*, UN General Assembly, 23rd of Nov 1982.

⁶³ S/RES/1246, *Resolution 1246*, UN Security Council, 11th of Jun 1999.

⁶⁴ S/RES/1257, *Resolution 1257*, UN Security Council, 3rd of Aug 1999.

Addressing the violations past the referendum the SC asks Indonesia to grant access to other states to intervene in restoring peace and security.⁶⁵ The 19th of November 1999 the SC decided to act on Chapter VII of the Charter, a military intervention.⁶⁶ The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) is established to have the administrative responsibility in place of Indonesia and provide assistance to East Timor outworking their self-governing.⁶⁷ The SC was only able to invoke a Chapter VII decision of the UN Charter when the Indonesian government approved them to do so.⁶⁸ An intervention could only be made possible with the consent of the state that was oppressing East Timor. Not until then could the peacekeeping force intervene.

5.3 The United Nations Commission on Human Rights report on East Timor

The Commission on Human Rights of the UN made a report in 1994 about the human rights breaches in East Timor, “the Government of Indonesia extended to the Special Rapporteur an invitation to visit Indonesia (Jakarta and East Timor)”⁶⁹. But the report also stresses that it does not intend to make any political comments, but its purpose is to study this region's right to life. In the beginning of the report East Timor is mentioned as a part of Indonesia. The heading of the report seems contrasting to this remark, “question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world, with particular reference to colonial and other dependent countries and territories”. The report says that “a full-scale invasion of East Timor by the Indonesian armed forces put an end to a decolonization process”, to then say that the UN “has never recognized Indonesia's sovereignty over the territory”.⁷⁰

The report stated that up to 100 000 people were killed by the Indonesian armed forces 1975-1980. And that a further 100 000 were killed because of starvation or disease between 1980-1984. The Santa Cruz massacre 1991 is also investigated and the Human Rights Commission makes claims that this was a planned military action from Indonesia to deal with a public opinion of independence that was not accepted.

⁶⁵ S/RES/1264, *Resolution 1264*, UN Security Council, 15th of Sep 1999.

⁶⁶ S/RES/1275, *Resolution 1275*, UN Security Council, 19th of Nov 1999.

⁶⁷ S/RES/1272, *Resolution 1272*, UN Security Council, 25th of Oct 1999.

⁶⁸ Brooks in Genser & Stagno Ugarte 2014, pg. 53.

⁶⁹ E/CN.4/1995/61/Add.1, *Report by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Bacre Waly Ndiaye, on his mission to Indonesia and East Timor from 3 to 13 July 1994*, UN Economic and Social Council, 1st of Nov 1994.

⁷⁰ E/CN.4/1995/61/Add.1 1994.

There were also testimonies of families in the report on East Timor not daring to reach out for help when a loved one died or disappeared out of fear of being seen as someone as a part of the resistance movement.

The report concluded that there is still oppression in the area from Indonesian military and that they are threatening the people of East Timor.⁷¹ There seems to be a clear divide between Indonesia and its 27th province. This report came prior to the UN placing Indonesia in charge of the security and safety of the Timorese people in the referendum 1999.

6 International media and public opinion on Timor-Leste

6.1 Demarcation, terminology and choosing media

The time period chosen is 1960-1999. Articles have been chosen from some of the most trustworthy international news agencies. These sources have been chosen based on how they relate with the historic events in Timor-Leste. They are from different perspectives and parts of the world, but mainly from a Western perspective, and only chosen from sources available in English. It is possible that other articles and news agencies in other languages would have given a different outcome with sources of other perspectives. The term “international media and public opinion” therefore needs to be understood as a selected few media outlets creating a public opinion that narrows down to their own cultural perspective and political interests.

The articles chosen relate to human rights breaches in East Timor and these events will be compared with the UNs political actions, or lack thereof. Therefore these articles are important in the study, to gain a selected understanding of what the international media and public opinion looked like in relation to historical events as well as political actions in regards to East Timor 1960-1999. However, it is important to note that these articles in themselves cannot bring light to the whole truth when it comes to international media and public opinion on East Timor in the chosen time frame.

⁷¹ E/CN.4/1995/61/Add.1 1994.

