# When the personal is political:
the dynamics of communal conflict in
East Timor 2000-2013

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I certify that all the work contained in this thesis is my own unless otherwise stated.

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Acronyms and Foreign Terms

Acronyms

AC75	Association of Ex-Combatants 1975
ANU CAP	Australian National University College of Asia Pacific
APODETI	*Associação Popular Democratica Timorense* (The Timorese Popular Democratic Association)
ASDT	*Associação Social-Democratica Timorense* (Timorese Social Democratic Association)
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BURADO	*Buka Ransu Dalan Unidade* (Seeking Our Path to Unity Together)
CAVR	*Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor Leste* (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste)
CNRT (a)	*Conselho Nacional de Resistencia Timorense* (National Council of Timorese Resistance)
CNRT (b)	*Congresso Nacional da Reconstrução Timorense* (National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction)
COLIMAU 2000	*Comando Libertasaun Maubere* (Maubere Liberation Commando)
CPD-RDTL	*Conselho Popular Defesa de Republica Democratica de Timor-Leste* (Popular Defence Committee-Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FALINTIL	*Forças Armadas de Liberatação National de Timor Leste* (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor)
F-FDTL	FALINTIL-*Forças de Defesa de Timor Leste* (FALINTIL-Defence Forces of Timor-Leste)
FNJP	The National Front for Justice and Peace
FRETILIN	*Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente* (Revolutionary Front for East Timorese Independence)
GTZ	*Deutsche Gesellschaft Für Technische Zusammenarbeit* (German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation)
IDP	internally displaced people

IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISG	informal security group
KOPASSUS	*Komando Pasukan Khusus* (Special Forces Command)
KORK	*Kmanek Oan Rai Klaran* (Wise Children of the Hinterland)
MAG	martial arts group
MUNJ	*Movimento Unidade Nacional Justicia* (Movement for Justice and National Unity)
NGO	non-governmental organisation
ORSNACO	*Organisasaun Resistencia Social Nacional Cooperativa* (National Resistance Organisation Social Cooperative)
PD	*Partido Democratica* (Democratic Party)
PDRT	*Partido Democratica Republica Timor-Leste* (Democratic Party of the Republic of Timor)
PNTL	*Policia Nacional Timor-Leste* (East Timorese National Police)
POLRI	Indonesian Police
PSD	*Partido Sosial Democratica* (Social Democratic Party)
PSHT	*Persaudaraan Setia Hati Terate* (Faithful Brotherhood of the Heart)
RDTL	*República Democrática de Timor Leste* (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
RENETIL	*Resistencia Nacional Dos Estudantes De Timor Leste* (National East Timorese Students Resistance)
TNI	*Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian Armed Forces)
UDT	*União Democrática Timorense* (Timorese Democratic Union)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIT	United Nations Integrated Mission in East Timor
UNPOL	United Nations Police
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration of East Timor
USAID	US Agency for International Aid

Foreign Terms

Aldeia	sub-village
Chefe	chief or head
Cobrança	levy or charge
Firaku	person from the east of East Timor
Hansip	*pertahanan sipil* (civil security)
Kaladi	person from the west of East Timor
Kera Sakti	powerful monkey
Lia na'in	traditional elder
Lulik	sacred
Mahidi	*Mati Hidup Integrasi Dengan Indonesia* (Live or Die for Integration with Indonesia)
Perumnas	*perumahan dinas* (civil service housing)
Suku	village or cluster of sub-villages
Sumbungan	donation
Tara bandu	traditional ceremony commonly employed to ban eating or harvesting of particular plants or trees, but also utilised in conflict resolution
Uma lulik	sacred house/origin house
Warga	initiated master

Abstract

This thesis analyses conflict patterns in East Timor, and the role of informal security groups in East Timorese society between 2000 and 2013. Beyond allusions to conflict in donor literature on land disputes, conflict at a sub-national level in East Timor has received very little attention. Extant scholarship on post-independence era conflict in East Timor has almost exclusively focussed on a three-month long series of events in 2006, in the capital Dili, known as the 'Crisis'. As a consequence, conflict in East Timor, and the variety of different informal security groups who often enact it, is commonly understood as a recent and largely urban phenomenon. Informed by a range of normative, macro-level and classical social deprivation theories, the events of the Crisis have been widely attributed to an explosion of social tensions arising from poor state building, political and elite rivalry, youth alienation and regional ethnic tensions. These understandings have been, and continue to be, highly influential in the design of peace building, policing and development responses.

Closer examination reveals that sub-national conflict has been a constant feature of East Timorese society since early independence. A range of historical and social factors such as land disputes, payback traditions and family disputes drive multiple, ongoing micro-conflicts in both rural and urban areas. Rather than being generalised, the worst and most persistent conflict occurs between specific villages in regions with a long history of communal tensions. The many informal security groups involved in these conflicts, such as martial arts groups, are just as much a rural as an urban phenomenon, so their existence cannot be attributed to urbanisation, disadvantage and youth alienation alone. Many groups also have a long and complex history predating the independence era. However, while inter-group conflict or violence often appears to be random and spontaneous, there are particular patterns in the ways that conflict occurs, where it occurs, and between whom.

Drawing on an emerging international literature critical of dominant macro-level understandings of conflict, this thesis uses the events of 2006-07 to elaborate a broader, more ethnographic and multi-layered framework for understanding conflict in East Timor. As I argue in this thesis, the national level, urban-based violence of the Crisis linked up with a range of pre-existing micro-level conflicts, so that one conflict became many. While macro-level factors such as youth unemployment and elite or political party tensions certainly play a part in fuelling tensions, conflict in East Timor is essentially communally driven and takes place within a historical, cultural and social context and continuum. As part of this examination, I will demonstrate how a range of factors, including cyclical rural urban migration, complex kinship networks and multiple and fluid identities drive conflict, and how these factors sometimes combine to

suddenly escalate local level conflicts. Such a diverse but interrelated range of phenomena ensures that there is an ongoing, interactive dynamic between rural and urban conflict, and local and national level conflict. Understanding this dynamic will be key to the effectiveness and sustainability of future peacebuilding responses.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Between April and June, 2006, a rapid series of events resulted in the unravelling of a comprehensive six-year UN state-building project in East Timor. In what is now popularly referred to as the 'Crisis', a protest by a group of sacked soldiers outside the national parliament descended into a riot, leading to the collapse of the national police force in Dili and a series of armed confrontations between the army, the police force and sundry groups. This initial series of events then served as a catalyst for a wider communal conflict on a national scale. Initially assuming the appearance of an ethnic divide, this conflict was conspicuous for the involvement of a wide variety of gangs, martial arts groups (MAGs) and other informal security groups (ISGs). By the time the conflict ended in early January, 2008, there had been an estimated 200 fatalities, at least 150,000 people forced into refugee camps and about 6000 houses destroyed (UN, 2006; USAID, 2006; 2007). Apart from the widespread destruction, there was also a tremendous economic and social cost. Government functioning and business operations were severely restricted for much of this time, and this period of violence revealed multiple and intricate fracture lines in East Timorese society that are still evident today. The repercussions for the international aid community were equally salutary. In the space of three months, from April to June 2006, East Timor's reputation had traversed the full spectrum between UN success story and 'failed state'. Given that up to this point the international presence was being rapidly scaled down, with the mission being classed as a successful exercise in state and nation building, these events took most observers completely by surprise.

1.1   Academic and donor discourse on the Crisis

As academics, development and donor agencies struggled to take stock of these events and formulate appropriate policies and responses, a consensus quickly emerged that attributed these events to a range of macro, national level causes. As Devant (2008: 13) notes, analysis of the 2006-07 Crisis is deeply embedded in a framework of development and nation-building. A common theme to these works was, and continues to be, a search for a single or set of 'pathogens' (Cramer, 2002: 94) or 'root causes' (Woodward, 2007: 145) that gave rise to the conflict, such as 'ethnicity', 'elite tensions' or specific flaws in the UN state-building model. While some authors have examined contributory factors in the violence, such as latent regionalism or land disputes (Kammen, 2010; McWilliam, 2007b; Silva, 2010), the dominant themes to emerge from this literature were that the original UN and donor 'recipe' for state-building and institutional design was flawed (Richmond and Franks, 2008; Sahin, 2007; Simonsen, 2009) and that the resultant violence was an explosion of inbuilt tensions within the system, elite competition and frustration with the slow pace of development. Violence following

the initial police and army confrontations was almost invariably glossed as gang violence, a conclusion no doubt reinforced by sensationalised press headlines like 'East Timor in the grip of machete gang war' (Kearney, 2006) or 'Street gangs running riot in East Timor' (*The Australian*, December 4, 2006).

In academic and donor discourse, this violence was perceived to be the consequence of a lack of employment and educational opportunities, thus increasing youth susceptibility to political manipulation (Arnold, 2009b; Shoesmith, 2007b; Simonsen, 2009). Shoesmith (2007b: 29), for example, attributes the violence of 'gangs and vigilante groups' to frustration arising from deprivation and an antidote to boredom and unemployment, while Arnold (2009b) portrayed youth violence as a product of a range of factors, but predominantly economic and political exclusion and a weak state. Implicit in these responses is the assumption that the conflict was exclusively urban, reflecting a broader international literature focussed on the US and developing countries that posits deindustrialisation, rapid urbanisation and a 'youth bulge' as key sources of crime and violence (Clinard and Abbot, 1973; Hagedorn, 2008; Urdal, 2004; Vigil, 2003). Such explanations and assumptions continue to be influential in explanations for the Crisis long after the event (see, for example, Arnold, 2009b; Moxham, 2008; Silva, 2010; Simonsen, 2009).

Given the urban focus of these responses, there is little mention of conflict outside the capital Dili, despite intense bouts of violence in rural areas before, during and after 2006. The bulk of these accounts were also largely based on written or secondary sources (see, for example, Shoesmith, 2007b), or at best, interviews with educated, urban based staff of international agencies, NGOs or English speaking East Timorese elites (see, for example, Cotton, 2007b; Sahin, 2007; Simonsen, 2009). The testimony of the actors themselves, such as MAG or other group members, is largely omitted.

There was also an acceptance of a narrow time frame for the conflict period, beginning with the soldiers' protests in April 2006 and ending with the resignation of the Prime Minister of the time, Mari Alkatiri, in late June 2006. Except for a few brief mentions of a bout of post election violence (Leach, 2009), the violence of 2007 was barely mentioned or glossed over, even though it was in many ways even more intense and demonstrably different in character from the violence of 2006. Post-Referendum conflict in East Timor has therefore become understood as a one off-event frozen in time, as a cautionary tale or case study for debates surrounding post-conflict fragility and the UN state-building approach.

Explanations for the Crisis also rarely made reference to the cultural or historical context in which these events took place, beyond boilerplate references to East Timorese society as being

deeply traditional and predominantly Catholic. The implications of what it means to be a deeply traditional society are rarely explored. With few exceptions (see, for example, Gunter, 2007; Molnar, 2004), references to past violence were largely confined to discussions of major conflicts such as the 1999 Referendum violence and the 24 year war of resistance against the Indonesian occupation before that, or references to land disputes buried in donor reports (see, for example, Kruk, 2004; USAID, 2006).

The focus on the one big conflict and a corresponding blind spot on multiple smaller intervening events and developments, both violent and non-violent, before or since the Crisis (in the independence era that is) has left major gaps in understanding of the nature of conflict in East Timor. Evidence of such a blind spot can be discerned in peacebuilding literature on East Timor which has focussed, and continues to focus, on the UN state and nation-building mission, and justice and reconciliation for the violence of 1999 or before that (see, for example, Arnold, 2009b; 2009a; Richmond and Franks, 2008). Beyond NGO reports (see, for example, Asia Foundation/Belun, 2013), or Molnar (2004) or Gunter's accounts (2007), after more than a decade of independence, there is still yet to be a study published on conflict or peacebuilding at a local level.

1.2   An alternative reading

This predominant reading of those events did not resonate with my own experiences both as a long-term researcher of East Timor and as a resident there of four years. Immediately prior to the Crisis, I had worked in East Timor for three years in media development, spending periods of between one week to one year in 12 of the country's 13 districts, conversing almost entirely in Tetun, the national language. I became aware of a number of endemic, longstanding conflicts in rural areas and in Dili. Rather than political rivalries, highly localised issues such as land, livestock theft, personal and family disputes or even witchcraft allegations generally motivated these conflicts. A number of times people had also intimated to me that they, and many others, would be seeking payback once the UN left, but not for the militia crimes of 1999, but for the bitter civil war of 1975.[1] The knowledge of such ongoing, local level conflicts or tensions, therefore, made it difficult to view the events of 2006-07 as either surprising, or as an aberration from an otherwise peaceful norm.

My initial observations indicated that ideology played little part in these disputes. Education levels were low and, consequently, so were levels of political consciousness. Except for an educated elite, most people I met told me that they inherited their political affiliations from their

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[1] This civil war between the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor (FRETILIN) party and

family. When I asked them about their political preferences, most youth merely said "*hau simu de'it*" (I just receive). I had also heard of, and witnessed, entire villages changing their political affiliation according to the preference of their hereditary village chiefs. Very few parties have any coherent policy platforms and it was rare, even among educated elites, that anybody could articulate a single political party policy. Yet, everybody knew what everybody else's political sympathies were, to an intimate degree, especially that of their rivals, with whole villages or regions labelled as affiliated with particular political parties. This indicated that family, language and geographic location played a far more pivotal role in political allegiances than actual policy or ideological differences.

In addition, despite an emphasis on state-building in academic accounts (Cotton, 2007b; Kingsbury, 2007b; Shoesmith, 2007b), from my own experience it was clear that the government and the police force played little part in the lives of most people, particularly in rural areas, but also in many parts of Dili itself. Like nearby Papua New Guinea (PNG) and many other developing countries with low state functionality, there is minimal service delivery outside the capital, and in many peri-urban areas of the capital itself. Many of my East Timorese acquaintances viewed the police as either partisan to particular MAGs or factions in the community or as lazy and ineffectual. I had heard of many instances and witnessed one case where police were called to an incident, to stop a group from stoning a business or residence, for example, only to become bystanders or even to join in. In some cases the police themselves were the perpetrators in the first place. It was difficult, then, to view the factionalisation and breakdown of the police in Dili as any great departure from the norm or as a salient factor in the surge of violence flowing from the events of April 2006.

Similarly, the characterisation of the violence as gang warfare did not fit with my own observations. Living with a large extended East Timorese family in a poor, crowded area of the capital Dili, I knew that some of my East Timorese friends and acquaintances had been involved in or affected by violence prior to the Crisis and neither the victims nor the antagonists were members of any gangs. In some cases, the antagonists were women, or, more often than not, close neighbours or from the same rural district and related to each other. I was struck by the ambivalence towards violence of many people that I knew, as they defended their own or other people's actions under various justifications such as redistributive justice, vengeance or social jealousy. These were just average members of the community, mostly students, employed or married, not alienated youth venting their frustration at lack of access to employment or education – while not denying that there were many who did fall into that category.

After an absence of six months, I returned to Dili during intense communal violence in mid-2006 to research gangs and youth groups for the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). I interviewed the members and leaders of more than 40 different groups. It quickly became clear that far from being an amorphous mass of angry young men, there was a diverse array of groups whose existence long predated the events of the Crisis and whose members voiced coherent, rational reasons for forming or joining such groups. Such generalisations also did not do justice to the very positive role many of these groups played in their communities such as cleaning the streets and helping the poor. It was also clear that there was a strong linkage between these groups and their communities, manifested in group, family and territorial ties and symmetries, and that most of them were rural in-migrants.

I also found that people often possessed multiple social identities – for example, as church going scions of the community, as members of particular families, regional or linguistic groups or informal security groups, with multiple group membership common. These identities were fluid and interchangeable, and while initially confusing, this phenomenon lent a certain logic to the way small, personal conflicts suddenly flared into wider events. In late 2006, as the conflict rapidly spread from previously untouched areas of Dili and into rural areas in a distinct new phase of the conflict, explanations given by participants themselves for the violence of the 2006-07 period indicated such minor incidents as a pregnant woman abandoned by her boyfriend, a broken water tap, or a fight at a wedding as being sparks for wider conflict. It became clear that the events of early 2006 had branched out from one conflict into multiple small conflicts.

There was also a widespread acceptance among observers from UN agencies and NGOs that I interviewed for different research projects between early 2008 and 2012 that the security situation had 'normalised', an assessment clearly based on the rather complacent assumption that as long as there was no all out civil conflict, there was no conflict. In subsequent visits between 2006 and late 2012 for my own research and for a series of commissioned assignments on urban violence and peacebuilding projects, it was evident that conflict, both sporadic and low tempo and at other times intense and destructive, was very much alive in both Dili and rural areas, long after the 2007 elections and well before the 2012 elections.

Press reports and government pronouncements critical of gang or martial arts group (MAG) violence also did not ring true. While MAG rivalry was undoubtedly a source of violence and bloodshed, it was only part of the story. During a consultancy to evaluate a peacebuilding project in 22 villages in Dili in 2011, for example, all the data from interviews and focus groups with the affected communities indicated that gangs or MAGs were seldom involved in any of

the conflicts in these communities and when they were involved, there was usually a deeper, underlying issue related to a long running communal dispute. As described above, these disputes usually revolved around contestation over access to scant resources like land and water, but some communal enmities were clearly linked to longer standing rural disputes in their villages of origin.

Nonetheless, the consensus described earlier has been highly influential in the design of policy responses. Institutional strengthening has been the most commonly prescribed policy solution in academic literature, with a particular focus on justice and security sector reform (Cotton, 2007b; Cumes, 2010; Simonsen, 2009) and improving the capacity and effectiveness of the police force. Development discourse has, in turn, recommended such solutions as accelerated development through macro, national level economic and educational measures (UNICEF, 2006a; World Bank, 2007a; 2007b). Donor organisations like the World Bank and USAID launched a number of initiatives such as national level public works programs and vocational training initiatives, a youth parliament and a national youth fund. There is little to show for the substantial amounts of funding involved for these programs. While a number of other issues have presented obstacles to their implementation such as organisational capacity and poor planning (Independent Evaluation Group, 2013), the generic, untargeted nature of these programs has also limited their effectiveness. Five years of political stability and a multi-billion dollar government spending program have also failed to eradicate low level sporadic conflict. There are clearly factors at work other than poverty and political rivalry driving conflict.

A number of different prescriptive, top down conflict resolution programs and processes have also been implemented by donors and the East Timorese Government, largely based on these assumptions. These programs did not seem to be grounded in a local evidence base and did not, therefore, take into account many of the actual patterns and dynamics of the conflict. While most conflict took place at an *aldeia* (sub-village), for example, conflict resolution programs were being conducted by the government and a range of international agencies at a *suku* (suburban or village) or district level, thereby not addressing those communities actually affected by the conflict. Mediation sessions between Eastern and Western sections of the community continued to be held well into 2008-09 in different sub-districts in Dili, even though the conflict of 2007 took place between completely different adversaries and over different issues than 2006. Traditional rituals were employed in conflict resolution ceremonies when there were no traditional leaders to represent the affected communities to legitimise the rituals. Laws drafted to regulate martial arts groups and extensive mediation programs were aimed at the major MAG leaders, even though these leaders had little influence on their members outside their own rural or urban neighbourhoods, and most local level conflicts had little to do with

MAG rivalries. As a consequence, these programs and processes have had little more than a temporary impact. While conflict has certainly not returned to anywhere near the levels of 2006-07, it still continues at problematic levels and always has the potential to break out into a wider conflagration, as seen from the events of 2002 and early and late 2006.

It is not my intention here to discredit dominant narratives of the events of the Crisis. All these accounts have validity and have made valuable contributions to knowledge on the events of early 2006. However, while there is little doubt that such factors as elite tensions, poor security sector design and the slow pace of development were potent catalysts for the chain of events between April and June 2006 and national level, urban based violence of mid 2006, this overwhelmingly urban centric focus on a rapid series of events over a short period of time leaves much unexplained. Why, for example, did the conflict spread to rural areas and continue for nearly 18 months afterwards? Why was the violence selective, occurring in particular clusters of communities, rather than being generalised throughout the country, as would be expected if politics, poverty and ethnicity were the key conflict drivers? These explanations also do not take account of recurrent, localised conflict long before and after the main conflict of 2006 and possible linkages between these low level, ongoing conflicts and the conflict of 2006-07, nor of the sheer diversity and motivations of the groups involved.

1.3   Micro-level and ethnographic perspectives

There is an emerging but growing international literature concerned with sub-national level conflict, that has been highly critical of prescriptive, normative frameworks and of master narratives – the simplified macro-level explanations of complex events (Kalyvas, 2003: 486). Authors such as Cramer (2006; 2002), Richards (2005) and Nathan (2008) have provided detailed critiques of the normative, rational choice approaches of theorists such as Collier et al. (2004; 2008; 2005) or Goldstone et al. (2005), whose work has been highly influential in accounts of the Crisis (Cotton, 2007b; Shoesmith, 2007b). These critiques have argued that the use of sets of macro-level generic indicators is reductive, methodologically flawed and incapable of capturing sub-national dynamics.

Many of these authors argue for a more ethnographic approach and a culturally based understanding of violence. Some authors such as Banks (2000) or Goddard (2005) have criticised normative depictions of violence as a consequence of disadvantage and social fragmentation as being largely derived from Western industrialised contexts. Both of these authors argue instead that, at least in the context of Papua New Guinea (PNG), where they base their studies, attitudes to violence are highly ambivalent and culturally informed, varying in accordance to the context in which a criminal or violent action is performed. Other authors such

as Strocka (2006a) or Hughes (2005), writing on Latin America, have also challenged such stereotypes, arguing that far from being hardened criminal gangs of alienated youth, ISG or gang members have multiple social identities, some violent and some not, depending on the social context.

There are also a number of ethnographically based, micro-level studies which have questioned master narratives such as ethnicity, political ideology or economic factors by detailing the micro-level issues, enmities and dynamics that have driven local level conflict in different contexts, emphasising the agency of local level actors. Allen, for example, has questioned the dominant 'greed and grievance' explanations for the 1998-2003 communal violence in the Solomon Islands by stressing the agency of the combatants involved, who expressed a range of individual motivations differing from standard explanations for that conflict (Allen, 2013). A number of authors have explored the interlinkages between local and national level tensions or conflicts, countering standard portrayals of civil conflict enacted by national level actors, with local level actors and populations depicted as hapless victims. Kalyvas, for example, contends that there is agency at both a national and local level as local level actors often enlist the support of more powerful national level actors, or vice versa, a dynamic he has termed 'cleavage and alliance' (Kalyvas, 2003: 486). In a similar vein, Van Klinken has detailed the different local level tensions that drive conflict in regional Indonesia and how these tensions have escalated as they intersected with national level issues (2007).

There is also a growing literature that has applied these arguments to peacebuilding practice, arguing that an understanding of the specific micro dynamics of civil conflicts – their scale as well as their historical, geopolitical and socioeconomic roots – should inform how peace is brokered and maintained (Ahmed, 2005; O'Lear and Diehl, 2011; Raleigh, 2011; Woodward, 2007). Autesserre (2007; 2012; 2008; 2010), writing on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), contends that a reliance on dominant narratives has obscured the importance and existence of micro-level conflicts. She believes that national level and local level conflicts are interactive, and that national level conflict cannot be resolved in a sustainable way without also resolving these micro-level conflicts.

1.4   Thesis overview

Drawing on this critical international literature on conflict dynamics, this thesis is my attempt to bridge what I see as a disjuncture between the political science oriented macro-level studies that dominated explanations for the events of 2006-07, and historically informed and ethnographically based local level data. In this thesis, I argue that the early urban-centric national level events of the 2006 Crisis converged with a range of pre-existing, ongoing micro-

conflicts, extending and expanding the original urban-based conflict into multiple smaller conflicts, in both urban and rural areas. Informed by Kalyvas's (2003: 486) theory of cleavage and alliance (explored in more detail in Chapter Two), and using the events of 2006-07 as a lens to analyse wider patterns of conflict, I will propose an alternative, more ethnographically based, dynamic and multi-layered framework for understanding contemporary conflict in East Timor. This framework situates conflict within a cultural and historical continuum, and identifies the mechanisms by which these micro-conflicts interacted with the national level conflict of 2006-07. As I argue here, most violence in East Timor is essentially communal, not criminal or political in nature. Dominant narratives that portray the violence of 2006 as monolithic battles between rival MAGs or supporters of political parties, for example, or as the product of a growing cohort of alienated urban youth fallen prey to criminal gangs, do not take account of a complex range of factors such as cultural attitudes towards violence, the close linkages between informal security group members and their communities, the perspectives of group members themselves and long running but highly localised communal feuds in the rural hinterland. As part of this examination, I will demonstrate how a range of culturally and historically based social phenomena, including rural urban migration and complex kinship and clandestine networks, ensures that there is an ongoing, interactive dynamic between rural and urban conflict; between 'small town wars' (Van Klinken, 2007) and national level, elite tensions.

The structure of this thesis is guided by these three interlinked research questions:

1   What are the social, cultural and historical factors that drive conflict or violence at a local level in East Timor?

2   What is the origin and nature of contemporary ISGs and what role do they play in their communities and in communal violence in East Timor?

3   What are the mechanisms and dynamics through which local level conflicts become linked with broader, even national level conflicts, as occurred in 2006?

Encompassing the years between 1999 and 2013, this thesis constitutes the first comprehensive study of post-independence conflict and informal security groups in East Timor. It is also the first study to place the events of the 2006 Crisis in their social and cultural context, viewing these events as a continuum in a long-term pattern of conflict rather than a one-off event. A key aim of this thesis is to foster a more nuanced, multi-layered and sub-national understanding of the nature and sources of conflict in East Timor, and an appreciation of the diversity of the informal security groups currently active there, and their role within East Timorese society. This study will also hopefully make a useful contribution to a growing international literature critical of normative, macro-level approaches to conflict analysis, which argues instead for more

ethnographically informed and holistic analyses that integrate both macro- and micro-level understandings of conflict.

1.4.1   Thesis outline

Chapter Two, 'Meta and Micro Narratives on Conflict', is divided into three sections. After a brief discussion of some of the master narratives that dominated pre-Crisis scholarship and debate on East Timor, the first section examines macro-level treatments and understandings of the Crisis. The aim of this exploration is to challenge some of the assumptions informing academic treatments of the Crisis and informal security groups, and attendant responses and policy initiatives. These frameworks are then examined with reference to current critiques and debates in international conflict studies. This is followed by an interrogation of the main treatments of the Crisis in the light of these critiques and also local context. As will be argued here, these assumptions are heavily influenced by contested normative frameworks, many of which are derived from Western industrialised countries, and also by analyses conducted almost exclusively at a national level from an elite, urban and state centric perspective. The third section situates this thesis within an emerging international literature on conflict analysis that challenges the use of master narratives, or generic and normative approaches to conflict analysis. This literature argues for or utilises ethnographically based, sub-national studies on conflict and poses alternatives to macro-level approaches through more integrated, multi-level frameworks for conflict analysis.

Chapter Three, 'Methodological and Conceptual Framework', first outlines the conceptual framework that will guide this thesis. It discusses how political science, anthropological and historical disciplinary approaches will be integrated and the overall theoretical framework that informs the structure of this thesis. It then outlines the ethical framework before moving to a description of the different methodological approaches and challenges in gathering the data for this thesis. A major component of this section addresses the challenges of working with informal and even illegal groups. This section also addresses the difficulties of gathering accurate and meaningful data in a low literacy and low educational environment. The chapter concludes with a description and justification for the different case studies chosen for this thesis.

Chapter Four, 'Cultural and Historical Legacies', sets out to challenge master-narratives that almost exclusively attribute the events of 2006 to elite rivalry and flaws in UN and donor driven post-independence state-building approaches. Divided into two sections, it first details the multiple and often highly localised cultural, historical, social and political factors and issues that generate contemporary conflict in East Timor and the emergence of informal security groups.

As part of this examination, East Timorese kinship systems and systems of reciprocal obligations are outlined and the importance of land and relevant traditional belief systems such as payback traditions. The second section outlines the major historical developments and legacies of colonial rule, and the historical context for a number of contemporary tensions. After a description of the Portuguese era, there will be an examination of the legacy of Indonesian occupation in the contemporary proliferation of ISGs and persistence of gang conflict.

Chapter Five, 'Continuities in Conflict', takes this historical chronology into the post-independence period, demonstrating how the range of historical, cultural and social factors outlined in Chapter Four have continued to influence events and shape conflict in the independence era. This chapter begins with a discussion of the range of micro-conflicts in evidence in rural and urban areas long before the events of 2006, before moving to a discussion of the events of 2006-07 and concluding with a brief summary of events up until 2013. This section demonstrates that there is considerably more complexity to the events of 2006 than dominant narratives allow for, and that the violence of the 2007 period, rather than being a sort of post-script to the events of 2006, was equally as substantive at a sub-national level, and demonstrably different in terms of the nature of the conflict and the roles and allegiances of the actors involved. As this chapter will show, while dominant narratives can explain the initial events within the commonly accepted timeframe between April and June 2006, they cannot adequately explain what happened thereafter, whereby the main, national level urban conflict became transformed into multiple micro-conflicts in both rural and urban areas. Many of these conflicts also have a history that considerably predate independence era configurations of political parties, and have little to do with national level cleavages of elite rivalries, youth disadvantage or state-building.

Chapter Six, 'National Level and Rural Groups', examines the origins and nature of the main national level informal security groups. Often dismissed as criminal groups and as a security threat, or as passive by-products of national level issues and events beyond their control, there is little understanding of these groups. Yet, given both their localised origins but national level scope, a closer examination of these groups can offer keys to understanding the dynamics of the 2006-07 conflict and of the contemporary period. As is discussed here, national level informal security groups display agency and rational choices in their motivations, objectives and actions. Many of these groups have strategically formed alliances with other groups and national level actors and utilised the events and divisions of 2006-07 to opportunistically redress often highly localised disputes or grievances. Each of these groups has had its own distinct historical, social and cultural genesis, identities and connection to their own communities. In support of these contentions, the historical basis for the existence of these groups is described, their geographic

prevalence, the longstanding nature of their specific grievances, antipathies to the State and, where appropriate, the origins of these groups' beliefs in East Timorese culture. Their linkages and alliances with other groups and how they have intersected with national level cleavages will also be explored, and how their beliefs and behaviour fits within a wider Pacific and Melanesian ethnographic context.

Chapter Seven, 'Urban, Dili Based Groups', describes the different, mostly urban-based youth groups, gangs and clandestine groups, with a discussion of their motivations, objectives and self-assessments. As with the previous chapter, a major objective of this chapter is to demonstrate how these groups have shown agency in the deliberate and rational decisions made to form or join groups, but also to take issue with portrayals of these groups as gangs based on assumptions drawn from Western industrialised nations. Taking an ethnographic approach to the concepts of crime and violence, this chapter demonstrates, for example, that crime and violence are not necessarily products of urbanisation, disadvantage and youth alienation but are culturally informed, with deep roots within wider societal attitudes and similarities to neighbouring societies. While some groups exhibit gang style structures or behaviours, many groups are hybrids with both positive and negative aspects, with some making dedicated attempts to transform their communities and provide positive alternatives to local youth. As will be discussed here, multiple identities and group memberships also complicate the task of categorisation and constitute an important conflict dynamic, linking localised, personal disputes to broader level tensions or conflicts. This chapter provides the foundation for the case study in Chapter Eight in sketching out the linkages between some of these groups and the processes of rural urban migration and kinship affiliations. It includes a discussion of some of the different social and historical factors that created these groups, why people joined groups and how the groups are integrated with their communities. These groups will be considered and compared in the light of the broader international literature on gangs, urban crime and violence.

Chapter Eight, 'A Case Study of Perumnas, Bairro Pite, Dili', illustrates the complexities of what has been commonly described as gang conflict in the capital Dili by constructing a profile of a squatter settlement comprised of three villages, and a neighbouring village. This chapter draws together themes from Chapter Six and Seven on group motivations, enmities, composition and origins, and shows how these are reflected in discrete group territories; how cyclical and permanent rural urban migration affects settlement patterns and conflict dynamics. Drawing on long-term field research in this neighbourhood, this chapter provides detailed data on the demographic characteristics of the neighbourhood such as regional linguistic configuration, a profile of local youth groups and gangs, their territories and their conflicts. As this chapter demonstrates, conflicts typified as MAG conflicts are more often than not

communal conflicts that are rural in origin, and MAG or other such group membership is more closely related to such conflicts and family identities than as a response to disadvantage and alienation in an urban setting. Intergroup conflict is also quite dynamic, with groups changing allegiances and with localised conflicts linking up with broader national level narratives and cleavages through a variety of mechanisms such as multiple identities and memberships.

Summarising the analysis of previous chapters, Chapter Nine brings the thesis to conclusion by examining the implications of the misconceptualisation of conflict in East Timor and offers recommendations for future practice. This chapter argues that many recent and current interventions are too often based on rigid, state centric, national level analyses. These analyses are in turn based on assumptions informed by Western industrialised models or macro-level, normative frameworks. As such, these understandings cannot adequately take account of the complexity and localised nature of most conflict, the motivations of individual actors and the dynamic interactive linkages between local and national conflicts in East Timor. As is argued here, unless current aid or policy interventions address the complexities of current conflicts, they are destined to be short-lived and unsustainable in the long term.

CHAPTER TWO: Meta and Micro Narratives on Conflict

Until the end of the Cold War, war had been generally perceived as the monopoly of the two opposing superpowers of the US and the Soviet Union, albeit largely fought through proxies in Africa, Latin America, South East Asia and the Middle East (Richards, 2005: 1). In the ensuing 1990s period, there was a realisation that the nature of war had changed. As noted in a recent World Bank report (2011b: 51), after a peak in the early 1990s, both inter-state wars and civil wars dramatically declined and became less violent in terms of overall casualties. As that report notes, however, the tendency to define conflict in terms of interstate or major civil wars and the assumption of a linear progression from violence to sustained peace ignores the existence of and increase in recurrent low intensity, localised violence (World Bank, 2011b: 51). These 'new wars' take place in what Richards terms 'inter-zones' – 'the spaces left where weak states had withdrawn or collapsed' (2005: 2). With the realisation that such new wars, if left untended, could have wider repercussions – such as the growth of organised crime within conflict zones, or have a destabilising impact on neighbouring countries (World Bank, 2011b: 51), there was a renewed interest in examining the causes for such conflicts. In the 1990s, a highly influential neo-classical school of economic theory emerged that attributed such conflicts to such macro-level factors as population pressures, economic stagnation, resource competition and ethnic rivalry. As Richards points out, these explanations are deeply rooted within European thought of the 17th and 18th Century (2005: 4), yet such analysis continues to dominate contemporary policy frameworks, even though, as Woodward asserts, these explanations are now dated, highly contested and even superseded (2007: 154).

Academic understandings of the 2006 Crisis in East Timor, which have predominantly emphasised economic, political and demographic factors, have been heavily influenced by such explanations. Such understandings have also in part been shaped by a pre-Crisis academic preoccupation with themes of state-building, justice and reconciliation for the Indonesian occupation. Endemic communal tensions and micro-level conflicts were thus largely overlooked, thereby facilitating a portrayal of the events of the 2006 Crisis as a one off event – an aberration from an otherwise peaceful norm. As will be argued here, urban and state centric, macro-level explanations based on normative approaches derived from Western, industrialised country contexts do not take account of sub-national conflict or local context such as the cultural and historical roots of conflict and violence in East Timor. Nor do they take account of the dynamics that link and escalate conflict at an individual, local and national level.

There is, however, an emerging field of international scholarship critical of such macro-level normative approaches to conflict analysis. This scholarship argues for more context relevant,

dynamic and ethnographically based sub-national understandings of conflict and emphasises the agency of actors at both the local and national level. Apart from the handful of works on East Timor in this new tradition, much of this literature is, however, concerned with armed violence, often protracted civil wars and insurgencies and in societies substantively different from East Timor, such as in the Philippines and on the African continent. Nonetheless, the methodological and theoretical approaches adopted by this scholarship have much resonance with the nature and dynamics of sub-national, micro-level conflict in East Timor.

This chapter is divided into three sections. After first discussing some of the dominant macro-level narratives in scholarship on East Timor prior to the 2006 Crisis, the second section then summarises some of the normative, macro-level frameworks adopted by or that inform most accounts of the 2006 Crisis. These frameworks are then examined with reference to current critiques and debates in international conflict studies. This is followed by an interrogation of the main treatments of the Crisis in the light of these critiques and also local context. The third section outlines an emergent, alternative field of scholarship on conflict studies that informs the approach taken in this thesis.

2.1   Perspectives on conflict in East Timor

2.1.1   Dominant pre-2006 Crisis narratives

The common portrayal of the events of 2006 as a sort of explosion of tensions is based on the impression of East Timor as largely conflict free between 1999 and 2006. This impression can in large part be attributed to the pre-existing dominant narratives used to frame East Timor's politics and history, and it is analytically useful to briefly outline some of this literature here before moving to a discussion of academic representations of the Crisis.

East Timor's resistance history and the UN state-building enterprise have proved a major preoccupation for scholarship on that country. Such a preoccupation has led to a broad conceptualisation of East Timor as a post-conflict state and a new nation on a difficult path to modernity and stability, rather than as a small island society with still vibrant traditional forms of social organisation, allegiances and, also, a history of pre-existing local level conflict. Until the 2006 Crisis, aside from micro-level ethnographic studies, most post-independence scholarship, both academic and non-academic, had focussed largely on themes related to major outbreaks of violence, chiefly, the Indonesian occupation period, the militia violence of 1999 and the subsequent search for justice and reconciliation (see, for example, Jolliffe, 2001; McDonald, 2002; Nevins, 2005; Taylor, 2000). Tanter has characterised this commentary as 'the simple and clear narrative of the long hard decades leading up to September 1999 of good

Timorese seeking self-determination and bad Indonesian military colonialists' (Tanter, 2006: 1). While this judgement is perhaps a little harsh, it does highlight the somewhat binary nature of this literature, which does little to address the complexities of that period, such as the many social divisions in East Timorese society which led particular villages to take a particular side, or why some people, and not others, suddenly and willingly carried out violence towards family members or neighbours.

There were, however, two notable exceptions to this general oversight. One was Molnar's study of local perceptions of the informal security group COLIMAU 2000 (2004), written during her work with the UN in rural Ermera District. Molnar traces COLIMAU 2000's militancy and conflict with other groups to tensions dating back to Portuguese times, and also to local traditions of millenarianism and protest. The other exception was Babo Soares's Doctoral Thesis (2003), which provides a detailed account of the issues behind the militancy of the Popular Defence Committee of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (CPD-RDTL) and exhaustively details the range of historical, political, generational, linguistic, ethnic, and even geographic divisions within East Timorese society.

Most accounts, however, have predominantly focussed on the trappings of modern democratic processes such as the state and its institutions, security, justice and appropriate development models; in particular, the UN state-building enterprise. A number of critiques emerged, for example, to argue that the UN had side-lined traditional or clandestine resistance leadership structures, did not adequately consult the local population or excluded them from decision-making (see, for example, Chopra, 2000; Hohe, 2002) or inadvertently institutionalised elite tensions and security force rivalry (see, for example, Shoesmith, 2003; Smith, 2004). The implicit assumption contained in most accounts is that given the right conditions and the right model of development, East Timor would have been set on the path to sustained peace, stability and modern statehood. This is despite the fact that this has not been the case in neighbouring PNG or other small island states such as the Solomon Islands or Vanuatu after more than two decades of independence. Nonetheless, East Timor continues to be measured according to its progress on this trajectory.

Perhaps because of this focus on the Indonesian occupation, the UN state-building process and a widespread assumption among Western observers that the East Timorese were united by their common struggle in the resistance, as also noted by Sahin (2007: 261), rising levels of micro-conflicts were largely invisible to outside observers. Another reason was, perhaps, that much of the post-independence violence took place in rural areas, quite often in remote, inaccessible

locations or in the backstreets or poverty stricken, peri-urban areas of Dili, where few expatriates ever venture, as is largely the case now.

By contrast, for the sake of comparison, perhaps partly due to a lack of similar distractions such as a national resistance movement or a root and branch UN state-building enterprise, ethnographic studies on communal conflict in Melanesia were available very early into independence (see, for example, Meggitt, 1977). There is also a rich and diverse literature on the roots of and dynamics of communal conflict in neighbouring Indonesia (Bertrand, 2004; Tajima, 2004; Van Klinken, 2007) and the widespread and growing phenomenon of ISGs there (Kristiansen, 2003; Nilan, 2010; Wilson, 2006).

As a consequence of the different preoccupations described here, no more than a handful of studies warned of the combustible internal structural and social tensions that erupted in the 2006-07 Crisis. In addition to Babo-Soares's work (2003), Rees (2004) and Shoesmith (2003) pinpointed tensions between the security forces as a consequence of the flawed nature of their creation and their overt politicisation as a source of imminent conflict. Schofield (2005) and Smith (2004) also pointed to growing social tensions, including cross border militia incursions and the militancy of ex-veteran's groups such as the CPD-RDTL. A prescient USAID conflict assessment (Brown et al., 2004) anticipated how the Crisis would unfold and to a large extent, who would be involved. In addition to occasional press reports, a World Bank report (Ostergaard, 2005) also briefly outlined the variety, mass scale and fractious nature of the nation's many MAGs, although this was largely a background section to a longer assessment of NGOs and youth organisations. Such insightful commentaries were the exception, however, and most accounts failed to foresee the events of the 2006-07 Crisis. The manner in which events unfolded, therefore, proved highly instructive on many levels.

2.1.2   Contested normative frameworks

The dearth of pre-Crisis scholarship on sub-national conflict, and an urban, state centric focus on meta narratives, has undoubtedly played a part in creating the sense that a sort of 'tipping point' had been reached in 2006, resulting in a sudden explosion of tensions. Without the knowledge of the social and historical context in which these events occurred, it is perhaps unsurprising that the events of 2006 would be viewed in this way. Scholarship on the Crisis has therefore drawn on a number of influential normative frameworks and academic traditions in search of the precursor elements of this sudden explosion. As is argued here, however, while the use of such macro-level, broad-brush normative frameworks has some utility in formulating rapid response policy responses, they do not deal with the specifics of conflict at a local level. These frameworks are also highly contested, and, as Woodward claims, outmoded (2007: 164).

Nonetheless, it is worth first detailing these frameworks, and critiques of them in international literature, before moving to a discussion of how these frameworks have been applied to East Timor and their relevance to that context.

In the 1990s, there was a growing concern among Western governments, particularly the UK and US, and within policy and practitioner agencies such as the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development, about the impact of conflict on development. The thinking at the time was that instead of merely responding to or intervening in conflict zones, a great deal of time and resources could be saved through early intervention and conflict prevention. A number of research units were set up with the aim of producing usable, policy ready research that could help predict and respond to the outset of conflict. The most influential of these were the research centre on Economics of Crime, Violence, and Civil War, led by Paul Collier and set up by the World Bank, and the US Government and Central Intelligence Agency initiated Task Force to Study State Failure (later changed to Political Instability), led by Jack Goldstone (Woodward, 2007: 149).

Collier and Hoeffler's work has been the most debated of the research produced by these centres. According to Ron (2005: 446), Collier and Hoeffler's formulations have been highly influential and uncritically taken as a core assumption by many writers on the subject of the resources curse – the contention that there is a strong correlation between conflict and a country's dependence on the export of primary commodities. Collier and Hoeffler constructed a mathematical or econometric model that they believe predicts the likelihood of civil war (2004), based on a quantitative study of 79 major civil conflicts between 1960 and 1999. Collier and Hoeffler have defined this framework as a 'greed' and 'grievance' dichotomy, arguing that greed is the dominant factor motivating civil conflict. These authors posit a key set of variables such as measures of economic agendas (greed), including overdependence on resource revenue and rapid population growth, with an attendant disproportionate number of young men, low educational levels and a large diaspora. Their four grievance variables include the expression of raw ethnic or religious hatred; economic inequality; a lack of political rights; and government economic incompetence. All these factors, these authors believe, can be quantified through mathematical equation to predict violence (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004: 565). As summarised by Ron, in this view, 'rebellion stems from utility-maximizing decisions by individuals in poor countries with limited opportunities for economic gain. When the perceived economic opportunities from violence outweigh the perceived risks, armed revolt is more likely' (Ron, 2005: 444).

This use of econometric modelling by Collier and Hoeffler and others has, however, drawn considerable criticism. Some scholars have questioned its methodological validity (Nathan, 2008: 273) and the positivist oriented assumption of a direct relation between cause and effect in the social world – that a causal variable always causes a dependent variable (Bensted, 2011). Other criticisms have been that Collier and Hoeffler's use of national level data does not capture politically significant grievance at the sub-national level and the complexity of individual motivation and overall, that the conclusions drawn from their statistical analysis are in any case both speculative and unjustified (Bensted, 2011; Cramer, 2002: 131; Nathan, 2008: 273). Van Klinken (2008), for example, in his study of communal violence in Kalimantan, Indonesia, tells of how the grievance approach has dominated explanations of why indigenous Dayaks have mobilised against the government and Madurese transmigrant groups. According to Van Klinken, the most common explanation for this violence has been that Dayaks feel aggrieved about the loss of their traditional lands through deforestation and land seizures for logging and palm oil plantations (Van Klinken, 2008: 37). However, as Van Klinken found, the areas of greatest violence between Dayaks and Madurese transmigrants have not been in the areas where such land seizures and deforestation have been greatest. Other reasons are to blame, Van Klinken argues, such as political opportunism by urban ethnic elites, both Dayak and Malay (Van Klinken, 2008: 42).

Collier and Hoeffler's framework has been highly influential in conflict studies, generating a number of variations. One example is the Africanisation framework, as advanced by Reilly (2000). According to Reilly, Pacific states are exhibiting a number of features of African states, which have, or will, lead to conflict. Reilly divides these into four main elements: increasing weakness of basic institutions of government; the increasing centrality of the state as a means for accessing, controlling and exploiting the nation's resources; a growing tension in civil-military relations, and an intermixture between ethnic identity and perceptions of group inequality on the one hand, and the struggle for control of natural resources on the other (Reilly, 2000: 262-263). The Africanisation framework has been contested by a number of authors. Fraenkel, for example, believes that the Africanisation framework, as applied to the Pacific, is not only inappropriate but relies on flawed data analysis and generalisation. As Fraenkel points out, while some Melanesian states face serious underlying tensions, political crises tend to be localised, sporadic and linked to very specific historical causes which are not adequately explained by generalised comparisons with Africa. He also points out that only parts of Melanesia face extreme poverty and urban squalor remotely near African levels, and that there is not even a remote possibility that the kind of protracted, complex conflicts involving multiple states that characterise the African continent could occur in Melanesian states (Fraenkel, 2004: 2). Fraenkel also argues that in many cases, the Africanisation thesis does not even apply to

Africa itself. He points out that in the cases of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique cited by Reilly, for example, ethnic tensions were not the real source of conflict, so that the quest for primordial racial similarities between the two regions is similarly misguided (Fraenkel, 2004: 12).

Modernisation theory also incorporates some of these assumptions that inform many accounts of the Crisis. In modernisation theory, education and employment are viewed as enlightening influences on crime and violence (see, for example, Clinard and Abbot, 1973). As summarised by Banks (2000: 22-23), in critiquing similar assumptions applied to PNG, there is an assumed linear process of structural transition from informal to formal controls, guided by an educated elite who implement modernisation through education, employment and communications initiatives. When these policies fail, the youth who have migrated to urban areas to partake of these opportunities then become alienated, engendering a breakdown in social norms and an attendant rise in crime and anomie. As Banks notes, in addition to access to jobs and education, modernisation theory adherents advocate for institutional strengthening and crime prevention as a means of controlling crime and violence (2000: 22-23), or political incorporation of youth through participation in decision-making bodies (Sumner, 1982: 19). Such an observation has resonance in the impetus behind East Timor's National Youth Policy and Youth Parliament (See, 2007; UNICEF, 2006a). Critics of modernisation theory have argued that such a framework does not take account of rural violence and crime (Sumner, 1982: 15), or of customary disputes or pre-colonial history (Banks, 2000: 23). As Cramer (2006: 76) also points out, violence is just as prevalent in middle-income countries as it is in poverty stricken Third World countries, so poverty is not the only dynamic in creating conflict, and it is not only poor people who commit crime.