However, I argue that they give an insight into some of what that would have looked like, and enough of an insight to give a helpful contrast to the UN SC resolutions and the known history when it comes to the theory and methodology of this study. It is important to understand the term “international media and public opinion” in this light, as it by no means gives a greater understanding than the chosen articles picked out, based on their cultural and political views. This is not something this study will further investigate, but it will rather give a brief overview of what some of the media would have had to say about East Timor in this time period.

The years between 1960-1975 there have been no recordings that I have been able to find from the media. Therefore these years won't be mentioned. The reason for why these are quiet years might be many. It can be related to lack of historic data from the news agencies, or it might mean that East Timor was not on the world agenda at this time. A Canadian journalist may have given us a bit of an insight as to why there were silent years in the reporting on the atrocities of the Timorese people, it was the closed borders by Indonesia that made it difficult for international reports to see what was happening.⁷² It is hard to make any conclusions as to why this time is not recorded in the international media as other years, but it is known that East Timor's borders have been controlled by Portugal and Indonesia. On the one hand the voice of East Timor was not well known to the international community until much later. On the other hand, it was hard to access their borders, and perhaps it did not spark an international interest for political reasons.

International media is one of the things that has the power to pressure the SC to action, according to Brooks.⁷³ Therefore it is an important part of this study to get an insight to international media and the public opinion on the situation in East Timor. It is also the third and final part of the theoretical framework before final remarks and an analysis had been made.

6.2 Description of the sources

The sources have been picked out from twelve different news agencies from different parts of the world. They have been chosen because they represent different cultural and political views, but also because they are some of the most well renowned media houses internationally or locally, all of them report on both local and global issues and all of the articles chosen have been in English. Here follows a description of the different news agencies chosen and where they are situated.

⁷² “Indonesia fears communism on eastern flank 60,000 have died in an unseen war”
The Globe and Mail, 9th of Oct 1978.

⁷³ Brooks in Genser & Stagno Ugarte 2014, pg. 67.

From the United States there is the U.S. News & World Report with the focus of national and international affairs, The New York Times and The Associated Press. The Inter Press Service has their main quarters in Italy and reports on the Global south. The Xinhua News Agency is the official news agency of the People's Republic of China. From Canada there are two news agencies that have been chosen, The Globe and Mail and Hamilton Spectator, both have been reporting on news around the world for over 150 years. From Great Britain articles have been chosen from The Guardian, Financial Times and BBC. Agence France Presse, is a France based news agency, the oldest in the world. There will also be articles from Australian Courier-Mail.

Below is an outline from 1976-1999 with articles chosen based on the timeline of historic events in Timor-Leste. Different news agencies have been chosen in order to better understand what the international media reported at the time, and therefore be able to make an analysis on public opinion. It is important to emphasise again that this selection can not give us the whole picture of what international media and public opinion looked like at the time, but I argue they do give us a valuable context. And due to the pressure international media put on the UN, it is important to include.

6.3 Outline

6.4 Indonesian occupation 1976-1977 in international media

The first international media findings can be made to a greater extent first when Portugal decolonized East Timor and Indonesia invaded. A newspaper in the U.S. makes claims of human rights breaches in 1976, but makes no further remarks of what has taken place regarding the “bloodshed”, “Portugal no longer has any say in the affairs of East Timor. Indonesian-led forces have won "protective control" of most of the island after much bloodshed.”⁷⁴

In an Asian newspaper 1977 President Samora Machel of Mozambique made an appeal to the Indonesian government to “stop its illegal occupation of the territory of East Timor”.⁷⁵

In the U.S. press the American ambassador Goodling makes a statement that East Timor would not have been able to “survive alone” without Indonesia. The reporter mentions an Australian report just being made investigating the death of up to 100 000 people in East Timor since the “pro-Indonesian movement”.

⁷⁴ “West’s vanishing empires: what’s happening to them now”, *U.S. News & World Report*, 17th of May 1976.

⁷⁵ “Mozambican President reiterates support for Southern African liberation struggle”, *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service Xinhua General News Service*, 9th of Jan 1977.

Goodling discounted the reports and said “the United States would do better to find out ways to help the people of East Timor recover from the wounds of war . . . rather than discuss their past and investigate whether Indonesia has used American weapons there or not.”⁷⁶ He was meeting with Indonesia to talk “about Timor and...about the Communist threat to Indonesia and the types of arms needed to meet it.”⁷⁷

Another article from the AP a few months earlier mentions the same report, raising concerns with the high number of deaths raised in the report given that East Timor only had a population of 650 000 at the time, and that this would be one of the gravest injustices of the time. The UN GA is mentioned having rejected Indonesia's occupation and called on them to withdraw their military from the territory, but that the U.S. backed Indonesia in voting against this resolution.⁷⁸

During the same time the Asian newspaper Xinhua reports that Indonesia faces setbacks in East Timor and that FRETILIN has killed over 300 Indonesian “invaders”.⁷⁹ They also report on the 12th of November later that year of 1977 following the UN SC resolution calling on Indonesian military to leave the area. The Chinese representative Lai Ya-Li, “the Chinese government and people resolutely support the just struggle of the people of East Timor to safeguard their national independence, defend their state sovereignty and territorial integrity and oppose foreign aggression and intervention.” Ya-Li also brought up Indonesia's colonial past, mentioning the state as a “third-world country” just like East Timor, and calling upon them to co-exist.⁸⁰ Xinhua also quotes the FRETILIN member and foreign minister Mari Alkatiri “the people of East Timor have their own language, culture and homeland. To safeguard their sovereignty and national independence, they are determined to persist in their heroic and victorious struggle and to fight through to the end the war imposed upon them by Indonesia.”⁸¹

During the years of 1976-1977 Australia made a report that 100 000 Timorese have lost their lives, the U.S. says East Timor could not do without Indonesia and the Asian newspaper focus on the Indonesian troops being killed as they intervene in East Timor, and the right of East Timor to be independent. “International media” at this time looked like reports from Australia, the U.S. and Asia, as well as comments from the Mozambique president supporting East Timor.

The perspectives clearly differ depending on the news agencies local political interests in all of these regions in this time.

⁷⁶ “PM Cycle”, *The Associated Press*, 13th of Apr 1977.

⁷⁷ “BC Cycle”, *The Associated Press*, 13th of Apr 1977.

⁷⁸ “PM Cycle”, *The Associated Press*, 28th of Feb 1977.

⁷⁹ “Indonesian invaders suffer repeated setbacks in East Timor”, *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service Xinhua General News Service*, 22nd of Jan 1977.

⁸⁰ “East Timorese people's right to self-determination, independence reaffirmed at U.N.” *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service Xinhua General News Service*, 12th of Nov 1977.

⁸¹ “East Timorese people persist in struggle against foreign aggression, for national independence” *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service Xinhua General News Service*, 17th of Nov 1977.

6.5 In a trajectory of time the atrocities of East Timor is on the lips of the world

The Canadian newspaper “The Globe and Mail” reports on the atrocities of the Timorese people on the 9th of October 1978. Commenting on the silence of the west in regards to the tragedy of the massacres after Indonesian invasion, mentioning the closed borders to both media and aid organizations as a reason for the silence. Indonesia's justification of their actions that FRETILIN would be a communist threat is criticised by the journalist. “FRETILIN is avowedly anti-colonialist but there is no evidence to prove that it is pro-Communist. It has so far neither sought nor received any material support from any outside country, Communist or otherwise.” The later on renounced Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mr. Horta, at the time a leader in FRETILIN warned that “the Indonesian Army has adopted a scorched-earth policy in an attempt to starve the Timorese people into submission.”⁸² A local Portuguese Priest in East Timor, Father Leoneto De Rego, confirms that none of the leaders or followers of FRETILIN are communist. He then goes on to explain that shortage of food became a problem after 1977 as a result of the Indonesian bombing of FRETILIN headquarters, “from that time, he said, Indonesian search-and-destroy offensives forced the population to flee from one area to another without being able to plant crops.”⁸³

BBC News 1979 quotes the Australian Parliament report saying that “According to the report, which cited Indonesian sources, the population of East Timor has fallen from more than 688,000 in 1974 to just over 329,000 at the end of 1978, and up to 40,000 people are in danger of dying by disease or starvation owing to corruption and maladministration by Indonesian officials.”⁸⁴ The Indonesian government denies the report, saying that there was a large number of East Timorese that had moved to the mainland due to starvation in the mountains, and that the Indonesian government was providing all the aid they could.⁸⁵

⁸² The Globe and Mail, 9th of Oct 1978.