Sumner (1982: 16) believes that these frameworks and others similar to them are grounded in earlier theoretical traditions based on Western industrialised contexts, such as the influential work of the 'Chicago School' of sociology, as exemplified by the work of Robert Park (1925) and later Shaw and McKay (1942). These authors' studies on urban Chicago neighbourhoods identified 'ecological factors' such as high residential mobility, poverty and attendant social fragmentation as being important factors influencing crime rates. A variant of this tradition is social disorganisation theory (De Coster, Heimer and Wittrock, 2006; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003; Sampson and Groves, 1989). Like the Chicago School, the key assumption of this theoretical school, also based on urban centres of Western industrialised countries, is that social cohesiveness is essential to social stability; the greater the social cohesion, the greater the constraint on deviant behaviour, and vice versa (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). Another corollary of this theoretical school is the 'frustration-aggression nexus', which, similar to 'strain theory'

(Merton, 1968), posits that individuals from impoverished backgrounds in disadvantaged areas will experience individual level strain, or frustration, because of blockages to attainment of financial gain, including lack of access to employment and education. Free from the social constraints of the nuclear family or in the case of East Timor, traditional leaders, they may react to this strain by engaging in alternative, illegitimate means of financial gain, joining gangs or other forms of deviance (Agnew and White, 1992; Baron, 2009; Hoffmann, 2002).

Informed by these frameworks, much of international scholarship on conflict can be characterised as a search for the source of the 'deviant conditions', (Cramer, 2006: 95) or 'root causes' (Woodward, 2007: 145), in other words, the identifiable aberrations from the norm (Cramer, 2006: 95) that increase the risk of conflict. The assumption is that if these unique elements can be isolated, like pathogens in a laboratory, conflict can be better predicted and prevented, or in other words, cured. Woodward divides the most commonly identified root causes into three main arguments: the 'economic argument', which cites low overall GDP per capita, dependence on primary commodity exports, thereby creating a conflict trap of low or non-existent economic growth after war, and a large pool of unemployed young men; the 'political-regime argument', which posits that civil war is caused by authoritarian rule, the absence of democracy or that it is 'partial democracies' and a particular sequence of democratisation that is most prone to political instability and even violence; the 'cultural argument', which cites cultural difference, often summarised, however, as 'ethnic conflict' as a the key source of friction (2007: 150-151). According to Woodward, policies currently designed to address these root causes are based on research from the 1990s, such as the work of Collier and Hoeffler cited above, that has largely been discredited or superseded, but the policy world has not adjusted to the criticisms and newer scholarship (2007: 150). Woodward believes that such a preoccupation with identifying the pivotal factors or 'root causes', as she terms it, is so pervasive among academics and policymakers that it prevents careful research on the specific relation between policies and practices of intervention and the specific context of a case (2007: 145).

2.1.3   Macro-level narratives on the Crisis

Perhaps due to the framing of East Timor in terms of dominant narratives of post-conflict justice and state-building and consequent oversight of its internal problems, most accounts of the Crisis of 2006 therefore fit Cramer's (2006: 94) and Woodward's (2007: 145) typification as a search for pathogens and root causes. Given these broadly similar or overlapping assumptions and arguments, rather than deal with each account individually, Woodward's typology of the 'economic argument', the 'political regime' argument and the 'cultural' argument (2007: 150)

will be applied here to group the main explanations for the 2006 Crisis, before moving on to further critiques of other aspects of these accounts. This examination will not deal with every claim made by these accounts, such as, for example, the nature of military and political tensions, but will instead focus on the assumptions made about violence and the gaps left by the urban, elite and state centric focus of these accounts. It should also be noted that it is not the intention of this section to disprove or discredit political science perspectives on the Crisis. Some of the authors cited here have made significant contributions to understandings of East Timor's politics and history, and their accounts of the events of the Crisis are both authoritative and compelling. The point of this section is rather to detail the limitations of macro-level political science accounts, and an attendant focus on a narrow time frame and urban focus, in drawing broader conclusions about the social sources of conflict and violence.

The economic argument

Influenced by the work of Collier (2004) and other neo-classical economists and theorists, a key normative assumption found in most accounts of the Crisis is the catalytic effect of economic frustration on large numbers of unemployed youth. Cotton (2007b) for example, reviews a number of different predictive frameworks that he believes could be applied to East Timor to identify the precursor conditions of the Crisis. One of these frameworks is that of Collier and Hoeffler (2004). Cotton sees many parallels in East Timor with these theorists' precursors of civil disorder, such as an overdependence on resources revenue, overpopulation and poor education (2007b: 14). Another broadly similar approach he endorses is the Africanisation framework, pointing to tensions between the army and police and politicisation of these forces by political elites, geographically based gangs and the dominance of the state in the economy. Shoesmith (2007b: 25-27), also drawing on the work of Collier (2005) and the Africanisation thesis, argues that political risk analysis tools that incorporate a number of conflict feasibility factors such as stagnant growth, a weak state, high military spending and unmet social expectations generated by resources revenue, if applied to East Timor, would have predicted the events of 2006-07. Shoesmith refers to earlier and cyclical bouts of violence – chiefly, the 1975 civil war, and Indonesian sponsored East Timorese auxiliary violence during the occupation and in 1999, which he believes laid the ground for a culture of violence. To explain 'youth' violence, Shoesmith employs the frustration-aggression hypothesis, similar to 'strain theory', an assumption implicit in most other accounts of the Crisis (see, for example, Sahin, 2007). Thus, gang violence and criminality, Shoesmith asserts, are motivated by financial gain but also, variously, socialisation from decades of violence and struggle, regional divisions and a lust for power and excitement (2007a: 30).

Informal security groups are largely footnotes in these accounts, variously portrayed as security threats, as gangs and sect-like 'politico-criminal' organisations (Kingsbury, 2007a: 20). Arnold provides perhaps the only account devoted to youth groupings and informal security groups related to the Crisis, and attempts a sympathetic understanding. Arnold sees the emergence of youth formations such as gangs as being driven by a number of factors including 'rampant' youth unemployment, a youth bulge, a need to protect communities but also a breakdown in traditional family structures (it is assumed this is referring to urban areas), and a weak state. When the youth 'became agitated and violent', there was nobody to rein them in (2009b: 386). Arnold also believes that youth feel a loss of status over the lack of recognition for their contribution to the resistance. Disillusioned with the state-building project, involvement in street fighting embodies a rebellion against authority, emulating past resistance days. While Arnold briefly alludes to how the violence evolved into the 'micro-politics of local neighbourhoods', he emphasises these major structural factors as being the chief causes of the Crisis (2009b: 386).

The grey literature of donor and aid agency reports reflects similar national level frameworks and perspectives as these authors. Much of this literature also primarily attributes the events of 2006 to a buildup of social and economic factors (World Bank, 2007a; USAID, 2006). A 2007 report by the World Bank, 'Youth in Crisis' (2007a), for example, while noting that problems existed well before 2006, attributes the 'explosion' of violence in 2006 to youth unemployment and exclusion, weak security and justice sectors, regional identities, political manipulation and a breakdown in social controls in urban areas. A number of studies also cite youth demographics, or a 'youth bulge', as a key determinant of conflict (Curtain, 2006), a view that can be found in wider literature on conflict (see, for example, Urdal, 2004). A UNICEF press release for the passing of a national youth policy describes a youth throwing rocks, who demands the government pay attention to youth, and that they be allowed to express themselves. The direct link between the stone throwing youth – reduced to mindless violence – and victimhood from disadvantage and exclusion is made implicit with the article's advocacy for greater education and employment opportunities and more youth representation (See, 2007).

These perspectives have been highly influential in the design of policy responses. Institutional strengthening has been the most commonly prescribed policy solution in academic literature, with a particular focus on justice and security sector reform (Cotton, 2007b; Cumes, 2010; Simonsen, 2009) and improving the capacity and effectiveness of the police force. UN agency efforts to reform and train the national police force in particular, received redoubled attention under a number of programs under the aegis of the 'New Partnership Agenda' (Peake, 2011: 615). The government also responded with more draconian police responses, including the

formation of the Task Force, a mobile unit notorious for indiscriminate violence. In 2011, the Secretary of State for Youth and Sport approved legislation to regulate MAGs (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, April 19, 2011) followed by a complete ban in 2012 (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, January 13, 2012), which has been subsequently extended.

Development discourse has in turn recommended such top down solutions as accelerated development through macro, national level economic and educational measures (UNICEF, 2006a; World Bank, 2007a; 2007b). A UNICEF 'Rapid Assessment Report' (UNICEF, 2006a), for example, recommended restorative justice programs, youth civic education and increased youth representation such as a National Youth Council and a 'Youth Parliament'. In response, in collaboration with the East Timorese Government, the World Bank, the ILO and USAID launched a number of national level public works programs and vocational training initiatives targeting unemployed and marginalised youth (International Labour Organisation, 2009; Democratic Republic of Timor Leste, 2009). In December 2007, the government approved the nation's first National Youth Policy, and allocated a National Youth Fund to be used to finance initiatives of youth groups and associations. The UNDP assisted the Department of Youth and Sport to resurrect the National Youth Council (a largely moribund body composed of ex-clandestine activists), to assist in the disbursement of this fund.[2] With assistance from the UNDP, two Government peacebuilding departments were inaugurated and a number of dialogue teams were set up to mediate in disputes and train members of the security forces, and prepare communities to accept the return of IDPs under the aegis of the *Simu Malu* (receive or accept each other) *Fila Fali Mai* (come back) and the *Hamutuk Hari'i Futuru* (Building the Future Together) National Recovery Strategy (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2006c).[3]

In 2008, informed by the belief that violence was generated in part by MAG rivalry, and the belief that MAGs were monolithic, homogenous groups, a number of programs were initiated by donors to mediate between MAG leaders and train them in conflict resolution (GTZ, 2007; Action Asia/ HAK Association, 2010). While there were some positive results, especially in (temporarily) ending the most heated source of MAG conflict, these initiatives have not resolved conflicts at a local or rural level. Conflict continued, for example, in the beachside area of Bebonuk between groups supposedly mediated by these processes until well into 2011.

A number of different prescriptive, top down conflict resolution programs and processes have also been implemented, largely based on these assumptions. Mediation sessions between Eastern and Western sections of the community, for example, continued to be held well into

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[2] Interview with Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport official, Dili, March 5, 2010.
[3] Interview with Catherina Maria, Catholic Relief Services, Dili, July 8, 2009.

2008-09 in different sub-districts in Dili, even though, as will be discussed further in Chapter Five, the conflict of 2007 took place between completely different adversaries and over different issues than in 2006. A number of community policing programs were also launched, and Government led conflict resolution programs utilising traditional conflict resolution rituals such as *tara bandu*.[4] As will be discussed further in Chapter Eight, these dialogues were usually conducted at a *suku* level, with little attention to local power dynamics or the highly localised, *aldeia* based level of much of the conflict. Such processes, which rely on the legitimacy and authority of traditional leaders, also generally failed to account for the heterogeneous nature of urban Dili, and the fluid and contested nature of traditional authority there – especially in the newer and more transitory informal settlements in the west of the city, which have suffered some of the worst violence.

All of these initiatives and explanations were certainly much needed, and they go some way to understanding and responding to the sources of the violence, but there is still much left unaccounted for. Violence has continued, albeit on a sporadic level, including areas that have been the subject of sometimes quite intensive mediation processes. There is no sense that this problem has gone away.

Frameworks based on the sources of youth delinquency and violence in more advanced developing countries or even industrialised countries should be used with caution in the context of East Timor, not just in terms of attitudes to violence, but in social and economic benchmarks. The linkage between urbanisation, poverty, unemployment and violence, for example, cannot be considered as automatic. As will be further detailed in Chapter Five, scrutiny of Government data, press reports and UN security updates reveals that until the violence of April to October 2006, most violence in the post-independence era in East Timor had been rurally based.

Also, as Bairoch (1973: 69) asserts, concepts such as unemployment in developing countries must be seen in relative terms, especially in small countries like East Timor, where 85 per cent of the population is based in rural areas and survives on subsistence agriculture (World Bank, 2011a). Authors such as Hagedorn (2008) have cited the influence of globalisation and de-industrialisation in Western countries, resulting in the decline of traditional blue collar, labour intensive industries, as a factor in the growth of gangs and youth delinquency. However, to speak about unemployment as a factor in the growth of both groups and conflict in East Timor is to assume that the labour market was once more vibrant and now in decline, and there is no evidence to indicate this was ever the case. In addition, a 2007 World Bank report (Das and

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[4] *Tara bandu* ceremonies are traditionally employed in natural resource preservation, whereby communities swear under a sacred oath, usually accompanied by animal sacrifice, not to eat particular foods or cut down particular plants or trees.

O'Keefe, 2007) actually found that in East Timor, the majority of unemployed in Dili came from educated, middle class[5] backgrounds, which they believe is a common pattern in developing countries. The stereotypical image of angry, alienated impoverished youth found in the accounts of the Crisis described here must therefore be considered to be contentious. Also, many of the leaders of MAGS and the supporters of violent paramilitaries are drawn from the social and economic elites and hold senior positions in the government and police force, in line with Cramer's observation that it is not just poor people who engage in crime and conflict (2006: 76).

The notion of urban social disintegration and breakdown of traditional or parental authority creating large cohorts of 'agitated' or delinquent youth is also problematic (see, for example, Arnold, 2009b: 386). As will be described in more detail in Chapter Eight, while many of the newer, crowded informal settlements do experience regular conflict, conflict was not confined to these areas in 2006-07. In fact, the pattern has been that in many cases, members of long established, relatively cohesive and often middle class villages in Dili attack the marginalised, transitory and socially fragmented informal settlements, rather than the reverse. In addition, many communities have adapted to this situation in quite innovative ways, such as creating local community based organisations, like youth groups, for example, or 'adopting' traditional leaders from other linguistic groups or families. Many youth live with extended families in any case, and so are not totally free of parental authority. Nonetheless, as Goddard observes of PNG youth, East Timorese youth have learned that claims of victimhood, poverty and unemployment play well with academics and bureaucrats as excuses for crime (2005: 99), a perspective prevalent throughout the academic and development agency accounts described above (Arnold, 2009b; PLAN, 2007).

Concepts such as the 'youth bulge', influenced by the early work of Goldstone (2001) and often found in conflict studies and policy discussions (see, for example, Urdal, 2004), are cited in a number of works on the Crisis (Arnold, 2009b; Curtain, 2006). Such concepts are contentious in understanding the roots of conflict in East Timor. While East Timor's population is undoubtedly overwhelmingly young, with more than 70 per cent of its population under 30 (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2010), the same could be said for many developing countries in the lower end of the poverty scale with high birth rates but low life expectancy. Furthermore, not all countries with 'youth bulges' experience conflict. Given their proportion of the population, youth are in fact the norm in East Timor, rather than the exception. While a burgeoning population of unemployed youth in the capital Dili has no doubt been a factor in violence to

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[5] The term 'middle class' is used in a relative sense here to denote those mostly employed in the formal sector in white collar jobs, such as for the UN, NGOs or the Government, and who are relatively financially secure.

some extent, all ages, genders and classes were involved before, during and after the 2006-07 violence, so multiple factors beyond a youth bulge must be considered. As already noted, much of the violence before, during and after the Crisis takes place in quite sparsely populated rural areas.

In the case of overdependence on resource revenue, cited as a factor by Cotton (2007a: 14) and Shoesmith (2007b: 25), East Timor is certainly overly reliant on resource revenue, at 95 per cent of its economy (International Crisis Group, 2013). The resource curse thesis, however, is usually cited as a factor in cases where the resource income is actually being spent, thereby fuelling inflation, corruption and a variety of other social ills (see, for example, Blunt, 2009: 92). This was not yet the case in 2006. The FRETILIN government, at the time of the Crisis, had a severely limited budget. For the 2004-05 financial years, for example, the state budget was a mere $75.1 million, of which 10 per cent was direct donor assistance (International Monetary Fund, 2005). There are strong indications that the knowledge of an imminent oil revenue increase after 2006 could have provided an ulterior motive for opposition parties and FRETILIN opponents for destabilising the Government. Nonetheless, this factor does not explain the social processes that drive conflict at a local level, particularly in the period before and after the chain of events between April and June.2006 know as the Crisis.

The political-regime argument

In addition to the focus on unemployment and economic stagnation as explanations for the violence, there has also been an over emphasis on the importance of the state. Common explanations of the Crisis are aptly summarised in Woodward's typology as being a response to authoritarianism – the absence of democracy – or 'partial democracies' and a particular sequence of democratisation, rather than the process of democratic transition in general (2007: 150). Cotton, for example, following Goldstone et al. (2005: 17), argues that the twin factors of regime type and the nature of executive recruitment and participation in the political system are key to predicting conflict. In Goldstone and colleagues' thesis, regimes that incorporate a mixture of democratic and non-democratic features are at most risk of instability, as they introduce both competition and factionalism into the political system. Shoesmith, like Cotton, also employs Goldstone and colleagues' argument that competitive democratic systems increase the risk of conflict. According to Shoesmith, the East Timorese Government under FRETILIN was a destabilising hybrid, a 'semi-democracy', neither an effective authoritarian one party state nor a fully-fledged democracy (2007b: 26).

A number of authors focus on poor state-building and consequent institutional weakness as being key to the conflict. Simonsen (2009), while citing similar explanations to other authors

such as poverty and elite rivalries, focuses on the factionalisation of the police and military, citing longstanding inbuilt problems largely following Rees's (2004) original outline, such as politicisation or personal, regional and historical rifts. Sahin (2007) sees the cause of the Crisis as being rooted in the flawed nature of the externally driven democratisation program. Sahin focuses on the twin structural factors of regional divisions and the problematic international armed forces development program as the major causes of the Crisis. Sahin believes the failure of the security forces in 2006 is symptomatic of a wider problem of inadequate development of state institutions. This inadequacy, she believes, is due to a failure to read the local social and political situation, or to leave room for negotiation and gain broader participation in institutional capacity building, chiefly in the security forces (Sahin, 2007: 254).

Richmond and Franks (2008), like Sahin, see flawed externally driven state-building as being an integral element in the 2006 violence. According to these authors, the UN adopted an inappropriate hybrid of a conservative, top down, hegemonic model of external peacebuilding that they believe engenders dependency, and an orthodox model where 'there is wariness about local participation and ownership but nonetheless a determination to transfer their normative methodologies and objectives into a new institutional governance framework' (2008: 187). This approach, they believe, did not take account of historical ideological and political disputes i.e. elite tensions dating back to the resistance, in addition to a failure to address poor socio-economic conditions. Traditional leadership was sidelined or ignored and new concepts such as the rule of law and human rights were imposed over traditional and *suku* level and 'tribal' law. As these authors claim, civil society was dominated by international advisers, so it took too long to emerge.[6] The new state was further destabilised by the installation of a dominant faction – the FRETILIN party and the introduction of the Portuguese language – both common themes to the writing described above – and a failure to gain local ownership of the new state. The 2006 violence, characterised by 'marauding armed gangs', was the consequence of these failures (2008: 189).

Low state legitimacy is also consistently cited by a number of authors as being key factors in the Crisis. Kingsbury, for example, attributes this lack of legitimacy to economic stagnation, perceived corrupt and authoritarian impulses, elite friction between Gusmão and Alkatiri dating back to the resistance years (2008: 16) and the adoption of Portuguese as an official language (2007a: 20-23), which is also cited by a number of other authors (see, for example, Moxham, 2008: 17). Kingsbury believes that apart from FRETILIN's perceived centralised governing

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[6] East Timorese civil society was actually quite vibrant, with over two dozen local NGOs in such fields as human rights, gender and the environment, and active from the earliest days of independence and even before.

style, there was an attendant lack of institutional capacity and a wider lack of acceptance of political and legal institutions (2007a: 25).

Emphasis on such structural, state centric explanations alone does not give the entire picture, however. Jones (2010) contends that an overemphasis on the centrality of the UN intervention ignores the fact that the state has very little presence on the majority of people's lives in East Timor, and even now, as in Portuguese times, has little penetration beyond the capital. Jones, in perhaps the only critical account of dominant narratives of the Crisis, contrasts neo-Weberian institutionalists, who believe that 'modern' state institutions can be grafted on to societies reductively labelled as 'traditional', with neo-liberals who believe that better institutional design could have prevented the Crisis. As Jones states, these approaches assume that institutions have magical powers that they simply do not possess, and do not take account of human agency. While the UN state-building approach certainly exacerbated social and political tensions, these tensions considerably predated the UNTAET period. Struggles for power and resources, Jones believes, would characterise any post-conflict scenario, and the UN was only one of many players in a highly contested process of state formation (2010).

The argument that competitive democratic systems increase the risk of conflict also does not take into account that exactly the same conflict occurred in 1975 between the same factions, and even some of the same individual leaders, without any elections or a UN state-building mission, with the police and army largely aligning with the same factions as they did in 2006. It is highly likely that no matter how perfect the system was, due to the unfinished business of 1975, conflict would still have eventuated. In any case, as will be further detailed in Chapter Five, most of the rural areas that suffered from violence in 2006-07 had experienced conflict up to a century or more before modern political configurations and during the independence period. Conflict was interspersed in these regions throughout periods long before or after national elections, although it is granted that conflict intensified immediately before or after elections.

The cultural argument

A number of authors, such as Simonsen (2009), Cotton (2007b: 15) and Sahin (2007) have emphasised ethnicity, as manifested in an east versus west divide, as a major factor in the Crisis. For Sahin, for example, this wider regional divide prevented the creation of a unified nation, gaining salience after the disappearance of a common enemy (2007: 259). Simonsen points to the regionally based nature of gang identity and mentions ethnic tensions between Makassae and Naueti linguistic groups in Viqueque in passing, but claims that the east-west regional division poses a greater challenge and ongoing threat to stability (2009: 578).

While all authors seem to concede that the notion of ethnicity in the case of east versus west identities is highly contested and socially constructed, as the course of this conflict showed over the two years between 2006 and 2007, however, the social importance of ethnicity was only activated for a specific time. Even then, it was only one of many divisions and social identities, such as family or resistance era identities, to emerge in this period. This east versus west division also only featured in the 2006 conflict for seven months, from April until October 2006, and only in Dili. As one leader of an ISG of Eastern origin involved in this east-west conflict stated, "After that, we were just spectators."[7] East-west tensions might have had relevance as a catalyst for violence in a mixed urban Dili context, where segments of both populations live, but not in rural areas, which suffered, and continue to suffer conflict such as in Viqueque and Ainaro Districts. The bulk of the violence in 2007 was actually within, not between, linguistic groups, and also, in many cases, between supporters of the same political parties. Even in Dili there were also a number of highly heterogeneous areas that did not experience conflict in 2006. There were often more mundane, localised factors at play in violence like social jealousy, protection rackets or livestock theft, as will be explored in subsequent chapters, but that were nonetheless glossed as ethnic violence.

2.1.4 Further observations

Narrow timeframe

Much of the literature that deals with the Crisis also predominantly concentrates on the 2006 April to June events, focussing on either a single or a particular combination of factors as the most integral catalysts for the outbreak of the Crisis and subsequent societal breakdown. The assumption is that the situation before and after these events was normal, or, at least, unremarkable. Many accounts fail to mention 2007 at all (see, for example, International Crisis Group, 2008), except perhaps violence during or immediately after the elections (Kingsbury, 2008: 40) even though the violence of 2007 was just as intense but even more widespread.[8] In Simonsen's summary of the Crisis, for example, he claims that the violence had largely abated by the time of the presidential and parliamentary elections, and blames FRETILIN's refusal to recognise the CNRT victory as integral to this 'renewed' violence (2009: 582). Arnold, who largely attributes the violence to disadvantaged youth, claims youth only 'formed into violent bands' during a period of upheaval when there was less fear of reprisal (2009b: 386). The twin

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[7] Interview with Eastern Sagrada Familia member, Dili, 30 November 2006.
[8] One UN source estimated that incidents (based on reports of incidents where UN forces were called out to respond) ran at an average of 50 per week for the January to October 2007 period, resulting in about 150 group fighting related fatalities, although the violence certainly did intensify in the wake of the election results being made public (UNMIT Joint Operational Command Presentation to the NGO Forum, October, 30, 2007).

statistics of 140,000 displaced and 37 dead have become boilerplate text for any press report, academic article or almost anything written on this period, even though so called gang violence continued at an even intensified rate in 2007, spreading through almost every suburb of Dili and district in East Timor, with up to 200 deaths (UNMIT, 2007). This oversight perhaps reflects the unease many observers have in explaining what was essentially a new phase of the conflict, but which was not so amenable to conventional political science frameworks that emphasise state centric, macro-level narratives. It is also perhaps a reflection of an over-reliance on urban institutional and local elite sources.

Regardless of the apparent blind spot on the 2007 violence, intergroup and communal conflict certainly did not start and end with the 2006-07 period. An examination of press reports and UN security reports between 2000 and 2006 reveal that persistent communal conflict has blighted East Timor ever since independence and well before it An examination of scholarship on the colonial era also indicates patterns of conflict and alliance long predating the Crisis and current political party and gang denominations by several decades. Few authors make reference to pre-2006 violence and when they do, it is usually a reference to the 2002 Dili riots.[9] By only focussing on events with the greatest overt magnitude of violence within a finite time frame, a range of equally salient pre-existing and ongoing sub-national or rural tensions or conflict are excluded, which potentially can result in poorly designed, unsustainable interventions and policy initiatives.

Cramer terms such a narrow focus on a particular number of factors and events as 'contingency theory', as advanced by theorists such as Eckstein (1965). This theory, according to Cramer, holds that 'the normal state of affairs is peaceable, but that extraordinary events can trigger affective, irrational outbursts' (2006: 95). As a consequence of this assumption, only highly visible events, such as massacres or major outbreaks of civil conflicts, attract attention and analysis, while more subtle series of events, either violent or non-violent, that precede them are overlooked (Kalyvas, 2006: 21). Ovesen (2005: 22-39), for example, in the case of Cambodia, criticises what he sees as an overemphasis on the commonly accepted narrow timeframe of the 1975-79 Cambodian genocide. He argues that this event should be seen as part of a continuum of violence throughout Cambodia's history, and that misrepresenting this event as merely a violent interlude in an otherwise peaceful history risks seriously distorting and restricting understanding of the nature of conflict in that country. Such a focus on the events of the 2006 Crisis risks a similar distortion and misrepresentation of the sources of conflict in East Timor.

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[9] One exception is McWilliam's thoughtful treatment of the origins of social tensions. McWilliam draws attention to the urban violence in the UNTAET period, competition for markets and other more complex social problems preceding the Crisis (2007b).

Elite and urban bias

All but a few of the accounts that stress state centric factors such as the failures of state-building are based on secondary or written sources that often reference each other. These macro-level, state centric and institutionally focussed accounts of the 2006 Crisis are also urban in focus, so rural conflict is rarely even mentioned. As observed by Autesserre (2012: 208) and Kalyvas (2004: 164) of a similar urban centric bias in international conflict studies, this bias can be partly attributed to the simple fact that observers on the ground often never venture outside the capital city, frequently lack the linguistic skills and local understandings that are necessary for a deeper analysis of the conflict, and the need for simple narratives for the consumption of foreign based managers or domestic media audiences.

If interviews are conducted, it is usually with diplomatic sources or educated, English speaking urban-based staff of international agencies. Richmond and Franks (2008), for example, base their analysis on nine interviews in Dili with mostly senior officials in international agencies such as the World Bank. Sahin (2007) lists one interview with a Timorese academic, while Simonsen lists interviews with four political leaders, NGOs or English speaking East Timorese elites (2009). In the case of donor or aid agency reports, these are often written by external consultants (see, for example, UNICEF, 2006a) with little or no country knowledge, who are therefore predictably reliant on both normative theory and institutional sources for information.

Such an urban bias has clearly influenced explanations for the 2006 violence. A number of accounts have, for example, cited the importance of the unpopularity of the decision to adopt Portuguese as the official language (Kingsbury, 2007b: 23; Richmond and Franks, 2008: 196). It is undeniable that this decision was unpopular, but anti-Portuguese language sentiment is strongest among the educated, urban, middle class, elite,(Leach 2012b: 236), with whom many commentators would have had contact. Many of these elites were educated in Indonesia. As in any decolonised country, it is usually the elite educated in their former colonising country who take power, as was largely the case across Africa (Prosser and William, 1988: 226). The sense of thwarted entitlement was very strong among this urban elite in Dili, as exemplified by the prominence of members of the Indonesian based student clandestine movement in the opposition movement, who had been well connected enough to receive scholarships during the occupation. This urban, Indonesian elite were also a mainstay of the opposition Democratic Party (PD), and so are predictably critical of FRETILIN. To a large extent, the language issue was more of a signifier of animosity towards the diaspora educated FRETILIN core leadership group. But while the language issue might have stirred resentment among an urban, Indonesian educated Dili elite, it hardly seems of relevance to a rural population where less than half the

population can speak, read or write even in the national language Tetun, only a third are literate in Indonesian, and less than 10 per cent have completed secondary school (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2010). Factors such as youth alienation, unemployment and poverty might also be factors in the city, where wealth inequalities are increasingly evident and where employment in the formal sector is most significant, but these factors have little utility in rural villages where most people live a fairly rudimentary existence engaged in subsistence farming.

Non-elite and rural perspectives are therefore largely overlooked in such accounts. Arnold (2009b) lists interviews with martial arts group members, but these are all urban based, and predictably cite exclusion, lack of access to employment and educational opportunities as being key factors in youth violence. As argued by Autesserre, the consequences of basing policy on macro-level, urban centric analyses will be that responses will also be similarly focussed. Conflict at a local level will be not be addressed, meaning that peacebuilding responses and strategies will be ineffective and ultimately unsustainable (Autesserre, 2007: 438).

Lack of agency

Overall, apart from the role played by peak leaders such as Mari Alkatiri and Gusmão, existing accounts of the Crisis assign little agency to East Timorese as active participants in their own fate. The East Timorese are largely depicted by these macro-level accounts as victims of external actors like the UN and of systems and structures not of their own making. Given the over representation of urban, institutional and elite sources, youth, and youth groupings such as gangs and martial arts groups are assigned largely peripheral roles, as victims or by-products of these national level issues. This discourse or sub-text of youth as passive victims of forces beyond their control is prevalent in academic accounts of the Crisis but also implicit in donor reports, frameworks and policy prescriptions (see, for example, PLAN, 2007; See, 2007; UNICEF, 2006a). As found in Arnold's account cited above (2009b), it is a viewpoint certainly encouraged by a sector of East Timorese youth themselves; "The politicians made us do it" was a popular exculpatory sentiment found among youth involved in the violence of 2006. One report by PLAN (2007), one of the few studies to gauge the opinions of local youth, takes such sentiments at face value, using the title 'Like Stepping Stones in the River' to refer to their respondents' perceptions that they are used as passive stepping stones by the elites. As per Goddard's (2005: 99) observation cited earlier, urban youth know this plays well with the government and international NGOs, but such generic explanations mask deeper sources of violence.

This portrayal of youth as victims is perhaps partly due to the fact that reaching more marginalised groups and individuals and eliciting less anodyne and generic responses usually

requires longer term studies and an attendant process of trust building, which few consultants or policymakers are allowed the time and budget to undertake. Therefore, there have been few attempts to substantially engage with perspectives of local level or rurally based informants or participants in the violence, which might reveal a more nuanced portrayal of the role and nature of the many groupings that emerged in public view during these events and the complexities and dynamics of violence. As will be discussed in chapters six and seven, members of the different groups express versions of events and individual motivations considerably at odds with the macro-level accounts described above.

Lack of ethnographic context

There is also very little ethnographic understanding of East Timorese society in these state centric, macro-level accounts. The normative frameworks as described here assume, for example, a Western oriented criminological definition of violence. Such assumptions bear strong parallels to Knauft's observation of accounts of warfare in Melanesia, which he claims 'insufficiently penetrated the indigenous underpinnings and psychological dynamics of violence' (1999: 154). Similarly, in Banks's study of crime and violence in PNG (2000), she contends that violence is not always viewed in the same binary way that it is in the West. In many societies, such as in Melanesia, there are ambivalent attitudes to crime and violence; that 'an offence is defined not so much by the act itself but in the social context in which it occurs', with particular reference to the relationship the people involved have to each other (Banks, 2000: 37). As Young observes of community attitudes in Milne Bay, PNG, 'it's not what one does, but whom one does it to which matters' (Young, 1971, cited in Banks, 2000: 34). Ward (2000) has also described the influence of payback traditions and clan solidarity on violence committed by Highland youth in Port Moresby. As noted by Dinnen et al. of Melanesia, conflict and disputes are part of the ebb and flow of everyday social and political life. As those authors argue, linear understandings of conflict, therefore, fail to understand the dynamic and changing nature of conflict and rarely engage with how people experience it (2011: 14). All of these observations, as will be described in further detail in subsequent chapters, could equally be applied to East Timor. Violence, therefore, is not necessarily a random act of anger or frustration, or the exclusive preserve of alienated, unemployed youth. As Banks (2000: 39), Knauft (1999: 154) and others have argued, there is a vital need for a more ethnographically informed 'cultural criminology' that takes account of traditional attitudes to conflict, crime and violence in their local and cultural setting.

Despite an extensive anthropological literature on East Timor, most contemporary works tend to focus on the local level in discussions of traditional forms of justice or social organisation.

There is little discussion of how kinship links, for example, or other forms of reciprocal relationships might drive group or individual behaviour and allegiances at a national level, or culturally informed notions of violence.

Despite the academic and donor focus on urban unemployment and youth violence in Dili, however, at the same time there is also a surprising dearth of ethnographic literature on the urban population of East Timor. There is, for example, only one (unpublished) study from 1975 on rural-urban settlement patterns (Ranck, 1977), and little reflection on such issues as how traditional authority is mediated in a cosmopolitan, highly heterogeneous environment, the links between rural and urban communities and conflict, and the implications this might have for policing and peacebuilding interventions. By contrast, in nearby Papua New Guinea there are a number of urban ethnographies (Levine and Levine, 1979; Strathern, 1975) and studies written on the phenomenon of rural urban migration (Koczberski and Curry, 2004) and informal settlements (Chand and Yala, 2008). There is a vital need for similar detailed and ethnographic understandings of the social dynamics and nature of East Timor's urban centre.

2.2   Multi-level approaches to conflict research

Janet Gunter's study (2007) of the origins of the Uatolari conflict in the Eastern Viqueque District is quite unique among these studies described so far. While not referring to specific groups such as martial arts groups, Gunter's study offers a rich, multi-layered account of the historical origins of one of the most intractable and violent conflicts in East Timor today, explicitly linking local level disputes with broader, national level narratives and tensions and also establishing the historical basis for contemporary tensions. This case study emphatically underscores the case that a number of sub-national, micro-level conflicts considerably predate contemporary political and gang affiliations, the advent of the UN mission and the imposition of Western political systems and notions of statehood. Her study also adeptly shows how historical enmities can be merely reproduced in contemporary political affiliations, a central argument of this thesis.

Gunter's approach to her study reflects an emerging tradition of international scholarship that is critical of such macro-level narratives as described above, and argues for a more nuanced, multi-level, historical and ethnographic understanding of conflict. Kalyvas has termed this 'the micro dynamics of civil war' – the systematic collection and analysis of sub-national level data, which he believes improves data quality and tests for micro foundations and causal mechanisms (2008: 397). As Verwimp et al. also argue, while macro-level explanations provide an ideal entry point to understand factors associated with the outbreak and duration of conflict and

violence, a micro-level approach also advances our understanding of conflict by its ability to account for individual and group heterogeneity within one country or one conflict (2009: 308).

Raleigh (2011), writing with particular reference to conflicts on the African continent, also accepts that national level research is critical for explaining which countries are at high risk for instability, but argues that the nation state by itself is nonetheless a poor vehicle for conflict analysis. This is, she believes, because of a tendency to pose a simplistic, binary opposition between competing forces with little consideration for the spaces and dynamics of conflict, or lack of conflict, across and within states; how individuals and groups participate in conflict to redress local disputes or how government actions or policies interact with these disputes (2011: 470). Raleigh believes this is particularly the case in developing countries where governance systems do not conform to predetermined units or functionality. According to Raleigh, while micro-level research is not well suited to a comparable process-based examination of conflict patterns and trends, its strength is that findings can be directly associated with the specifics of cases, instead of producing generalised results with limited real-world application (2011: 471). For Raleigh, it becomes a question of scale, with the breadth of the research question determining the scale at which analysis is conducted. Raleigh claims that country level research seeks to address questions that simply cannot be answered when focussed on a national scale (2011: 478).

There is now a substantial body of literature arguing for micro-level case studies using ethnographic approaches, that detail the very localised nature of civil conflict and emphasise the agency of local actors (Cramer, 2006; Van Klinken, 2007; Richards, 2005; Kalyvas et al., 2008). Straus (2008: 301-319), for example, in his micro-level account of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, questions master narratives that stressed the history of ethnic identity formation. Straus asks why so many Rwandans with no history of violence were involved in the killing, and why they so willingly participated. Straus found that there were more diverse factors at work than racial enmity in determining levels of violence, including power struggles between local level elites, government officials, the military and other actors. Allen (2013) has also challenged the dominant 'greed and grievance' explanations for the 1998-2003 communal violence in the Solomon Islands, which portrayed the combatants as criminally inclined mobs bent on loot and adventure. In addition to questioning Western, culturally informed notions of crime and violence in the context of the Solomon Islands, Allen found that the combatants' own narratives expressed a range of motivations grounded in their individual perceptions of historical processes, colonialism and their relationship to the state, development and nation-building (Allen, 2013: 9).

Another such micro-level approach is Tajima's detailed study (2004) of intercommunal violence between indigenous villagers and transmigrants in Lampung, Indonesia. Tajima describes how a variety of justifications have been used to legitimate violence in what has become a long running cyclical process of vengeance and retaliation. Tajima employs the concepts of 'self-righteous narratives' or 'identity politics' to describe the range of justifications leaders use to mobilise group or community members for violence against other groups, such as claims of victimhood and perceived injustice or inequality (2004: 16).

Like Molnar's (2004) and Gunter's work (2007), Nordstrom (1997: 101-105) examines the historical roots of contemporary patterns of conflict and alliances, stressing local agency in her explanation of patterns of pro or anti government affiliations in the Angolan civil war. Eschewing macro-level political or ideological explanations, Nordstrom asks why two contiguous areas supported opposing forces, with one area supporting the government forces and the other supporting the rebel forces. According to Nordstrom, particular language groups and families had aligned themselves with the Portuguese colonial rulers and transferred this allegiance to the government after independence, retaining their dominant and privileged status at the expense of other groups, who then backed the rebel movement. This is not unlike East Timor where colonial era allegiances were largely reflected in post-independence political party affiliations, alliances and antagonisms. As in East Timor, the effectiveness, or ineffectiveness, of different traditional leaders, according to Nordstrom, also proved critical in explaining why some villages suffered more war damage than others.

2.2.1 Jumping scale

A common theme to these ethnographic studies is that while often purely local issues such as land or family feuds might motivate conflicts, through a number of different mechanisms or dynamics, national or broader level issues may at different points coincide or interact with local level conflicts. In the case of the Tajima study cited above, for example, the author contends that while conflict in the region tends to be cast in terms of master narratives, such as religious violence between Christians and Muslims, much of this violence begins as localised incidents, but escalates as groups or communities become mobilised around localised village identities and then national ethnic or religious identities (2004: 6).

O'Lear and Diehl (2011: 34), writing on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), use the term 'jumping scale' to describe this phenomenon. For O'Lear and Diehl, scale denotes the outcome of the interactions between highly fluid, dynamic and multiple levels of overlapping activities and relations of interest linking processes, groups of actors (which may be nation-states, local governments, groups, or individuals), types of networks and places to conflict.

Scale, therefore, may continuously change or 'jump' as local level actors solicit assistance from supra-level actors. In the case of the DRC, O'Lear and Diehl claim that this occurred in the Great Lakes conflict of the 1990s onwards, when highly localised DRC rebel groups allied themselves with forces from neighbouring states such as Rwanda and Angola. These authors claim that top-down, state centric analyses ignore interactions across units of analysis, do not take account of the contexts of specific conflict locations and the role of non-state actors and subnational groups who may not necessarily be involved in violence. This means that many of the actors who are stakeholders in a conflict, both economically and politically, are ignored in peace processes if they are not active participants in the violent elements of the conflict. Identification of these actors, is, they believe, vital to conflict resolution (O'Lear and Diehl, 2011: 34).

Wood's study of a Palestinian village in Israel (1993: 88-117) illustrates the multi-level nature of conflict by detailing how local level issues assumed the mantle of broader political narratives through symmetries between kinship and political party affiliations. Wood argues that a multiplicity of identities is meaningful to Palestinians and that these identities are fluid and dynamic, constructed and reconstructed on a constant basis. Kinship, nationalism and class are just some of these identities, which, she argues, can be held simultaneously – not just at a community level, but also at the individual level. According to Wood, the official construction of Palestinian tradition by the Israeli State resulted in the institution of village councils based on traditional units of social organisation. These councils were, in turn, divided between competing political party entities, some incorporating nationalist ideology in their platforms, with the parties themselves reflecting kinship affinities and alliances. Political authority among Palestinians, Wood claims, is also based on social standing in the community, which is, in turn, predicated on honour – in particular, according to Wood, control over women's sexuality. As Wood describes, an illicit affair by a female family member threatened the honour and social standing of a particular family, and therefore their associated political party. This incident, and the subsequent honour killing, led to a reconfiguration of local party support, so that politics, nationalism and purely personal family issues became intricately bound.

Van Klinken (2007: 72), in his study of five local level conflicts in Indonesia, describes how national or regional level actors used broader cleavages or master narratives such as religion or ethnicity to mobilise support at a local level, elevating local level disputes to national level cleavages in the process. Similar to O'Lear and Diehl (2007), he uses the notion of 'scale shift', as advanced by McAdam et al. (2001), to describe how a number of local level disputes escalated into a broader dispute involving a wider range of actors, bridging their claims and identities in the process. Van Klinken describes one case in North Maluku where a political

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rivalry between two provincial leaders of the ruling party, Golkar, escalated into a religious conflict. One faction mobilised supporters among ethnic Makian farmers engaged in a territorial dispute with the neighbouring ethnic Kao group by changing the frame of this dispute from an ethnic based land dispute to a religious frame, with Makian farmers forming an alliance with radical Muslim activists. This new religious dimension of this local level dispute escalated into a province wide conflict between Muslims and Christians (2007: 117).

Van Klinken also cautions that violence needs to be disaggregated from the national level, observing that while the violence that broke out after the fall of the Suharto New Order regime in 1998 is often portrayed as afflicting the whole country, it was actually largely confined to five specific locations. Failure to disaggregate conflict in Indonesia in space and time, he contends, leads to reductive understandings of the nature of this conflict (Van Klinken, 2007: 34). The same observation could also be made of East Timor, as described earlier, where rural violence glossed as political violence only occurred in specific locations with a history of communal tension and conflict.

This multi-level perspective is also incorporated into a collection of studies on communal violence in Mindanao, the Philippines. These studies, the result of a research project by the Asia Foundation (Torres, 2007), examine the phenomenon of clan violence known as *rido*. A central finding of this study was that locally based clan rivalries intersect with broader, national level conflicts between regional insurgencies. One author, for example, describes five case studies where purely localised clan rivalries ignited much larger conflicts. In one case study, a fight at a basketball game escalated into an armed confrontation between forces aligned with the Moro National Liberation Front rebel movement, the Philippines National Army and national police forces, due to the different affiliations of the opposing basketball players' family members with these regional forces. The conflict also inflamed tensions between local Christians and Muslims (Canuday, 2007: 255-289). As the study concludes, a deeper understanding of these specific, localised conflicts is crucial to disentangling the blurred lines between these conflicts and larger regional and national conflicts. These authors claim that conflict management at the local level, therefore, may require actions at a higher, interrelated level or the delinking of local conflict from interstate or regional conflict, an observation also made by some of the protagonists themselves of the 2006-07 violence in East Timor (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2006b).

Severine Autesserre's work (2007; 2012; 2010) – in particular, her notion of micro-conflicts – is highly applicable to the East Timorese context. Also writing on the DRC, Autesserre argues that longstanding micro-conflicts at the level of family, clan, municipality, or district over land,

resources, political power, and ethnic antagonism increasingly are, or can become self-sustaining, autonomous and disconnected from the national and regional issues. Autesserre believes, like O'Lear and Diehl (2007), that conflicts can change scale, that national tensions can spark localised tensions, and vice versa, with national level events such as elections reigniting tensions at a local level. Also like O'Lear and Diehl, Autesserre believes that solutions or interventions that only target national level conflicts will do little to resolve local level conflicts, so that an integration of macro-level and micro-level understandings approaches is necessary to both understanding and resolving conflict in the DRC (Autesserre, 2010: 9).

2.2.2 Cleavage and alliance

The notion of the interactivity of local and national level conflict has been further developed into an overall analytical framework by Stathis Kalyvas (2003; 2004; 2006), which will form the primary theoretical framework of this thesis. Drawing on a wide number of case studies and examples ranging from the Napoleonic Wars, the American Civil War, the Vietnam War and even the East Timorese post-Referendum violence of 1999, Kalyvas has noted a similar dominance of macro-level explanations for conflict, which he likens to 'master narratives'. Kalyvas believes that contrary to such master narratives, civil wars are rarely binary conflicts, but are instead highly ambiguous processes that foster a range of identities and actions. Rather than being one big conflict, civil wars are usually an agglomeration of multiple, smaller unrelated conflicts. Kalyvas uses the term 'cleavage' to describe such master narratives – 'a symbolic formation that simplifies, streamlines, and incorporates a bewildering variety of local conflicts', as a means of constructing 'a straight, compelling story out of many complex ones' (2003: 486). Therefore, according to Kalyvas, civil conflicts tend to be understood on the basis of their central, overarching issue dimensions, or cleavages, such as ideological, ethnic, religious or class conflicts.

Kalyvas does not argue that national level cleavages are unimportant in explaining civil conflicts; rather, he asserts that both local and national level conflicts can become interactive through 'joint production' of violence. To describe this interaction, Kalyvas has devised the concept of alliance, which implies an interaction between supralocal and local actors, whereby each can utilise the other for either national level or purely private, localised ends, intricately linking conflict at a national and local level. For Kalyvas, the concept of alliance allows for 'multiple rather than unitary actors, agency located in both centre and periphery rather than only in either one, and a variety of preferences and identities as opposed to a common and overarching one' (2003: 486).

Kalyvas discerns a clear disjunction between the identities and actions at the elite level of analysis and at the local and mass level. According to Kalyvas, this disjunction takes two forms: 'that actions on the ground seem more related to purely local or private issues than to the war's driving (or master) cleavage; second, individual and local actors take advantage of the war to settle local or private conflicts or engage in vendettas often bearing little or no relation to the causes of the war or the goals of the belligerents' (2003: 476). Civil conflict does not then merely give rise to ensuing random and anarchical violence. As Kalyvas points out, many of these local grievances are often innocuous, but in the time of significant civil conflict, are enacted violently. These local actors have their own distinct identities, motivations and interests, adapting to each successive regime to leverage their support against their rivals. For Kalyvas, then, political violence is not always political – people are not necessarily enemies because they are in different parties, they may be in different parties because they are enemies (2003: 476).

In support of this contention, Kalyvas observes that violence is selective. He asks, for example, as per Nordstrom's example (1997) why is violence more pronounced in some areas than others during times of civil conflict; why some villages or regions take particular sides in conflicts, becoming rebel strongholds, for example, or siding with a repressive State apparatus or invading foreign forces. A focus on local cleavages can thus explain selective patterns of violence through 'specifying the logic of local participation in the production of violence' thereby underscoring the importance of local cleavages for wider processes of state collapse or state formation (2006: 365).

2.3   Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and interrogated the dominant narratives used to frame conflict in East Timor. As has been argued here, these macro-level, state centric narratives are informed by normative theoretical traditions and assumptions derived from Western industrialised nations, or based on contentious methodological frameworks. Such frameworks have resulted in a narrow focus on a three-month time frame and reliance on a largely urban based institutional or local elite sources, at the expense of a longer-term analysis at a sub-national level and local level perspectives. It is not claimed here, however, that these macro-level explanations are necessarily incorrect or superfluous. While the factors cited by these sources above certainly contributed to the violence of 2006-07, they are, however, simply inadequate to explain the sheer number, prevalence and persistence of the informal security groups found in East Timor today and the nature of conflict before, during and after this period. This chapter has also outlined an emergent field of international literature critical of such macro-level, normative approaches to

conflict studies, arguing instead for more dynamic, multi-level approaches and ethnographically based sub-national studies. This literature has informed the structure of this thesis and provides the basis for the theoretical and conceptual framework outlined in the following section.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodological and Conceptual Framework

This chapter outlines the conceptual framework that informs the structure for this thesis. It then outlines the ethical framework before moving to a description of the different methodological approaches and challenges in gathering the data for this thesis. As is described here, chief among these challenges was working with informal groups and within a culture of secrecy, but also the difficulties of gathering accurate and meaningful information in an environment of low literacy and low education. The chapter concludes with a description of, and justification for, the focus on the case studies of rural and urban groups, and the urban case study site of the Perumnas squatter settlement in Dili.

3.1   Conceptual framework

This thesis adopts an integrated, interdisciplinary approach that incorporates elements of both anthropology and political science, an approach that views national level political events and processes as embedded in specific social, cultural and historical contexts. This approach is informed by Knauft (1999) and Van Klinken (2008) and others, who argue that there is a growing convergence between anthropology and political science whereby indigenous and individual perspectives can 'articulate with politico-economic theory without giving in to simplistic assumptions concerning the ultimate causes of violence' (Knauft, 1999: 149). Utilising this integrated approach, I propose a multi-level framework for understanding conflict in East Timor. This framework seeks to explore the dynamic interactions between local and national level conflicts and between highly fluid and multiple identities, grounding current understandings of conflict in East Timor, particularly the events of 2006-07, in a historical and cultural context. While this thesis is not solely concerned with the events of 2006-07, it uses those events to facilitate a broader understanding of the nature of informal security groups and conflict dynamics in East Timor. Rather than ascribing conflict to a single root cause or set of root causes, in line with the emergent field of conflict studies described in the previous chapter, I propose that there are multiple, fluid and interactive sources of conflict, and multiple, ongoing local level conflicts rather than one single isolated event. This perspective does not, however, view conflict as a random phenomenon, but rather, that there is a certain logic to why and where conflict occurs and between whom.

Political science explanations for the events of 2006-07 are acknowledged here in this thesis; there is indeed compelling evidence that the events of early to mid 2006 were rooted in elite rivalry, poor cohesion among the security forces and a weak state as described in macro-level accounts, but this is only part of the story. These events took place within a wider, cultural and historical context. East Timor is a traditional, collective society and the extended family forms

the cornerstone of social organisation. Combined with low education levels and a singular lack of coherent policy platforms among the major parties, this means that social, rather than political identities are the primary driver in group formation, coherence and conflict dynamics. An ethnographic approach is therefore essential to understanding the logic that drives different forms of cultural and political organisation and, also, collective violence.

Banks, referring to the study of criminology in PNG, has termed such an ethnographic approach as 'cultural specificity' – 'a bottom up approach that aims to provide a holistic and contextual ethnography of the society studied' (2000: 40), that is inclusive of indigenous constructions of meaning in any political, economic or structural analysis of a society (2000: 41). Using this approach, dominant narratives on the sources of violence and conflict based on Western understandings are interrogated in this thesis by interpreting violence through local understandings and attitudes to violence and an examination of cultural and historical context. The ethnographically based premise that East Timor is a highly networked society, through a variety of bonds and mechanisms such as kinship, clandestine networks and rural-urban migration, is central to my approach. East Timor has a complex and tumultuous history, so a historical approach to group conflict is also combined with an ethnographic and political science approach. As is described in later chapters of this thesis, most of the informal security groups currently active in East Timor have a history, often considerably predating the events of the Crisis, in addition to a range of cultural identities.

As noted earlier, there is a dearth of ethnographic material on contemporary informal security groups, small-scale communal conflict and contributing factors such as rural urban migration and payback traditions in East Timor. Literature on neighbouring societies, such as PNG and Indonesia, is therefore selectively utilised. While acknowledging their considerable cultural and political diversity, given their geographic proximity, these two countries share a number of cultural, social and historical similarities with East Timor, including an increasing rate of rural urban migration, communal violence, and descent based collective identities and systems of reciprocal obligation, so this literature can provide some valuable insights. Knowledge of the Indonesian military's counter insurgency strategies, such as attempts to co-opt youth and the use of paramilitary groups, both in Indonesia and East Timor, is also integral to an understanding of the nature and origins of contemporary ISGs in East Timor.

As part of this integrated approach, I view traditional and modern forms of political, social and cultural systems, identities and alliances as being dynamic and interactive, rather than static and enclosed. This flexible approach is informed by Pierre Bourdieu's work (1977), which examines how kinship systems are 'lived' and constantly re-negotiated. While Bourdieu's studies

focussed on the Kabyle people of Algeria, his work has important application for similarly descent based East Timorese cultural and social systems. His discussion of how people are active agents in how they utilise, 'read' and maintain particular elements or links within kinship systems, based not only on social and cultural principles but also economic and political principles, is integral to the East Timorese context. Bourdieu poses two types of relationships or alliances: 'practical kinship alliances' – a system of genealogical relationships; and 'practical relationships' – non-genealogical relationships that can be mobilised as required (Bourdieu, 1977: 36-40). Such an understanding helps illuminate the complex logic that motivates individual and group behaviour and how individuals and groups negotiate and adopt multiple social identities and obligations. This conceptualisation informs the lines of inquiry into group identities and affiliations throughout this thesis. Both types of relationship could be discerned at different stages in the 2006-07 conflict and throughout the independence period. While group formation was often based on family lineage or other localised identities, some groups also coalesced around veteran's rights, justice, criminal activities or martial arts and clandestine group identities. With many individuals involved in multiple groups, different identities were privileged at different times, and groups also formed alliances with different groups at different times. Individuals move back and forth between these groups, identities and alliances, or maintain them simultaneously, as described earlier by Wood of the Palestinians (1993: 88-117).

While Bourdieu's work has informed the approach of this thesis, the overarching theoretical and conceptual framework for this thesis is adapted from Kalyvas's concept of cleavage and alliance (2003: 486). Kalyvas uses the term 'cleavage' to denote master narratives – the central, overarching issue dimensions used to understand conflicts such as ideology, ethnicity, religion or class. Kalyvas's concept of alliance envisages an interaction between supralocal and local actors, whereby each can utilise the other for their national level or purely private, localised ends, intricately linking conflict at a national and local level. For Kalyvas, the concept of alliance allows for 'multiple rather than unitary actors, agency located in both centre and periphery rather than only in either one, and a variety of preferences and identities as opposed to a common and overarching one' (2003: 486). According to Kalyvas's conceptualisation, this means that local level disputes can take on the appearance of the national level cleavage, even long after that cleavage has disappeared from the national level. This is a particularly apt framework, for example, to understand the phenomenon of how long standing localised rivalries have taken on the appearance of political party rivalries, which inevitably erupt into conflict at election time, even when these conflicts have predated current political party configurations by up to a century in some cases.

It is acknowledged here that Kalyvas's theoretical framework has come under criticism. Tarrow, for example (2007: 592), has criticised Kalyvas for a focus on violence that ignores non-violent forms of contention. In addition, the types of major armed conflicts Kalyvas draws on in his studies, such as the Vietnam War, the Greek Civil War and even the American Civil War have little in common with the type of usually low level and sporadic conflict found in East Timor. Nonetheless, his work still has much resonance with the way that in East Timor these small, local level conflicts escalated into prolonged, daily occurrences over an 18 month period. While not of the magnitude of the wars described by Kalyvas, these local level conflicts still constituted a significant and sustained outbreak of violence. Contrary to Tarrow's criticism (Tarrow 2007: 592), Kalyvas does allow for non-violent forms of contention. He describes how enmities or issues that are resolved or enacted non-violently in peace time become enacted violently in civil war, which is central to his theory that people use the cover of national level tensions instrumentally to enact vengeance or gain advantage over rivals in purely local disputes. Local level disputes, therefore, appear on the surface to reflect national level cleavages, such as, for example, political or ethnic tensions (Kalyvas, 2003: 483). Kalyvas is also critical of macro-level approaches to conflict analysis that do not take account of both violent and non-violent events and periods prior to major outbreaks of civil conflict (2006: 21).

Kalyvas also makes the critical distinction between civil war (in this context, national level civil conflict) and violence, arguing that the causes for violence during civil war cannot be all subsumed under the causes of civil war (2006: 20). Such a distinction allows for an examination of the complexities of micro-level conflicts that may break out in the time of a larger scale, national level civil conflict, but may be completely unconnected in terms of actors and causes, which, as is argued in this thesis, is what happened in late 2006 and throughout 2007.

With its history of communal conflict spanning Portuguese and Indonesian colonialism and then the UN administration, and symmetries between family, political and ISG identities, Kalyvas's twin concepts of cleavage and alliance (2003: 486) are well suited to an analysis of conflict dynamics in East Timor. They allow for a multi-level, interactive analysis that is inclusive of both political science oriented master narratives that take account of elite competition and state-building, but also take account of local level dynamics (which in East Timor, are often far removed from national level politics in the urban centre), and of agency at a local level, such as the perspectives of ISG members. This conceptualisation is also accommodating of historical and cultural contexts that point to a history behind many endemic contemporary conflict sites in East Timor, and allows for an exploration of the different mechanisms through which localised conflicts or tensions can interact with national conflict.

Utilising this framework, the structure of this thesis is set out to first outline the historical basis for a number of contemporary conflicts in East Timor and also cultural foundations for, and understandings of violence in East Timor. It then proceeds to explore the historical and cultural basis for a range of contemporary groups and identities, before moving to a case study of an urban location to illustrate the interconnections between group, political and kinship identities, rural and urban conflicts, and the mechanisms through which localised disputes can escalate as they become linked with national level cleavages.

3.2   Ethics framework

While some of the data for this thesis is drawn from research fieldwork performed for different agencies under their own ethical guidelines, the main ethics framework for this research is guided by my research ethics application granted by Swinburne University Ethics Committee.[10] This ethics framework sets out my methods for gathering information and the strict guidelines that I adhered to on confidentiality, consent and duty of care towards interview respondents, responsible use of their information and steps taken to ensure my own personal safety. As part of these guidelines, consent forms were prepared and translated into Tetun to be read or signed by respondents. Given low literacy levels, most informants had difficulty in reading Tetun[11] and respondents were reluctant to sign their name on any official document, no matter how much confidentiality was stressed, so this necessitated that consent forms were read out and explained verbally. Verbal agreements also protected witnesses from potential prosecution. Interviews were initially recorded but given the sensitivity of the topic, this almost invariably made people guarded and self-conscious, so written notes were adopted instead. No names of respondents involved in illegal activities were recorded and no names have been used without the informants' consent. No information has been divulged to any third party that might incriminate any informant.

3.3   Research database

The research for and insights contained in this PhD thesis are drawn from a number of periods of fieldwork conducted for my PhD and a series of five commissioned research studies for international agencies between 2006 and 2012. Given the narrow timelines and frameworks for presenting the data gathered for these studies, there was much material only partially utilised or left unused, and many promising themes and lines of inquiry left unexplored. This thesis is an opportunity to expand upon this rich database of material by combining it with my own PhD

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[10] This PhD was commenced at Swinburne in 2009 and transferred to ANU in 2011.
[11] Tetun was only beginning to be taught as a written language, with Indonesian still the dominant language of learning in 2006. Levels of spoken and written Tetun skills are still low outside the capital (RDTL 2010).

research undertaken between 2008 and 2012. Data from these studies has only been utilised, however, where explicit permission has been obtained from the agencies concerned. In addition to my PhD research my fieldwork has involved a wide range of research including the origins, nature and objectives of informal security groups in East Timor and their role and connections within their communities, the dynamics and causes of local level conflict in Dili's urban areas, the impact of diverse factors such as rural urban migration and organised crime on conflict and an evaluation of the most effective peacebuilding strategies to deal with local level conflicts. This research includes 39 focus groups, more than 170 interviews and 300 household surveys with local residents, shopkeepers, members and leaders of informal security groups, local and international police, civil society organisations, international NGOs and UN agencies. This fieldwork was conducted in over 30 *aldeias* in Dili and three rural districts, with a focus on four *aldeias* in my main field site, Perumnas, in the Bairro Pite Sub-District of Dili.

My research insights are also informed by four years of living in East Timor, speaking the national language Tetun, travelling to 12 out of 13 districts, spending between one week to one year in each location, and two years living with a large extended East Timorese family in my field study area. My attendance, through my close relationship with this family, at frequent ceremonies and celebrations introduced me to a wide circle of informants, and social and family networks in my field study area that I could not have otherwise accessed. Countless informal conversations with participants at such events, as well as East Timorese friends and neighbours have also been highly informative to my perspectives on sources of conflict and local attitudes to violence, and broader matters such as family obligations, justice, and politics.

Between 2003 and 2005 I also worked in media development, coordinating a range of different national radio documentary projects, including on the history of the clandestine resistance movement, domestic violence, traditional culture and community political forums. This work took me to some remote corners of the country and provided me with some unique insights into East Timorese history, culture and society and the continued salience of clandestine networks. Through field trips to train local journalists, with extended stays in some locations, plus seminars and training workshops in Dili bringing together journalists from all over the country, I developed an extensive network of informants and trust relationships which, as will be described further here, proved vital for the sensitive nature of my research. These networks of rural and urban-based journalists have provided me with information on conflict incidents in their local districts or neighbourhoods on an ongoing basis. Their information often sits at odds with official optimism about the overall security situation, and with the notion of conflict as a largely urban phenomenon.

Numerous informal discussions and also confidential, internal briefing sessions where I gave presentations (with often frank exchanges of information or assessments of security threats) with staff from international NGOs, diplomatic missions and agencies such as the UN, aid NGOs, diplomatic missions and international security forces have also informed this analysis. Due to different contractual obligations, fear of losing their jobs or compromising their relationship with the Government, there is much information that people will not divulge in a formal interview but will relate, often in quite some detail, in an informal, off the record discussion. That confidentiality is honoured here, but these exchanges have informed my analysis and assisted in directing and focussing my research.

Reports critical of the government, project implementation or that paint a less than optimistic view of the security situation are rarely put on the public record. Therefore, confidential internal documents such as briefings and project evaluations gained from these social and professional networks cultivated over the last decade have also been invaluable in shaping and informing my analysis. One highly insightful unpublished evaluation, for example, included a baseline survey of causes of conflict, power dynamics and the groups and individuals involved, including local maps with conflict locations over 22 villages in Dili. Regular reports such as the Belun conflict updates are also utilised,[12] which are compiled from data gathered from a national network of trained volunteers. Internal newsletters such as the Joint NGO Safety reports with security updates are also utilised, in addition to my own unpublished reports and briefings based on qualitative field based research – subject to copyright and confidentiality agreements.

There is a dearth of information on pre-Crisis conflict and the period since, so press and UN reports are drawn on extensively here to get a picture of the frequency and extent of conflict during this period. The UN briefings, including daily and weekly reports during the 2006-07 period, are fairly reliable – given that they are based on incidents where UN forces responded and documented the incident. International press reports tend to be sensationalist and superficial, but are usually an accurate testimony that an event actually took place. Local press reports are much less reliable. Before 2005, a team at UNMIT compiled local press reports on a weekly or daily basis. Since 2005, local press reports have been compiled and translated into a daily summary by a team of local journalists at the Timor-Leste Media Development Centre (TLMDC) in Dili. Local media outlets are mostly poorly trained and except for the national broadcaster, severely under resourced. Stories are often based on rumour and not double-checked and critical information is often omitted. Therefore, the local news articles utilised here are only of events where there have been multiple accounts confirming that the event actually

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[12] Belun is an NGO set up by Columbia University Centre for International Conflict Resolution. The website can be accessed at http://www.cicr-columbia.org/?page_id=183.

took place – although the details might sometimes vary, such as the number of people killed or houses burned down. That said, there are consistent patterns in conflict reports over time, in that conflict generally occurs in the same areas, such as the lowland plains areas of Baucau or Uatolari Sub-District in Viqueque, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

My analysis also draws on micro-level anthropological studies of East Timor. As discussed in the previous chapter, these are notable for their lack of discussion of conflict, with the exception of Molnar (2004) and Gunter (2007). Some studies are useful, however, where they focus on a source of friction between different communities, particularly those pertaining to property or land disputes. Fitzpatrick, McWilliam and Barnes's study of traditional land ownership systems, for instance, contains detailed case studies of three particular land disputes and their implications for national land laws (Fitzpatrick, McWilliam and Barnes, 2012). While these studies do not mention particular informal security groups, the areas where these case studies were researched have been sites of persistent martial arts group conflict and so provide useful background to the origins of these conflicts, allowing analysis beyond the national level scope of a political science stress on elite tensions or political party manipulation. The three case studies cited in this work by these authors result from more than a year's field study by one of the authors, Susana Barnes. While many commentators lack local knowledge and language skills as described earlier, Barnes has been working in East Timor for over a decade, speaks two local languages and so her observations are accordingly rich in detail. Barnes's observations of the symmetries between political affiliation, descent lines and village boundaries in the context of land conflict, and the historical basis for these land conflicts, provide a compelling basis for further analysis of the linkages between national and local level conflicts.

3.4   Field research methodology

3.4.1   Working with informal groups

My field research utilised a mixed methods approach, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data including surveys, interviews, focus groups and participant observation. My methodology is particularly informed by 'grounded theory'. Grounded theory consists of an iterative process of 'simultaneous data collection and analysis, with each informing and focussing each other throughout the research process' (Charmaz, 2005: 508). As set out by Bryman (1999) and Weingand (1993), I have commenced with a general research proposition, which, as outlined in the introduction, posited that localised rivalries, not politics, were driving conflict at a local level. I then collected data, further developed this proposition, collected further data and continued this process on a cyclical basis to progressively consolidate a more concise theoretical conclusion. I have also consistently confirmed and re-confirmed this

information with as wide a cross section of informants as possible over a long period of time to ensure the data remains up to date and accurate.

My individual field research approach is also critically informed, however, by my first period of research for my two AusAID reports (2006; 2007). As is described below, this research took place in a highly charged atmosphere, where a culture of secrecy presented considerable challenges to collecting accurate data and also to personal safety. While the methodology adopted for this AusAID study could be considered a generic ethnographic research approach, much of it is specific to addressing the major challenge of this type of research on ISGs, which is accessing and interviewing informal groups, many of whom are involved in illegal acts. As Wilson and Hodgson (2012) attest, in their study of working with drug users in the UK, the chief concerns in working with such groups are the centrality of gaining and maintaining trust as well as confidentiality – protecting sources from possible exposure to prosecution or retribution. A lesser, although still considerable challenge, in East Timor, was how to negotiate a cross-cultural, low literacy and low education levels environment. I have continued to use the methodology for my AusAID research for my PhD research and other research projects.

To provide some background to this study, in 2006, I was contracted by AusAID to conduct two research projects over five months documenting gangs and youth groups during daily communal violence in multiple urban areas of Dili. This research was conducted in a difficult environment with a number of different challenges, not the least of which were risks to personal safety and a culture of suspicion and secrecy. Apart from youth groups, few people I interviewed in East Timor admitted to being involved in more controversial groups such as MAGs or former clandestine groups. The former clandestine groups were set up in semi-autonomous cell structures to defeat detection by the Indonesians and they still retain this secretive, clandestine structure and nature. People also rarely admitted to being involved in illegal acts, except where they can argue self-defence. Even leaders of MAGs deny any wrongdoing by their organisation, despite being involved in daily pitched battles and multiple fatalities, so considerable ingenuity had to be employed in procuring information.

During this research I also found that sources within the international security forces, NGOs and individuals working in security or peacebuilding were, with some notable exceptions, generally of limited value due to high staff turnover and lack of localised street level knowledge. Non-institutional sources, therefore, were the most useful, such as East Timorese professional colleagues, friends and neighbours, taxi drivers and staff in hotels and restaurants. I took the view that most people would either have witnessed gangs or youth groups locally or have some social or family connection to a gang or other group member.

Groups were also approached through trusted intermediaries, who, apart from friends, often came from anomalous backgrounds including university lecturers, a tennis coach, a street DVD hawker and a senior aid agency staff member. While I usually attended interviews alone, I always felt secure in the knowledge that because of the use of an intermediary, I would not be harmed and while I always informed someone of my whereabouts, this approach has always proved sound. While at times some respondents were angry and interviews were sometimes tense, there have only been two incidents where I have been personally threatened and this was by third parties who had not been made aware of my visit to their area. A number of groups and individuals were not approached, as they were widely perceived as being too unpredictable and unstable and in one case, because members of the group were armed and perceived to be anti-foreigner.

3.4.2   Overcoming language and education barriers

Most interviews with East Timorese nationals for the AusAID project and my PhD research were conducted in Tetun. Interviews were initially structured, but I resorted to semi-structured interview techniques with the realisation that many respondents came from rural areas with poor Tetun skills, low educational levels and had an attendant low capacity to answer open questions involving comparative or critical thinking, or questions about time sequences. Other researchers have noted this lack of capacity for lateral thinking. One Oxfam study (2003), for example, noted that questions such as "What was the most difficult and what was the easiest work?" proved almost impossible to answer without prompting, and open questions proved unproductive to the point of being obstructive to discussion. Therefore, in my own research, a considerable range of prompt or sub-questions had to be prepared for each main question and great care taken not to pre-empt answers. In addition, very few respondents could provide a linear, structured narrative or responses directly relevant to each question. This meant that the same questions often had to be repeated at a later point or asked in different ways to counter both evasion and to try to frame questions in local understanding or frameworks, as is described below in relation to notions of violence and crime. People might not be able to answer a question like "Have you experienced violence in your neighbourhood recently?" so the question would have to be broken into multiple, specific questions such as "Has there been any stone throwing here?" "Have there been any houses burned down?" or "Was anybody injured?" followed by "When did this happen: this week? Last week? Last month?"

Respondents might initially say there has not been any violence, but might contradict themselves later if the question is asked in a different way. In one focus group, for example, I asked the respondents if they thought violence was appropriate under a range of different

circumstances, such as towards rival regional, descent or linguistic groups. The answer was a resounding 'no' but when later asked instead what they thought of a range of notoriously violent gang leaders, they contradicted their earlier statement by their positive endorsement of the behaviour of one of the worst gang leaders, because his violence was directed at rival Easterners.

Such experiences during the AusAID research led me to considerably adapt my approach over time for subsequent PhD research and other research projects. In my later interviews, I simply drew up a list of the information I needed to know, allowed respondents to weave a narrative and attempted to guide this narrative to secure all the relevant information, but this approach still required considerable ingenuity and tenacity. It also became apparent that sometimes people would speak in the third person when actually talking about their own experience. This was perhaps a means of relating their own experience, but without implicating themselves in any illicit or violent acts.

Finding the right local terminology in order to ask questions about MAGs and violence was also highly challenging. The words used to describe groups, crime and violence by my informants were highly revealing of the attitudes towards them. It soon became obvious, for example, that words or concepts like 'gang' had little meaning – there were simply groups, which were either *siak* or *la siak* (angry or not angry). The same difficulty presented itself with ascertaining the prevalence of crimes such as extortion rackets or violence. The words used for extortion, for example, were the Indonesian word *sumbungan* meaning donation and the Portuguese word *cobrança* meaning levy or charge, which have positive connotations (see Chapter Seven for a further discussion of these terms). As is discussed in Chapter Seven, attitudes to extortion and violence are ambivalent, depending on who is being extorted and who perpetrates the extortion. A similar ambivalence pertains to violence. A UNICEF report (2006b) on violence in education in East Timor found that violence is considered justified on a number of grounds such as justice, discipline or teaching, with only violence resulting in hospitalisation regarded as actual violence. This meant that my questions about violence drew few useful responses. Due to this ambivalence towards violence, discerning the nature of different groups was therefore challenging. If a community thought a local group was 'angry', for example, this was a strong indication that they were violent or at least a nuisance, whereas if the local community had a positive appraisal of a local group, this was not always an accurate indication of whether the group was actually a non-violent group. I also conducted a sort of random crowd survey with people such as taxi drivers, waitresses or other people I met by telling them about what I was doing and asking them for a second opinion on my various lines of conjecture, and on how

particular groups were viewed by the public. As these groups were rarely viewed in a negative light, most people were quite forthcoming with information.

Speaking a local language was integral to the success of my research. Very few people that I interviewed spoke English. I am proficient in Tetun, so 95 per cent of interviews with East Timorese subjects were conducted in Tetun. Speaking in Tetun meant that respondents were generally more willing and sympathetic to participation in interviews and often produced profoundly different and more frank responses than if they were required to speak English. When people spoke in English, quite often they tended to employ a practised Western or official discourse, whereas speaking in Tetun produced a more natural or indigenous perspective. In some cases where the source was bilingual and the interview was conducted in both Tetun and English, the discursive difference could be quite dramatic. Sometimes, for example, bilingual sources would insist on relating some information in Tetun, rather than English, such as information of a more sensitive nature or that revealed some aspect of traditional cultural belief. This reinforced my feeling that there were contrasting linguistic discourses of officialised, trained knowledge in English and local or traditional, intuitive knowledge in Tetun.

3.4.3 Overcoming a culture of secrecy and denial

A variety of local and international agencies, particularly the UN, were involved in an intensive campaign between 2006-07 to mitigate the violence and sectarianism through civic education via media, murals and public banners. Reference to the violence or sectarian divisions came to be seen as divisive or politically incorrect. Combined with a fear of arrest, retribution, a long tradition of clandestine secrecy, a distrust of outsiders and a preference for keeping their own affairs in house, few people would admit to using violence or to having knowledge of other perpetrators. Except for victims of violence, few would admit any knowledge of who was involved or responsible except for oblique reference to 'outsiders' or exculpatory references to manipulation from above by politicians, although few would ever name which actual politicians. While distrust of strangers asking questions is a feature of any culture, I would argue that it is particularly pronounced in East Timor, perhaps in no small part due to a long clandestine tradition during the Indonesian occupation.

Local knowledge was integral to eliciting such sensitive information or unlocking realms normally closed to Western or outside researchers. Knowing the colloquial word for a particular behaviour, or a name of a group or gang leader sometimes operated as a sort of code or pass word. Respondents seem to think that if you knew a particular person or word, you must be 'on the inside' and it was therefore permissible to divulge information to you. I found that unless sources knew me personally or through another close intermediary, they would almost

instinctively deny that there is conflict or any type of group in their neighbourhood (in one case, even where they had invited an NGO I was evaluating into their neighbourhood to resolve conflict). Once they realised I already had some details of their conflict, however, they volunteered information in some depth. I therefore soon learned not to ask questions such as "Is there conflict in this area?" but instead "Where is the conflict?" ..

I also found that women were generally far more willing to be frank about levels of conflict than men. This was perhaps because in many cases they had less stake in the conflict, or were the frequent victims of it – women would sometimes be harassed by gang members to provoke members of opposing gangs, have their wages stolen from them or suffer routine sexual harassment (Focus group Fatuhada, Dili, June 13, 2009). In one focus group in a particularly violence prone neighbourhood, for example, the men denied that there had been any conflict ever in their neighbourhood, whereas the women gave detailed accounts of almost nightly violent confrontations (Focus group Fatuhada, February 4, 2012). I was therefore always careful to conduct separate women's and men's focus groups and interview as many women as possible.

3.4.4   A networked, ethnographic approach

An ethnographically grounded knowledge of the value and extent of different types of social networks and reciprocal exchange relationships has been integral to my work, both in accessing hitherto closed information domains and in analysing patterns and dynamics of covert group and individual alliances. My earlier experience of living in the country for an extended period and the networks, trust and respect gained through this work, have been invaluable to overcoming barriers of secrecy due to the sensitive nature of this research. I have consistently drawn on these networks and contacts through what I would term a social capital approach and an ethnographic understanding of community. Portes's broad definition of social capital is utilised here; 'the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures' (Portes, 1998: 6). The term community is used here in Bellair's sense of the word, as a 'complex system of friendship and kinship networks and formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and ongoing socialisation processes' (1997: 677). As mentioned earlier, the knowledge that members of gangs and other informal groups are not alienated from the community but are somebody's brother, cousin or son and part of a wider network, and therefore that a gang member, for example, could be accessed through a connection from any rank or segment of society was integral to my research approach, and also part of my personal security approach. I was acutely aware that many people were connected to

some of the most violent or criminal groups or individuals through family or other links, so after a number of initial negative experiences, I was very careful about what I said and to whom.

3.4.5   Utilising social capital

My work in media development had already gained me considerable networks, but I further built on this social capital through my engagement with local youth groups. Once I finished the first AusAID report on urban youth groups and gangs (Scambary, 2006) I commenced the next report on nationally based groups. Over the next three months, I came to know a number of groups in my local area and developed friendships with some. While not actively researching these groups, I became a supporter of their efforts towards neighbourhood renewal and conflict mitigation. One such group was *Buka Ransu Dalan Unidade* (BURADO) (a Tetun acronym meaning 'seeking our path to unity together'), whom I met through a contact in community radio. This group was conducting some highly constructive voluntary work within the community, but without any resources or funding. I assisted the group with materials for their different community projects, in addition to sporting equipment. As a result, I formed a close social bond with this group. About one dozen or more of their women's division would visit me on a weekly basis and engage in an informal discussion session. Through a process of participant observation over time, I gained a great deal of insights about the local area and about the dynamics of local conflict, power structures, kinship and migration patterns and other aspects of local life that would not have otherwise occurred to me to ask questions about in formal interviews. It was this group, for example, who alerted me to the kinship based nature of many groups in the area, including their own, which male group members had been at pains to deny in formal interviews – perhaps through fear that they might be denied a funding opportunity if identified as a sectarian group. I have maintained my relationship with members of this group until the present day and have canvassed or crosschecked many of my theories and observations with them, so they have operated as a sort of informal research reference group.

One of the male leaders of this group has also acted as an introduction to other groups in this community. As very few people will admit to being gang members or involved in violence, he was able to identify people for me to interview without them knowing I was aware of their background. While I did not ask them to divulge any incriminating information, these respondents were able to be less guarded in their testimony, particularly in describing the chronology of specific local conflicts.

I also formed a similar relationship with a street corner group close to my residence, with whom I frequently sat with late at night, and whom I also supported with art materials and musical instruments. Through socialising with this group, I received many insights about the dynamics

of violence in the local area and contacts with previously inaccessible groups. As is described in Chapter Seven, when I had first interviewed this group for my gang and youth group research, they had, like all other groups, stoutly denied any involvement in violence or knowledge of any other groups involved, and any sectarian sentiments. Through long-term participant observation, this group revealed they had in fact been involved in the violent eviction of local Eastern residents, although they did not see this as violence or a sign of prejudice, but as redistributive justice. Until that time, the scale and pervasiveness of the violence, in contrast with the blanket denial of any involvement in violence by any of the actors, had presented a quite singular enigma. This insight, gained from informal exchange and building a trust relationship, was pivotal to furthering my understanding of local attitudes towards violence and justice.

These are just two examples of this social capital approach. There were also multiple, smaller interactions that unintentionally proved highly fortuitous, leading to contacts with previously inaccessible groups and individuals or insights into violence, conflict and group behaviour. Such encounters also provided evidence of how easily exchange relationships were established and how binding these relationships were. Observations on the strength of these exchange relationships led in turn to a reflection on how big men figures and gang leaders might manipulate the reciprocal obligations entailed in such relationships to mobilise for violence.

3.4.6 Social network analysis

A social network analysis (SNA) approach has also been used in analysing the linkages between groups and individuals. In East Timor and elsewhere, people derive their social capital and in many cases, their means of survival from these social networks. There is a rich body of work, most prominently the work of Granovetter (1973), on the value of social networks and social capital, and the positive and negative sides of social capital and networks (see, for example, the work of Portes, 1998; Rubio, 1997). SNA is now a standard tool used in sociology and criminology but also a range of other disciplines to study the patterns of social connections that link a set of actors. According to Freeman, SNA generally looks for either social groups – collections of actors closely linked to each another, or, social positions – sets of actors who are linked into the total social system in similar ways (Freeman, 2000). Ranck (1977) has effectively employed this tool in East Timor, for example, as an ethnographic device in tracing linkages between family members in source and destination villages in rural urban migration to Dili. As is described further in subsequent chapters, there are multiple linkages binding people together including kinship, clandestine resistance, descent-group based ties and combinations of all of these.

3.4.7 Mapping

Mapping was also integral to my approach. Given many informants' reticence and limited capacity to answer open questions or discuss sensitive matters such as ethnicity, tangible, visual aids such as maps proved invaluable in unlocking some of the dynamics of informal group territories and conflict, family and linguistic group settlement patterns and the outcomes of these dynamics for peacebuilding. Local groups, as in the case of BURADO for the map of Perumnas in Chapter Eight, or my social contacts in a community, would do a hand drawing of a map and then notate it with such information as group territories or linguistic/district based enclaves. In line with a grounded theory approach, beginning with a group of local traditional authorities, with whom I produced my first draft, I would show the map to different sources, progressively developing it as I went along with new information, and test it on people from the neighbourhood who would either confirm or question the accuracy of the information or offer new information. This way, the map became progressively over layered with new information and also revealed possible further lines of enquiry. The map in Chapter Eight is therefore thoroughly cross-checked with the local community, but will continue to be a living document.

Maps also proved to be an effective way of obtaining quite sensitive information. As discussed earlier, if I had asked people if there were any groups or gangs in the neighbourhood people might have denied this, which in fact many did in the World Bank Survey I was part of in 2009 (World Bank, 2010). People would also have claimed that their neighbourhood was mixed or denied knowledge of any linguistic or regional divisions. Therefore, instead of asking people open questions, I asked people instead where the groups were located on the map, given that I knew some existed already, and where people from different districts were concentrated. With each layer of knowledge I would then try to go one layer deeper. On seeing that I already had some of this information, one source ventured, for example, that usually people did not just come from one district but from the same village or family in that district, a point I then quizzed others about, gaining even further clarification and conjecture as to the nature of the conflict and configuration of *aldeias* and *sukus*[13] in the district of origin.

3.4.8 The case studies

There are a number of case studies in this thesis. As George and Bennett contend, the value of case studies is that they 'allow a researcher to achieve high levels of conceptual validity, to identify and measure the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts the researcher

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[13] A *suku* is a colonial subdivision one level down from a sub-district, which contains a number of hamlets or *aldeias* (Hohe 2002: 574). These administrative divisions will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Four.

intends to measure.' (George and Bennett, 2005: 19). Chapter Six, 'National Level and Rural Groups', discusses the five main national level groups, comprised of both disaffected groups and martial arts groups. A common criticism of case study research is that that one cannot generalise on the basis of individual cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 225). In the context of East Timor, this might be true if only one group was chosen, such as a disaffected group, for example. Disaffected groups have very different characteristics from other national level groups, such as martial arts groups. Disaffected groups, for example, have relatively localised strongholds, whereas martial arts groups can be found throughout the country. Some disaffected groups are involved in localised conflicts, but some are not. That is why five different groups have been chosen as case studies, drawn from both categories. Another common criticism of case study research is that too often case studies are selected that fit the hypothesis, while others that contradict it are ignored (George and Bennett, 2005: 24). The groups profiled here were not chosen because they exhibited the particular characteristics that fit a particular hypothesis, but because they are the biggest and most prominent groups, and the most frequently associated with or involved in violence. This selection of groups can therefore be seen as the most representative and analytically useful cross section of groups to study for the purposes of this thesis.

The same logic operates for urban-based groups. Chapter Seven, 'Urban, Dili Based Groups', presents a case study of six urban-based groups. The choice of groups was informed by knowledge gained from previous research over five years. Rather than pick a random cross section of groups to extend broader generalisations to other groups, these case studies have been chosen to illustrate the diversity and complexity of groups, to show that it is actually impossible to make generalisations about them. These groups have also been selected for their different positions on a scale spanning the most socially oriented groups to the most anti-social groups, to demonstrate that due to their hybrid nature, a distinction between positive and negative groups is neither so easily established nor useful. Selection of groups was also based on a geographic and demographic cross section of Dili, so that groups from both established and more affluent areas and more heterogeneous poor areas were represented – Table 1 below lists the case study groups. If only groups from poor areas were chosen, for example, this would confirm the thesis critiqued in Chapter Two that such groups were a product of poverty and transience, when they are in fact found in all areas.

Table 1: List of case study groups

Group	Location
BURADO	Perumnas, Dili
Choque	Becora, Dili
CPD-RDTL	All districts
Colimau 2000	Western districts
Harmoni/Diablo	Bairro Pite, Dili
JOCAR	Perumnas, Dili
KORK	All districts
Lito Rambo	Dili
PSHT	All districts
Sagrada Familia	All districts
Slebor	Kampung Alor, Dili
Sola Deus	Bebora, Dili

Chapter Eight, 'A Case Study of Perumnas, Bairro Pite, Dili' presents a case study of an urban informal migrant settlement (detailed maps of the case study locality will be provided in that chapter). Chapters four and five set out the different historical tensions in rural areas; how these tensions became re-activated after the 2006 Crisis, and how local level conflicts shifted scale to connect with national level conflict. Chapters six and seven profile the diverse number and types of different ISGs, and show the links between local and national level actors. It is therefore analytically useful to examine an urban Dili based setting to build on the findings of those chapters, to test the hypothesis of the interactivity of national and local level conflicts through such links between national and local level actors, and the connection between rural and urban conflicts.

There were a number of factors in the choice of case study area. As Flyvberg points out:

> *... the generalisability of case studies can be increased by the strategic selection of cases. When the objective is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given problem or phenomenon, a representative case or a random sample may not be the most appropriate strategy. This is because the typical or average case is often not the richest in information. Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied* (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 229).

While there are dangers in generalising the situation in any particular area to another in East Timor, given its diversity, Perumnas is ideal in a number of respects. Firstly, it is one of a number of informal settlements spread across urban Dili where as much as half the urban population live (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2010). The demographic characteristics of Perumnas, in terms of linguistic heterogeneity and residential mobility, indicate that there are still intricate linkages and movements between the population there and their rural villages of origin. The value of this demographic make up is that it permits a first hand view of the impact of rural urban migration on the dynamics of settlement patterns, village boundaries, informal group territories and communal conflict.

All these settlements portray high levels of informal group activity but Perumnas, from my own knowledge based on my experience as a resident there and my research over seven years, has the highest concentration of all. At last count there were over 24 groups from both rural, national level groups and purely Dili based groups concentrated in a one-hectare block. Given that these settlements, Perumnas in particular, have been among the hardest hit by both waves of violence in the 2006-07 period and continue to suffer violence on a sporadic basis, the different approaches to peacebuilding by different agencies can be examined in the light of these dynamics and also the implications of fragmented or diffused traditional authority for these peacebuilding efforts. However, in addition to Perumnas, an adjacent *aldeia* has been included in the case study. If only a poor heterogeneous and new neighbourhood such as Perumnas was studied, it would not challenge the notion of conflict being a product of poverty and social fragmentation. The inclusion of neighbouring *aldeia* THT, whose community has been in conflict with communities within Perumnas, demonstrates that relatively affluent, long established and socially cohesive communities can be involved in conflict, and offers clues to the social, rather than economic or political basis for communal conflict in East Timor.

Another reason for basing my case study in an urban rather than rural community was that if a rural case study were chosen, there would be relatively static (albeit often contested) settlement patterns and traditional power structures. Communal conflict there tends to take a binary form between two opposing MAGs representing their particular extended family and village, whereas this particular location offers a view of many different ISGs. While there are similar rural conflict dynamics which can be generalised across East Timor, albeit with different historical bases and causes, such contexts do not offer the same rich cross section of both rural and urban groups, nor are they revealing of the complexities of rural urban migration as revealed by a study of an informal settlement, and the multi-layered sources of conflict. An urban study also reveals how micro-level rural conflicts can become linked to urban and national level tensions or conflict.

Another major reason for the choice of this area was that I had detailed demographic data in the neighbourhood. While the official census provides data per *suku,* it does not have *aldeia* level data – *aldeia* boundaries are still not officially listed or recognised and are still viewed with some sensitivity, due to issues surrounding land ownership. As part of the World Bank project I worked on in 2009, implemented in four neighbourhoods including Perumnas, I was able to secure detailed data on population density, linguistic group diversity, employment levels, crime, security, opinions on MAGs and even government service delivery. Knowledge of such local context in this area also allowed me to contrast standard portrayals of the Crisis with the actual issues and social dynamics that drove conflict at a local level, and also to get beyond anodyne, exculpatory answers stressing victimhood or disadvantage to actual eyewitness testimony of events as they unfolded during this period.

The final, and perhaps most significant, reason that I chose Perumnas as my case study area was my pre-existing social networks in this neighbourhood. Through living in the neighbourhood, I had developed the strong trust relationships with local groups essential for performing such sensitive research. Through my frequent visits I also developed a familiarity with the local community in the neighbourhood, which eased access to potential respondents and allowed me to come and go with a reasonable level of anonymity and personal security. Regular conversations and social interactions also proved highly revealing of the multiple social identities of different ISG members and their perspectives on conflict and violence. I also had formed long-term personal and professional friendships with a number of local residents through my work in media development, from both the Eastern and Western regions of East Timor, who were able to give me detailed accounts of life in Perumnas and also to advise and critique my work and check its accuracy. All the information contained in the case study has been checked and double checked with these people, who are acknowledged at the beginning of this thesis.

3.5   Conclusion

This chapter has presented the conceptual framework, ethics framework, research database and methodology utilised for this thesis. The need to draw on comparative literature on other culturally or historically linked states to help illuminate cultural and historical phenomenon in East Timor has also been highlighted. The range of methodological tools required to address the multiple challenges of conducting research in a low literacy, cross cultural, post-conflict context, an environment of secrecy and denial, has been described. The vital importance of building the necessary trust relationships to access informal and clandestine groups, which are sometimes involved in illicit behaviour, has also been highlighted. The next chapter sets out the

cultural, social and historical context for the events of 2006-07 and contemporary conflict in the pre-independence period, from pre-Portuguese times, the Portuguese colonial era and Indonesian military occupation to the 1999 Referendum.

CHAPTER FOUR: Cultural and Historical Legacies

Communal violence in East Timor is not confined to the riots of 2002, or April to May 2006. As Macintyre argues in the case of PNG, 'far from constituting a disjuncture, contemporary violence has much continuity with the past, both in form and social context at regional levels' (2008: 181). The legacies of Portuguese and Indonesian rule continue to have an impact on East Timorese society on multiple levels. Not unlike the post-colonial legacy in the African continent (Prosser and William, 1988: 5), the Portuguese colonial government's imposition of boundaries bisecting pre-colonial indigenous polities and implementation of divide and rule strategies still resonate in a number of localised conflicts of East Timor. The Indonesian period also continues to impact on contemporary East Timorese society, not just through the creation of myriad ISGs, but also, for example, through contested property claims and the continued salience of the independence and resistance narrative as a framing device. Traditional social structures and alliances have also endured over time but in urban as well as rural areas – a reality that has, as discussed in the introduction, been little considered in current anthropological or political science literature on East Timor. This chapter engages with Kalyvas's notion of cleavage and alliance and the joint production of violence (2003: 486) to show how local level actors have utilised national level actors, such as the Indonesian or Portuguese colonial regimes, to settle local level grievances, while national level actors have exploited local level rivalries for the purpose of dominance at a national level.

The first section of this chapter sketches the broad social structures and traditions that are referred to throughout this thesis and that have direct relevance to the conflict dynamics described here. It also describes the social, cultural and political factors, such as payback traditions or rural-urban migration, that contribute to intergroup conflict in East Timor. The second section provides a brief background of the periods of Portuguese and Indonesian rule, outlining some of the key events and complex legacies of these periods to illustrate continuities in conflict from the colonial era to the present. At the same time, some of the dominant narratives used to frame the events of 1999 and 2006, such as pro or anti-independence dichotomies or political party rivalries, are also examined through reference to a number of alternative readings of the 1999 violence, and the historical genesis of the main political parties.

4.1   Geographic and cultural context

4.1.1   Language

As seen in the map at Figure 1, East Timor occupies a geographic junction between Asia and the Pacific. Its closest neighbours are Indonesia to the West, with which it also shares a

common border, and West Papua and Papua New Guinea to the east. This geographical dichotomy is mirrored in East Timor's linguistic dichotomy. While possessing more than 20 distinct linguistic groups, East Timor's ethnographic composition is dominated by two main language groups: the dominant Austronesian linguistic group, which is related to languages in neighbouring Indonesian islands of Solor, Maluku and Flores, and a Papuan Trans-New Guinea linguistic group (Fox, 2000: 5).

Figure 1: East Timor in regional context (ANU CAP, 2013b)

According to Fox, the main Austronesian linguistic groups are Mambai – the largest group – followed by Tetun, Tokodede, Galoli and Kemak (2000). The main Papuan Trans-New Guinea languages are Bunak, spoken in the Western border region of the country, predominantly in Bobonaro District; Makassae, predominantly spoken in the Eastern districts of Baucau and Viqueque; and Fataluku, mostly spoken in Lautem District, also in the east. Their geographical locations are marked in the map at Figure 2. While there are a variety of dialects, Tetun is the lingua franca and national language of East Timor, with Portuguese the official language. Both languages have equal status in the Constitution.