⁸³ “East Timor guerrillas defy starvation and Jakarta's bombs”, *The Globe and Mail*, 4th of Sep 1979.

⁸⁴ “The plight of East Timor”, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 17th of Oct 1979.

⁸⁵ “Reported Starvation in East Timor; Indonesia denies allegations of starvation”, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 6th of Nov 1979.

During two weeks in 1980 the New York Times wrote articles about East Timor several times with a few of the headlines being “refugees say rebels in East Timor are still fighting the Indonesians”⁸⁶ and “Indonesia's commitment to aid development in East Timor”.⁸⁷ However, the article about the “rebels in East Timor” also has testimonials of how Indonesian military steals medicines at the hospitals and that hunger is an increasing issue. It is said that East Timor was “left to fend for itself. Its people had almost no preparation for independence, and a violent struggle for power attended the Portuguese departure.” According to The New York Times Indonesia was being shamed by the UN for its actions, “at the United Nations the other day, Portugal was praised for championing the cause of self-determination in East Timor, a former colony. Now Indonesia, which annexed the colony, is plainly the bully. A more shaming judgment on Indonesia, once the cynosure of the third world, is hard to imagine.”⁸⁸

In 1982 The Financial Times writes about Indonesian hopes of their “fait accompli” of East Timor being accepted in the UN. They had a referendum and opened up the borders, according to the Financial Times to make propaganda, by inviting Australian and Dutch journalists, but the newspaper concludes that “even with this “democratic” win of the referendum, the Indonesian military is likely to continue to play a major role in the administration of the province for the foreseeable future.”⁸⁹

In all of the reports and comments of who to hold responsible for the starvation of the Timorese people, their lack of independence and failure of the UN to act is also criticised in The New York Times 1982.⁹⁰

6.6 The Santa Cruz massacre 1991 happens in front of the eyes of international media and calls upon the international community to take action

The 12th of November 1991 hundreds of Timorese mourners were shot by machine guns by the Indonesian military at a memorial of a member of the resistance movement, shot by Timorese military whilst hiding in a church. It was captured on camera and the world got to see for themselves what was taking place in East Timor.

⁸⁶ “Refugees say rebels in East Timor are still fighting the Indonesians; East Timor rebels called still active; Refugees Assert Guerrillas Harass Soldiers of Indonesia, Which Seized Territory in 1975; Guerrillas Are Reported Still Active in East Timor”, *The New York Times*, 29th of Jul 1980.

⁸⁷ “Indonesia’s commitment to aid development of East Timor”, *The New York Times*, 8th of Aug 1980.

⁸⁸ “The Shaming of Indonesia”, *The New York Times*, 8th of Dec 1980.

⁸⁹ “Indonesia steps up campaign for UN to accept island claim”, *Financial Times*, 19th of May 1982.

⁹⁰ “Forgotten sorrows in Timor”, *The New York Times*, 9th of Oct 1982.

Australian Courier-Mail could not be any more clear in their message to the Indonesian government and their own after the Santa Cruz massacre, "The Australian representative at the United Nations should seek direct intervention of the United Nations in East Timor...The killing must end now. The harassment, beatings and torture must end now. The time has come for Australia to take an active role in implementing the fundamental principles of our foreign policy...with Indonesia." ⁹¹

Agence France Presse reported the same day as Courier-Mail, the 14th of November 1991, on Amnesty demanding the international community to act "It is time the international community took stock of what is happening in East Timor and shouldered some of its responsibility for bringing these human rights violations to an end". ⁹²

A resistance member with the fictitious name Joaquim Guterres, made this comment to a reporter from The Guardian that was allowed into East Timor 1994 "The world refuses to pay attention, no matter what we sacrifice, families, homes, lives...We have been given many fine words, but we are still dying. Every day we are still dying." Whilst a Catholic priest still put his hope for a referendum through the UN, and "perhaps even full independence", putting his hopes in the revolutions of 1989 and Clintons so far unfulfilled words of providing a model of change. ⁹³

6.7 Referendum 1999 "The credibility of the United Nations is increasingly at stake"

Critical voices were raised at the UN prior to the East Timorese referendum 1999, where 78,5% voted for independence. The Portuguese diplomat Fernando Reino, made a claim saying that "the Security Council and in consequence the United Nations end up as accomplices of a...(Indonesian) plan" to squash the will of the East Timorese, who voted Aug. 30 for independence from Indonesia. " and goes on to say that "The credibility of the United Nations is increasingly at stake". ⁹⁴

Canadian The Hamilton reports about a week after the referendum that the UN estimated up to 200 000 people displaced since the day of election. Bishop Carlos Belos home was burned down and he said that his people stood defenseless to the violence and that "The international community should act immediately to protect the people." ⁹⁵

⁹¹ "Time for action to stop the brutality on East Timor", *Courier-Mail*, 14th of Nov 1991.