Figure 2: Language groups of East Timor (Fox, 2000: 4)
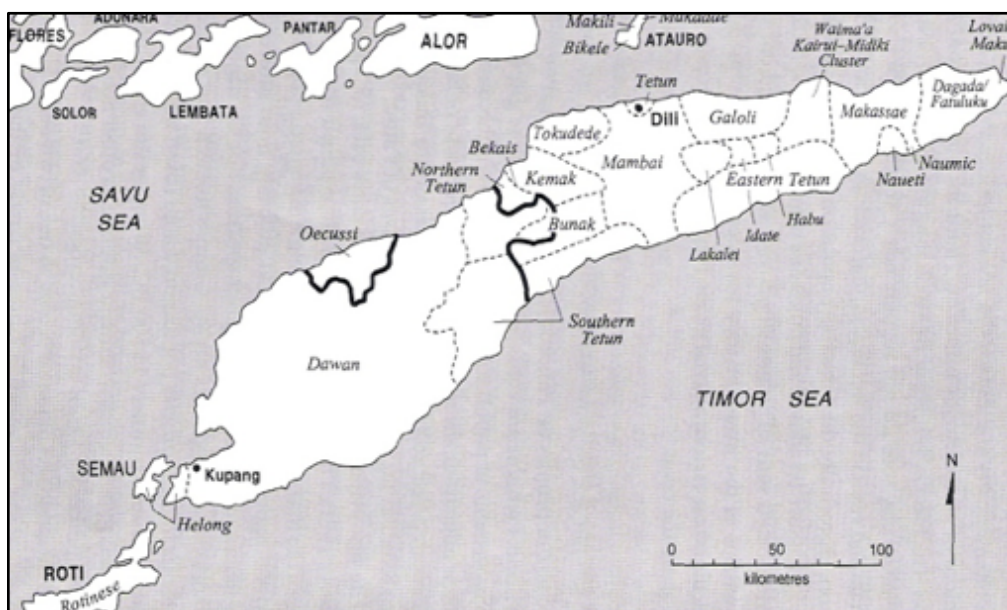
4.1.2   Ethnicity and the East versus West question

The terms ethnicity or 'ethno linguistic' groups are often utilised in discussions of East Timorese politics and culture, particularly as a national level cleavage in discussions of the 2006 Crisis (Sahin, 2007; Silva, 2010). It is, however, contentious to speak of ethnic groups in East Timor, for a number of reasons. While different linguistic groups may generally share a number of important traits such as ancestrally based descent and landownership systems, within these commonalities can also be found a diverse range of cultural traditions. In addition, over time, many of these linguistic groups have blended with others, producing hybrids of different cultures and languages as described, for example, by McWilliam (2007a), of the Papuan Trans-New Guinea based Fataluku linguistic group's adoption of Austronesian linguistic and cultural norms. Intermarriage, forced resettlement under the Indonesian regime and the encroachment of urbanisation and Western influences, have also produced numerous permutations and blends of traditional and modern practices. It is, therefore, difficult to make generalisations about the ethnic nature or cultural tendencies of any particular group. Anderson (1993: 3) has also noted East Timor's linguistic and cultural diversity, observing that in 1975, East Timor had been merely a geographic and bureaucratic invention, that perhaps only a small percentage of the population could then really 'imagine' the future nation-state of East Timor, with most East Timorese identifying themselves in terms of language and family entities. Similarly, as Fox asserts, 'Timor is not one place, but many.' (2000: 1).

Most recent discussions of ethnicity have centred on the East versus West division that emerged in 2006. As is argued in this thesis, the attention given to this division is out of proportion to its

actual importance to the conflict. As stated in the introduction, a focus on national level cleavages such as ethnicity has distracted attention away from more salient localised issues. Nonetheless, it is worth briefly summarising some of the understandings in academic literature of the roots of this division.

The Eastern region of East Timor is generally understood to mean the three Easternmost districts of East Timor: Baucau, Lautem and Viqueque. The East-West divide has been examined in a number of authoritative accounts, most notably those of Babo Soares (2003), McWilliam (2007b), Kammen (2010) and Silva (2010). Some of these accounts have traced the historical origins of the terms *firaku*, associated with the east, and *kaladi,* associated with the West, back to the colonial era. According to Kammen, the word *kaladi* had various possible origins, including as a species of taro found in the Western mountains, which was used as a pejorative term to describe mountain people from the Bobonaro, Cova Lima and Liquisa areas, but also taken to mean people who resisted colonial rule (2010: 245). Kammen traces the word *firaku* to the mid 19th century, as a general term for people of the Eastern region (2010: 250). According to McWilliam (2007b: 37), these two words came to symbolise stereotypes, with *kaladi* typified as closed and taciturn and *firaku* as talkative and excitable.[14]

Babo-Soares traces animosity between East and West groups to a wave of migration to Dili of both Bunak and Makassae groups, predominantly from Baucau in the post Second World War period, sparking competition over markets. Babo-Soares (2003: 283) describes persistent conflict between groups in the early post-independence period in the peri-urban areas of Dili. As McWilliam points out, one source of this animosity lay in competition over vacant housing abandoned by the Indonesians and refugees who fled across the border to Indonesian West Timor (2007b: 41), but the widely reported potent charge by Easterners that Westerners did not play any significant role in the resistance also resulted in considerable friction. The emergence of alleged discrimination against Westerners by Easterners on the basis of this accusation galvanised these existing tensions in the violence of 2006. Babo-Soares also cites the regional concentration of particular parties as contributing to their identification as being *firaku* or *kaladi*, which he claims is sometimes a deliberate ploy to attract further supporters (2003). In 2006, East versus West tensions became hardened and reified in a number of forms, including antagonism towards the F-FDTL (FALINTIL-Defence Forces of Timor-Leste), which detractors sarcastically renamed the *forças firaku distritu tolu (firaku* forces of the three districts), the FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front for East Timorese Independence) party and the Arabic heritage of Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri.

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[14] The word *muturabu* (troublemaker) is often used stereotypically to denote Makassae people, particularly youth, as volatile and disruptive.

It is difficult to gauge the extent of residual East West-tensions. As a three month 2010 Catholic Relief Services survey of Dili found, such tensions remained, but it was only cited as a factor in two out of 22 sub-village conflicts they studied (2010). While the anti-Eastern sectarian violence of 2006 did not make such distinctions, in my own experience, I found that when people talked about their individual feelings about the issue, anti-Eastern sentiment seemed to be squarely aimed at Makassae speakers from Baucau and Viqueque, which would seem to support the competition thesis, with Makassae migrants being more numerous and dominant than Lautem migrants among squatter communities and market traders. While there appears to be a historical basis for the terms *firaku* and *kaladi* and divisions between these two groups, the authors cited above (Babo-Soares, 2003; Kammen, 2010; McWilliam, 2007b; Silva, 2010) agree that these are socially constructed terms and that ethnicity, as a term or a concept, is not really applicable.

4.1.3 Social organisation

Kreuzer's (2005: 5) observation on the southern Philippines that an overemphasis on ethnicity has resulted in the overlooking of the importance of sub-groups, such as descent groups, can equally be applied to East Timor. Descent group, not language or ethnicity, is the most integral unit in East Timorese society. While the actual rituals and organisation may differ among linguistic groups, the main axis through which Timorese society is constructed is the sacred house of ancestral origin, the *uma lulik (*some groups may have a number of *uma luliks). Uma luliks* vary in appearance from district to district but they are generally composed of a thatched wooden hut on stilts.

Figure 3: *Uma lulik* in Lospalos, Lautem District

The term *uma lulik,* however, refers to not just a physical structure, but also to a social group. These sacred houses represent the ancestral foundation of a descent group, governing kinship

lines, landholdings, complex systems of reciprocal obligation and hierarchies of traditional authority (Traube, 1986). As Hohe (2003: 343-344) points out, there are a variety of complex traditional dispute resolution and justice mechanisms in East Timor, varying with each linguistic group and with the nature of the dispute or crime (and, quite often, varying with the relationship between the plaintiffs and individual traditional leaders). The common aspect of all these systems, however, is the involvement of respected traditional leaders from a common ancestral lineage, who still constitute the main source of authority in relation to mediation and local justice in East Timor (Everett, 2008). The decent group, then, is the cornerstone of the East Timorese social order.

Another network of alliance is marriage, with one *uma lulik* connected to another through marriage alliances. These intricate alliances form lifelong and inter-generational exchanges of gifts and labour services between allied houses, and constitute the pivotal basis for the perpetuation of Timorese society (McWilliam, 2005: 28).[15] Anthropologist Patricia Thatcher, who has been studying East Timor for over 20 years, describes how this intricate kinship system is learned from early in life:

> *Children are socialised from a very early age to know where, and to whom, their primary loyalties must go. The central focal point of social organization in both urban and rural areas is the extended family – the marital alliance systems that are forged through the ritual of barlaque (gifts or wealth exchanged in return for the bride, according to a 'contract' agreed to by the two families).[16] One's kinship is an individual's alliance system. Loyalty is first given to one's immediate family then to the extended family and family alliance members. This loyalty takes precedence over all other loyalties. Unlike with Western understandings of kin, third and fourth cousins are often as important as first or second cousins* (Thatcher, 1992: 83).

According to Thatcher, children are also brought up to show unswerving loyalty not just to their immediate family and kin, but also to the hereditary *liurai* as head of one's extended family. Descent group, or as the East Timorese say *familia* (family) identity, is generally embedded within linguistic identity. Given the geographical isolation of many of these kinship groups, the

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[15] Australian Aboriginal society also features complex kinship systems. While not suggesting that Australian Aboriginal society can be directly compared with Timorese society, to give an idea of the intricacy of such family relationships and networks of reciprocal obligation, in one study it was estimated that in a group of 30 people of the Lardil Group in Mornington Island, off the coast of Northern Australia, there could be as many as 870 variations of reciprocal obligations (McKnight, 1986: 158).

[16] Most, but not all language groups pay *barlaque* (commonly spelled *barlake* in Tetun), but the centrality of marriage as a ceremony and contract binding different groups together is common to all groups (Hohe, 2003: 339).

language spoken by this extended family, or its dialect of a major language, is a key aspect of social identity, although secondary to the family identity (1992: 84). Family identity or descent group then, rather than language or regional group, is the primary pillar of East Timorese identity. Except for the short-lived East-West violence of 2006, these identity markers, rather than ethnicity, are more accurate and useful tools to refer to when analysing specific conflicts.

There are also non-kin affiliations, which may also entail binding reciprocal obligations. There are adopted family members who may not necessarily be related by kin, a common practice in East Timor, especially in the case where a wealthier family adopts children from a poor family, who perform household chores in return for school fees, a practice described in some detail by Ranck (1977: 139-155). Adoption of non-kin members of the same linguistic group as family members through regular association, as observed by Strathern (1975) of rural in-migrants in Port Moresby, PNG, is also common, particularly in urban Dili. Many of these links are opaque and often unknown except to the individuals involved. Friendships or bonds formed in the resistance years by students in Indonesia, for example, can be observed at every level of East Timorese society. Bonds developed through serving in the domestic clandestine networks are also very powerful. According to Andrew McWilliam, the rural clandestine networks known as *nucleos de resistencia popular* (NUREP) were built around these close-knit extended family relationships. So tight were these networks, they not only survived Indonesian repression, resettlement and attempts to socially remould Timorese society, but also enabled the resistance movement to regroup and revive in 1983, after near annihilation (McWilliam, 2005: 35). There is strong evidence that these clandestine networks were utilised in the violence of 2006.

Binding reciprocal bonds are also created by favours, such as cash loans or in kind favours. As Scaglion (1981: 40) observes of PNG society, even between close kin, every minor service must be reciprocated, and the same strength of reciprocal obligation can be observed in East Timor. This gives gang leaders or 'big men' who provide youth within their sphere of influence with money, alcohol, cigarettes or protection a powerful hold over their extended membership, and constitutes a highly effective mode of mobilisation when required. Scaglion also found that non-related men were sometimes fully integrated into a clan through recruitment by big men (1981: 39). As is further discussed in Chapter Seven, many refer to big men figures like Joao Da Silva as 'big brother', as if they were close relatives, so it is possible that some patronage based groups may operate as a sort of extended family.

While there is ample scholarship on East Timor concerning how kinship structures social relations at a rural village level (see, for example, Traube, 1986; McWilliam 2005; Molnar 2006) there is little recent discussion about how this might translate into political allegiances

and action on a broader scale. Little is understood about the multiple micro relationships that bind particular individuals together, vertical and horizontal bonds of reciprocal obligations that link elites to non-elites, that guide the loyalties and actions of groups and individuals who, while not perhaps well known at a national level, played key roles in organising the anti-government protests or violence of 2006. Alliances are also formed at different times for different purposes, which may involve alliances of people who would under normal circumstances be considered enemies. Kinship, political or regional/linguistic bloc ties may also mean that erstwhile opponents are sometimes linked, albeit often unwillingly, by a common alliance with a third party.

4.1.4   Payback traditions

While not comparing East Timorese culture to that of the Philippines, many local level conflicts in East Timor closely resemble the clan feuds or *rido* that characterise much local level conflict in the Philippines (Torres, 2007). As seen in the Philippines, the historical origins of these enmities are not always apparent, so they may take on the appearance of broader level cleavages of political or ideological struggles, reflecting Kalyvas's observation that political violence is not always political (Kalyvas, 2003: 476). Payback traditions play an important part in driving these historical enmities in East Timor.

Like many other cultures, including Australian Aboriginal culture and neighbouring Melanesian cultures, complex systems of reciprocal social obligations are embedded within East Timorese kinship systems, which mediate the nature of social relations. Sometimes these obligations are simply expressed as dever (duty), which, not unlike *wantok* ('one talk' or someone who speaks the same language) , the *tok pisin* (a creole language spoken throughout PNG) concept used in PNG and elsewhere in Melanesia (De Renzio, 2000; Goddard, 2005; Monsell-Davis, 2000), implies an obligation to assist your fellow extended family members or kinspeople, but there are also codes of social sanctions and taboos embedded within these kinship systems. One example is the *ialanu* or avoidance relationship in the Fataluku culture of the Eastern Lautem District, whereby a man or woman may not enter a house if an in-law of the opposite gender is inside. As described by Thatcher (1992), children are taught from an early age not just about to whom their loyalties should be to but also their enmities, which are also passed down through descent lines. Therefore, families, even if related, may inherit ancestral feuds even centuries old. One version of such ancestral enmities, in Fataluku culture, for example, is *nita cal uca* (bitter hands). According to this taboo, a person from a lineage that has 'bitter hands', through some wrongdoing (usually murder) in the past, cannot share food with someone from the lineage with

whom they share this enmity as it could result in death or serious illness to that person.[17] A number of versions of this tradition operate in other linguistic groups. [18]

More serious enmities can also be passed down through the kinship system. According to Thatcher (1992), pay back (also referred to in Indonesian as *balas dendam)* obligations to avenge blood crimes can be passed on through four to six generations. One source, for example, described a Kemak tradition in his village known as the 'justice tree'. Under this tradition, a murder victim (or suspected murder victim) could not be buried in hallowed ground until he/she was avenged.[19] However, while much has been written about traditional and hybrid justice systems in East Timor, little has been written about the practice of payback. Traube contends that among the Aileu Mambai, violence 'within a house' is viewed as more serious than violence against a house from 'outside', which in the context of the militia violence of 1999, she took to mean that the crimes of the Indonesians were viewed as less culpable than those committed by the East Timorese themselves (2007: 21). Other than this observation, there is little recent scholarship that has detailed the different rules and traditions governing payback, such as what types of crimes trigger what types of payback obligations and the consequences if the payback is not enacted, as seen in studies of other cultures in the region. Some examples of these are Meggitt's study of the Mae Enga of PNG (1977), or Heider's study of the Grand Valley Dani of West Papua (1979).

A focus on master narratives such as justice, state-building, political or 'ethnic violence', can mean that traditions such as payback and other complex dynamics of communal enmities are overlooked. A knowledge or awareness of these traditions is vital for conflict resolution and peacebuilding interventions, as there is continued evidence of such traditions driving conflict. As will be detailed in the following chapter, the strength of the memory for long past internal crimes could be seen in 2006, where vengeance for the internecine violence of the 1975 civil war was seen as a key factor in the communal violence (UN, 2006), but also in sporadic violence stemming from murders committed in the 2007 conflict (Catholic Relief Services, 2010). Such traditions also have implications for mediation processes. While there is a trend towards more intuitive approaches to peacebuilding, such as the utilisation of traditional mediation ceremonies, for example, there appears to be little reflection on local power dynamics or legitimacy levels of local traditional leaders. As will be described in Chapter Eight, there

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[17] Interview with Fataluku community member from Perumnas neighbourhood, Melbourne, August 14, 2010.

[18] The Makassae version of this tradition is *tagui dada guta* and in Bunak*, i en by gocu poh.*

[19] Interview with confidential source (they did not want to be named for fear of being identified as having divulged sensitive cultural information), December 18, 2008.

were also continuing attempts to mediate East-West tensions in 2007, even though the ongoing violence was largely unrelated to these tensions.

Figure 4: District map of East Timor (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2006a)
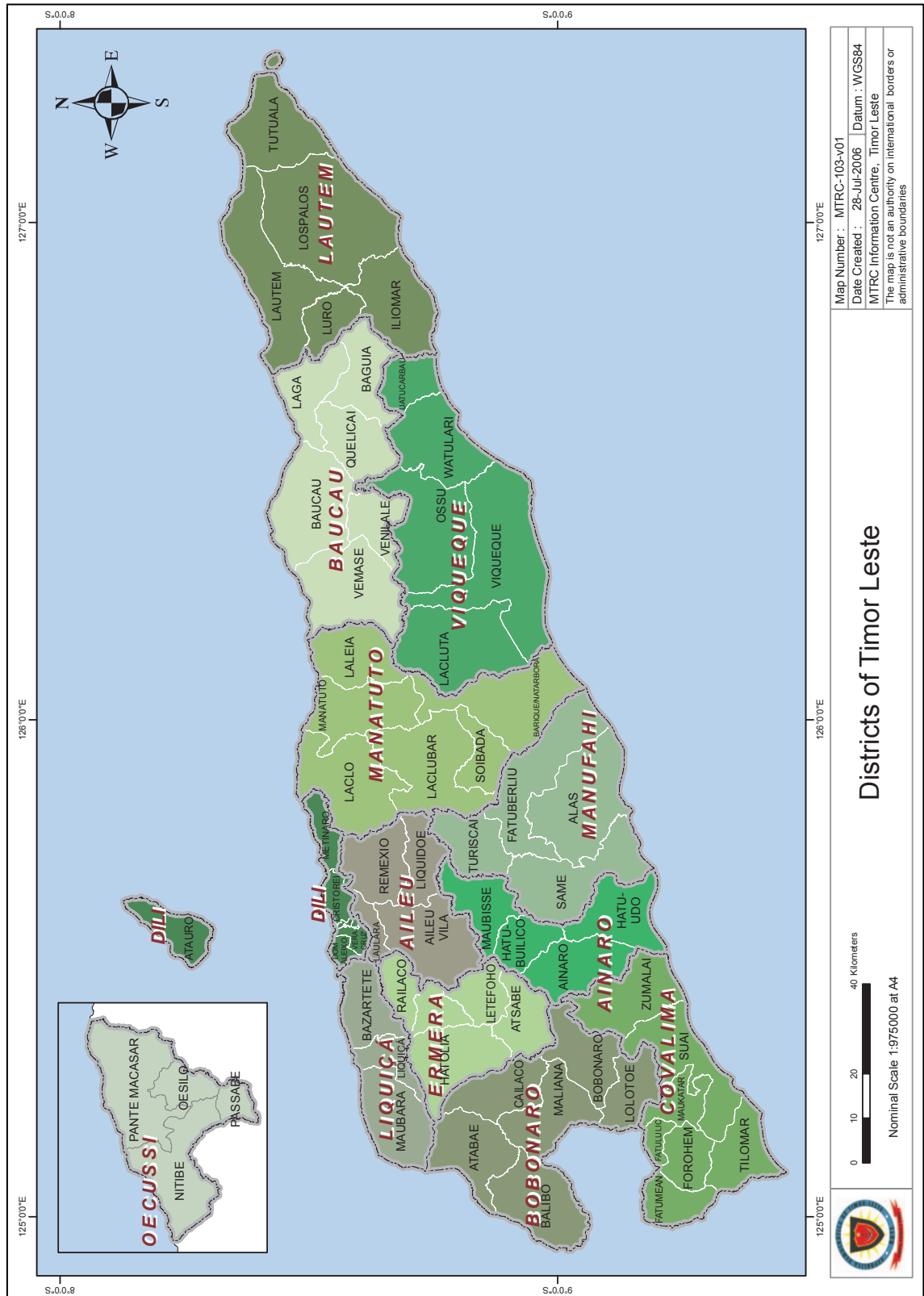
4.1.5 Traditional and administrative residential structures

In rural areas, communities are organised into origin groups. While one origin group may encompass a number of hamlets or *aldeias*, which comprise a *suku* or village, each *aldeia* is more or less one extended family unit. There is a *chefe de aldeia* and a *chefe de suku,* who draw their authority through their lineage to the ancestors. While these roles are now elected, in many cases the positions are filled by traditional leaders who therefore bear both modern administrative and traditional authority (Cummins and Leach, 2013: 171). As Traube points out, the Portuguese imposed a territorial based administrative system of *sukus* over a genealogically based system, so that many East Timorese do not recognise *sukus,* or at least do not relate to them except as a purely geographic distinction.[20] Traube recounts how in her study area of Aileu, one cluster of *aldeias* demanded recognition as an independent *suku*, a claim they believed was legitimised by their support for independence when surrounded by collaborators. UNTAET officials were confused by such passionate demands for *suku* recognition, seeing this as an administrative issue, not understanding that political units in local conceptions ideally reflect and express traditional hierarchical relationships, which were increasingly contested (Traube, 2007: 20).

Some of the structures inherited from Portuguese times are still used. The country is now divided into 13 districts, as seen in the map at Figure 4. These are further divided into sub-districts, down to *sukus* and then *aldeias*. Sub-districts sometimes confusingly bear the same names as districts, and *aldeias* sometimes bear the same name as *sukus*. Contemporary *suku* boundaries are largely colonial entities, so people often conflate *aldeia* and *suku*, given that people are often, in urban areas at least, unfamiliar with which *suku* they belong to. Care had to be taken in interviews to ensure which of these entities is actually being referred to.

As described by Raleigh (2011) and O'Lear (2011), such distinctions between different administrative levels are also important, for example, in determining both the scale and location of conflict, with most conflict occurring between *aldeias*, not *sukus*. As will be discussed further in Chapter Eight, failure to adequately identify the scale and location of a conflict has a number of implications for peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

4.1.6 Rural-urban migration

It is through these place based descent systems or origin groups that national level actors are linked with local level actors, and highly localised rural conflicts, such as enduring payback

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[20] While the Indonesians incorporated these structures into existing Indonesian local government structures such as *desas*, these original structures were largely left intact (Cummins and Leach, 2013).

cycles, can become linked with national level conflicts. As per Autesserre's observation (2007: 438), tensions at one level can spark tensions at another. Constant population movements between the city and rural districts also serve to maintain and enhance these links and, in turn, make urban and elite centric analyses difficult to sustain. Rural-urban migration has, however, received surprisingly little attention in academic or policy discourse on East Timor. A closer study of this growing social phenomenon is important because it challenges many assumptions held about East Timorese society. It also has a number of implications for peacebuilding in terms of raising questions about the effectiveness of urban-based mediation efforts such as those described earlier.

Traditional social structures and belief systems that apply in the rural districts may not exactly translate into the urban setting but many aspects survive, especially networks of reciprocal obligations, maintained by ongoing and intricate links to rural villages of origin through circular rural-urban migration. Even in rural areas, while there are many common traits, social systems differ from district to district. As outlined in the introduction, traditional rural East Timorese village structures and society are broadly based on relatively homogenous kinship units (in the sense that they speak the same language and are more likely than not to be related in some way) radiating out from a common ancestor, as embodied by their *uma lulik* or sacred house or houses. Massive social dislocation under the Indonesian occupation and subsequent population movements, however, have in many cases disrupted and distorted this system, particularly in urban areas in the capital Dili.

In addition to blurring distinctions between rural and urban cultural domains, the sheer volume and scale of rural-urban migration also intricately links families, events – and conflict – in rural areas with the capital. Forced resettlement and displacement under the Indonesian occupation and post-independence in-migration from rural districts has boosted Dili's population to more than eight times its 1974 pre-Indonesian invasion size of less than 30,000. Until the Indonesian invasion in 1975, Dili was a small town composed of a small commercial area, a port facility, and a number of scattered clusters of *aldeias* on its urban periphery (Ranck, 1977: 93). Caicoli, for example, later the hub of UN and international NGO operations, was an uninhabited swamp. Even then*,* Dili was a migrant city. In 1974, the year before the invasion, according to Ranck, as much as 75 per cent of the population consisted of rural migrants (1977: 126). Today, less than half of Dili's population were born in the city (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2010). While there have been a number of waves of migration, following different phases of the armed resistance against the Indonesian occupation, most of the growth has been since independence. In the five years from 1999 to 2004, Dili's population grew from 100,715 to 173,541 persons

and 56.4 per cent of that increase was caused by inward migration (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2010).

This population movement, especially of rural youth moving to the city, is continuous; a 2009 International Organisation for Migration survey described an influx of almost 700 youth into the West of the city between December 2008 and February 2009 (IOM 2009). This estimate is supported by the 2010 census, which found that since 2004, Dili's population has grown by a third, to its current size of 241,331. The percentage of in-migrants among those 20 years and older is over 50 per cent, and more than 60 per cent of these are between 25-34 years old (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2010). Even then, many of those who do list themselves as Dili-born have parents or grandparents from the rural districts and therefore still maintain landholdings, dwellings and allegiances to kinship networks and traditional authorities there, rather than Dili.

Then there is circular migration, which as described in more detail in Chapter Eight, considerably swells the population of Dili in regular annual cycles, with attendant cycles of conflict; just as circular migration connects families in rural areas with their relatives in the capital, it also connects conflicts. Migration patterns into Dili follow global chain migration patterns (Choldin, 1973: 164), whereby one family establishes a base and then 'sponsors' others from the extended family and home *aldeia*, helping them find housing and even employment. This means that truncated enclaves of the *aldeia* of origin are established alongside enclaves of other migrant groups, creating a patchwork of different and often competing descent groups. Therefore, many *aldeias* established in Portuguese or Indonesian times might have reasonably contiguous extended family structures living in close proximity, although they are considerably reduced versions of their rural branches. In rural areas, as stated, an *aldeia* is essentially a family unit (Cummins and Leach, 2013), but this principle largely holds true for established urban *aldeias* (although there is considerable variation), with one larger family dominating but with a number of smaller enclaves of other families and ethno linguistic groups.

Those areas comprised of former Indonesian housing are different again. These new neighbourhoods were created almost overnight, when rural migrants rushed to occupy vacant Indonesian civil service and military housing (these neighbourhoods are represented by the heavily cross-hatched areas in the map of Dili at Figure 5). Officially, this housing is owned by the State and while many households pay a token rent to the Department of Land and Property, these are essentially squatter settlements.[21] As people later followed their relatives into Dili after

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[21] The inhabitants of two settlements, Aitarak Laran and Brimob (named after the former Indonesian police barracks it is located in) – both in Bairro Pite, have recently been evicted (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News,* January 11, 2011).

1999 (and continue to do so) to seek education or to partake of the development bonanza provided by the UN presence, they moved into already crowded relatives' houses or settled in areas close to them, forming even more truncated versions of traditional rural *aldeias*. The cosmopolitan nature of these *aldeias* gives them a very different dynamic to the clan centric traditional *aldeias* of the rural hinterland, or the still somewhat heterogeneous but older, more established *aldeias* in Dili.

These migrants soon found that they were sharing communal space with groups from unfamiliar descent and linguistic groups with whom they had no kinship links or exchange relationships. Such proximity to different groups created tension not only through competition for scarce resources such as spare land to cultivate kitchen gardens and access to water, but also through each group's desire to bring their relatives into Dili to live in close proximity to their own established extended family settlement area. Many families who had settled in Dili much earlier coveted this housing for their own relatives in the districts and resented these newcomers illegally squatting this accommodation (see section 4.1.7 below for a more detailed account of these disputes).

Access to employment or livelihoods also created tension as each group tried to control access to markets for their own group, both in purchasing and transporting produce from their own rural districts and in allocation of market stalls and produce prices. Markets, bus terminals and the clusters of Indonesian housing, therefore, became some of the worst conflict zones in the 2006 East-West based violence.

Most of the Indonesian era housing is concentrated in the West of the city in the *sukus* of Comoro and Bairro Pite (as seen in the cross hatched areas in Figure 5) which today continue to suffer sporadic outbursts of communal violence. Major population movements, especially in the post-1999 rural influx, have almost doubled the population of this region of the city, creating a potent legacy of overcrowding and contested property claims.

The socially fragmented nature of these urban migrant *aldeias* means that authority can also be fragmented. Similar to other societies, such as in the Philippines, (Kreuzer, 2005: 4), in rural areas of East Timor age and genealogical status are the primary source of leadership legitimacy, bestowing on selected people the authority to conduct ceremonies and mediate conflict. In urban areas, given the heterogeneity of their populations, authority is highly contested, so access to resources is integral to leadership legitimacy. Traditional leadership must also compete with alternative forms of authority such as MAG *wargas* (initiated masters) and 'big men'. The authority of big men is derived from a number of sources, especially their ability to deliver

Figure 5: Map of Dili (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2007)

patronage such as small cash loans, cigarettes, alcohol and even jobs. Without access to such resources, it is very difficult for traditional leaders to exert influence very far beyond their own immediate and extended family. The efficacy of traditional authority, for the purposes of

mediation processes, therefore, cannot be taken for granted. Constant circular and permanent rural-urban migration also creates highly fluid social structures so that any authority that does exist, that could play a mediating role in conflict or exercise some measure of social control, is far from static. That said, many long established communities sometimes 'adopt' traditional leaders if they become popular with the entire community and enjoy legitimacy beyond a common lineage, and the same phenomenon may eventually occur over time in the more recent informal settlements (Focus group, Kuluhun, Dili, February 12, 2012).

In summary, population movements and settlement patterns in East Timor do not permit an easy dichotomy between a 'modern' urban centre and a 'traditional' rural periphery. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that administrative entities in the urban centre, such as *aldeias,* have the same coherence and traditional social structures as in rural areas. At the same time, notions of fractured traditional social structures leading to youth running wild without adult supervision (Arnold, 2009b: 386) are also not entirely accurate, with many communities adapting to vacuums in traditional forms of authority in a number of ways, as will be explored in more detail in Chapter Eight. Such population movements also mean that there is an intricate link between extended descent units, ISGs and also conflicts in both the city and village of origin. This phenomenon also means that the urban population is quite fluid and dynamic, undercutting the notion of a static, mass of unemployed and increasingly alienated urban youth, as might be the case in more advanced or Western industrialised countries.

4.1.7   Property disputes

Property disputes are a major source of the myriad of micro-conflicts enduring in both rural and urban areas of East Timor, and it was clear that in 2006 and 2007, the cover of political and regional violence, in addition to an atmosphere of lawlessness and impunity, was used to settle many of these disputes. While there are a number of longstanding and complex property disputes in rural areas, due to the post-independence population movements described above, it is in Dili that this issue is most chronic and widespread.

In addition to the problems caused by forced mass resettlements and population movements during the Indonesian occupation, as dealt with in studies by Thu (2012), Fitzpatrick et al. (2012) and others, as described in the previous section, a wave of inward migration to Dili followed the destruction of 1999. With a large number of houses left vacant by refugees who fled or were forced to move to Indonesian West Timor in 1999, and with the departure of Indonesian military and civil servants, it is estimated that around 50 per cent of remaining houses were illegally occupied (Knezevic, 2005). The question of land ownership prior to 1999 was equally fraught. The Portuguese issued some 3000 land titles, and the Indonesians issued

around 47,000 (De Sousa, 2005). Despite this, by 1997, less than five per cent of land had clear status. Of those land titles issued by the Indonesians, as many as 30 per cent were illegal, due partly to the practice of registering multiple titles to the same property. This resulted in legitimate owners being dispossessed by people bearing registration papers for the same property. Forced land expropriation by the Portuguese colonial government meant that some land disputes even extend back to the 19th century or further (Elderton, 2002).

There is widespread acknowledgement in donor and academic accounts that such land and property disputes, in Dili and in the districts, have been a major factor in ongoing violence (USAID, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2010). Although many returnees had legal title to their properties, many were asked to pay the squatters 'compensation' to make them move out, and not all squatters were prepared to move. The lack of access to justice or mediation has meant that many people have resorted to their own brand of street justice. Former Indonesian military and civil service accommodation was a particular source of heated contention. Many people, including corrupt property developers, also opportunistically exploited the mood of instability and lawlessness created by the political crisis to dispossess other people of their rightfully owned property. In 2006, there were many stories of gangs with lists, sometimes even provided by a *chefe de suku*, of houses to burn, or of people to intimidate and evict (Harrington, 2009: 45). This has compounded an already confusing situation with another layer of property disputes.

Conflict in East Timor is more often than not driven by the social dynamics and local level issues described here. National level issues like unemployment or elite rivalry certainly play a part in stoking tensions. However, as will be further detailed in the following section, a grounding in such social dynamics and micro-level issues, and how they might interact with broader level tensions or conflict, is essential to understanding the nature of conflict in East Timor.

4.2   Historical legacies of conflict

4.2.1   The pre-Portuguese era

While in no way resorting to a primordialist argument that all current conflict can be traced back to ancient clan feuds, it is nonetheless vital to locate contemporary East Timorese tensions and conflicts in their historical and ethnographic context. Given, as described by, (2006), the somewhat binary portrayals of the resistance struggle and the violence of 1999, it is important to remember that East Timor's post independence international border with Indonesia and national district boundaries bisect the territories of former coherent ritual and traditional domains,

polities, linguistic groups and extended families. As will be demonstrated here, in East Timor, politics, including pro or anti-independence sympathies, can be a family affair.

According to Hägerdal (2007: 8), pre-colonial era Timor was divided into many different domains (sometimes referred to as kingdoms or regencies), comprised of different cultural groups. The Wehali domain, located in the south-Eastern part of West Timor, was the closest approximation to a coherent state. Although Wehali now lies within the territory of Indonesian West Timor, according to Schulte Nordholt, it may have once exerted ritual authority, if not effective rule, over two thirds of the island, uniting other smaller regencies (Schulte Nordholt 1971, cited in Gunn, 1999: 34). In Therik's account (2004: 57), for example, the Wehali Domain included regencies in Liquisa, Same, Manatuto, Bobonaro, Ermera and Cova Lima. These domains or regencies were, however, inherently unstable, due to widespread warfare and a tendency to fracture and break off to form new, smaller alliances (Hägerdal, 2007: 8).

These domains based their power and authority on a number of different and sometimes extensive and complex marriage alliances. According to Molnar, the Kemak Atsabe regency, for example, located at the junction of Maliana, Ainaro and Ermera boundaries, forged inter-ethnic ties with the Aileu Mambai, Tetun and Bunak groups of Western East Timor, which extended over the border of current East Timor into Atambua in Indonesian West Timor. Molnar claims that these alliances are still maintained (2010: 339). Such cross border family alliances must therefore be taken into account in analysing conflict as these family alliances are far more salient factors, given their longstanding historical basis, than political or MAG loyalties and affiliations or international borders.

Figure 6: East Timorese domains (Hägerdal, 2012: 79)
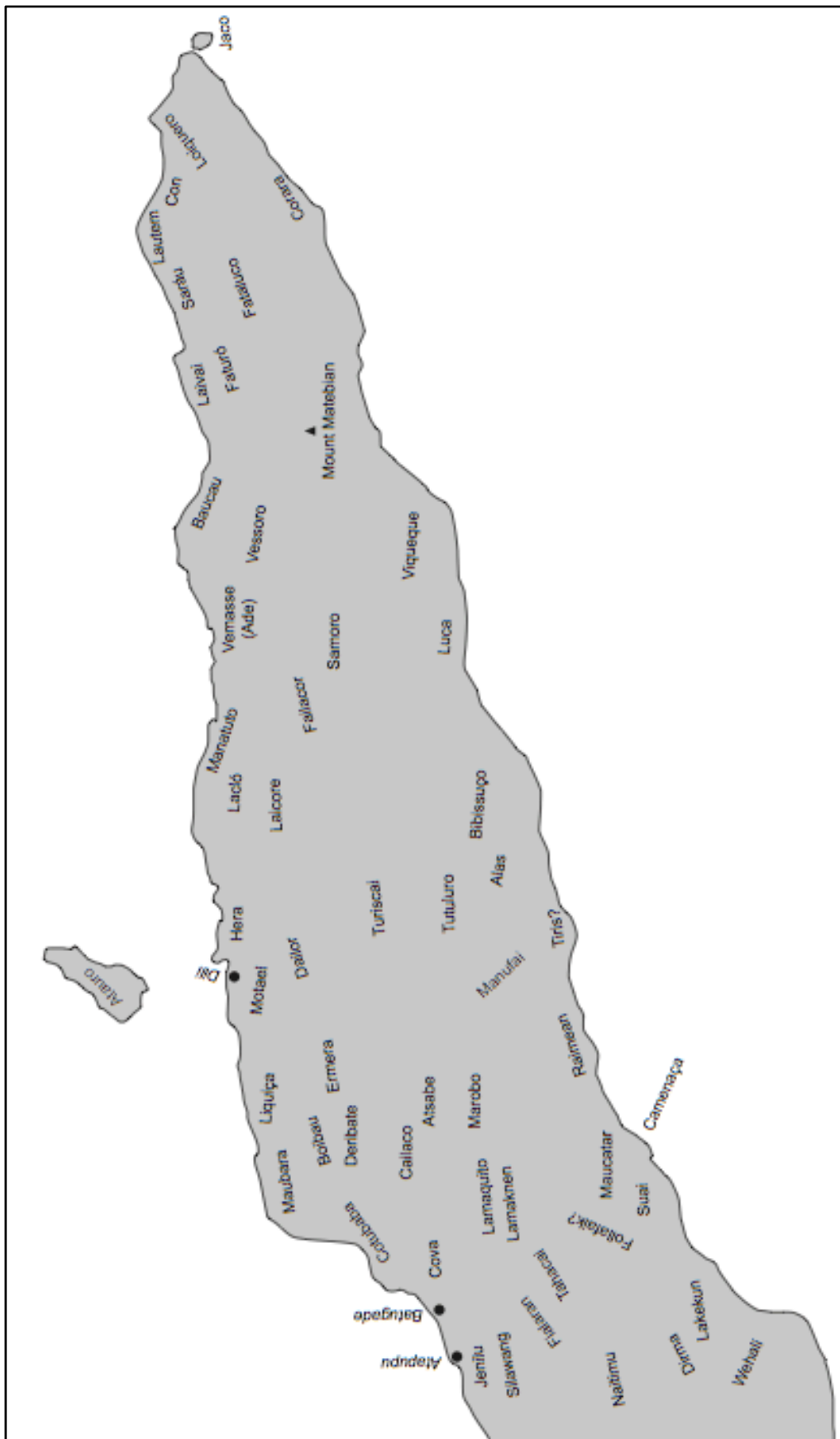
Royal families tracing lineage back to these kingdoms are referred to as *liurai*. According to Molnar (2006: 352), ruling families that administered their regions on behalf of the colonial empire were among the very few privileged with an education, with some sent to study in Portugal, following a widespread colonial tradition in other countries where colonial authorities fostered a local *compradore* elite, much as the French and British did in Africa, for example (Prosser and William, 1988: 226). Given that these privileged few already occupied both traditional and administrative status, they were also recruited into salaried civil service positions by the Indonesians, which meant that their offspring, too, enjoyed the benefits of scholarships to Indonesia. People connected to these families and their marital alliances continue to obtain the best administrative positions and, in Atsabe at least, Molnar's area of study, the best land (Molnar, 2006: 373). According to Da Costa Guterres, the ranks of the contemporary political and economic elite continue to be dominated by the descendants of these *liurai* families (2006). As both Da Costa Guterres (2006: 105-110) and Kammen (2010: 255) note, the leaders of the three main political parties at independence from Portugal were drawn from *liurai* and *mestiço* families, educated in the two seminaries at Dare and Soibada, and had worked in the colonial civil service.

4.2.2   The Portuguese era

Claims to Portuguese colonial rule over Timor date back to the first permanent settlement by a Portuguese Dominican order on the island of Solor, northwest of Timor, in 1556 (Gunn, 1999: 57). As pointed out by Kammen, however, the first Portuguese governor based in Timor was not appointed until 1702, and the Portuguese had little control over the territory of what now constitutes the nation of East Timor until the early twentieth century (Kammen, 2003: 71). But while the Portuguese left very little legacy in terms of infrastructure, governance structures or education. Nonetheless, the Portuguese use of native civilian militias or *moradores,* drawn from regions under ruling families loyal to Portugal, continues to have repercussions to this day.

There were a number of significant rebellions against Portuguese rule where these *moradores* and other irregular forces drawn from local populations were used, thereby laying the foundations for contemporary inter-communal tensions. It is, however, the 1912 Boaventura rebellion in Manufahi District that has attracted the most attention. According to Gunn, drawing on Pellissier's more detailed account (Pélissier, 1996), this rebellion, led by Dom Boaventura, a Manufahi *liurai*, began in December, 1911, as a reaction to a tax increase. These taxes, together with forced labour for cash crops and road construction, were deeply unpopular and the source of frequent rebellion and civil disobedience (Gunn, 1999: 183). The 1912 rebellion was initially so successful it spread as far as Dili. Nonetheless, by April, 1912, the Portuguese had largely

suppressed the rebellion. While the use of a gunship, modern weapons and superior forces were certainly decisive factors in this victory, it was, according to Gunn, the collusion of the Suro domain or regency which guaranteed the Portuguese continuous north to south coast supply and communications lines (Gunn, 1999). In return, the Suro regency was granted independence from the Atsabe domain and assumed parts of the southern domain of Kamenasa. By the end of the rebellion, the Suro regency encompassed the *postos* (administrative posts) of Maubisse, Hatu-Builico, Ainaro, Hatu-Udo as well as Turiscai and parts of Zumalai (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012: 210).

Many other smaller rebellions erupted in various locations before and after the Boaventura uprising, including Baucau and Viqueque, but also Atsabe and Letefoho in Ermera District, Camenassa in Cova Lima, Maubara in Liquisa District and Cailaco in Bobonaro District (Kammen, 2010: 247) which are all, significantly, also the hotspots of informal group activity and continued communal tensions and conflict today. The last major rebellion of the Portuguese colonial era, in Uatolari District of Viqueque in 1959, is a case in point. Susana Barnes, an anthropologist who has conducted extensive field work in this area, believes these tensions stretch back to the 1930s, when highland groups began settling in the lowlands, sparking conflicts over rice fields.[22] Gunter also refers to residual communal tensions from this period, particularly related to forced work corvées under the Japanese occupation in World War Two. People who had been forced to cultivate the plains for rice fields felt they should therefore have some proprietary claim to them (2007: 29).

However, according to Gunter, the pivotal event in these tensions was a failed anti-colonial rebellion in 1959, initiated after the arrival of a number of Indonesians fleeing a Jakarta crackdown on a separatist movement in Indonesian West Timor. In Gunter's account, while the rebellion was centred in Uatolari, it had roots in surrounding districts. After suppression of the uprising by Portuguese authorities, Makassae speaking groups from Ossu and Venilale and Tetun speaking groups from Viqueque then invaded the vanquished groups' land and destroyed their villages, killing as many as 200 people (Gunter, 2007: 33). Another account describes militia being recruited from as far away as Lospalos Sub-District of Lautem, and estimates casualties at between 500-1,000 (Gunn, 1999: 260). As Gunter cautions, this conflict should not be reduced to Naueti versus Makassae tensions fanned by the Portuguese, as it was not only the lowland Naueti speakers who suffered, but also lowland Makassae. Nonetheless, the memory of the Portuguese' utilisation of warriors from neighbouring areas and opposing clans against the rebels continues to cause bitterness and fuel tensions today (Gunter, 2007: 30-33).

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[22] Interview with Susana Barnes, Dili, January 19, 2008.

The Japanese invasion and occupation of 1942 provided a brief interregnum from Portuguese rule. The Portuguese declared neutrality and so the Japanese were able to enter Dili in February 1942, largely unopposed. Indeed, the first real act of East Timorese rebellion during the Japanese occupation, in Aileu and Maubisse in August 1942, was not against the Japanese, but against the Portuguese. These rebellions are significant because, according to Péllissier, the uprising against the Portuguese in Maubisse was not in support of the Japanese but an attempt to redress the defeat in the 1912 Manufahi wars and exact revenge against the Suro regency of Dom Aleixio Corte Real (1996 in Gunn, 1999: 225). As Gunn notes, pro and anti Portuguese sentiments were translated into pro-or anti Japanese sentiments, a division skilfully exploited by the Japanese themselves. As described by Gunn, the Australian commando forces experienced contrasting support from the East Timorese population, being protected and supported by the pro-Portuguese elements and informed on and attacked by the anti-Portuguese elements (Gunn, 1999: 229).

4.2.3   The Portuguese withdrawal and the 1975 civil war

These tensions persisted and were again to find their outlet at the end of Portuguese rule, with the formation of political parties that largely reflected pre-existing communal divisions. With decolonisation and the restoration of democracy as its central demand, in April 1974, in what is popularly referred to as the Carnation Revolution, a group of army officers deposed the Portuguese government and restored democratic rule (Jolliffe, 1978: 60).

The East Timorese quickly exploited their newfound political freedom by establishing a number of new political organisations, previously banned under the Portuguese Caetano regime. The first political organisation,[23] the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT), was formed on May 11, 1974 (Jolliffe, 1978: 62). Promoting federation with Portugal, this group was formed from local functionaries and plantation owners from mestizo and *liurai* families (Kammen, 2010: 255). The foundation of the Social Democratic Association of East Timor (ASDT) followed barely a week later, subsequently changing its name in September that year to Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (FRETILIN). Taking inspiration from African independence movements, this party articulated an anti-colonial, pro-independence reform-minded platform. A third party then formed in May that year, the Popular Democratic Association of Timorese (APODETI), which proposed that East Timor become an autonomous province of Indonesia, and the stage was set for conflict (Jolliffe, 1978: 64).

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[23] As there was still no formal law permitting political parties, these were called unions or associations instead.

Even at inception, according to Kammen, political party affiliation at the local level was driven by rivalries between hamlets, villages and former domains or regencies, rather than by ideology or political orientation. One of APODETI's three strongholds, for example, was in the area of Viqueque where the 1959 rebellion took place and anti-Portuguese sentiment had been strong. Another was Atsabe (Kammen, 2010: 255). According to Molnar, the vehemently anti-Portuguese Dom Guilherme Gonçalves, one of the APODETI founders and the acknowledged ruler of the former Atsabe domain, had access to a substantial traditional army through extensive marriage alliances within the Atsabe region, and across the border, that could easily be mobilised as required (Molnar, 2006: 349). In Ainaro District, some of the founding members of APODETI were drawn from descent groups who had lost land and power as a result of fighting against the Portuguese or on the side of the Japanese (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012: 210).

Importantly, in line with Kalyvas's concept of alliance (Kalyvas, 2003: 486), whereby local and supralocal actors utilise the other for either national level or purely private, localised ends, Molnar contends that there is a dynamic interaction between modern party system politics and such traditional systems of kinship based alliances, as figures from these traditionally based alliances use modern political systems instrumentally to legitimise their authority and further their own agendas (Molnar, 2010: 336).

As documented by the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste (CAVR),[24] on August 11, 1975, the UDT leaders launched a coup. With the aim of purging 'communist' elements within FRETILIN, the security forces and colonial government, UDT forces seized control of the police headquarters and a number of key installations, detaining hundreds of FRETILIN supporters in the process. FRETILIN leadership withdrew to Aileu, also the army training headquarters, and on August 20, launched a counter attack. While elements of both the army and police joined both sides, the political loyalties of the army and police largely mirrored that of 2006, with the police aligned with UDT and the army joining FRETILIN, whose superior armaments and numbers proved the decisive factor. Although estimates vary, somewhere between 1,500-3,000 people were killed in the violence that ensued, spreading from the city to all parts of the country (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005b: 43).

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[24] The CAVR report is the most authoritative account of this period. The CAVR was an independent statutory authority set up in 2001 under UNTAET Regulation 2001/10 to research the history of violence and human rights abuses between 1974-1999, including East Timor's civil war, and to facilitate community reconciliation for less serious crimes. Its work culminated in a 2,800 page report, completed in October 2005, entitled 'Chega!' (Stop, Enough) based on four years of research and thousands of statements from ordinary East Timorese and hundreds of interviews with leading figures from all sides of the conflict (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005b).

As some of the key leaders attested, the violence did not always follow clear lines, with FRETILIN sometimes aligned with APODETI against UDT, or both of them against FRETILIN; or sometimes FRETILIN and UDT against APODETI. The violence was worse in rural areas, particularly in Liquisa, Ermera, Ainaro, Manufahi and Manatuto, with pre-existing tensions based on clan feuds and personal grudges. As one political party leader described, people took advantage of the war to settle purely personal grievances, such as fights over girlfriends or being fired from their jobs, or to take justice into their own hands over some unsettled dispute from the past (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005b: 43).

By the end of August, FRETILIN was in control of most of the country.[25] On September 7, 1975, the defeated forces of the other parties, primarily UDT and APODETI, signed a petition (although the signatories claimed they were coerced) to President Suharto of Indonesia asking for East Timor to be integrated into Indonesia (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005b: 45). The contested memory of this act has dogged these parties' leaders and supporters ever since.

Indonesia had already made a number of attacks on East Timor, using irregular forces drawn from APODETI members and other anti-FRETILIN parties. On October 15, 1975, they began a series of major land based incursions into Bobonaro District on the border, with forces now primarily composed of Indonesian troops. While FRETILIN continued to recognise Portugal's sovereignty, its overtures to Portugal to negotiate a transition to independence were rebuffed. On hearing that Portugal had already conducted talks with Indonesia, and fearing an imminent full-scale invasion, FRETILIN declared independence on Friday, November 28, 1975. The next day, FRETILIN Central Committee appointed Fransisco Xavier do Amaral as President of the Republic (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005b: 55).

4.2.4   The Indonesian invasion and period of occupation

On December 7, 1975, Indonesia launched a full-scale invasion by land, sea and air. After initial stiff resistance, East Timorese troops were simply overwhelmed by superior numbers and firepower. By August 1976, the Indonesian army controlled most of the major towns in East Timor and by 1979, the Indonesians declared the area pacified (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005b: 68).

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[25] During this time, the Portuguese colonial administration had fled to Atauro Island just off the coast of Dili. Portugal's attempts to negotiate a ceasefire and a political solution proved fruitless, undone both by FRETILIN's refusal to negotiate with the other parties and the collapse of Portugal's own government.

In recognition that they could not win a conventional war against the Indonesians, in 1981 the surviving leadership, with Xanana Gusmão now at its head,[26] reorganised as the Revolutionary Council of National Resistance (CRRN), which would encompass all political groupings, not just FRETILIN. They adopted a guerrilla warfare strategy, with small mobile teams of guerrillas to be supported by a clandestine structure operating in district level national resistance centres and small village level cells. In the 1980s, a number of other clandestine structures began to form. In 1985, East Timorese students were allowed to travel abroad to study in Indonesian universities, and students began to set up clandestine groups in Indonesia and to forge links with Indonesian rights groups (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005b:109). The most prominent of these groups, the Timor-Leste Students' National Resistance (RENETIL), was founded in 1988 by Fernando 'Lasama' Araujo and Domingos Alves (Niner, 2009: 110). It was a protest by clandestine student activists on 12 November 1991, culminating on what is now known as the Santa Cruz Massacre, that is credited with both revealing the brutality of the Indonesian occupation and putting East Timor's case for self-determination back on the international agenda.[27]

The militarisation of East Timorese society

As this sub-section demonstrates, current depictions of East Timor's informal security groups as contemporary products of poverty, alienation and political manipulation (Arnold, 2009b; Cotton, 2007b; Shoesmith, 2007b; Simonsen, 2009) do not take account of the historical factors that led to their existence. The militarisation of Timorese society under the Indonesian occupation must be seen as a major formative influence on their creation, and on their tactics and behaviour. This section details the Indonesian military's systematic enlistment of the East Timorese population into a variety of paramilitary and quasi-military groupings for the purposes of counter-insurgency and indoctrination.

While local paramilitaries, such as the *moradores* described earlier, existed under Portuguese colonial rule, under the Indonesian occupation counter insurgency strategy, such paramilitaries were comprehensively established at almost every level of East Timorese society. According to Robinson, right from the beginning of the Indonesian occupation in 1975, and even before, Timorese conscripts or volunteers were organised by the Indonesian military into a variety of formal and informal military groupings including village based militias, such as village-based auxiliary units designed to assist the Indonesian army in detecting and combatting the resistance

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[26] Gusmão had been involved in the resistance from the beginning, but broke with FRETILIN in 1986 (Niner, 2009: 111).

[27] As many as 271 people were estimated to have been killed by the Indonesian military on the day and in ensuing reprisals, and 250 were reported as missing (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005b: 203).

(2001: 70). As Robinson points out, the 1999 militias are generally portrayed as a spontaneous phenomenon that, after being covertly recruited by the Indonesian military, suddenly sprang from nowhere. However, when the TNI began mobilising militias for the post election violence of 1999, the foundations were already long established (2003: 82).

Apart from the creation of militias and paramilitaries, another strategy of the Indonesian occupation was to target youth, a theme that will be explored in more detail in chapters five and six. By the 1980s, youth had become an important element of the urban clandestine resistance, and the Indonesian authorities sought to indoctrinate them or co-opt them through the creation of a variety of youth organisations. This was a tactic already tested in Indonesia, where the Indonesian military sought to increase its access to gangs and youth by establishing 'teen clubs', with an emphasis on sports (Ryter, 1998: 62).

In the late 1970s to early 1980s, the Indonesian police and military instituted a scout movement and also martial arts groups with public military style training and uniforms (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005b: 27). According to Wilson, in Indonesia, the practice of martial arts or *pencak silat* became increasingly associated with the military and nationalism in the 1930s, especially after the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945. The association of MAGs with the state and the military became most pronounced under the New Order regime of Suharto, whose family, as well as the military, were strong patrons of the Indonesian MAG peak organisation, the Indonesian *Pencak Silat* Association. In East Timor, as in Indonesia, sport, in this instance martial arts, was implicitly viewed by the New Order regime as a tool of social control (Wilson, 2002). This strategy of organising Timorese youth into martial arts groups for the purposes of indoctrination is undoubtedly the main reason for the sheer size and variety of MAGs currently in existence in East Timor. The Indonesian KOPASSUS (Special Forces) Commander, Major General Prabowo Subianto, in particular, is widely credited with implementing this strategy in East Timor, in addition to being accused of serious human rights abuses (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005b: 14). Another reason, however, for being a member of one of the MAGs associated with the Indonesian military, was patronage. Membership of a MAG was a pragmatic step to gain access to scholarships, jobs, but most importantly, protection from the military and militias.[28] This is not to suggest that the groups created in East Timor or the people who joined them necessarily became pro-Indonesian, but there is certainly strong evidence that the plethora of youth groups active in East Timor today is a legacy of this policy.

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[28] Interview with PNTL officer, Dili, January 1, 2008.

The Indonesian military also imported some of its own paramilitary style 'youth groups', so it is no coincidence that some of the politically inspired 2006 violence in East Timor bears resemblance to the methods of the Suharto era and contemporary paramilitary groups such as *Pemuda Pancasila* (Pancasila Youth).[29] In addition to carrying out intimidation of political opponents in Indonesia on behalf of the Suharto era ruling party Golkar, *Pemuda Pancasila* engaged in extensive extortion and stand over rackets (Ryter, 1998: 46). This group, and others similar to it such as the National Committee of Indonesian Youth, also had branches in East Timor where they carried out organised violence against independence supporters in East Timor (Aditjondro, 2001: 40).

Some of the contemporary gangs in Dili possibly gained experience from other gangs in Indonesia itself. A 1992 Asia Watch report details how up to 600 East Timorese youth were brought over to Indonesia for 'training' and then forced into slave labour conditions, or in some cases forced to undergo military training at a KOPASSUS run complex in Cijantung, West Java (Asia Watch, 1992). Some of these people went on to join gangs, most notably in the Blok M commercial and nightclub area of Jakarta. The most notorious East Timorese underworld figure, Rosario Marcal aka 'Hercules', had been a private assistant of the Indonesian KOPASSUS Commander, Major General Prabowo Subianto, in East Timor before he was brought to Jakarta to organise pro-integration actions, such as harassing pro-independence activists (Wilson, 2002). There are a number of gangs in Dili comprised of his former members in Tanah Abang (see Figure 7). A number of Dili based groups still bear names indicating their Indonesian origins such as 'Blok M', which many such groups inhabited, and *Gang Potlot* – named after the street where the Indonesian rock band, 'Slank', lived (gang also means street or laneway in Indonesian). Some groups, like Blok M, have also maintained their Indonesian underworld connections.

Figure 7: Hercules gang graffiti, Perumnas, Dili

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[29] *Pancasila* means Five Principles, which provide the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state.

Resistance to the Indonesian occupation also spawned a wide range of groups. In addition to FALINTIL (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor) guerrillas, there were also numerous clandestine activist cells that supplied the guerrillas with weapons, food, medicine and intelligence. As well as the student and other clandestine movements and cells described earlier, there were a number of other groups organised into cells, such as the variously named 'wound' or 'magic' groups, most notably Five-Five, Seven-Seven and others such as COLIMAU 2000, as is described in more detail in Chapter Five. There were also numerous small neighbourhood vigilante groups that harassed Indonesian forces or their proxies and warned their neighbourhoods of impending attacks.

Almost all of these groups can still be found in contemporary East Timor. The fact that these groups prevail, with many still defining themselves as clandestine groups long after the war has ended points to more complex factors than poverty and disadvantage in the number and diversity of such groups. The continued salience of such resistance networks also has implications for understanding the historical nature of contemporary violence.

4.2.5   The 1999 Referendum violence

With the capture of Gusmão by the Indonesian military on 20 November 1992, in Dili, the Indonesians were confident that they had now broken any final resistance. This proved not to be the case, but it was events in Indonesia itself that proved more critical to the success of East Timor's cause. In 1998, after waves of protests, splits within the military, a major economic crisis and a series of high profile corruption scandals involving members of Suharto's family, his New Order regime fell, after 30 years of power (Braithwaite, 2010: 92). By this time, the conflict in East Timor had claimed the lives of approximately 102,100 people, with an additional 18,600 people presumed killed or missing, and as many as 84,000 dead from conflict related starvation and illness (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005a: 2).[30]

On January 27, 1999, Suharto's successor, President B.J. Habibie, suddenly announced that the East Timorese would be offered the chance, through a direct ballot, to decide if they wanted to continue to be part of Indonesia as an autonomous province. If not, Indonesia would withdraw and East Timor would be on its own. The UN was tasked with running the 'popular consultation', as it was called, in August 1999, but under the terms of the accords regulating the ballot, Indonesia controversially retained the right to provide security. The UN Mission in East

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[30] The CAVR cites this figure as a 'minimum conservative' figure that can be scientifically validated, but believes the figure could be much higher (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005a: 2).

Timor (UNAMET) began setting up its operations in May that year. At the same time, FALINTIL had deployed its troops to four cantonments with a commitment to stay there for the duration of the process and to abstain from violence. The militias, despite a sham disarmament process, began a campaign of violence and intimidation well before the ballot began, with eight killings in Dili alone. The vote proceeded, as planned, on August 30, resulting in 78.5 per cent of voters rejecting the autonomy proposal. Almost immediately Indonesian troops and pro-autonomy militias began a nationwide campaign of murder, violence and systematic destruction leading to between 1,200-1,500 deaths and the loss of as much as 85 per cent of East Timor's infrastructure (Robinson, 2003: 4).

'Mixed with other matters'

There is little doubt that the militia and Indonesian rampage of 1999 was in large part indiscriminate – a vindictive scorched earth policy to ensure that the East Timorese would not enjoy the fruits of independence for a considerable period afterwards. There were particular patterns to this violence, however, indicating agency of local actors in this 'joint production of violence' (Kalyvas, 2003: 476), which did not always fit meta narratives of pro or anti-independence or of 'good Timorese seeking self-determination and bad Indonesian military colonialists' as described by Tanter (2006: 1).

According to Robinson (2003: 54) and the CAVR Report (2005), rates of militia violence varied from district to district (a phenomena also described by Straus in the case of the Rwandan genocide (Straus 2008), depending on the political sympathies and effectiveness of local *bupatis* – the Indonesian appointed district level mayors or administrators. Some, for example, had pro-independence sympathies and so were able to use their authority to mitigate the worst excesses of the militias. In others, such as in Oecusse, the militias had the full political and financial backing of the local *bupati* and so the local population suffered some of the worst militia excesses in the country during that period.

Differing levels of localised historical rivalries also resulted in widely differing levels of violence from village to village and across the country, and there were a variety of motivations for local participation in the violence. While the pro or anti-independence master narrative has dominated accounts of the 1999 violence, there was also evidence of payback for grievances predating the Indonesian occupation, such as the crushing of the 1959 Viqueque uprising. The notorious 1999 militia leader, Eurico Guterres, was the nephew of the original 1959 rebel leader, António Metan, and he explicitly made the connection with the rebellion by naming the Viqueque militia '59/75' (Gunter, 2007: 37).

Kammen (2003) and Molnar (2004) have similarly questioned the dominant pro or anti-independence narrative that posits East Timorese as entirely innocent victims of Indonesian led proxy militias. Molnar claims that in the Atsabe region of Ermera, militia membership was strongest among those who had opposed the previously Portuguese aligned ruling families who had been given the best land and assumed most of the administrative posts (2004). Molnar contends that these former ruling families continue to enjoy these privileges today. Molnar believes, therefore, that East Timorese participation in militia violence in Atsabe was largely motivated by economic jealousy, and so was particularly targeted at the ruling Tiar Lelo family kin group, as well as villages (or origin houses) of the closest of their affinal allies (2006: 352). In neighbouring Ainaro District, *Mahidi* militia members, like the pro-Indonesian APODETI party founders before them in 1975, were drawn from descent groups who had lost land and power for fighting the Portuguese or allying themselves with the Japanese (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012: 210). In Liquisa District, Kammen asserts that many of the militia members were drawn from the slave and plantation worker class, who were motivated by both a wish to punish their former masters and to ensure that they did not regain their former ascendancy (2003: 82).

In Dili, Field (2004: 106) relates that as many as 80 per cent of the Bidau Santa Ana *Aldeia* in the east of Dili may have joined the militias in 1999, some motivated by a wish to drive out unwelcome Makassae migrants from Baucau and Viqueque, who had arrived in the area in the mid 1980s. Rawski (2002) also notes that militias targeted particular pro-independence villages in Ainaro District. According to one witness in Rawski's account of the militia massacre in one *aldeia*, Maununo, however, this *aldeia* had not even been a resistance or pro-independence stronghold. This witness asserted that this massacre was 'mixed with other matters' (Rawski, 2002: 95), part of a longer history of conflict between Maununo and Kasa *sukus*. Apparently this was merely the third violent event in a rivalry with the neighbouring village of Kasa (the centre of the *Mahidi* militia operations in 1999) a rivalry that dates back to another massacre related to the Dom Boaventura uprising in 1912, a murder sometime in the 1880s, and even further back to a mythical past (2002: 94).

Traube offers a similar counter narrative for violence in Aileu District. In her account, the destruction of the ancestral origin villages of Hohul and Raimaus by the militia belonging to the Aileu ruling family was attributed by victims to a long running enmity between two origin groups, but also a decline in their own spiritual power, and the complicity of their own ancestors in the crime against Tat Felis/Jesus, a hero figure in a cargo cult like local tradition (Traube, 2007: 19).

4.3   Conclusion

This chapter has engaged with Kalyvas's theory of cleavage and alliance and the joint production of violence (Kalyvas, 2003: 486), which suggests that local level actors can enlist national level actors in purely localised conflicts, and national level actors can mobilise local level actors for broader level conflicts and purposes. The different cultural traditions and structures that underpin the East Timorese social order – but that can also form the fracture lines of conflict – have also been outlined. The host of colonial legacies and social phenomena that drive localised conflict have also been detailed, including contested land claims, rural urban migration, the myriad ISGs created under the Indonesian regime but chiefly, the phenomenon of shifting local allegiances to successive colonial regimes. As described here, pre-colonial era East Timorese polities divided along pro or anti-Portuguese affiliations, and conflict between these polities has driven a number of localised conflicts throughout the Portuguese era. While meta narratives of pro- or anti-independence allegiances have characterised accounts of the subsequent Indonesian occupation, this chapter argues that these Portuguese era constellations of pro or anti-colonial alliances continued to inform selective patterns of pro or anti Indonesian alliance, as local level actors positioned themselves to seek advantage over rivals with new national level actors. The same patterns were evident in the post-Referendum violence of 1999. In many cases, there was a history to the violence and as the above examples show, the cover of war and the support of Indonesian authorities enabled many groups or communities to enact vengeance on rivals in purely localised, pre-existing conflicts – conflicts that had little to do with national level pro or anti-independence cleavages.

As the following chapter will illustrate, despite dominant accounts of the Crisis attributing the violence of this event to meta narratives of state-building, elite tensions and economic causes, these localised conflicts or tensions endured into the independence period. This was most evident in the post-2006 violence, but with corresponding new affiliations to reflect current constellations of political power.

CHAPTER FIVE: Continuities in Conflict

The violence over a three-month period of 2006, popularly referred to as the Crisis, has been portrayed as a one off, sudden explosion of tensions. A range of meta narratives have been deployed to explain its root causes such as poor state-building, ethnic tensions and elite rivalry. While a number of accounts of the Crisis point to resistance era enmities between elites, or allude to 'quasi criminal groupings' (Kingsbury, 2007a: 20), except for the 2002 riots, there is scant mention of any previous conflict in the post-independence period or in the period afterwards, as if all post-independence era conflict began and stopped between the months of April to June 2006. A further confirmation of the common utilisation of this time frame can also be found in the oft-repeated figure of 37 dead, the total compiled at the end of the fighting between the army, police and their respective supporters in May 2006. This adoption of a narrow time frame enables a stress on macro-level factors – the search for the root causes of the aberrant exception to an otherwise peaceful norm. As Cramer (2006: 96) and Kalyvas (2006: 21) assert, such a focus on major events or outbreaks of civil violence excludes an examination of more subtle and complex violent or non-violent events that precede them. Scrutiny of press, Government and NGO reports over the period from 2000 to 2006 reveals evidence of persistent tensions and conflict in both Dili and rural areas, particularly in the 2007 period, and evidence of sporadic and occasionally intense incidents of localised conflict long afterward. Conflict before and after 2006 was also selective – not generalised, as would be the case if youth alienation, inequality and political rivalry were the key factors in driving the violence. Such patterns, it is argued here, reveal the legacy of the pre-existing enmities described in the previous chapter, with localised origins largely unconnected to broader cleavages or meta narratives.

Focussing on the events of the 2006-07 period, this chapter builds on Chapter Four to situate the events of the Crisis in a continuum of violence from the pre-independence period onwards. This chapter utilises Kalyvas's theory of cleavage and alliance (2003: 486) to show how a range of historical factors has created enduring enmities, which have been subsequently reproduced in contemporary political affiliations. As Kalyvas observes, many local level grievances may be normally innocuous, but in times of national civil conflict, may be enacted violently (2003: 476) as local level actors enlist national level actors to address localised grievances. As will be demonstrated here, as a consequence of this phenomenon, localised conflicts may often take on the appearance of national level cleavages, sometimes long after these cleavages have disappeared at a national level.

5.1   Early tensions

On September 12, 1999, Indonesia agreed to the intervention of an international force in East Timor (INTERFET), which deployed there on September 20 to begin restoring order and distribute humanitarian aid. On October 20, Indonesia rescinded the law claiming East Timor as an Indonesian province and the last of their troops withdrew from East Timor. Following the restoration of order, the UN Security Council mandated the establishment of the United Nations Transitional Administration of East Timor (UNTAET) to manage East Timor's transition to independence. UNTAET's responsibilities were comprehensive, ranging from humanitarian assistance through to building the foundations of a new democratic state, including setting up administrative and judicial institutions and the various functions of government. Security was provided by a 9,000 strong international security force, the UN Peacekeeping Force (UN 2002).

A number of consultative bodies were established to liaise with the East Timorese leadership. On December 11, 1999, a National Consultative Council was appointed, comprised of members of the National Council of the Timorese Resistance (CNRT) (Braithwaite, 2012: 120). The factions that emerged in 1975 soon resurfaced, however, and FRETILIN and UDT broke away, arguing that the CNRT's purpose had finished with the end of Indonesian occupation (Braithwaite, 2012: 118).

With the announcement of elections for a Constituent Assembly in 2001, given the experience of 1975, there was a widespread, and, as the events of April to June 2006 proved, well founded fear that the return of party politics would prove divisive and result in a return to conflict (Babo-Soares, 2003). Sixteen parties contested the August 2001 elections, some of whom had only formed that year, such as the Democratic Party (PD) led by the RENETIL leader Fernando 'Lasama' Araujo, who represented a substantial bloc of Indonesian educated urban middle class elite. Other parties such as the UDT and the *Trabalhista* (Labour Party) remained from the 1974 period. FRETILIN won the election, with 55 of the 88 seats in the Constituent Assembly. Gusmão became the country's first President in the April 2002 presidential elections (Shoesmith, 2003: 232).

Tensions began to surface in East Timor soon afterwards. While the nation's new-found freedom was widely celebrated, the process of state building left many feeling excluded. The break up, for example, of the resistance umbrella body, the CNRT, and the dominance of FRETILIN in the August 2001 Constituent Assembly elections left many former leaders and their followers feeling disenfranchised (Babo-Soares, 2003). The allocation of limited positions in state sector employment inevitably created discontent and led to consequent allegations of

favouritism and corruption. All these factors combined to ensure that the post independence period would be characterised by conflict and divisions, rather than by peace and national unity.

The most serious tensions first emerged in the creation of the new national army, the FALINTIL-Defence Forces of Timor-Leste (F-FDTL). On February 1, 2001, the old resistance army, the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor (FALINTIL), was officially disbanded and the F-FDTL was born. 650 FALINTIL were selected to constitute the first battalion of the F-FDTL. The remaining 1300 were demobilised under the FALINTIL Reinsertion Assistance Programme (FRAP), in a process implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which ran for a year between February and December 2001. Under this scheme, ex-FALINTIL veterans received cash payments and a package of benefits to aid their reintegration into the community (World Bank, 2002). The controversial nature of the creation of the F-FDTL has been extensively analysed by Rees (2004) and a number of more recent treatments (Simonsen, 2009). Analysts such as Rees (2004) have argued that this process left many ex-FALINTIL (although the category of who was or was not a FALINTIL member was in itself highly contentious) feeling excluded and ignored. Inclusion in the new national army or the bestowment of a benefits package not only meant a degree of financial security and status but also a symbolic reward and recognition for their sacrifice to the nation. The formation of the new East Timorese National Police Force (PNTL) further inflamed the situation. Again, many FALINTIL missed out on selection because of age or other factors. Their feeling of grievance was compounded by the inclusion of over 300 East Timorese ex Indonesian Police Force (POLRI) members, some of whom, such as the police commissioner, Paulo Martins, were assigned senior positions in the PNTL (Shoesmith, 2003: 249).

The selection process for the two forces became a heated issue at public forums thereafter and ex-FALINTIL and their supporters began to mobilise in often violent demonstrations. In addition to former resistance groups, a number of 'political security groups' composed of disaffected ex-FALINTIL emerged. Loosely connected under the umbrella of the Association of Ex-Combatants 1975 (AC75) headed by ex-FRETILIN Minister for the Interior, Rogerio Lobato, they included smaller autonomous groups led by former guerrilla leaders (Rees, 2004: 50). A number of attacks by unnamed groups on police posts were attributed to these groups of ex-veterans, such as the attack on the Baucau police headquarters on November 25, 2002, in which one protester was killed and several others were wounded (Shoesmith, 2003: 250). The most serious incident, known as the Dili riots in December, 2002, sparked by a student demonstration, led to one death and considerable destruction of commercial and residential buildings in the capital Dili (Smith, 2004).

Cross border incursions, often violent, continued on a regular basis. As described in more detail in Chapter Six, an attack by an armed group left seven dead in two villages near Atsabe, Ermera District, in 2003 (Rees, 2004: 23). As one report claimed, rather than being organised militia attempts to disrupt the new government, such attacks were related to land disputes and cross border smuggling (International Crisis Group, 2004). Many families were separated not only by the division of pro-and anti-independence sympathies, but also by the post-independence border demarcation, which created an artificial distinction between East and West Timorese from the same extended families. Apart from clashes in Maliana and Ermera Districts (International Crisis Group, 2006a), a number of border disputes continue to fester in the Oecusse enclave to this day (International Crisis Group, 2010).

5.1.1   Martial arts group conflict

Another source of instability, with no apparent relation to any of these issues, was outbursts of communal conflict involving martial arts groups (MAGs). While there are few reliable statistics kept on this period, data from the Ministry of Interior indicates that between 2002 and 2004, registered cases increased from seven to 37, spreading from four districts in 2002 to 11 of 13 districts in 2004. The district of Dili had the highest number of cases, with a total of 14, of which 10 were registered in 2003. The only districts with no registered cases were Cova Lima and Aileu. The violence seems to have been particularly endemic to four districts: the two Western highlands districts of Ermera and Ainaro (in the period cited above, Ainaro had 11 cases, more than half occurring in 2004) and the Eastern districts of Baucau and Viqueque (Ostergaard, 2005: 23). The figures also give no indication of the seriousness of the clashes. A riot in March 2001, for example, between martial arts groups, almost entirely destroyed two villages in Viqueque District and in August 2004, 50 houses were burned down in Ainaro District (UNMIT Media Monitoring, Dili, March 17, 2001). As Molnar notes, however, there was much conflict that was (as is no doubt the case now) never reported. Molnar claims that conflict was rife in the Atsabe region of Ermera District throughout the 2002 period (2004: 366). Many conflict locations are inaccessible by road, and staff of local and national press outlets are too poorly trained and resourced to report much more than the most serious cases that have led to police interventions.

Amidst this rising insecurity the Catholic Church launched a mass protest between April and May 2005 in Dili. Sparked by a plan by the government to make the teaching of Catholic Doctrine optional in schools, this protest acted as another vehicle for popular discontent. Thousands of demonstrators arrived in Dili, mostly trucked in by the Catholic Church, and camped on the foreshore near the Bishop of Dili's residence. As Hicks notes (2011: 122),

however, this protest soon became hijacked by opposition parties and the central complaint for the original protest broadened into a new demand that the government resign, serving as a precursor of the PD led 2006 demonstrations.

Incidents involving MAGs and other ISGs continued throughout the post-independence period, but there was a noticeable spike ahead of the political crisis that began in January 2006, with the emergence of the F-FDTL 'Petitioners' group. In November, 2005, armed groups began appearing in Bobonaro, Viqueque (UNMIT Media Monitoring, Dili, November 16, 2005) and Covalima Districts, and a police post was bombed in Baucau District (UNMIT Media Monitoring, Dili, November 23, 2005). There were a series of militia incursions from Indonesia, beginning in October, 2005. One notorious incident, in Bobonaro District on January 6, 2006, left three ex-militia members dead and a member of the Border Patrol Unit wounded (UNMIT Media Monitoring, Dili, January 7, 2006).

5.2   The April/May 2006 Crisis

Although the capital Dili had been relatively calm in early 2006, there was a growing sense of insecurity nationally. Tensions increased with the sacking of 591 soldiers. While many of that number were dismissed for sundry disciplinary reasons, nonetheless this group became collectively known as the Petitioners – a group of soldiers, of predominantly Western origin, who signed a petition alleging discrimination by the F-FDTL's predominantly Eastern hierarchy (UN, 2006). The violent demonstration in support of their protest on April 28 was to prove a lightning rod for a whole range of existing tensions, and the emergence of a range of new and existing disaffected groups. The broad outline of the main events of the Crisis, following the chronology established by the Report of the United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry, is set out below (UN, 2006).

1	March 16: Dismissal of 591 soldiers from F-FDTL for desertion
2	April 24: Group of sacked soldiers known as the Petitioners and their supporters stage demonstrations outside Parliament
3	April 28: Demonstration turns into riot and two people are killed
4	May 3: Major Alfredo Reinado abandons the F-FDTL Military Police, taking with him other military police officers, PNTL officers and weapons
5	May 23: Five killed in armed confrontation between F-FDTL and Major Alfredo
6	May 24 -25: Nine killed when Petitioners and group led by ex F-FDTL member Vicente de Conceicao (aka Railos) attacks F-FDTL base in Tasi Tolu

7 May 25: Nine PNTL members killed in confrontation between F-FDTL and PNTL at the PNTL Dili headquarters on the Dili command; PNTL largely disintegrates as a force in Dili

8 June 26: Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri resigns and Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta appointed as interim Prime Minister

The conflict did not end, however, with the resignation of the Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri, and there appeared to be three broad phases in this conflict:

1 March-May 2006: A political crisis combined with armed conflict between the security forces;

2 May-October 2006: Widespread regionally based violence between groups divided by loyalty to the Petitioners or the F-FDTL;

3 November 2006-January 2008: A sporadic and highly fluid conflict between changing groups, with shifting alliances and locations, spreading beyond Dili to rural districts.

5.2.1 The first phase of violence

The first phase of the Crisis between April and June 2006 certainly followed the timeline and interpretations of the macro-level accounts outlined in Chapter Two (Kingsbury, 2008; Shoesmith, 2007b; Simonsen, 2009). There was a noticeable build-up of tensions in the immediate pre-2006 period, accompanied by intensified exchanges of political rhetoric between the President Xanana Gusmão and the Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri. There was also widespread discontent in the population about the slow pace of development, reflected in sometimes sensationalist reporting in the press,[31] and the increasingly centralised nature of political power.

As outlined by a number of authors including Shoesmith (2007b), Sahin (2007) and Simonsen (2009), the flawed nature of the creation of the army and police forces clearly manifested itself in the rapid series of events of early 2006. The army split along regional lines, with the Petitioners broadly identified with the Western districts and opposition parties, and the remaining F-FDTL broadly identified with the Eastern districts and FRETILIN. As described by these authors and others, the inclusion of members of the former Indonesian police force in the PNTL, the blurring of roles between the police and army through the creation of competing paramilitary police units and the politicisation of the police force had earlier resulted in a series of violent incidents up until this time. These tensions now manifested themselves in open

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[31] A story in a local paper in February, 2005, for example, reporting the death of 53 people from starvation, was widely quoted but later proved to be false (see, for example, Moxham, 2005).

confrontations between the two forces. Following the Petitioners' demonstration, the army and police fought each other and the Dili based PNTL force disintegrated.

The 'National Front for Justice and Peace' (FNJP), headed by Major Augusto Tara Araujo, the key group involved in organising the initial demonstrations, was also clearly a political front group. The FNJP, which later became the National Movement for Unity and Justice (MUNJ), claimed to have broad popular support, with members in all districts, including official affiliation from ISGs CPD-RDTL, Sagrada Familia and COLIMAU 2000, but it was primarily a Western group largely composed of opposition parties.[32] Its Dili coordinator, Vital Dos Santos, for example, went on to become a Democratic Party (PD) Member of Parliament, while Major Tara later became a Social Democratic Party (PSD) Member of Parliament (*East Timor Legal News,* January 22, 2008). This combination of events and factors would all certainly seem to indicate that elite rivalry, poor institutional design, state and nation-building, and divisive regional tensions all played a part in sparking the Crisis. However, this is not the full picture.

5.2.2 The second phase of violence

The so-called gang violence that broke out around this time also initially appeared to conform to most macro-level explanations. Disturbances had already broken out around Dili during the demonstrations, but the second phase of this conflict really began with the collapse of the police force. Over a six-month period, up to 3000 houses were burned, and up to 150,000 people fled to the districts or to IDP camps around Dili and rural districts (International Crisis Group, 2008). This second phase of the conflict also initially appeared to follow most accounts of the Crisis as the violence assumed the outward appearance of a regional divide. While the main leaders of the different factions came from opposing regional blocs, however, there were a number of interlinked factors, which pointed to a range of issues at work other than regional enmities.

Five groups centred around former clandestine resistance figures were prominent in this second phase of the conflict. The three main Western groups led by Joao Choque, Cinto Kulao, Ameu Van Damme and associated smaller groups, were pitted against two main Eastern groups centred around Lito Rambo and 'Commander' Mau Kiak, a former FALINTIL fighter. MAGs also had a major involvement in this conflict; chiefly, the two largest groups, *Kmanek Oan Rai Klaran* (KORK) (literally translated 'Wise Children of the Hinterland') and *Persaudaraan Setia* (see Chapter Six for a more detailed discussion of these groups).[33]

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[32] Interview with FNJP Coordinator, Dili, November 21, 2006.
[33] These national level groups will be dealt with in more detail in the next two chapters.

By the end of 2006, the demographic map of Dili had profoundly changed. As noted by Babo-Soares (2003: 283), while a number of areas of the city had previously been identified as Eastern or Western enclaves, Dili was predominantly mixed. As shown in the map at Figure 8, now the city had become predominantly Western; Eastern enclaves were isolated in a few pockets on the coastal fringe, with the bulk of Easterners residing in IDP camps or having fled back to their original districts.

Figure 8: Dili ISG territories and East-West enclaves in Dili, 2006
(UN Political Affairs, 2006)
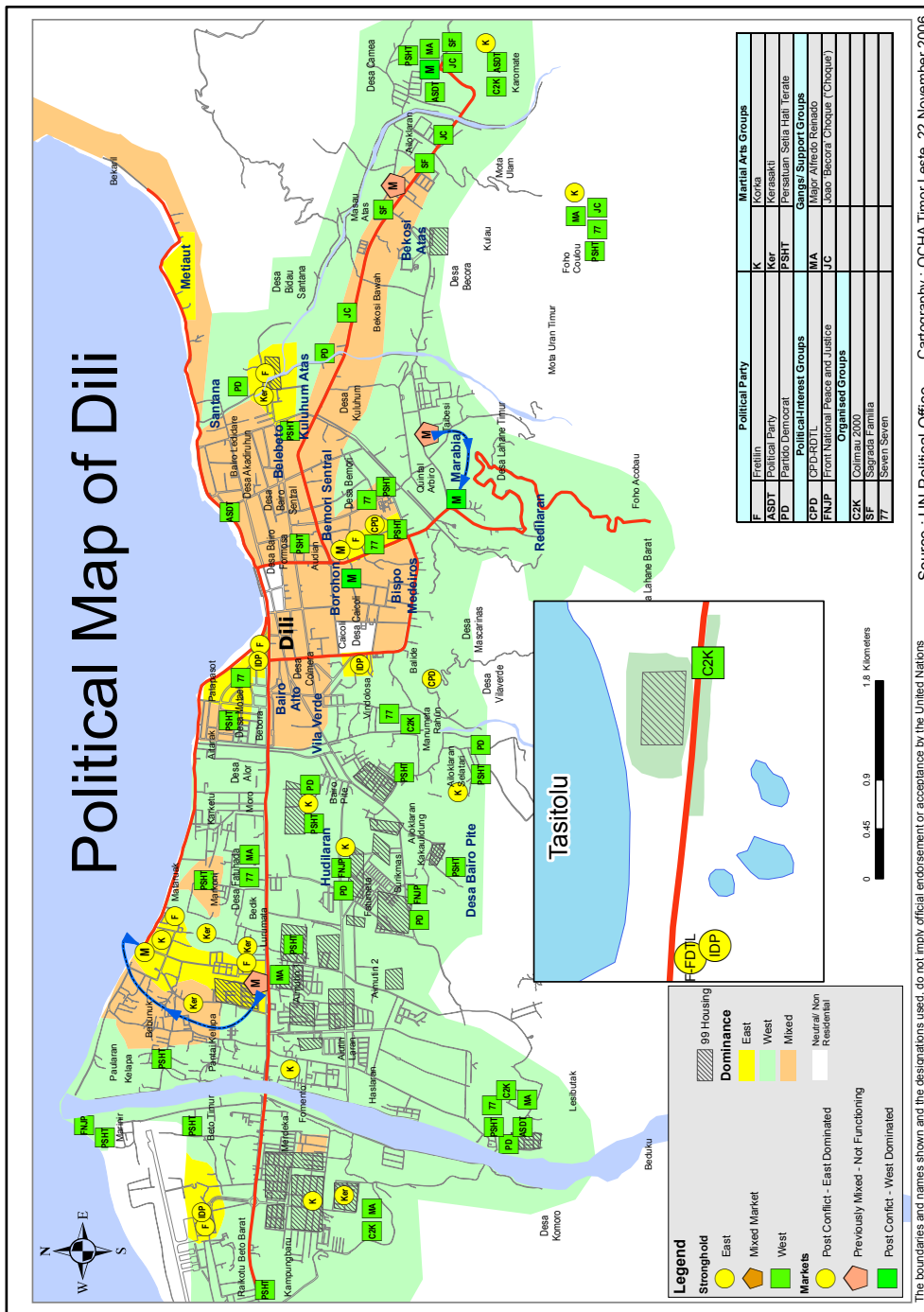
Figure 9: *Rama ambons* – homemade steel darts fired

with slingshots – a source of many casualties

There were a number of existing personal enmities before this conflict though, which assumed a wider significance with the events of the Crisis, as these personal and local level identities and enmities intersected with broader level political or regional identities and affiliations. Tension already existed between former allies in the resistance, Lito Rambo and Cinto Kulao, dating back to the beginning of December, 2005, after members of Kulao's group killed a friend of Lito Rambo in a brawl at a party.[34] According to an International Crisis Group report, there was another brawl between the two groups on May 22, 2006, resulting in four deaths (International Crisis Group, 2006b). This dispute then exploded into a wider conflagration, involving many other groups. There appeared to be no political motivation for this. Both Lito Rambo and Cinto Kulao were affiliated to the alliance of opposition parties – Lito Rambo was previously the leader of the PD youth wing. With the outbreak of East versus West tensions, both found themselves on opposite sides. Lito Rambo found himself allied with Oan Kiak, a FRETILIN loyalist, while Cinto Kulao, along with Joao Choque from the neighbouring area of Becora, took the side of the Petitioners and Major Alfredo Reinado and his group.

Like the F-FDTL leadership, Lito Rambo and Oan Kiak are both Easterners, whilst the opposing groups were almost exclusively Western. Lito Rambo, from the Eastern district of Viqueque, claimed that the fact that he is an Easterner was manipulated to fan the flames of a regional divide[35] (although control of the protection rackets in the Audian commercial area was also a significant factor). Cinto Kulao was also one of many gang leaders to confess to receiving

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[34] Interview with Lito Rambo, Dili, November 30, 2006.
[35] Ibid.

money for orchestrating violence, a confession revealing of more venal motives in the early 2006 violence than historical regional enmity or any ideological persuasion.[36]

This personal antipathy and dispute became, in turn, linked to the wider regional ethnic cleavage corresponding to pro and anti F-FDTL sentiment. This anti F-FDTL sentiment had its source in the belief that the F-FDTL was chiefly an Eastern force, due to the fact that its leaders were mostly Easterners, and in the composition of the predominantly Eastern First Battalion, recruited entirely from the ranks of former FALINTIL guerrillas (Rees, 2004: 29). The further identification of the F-FDTL with FRETILIN gave rise to a number of alarming dichotomies. All Easterners were tarred as FRETILIN sympathisers, and therefore collectively guilty for the F-FDTL massacre of 11 police on May 25 and subsequently discredited rumours of another F-FDTL massacre of more than 60 civilians (UN, 2006). The association of Easterners with FRETILIN and the F-FDTL even took on a global proportion. To show how quickly one oppositional identity can flow into another, in a play on words, *firaku*, the Tetun word for Easterner, became shortened to *Irak*, to denote the Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri's Arabic ancestry (see Figure 10). Consequently, anti-Palestinian Liberation Organisation graffiti began to appear in Dili, as did pro-Israeli and pro-USA graffiti. Stories abounded of people being asked if they were 'pro- or anti-America' rather than *firaku* or *kaladi*.

Figure 10: Graffiti reflecting Israel/Arab and *Firaku/Kaladi* dichotomy

Until the Petitioners' demonstration turned violent, the CPD-RDTL and Sagrada Familia (see Chapter Six for more detailed discussion of these groups), already notorious for their militancy over the appointment of Gusmão loyalists to the top ranks of the F-FDTL, had both been members of the anti-FRETILIN political front group the FNJP/MUNJ. Yet when the regionally based violence erupted soon after the Petitioners' demonstration, the CPD-RDTL and Sagrada Familia came under attack from other anti-FRETILIN and anti-F-FDTL groups. They now

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[36] Confidential interview with international aid worker, who witnessed gang leader confessions during Catholic Church led dialogue, July 14, 2009.

found themselves on the same side as the F-FDTL and its leadership, whose own relationship with Gusmão was strained by Gusmão's divisive East versus West speech on March 23, 2006 (UN, 2006: 22). The CPD-RDTL's headquarters was burned down during the early 2006 rioting and they claimed that their headquarters had been shot at by the then Dili PNTL Deputy Commander, Abilio 'Mesquita' Maussoko. Maussoko was part of the anti-FRETILIN group who launched an attack on the F-FDTL Commander's house on May 24 (UN, 2006: 32).[37] Through this new regional alliance, the CPD-RDTL and Sagrada Familia also found themselves aligned with other anomalous figures from the east, such as the pro-FRETILIN Oan Kiak and pro- Gusmão figures such as Aleixio da Silva Gama.[38]

Not all violence was committed by organised, identifiable gangs, or supporters of rival political parties. The way the violence was organised was more diverse, informal and organic than that. Big men and prominent youth group leaders leveraged links with youth groups and former clandestine networks.[39] Networks of reciprocal obligation and assorted favours were called in all over Dili and rural areas not just to organise mobs, but also to provide the considerable logistics, such as the vehicles and petrol required to bring people into the capital and take mobs from target to target, and the food to sustain them.[40]

There was also money to be earned in violence. Some youth jokingly referred to *limpeja kalan* (night cleaning – a reference to the International Labour Organisation sponsored 'dollar a day' public works schemes). As described in Chapter Four, the cover of chaos was used to evict people (who quite often had legitimate claims) from property coveted or disputed by others, or to clear squatters out of properties or land on behalf of landlords or corrupt property developers who coveted this potentially lucrative real estate, a pattern seen in many other developing countries.[41] Some of the most consistent and heated conflict zones, for example, were in the beachside suburbs of Marconi and Bebonuk, near the diplomatic areas in the West of Dili. These are now the sites of luxury resorts, expatriate housing and hotels.

While disenfranchised unemployed youth are almost uniformly blamed for the violence in accounts of the Crisis, this is an assumption at best, not based on any research. MAG and gang

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[37] Interview with CPD-RDTL coordinator Ai Tahan Matak, Dili, November 16, 2006.

[38] Commonly referred to as Aleixio Cobra, Da Silva Gama was a clandestine resistance leader during the Indonesian occupation (Leach 2012a: 258)

[39] Confidential interview with international aid worker, who witnessed gang leader confessions during Catholic Church led dialogue, July 14, 2009.

[40] For example, COLIMAU 2000 leader Osorio Mau Lequi admitted that his group had been paid to come to Dili during the protests in July, 2006, against the arrest of Major Alfredo Reinado, with trucks and food provided, but he refused to divulge who (interview with COLIMAU 2000 leader Osorio Mau Lequi, Dili, July 27, 2006).

[41] See, for example, Weinstein's description of the use of gangs to clear slums in Mumbai, India, under the cover of 'ethnic' Hindu versus Muslim violence (Weinstein, 2008).

members are drawn from all ages, genders, and all sectors of society, including the police, civil service and the economic and political elite. Much of the violence was orchestrated with support from opposition parties and the business community (in my own experience, I witnessed the workers from a construction business adjoining my residence, owned by an opposition supporter, being regularly mobilised for violence using company vehicles). Many of the raids on the IDP camps in Caicoli and Colmera *Jardim* were carried out by mobs transported in such trucks, some belonging to well known construction companies.

Figure 11: Opposition demonstrators, Dili, 2006

Middle class, employed public servants and NGO workers played a significant role in organising or perpetrating the violence. A stockpile of Molotov cocktails, often used in these raids on the IDP camps, was found in the house of the PSHT leader Jaime Lopes after his arrest. (UNMIT, 2007). He is now a Secretary of State in the current Government. A number of aid agency staff reported to me that the middle class staff of a number of local and international NGOs could also be discerned in these trucks and there were even stories from aid agencies of employees assisting IDP camps by day and stoning them by night. A number of staff on international aid agencies reported to me that they were sure that it was such extra-curricula activities by their own staff that were leading to retaliatory attacks on their facilities. All of this suggests that the violence of 2006 was by no means confined to gangs of disenfranchised male youth. It was a much wider and more complex social phenomenon.

Figure 12: Staff member of international NGO with homemade sword[42]

5.2.3 The third phase of violence

A common assumption in accounts of the Crisis is that the violence had either largely stopped in June or sometime in 2006 or, at the very least, had largely abated by the time of the 2007 elections (Simonsen, 2009: 582). Such an assumption is difficult to sustain, however, in the light of data available from that time. As the following section demonstrates, after the early Dili based events of the Crisis from April to June, fighting continued all the way through late 2006 and 2007 to early 2008, but conflict patterns took on a very different dynamic and, significantly, spread to rural areas.

After a truce between the main antagonists brokered by the President's Office, by the time of November 12, the commemoration day of the Santa Cruz Massacre, the violence had almost completely disappeared, indicating the largely orchestrated nature of this violence. The peace did not last long, however. On November 14, 2006, in *Suku* Estadu, Ermera District, a local conflict between PSHT and COLIMAU 2000, who had both been part of the anti-FRETILIN alliance, destroyed up to 100 houses, and claimed the lives of seven people (UNMIT Daily Security Briefing, Dili, November 22, 2006). In what was clearly a distinct new third phase of violence, this conflict then rapidly spread from village to village in Ermera District, and then to Bobonaro and Cova Lima Districts, resulting in the deaths of up to seven people, before spreading to Dili and enveloping a number of other groups and triggering multiple further localised disputes in the city.

The Prime Minister's Office, under the then interim Prime Minister, Jose Ramos Horta, negotiated a peace process between the rival groups throughout late November, which initially appeared to hold, until a secondary conflict broke out in Dili between PSHT and the former

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[42] Still from film of 2006 violence by BURADO youth group.

clandestine group, Seven-Seven. The conflict spread rapidly, with multiple flashpoints in Dili and in both the Eastern and Western districts. Areas that had previously enjoyed relative peace (including areas that had been seen as model communities) in the earlier conflict also began to suffer violence. This conflict led to a formal alliance against PSHT of a group calling itself the '*Rai Na'in*' (originals) group, consisting of COLIMAU 2000, KORK and other MAGs (ironically some of Indonesian origin, such as *Kera Sakti-powerful monkey*) and a number of former clandestine groups (UNMIT Media Monitoring, Dili, November 24, 2006). The map at Figure 13 shows the main conflict areas early in 2007, but by the end of 2007, conflict had spread to nearly every village in Dili.