⁹² "Amnesty urges Indonesia to investigate East Timor massacre", *Agence France Presse -- English*, 14th of Nov 1991.

⁹³ "Inside story: Mass resistance; In our second report from 'the saddest place on earth' Robert McCrum discovers a defiance still burning among the East Timorese. Almost the entire population has found refuge from Indonesian oppression in Catholicism - the faith of their former colonists.", *The Guardian*, 18th of Feb 1994.

⁹⁴ "Rights - East Timor: United Nations at a critical juncture", *IPS-Inter Press Service*, 8th of Sep 1999.

⁹⁵ "East Timorese flee violence; 30,000 leave provincial capital amid rampages", *Hamilton Spectator*, 8th of Sep 1999.

In an analysis with the heading “who failed the people of East Timor?” from IPS in September 1999 the UN and the inaction by the SC in East Timor is heavily criticized, making comparisons to Rwanda and Angola. And “Jose Ramos Horta, the East Timorese independence activist and Nobel laureate, said that he did not see how “people would ever again trust the United Nations.” The article goes on to say that the U.S. now has suspended all of their military aid to Indonesia, but at the same time criticized for holding the UN back from intervening through the SC in East Timor without the consent of Indonesia.⁹⁶

7 Analysis according to the trinitarian theory and method

Below is a timeline of the events this study has examined based on the trinitarian theory and methodology. Followed by an analysis of how these have interacted with each other to answer the question of what caused the action and the inaction of the United Nations to act politically on behalf of Timor-Leste’s independence and human rights through the United Nations Security Council 1960-1999?

“International media and public opinion”

1960-1975 Radio silence

1976-1977 American news reports on how East Timor is now in “protective control” of Indonesia and that Portugal no longer has any say in their affairs, American news also emphasizes that East Timor would not be able to “survive alone”. Australia reports on the mass killings of the Timorese of up to 100 000 people and the President of Mozambique appeals in an Asian newspaper to the Indonesian government for East Timor's independence.

1978-1980 A Canadian newspaper reports on the grave injustices and killings of the Timorese people and comments on the world's silence saying it is because of Indonesia's strict control on East Timor's borders to international media. The New York Times refers to the “rebels in East Timor” and criticizes UN inaction. 1989 Indonesia opens up the borders in a less restricted manner for international media and the reporting increases.

⁹⁶ “Politics-U.N.: Who failed the people of East Timor? Analysis By Farhan Haq”, *IPS-Inter Press Service*, 10th of Sep 1999.

1991 The Santa Cruz massacre is filmed and reported by international media and the world is in shock.

1996 Nobel Peace Prize to FALANTIL leader from the resistance movement and to the Bishop of Dili, a great embarrassment to Indonesia.

1999 Many journalists are in East Timor for the referendum, the UN is under international pressure to act with the fresh memory of 1997 when Kofi Annan promised “never again” after the genocide in Rwanda. News agencies report about 200 000 people displaced in East Timor after casting their ballots in the referendum on independence and "the credibility of the United Nations is increasingly at stake".

“The front line”

1974 Portugal becomes a democracy and East Timor is decolonized, Indonesia has a dialogue with Portugal about entering the area and Portugal nor the UN acts.

1974 East Timor declares themselves as independent in December, two days later Indonesia forces them to sign papers that they now are under Indonesian administration, nine days after Timorese independence from Portugal they are the 27th province of Indonesia. East Timorese independence is supported by China, Cuba, Vietnam and previous Portugese colonies, but not by the UN or the West.

1975 Indonesia attacks Dili. The resistance movement FALANTIL appeals to the UN for a peacekeeping mission but no action is taken.

1975-1984 An estimated 200 000 Timorese are being killed or die under Indonesian occupation.