Figure 13: Dili conflict zones, January 2007 (UN Security, 2007)
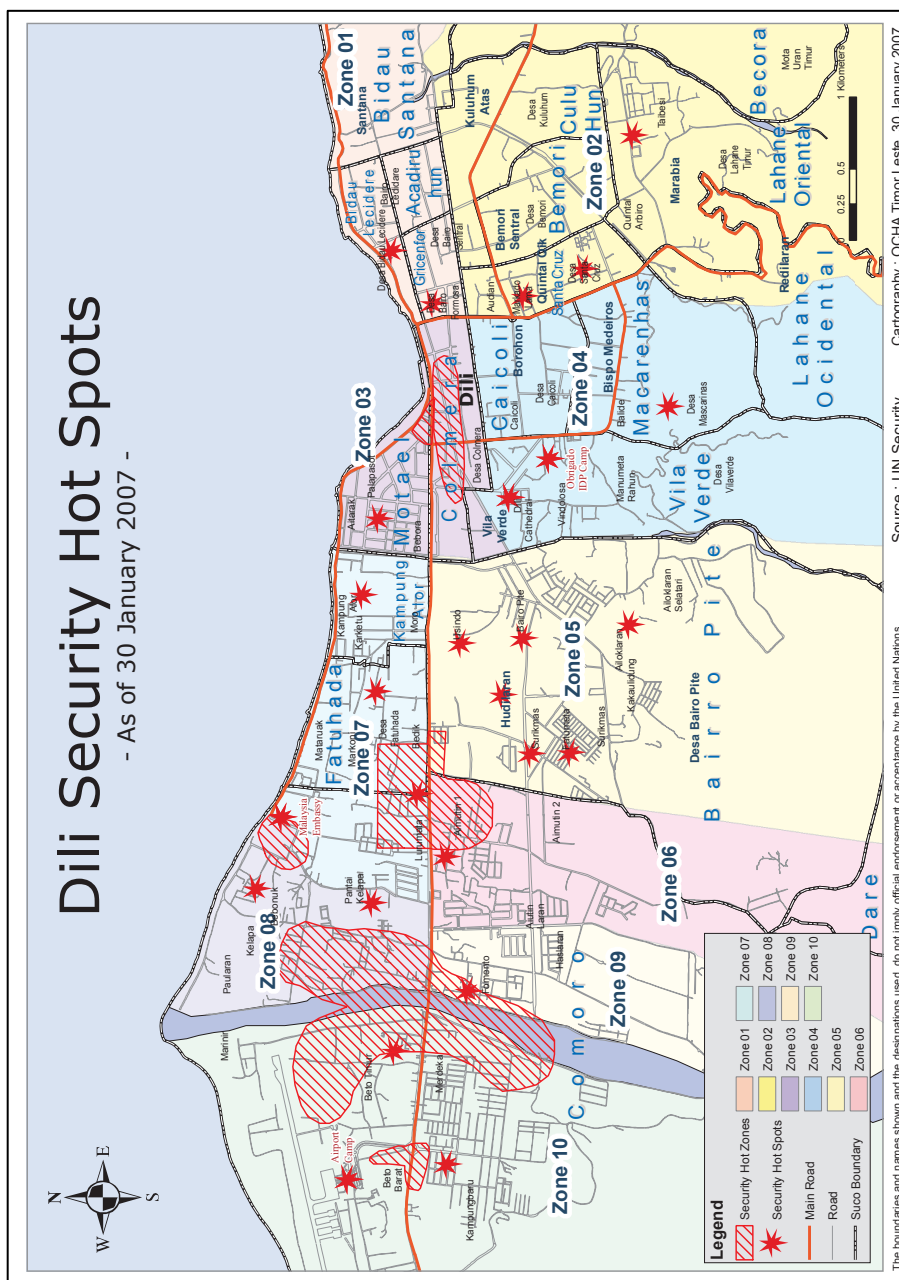
In spite of a substantial international peacekeeping contingent, conflict between Seven-Seven and PSHT persisted throughout 2007. UNMIT figures, as shown at Figure 14, derived from UNPOL incident reports, indicate a constant level of group fighting of up to 46 incidents a week during that time, with heated clashes involving up to 600 people even into the new year on January 3, 2008, and up to 100 deaths. In the light of these UNMIT figures, it is hard to justify continued claims that fighting stopped in June 2006 and the death toll stood at 37.

Figure 14: Incidences of 2007 group fighting (UNMIT, 2007)
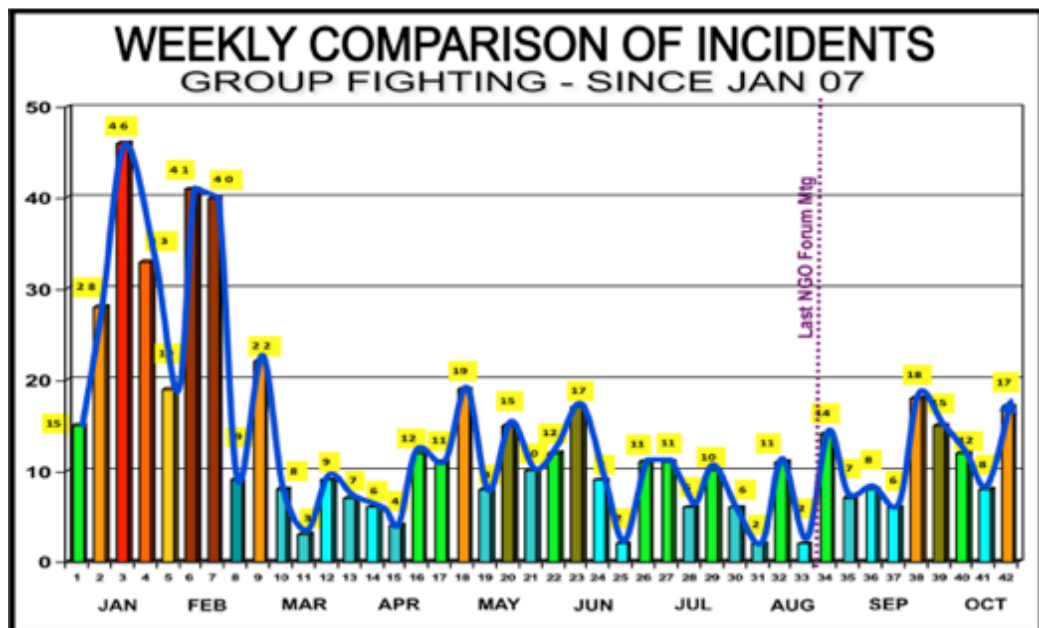
There was a temporary lull in hostilities in the second week of January, until the February 11 assassination attempt on the President, Jose Ramos Horta, and Prime Minister Gusmão by a group of Petitioners and Major Reinado's band, which resulted in Reinado's death and serious injury to Horta (for a detailed analysis of this incident, see Kingsbury 2009). Despite fears that Reinado's death would spark renewed fighting, this did not eventuate. On Aug 27, 2008, Seven-Seven and PSHT signed a peace agreement. While the truce did not totally end skirmishes between the two groups, it did end the all-out fighting (Timor Leste Daily Media Monitoring, August 28, 2008).

5.3   Patterns in conflict

This late 2006 and 2007 violence represented a completely new phase of the violence and significantly different conflict dynamics. Apart from the difference in forces involved, a distinguishing feature of the 2007 violence was its spread to the rural districts, which were largely spared in 2006. Whereas in the first phase the violence was mainly aimed at Easterners, they were largely bystanders in the 2007 violence in Dili. These disputes were also far more

localised, pitting *aldeia* against *aldeia* and family against family in both the Eastern and Western districts. An examination of news reports from the period before, during and after the Crisis also indicates that the bulk of the violence in rural areas occurred in locations with a history of endemic conflict. In other words, it did not occur everywhere, at random, as might be the case if purely political or ethnic rivalry, economic disadvantage or population pressures were to blame. Informed by press reports over the last decade or so, UN Security updates and academic scholarship accumulated over a 10-year period, the map at Figure 15 layers linguistic boundaries – denoting to a certain extent the boundaries of descent groups, with the areas of most persistent conflict. These zones also coincide with the territorial strongholds of the largest and most militant groups, particularly CPD-RDTL and Sagrada Familia in the East, and in the West, COLIMAU 2000, CPD-RDTL, and the major MAGS PSHT and KORK. These areas were the most affected by violence at election times in 2007 and 2012.

5.3.1 Conflict in the Eastern districts

Violence immediately following the 2007 elections was widely attributed at the time to political violence (Belun/IFES, 2007; Geneva Small Arms Survey, 2009), particularly FRETILIN's anger at losing the election (Kingsbury, 2007c). Given still quite considerable nationwide levels of violence at that time (UNMIT, 2007), this post-election violence should, in any case, be seen as an intensification of violence, not as a sort of aftershock or isolated outburst. Even then, this intensification only occurred in specific areas. Some of the worst 2007 post-election violence, for example, occurred in the Eastern districts of Baucau and Viqueque. These areas have long been a hotbed of land disputes. As evidenced by the map at Figure 16, some of the worst violence was experienced in Uatolari and Uatacarbau, two sub-districts of Viqueque in the east of the country.

Figure 15: East Timor linguistic boundaries and conflict zones (ANU CAP, 2013a)

Figure 16: Map of post 2007 election violence in the east (UN, 2007a)
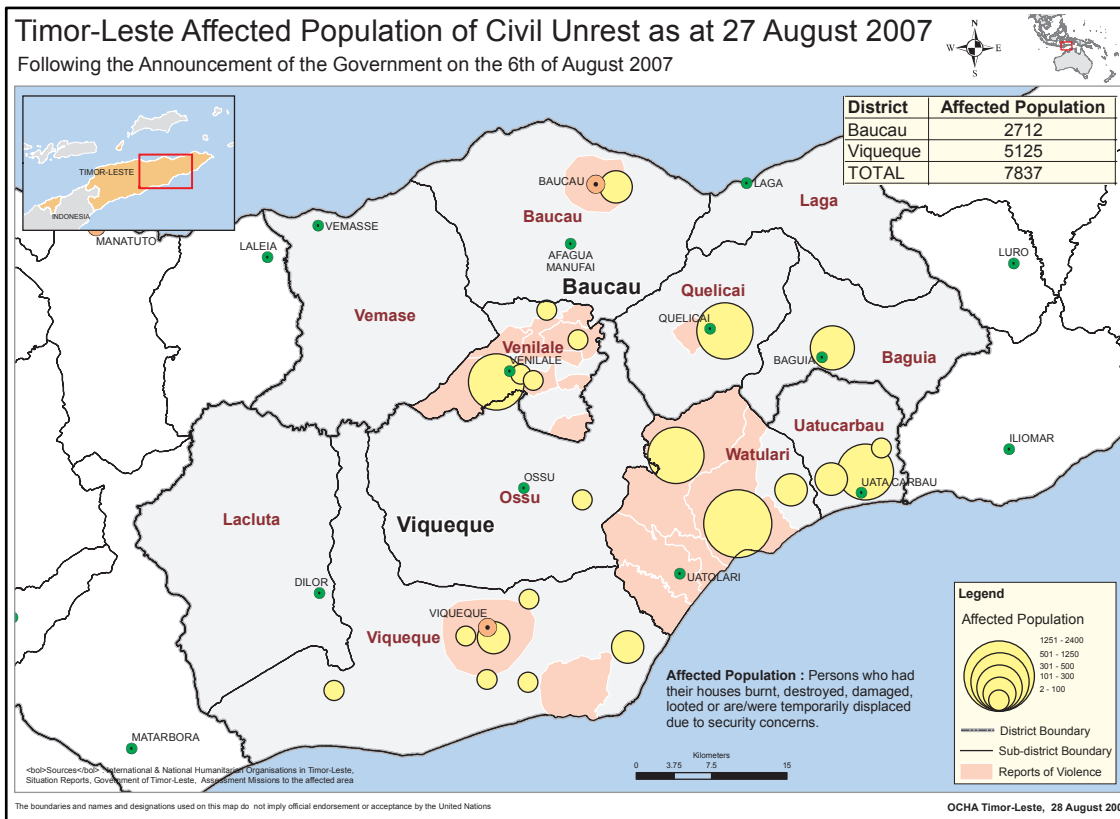
Violence in the Viqueque District and surrounding regions, for example, has a much older genesis. As was described in more detail in Chapter Four, according to Gunter (2007), tensions from the 1959 rebellion have been also reproduced in contemporary political alliances. Predominantly Naueti descent groups associated with the victims of 1959 and the original rebels then joined the pro-Indonesian party APODETI in 1975. Political divisions between these descent groups and the pro-independence descent groups were further exacerbated by the devastation wrought by a Viqueque militia predominantly drawn from members of these descent groups. Many members of these pro-integrationist descent groups remain in Indonesian West Timor, or Dili, afraid to return. Those that do remain suffer constant livestock theft, in addition to ongoing tensions and occasionally violence, with pro-independence descent groups now claiming their land as their own (Gunter, 2007: 37). Those previously pro-Indonesian descent groups that remain have now largely aligned themselves with the current Government, while their opponents have aligned themselves with FRETILIN.

There have been reports of violence in this region ever since independence. One UNTAET report, for example, describes a serious outbreak of conflict in March, 2001, that resulted in two deaths, the razing of over 50 houses and left 250 people homeless (UNTAET Weekly Incident Report for March 11, 2001). Another 2005 report describes a police operation to capture a group

stealing livestock and threatening villagers in Ossu (UNMIT Media Monitoring, Dili, November 16, 2005) while a 2009 report describes an attack on a police station in Uatolari (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, December 4, 2009). There are now frequent press reports of intergroup violence in this region, with one incident as recent as July 2012 that left one dead and seven houses burned down (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, May 23, 2012). Factions are now represented by rival MAGs KORK, *Kera Sakti* and PSHT, with PSHT tending to represent the former pro-integrationist clans or villages. As described by Barnes, it was common for whole families and entire villages to belong to the same MAG.[43] As in McCoy's example of Filipino clans who sided with different regimes, including the Japanese, the US, communist rebels and national governments over the last century, these rival groups have adapted to each successive regime, attempting to leverage the power of national level political parties to the detriment of their rivals (McCoy, 1980, cited in Kalyvas, 2003: 476).

Forced resettlement

The forced relocation of communities onto other people's land during the Indonesian occupation, and the refusal of these settlers to leave after independence, were also major factors previous to and during the 2007 post-election violence in Viqueque and Baucau districts (GTZ/Oxfam, 2003: 16; Kruk, 2004: 24), and continue to act as tension points now. This is particularly the case on the coastal plains where people were relocated to separate them from FALINTIL forces in the hills. In some cases, entire *sukus* were emptied of residents and hundreds of families were relocated to new areas (GTZ/Oxfam, 2003: 16). Fitzpatrick and Barnes (2010) refer to a multi-layered land dispute in the *sukus* Babulo and Afaloicai, Uatolari, complicated not only by Indonesian era forced resettlement, but by earlier Portuguese era incorporation of migrant groups, and even mythical, ancestral claims to land. As these authors point out, many of the disputes on the Uatolari plains area originate in competing land claims where groups claim usufruct rights due to having cleared or tilled the land under forced labour during the Indonesian or Portuguese regimes (2012: 257). Indeed, both of these *sukus* were disproportionately affected by the 2007 post-election violence (UN 2007b). Kruk (2004) and Thu (2012) have also chronicled similar land disputes in neighbouring Baucau in some detail. As Thu describes of Tequinomata, Baucau District, competing traditional land owning and settler groups have found an uneasy accommodation to allow joint cultivation of disputed communal land, but this often breaks down into conflict. As in Uatolari and other districts, these longstanding communal tensions are often manifested as MAG conflict (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, Dili, November 24, 2010).

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[43] Interview with Susana Barnes, Dili, January 19, 2008.

In Baucau's main town, another hot spot for 'electoral violence', two disputes have been simmering over the last decade, with occasional outbreaks so serious that they have led to periodic UN warnings to avoid travelling through there. One dispute stems from tensions between the residents of Trilolo and Bahu *sukus*, who claim to be the traditional owners of Baucau town, and settlers from the outward sub-districts of Laga, Baguia and Quelicai who have occupied local land and properties (Interpeace, 2008). These rivalries are replicated in political party cleavages, with rival *aldeias* affiliated with opposing political parties. These disputes have not always involved MAGs, with one outbreak apparently involving community members of two opposing *aldeias* (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, July 27, 2010), but as in Uatolari, these tensions have been largely reified into contemporary MAG rivalries. Baucau town, during that time and until quite recently, was divided into discrete MAG territories. The *aldeia* Dewaki *Leten* (upper) for example, is affiliated with the PD and the MAG PSHT, which fights Dewaki *Kraik* (lower), on the beach side, which is affiliated with FRETILIN and the MAG *Kera Sakti*. The sometimes deadly disputes between rival MAGs in Baucau town must therefore be seen in this light. One conflict, for example, between PSHT and Seven-Seven members in April, 2008, resulted in two deaths. According to court transcripts, the dispute arose from a friendly tussle between a group of friends. During the tussle, one antagonist apparently landed in some dog faeces and sought revenge. The aggrieved party was a member of PSHT, so the personal dispute escalated into a larger MAG conflict, in turn involving wider broader identities and cleavages including communal tensions over land, political and pro- or anti-independence narratives (East Timor Law and Justice Bulletin, 2009).

Figure 17: Trilolo and Bahu *sukus* in Baucau (Seeds of Life, 2014a)
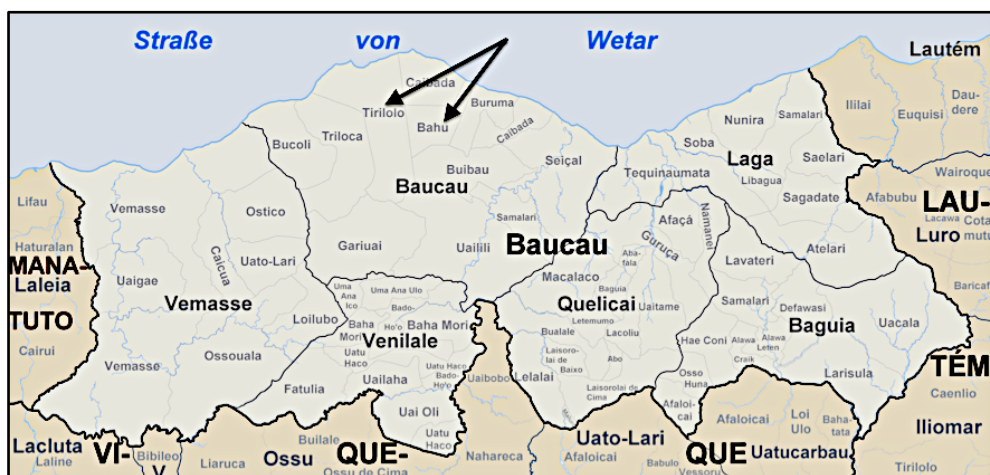
5.3.2 Conflict in the Western districts

Conflict also broke out in a number of locations in the Western districts during 2006, and many of these conflicts have, like the conflicts just described in the Eastern districts, a much older genesis. Ainaro District in the West is one example. According to Fitzpatrick et al., the conflict in the Manutasi Sub-District of Ainaro stems from encroachment by neighbouring villagers on the ancestral lands of families of former militia, in the belief that this land is owed to them as compensation for the militia's crimes in 1999,[44] a claim common to a number of other land disputes (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012: 228). As discussed earlier, ongoing power struggles dating back to the allocation of parts of the Atsabe kingdom to the Ainaro Kingdom by the Portuguese animate current tensions, with these historical tensions now being reproduced in contemporary MAG and political party configurations. As seen in the map at Figure 15, that area of contention in the central Western highlands, at the boundaries of Ermera, Bobonaro and Ainaro Districts, constitutes one of the major areas of endemic conflict in East Timor and the highest concentration of ISGs, with more than five groups all originating in this area and having their strongholds there. Some of the key national leaders of the 2006 violence and organised crime figures were also born there, such as Major Tara, Major Reinado, Hercules, the PSHT leader Jaime Lopes, the KORK leader Nuno Soares, the Seven-Seven Leader 'Sanamea' and the PD leader Fernando 'Lasama' Araujo. Many of Major Reinado's followers and the Petitioners, some of whom, like Salsinha, were COLIMAU 2000 followers, were born in this region and this was the area where most were eventually found when finally arrested (*Lusa*, Dili, March 5, 2008). This suggests that some national level tensions have more localised origins, as will be discussed further in the next chapter.

As described in accounts by Traube (1986; 2007) and Molnar (2004), this region has also historically been rich with millenarian movements. Even now, a new group has emerged in the Ermera/Liquica border named 'Group 51' – the name refers to the requirement for a single member to gather five followers before he may be endowed with supernatural powers. Accusations of witchcraft and murder have followed when people associated with these groups have died, resulting in violent reprisals (Belun, 2012).

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[44] Interview with Susana Barnes, Dili, January 19, 2008.

Figure 18: Manu Tasi, Kasa, Suro and Suro Kraik *sukus*, Ainaro District

(Seeds of Life, 2014a)

As in Viqueque and Baucau, tensions in this region have been compounded by displacement and forced resettlement under the Indonesian occupation. As described by Fitzpatrick et al. in their case study of land disputes in Ainaro District, Ainaro town, Manu Tasi, Kasa, Suro Kraik and Suro were five out of six of the most significant 'transit' or 'concentration' centres for displaced persons from Ainaro and surrounding areas (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012: 227). Manu Tasi is the heartland of PSHT and the birthplace of its controversial former leader, Jaime Lopes. Suro is the heartland of KORK, and the birthplace of its leader, Naimori. All five of these locations have been conflict hotspots between these two groups over the last decade. In 2004, for example, more than 50 houses were burned down in Kasa village leading to the imprisonment of the KORK leader, Naimori (Associated Press, August 16, 2004*)*. More than 20 houses were again burned down there in 2011, in one of many violent incidents there (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, April 13, 2011). Urahu, another resettlement centre in Ermera District during the Indonesian occupation period (Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, 2005b: 62), was also the site of fighting reported as MAG conflict, resulting in four deaths in one incident in June, 2004 (Lusa, Dili, June 22, 2004).

Some of the early cross border attacks in this region glossed as militia attacks were family affairs. According to one account of the Atsabe incident in 2003, described in Chapter Six, the attack was the work of ex-militia members based just across the border, bent upon revenge against one particular individual, Domingos Gonçalves, a former pro-independence village chief in Atsabe Sub-District. Gonçalves's killers were reportedly accompanied by his own cousins.

Rather than any pro or anti-independence narrative, the prime motivation for the attack was a dispute with Goncalves over cattle that they believed had been appropriated/stolen by him during their absence from Atsabe while fugitive ex-militia/refugees in Indonesian West Timor (International Crisis Group, 2004: 14).

The rural dispute in the same area that sparked the third phase of violence in 2007 also has a much longer history. Molnar argues that tension between COLIMAU 2000's stronghold of Lemia Kraik and neighbouring *sukus* has been simmering since Portuguese times, due to historic antagonisms between these former regencies. According to Molnar, various attacks attributed to COLIMAU 2000 have been against villages aligned with the former regency of Tiar Lelo and its allies, which she claims usurped the kingdom of Lemia and its lands when the Portuguese apportioned parts of Atsabe, Ermera, into the new district of Ainaro. The Lemia and Boboe *sukus* in Atsabe have traditionally been the heartland of COLIMAU 2000. Molnar claims that those aligned with the Tiar Lelo ruling house have also received the highest proportion of jobs in the local administration and police force, as well as most of the productive farming land and the biggest coffee plantations. Molnar believes therefore, that the Atsabe conflict is to some degree a power struggle for authority and economic advantage (Molnar, 2004: 373).

Figure 19: Ermera *sukus* (Seeds of Life, 2014b)

It seems plausible that this conflict has been replicated in contemporary divisions between COLIMAU 2000 and PSHT in Dili. One resident of Bebonuk, a site of constant tensions and intense fighting in the 2007 period between Seven-Seven and the martial arts group PSHT, claims that conflict between the two groups started when his own father was killed in an ambush by PSHT in Lemia Kraik, in November 2006, then spread to Dili. According to the respondent, his family belonged to the vanquished family, and verified that the opposing family

still enjoyed superior social standing and privileges.[45] A number of sources have suggested that the conflict between these two groups that began in Estado *aldeia* was actually a land dispute between two extended families over a coffee plantation.[46] There is certainly substantial evidence to suggest that purely local communal disputes, sometimes over a century old, often assume the form of a political conflict when rival communities enlist rival political parties or martial arts groups to further their cause, or as security against attack.

5.3.3   Conflict in Dili

Conflicts in Dili throughout the 2006-07 period often had a highly localised character, and the explanations of individual actors for the causes of conflict sit at odds with macro-level master narratives of political violence such as poverty and youth disadvantage. In 2006, as they had done in 1999 (Field, 2004), Bidau residents once again combined to drive out Makassae migrants who had broken the unwritten community agreement not to build along the riverbank leading to the river mouth (apart from being labelled as outsiders who would not 'fit in').[47] Residual tensions in this area of the city have led to ongoing but small-scale conflict in the post Crisis period. As a consequence, this area has been subjected to intensive peacebuilding and community policing initiatives between 2004 to 2010 (Catholic Relief Services, 2010).

In another example of localised conflict in 2006, an interfamily dispute in *Aldeia* Malinamo, *Suku* Comoro, between a tenant and the landlord's wife over a broken communal water-tap led to a three day battle between rival MAGs PSHT, KORK, Seven-Seven and Five-Five. This conflict stemmed from the fact that the tenant was a member of Five-Five and the landlord's wife was a member of PSHT. Two people died and 20 houses were burned down.[48] In many cases of arson, it is not the occupants of a house who are the target, but the landlords, which adds further complexity to interpretations of violence and potential for conflict if the occupants are members of a larger group such as a MAG or another ISG.

Many other disputes in 2006-07 had a similarly purely local aspect to them, such as pre-marital pregnancies, fights over perceived slights at wedding parties, disputes over a girl or,[49] as described in Chapter Eight, the extortion attempt on a bus driver.[50] Given overlapping MAG, gang, family and political affiliations, these personal disputes erupted into much wider conflagrations. More recently, a 2010 Catholic Relief Services Baseline Survey (Catholic Relief

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[45] Interview with Bebonuk resident, Dili, December 3, 2008.
[46] Conversation with Red Cross project officer, Dili, December 9, 2006.
[47] Interview with Bidau resident, July 25, 2006.
[48] Interview with resident of Malinamo *Aldeia*, Comoro, March 16, 2010.
[49] Interviews with UN Political Affairs, July 24, 2006, Dili; BELUN Conflict resolution team member October 24, 2006, Dili; inter-NGO Conflict Monitoring team member, January 21, 2008, Dili
[50] Interview with resident of Moris Ba Dame village, Bairro Pite, March 16, 2010.

Services, 2010), conducted over a three-month period in 22 villages all over Dili, revealed a host of often mundane, everyday sources of conflict. While issues surrounding the return of IDPs were a considerable source of tension, re-igniting old tensions and also creating new ones through jealousy at the package of benefits for returning IDPs, a range of other issues animated inter communal friction and conflict. These issues included contested water supplies – disputes over water are common and as the map at Figure 20 shows, animate a number of other contemporary disputes in Dili and rural areas (Catholic Relief Services, 2010). [51] Other issues raised by community members in the survey included suspected witchcraft, land disputes, garbage disposal,[52] competition between old and new *suku* and *aldeia* leaders, and of course alcohol driven violence. These issues continue to cause friction and conflict on a daily level (Catholic Relief Services, 2010). East versus West tensions remained in some areas, but it was clear that the tensions were due to multiple and complex issues, pitting more established Western communities against Eastern newcomers, than any primordial ethnic animosity.

Figure 20: Areas experiencing tensions over water
(International Organisation for Migration, 2008)

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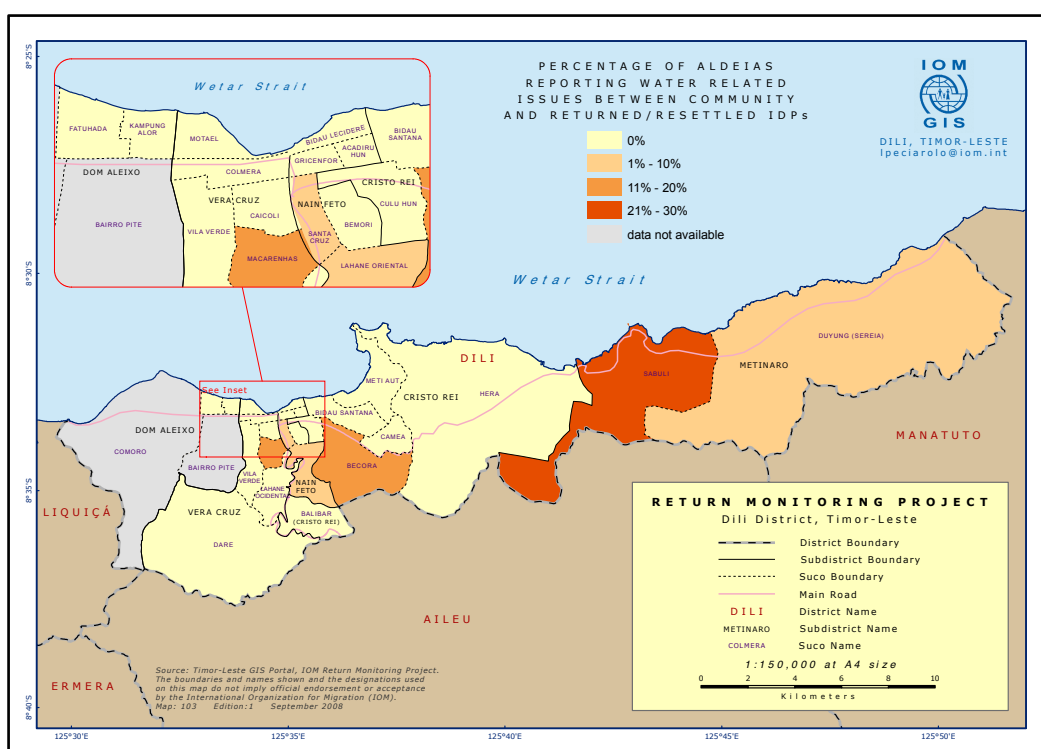
[51] Dili's water supply was built for a population less than a quarter of its current size, so many communities in Dili still do not have access to piped water and must rely on water from natural springs or the river, which is often little more than a few puddles in the dry season (see, for example, 'Residents in Camea lack water supply' January 24, 2013 *Timor-Leste Subscriber News*).
[52] People dump rubbish in each other's land or in the riverbed during the dry season, affecting communities downstream when the river flow increases in the rainy season. People also grow water spinach crops in rivers, despite government bans on the practice, causing floods in the rainy season, another source of contention.

5.3.4   The post Crisis period

Conflict did not end, however, with the change of government in 2007. After a comparative lull in the 18 months following the joint attacks on the President and Prime Minister in February 2008, there was a marked rise in ISG related violence nationally in both the capital Dili and in outlying rural districts. Armed or masked groups began appearing once more in remote areas, sometimes merely alarming the local population, but sometimes engaging in property destruction and even murder. In late 2009 and early 2010, masked groups committed two killings in the Western border districts of Cova Lima and Bobonaro adjacent to Indonesia. In response, the government launched the police operation 'Operation Ninja' on 22 January, 2010, the largest security operation in Timor-Leste since the attacks on the President and Prime Minister in February 2008.[53] On May, 2010, an unidentified armed group exchanged fire with a unit of the National Police, in the mountainous Western district of Ermera (*Timor-Leste Daily Media Monitoring*, May 19, 2010). There were also reports of persistent conflict in the Western highlands district of Ainaro, and at least four other districts. [54]

Based on press and NGO reports, low level conflict simmered in approximately 30 neighbourhoods of the capital Dili, albeit primarily concentrated in the West of the city (Catholic Relief Services, 2010), but group fighting sometimes involved up to 300 people, a level not seen since 2007. Conflict intensified in the latter half of 2011, resulting in about six deaths and over 100 houses being burned down. Five people died in a particularly deadly outburst of fighting in the three months before Christmas, 2011, leading up to the banning of MAG training by the government on December 22, 2011 (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, January 13, 2012). Apart from Dili, much of this violence was, however, concentrated in the areas described earlier in the Western highlands region bordering Ainaro and Ermera Districts and in the Eastern regions of Baucau and Viqueque. While not at anywhere near the same intensity as 2006-07, conflict has continued to trouble Dili and rural areas well into 2013. As one government politician asserted, this was village against village, not a martial arts conflict (Freitas, 2013), indicating that there are still multiple local level tensions that have not been resolved. Conflict levels are now more or less similar to those prevalent before 2006. As was proven in 2007, such local level conflicts or tensions always have the potential to expand into a bigger conflict.

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[53] Mobilising hundreds of police officers, of which at least 120 were heavily armed paramilitary police, Operation Ninja resulted in the arrest of 118 people, according to the National Police Commissioner, but only seven of whom were imprisoned and no firearms were recovered. With echoes of the 2003 Atsabe incident, the operation came under heavy criticism for human rights abuses by civil society groups (Assosiasaun HAK, 2010).
[54] Interview with Belun international adviser, Dili, March 5, 2010.

5.4   Conclusion

This chapter has grounded the events of the Crisis in a historical continuum, detailing the legacy of a range of historical events and issues and their legacy on contemporary conflict patterns. This chapter has also demonstrated that conflict continued for much longer and assumed a fundamentally different character than allowed for in standard accounts of the Crisis. If anything, the conflict that followed the national level events of early 2006 was even more intense and cannot be explained by standard meta narratives and national level, urban and elite centric analyses. It has been argued here that many of the tensions and conflicts currently attributed, for example, to flaws in the UN state-building project, ethnic tensions, and enmities between the current political elite, have a longstanding historical basis. In many cases, these conflicts and tensions have been driven not by political ideology, but often purely localised or personal factors. In line with Kalyvas's notion of cleavage and alliance (2003: 486), local level actors have used the cover of national level conflict to settle local level grievances, which have, however, often assumed the appearance of national level cleavages such as political party rivalries or regional enmities. Different groups have affiliated themselves with different national level actors, from pro-or anti colonial affiliations during the Portuguese or Indonesian eras, pro or anti-autonomy in 1999 to pro or anti-FRETILIN affiliations, which have sometimes mirrored MAG or other ISG affiliations. As has been shown here, as per Kalyvas's observation, people are in different political parties because they are enemies, rather than being enemies because they are in different political parties (Kalyvas, 2003: 479).

The next chapter describes some of the groups who have emerged as a result of this complex historical and cultural context; their objectives, motivations, cultural beliefs and how their different, often localised grievances have intersected with national level cleavages. As will be shown in this chapter, there is a strong symmetry between the geographic territories of many of the most prominent ISGs, contemporary conflict patterns and the regions experiencing longstanding historical enmities and conflict just detailed in the last two chapters.

CHAPTER SIX: National Level and Rural Groups[55]

Conflict between martial arts groups and confrontations with the State by a variety of non-state actors such as veteran's groups have characterised much of East Timor's post-independence era. A series of political and social upheavals has served to reopen old wounds (or created new ones), and to ensure that these groups have both re-emerged and remobilised. It is clear from a series of recent incidents, as described in the last section of the previous chapter, that these groups are very much alive and becoming a feature of East Timor's political landscape. These groups have, however, received very little academic attention. With the exception of three accounts (Babo-Soares, 2003; Kammen, 2009; Molnar, 2004), informal security groups have tended to be accorded a cameo role within broader studies on state-building or security sector reform, either as a security threat or as signifiers of internal discord (Simonsen, 2009: 591), variously described as a sort of East Timorese 'Freikorp'[56] (Smith, 2004: 286) and even as a neo-Nazi 'front organisation for Indonesian irredentists' (Kingsbury, 2003). MAGs have also been portrayed as a recent urban phenomenon, a product of alienation and despair and the youth bulge (Arnold, 2009b; Curtain, 2006; Shoesmith, 2007b). There is no doubt that a number of groups have grievances against the State and have been involved in violence, but to merely view them as security threats and as symptoms of wider discontent or despair ignores their full complexity and place within East Timor's history and culture. While branches of some of these groups can be found nationally, most have highly localised and distinct historical, social and cultural origins, identities and close connections to their own communities, so a more ethnographic approach and perspective is required to understand these groups. However, while some groups have arisen in response to particular, often localised historical or contemporary grievances, others have formed alliances with national level actors to opportunistically redress these grievances, but reframe them in the dominant political rhetoric of the moment.

Focussing on the nationally based and more enduring informal security groups (the more transitory groups, such as the Petitioners and veteran's groups, have been described separately in Chapter Four), this chapter utilises the notion of cleavage and alliance (Kalyvas, 2003: 486) to examine how interactions between supralocal and local actors intricately link conflict at a national and local level. It examines how agency is located in both centre and periphery, and expressed through variety of preferences and identities, as opposed to a common and

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[55] Substantial sections of this chapter have been published as a book chapter 'Informal security groups in East Timor' in 2013 (Scambary, 2013b).
[56] This is a considerable exaggeration. The Freikorp (free corps) were irregular army units composed of demobilised German soldiers after the First World War. They are credited with extreme right views and as being particularly brutal. Many of them subsequently joined the Nazi Storm Troopers and various Nazi paramilitaries (Citino, 2012).

overarching one (Kalyvas, 2003: 486). The historical basis for the existence of these groups will be described here, their geographic prevalence, the nature of their specific grievances, antipathies to the State, and the origins of these groups' beliefs in East Timorese culture. A description of each group is followed by a discussion of how they have intersected with national level political events, and their linkages to, or alliances with, other groups and political parties. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section one presents a typology to broadly summarise the diverse array of groups and their regional distribution. Section two profiles the major disaffected groups and social movements and section three discusses martial arts groups. Both the second and third sections conclude with an analysis of the different linkages between groups and national level actors, and how these linkages played out in the 2006 Crisis.

6.1   Typology

There are more than two-dozen different types of ISG found on a national basis in East Timor and it is not possible to describe all of them within the scope and space of this thesis. It is, nonetheless, worthwhile summarising and documenting the sheer variety and nature of some of these groups, although it is acknowledged here that any attempt at a typology will be inevitably problematic, for a number of reasons. Some are hybrids and there is frequently overlapping membership between these groups. It is also worth noting that in some cases, only sections of particular groups may be involved in illegal activities, not the entire group. Therefore, these groups are here described and categorised by blending observation with these groups' own self-definition, as described in interviews with group leaders and members, and contrasting these self definitions with accounts by independent observers such as academic and community sources. The groups are outlined here in broad categories, and the main groups are then described in more detail on subsequent pages. The figures presented here are only estimates, based on observations included in reports (see, for example, Ostergaard 2005), interviews with group leaders, newspaper reports and the little academic research that exists (see above). There are few reliable figures on the number of members of such groups, partly due to a lack of available research and also because these groups artificially inflate their numbers to present their groups as more significant than they are. The strength and numbers of these groups also fluctuate over time due to splintering and other factors.

Table 2: National level and rural groups typology

Type of group and examples	Geographic range	Date of origin	Composition and size	Political allegiances and other features
Disaffected Groups e.g. CPD-RDTL; COLIMAU 2000	National but generally strongest in rural home areas of leadership	Mostly resistance era in the 1980s or later	• Older, unemployed, or poor farmers from rural districts with a high percentage of ex-veterans • Numbers in the low thousands	• Anti-government, not politically aligned except opportunistically • Specific grievances include jobs for veterans and government assistance for agriculture • Persistently feature in violent demonstrations and other actions • Incorporate some elements of animism and millenarianism in beliefs and rituals
Martial arts groups (MAGs) e.g. PSHT, KORK, *Kera Sakti*	National but often specific to particular villages	Mostly founded under the Indonesian occupation in the 1980s but some claim to have been founded earlier	• All ages, both genders and all classes of society, including academics and government ministers; strong presence in the security forces • 15–20 groups and combined membership of up to 45,000	• Publicly proclaim neutrality but the major groups are usually identified with one of the main political parties, depending on the allegiance of MAG leadership • Mainly legitimate sporting organisations, but are also mobilized by politicians for demonstrations and violence, and by organised crime for security, extortion and other criminal acts • Incorporate some elements of animism and Javanese mysticism in beliefs and rituals
Paramilitaries e.g. Petitioners, Major Alfredo	Mostly rural districts in the Western highlands particularly border areas	Appeared in the 2006 Crisis period and disbanded with arrest and then pardoning of Petitioners in 2010 but with one armed group incident in 2010	• Ex-PNTL, former veterans and military deserters	• Anti-government but not politically-aligned except opportunistically; grievances centre on issues related to employment in the F-FDTL • Have access to manufactured arms; although temporarily disbanded, have the potential to reform quickly
Veterans groups e.g. ORSNACO, AC75	Mostly rural districts in the Western highlands particularly border areas, but some in Baucau/Viqueque hinterland	Appeared throughout the post-independence period but most prolific in the late 2005-07 period, with some new ones appearing in 2010-11 period	• Mostly older veterans but some younger ex-F-FDTL soldiers and police officers • Numbering in the hundreds, but individual groups in the dozens	• Grievances focussed on accessing pensions, recognition of service, jobs in security forces

6.2   Disaffected groups

While the three main groups examined in this section – COLIMAU 2000, the CPD-RDTL and Sagrada Familia, existed as religious and resistance structures predating independence, a series of events soon after independence saw them re-emerge as protest movements. As detailed in Chapter Five, the contentious nature of the FALINTIL demobilisation and F-FDTL selection process created widespread resentment among former FALINTIL fighters and their supporters. As a symptom of the disenchantment with this process, a number of groups emerged to mobilise disaffected veterans and their sympathisers in rural areas into substantial national movements. While the major disaffected groups share many of the main features and causes of veterans' groups and, indeed, members, the criteria used here to distinguish between these groups are hierarchical organisation, national or at least regional influence or branches, durability and coherent political platform or features of a social movement. These three groups have not only endured throughout the post-independence period but have also articulated demands and ideologies, and have become involved in the political process, either through alliances with political parties or through forming their own parties. The groups' origins and beliefs – both cultural and political are first examined here, followed by an analysis of how they have intersected with national level politics, and also of their alliances and political linkages.

6.2.1   Group origins

While some disaffected groups can be found throughout East Timor, most seem to have highly localised powerbases, located in the birthplaces of their leaders, indicating the descent group based nature of these ISGs. COLIMAU 2000's strongest local support, for example, is in the natal areas of one of its main leaders, Gabriel Fernandes, in the Kemak *suku* of Leimea Kraik in Atsabe Sub-District, in the District of Ermera. The bulk of Sagrada Familia's support lies in its leader Eli Sete's birthplace of Laga, in the Baucau District, but by most accounts, spanning from Laga in Baucau to the salt plains of Vemasse, and even further.[57] The CPD-RDTL's stronghold is in the Viqueque area bordering Baucau regions of Quelicai and Venilale (the natal region of two of its founders, Cristiano Da Costa, and Olo-Gari Asswain). While pockets of these groups can also be found throughout the country, their presence seems to be highly localised within particular *sukus* or *aldeias*.

While all three groups emerged as a consequence of dissatisfaction over the F-FDTL recruitment process, they have a much earlier and diverse provenance. COLIMAU 2000 began

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[57] Ramos Horta's 2007 Presidential campaign was kicked off in Laga, seen by many as a politically astute move to court the large extended family of Sagrada Familia leader Cornelio Da Gama and Sagrada Familia's influence in the region.

as a religious group called Sagrada do Coração de Jesus (Sacred Heart of Jesus). The group was formed in the mid 1980s by Martinho Vidal, in the Hatu Builico area of Ainaro District (Kammen, 2009: 400). In Kammen's account, COLIMAU 2000 was a name given to the clandestine resistance by the Bobonaro District Indonesian Military Command. The number 2000 is derived from a dream Martinho had that the Indonesian occupation would end in the year 2000 (2009: 400). According to Kammen, while the founding members became inactive, a new generation arose in 2000 (2009: 401) led by Osorio Mau Lequi, Gabriel Fernandez, and Bruno da Costa Magalhaes.[58] Nonetheless, Molnar argues that COLIMAU 2000 is not a homogenous, monolithic group, that in Atsabe at least, it is only loosely organised at the local level (Molnar, 2004: 376).

Figure 21: Osorio Mau Lequi addressing COLIMAU 2000 members at rally

The CPD-RDTL claims their group was founded back in 1974, at the birth of the ASDT. Others claim it was more recent, around the time of the May 5, 1999 Accord between Indonesia and Portugal to hold a referendum in East Timor (Babo-Soares, 2003: 175).

While these groups have their origin in the clandestine war of resistance, their anti-government activism can be traced back to a number of key incidents in the pre and post independence period. While COLIMAU 2000 has its roots in local cultural traditions prevalent throughout the Western mountain area, its emergence as a more significant social movement was sparked by victimisation by the F-FDTL in the Atsabe incident of January 4, 2003. On that night, armed groups simultaneously attacked two villages in the Atsabe area of Ermera District, leaving seven dead. The F-FDTL was mobilised in a policing role (and in contravention of their constitutional mandate) and arrested 59 people, including children, with very little investigation and without warrant, and then handed them over to the police. As it turned out, nearly all of those arrested were members of COLIMAU 2000. All but four of the 31 presented in court were

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[58] Magalhaes claims to have attained a Masters in Theology.

later freed for lack of evidence (Jolliffe, 2003). There is considerable evidence that 1999 era pro-integration militia were responsible for these killings. One news report even claimed it was a coordinated militia attack planned by rogue members of the Indonesian Army. This claim is supported by the group's use of automatic weapons, and the discovery immediately after of bullet casings from Indonesian-issue rifles (Jolliffe, 2003). Molnar claims that local residents knew this but blamed COLIMAU 2000 to rid them of COLIMAU 2000's coercive attempts to recruit people to their organisation (Molnar, 2004: 369). Nonetheless, this incident became etched in public memory as the work of COLIMAU 2000, and has made them an object of fear and mystery ever since, a mystique compounded by their reputation for syncretic ritualism. This incident also created a bitter grudge among COLIMAU 2000 members against both the F-FDTL and FRETILIN.

The anti-state militancy and rhetoric of the CPD-RDTL and Sagrada familia can be traced back to what is known as the *Hudi Laran* tragedy. In May 1977, FRETILIN changed from a nationalist movement into a left wing movement, the Marxist Leninist Front, resulting in acrimonious divisions within FRETILIN. When at the Hudi Laran meeting of the FRETILIN Central Committee in 1984 in Manatuto District, the Marxist Leninist Front then changed to the *Conselho Revolucionario da Resistência Nacional* (the national Revolutionary Resistance Council) a new division appeared. One faction in favour of the change, which included Xanana Gusmão, opposed another, led by Reinaldo Freitas Belo (aka Kilik Wae Gae), then FALINTIL Chief of Staff, and Commander Paulino Gama (aka Mauk Moruk). Both these men were dismissed from their positions at the conference (Babo-Soares, 2003: 183). Kilik Wae Gae and some of his friends then disappeared. Xanana's opponents have accused his faction of having killed them, although it is equally possible they were killed by Indonesian forces. Paulino Gama escaped to the Netherlands. Paulino Gama is the brother of Sagrada Familia's Cornelio Gama (more popularly known as L7, or Eli Sete). A junior FALINTIL Commander at the time, Eli Sete was briefly ousted from FALINTIL following his brother's fall from grace. Despite being later reintegrated into FALINTIL, Eli Sete consistently clashed with the FALINTIL High Command, finally breaking away in 1985 to form an independent armed movement in the hinterland of Baucau, where he then founded Sagrada Familia (Shoesmith, 2003: 248). Olo-Gari Asswain, CPD-RDTL leader and a member of the Marxist Leninist Front, was also later captured by the Indonesians. Mauk Moruk became the CPD-RDTL vice president. While the circumstances of the actual Hudi Laran event remain obscure, this incident has certainly bred a deep antipathy among the CPD-RDTL to the state and Xanana Gusmão in particular, as head of the armed forces (Babo-Soares, 2003: 186).

6.2.2   Religious beliefs

While all three groups exhibit some aspects of traditional belief systems or cargo cults, it is COLIMAU 2000 that bears the most resemblance to a millenarian movement. One of COLIMAU 2000's beliefs is that fallen independence fighters, in particular slain resistance leader, Nicolau Lobato, will be reborn to lead them. Similar to Traube's description of beliefs in her study area in Aileu (Traube, 2007), one of COLIMAU 2000's leaders, Dr. Bruno Magalhaes, claims that slain resistance leader, Nicolau Lobato, is still alive and hiding in a secret mountain city, bigger than Dili, with an international airport, waiting, along with representatives from MI5, the CIA and Mossad, until the time is right for his re-emergence.[59] Dr. Magalhaes also claims that COLIMAU 2000 ruled all Timor until it lost power to the Portuguese in 1512. He claims to still have some of the sacred objects from this time, and that they have been moved from one place to another for safety. Now he and COLIMAU 2000 want to bring them to Dili, build a 'sacred house of culture' to store them, and show people the greatness of the 'people of Maubere'. Dr. Magalhaes maintains that Mt. Tatamailau in Ainaro District is the centre of the world, and all the problems of the world can be solved there.[60] This last belief is a central tenet of Mambai cosmology; the Mambai believe Mt. Tatamailau is at the centre of the cosmos (Traube, 1986: 37), and returning Portuguese colonists are younger sons of the land (Traube, 1986: 53).

The belief in the dead coming back to life is a common feature of Melanesian millenarian or revitalisation movements, as is a belief in restoring lost traditions from an imagined golden era, and an attempt to effect the return of perceived former benefactors (Keesing, 1981: 407-408) – as in the UNTAET time referred to by Dr. Magalhaes.[61] Such a belief in the return of fallen heroes or secret armies bears strong resemblance to the reputed 'Makiran Underground Army' of Makira Ulawa Province in the Solomon Islands. According to this legend, Makirans believe a secret army, trained by elite Western forces, is hiding inside a subterranean cavern. Guarded by autochthonous spirits, this army is in communication with the deceased former Prime Minister, Solomon Mamaloni, waiting for the right time to emerge and lead the Province to independence from the Solomon Islands (Scott, 2011: 196).[62] Certainly, COLIMAU 2000 is not the first such

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[59] Interview with Dr. Magalhaes, conducted together with Douglas Kammen, Dili, November 2006.
[60] COLIMAU 2000 claim it built a community hall in 2000 with the brief-lived veterans' group National Resistance Organisation Social Cooperative (ORSNACO). This community hall could be the same building described by Traube, built in the Aileu village of Haih Rian, so that Turiscai born Fransisco Xavier Do Amaral, founder and leader of the ASDT, Nicolau Lobato and other deceased FALINTIL leaders would gather there to celebrate the nation (Traube, 2007: 18).
[61] Interview with Dr. Magalhaes, conducted together with Douglas Kammen, Dili, November 2006.
[62] In 2005, I heard a similar story from a local elder in Atsabe, who described a cave that he and the village people fled to when under attack from Indonesian troops. The cave was too small for the

movement in East Timor. As Molnar points out, there have been three other significant movements in East Timor since the end of the 19th Century that have taken the form of religious sects, and these too have primarily been political movements against dominant authority (Molnar, 2004: 371). There are, even now, other similar, but smaller syncretic groups in the same region, such as *Bua Malus* (the betel nut and pepper carried in a pouch by members), which may also be a COLIMAU 2000 offshoot. In 2010, another group appeared in the Aileu area and conducted parades through the main town and nearby villages with an 11 year old boy they proclaimed was the son of Christ.[63]

COLIMAU 2000 also has a number of offshoots. In 2003, Mau Lequi formed the Colimau Communication Forum, and then registered a party, the Democratic Party of the Republic of Timor (PDRT), in September 2004 (Democratic Party of the Republic of Timor, 2004). In 2006, COLIMAU 2000 also launched the Movement for National Unity (MUN)[64], which Mau Lequi describes as a sort of promotional vehicle for COLIMAU 2000's principles of "Justice, unity, democracy, and peaceful change through elections."[65] Banners at the MUN's rally in Dili on July 27, 2006, illustrated a variety of appeals to national unity, recognition for participation in the resistance and for the renewal of culture at the centre of the nation's consciousness. Such demands and appeals are strongly reminiscent of anti-colonial cultural revivalist movements such as Maasina Rule in Malaita, the Solomon Islands, a movement which appealed to *kastom* (a Melanesian *Pijin* word denoting local custom, beliefs and traditions) as a unifying symbol to resist exclusion and dominance by the colonial authorities, as described by Akin (2012). The appeal for recognition for their service towards independence confirms Molnar's observation that this movement is an attempt at a reformulation of identity, motivated by a loss of status following the end of the war and a consequent struggle for recognition from the new State (Molnar, 2004: 378).

Indonesian troops to enter, but it widened out, with the incantation of the right sacred words, to accommodate over 100 people.
[63] Interview with UN Political Affairs, Dili, March 5, 2010.
[64] This group is unrelated to the Movement for Justice and National Unity (MUNJ).
[65] Interview with COLIMAU 2000 leader, Osorio Mau Lequi, Dili, December 1, 2006.

Figure 22: MUN banner demanding recognition for participation in independence

While Sagrada Familia have not demonstrated the millenarian attributes of COLIMAU 2000 or the CPD-RDTL, they do incorporate aspects of local culture through the amulets and other cultural artefacts carried by their members. Eli Sete claims to have been given a *fita mean* (red ribbon) by the Holy Family (see Figure 23), to protect him from danger (Babo-Soares, 2003: 297). All Sagrada Familia members keep one of these, although some are also said to wear amulets containing a potion that they believe gives them magic powers. Members believe these ribbons saved them from capture or harm from Indonesian troops, and even the ability to become invisible or change shape, but some claim that these artefacts no longer possess power now that the resistance is over.[66]

Figure 23: Sagrada Familia member wearing *fita mean*

Despite their reputation for violence and troublemaking, the CPD-RDTL, like COLIMAU 2000, also resembles a millenarian social movement in their harking back to a former golden era, or a fundamentalist movement in their dogmatism. Their main platform is that the original declaration of independence of November 28, 1975, and the original constitution be reinstated. They also claim that the CPD-RDTL is the only true umbrella body for all the different parties

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[66] Interview with Sagrada Familia member, September 1, 2011.

and resistance groupings, not FRETILIN or the CNRT. They consistently use the national flag and other FRETILIN emblems as their own, infuriating FRETILIN leaders and supporters, thereby provoking harassment and intimidation from FRETILIN supporters at a local and national level (Babo-Soares, 2003: 167).

In early 2013, CPD-RDTL members occupied a tract of state owned land in Fatuberlihu Sub-District of Manufahi District, where they established a collective farming cooperative, with the intention of demonstrating to the nation how to enhance agricultural output. It was a short-lived experiment, however, with the security forces moving in to force the members to eventually return to their districts (East Timor Law and Justice Bulletin, 2013). Nonetheless, this endeavour illustrates the essentially social, even utopian nature of this movement, bearing comparison with similar movements in the region, for instance, the post-World War Two Tommy Kabu movement of the Purari Delta in PNG. While the Tommy Kabu movement initially formed in opposition to Australian rule, it modified its objectives and set up a (ultimately unsuccessful) cooperative trade company. Very much like the CPD-RDTL, it was branded a militant or bandit group by colonial authorities (Maher, 1984: 218). The CPD-RDTL has consistently been accused of violence, but this reputation is exaggerated. Many of the attacks they have been accused of have later been found to be the work of other groups like MAGs. There was also a joint police and military operation against the CPD-RDTL in the Western border region in 2010, 'Operation Ninja' as described in the last chapter, where they have been accused of being Ninjas, and responsible for two murders, but this was later found to be unproven. In fact, the sacking of two local police for involvement in violence following this operation indicated that the perpetrators were possibly the police themselves (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, Dili, February 5, 2010).

As the preceding chapter suggests, these groups' reputation for violence and designation as security threats warrants further scrutiny. While they have engaged in violence and anti-state rhetoric at different times, these groups are clearly a more complex phenomenon, both an expression of a wider movement calling for social change and inclusion, and reaffirmation of East Timorese cultural traditions.

6.2.3 Linkages and alliances

The complexity of these groups is also evident in the fluid way that they have adapted and responded to a changing political and social landscape. Many ISGs have a number of different preferences and identities such as descent group, regional identity, religious or political identity or in some cases, criminal identity, demonstrating Kalyvas's concept of alliance (2003: 486). ISGs have shown agency in the way that they have forged different types of affiliations in often

a quite opportunistic manner that does not conform to meta narratives about pro or anti independence sympathies, occupation era enmities within the resistance, or elite rivalry. Bonds or antipathies formed during the war of occupation have certainly been a salient factor in the formation and perpetuation of alliances between these groups. These bonds and antipathies are not immutable, however, and there are a variety of different forms of bonds. The social network analysis at Figure 24 describes the network of groups allied against the governing FRETILIN Party in 2006. The groups are not coded by type of relationship, because in many cases links correspond to a variety of types of relationships including kinship, clandestine resistance alliances or simply friendship. It is instructive to unpack some of these links and examine the complexity and fluidity of contemporary political alliances in East Timor.

Figure 24: 2006 group political alliances
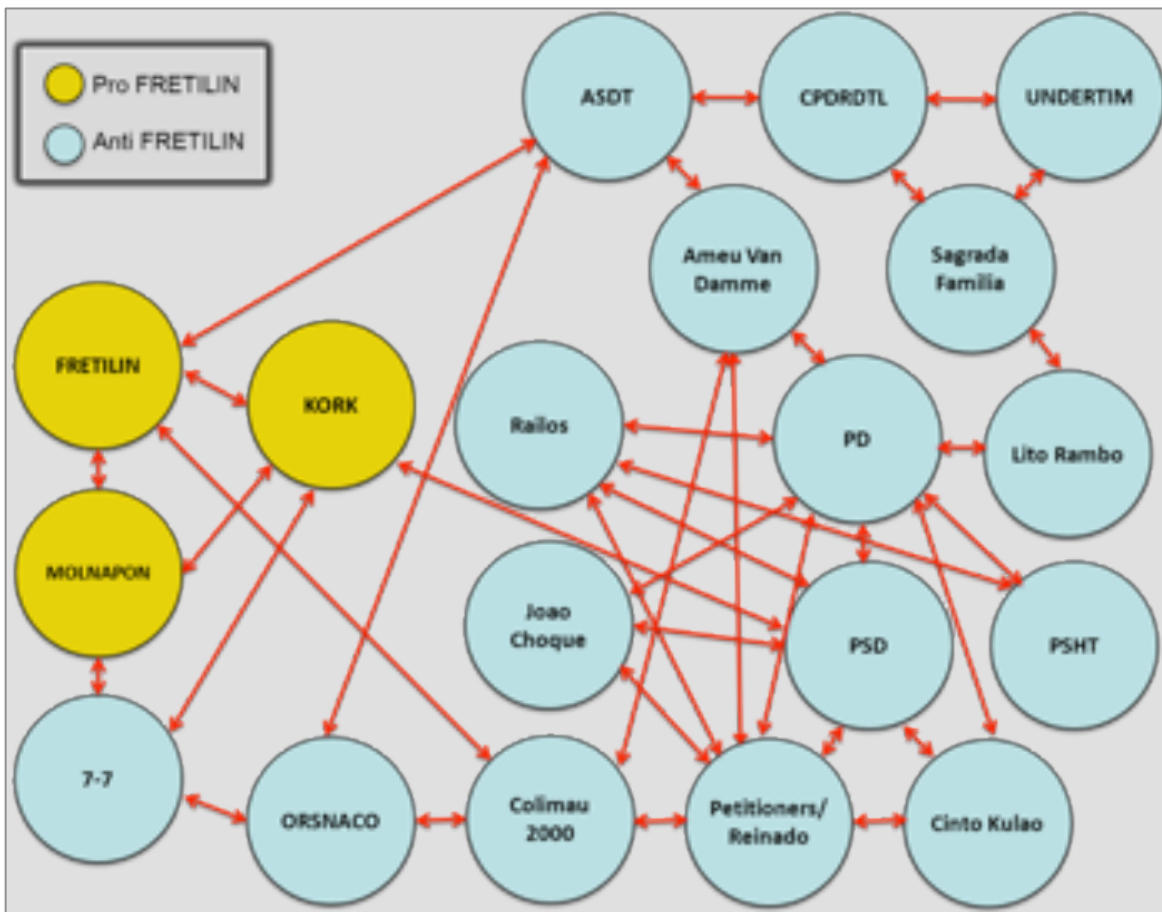
The cluster of groups around Sagrada Familia is particularly illustrative of the different alliances either used instrumentally or forced on groups by circumstance at different times. As earlier described, Sagrada Familia is closely linked to the CPD-RDTL through Mauk Moruk, the brother of Sagrada Familia leader Cornelio Gama. Both Sagrada Familia and the CPD-RDTL (and also COLIMAU 2000) are linked to the ASDT and its (recently deceased) leader

Xavier do Amaral, with local support in Amaral's natal area around Turiscai, Manufahi District and surrounding areas. This affiliation seems to be based on Xavier do Amaral's prestige as first President of the Republic.[67] During the 2001 Constituent Assembly elections, a CPD-RDTL leader, Feliciano Alves, was elected as an ASDT member (Babo-Soares, 2003: 193).

Sagrada Familia originally enjoyed a close alliance with the FRETILIN Minister of the Interior, Rogerio Lobato, who was also president of one of the main veterans' associations, the Association of Ex-Combatants 1975 (AC75), and a spokesperson for disaffected veterans (Rees, 2004: 47). Lobato moved to appoint Elle Sete as his department's security adviser in July 2002, in an attempt perhaps to counterbalance Xanana Gusmão's FALINTIL loyalists, and at the same time to strengthen his own faction within FRETILIN against Alkatiri (Shoesmith, 2003: 249). Recognising the political influence wielded by Sagrada Familia (at least in its power base in Baucau), FRETILIN courted its members in the run up to the October 2001 general election. A number of younger Sagrada Familia activists were elected to the FRETILIN Central Committee in August 2001 – one of whom was appointed National Security Adviser to the Chief Minister (Rees, 2004: 42). Given FRETILIN's roots in the resistance to Indonesian rule, FRETILIN would seem to be the more natural allies of Sagrada Familia. However, while their initial antipathy to the State seemed to be directed at Gusmão and the F-FDTL High Command, a falling out with Rogerio Lobato sometime in 2003 over the illegal logging trade is possibly a major source of the switch in their antipathy to FRETILIN instead.

Despite their antipathy to the formerly pro-autonomy parties, in 2006, Sagrada Familia and the CPD-RDTL (as well as COLIMAU 2000) also joined the opposition party led political front group, the FNJP/MUNJ, led by a well known pro-autonomy figure, Vital Dos Santos. In June 2005, the leader of Sagrada Familia, Elle Sete, set up a political party, the National Democratic Unity of the Timorese Resistance (UNDERTIM), with former guerrilla leaders Samba Sembilan, Renan Selak, and Cristiano Da Costa from the CPD-RDTL.[68] Despite its historical antipathy to Gusmão, however, UNDERTIM joined the Gusmão led Parliamentary Majority Alliance (AMP) government coalition after the 2007 elections (subsequently losing its seats in the 2012 Parliamentary elections). While the details of the deal that secured this partnership have not been made public, the Government's largesse towards the veterans over the last five years provides some inkling of the power of this lobby group of ex-veterans. Worth over

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[67] ASDT is paradoxical in itself for having a former pro-autonomist, Gil Alves, as a Minister in the Parliamentary Majority Alliance (AMP) government, although in 2008 it later threatened to leave the alliance and join FRETILIN if Xanana Gusmão did not sack Alves for corruption, but later withdrew this threat (UNMIT Daily Media Review, May 9, 2008).
[68] Interview with Andre da Costa Belo, Dili, November 30, 2006.

USD40 million, veteran's payments consume 60 per cent of the total social assistance budget, for only one per cent of the population (World Bank, 2013).

Sagrada Familia is also a predominantly Eastern group, and it is certainly identified as such in the wider population. In 2006, despite having been persistently involved in anti-FRETILIN demonstrations, Sagrada Familia and the CPD-RDTL (predominantly Makassae groups) became the target of indiscriminate opposition driven violence against Easterners. Sagrada Familia found themselves in an alliance based on a loose Eastern regional affiliation with underworld figure Lito Rambo (see Chapter Seven for more detail), who is also related to Elle Sete, but also pro-FRETILIN groups such as KORK and Oan Kiak's group of supporters – predominantly from Lautem District. Despite his affiliations to the PD, Lito Rambo is close to Oan Kiak, a FRETILIN militant, later organising a protest against Oan Kiak's 2010 conviction over charges relating to the 2006 violence.[69]

Figure 25: Lito Rambo (standing third from left) and Sagrada Familia members

Sagrada Familia, the CPD-RDTL and COLIMAU 2000 are also alleged to be involved in cross border smuggling and illegal logging rackets, which they no doubt were also involved in during the resistance era. One report on security sector reform, published soon after independence, for example, refers to the legacy of the resistance era in the organised network of unofficial civilian operatives with links to FALINTIL, involved in smuggling, theft and extortion (Centre for Defence Studies, 2000: 3). Elle Sete was arrested in 2010, after being caught in possession of a truckload of suspected smuggled tyres (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, Dili July 13, 2010). This enterprise has also entailed some unusual bedfellows. As was no doubt the case during the resistance era, rogue elements of the Indonesian military and former militia, many of whom were originally drawn from the criminal underworld, also collaborated in this trade with these

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[69] Interview with UN Political Affairs, Dili, 5 March, 2010.

former resistance groups, in addition to members of the PNTL and F-FDTL, despite having fought each other for 24 years (International Crisis Group, 2004; 2006a).

COLIMAU 2000 also demonstrated agency in its choice of alliances. While COLIMAU 2000's involvement in the 2006 Crisis was part of the FNJP/MUNJ opposition political alliance, COLIMAU 2000 split with this group after the Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri, stepped down, with the PD led faction continuing to push for the downfall of the government and the other faction wanting to await the outcome of elections. As a sign of COLIMAU 2000's disaffection with that movement and the involvement of opposition parties, and perhaps of his own mercurial nature, Mau Lequi then endorsed FRETILIN's claim to government in the August 2007 elections, although there are unconfirmed reports that he has switched his allegiance back to Xanana Gusmão's CNRT (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, Dili, July 6, 2010).

Such fluid and opportunistic alliances, as described here, illustrates Bourdieu's concept of 'practical kinship alliances' – a system of genealogical relationships; and 'practical relationships' – non-genealogical relationships that can be mobilised as required (Bourdieu, 1977: 39) in the way that they have adapted and formed new alliances based on a variety of identities. They also further support Kalyvas's theory of alliance (2003: 486) in the way that they have opportunistically utilised alliances with national level actors, such as political parties, to redress local level grievances or issues. Alliances have been formed that may appear to be counter-intuitive, such as alliances formed with former adversaries during the Indonesian occupation or individuals and groups from rival political parties. These dynamics unsettle master narratives of elite political rivalries or pro-or anti-independence sympathies. As the following section shows, similar to disaffected groups, more ethnographic understanding of MAGs is also required than merely as security threats, and the logic of their alliances do not always conform to master narratives of political manipulation of vulnerable youth or elite rivalries.

6.3   Martial arts groups

As a result of the events of the Crisis, a great deal of attention has been devoted to MAGs in terms of mediation programs. There have also been a number of Government attempts to ban them, or eradicate their members from the security forces. Between 2005 and 2011 there have been three national level MAG mediation programs, with one, coordinated by Action Asia, lasting two years (Action Asia/ HAK Association, 2010), and the formation of two successive national MAG representative groups – the Communication Forum for Timor Leste's Martial Arts Groups (FOKAMTIL) (Asia Foundation, 2007) and the Martial Arts Federation of East Timor (FESTIL) (Ita Ba Paz, 2010). These responses have been largely based on the premise

that these are monolithic groups, and that localised conflicts are caused by rivalries between these groups at a national level. A common approach has been, for instance, to attempt to reconcile national leaders through training and mediation processes. MAGs have also tended to be conflated with the overall amorphous category of 'agitated' urban youth frustrated by limited opportunities or elite manipulation (Arnold, 2009b: 389). As this section will show, however, MAGs are closely linked with their communities and are as much of a rural phenomenon as an urban one, with particular prevalence in areas of endemic social tensions, so explanations must be sought beyond meta narratives of social disadvantage and social breakdown. Rather than being a contemporary phenomenon, in most cases these groups can date their genesis back over two decades or more, with rituals and beliefs firmly rooted in East Timorese cultural traditions. The much reported connections between these groups and political parties are also far more informal, organic and opaque, based on connections through descent group or former clandestine networks. These networks, in turn, link national level actors with local level actors, and also localised rural conflicts or tensions with national level and urban conflicts, which can result in the scale shift described by Van Klinken (Van Klinken, 2007) or O'Lear and Diehl (2011: 34).

6.3.1   Background

MAGs in contemporary East Timor have a mixed, but certainly not recent provenance. Martial arts practices may have been originally inherited from China, which has its own strong martial arts group culture (Overmyer, 1981) via contact with Chinese traders, or by Malay traders with their own martial arts traditions. While MAG members sometimes refer to an indigenous form of martial arts known as *joga libre* (free play), other more recent groups were formed by members of UNTAET Korean and Japanese forces stationed in Dili. There is, however, little evidence to suggest that there were any substantial organised groups or competitions until the Indonesian occupation, during which time, as described in Chapter Four, the establishment of MAGs became a feature of the Indonesian military's counter insurgency strategy.

Figure 26: MAG training in Dili

There are some 15-20 martial arts groups and the number of registered members is probably around 20,000, with as many as 45,000 unregistered members. According to Ostergaard (2005), up to 70 per cent of Timorese young men, mostly between the ages 15-29 (the leadership usually more senior), are active in martial arts groups. It is chiefly a male domain – most of these organisations have only about 5 per cent female members at most. Although most of the groups were established during the Indonesian period as part of larger Indonesian organisations, they have since become autonomous, local organisations. Several organisations have members in all 13 districts, with branches down to the village and hamlet level (Ostergaard, 2005: 41). Most are non-violent, and a number of them belong to internationally recognised organisations that compete in international competitions.

As described by Shoesmith (2007b: 30), for young men, especially migrants new to Dili, martial arts groups may provide a welcome source of structure, protection, recreation and companionship in the absence of family support and state resources. This phenomenon can be witnessed in other cities in the region and in developing countries around the world, as part of the urbanisation process, as highlighted in Strathern's study of Highlands migrants in Port Moresby, who tried to replicate kinship based support structures in the city (Strathern, 1975). Many also say that being a member of a group is part of East Timorese male identity, which may partly explain these groups' broader and continuing popularity.[70] The standard portrayal of MAG members as vulnerable young unemployed males who join MAGS upon arrival in the city is only part of the picture, however. As will be further detailed in Chapter Eight, many youth already belong to a MAG in their village of origin before they arrive in the city, so the lack of social structures and family guidance can be overstated.

There is also considerable demographic variation in MAGs as membership transcends age, gender and class boundaries. High-ranking leaders are often well educated and employed in

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[70] Interview with senior PSHT member, Dili, October 23, 2006.

senior positions in government – including at least one Minister – and even in international agencies such as the UN. Their members can also be found throughout civil society organisations including human rights and conflict resolution NGOs. Many of their members can also be found in security company rosters, the police force and army. As a consequence, police are frequently accused of siding with one group against another during MAG clashes. In a MAG clash just before Christmas, 2011, for example, which resulted in two fatalities, as many as 20 PNTL members were accused of being involved (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News* December 22, 2012). More recently, as part of an initiative to purge the PNTL of active MAG members, 801 PNTL members handed over their MAG uniforms (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News* January 16, 2014).

6.3.2   Main groups

There are two main nationally based groups, which share an historical enmity. One of these is KORK, founded in Ainaro District in 1983. Now led by 'Naimori', KORK was led for three years by Nuno Soares, a former clandestine resistance leader. KORK is believed to have up to 10,000 members, although this number is no doubt inflated.[71] This group rose to prominence in the 2006 violence, but has receded from sight in recent years.

Figure 27: KORK members, Lospalos

Persaudaraan Setia Hati Terate (PSHT-the Faithful Fraternity of the Heart), also known as *Nehek Metan* (black ants), is possibly the largest and certainly the most controversial of all MAGs, given its prominence in ongoing violence. PSHT originated in Madiun, Indonesia, as an offshoot of an earlier group, *Persaudaraan Setia Hati,* which was founded in 1917 before Indonesian independence from the Dutch. PSHT became the dominant branch, with close links

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[71] Interview with former KORK leader, Nuno Soares, Dili, December 7, 2006.

to the military.[72] These groups have continued to fight each other in Madiun from this time on (Maksum, Tjahyono and Purbodjati, 2007). One of the most common claims about PSHT is that it was set up in East Timor by KOPASSUS (Indonesian Special Forces) and was a pro-autonomy agent-provocateur group, although their former leader Jaime Lopes counters that they were established by Timorese students returning from study in Indonesia. PSHT members are also keen to stress that PSHT was equally involved in the resistance.

PSHT has a violent reputation, accused of fomenting problems even in Indonesian times. Of 42 cases identified as martial arts group conflicts between 2002 and 2004, more than half involved PSHT. Eyewitnesses described an attack by PSHT members in 2006 on Bebonuk in *Suku* Comoro, and other attacks in Perumnas and Hudi Laran in *Suku* Bairro Pite, resulting in widespread destruction of Easterners' homes.[73] On January 30, 2007, in a combined raid by UN and Australian forces, the PSHT leader Lopes and dozens of his members were arrested. Over 400 mostly homemade weapons were seized in the raid including firearms, ammunition and Molotov cocktails (UNPOL Broadcast February 1, 2007) – some of which can be seen at Figure 28.

Figure 28: Selection of weapons captured in raid on PSHT headquarters
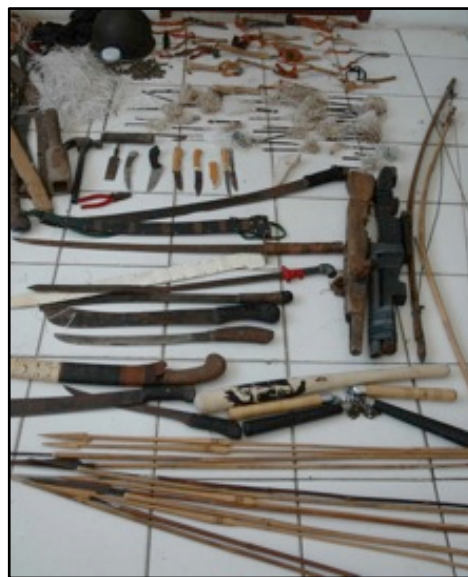
6.3.3   Ritual practices

The indiscriminate application of the title 'martial arts' group to all groups, even to those who do not engage in any kind of training or *silat* such as Seven-Seven, was once a source of considerable irritation to those MAGs who take their art very seriously and conduct regular

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[72] Interview with former PSHT member, Dili, February 17, 2012.
[73] Interviews with witnesses in Comoro area, July 21 and July 23, 2006.

training. Hence, as part of a truce agreement concluded between rival groups brokered by the Prime Minister at the time, Jose Ramos Horta, the term 'ritual arts group' (RAG) was coined to distinguish MAGs from clandestine groups such as COLIMAU 2000, Seven-Seven, Five-Five and other similar groups. This distinction has been over utilised as many groups who conduct training also conduct rituals. KORK, for example, has been designated as a RAG. The KORK leader, Naimori, believes he has invented a secret language and script, passed down to him through a dream, perhaps in keeping with millenarian beliefs prolific within his birthplace in the remote Western mountainous region of Ainaro (Traube, 1986).[74] Nonetheless, KORK also conduct training (as seen at Figure 27) and participate in organised competitions. Also, many self-designated MAGs of Indonesian origin are influenced by the Javanese mysticism practised by their Indonesian founding groups (Farrer, 2009) and thus incorporate ritual as a major component of their *silat* or practice. Some believe these rituals give them magic powers such as invincibility, invisibility and healing powers. There is also a certain element of syncretism in MAG rites. Even PSHT, whose members often scorn other self-proclaimed 'indigenous' MAGs such as KORK as backward bush dwellers, use ritual as part of their initiation as a *warga*.[75] PSHT members believed that the wall at their headquarters in Ailok Laran (seen at Figure 29),[76] that bears a mural of a faceless leader, is imbued with sacred significance. The symbol of a sacred heart also has resonance in local syncretic belief systems such as the founding movement of COLIMAU 2000. Therefore, they believe their initiation rite is *lulik* (sacred or taboo under traditional animist belief system).

Figure 29: PSHT members at former PSHT headquarters, Ailok Laran, Dili

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[74] Interview with UN Political Affairs, Dili, January 21, 2008.

[75] One former PSHT member reported that as part of this ritual, initiates must prepare a white rooster, grooming it and feeding it a special diet so that it is 'clean' when it is ready for sacrifice. When they complete their initiation, they become a 'new person' and the rooster represents this future person, and so must be pure. If it is not, this will affect the initiates' personality, with potentially fatal consequences (interview with former PSHT member, Dili, February 17, 2012).

[76] Their headquarters was burned down in fighting in January 2007.

The implications of such beliefs are considerable. PSHT, for example, exerts a powerful, almost sect-like hold over its members.[77] Loyalty to *wargas* is absolute, and to disobey them is to risk spiritual sanction. As one member put it, "God gets you when you die, *lulik* kills you now".[78] The 'hurt one hurt all' motto of this group has also drawn other members into purely personal or family disputes, resulting in wider gang conflicts. Such intense group loyalty also leaves it open to manipulation by politically connected *wargas*, who have used the group as agent provocateurs and as a rent a mob.

6.3.4 Linkages and alliances

Kalyvas's concept of cleavage and alliance (Kalyvas, 2003: 486) can also be applied to the way that MAG members, and their conflicts, are intricately linked to national level actors and groups such as political parties, although this relationship is more informal and organic than generally understood. An examination of this relationship can also demonstrate how highly localised, rural disputes can often become linked to urban disputes, sometimes taking on the appearance of national level cleavages, as occurred in 2006-07.

Another cluster of groups featured in the diagram of forces opposed to the FRETILIN government links the PD, PSHT and the National East Timorese Students Resistance (RENETIL). While the former clandestine student movement, RENETIL, is not a group mentioned in the diagram at Figure 24, RENETIL members certainly operated as a network in organising the 2006 protests and violence and it is an integral element to the PD/PSHT nexus. Jaime Lopes, the leader of PSHT during 2006, is the blood cousin of the PD leader, Fernando Lasama de Araujo (usually referred to as Lasama). Both come from the same *uma lulik* in Manutasi, Ainaro. One of Lasama's first acts when he became President of Parliament in 2007 was to free Lopes and the other PSHT members who had been jailed in 2007.[79] A number of PD leaders, like Lasama (its former Secretary-General), were also members of RENETIL while studying in Java. Within this elite there seems to be a strong symmetry between PD, RENETIL and PSHT. Many joined PSHT when students in 2006, so while PSHT's detractors identify them with pro-Indonesian tendencies, for these members who joined PSHT as students in Indonesia, PSHT is inextricably bound with memories of the student resistance.[80] A number of this elite are members of all three groups, which is a quite common phenomenon; two senior PSHT leaders, for example, are members of all three organisations. The PD/RENETIL activist linkage is particularly prevalent among the middle class, Indonesian educated and Indonesian

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[77] In marked contrast to other groups, interviews with PSHT members invariably drew rehearsed, 'party line' self-exculpatory types of responses.
[78] Interview with Norwegian Refugee Commission MAG outreach worker, Dili, January 21, 2008.
[79] Confidential interview with UN official, Washington, July 18, 2008.
[80] Interview with senior PSHT, PD and RENETIL leader, Dili, October 23, 2006.

speaking Dili elite who formed the backbone of the 2006 protests. Also, while RENETIL members are spread across Eastern and Western members, it is perceived as a predominantly Western group and, as claimed by Aditjondro (1994: 9), was mainly drawn from children of families with APODETI or UDT backgrounds. Therefore, it could be said that RENETIL members used an anti-Indonesian occupation resistance network to enact a pre-Indonesian occupation enmity.

Despite claims by MAG leaders (particularly PSHT) that they have total control over their members, MAG groups are not monolithic, homogenous groups, and loyalties are to their localised *wargas* first, who are sometimes senior relatives and traditional leaders. The identification of a MAG with a political party is usually through the political preference of an individual leader and the section of the organisation (often family and regionally based) loyal to them. One example of this relationship is that between FRETILIN and MAG KORK. KORK was originally officially affiliated to FRETILIN, and the 2006 UN map in Chapter Five (see Figure 8) shows enclaves of KORK in Dili to be largely consistent with Eastern and FRETILIN enclaves. But this is not the entire picture. KORK originates from the birthplace of its original founder, Naimori, in the Western highland District of Ainaro. The decision to affiliate KORK with FRETILIN was entirely reflective of the temporary leader Nuno Soares's personal and family preferences. Nuno Soares, appointed as KORK leader after the imprisonment of Naimori in 2005 for arson, was responsible for affiliating KORK with FRETILIN. Although this alliance is much cited as being proof of political party gang alliances, this decision was highly unpopular with large sections of its membership.[81] In the heartland of KORK in Ainaro, for example, FRETILIN only received about 10 per cent of votes cast in the 2007 Parliamentary elections (EU Election Observation Mission, 2007: 54). After Naimori was released, he promptly expelled Soares from KORK and disaffiliated KORK from FRETILIN (KORK, 2008).

But while MAGs are mostly national in scope, their conflicts are highly localised, usually occurring in the same places between the same villages, either in Dili or in rural areas. Both the previous PSHT leader, Jaime Lopes, and the previous KORK leader, Nuno Soares, came from the Western region, from opposing *aldeias* no more than a couple of kilometres from each other in rural Ainaro District with a long history of conflict. KORK's heartland is in the natal area of its leadership in Suro, Ainaro District, which, as described in Chapter Four, is an area of historical contention with another *suku*, Manu Tasi, the natal area of former PSHT leader, Jaime Lopes and the PD leader Fernando 'Lasama' Araujo, and also Kasa. The KORK leader Naimori was imprisoned for three years for his part in burning down 50 houses in Kasa, Ainaro, in

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[81] Interview with Norwegian Refugee Commission MAG outreach worker, Dili, January 21, 2008.

August 2005. According to Soares, this conflict was purely a family dispute.[82] The affiliation of these *aldeias*, these two MAGs and their national leaders with national political parties drew in other groups and MAGs from other districts and escalated this local dispute to a national level. In 2006, the conflict between these two groups took on the appearance of Eastern FRETILIN/KORK alliance against a Western opposition party/PSHT and affiliated MAG and clandestine group alliance, but as has been described here, the reality was much more complex than that.

6.4   Conclusion

This chapter has described the complexity and adaptability of MAGs and disaffected groups as they have emerged at different points in time in response to a range of social and political events and upheavals. In contrast to portrayals of these groups as criminal elements and anti-democratic (Smith, 2004: 286-7), the product of poverty, social exclusion and a weak state (Arnold, 2009a; Sahin, 2007; Shoesmith, 2007b; Simonsen, 2009) it is clear that these groups are a more complex and longstanding phenomenon, and just as much of a rural phenomenon, if not more, than an urban phenomenon. Rather than being mute spectators of economic, political and social forces beyond their control, these groups have demonstrated individual agency. In the case of the disaffected groups, like Allen's Solomon Islands combatants (2013: 9), group members can articulate clear objectives and a range of motivations grounded in their individual perceptions of their own contributions to the nation's independence and their relationship to the state, development and the nation-building process. These groups clearly serve as community protest vehicles over specific sets of grievances and as rural or regional lobby groups. While they have a national level presence, they have highly localised origins, indicating that these groups have a predominantly descent group based nature. Their utilisation of, or appeal to, traditional myths, rituals and belief systems further grounds them firmly within East Timorese society and culture but also to wider regions and cultures such as in PNG and the Solomon Islands, and a broader pattern of South East Asian animism (McCoy, 1982: 355).

Illustrating Kalyvas notion of cleavage and alliance (Kalyvas, 2003: 486), these groups have instrumentally used alliances with each other and with national level actors such as political parties, or even formed their own parties, to advance their own or their community's interests and gain leverage over rivals in localised disputes. The way that some groups, particularly former resistance groups, have been prepared to opportunistically ally themselves with former adversaries indicates a pragmatism and agency that does not conform to master narratives of resistance era enmities or political manipulation (Kingsbury, 2008; Shoesmith, 2003; 2007b).

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[82] Interview with former KORK leader, Nuno Soares, Dili, December 7, 2006.

The combination of their localised origins, personal or kinship based linkages to national level political players, and national level scope of their membership, means that there is always the potential that localised disputes or grievances interact with national level cleavages, 'jumping scale' (O'Lear and Diehl, 2007), as occurred in the 2006-07 period.

The next chapter will deal with predominantly urban, Dili based groups. As this chapter will demonstrate, similar to these national based groups, there is a complex history to the origins of contemporary urban-based groups that cannot be encompassed within macro-level, conventional narratives of poverty, political manipulation and social exclusion. Like national level groups, these groups demonstrate agency in the way they negotiate and respond to a changing and complex urban environment. While they are not inherently violent, a range of complex social dynamics such as multiple identities and cross group memberships can present considerable challenges for conflict resolution, and create the potential for conflict to escalate well beyond purely localised origins.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Urban, Dili Based Groups

The ubiquitous presence of a myriad of youth groups, gangs and hybrids of both has long been proclaimed in the streets of Dili through graffiti, murals, or in groups of young males gathered at street corners engaged in often boisterous late night revelling. Most of these groups also considerably predate the Crisis period by a decade or more and yet somehow they remained largely unnoticed until the violence of 2006-07. Unlike the nationally based groups whose territories may span the boundaries of two or more districts, these groups are highly localised, found only in particular suburbs or even on particular street corners. There are over 60 such groups in Dili alone, occupying the full spectrum from violent criminal groups to three girl glee clubs. However, in official development, security and academic discourse, as discussed in the introduction, they nevertheless tend to be all conflated as gangs of alienated youth. Shoesmith, for example, speaks of how illiterate and jobless youth, socialised by violence in 1999, join gangs for companionship, excitement, illicit income and the release of frustration, as per the 'frustration/aggression complex'. These teenage gangs then merge with bigger gangs with patrons and political connections (2007b: 30). Arnold (2009b: 382), while cautioning against too liberal an application of the word 'gang', nonetheless attributes youth violence to a similar normative framework as Shoesmith. In Arnold's account, 'agitated' youth, who, with no family or traditional structures to rein them in, are driven to violence and aggression by a weak state, unemployment and rapid urbanisation (Arnold, 2009b: 386).

The conflation of all violence as gang violence, and as a product of social deprivation, has a number of implications for peacebuilding. One implication is that it can mean that broad brush, macro-level solutions such as increased educational and employment opportunities are prescribed, ignoring the real source of localised conflict. An over emphasis on gangs also precludes a deeper understanding of the nature and source of violence in urban Dili, the complexity and diversity of contemporary groups and their social relationships with their communities.

Violent gangs certainly exist in Dili, and some of the socially oriented youth groups occasionally display gang-like behaviour, but given East Timor's culture and history, drawing a distinction between youth group and gang is not a straightforward task. Violence, for example, is not viewed in the same binary way as it is in Western countries. Youth violence, therefore, cannot easily be separated from communal tensions and community endorsed rent seeking. This task is further complicated by the fact that members of these groups hold multiple social identities, both violent and non-violent, and are members of multiple ISGs, a phenomenon that has a number of implications for understandings of the dynamics and sources of violence.

Figure 30: **Jomar graffiti, Marconi, Dili**

This chapter will discuss the more localised and predominantly urban Dili based groups. It will be argued here that there is considerable diversity in group types and that far from being passive, alienated youth and victims of disadvantage, many of these groups constitute distinct forms of social collectives born out of specific cultural and historical circumstances. Many are completely integrated with their communities. Factors contributing to these groups' emergence will be detailed here, such as the legacy of the Indonesian occupation and traditional social structures, and how multiple identities and group membership might link conflict at a local and national level.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. It begins with a brief discussion of the historical origins of some of the groups prevalent in Dili's urban spaces and offers possible explanations for their proliferation, and also discusses the challenges to the categorisation of these groups, including the contentious nature of Western informed definitions of crime and violence. The second section provides a broad typology of groups, before moving to a discussion of the phenomenon of multiple identities and group memberships, and the implications of this phenomenon for distinctions between youth violence and communal violence and the potential for wider escalation of minor, personal disputes.

7.1   Group origins

As Sanchez-Jankowski urges, to fully understand informal groups such as gangs, it is vital to understand the broader social changes that have affected them at specific times in history (2003: 203). As described in the previous chapter on national level groups, understanding East Timor's

period of conflict and resistance under the Indonesian occupation is key to explaining, describing and classifying the proliferation and variety of contemporary ISGs. Most of these groups would probably not exist if not for the Indonesian occupation. Some groups began life as clandestine resistance cells found throughout the country. While most other similar groups became inactive with independence, some groups, such as Seven-Seven, have reinvigorated themselves through antagonisms with other groups and accessed income through illegal activities such as organising or providing protection for gambling rackets and brothels – as they probably already did during the Indonesian occupation. Many of the pro-Indonesian civil militias or *ninjas* who terrorised pro-independence activists were drawn from the ranks of the underworld (Robinson, 2003: 72). Some groups began as a form of neighbourhood security under the Indonesian occupation. These groups would warn their community of impending attack and carry out harassment of Indonesian forces. Some of them may also have been pro-Indonesian *hansip* (an acronym of *pertahanan sipil* or civil security), who performed surveillance on their local neighbourhood on behalf of the Indonesian security forces. In Indonesia, these groups would collect payment directly from the community (Bertrand, 2004: 333). No doubt, as in the case of many clandestine resistance activists or guerrilla fighters in East Timor and elsewhere in the world, in times of foreign occupation or resistance to tyranny, some groups played both sides.

Some groups were also set up by the Indonesian military, or, at least, established themselves to receive support from the military. Ryter (1998) and others argue that similar groups in Indonesia – mobilised to fight the Dutch and then the communists in the 1960s, formed the basis for today's Indonesian gangs and militias. Just as the Indonesian military set up martial arts groups in East Timor, they also set up youth groups. Ryter, in his account of the rise and fall of the Suharto era paramilitary group *Pemuda Pancasila*, describes how in Indonesia, the military gained access to gangs through organising teen clubs, giving them colourful and vacuous names such as the 'Nature Lovers Teen Clubs Cooperative Body' and funding them to organise a variety of sporting and social activities (1998: 62). While many similar East Timorese groups sport names of Hollywood films like 'Predator' or 'Resident Evil', or simply the name of their village like 'Youth of Palapaso', many still carry their original names such as 'Stylish Youth' or 'Peace, Love, Unity and Respect'.[83] Given the sensitivity of admitting to receiving funds from the Indonesian military, only one group out of 40 interviewed for this research admitted to receiving such support (and this was under the influence of alcohol). As one member of this

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[83] The names of these groups are no indication of their nature, with some of the most benign groups bearing names like '*O book o rahun*' (touch me and you will be smashed) while 'Stylish Youth' is one of the most violent groups. To underscore this point, 'Peace, Love, Unity and Respect', despite their name, also gained considerable notoriety during the 2006 violence for hanging a banner across their village entrance saying 'Easterners keep out'.

group claimed "They gave us everything!"[84] It was clear that many of these groups had once received considerable support. This was made most evident through the declining fortunes of all the groups who had been set up in Indonesian times. They described a once golden era of well resourced multiple male and female sporting teams of all ages, local and national competitions, art materials and music bands with all the required instruments.[85] Once this support disappeared after independence, most groups struggled to maintain group cohesion and retain members. When, in 2006-07, in a belated post-Crisis response to the needs of youth, a number of international NGOs announced small grant programs for local communities, a number of newly formed youth groups appeared, no doubt in hope of leveraging funding, perhaps demonstrating the origins of the explosion of such groups during Indonesian times. This is perhaps the most plausible explanation for the prolific range and number of youth groups in East Timor today.

7.2   Contested definitions

Before moving to a typology of the different groups, some of the standard terms and assumptions used in accounts of the 2006 Crisis, such as the linkages between poverty, crime and violence, and the use of the term gang will be challenged here. Most of the groups described in the following typology section would in fact fall under the description of a gang in the Western derived, normative sense of the word. It is therefore useful to engage here in a discussion of concepts such as gangs, crime and violence in the context of a largely rural, descent group based non-Western society. As the following section will demonstrate, in the East Timorese context, the types of groups found there are a far more complex and fluid phenomenon than the term 'gang' implies, and crime and violence are also not viewed or defined in the same way as they are in Western countries and cultures.

7.2.1   Violence as a social construct

While the word gang has been employed quite liberally in descriptions of the Crisis (Arnold, 2009b; Cotton, 2007a; Shoesmith, 2007b; Silva, 2010; Simonsen, 2009), internationally, there is actually little consensus about what constitutes a gang. As Dinnen notes, for example, most definitions of gang in international literature stress collectivity as a central element, which is of little utility in a society such as that of PNG or East Timor where collectivity is the norm (2001: 58). There is a general agreement that criminal activity or violence is another central element, as per Klein's influential definition (Klein, 1995: 30). As Bolden asserts, however, the salience of violence as a property of gangs is highly problematic (2012: 209). Given their recent record, the East Timorese army and police force, for example, with their penchant for arbitrary violence

[84] Personal communication with Bairro Pite youth group member, September 2006.
[85] Multiple interviews with group members in Dili, 2006.

and involvement in gambling rackets, could also be considered as gangs – the PNTL is often darkly referred to as East Timor's biggest gang. This is not to say that relatively harmless groups, or in the case of East Timor, groups that have formed for a particular cause such as the clandestine resistance, cannot become more violent and criminal in nature. A number of groups described below have made this transition.

However, in the context of East Timor, violence is not always an accurate guide to gang status. Apart from communally driven violence, as Esbenson et al. point out, in observing US gangs, much of the behaviour of these groups is not necessarily gang behaviour as such, but part of a wider youth sub-culture (2001: 108). In East Timor, this youth sub-culture itself must be viewed within the context of a wider cultural acceptance of violence. Violence towards women and children is commonly justified as discipline and even as a form of love (AusAID, 2008; UNICEF, 2006b), as also observed by Monsell-Davis (2000) of Fijian and Samoan culture. *Baku-hanorin* (beat-teach) is a term widely used, for example, in East Timor, to justify beating women and children. Similar to Banks's observation of attitudes to violence in PNG, where 'an offence is defined not so much by the act itself but in the social context in which it occurs, with particular reference to the relationship the people involved have to each other' (Banks, 2000: 37), violence in the putative name of a variety of forms of 'justice' is also widely condoned in East Timor.

Given the intertwined nature of many groups and their communities, violent behaviour is in many cases not only sanctioned by community leaders, but also even commissioned by them. In the World Bank study of four Dili neighbourhoods (World Bank, 2010), even in the cases of villages in conflict with each other, there were starkly differing perceptions of ISGs within each community. As is often the case in Dili, older, established communities use mobs of youth, often MAG members, to attempt to drive out illegal squatters in adjacent, newer villages. These older communities therefore tend to see these groups in a positive light, as performing a community service in the name of distributive justice, which the ISGs themselves use to justify their behaviour. One otherwise socially oriented group, which provided computer, English, art and singing lessons to local children who could not afford to attend school, boasted of evicting squatters from Eastern districts from State owned housing, which they viewed as a social service.[86] One group, who had demonstrated their socially oriented nature and non-sectarianism through assisting the return of displaced Eastern community members from IDP camps, had a positive view of a number of divisive and violent figures such as Major Alfredo Reinado,

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[86] Interview with youth group (name withheld), Dili, July 20, 2006.

excusing their violence as 'East/West stuff' (this claim was made in informal discussion after a focus group in which they had eschewed all forms of violence and sectarianism).[87]

Violence is also not confined to the socially excluded, who are blocked from access to employment or educational opportunity. The name of one youth group, composed of middle class youth from the relatively affluent Palapaso suburb, could be seen daubed victoriously on houses Eastern families had been driven from. The leader of the Slebor group described below was employed as a security guard by an international NGO and was married with two children – not the usual profile of an alienated youth. Apart from sectarian violence by otherwise benign youth groups, there have also been relatively frequent cases of violence between groups of students, such as the long ongoing clashes between two Dili secondary schools in the Comoro area (Catholic Relief Services, 2010) and also serious clashes among relatively privileged groups of students at the National University (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, February 17, 2012). There has also been a spate of violence between students on prized overseas scholarships, which recently resulted in two fatalities.[88] One clash between groups of East Timorese fortunate to have secured sought after overseas employment occurred in the UK as recently as July, 2013. The fact that they possessed European Union passports proved that they came from relatively privileged families (Scunthorpe Telegraph, July 05, 2013).