1989 Indonesia opens borders to East Timor after international pressure.

1991 The Santa Cruz Massacre, 271 people killed, hundreds missing.

1998 Indonesias President Suharto is overthrown after much unrest within Indonesia and Habibie is the new President.

1999 Habibie gives his consent for East Timor to vote for independence.

1999 The UN initiates the vote after consent from Portugal, Indonesia, and the SC, 98% of the Timorese votes, 78,5% votes for independence.

1999 Indonesian military forcefully displaces hundreds thousands of Timorese people after the referendum, over a thousand people are killed.

“Political change”

1960 “Timor and dependencies” are mentioned as a “non-self-governing territory” by the GA in the UN following Resolution 1514 “Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples”.

1975 The UN does not accept nor condemn Indonesia's attack on Dili and invasion in East Timor. The SC makes their first resolution regarding “the situation in Timor” asking Indonesia to leave the region immediately whilst calling on all states to cooperate with the UN in the decolonization, referring to Portugal as the administrating power still.

1976 Another resolution is added to the other one, asking Indonesia to leave.

1977-1999 Radio silence from the SC regarding resolutions on “the situation in Timor”, no process of the decolonization they set out to do.

1994 The UN Commision on Human Rights report on East Timor, saying 200 000 deaths have taken place during the Indonesian invasion 1975-1984 and reports that the Indonesian military is still a threat to the people.

1997 Kofi Annan becomes the Secretary-General of the UN.

1999 The 5th May Agreement is signed between Indonesia, Portugal and the UN regarding a referendum on East Timor independence after consent is given from Indonesian President Habibie.

1999 A resolution from the SC to set up UNAMET to ensure a fair referendum. Indonesia is in charge of “the security and peace” of the people of East Timor through a decision by the SC in the UN. UNTAET is established to have the administrative responsibility in place of Indonesia. INTERFET peacekeeping force is sent out through the UN after Indonesian consent.

There was a lot of silence and in between years in the political action of the UN when it came to protecting human rights and the independence of Timor-Leste. They were not acting based on Chapter VII until Indonesia gave their consent. It was in fact not what happened in the front line that caused the UN to act, not the hundred thousands of lives lost.

I argue that this is because of the structure of the UN. The SC is unable to act unless all of them are in agreement with one another. They also have their own political agendas, such as the U.S. military aid to Indonesia and past war with Japan, making the geo-political area of the Timorese island very valuable. It is clearly so that the international public opinion and its rampage of coverage of the area has preceded political action taken by the SC and Indonesia alike. The SC did not make a decision against Indonesia's will, even when it came to protecting the area of East Timor from a foreseen conflict disturbing the peace in the area.

The peace of one local area was just not that important when it came to political action for the SC to act upon what they have set out in the UN Charter to do, to protect peace and security.

However, this study has not been focused specifically on the peacekeeping force of the UN, but the main part of the peacekeeping mission 1999-2002 has been left out purposefully. Given the long history of oppression of the people of Timor-Leste, this study has been focused on how the UN has protected what they have set out to do. How did they initiate independence and decolonization for Timor-Leste other than mentioned in their resolutions? They did not. They could not. Because they stumbled upon their own structure of the SC vetoing according to their own political agenda. Leaving Timor-Leste oppressed, until the oppressor decided not to, because they now looked bad and their economy was at stake with the U.S. now withdrawing their military aid to the area. Why? Because they would face international scrutiny if not.

This is how all of the parts of this study come together. The international media wrote and made public what the political actors very well knew but chose to close their eyes to out of their own political interests coming first. Eventually this became an equation that was impossible. The U.S. had to let go of their support to Indonesia and Indonesia could no longer keep East Timor as their 27th province with the financial benefits of a collaboration with the U.S. and therefore they decided to let go. It was too costly out of their own expense to keep East Timor as a part of their “administration”. Costly, then, not in human lives but in the eyes of the international community and what it would do to their already unstable region at the time.

The UN was unable to act politically on behalf of Timor-Leste, when it was needed the most. But was able to when given the consent by Indonesia. It was a window of opportunity Kofi Annan would not let pass by again with the memory of Rwanda all too vivid still. The resistance leader Xanana Gusmao made it clear what his expectations of the new leader of the UN was that “we are in your hands now”, Annan commented this saying “our worst fears were coming true. Xanana warned me in a concerned but calm and determined voice that a ‘new genocide’ was threatening his people.”⁹⁷

From the timeline that the three different areas highlight, there are some conclusions to be made. Resolutions do not lead to political action. As a non-self-governing region identified by the UN 1960 and mentioned in a resolution to be decolonized 1975, Timor-Leste finally received the restoration of their independence after the referendum 1999. It took 39 years. The main part of political action happened outside of the UN for it to be outworked as a peacekeeping mission at last to save a people they very well knew was in need but could not politically act on behalf of regardless of what the Charter may say, because of the political and financial interest of the U.S. and Indonesia.

⁹⁷ Annan in Genser & Stagno Ugarte 2014, pg. 326.

What was sparked in international media by the events in the front line in Timor-Leste and how did it relate to the international politics leading up to resolutions and the political will decided by the SC? Are there any common traits when it comes to independence, human rights and political will regarding this? The Santa Cruz massacre in 1991 filmed by a foreign journalist shocked the world, and news agencies around the world reported on what was taking place. Reporting ramped up significantly in international media about the region.⁹⁸ The Nobel Peace Prize was a significant moment that I mean shaped public opinion and pressured Indonesia to move towards a referendum for Timorese independence. No action was taken on the front line of Timor-Leste from the UN until Indonesia had a new president in 1998 and gave their consent. The public opinion grew significantly, and commanded a political change, without a public debate and media coverage nothing happened politically.⁹⁹

8 Discussion and conclusion

The UN did not protect Timor-Leste's right to independence, nor their human rights in 1960-1999. Until they had to act due to public opinion but also were allowed to with the consent of all the states in the SC, as well as Portugal and Indonesia. The UN in themselves were powerless to act politically on behalf of Timor-Leste until the oppressor and colonial power of Indonesia themselves said they were willing to make their annexed province of East Timor vote for their own independence. The UN peacekeeping mission and mission to set up the referendum was described by Smith as “successful”¹⁰⁰. In calling upon this mission as successful I believe a wider time span has to be considered, which this study has set out to do. The mission did not start in 1999 with the referendum, but in 1960 when the UN first acknowledged the region as non-self-governing. The human rights reports that followed from the UN and the inaction for all those years I mean must be taken into consideration in order to truly say the mission was in fact successful. Had it not been for actors outside of the UN, and mainly outside of Timor-Leste, given their consent then no mission could have moved forward.

⁹⁸ Based on search results on the global news research database *LexisNexis*, 348 results for “East Timor” 1976-1982 and 3775 results for “United Nations” + “East Timor” 1982-1995, accessed 31st of Dec 2020.

⁹⁹ Based on search results on *LexisNexis*, 5942 results for “East Timor election UN” 1982-2000 and 348 results for “East Timor” 1976-1982, accessed 31st of Dec 2020.

¹⁰⁰ Smith 2003, pg. 28.

It is also important to note that considering the peacekeeping mission 1999-2002, the UN left Dili after the referendum due to the riots by the Indonesian military which would be another objection to the claim that the peacekeeping mission was successful.

With the trinitarian theory and methodology the conclusion I make is that human rights has been breached in Timor-Leste according to the UNs definition of human rights as equal for all states and having a right to independence. Political action has failed through the SC of the UN. The UN themselves partly acknowledges that there was an issue, naming it “the Timorese question” in their resolutions, a question that remains unresolved within the peace- and security founded organ for decades. It was a question seen but not acted upon until much later by the organ set out to protect human rights, independence and through their political action protect peace and security for all people.

This study set out to answer the question: what caused the action and the inaction of the United Nations to act politically on behalf of Timor-Leste’s independence and human rights through the United Nations Security Council 1960-1999? To answer and analyse this a trinitarian method and theory was used in the areas of “international media and public opinion”, “the front line” and “political action”. Analysing articles from international news agencies, historiographic literature and resolutions from the UN the answer is that the UN was unable to take political action regarding Timor-Leste's independence and human rights until Indonesia and the U.S. gave their consent based on their own political agendas. I argue that the UN SC, Indonesia and the U.S. had to act in the 1990’s. This due to the public opinion shaped by the international media outcry over the human rights violations in Timor-Leste demanding political action. The conclusion of this study is that the UN could not act politically without the consent of Indonesia and the SC.

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