7.2.2 Donation or extortion?

Many groups in Dili now sustain themselves through 'taxes' on local businesses or community members in return for 'security', to pay for cigarettes, alcohol or other basic needs. The words commonly used for this practice, *sumbungan* (donation) or *cobrança* (levy) denote the formerly voluntary or formalised nature of this tax, when the community paid them for this role during the resistance (or were forced to pay).[89] While in some cases this 'donation' is provided voluntarily, in other cases it is a more organised form of extortion. The prevalence of this practice is confirmed by the statistic that 50 per cent, and in some areas 100 per cent, of local businesses reported being intimidated for protection (World Bank, 2010). Another sign is the proliferation of private security companies to protect businesses from such depredations, whose staff now outnumber the national security forces (Ashkenazi and Von Boemcken, 2010).

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[87] Focus Group, Perumnas, Dili, January 21, 2008.
[88] In one recent case, for example, East Timorese students from rival MAGs clashed in Indonesia (*Timor-Leste Subscriber News*, July 12, 2013).
[89] Ryter describes a similar tradition in Indonesia known as 'struggle funds' to denote payments extracted from the Chinese to fund pogroms against communist sympathisers in the 1965-66 anti-communist pogroms (Ryter, 1998: 59).

This practice can also be viewed culturally, however, as a form of compulsory sharing or exchange. Groups of young migrant males, who would normally receive family support such as food, shelter and petty cash for necessities in their home village, are separated from this source of support in the city, and so seek to access it from their new community. When it is not given voluntarily, it is taken forcibly. Ward describes similar attitudes among Highland youth in Port Moresby, amongst whom crime and violence was seen as an 'equalising' act against those who otherwise refused to enter into exchange relations with them (2000: 233).[90]

In many cases, the community instigates extortionate demands collectively, as a form of rent seeking. There is a widespread expectation, in rural areas as well as the city, that any new business, especially if it is a 'wealthy' international agency, owes 'compensation' to the local community in return for the use of 'their' land (sometimes they might have no actual legal claim to the land, but just happen to live close by), even when the business might be a health clinic or community radio station built to serve that same local community.[91] One construction manager interviewed in Dili recounted that almost as soon as the first brick was laid on every job he worked on, an irate mob would arrive and threaten to burn down their office, or kill his staff if they were not given jobs, despite the fact that few of them, if any, had any vocational skills to offer. Local traditional authorities were then consulted and a compromise would be reached.[92] One Indian restaurant owner claimed that he had effectively stopped violent extortion threats by marrying into the local community.[93] Therefore, while sometimes an act of criminal opportunism, definitions of violence and criminality are also culturally informed.

In addition, while practices such as petty extortion are rife, it is often hard to view them as a concerted group exercise, but more as the initiative of a sub-group. A small group of BURADO members, for example, plague local Chinese shopkeepers, but it could not be said that this is representative of the group as a whole, whose constitution contains strong sanctions against violence. Many such groups do not have any affiliations at all and, like these sub-groups, do not even have a name. Sanchez-Jankowski (2003: 199) terms such groups as 'crews' – a group of three to five individuals organised for the sole purpose of crime, although in the East Timorese context, in most cases, it is more like a group of friends who congregate to socialise and drink,

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[90] In 2006, Westerners, especially youth, to use Benford's term (2000) 'framed' the Eastern population as being unfairly financially advantaged and the then FRETILIN government as only sharing resources with Easterners, so violence and looting were seen as an equalising act of distributive justice.

[91] In my own experience, at my residence in Dili, leased by an international NGO, after a locally hired security guard was sacked after being absent from work for a month without notice and routinely sleeping on the job (at one time allowing an armed intruder to burgle the house), he and his friends threatened to burn the house down unless one of them was hired to replace him. The appointment of a new security guard had to be then negotiated with the local *Chefe de Aldeia*. The job was clearly seen as a form of rent to the local community, rather than an actual task that needed to be performed.

[92] Interview with construction manager for international NGO, Dili, November 6, 2008.

[93] Conversation with business owner, Dili, July 26, 2006.

with crime functioning as an ancillary exercise to procure the requirements for *tuur halimar* ('sit-play' or hanging out) such as cigarettes and alcohol. These small, loose aggregations probably enact most of the petty extortion or theft on local shopkeepers, who generally will know them by name.

The existence of such anti-social sub-groups within a group with articulated humanitarian principles and activities also underscores the informal nature of these groups. As Bolden (2002) asserts, with reference to the US, such groups are not definitive entities. This is particularly the case in East Timor, in relation to the smaller, more fluid groups like Slebor. Bolden quotes Fleisher's study of gangs in Illinois USA, which found that gang members knew less than 10 per cent of the members of their gang, and the sub-groups or small social networks were more descriptive of the experience of a gang member's relation to the gang. Therefore, rather than see such groups as being unified entities, it is more useful to see them as part of a social network (Bolden, 2012: 209).

7.3   Group typology

To illustrate the diversity, fluid nature and complex history of urban, Dili based groups in East Timor, it is worthwhile constructing a simple typology. Categorisation of these groups is, however, a fraught task due to the contentious nature of terms like gangs or culturally informed definitions of violence, but also due to these groups' fluid, transitory and hybrid nature. Some groups last only a few months or years and each village or neighbourhood has a different demographic profile in terms of class, regional, linguistic and descent group composition, length of settlement and levels of security. Some groups have also changed from more criminally oriented to more benign groups and vice versa. They will therefore be simply organised into three main categories here according to their function, origin and nature and the community's and groups' own designations. These are not cast iron categories, given, as discussed above, the fluid and often ephemeral nature of informal groups, their overlapping memberships and their members' multiple identities. The typology will be organised from the most socially oriented to the most anti-social.

7.3.1   Youth groups

'Youth group' is the generic, non-judgemental name given by community members and also the groups themselves to all groups except martial arts groups. The word gang is almost never used by East Timorese, reflecting generally positive or ambivalent community attitudes towards such groups. Most youth groups in Dili are informal, with considerably varying degrees of involvement in violence, exhibiting some gang behaviour but differing in a number of other

important aspects. While 'youth group' is a useful all encompassing and non-judgemental term to use, there is such a variety of groups within this broad category, with hybrid aspects. They will therefore be broadly grouped into three sub-categories as set out below.

Egalitarian aldeia (village) based groups

Aldeia or village based groups can best be described as informal peer social clubs, in many cases comprised of groups of extended family members or school friends. Numbering between three to over 100 in membership, they are of mixed gender and predominantly linguistically homogenous, but not necessarily exclusive. The age of members varies between 17-23 years, with often a higher average level of education than other youth groups. These groups are usually non-hierarchical and may have a number of members who play a leading role, but with no formal or clear structure. These groups are, as a rule, more active and engage in organised activities, akin to small-scale, informal community based organisations. While they usually list their main activities as sport and music, they often conduct social services like street cleaning, or even sometimes running informal vocational training courses. It is unlikely that these groups are involved in violence, although some of their members might be on an individual basis. These groups generally list their main objective as bringing local youth together and unifying their community. Many of the groups, like *Juventude Colmera* (Youth of Colmera), have been around since Indonesian times and as described, were once much better resourced and numerous, while others are of more recent origin. One such group, which will be described in more detail in the next chapter, is BURADO *(Buka Ransu Dalan Ba Unidade – seeking the path to unity together)*. Based in the squatter settlement of Perumnas, the case study area examined in the following chapter, BURADO was a mixed group of about 100 (it is largely inactive now) who organised sporting activities for local youth, in addition to street cleaning, helping the poor and providing sewing lessons for local women.[94]

Figure 31: BURADO members outside their clubhouse

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[94] Interview with BURADO members, Dili, October 22, 2008.

Street corner groups

Street corner groups resemble, to some extent, the *parche* groups of Colombia, which, as described by McIlwaine and Moser (2001: 976), are a group of teenagers with membership based on flexible association and spontaneous congregation, who meet to hang out, drink or consume drugs, with some involvement in crime or violence. The practice of such groups of males of similar age gathering together in poor urban areas is not unique to East Timor. Vigil (1983: 49), for example, refers to the *palomilla* or 'age cohorting' tradition among Mexican migrant youth in the US (but adds that the stress and strain features of urban environment often result in these youth groups becoming gangs). Historically, however, street corner groups also have some resemblance to the 'cross boys' of urban Jakarta, as described by Ryter (1998: 59), many of which were also drawn from specific regional or linguistic groups. According to Ryter, these small, loosely knit street corner or neighbourhood groups, more common in the 1950s, were known more than anything for their parties and clothing styles than for violence. However, many members of these and similar groups had been mobilised in the anti-communist purges of 1965-66 (1998: 59), as the East Timorese had been mobilised in the clandestine resistance. When finally demobilised, without any further focus or fixed purpose, they went back to hanging out on street corners and harassing passers-by and local shopkeepers for money, much as happened in East Timor after independence. In general, however, they constitute more of a nuisance value than any serious criminal threat.

Membership of street corner groups usually reflects patterns of regional, linguistic or family settlement patterns in the area. In Perumnas, for example, they are mostly composed of Bunak speaking families from Bobonaro and to a lesser extent, Kemak speakers from Ermera. Group members give a variety of reasons for joining a group, depending on the nature of the group, but a common justification is that it is a means of meeting other youth in their area from the same district or *aldeia*, to give them a sense of family. Such group identification has also been observed of PNG Highlands youth in the capital Port Moresby, who form groups with kin or *wantoks* from their own rural village of origin, as they try to establish a sense of *ples* or place, in a cosmopolitan urban setting (Ward, 2000).

Predominantly male, group members' main activities consist of playing music and drinking, although some members are often dedicated artists. Many of these groups have names, while others do not. They often act as informal security for shopkeepers, in return for cigarettes and alcohol. The average age of group members is between 16-24 and they are generally unemployed, with low education levels. They usually list their main motivation in belonging to such groups as security and companionship with other youth in their local community.

One typical group of this nature is *Slebor* (Rebellious), founded in 1995. The group is primarily a social group, meeting together to play guitar, sing, paint and play football. Some members live together in an old mechanics' yard and connected living quarters that apparently formerly belonged to Easterners.

Figure 32: Slebor members

The leader of Slebor, when interviewed in 2006, worked as a security guard at an international NGO, but most members are secondary school students or unemployed. Members emphasise that apart from recreational opportunities such as football, they also joined the group to meet other people from the same rural area of origin in Ermera.[95] The group are avid artists, and their clubhouse functions as a vibrant mural gallery indicating diverse influences from history textbooks to heavy metal and Indonesian rock band album covers. This group is also unpopular locally for the 'tax' of petty cash or cigarettes they impose on local shopkeepers, although it is not seen as serious extortion.

Figure 33: Slebor mural

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[95] Interview with Slebor member, Dili, July 27, 2006.

Not all street corner groups are extortionate, however. The *Sola Deus* group, for example, formed around 2002, use the storage space of a small general store and furniture rental business (from which the name is taken) as a clubhouse and gym. The group, numbering around a dozen members, belong to the same extended family as the owner. As confirmed by the owner, the group provide security from other groups attempting extortion, sometimes help out with the business and can use his property in return, in addition to occasional gifts of cigarettes, coffee and beer. The group is more like a descent based peer group, and the relationship with the shop owner appears to be genuinely harmonious.[96]

Figure 34: Sola Deus group

Apical, large locally based 'youth' groups

These groups call themselves youth groups, but while most of their members are young, they have much older leaders. They generally claim to have a social function, helping to clean the streets for example, or organising sporting clubs. Such groups appear to be more like patronage groups, based on the remnants of old clandestine resistance networks, than the more overtly socially oriented teen clubs of the first category. With membership sometimes numbering in the hundreds, or even thousands, they are mostly male. While some may have Eastern members, they are predominantly drawn from Western regional and linguistic groups. The age range of these groups varies between 15-40. Unlike the bulk of their members, the leaders of these groups were often tertiary educated, employed and married. These groups are informal but are clearly hierarchical, centred on single charismatic or powerful figures who are usually older and are often former resistance leaders. These leaders command respect through being either physically imposing, or through reputed acts of physical prowess, bravery or even magic. These figures, very much in the Melanesian big-man tradition, exercise parallel authority to traditional leaders. As described by Sahlins in relation to Melanesian traditions:

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[96] Informal conversation with shop owner and Sola Deus members, Dili, February 3, 2008.

Upon these people he can prevail economically: he capitalises in the first instance on kinship dues and by finessing the relation of reciprocity appropriate among close kinsmen. A big-man is one who can create and use social relations which give him leverage on others' production and the ability to siphon off an excess product (Sahlins, 1963: 291).

Leaders of this type of group initially use kinship groups and a small number of core followers to slowly build a larger base of influence and also patronage. Some leaders of these groups use their status and authority as former resistance network leaders, or through providing alcohol and cigarettes, to set up and then manipulate exchange relations with local youth to utilise them for crime or violence. Such leaders are also linked to leaders further up the social or political scale, who call in ties to old clandestine networks to garner the collaboration of these local big men to mobilise these youth for political ends. They are not intrinsically violent groups, but may become involved in violence if mobilised, for example, for political violence, as in 2006.

One example of such groups is *Choque* (Collision), easily the best known and possibly the biggest of such youth groups. This group, based in the large *suku* or suburb of Becora, on the outskirts of Dili, is centred on their leader, Joao da Silva (aka Joao Becora or Joao Choque), Choque was established in 1989 as a youth movement, with a focus on sport as a way of keeping young people occupied and engaged. Da Silva claimed that the group has a number of youth sports teams (although he added that they struggled to support them through lack of funds), and that his group clean the streets on a regular basis and provides security for the neighbourhood. [97] Joao Da Silva derives his status and prestige from his record as a revered clandestine resistance fighter whom the Indonesians could never capture. Like other similar figures, legends abound about how bullets merely bounced off him. Many Western males closely identify with him, claiming him as *maun* (which in East Timorese culture can mean either elder blood brother or distant relation). A large number of groups claim affiliation with Choque, so this group may operate as an umbrella group – people from at least three other local groups were present at the meeting where Da Silva was interviewed.[98]

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[97] Interview with Joao Da Silva and affiliated groups, Dili, July 20, 2006.
[98] Ibid.

Figure 35: Choque group (Joao Da Silva second from right in front row)

7.3.2   Clandestine groups

Also known as *kakalok* (magic or mystical) or *isin kanek* (wound) groups, clandestine groups are distinct for the series of initiation scarifications on members' arms, the number corresponding to the group i.e. Seven-Seven or Five-Five and so on. These groups were formed as clandestine organisations under Indonesian occupation and while some have disbanded, although continuing to act as networks, others have continued and have become secretive, sect-like groups, some with involvement in criminal or violent behaviour. The clandestine group members' ages range between 20-60, with older leadership and generally much younger membership.

Figure 36: Seven-Seven graffiti

Seven-Seven (also simply known as Seven) is the only active group now. Its tag, as pictured at Figure 36, can be seen all around Dili. Like the other *isin kanek* groups, they are organized in *caixas* or cells. Their members can be distinguished by a series of seven scars running vertically up their arms. Seven-Seven members believe they are given magical powers through inserting a

potion under their skin making them invincible, and even invisible to enemies.[99] Members of Seven-Seven claim that each time they go through this initiation they increase their powers, and members will often have multiple lines of seven scars.[100] Video footage for a 2007 television documentary shows the incisions being made with razor blades and the insertion of a powdered substance into the wounds, which Seven-Seven members claim is composed of the ground up bark of three sacred trees. The footage shows a sort of syncretic ritual involving the sacrifice of a pig in front of a crucifix atop a makeshift altar (Kemp, 2007). Members also wear a sort of amulet on their upper arm made from a vine or bone. Such rituals have resonance with wider regional cultural practices among informal or paramilitary groups. Tremlett (2007: 2), for example, describes a similar ceremony involving the insertion of small shards of a sacred rock under the skin by the *Haring Bakal* (Iron King) militia group in the Philippines, which their members believed made them fearless in battle and immune from injury.

Seven-Seven members claim to maintain East Timorese cultural traditions and perform a certain type of martial arts training, but there is no evidence of the latter claim.[101] They are best known for control of gambling, protection rackets and providing security for brothels, for which they often violently compete with PSHT. Many members of this group can also be found in the police and army. It is only sections of this group who are involved in such criminal enterprise, however. It is unclear how much relation they have to their founding organisation, although their founder, 'Sanamea', continues to act as a group spokesperson.

Figure 37: Seven-Seven scarifications

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[99] Seven-Seven members insisting it is the ground up bark of three sacred trees, and their detractors arguing that it is the powdered bones of black cats.
[100] Interview with Seven-Seven member, Dili, July 27, 2006.
[101] Ibid.

7.3.3   Gangs

While the groups described above display many of the normative characteristics attributed to gangs, for the sake of simplicity, gangs are defined here as groups that are exclusively employed in crime or violence with no visible social function (even if the profits of crime might be redistributed among the community) and are viewed in a negative light by their communities. As described in the methodology section, impressions of these groups were exhaustively canvassed in casual conversations with East Timorese, including staff of restaurants, hotels, security guards, and taxi drivers.

There are a number of quite well known gangs in Dili, usually known by the name of their leaders, such as Cinto Kulao, Lito Rambo or Ameu Van Damme. These groups are predominantly involved in theft, political violence, extortion, running gambling rackets or providing security to illegal brothels. Lito Rambo (real name – Carlito Bonifacio) is probably the best known underworld figure in Dili. A former clandestine activist from Viqueque, Lito Rambo's group was most powerful prior to the 2006 conflict. Before 2006, this group were renown for their protection rackets in the Audian commercial area, which they previously controlled before being evicted by other groups. Patronage was dispensed through providing employment in local shops and rent extracted through Lito Rambo's group of enforcers, and thus his group came to be seen as a significant nuisance.[102]

Figure 38: 'Rambo Street' graffiti marking Lito Rambo territory

Like Joao Da Silva's group described above, rather than being a static gang, beyond a few core members, Rambo's group and others like his are more like a kinship and patronage based group. Certainly, his kinship links in his home region in Viqueque District and his links to Sagrada

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[102] Interview with senior PNTL Taskforce Officer, January 31, 2008.

Familia through his uncle, Elle Sete, who is also allegedly involved in a variety of informal enterprises, would give him access to a considerable pool of members.[103]

7.4   Multiple identities and memberships

Based on the typology outlined here, then, the term gang seems manifestly inadequate to describe the diversity of groups found in urban Dili and their fluid, hybrid nature, and given ambivalent, culturally informed community attitudes to violence and crime. The distinction between community members, benign youth groups and static, coherent, criminally oriented gangs and gang violence is further blurred by multiple identities and intergroup memberships. Wood, in describing a Palestinian village in Israel, argues that a multiplicity of identities are meaningful to Palestinians and that these are fluid and dynamic, constructed and reconstructed on a constant basis (1993: 91). A similar observation can be made of East Timor where ISG, family, regional, linguistic and political party identities are interwoven and interchangeable. While none of these identities may be intrinsically violent, as will be described in this section, the overlapping and occasionally contentious nature of these different identities can involve people in violence and easily spread to the domains of other identities.

One example of this phenomenon is the dichotomy between ISG and family identity. As Strocka observed of street gangs known as *manchas* in Ayacucho, Peru, while gang members may engage in violence or aggressive behaviour around or with fellow gang members, gang members are not necessarily inherently violent as they have multiple social identities, some violent and some not (2006a: 241). Brezina et al. refer to this as 'code switching', whereby youth gang members conform to a street code among other gang members, but revert to conventional norms in family or private setting (2004: 306). Strocka's study, which involved a peacebuilding experiment among rival *manchas*, found that gang members will usually disengage themselves from violent and illicit activities when alternative social identities become available (Strocka, 2006a: 245). In Dili, JOCAR (an abbreviation of their founder Joao Carau's name), for example, despite being previously known as a violent group, drawn from elements of a notorious Indonesian based gang headed by the East Timorese gangster 'Hercules', won the annual Dili nativity scene contest, [104] displaying their dual gang and social identities. Conversely, groups can also start out as benign, but become violent or aggressive. As described

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[103] Since being expelled by other groups from his Audian territory, Rambo, in the wider tradition of such gangs overseas, has since expanded into business, although he has proven that he still has the capacity to quickly mobilise a crowd, as he did in 2010 in protest against the conviction of Oan Kiak for his role in the 2006 violence (Interview with UN Political Affairs, Dili, 5 March 2010).

[104] Every year in Dili there is a contest to see who can build the best nativity scene. These are often built by local youths who then paradoxically use the shelter built to house the construction to drink alcohol and misbehave late at night.

by Strocka of peer groups among Peruvian school students, it is not uncommon in Dili for groups to start out as benign youth groups, but due to tensions or outright conflict with other groups, to develop into gangs, or at least to acquire violent behaviour (2006a: 137). BURADO experienced ongoing tensions with another similar group, *Fudido*, who despite their origins as a teen social club, developed a reputation for violence towards neighbouring groups and also petty crime, and were later evicted by other residents from the neighbourhood.

However, in some cases in East Timor, the group identity may be benign but violence may be enacted in the name of the community identity. As will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, these groups can also be a form of expressing a regional, linguistic or descent group identity of their village of origin with many, if not most youth groups, derived from extended families or descent groups. In the case of the Slebor group, for example, while this group insists it is a mixed group, all except for one member interviewed or spoken to came from the same district, and it is clear from the group's graffiti, seen at Figure 39, that their predominantly Kemak linguistic and descent group identity are very much part of their group identity.[105]

Figure 39: Slebor group tag and Slebor Kemak graffiti

Many members of BURADO also strongly objected to their group's membership being extended beyond their own descent group, which indicates that despite the benign and broad minded social orientation of the group, regional and descent group affiliations comprised a significant component of this group's identity.

Multiple social identities and overlapping memberships means that when groups or individuals are involved in conflict or violence, it is not always clear whether people are acting as members of a youth group or ISG (and if so, which one), or meeting obligations to a descent group or family identities. Many members of relatively benign groups in Dili were also involved in the

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[105] Kemak is a language predominantly spoken in the Bobonaro and Ermera Districts in the West of East Timor.

violence of 2006-07. In the case of the murder of a JOCAR member by a BURADO member in early 2007 (which will be described in more detail in the following chapter), for example, the BURADO member was also a member of the MAG PSHT. Whether the perpetrator was acting as a member of BURADO, PSHT or acting in his identity as a member of an extended family, enacting a family vendetta, or all of the above, is almost impossible to discern. It is likely the perpetrator himself would be unaware of which identity he was acting in the name of.

To illustrate this point, the man portrayed in Figure 40 was a member of the MAG *Padjadjaran*, the former clandestine group 'Five-Five', (the scarifications can be discerned in the upper arm), the local youth group 'Sklanet' and was also *chefe de aldeia,* in addition to family, linguistic and political party identities.

Figure 40: Multiple memberships
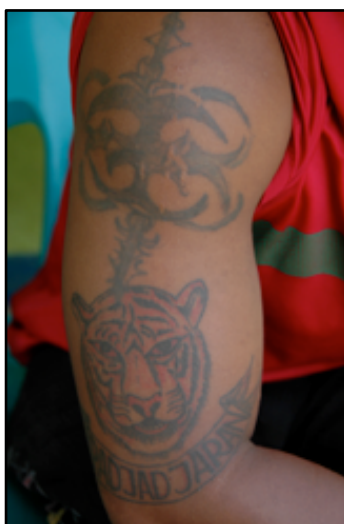
As with the example of the Sagrada Familia smuggling network described in the previous chapter, involvement in a criminal enterprise can also constitute an identity. Seven-Seven is widely accused of involvement in gambling and extortion rackets and is alleged to control the *futu manu* (cock fighting) and *kuru kuru* or *bola guling* (a form of roulette) rings and other gambling rackets. Despite a peace pact in early 2008, Seven-Seven have continued a low level enmity with PSHT, mostly in the backstreets of the Comoro area to the West of the city, related to the struggle for control of extortion and gambling rackets. The Seven-Seven leader Sanamia also emerged as spokesperson for the FRETILIN political front group (said to have only about 30 members), the Liberation Movement of Maubere People (MOLNAPON). This might partially explain the source of its tensions with PSHT, which is largely viewed as aligned with the PD, as described in the previous chapter. Therefore it may be difficult to disentangle the original source of the enmity between the two groups. Political, linguistic, descent group and

criminal identities are therefore sometimes simultaneously held, blurring distinctions between group and communal violence.

7.5   Conclusion

This chapter has set out to challenge notions, informed by Western industrialised contexts, of gangs of disenfranchised, unemployed youth roaming the streets of Dili, prone to crime, violence, or political manipulation. Criminal gangs certainly exist in East Timor, as described here. However, unlike urban gangs in industrialised countries or more advanced developing countries in Latin America, for example, these groups have yet to evolve into the kind of sophisticated operations and involvement in hard core violence, homicide and crime such as drug dealing, as described by Klein (1995), Vigil (2003) or in Latin America as described by Rodgers (2006), Strocka (2006b) or even the raskols of PNG (Harris, 1988) although this is likely to change with time. While many groups have names and exhibit other elements of gang type behaviours, it is difficult to view more than a handful of groups as gangs in the orthodox or traditional definition of the term.

Concepts such as crime and violence are also not viewed in the same way in East Timor as in the West, so it is not always easy to draw a line between gang or youth violence and communal violence. In many instances of so-called gang violence and extortion, it is with the explicit sanction of the community. Practices such as extortion, for example, may have more relation to Melanesian customary rules of exchange, or behaviour inherited from the resistance era than Western, criminological definitions of youth delinquency driven by social deprivation and social breakdown. As has been demonstrated here, an ethnographic approach is essential to understanding local constructions of violence, as also argued by Banks (2000: 39) and Knauft (1999: 154).

The profuse variety and complexity of different groups found in urban areas of Dili, with their considerably varying aims, objectives, histories, gender profiles, structures and levels of involvement in violence, defies conventional definitions and typologies. Most resemble informal peer group networks and for the majority of groups, their social function far outweighs their sometime delinquent aspects. Even then, this behaviour must be viewed within East Timor's cultural and historical context. The highly localised and predominantly descent group based nature of urban Dili groups, however, suggests that the basis for their formation goes beyond age cohorting or mere peer group formations. Viewed from East Timor's cultural context, they can also be seen as kinship networks based on extended family structures, as extensions of their communities and expressions of linguistic and family identity.

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It is also very difficult to see these groups, or the criminal actions of a minority of their members, as primarily a product of poverty, disadvantage and youth alienation. Most of these groups have evolved out of specific historical circumstances. Some have sought to redefine their resistance era identity and purpose to a contemporary role of the defence of highly localised urban space and regional/linguistic/kin based identity. Disadvantage is certainly a factor in the formation of some groups, as posited by Shoesmith (2007b: 30) and others, but it is by no means the only factor. While some groups come from disadvantaged families, especially in the more crowded squatter communities, in many cases groups can be found in affluent suburbs and are comprised of middle class, educated youth, with leaders drawn from the highest echelons of society. Many of these groups have coherent goals and objectives and are actively seeking creative solutions to contemporary needs, to transform their lived environment and unify their communities in times of economic stress and communal tension. Rather than being alienated from their communities, they are integral elements of them.

The process that leads to involvement in violence by some of these groups or their members is also not nearly so clear cut as suggested by authors like Arnold (2009b), Shoesmith (2007b: 30) and others. In the case of political violence, rather calling on static, cohesive groups or gangs, mobs are organised more organically. Prominent figures or 'meta' groups (such as those of Joao da Silva or Lito Rambo) may mobilise clandestine networks, or draw on systems of reciprocal obligation such as descent group affiliation or exchange relationships to oblige participation from members of these networks.

However, the networked, multiple and fluid identities held by these group members makes it difficult to identify any particular group as perpetrators of violence, and, after the early events of the 2006 political Crisis, to clearly identify the source of a given conflict. At the same time, such dynamics make it easy to understand how groups or individual members of these groups may be drawn into conflict in the name of a personal, youth group or family identity, for example, and how linkages between such localised identities and broader identities such as that of political parties, region or MAGs, can lead to wider conflict, shifting scale.

The following chapter will discuss the relationship between youth groups, gangs and MAGs and kinship networks in more detail, using the case study of a migrant squatter settlement. This chapter will show how constellations of groups, gangs and MAGs mirror settlement patterns, how they operate as extensions of their communities in conflicts and how these groups function as coping mechanisms. It will also demonstrate some of the implications of the multiple memberships and identities described here, including how micro-conflicts linked to more localised identities have become linked with national level cleavages.

CHAPTER EIGHT: A Case Study of Perumnas, Bairro Pite, Dili[106]

As described in Chapter Two, academic and development discourse on East Timor, particularly accounts of the Crisis, has been heavily influenced by a number of Western theoretical traditions, including the work of the Chicago School (Park and Burgess, 1925; Shaw and McKay, 1942) and its heirs such as 'strain theory' (Agnew and White, 1992; Baron, 2009; Hoffmann, 2002) and 'social disorganisation theory'. Poverty, cultural heterogeneity, residential mobility and unstable social structures are widely credited in social disorganisation theory literature as key sources of crime and social conflict (De Coster et al., 2006; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003; Sampson and Groves, 1989). A key assumption in this literature is that social cohesiveness is essential to social stability; the greater the social cohesion, the greater the constraint on deviant behaviour and vice versa (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). In line with this narrative, as per strain theory or the 'frustration aggression thesis' as employed by Shoesmith (2007b: 29), youth come to the city in search of employment and educational opportunities. Frustrated by blocked aspirations and at the same time freed from the social constraints of the nuclear family or traditional leaders, they join gangs and engage in delinquent behaviour. Accordingly, the standard responses recommended to stem this progression from poverty and frustration to crime has been the provision of employment and educational opportunities, and improved policing and justice systems (Arnold, 2009b; Sahin, 2007; Shoesmith, 2007b; Simonsen, 2009).

In addition to being informed by such Western centric theoretical traditions, a lack of ethnographic understanding, particularly of the fluid and heterogeneous nature of urban communities in East Timor, has hampered peacebuilding efforts. Peacebuilding initiatives at a sub-national level tend to assume static sets of social relations in urban areas with stable authority structures, with an attendant failure to disaggregate causes of conflict down to a localised level, or to account for the linkages between rural and urban communities. As is detailed in this chapter, rural urban migration, fluid social structures and contested traditional authority in Dili's urban centres, particularly in the informal settlements where the bulk of Dili's population reside, render these assumptions highly problematic. Rural-urban settlement patterns, for example, rather than being a random phenomenon, reproduce specific social and spatial microcosms of rural villages of origin, including MAG and political affiliations. Multiple identities linking these different affiliations can result in conflict escalating from a personal dispute to one reflecting master narratives of MAG, political or regional enmities. As this chapter also shows, conflict is usually between *aldeias* not within, and in many cases, more

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[106] A substantial part of this chapter has previously been published in Urban Studies (Scambary, 2013a).

affluent, established and socially cohesive communities may attack the more recent squatter communities. More complex factors, then, are at play than current assumptions about poverty, the youth bulge and the frustration aggression nexus. ISGs are also a more complex phenomenon than merely groups of angry, disenfranchised youth. As will be argued here, conventional normative definitions of criminality and violence do not take account of multiple social identities, and ignore socially inclined groups and behaviour.

Through a case study of a cluster of four of these urban migrant villages in the capital Dili, this chapter draws together themes from chapters six and seven on group motivations, enmities, composition and origins – how these are reflected in discrete group territories and how rural urban migration and settlement patterns affect conflict dynamics. This case study shows how local conflicts become interwoven with national cleavages, reinforcing both Kalyvas's (2003: 486) conceptualisation of linkages between local and national level conflicts, and O'Lear and Diehl's observations on the importance of identifying the correct location and scale in designing peacebuilding interventions (2011:34). Drawing on long-term field research in this neighbourhood, this chapter provides detailed data on the demographic characteristics of the neighbourhood, including district and linguistic configuration, the linkages between family and ISG membership, village boundaries, linguistic and descent group composition, settlement patterns, and symmetries with MAG, gang and youth group membership and conflict. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how some groups have attempted to adapt and respond to the complexities of this urban environment, in both violent and non-violent ways.

8.1 Background

As described in Chapter Four, much of Dili's population resides in informal settlements. These settlements are concentrated in the West of the city in the Dom Aleixio Sub-District, but particularly in the *sukus* of Comoro and Bairro Pite, which today continue to suffer sporadic outbursts of communal violence. The *suku* of Bairro Pite, in which this case study is sited (see Figure 41), is composed of over 34 *aldeias*, spreading from near the Dili Cathedral near the centre of town to the banks of the Comoro River in the West. Major population movements, especially in the post 1999 rural influx, have almost doubled its population (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2010).

Figure 41: Map of case study area (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2007)
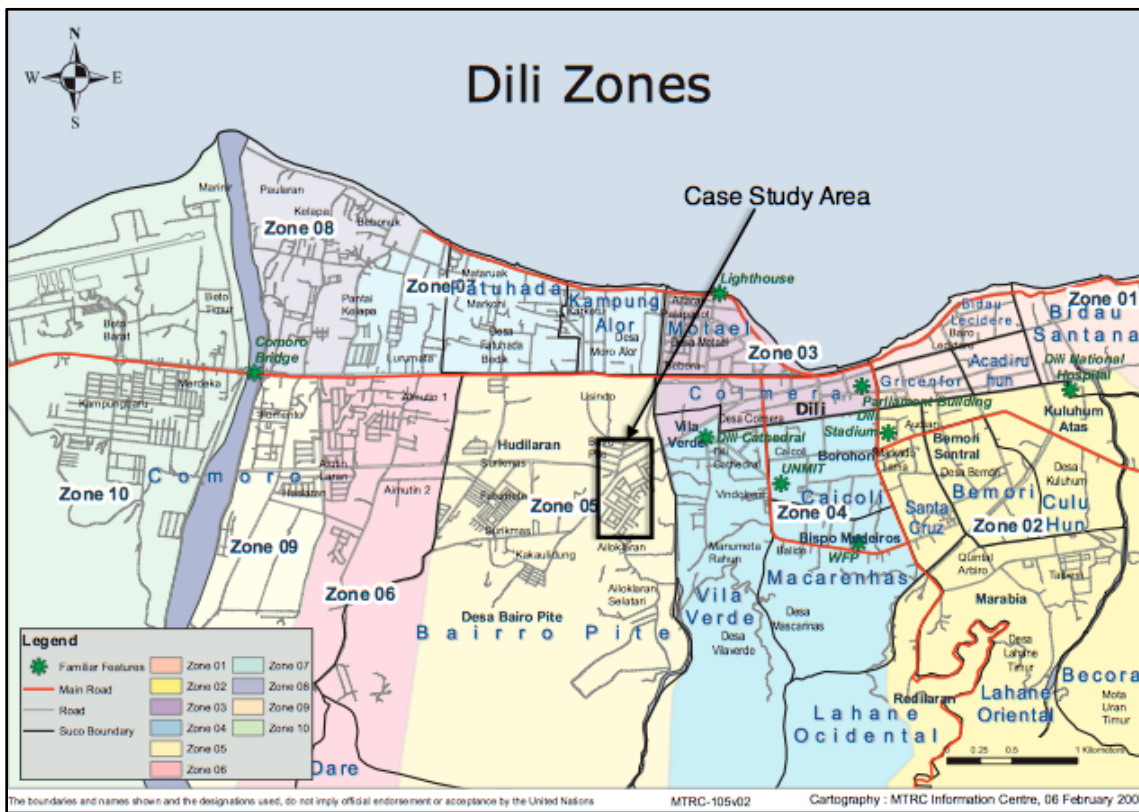
The main area chosen for this case study, Perumnas, was a former Indonesian built housing complex for civil servants. Its name is a derivation of the Indonesian words *Perumahan Dinas* (civil servants' housing). Now it is a cluster of three *aldeias: Avanca, Rio de Janeiro* and *Moris Ba Dame*. The adjacent *aldeia* 'THT' has also been included in this study as it comprises an important element of the conflict dynamics in this area. Separated from the complex by a main road, unlike Perumnas, THT is composed of primarily Portuguese era housing, and the families living there have been largely established since 1975. Seen from the air at Figure 42, the rusty red roofs of the old Portuguese housing contrast sharply with the newer, silver grey roofing of the Perumnas complex, providing not only a social but also a physical point of departure from the neighbouring housing complex. The map shown at Figure 44 further on shows the cluster of *aldeias* that comprise Perumnas and the road boundary with THT.

Figure 42: Perumnas and THT from the air (Google Earth, 2013)
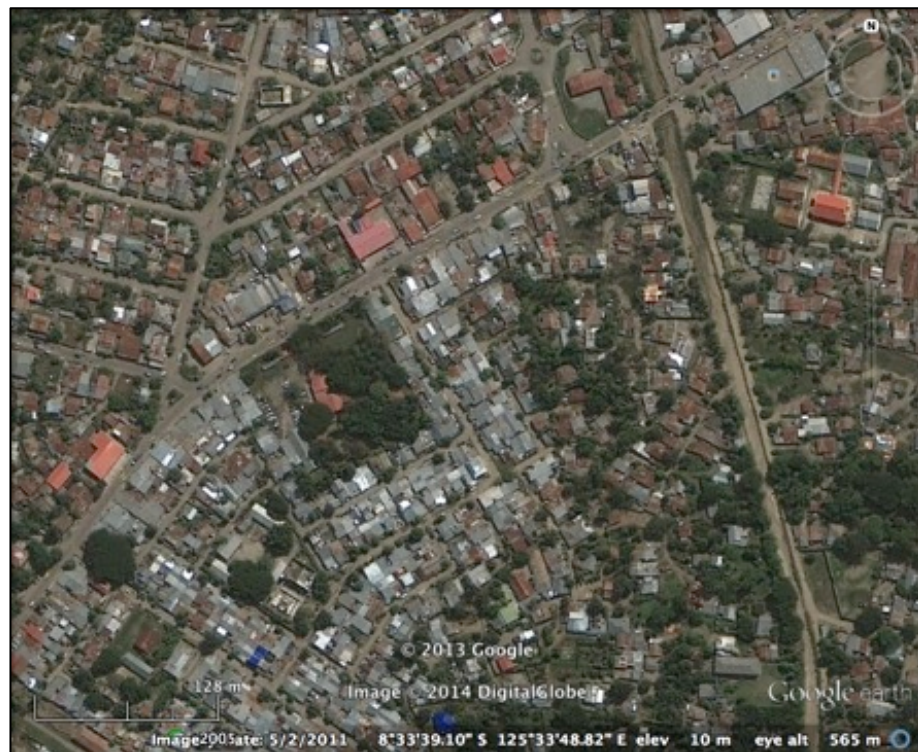
Like the sub-district that it is part of, where more than 75 per cent of the population come from outside Dili (Neupert and Lopes, 2006: 37), Perumnas is a migrant neighbourhood. According to locals, until the Indonesians built housing complexes there for their military and civil administration around 1992, it was mostly just farmland. Around 88 per cent of residents claim to own their houses in this neighbourhood (World Bank, 2010), but this is highly unlikely because, except for the *aldeia* THT, this housing belongs to the state. Nonetheless, people firmly believe the housing is theirs through first occupation; the expression used to justify this claim is "*Hau mak hamoos*", which means literally "*I am the one who cleaned it*"[107] denoting their repair of the houses after they were ransacked by departing troops and militias.

The population in this neighbourhood reflects the wider East Timorese urban society in terms of age, with more than 50 per cent of inhabitants aged 24 or under. Most houses have only three rooms, with an average of seven people per house, making for crowded living conditions. Over 40 per cent of the population in this neighbourhood self-identify as unemployed, reflecting a wider pattern in Dili as a whole. A further 25.8 per cent identify as self-employed, more than likely in the informal economy. Only 14.8 per cent have stable employment (World Bank, 2010).

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[107] Interview with Perumnas resident, Melbourne, August 14, 2010.

There is also considerable diversity in the number of district and linguistic groups settled here, with all 13 districts of East Timor represented. According to locals, however, the dominant groups come from the Western districts of Maliana and Ainaro, then Baucau and Viqueque from the east, a contention reflected in the statistics as shown at Figure 43. Only 13 per cent of the population claim to be Dili born (World Bank, 2010). Even these statistics do not tell the complete story. Given the nature of chain migration, where family members from rural districts follow other family members who have already established themselves in the city, many of these groups come from particular villages in these districts. Those from Bobonaro District, for example, are nearly all from four *aldeias* in the same *suku* and from the same *uma lulik*.[108]

Figure 43: Population of Perumnas by district of origin (World Bank, 2010)
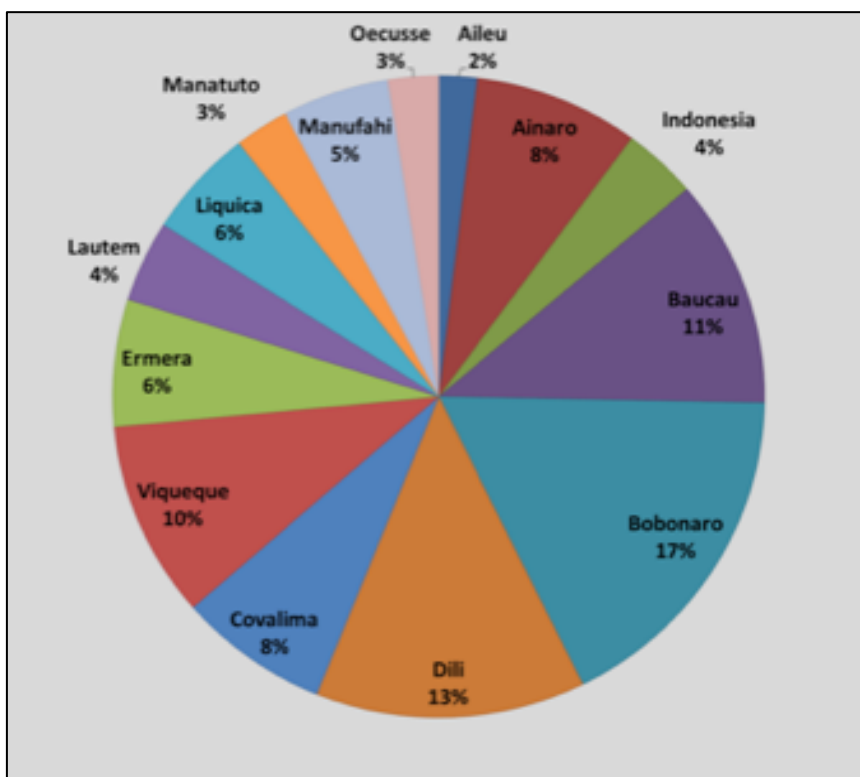
The map shown at Figure 44 was divided up, after consultation with *aldeia* elders, youth group leaders and crosschecking with local residents, into district enclaves.[109] *Aldeias* are not officially mapped and so, in the city at least, their boundaries are highly subjective and open to individual or communal interpretation, and therefore highly contested. Sometimes attempts to map them by authorities have ended in conflict (Catholic Relief Services, 2010). But while the lines shown here do not represent exact boundaries, they do show the rough location of these different district and linguistic blocs. As the map here indicates, while there are some blocs of dominant

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[108] Interview with Perumnas and Molop resident, Dili, July 1, 2011.
[109] Focus group, Perumnas, Dili, July 19, 2009.

groups, there are also mixed areas, and numerous smaller enclaves. As the map shows, for example, a community of people from Lospalos[110] occupy one side of a street, at the boundary of two *aldeias*. According to one of the Lospalos inhabitants, there are also numerous Lospalos enclaves or single households dotted throughout Perumnas.[111]

Figure 44: Perumnas *aldeias* by district and group territory (ANU CAP, 2013c)

8.1.1   Rural-urban population movements

These populations are, however, by no means static. There are five to six significant cyclical and circular population movements per year in East Timor, as described by Perumnas locals.[112] Between 1 and 2 November of each year, for example, many Dili residents travel to their home districts to commemorate *Loron Matebian* (also known as All Souls Day). Then there are public holidays such as Christmas, New Year and Easter when people travel back to the districts. In August and September, students arrive in Dili from the districts to register for school and university, or head to the districts for school holidays. July to September is also the dry season and therefore a time when people go back to the rural districts to hold weddings or for traditional ceremonies such as repairing *uma luliks* or *kor metan*.[113] There are other seasonal

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[110] Lospalos is a sub-district of the Lautem District in the Eastern tip of East Timor.

[111] Interview with Lospalos born Perumnas resident, Melbourne, August 14, 2010.

[112] Focus group, Perumnas, Dili, July 19, 2009.

[113] Ceremony for removing black clothing and other symbols of mourning to mark the one year anniversary of the deceased person's date of death.

movements too, such as people coming in to Dili to sell agricultural produce (many do this on a daily basis) or collect and spend their profits from the sale of their coffee. These population movements also coincide with peaks and troughs in conflict (Benini, 2009). As one source in the Dili National Hospital claimed, the coffee picking season, for example, inevitably revives land disputes and the profits from coffee sales are often spent on alcohol, which also results in violence.[114] Public holidays also result in spikes in violence. Then there is the constant inflow of rural youth to the city looking for work; many Dili residents tell of unexpected relatives from the districts (that they often never knew they had), who simply arrive on their doorstep expecting to be fed. The transitory nature of the population is reflected in the statistic that at least 36 per cent of the inhabitants of this neighbourhood have been there five years or less, and about 18 per cent have been there two years or less (World Bank, 2010). Such frequent population movements make this a highly fluid social environment. As Barber advises, in describing similar dynamics in a Port Moresby, PNG squatter settlement, it is analytically more useful to view such a neighbourhood not as a set of built structures, but more flexibly as a changing set of social relations (Barber, cited in Goddard, 2005: 30).

8.1.2   Contested authority

The fragmented nature of linguistic and descent group settlement patterns has a number of implications for community cohesion, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. According to Cummins and Leach, there are accepted hierarchies followed in resolving disputes at a local level. These chiefly involve the elected *chefe de aldeia* and traditionally legitimated *lia na'in* at the *aldeia* level; and the elected *chefe de suku* and traditional *lia na'in* at the *suku* level (Cummins and Leach, 2013: 172). However, as the 2010 World Bank survey of Perumnas found, while traditional authorities were the main sources of security, there were often highly ambivalent attitudes towards such authority, varying considerably from *aldeia* to *aldeia,* and there are a number of reasons for this (World Bank, 2010). During the communal violence of 2006-07, in many cases *chefes de aldeias* alienated sections of their community through sectarian behaviour such as involvement in, or endorsement of, arson, looting and intimidation (there are many cases of *chefe de aldeias* or *chefe de sukus* around Dili or Timor Leste also being MAG or gang leaders). Conversely, traditional leaders have sometimes gained respect across linguistic and descent group boundaries, either through neutrality, protecting victims, or through playing a mediation role. A case in point is the *chefe de aldeia* of *Aldeia Avanca* who,

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[114] Interview with head of admissions, Dili National Hospital, June 23, 2009.

despite being born in Maliana District in the far West of East Timor, has been accepted as a leader by groups in the *aldeia* from districts all over Timor Leste.[115]

Another reason for such ambivalent attitudes towards traditional authority, however, is that as settlement patterns in Perumnas and other hybrid urban neighbourhoods are highly fragmented, so, therefore, is traditional leadership. Given that traditional authority stems from family lineage, the ad hoc, patchwork nature of these neighbourhoods makes it is highly unlikely that any of the *chefe de aldeias* represent their whole *aldeia* in the way that they would in a conventional, rural *aldeia*. The less homogenous the community, the less authority a traditional leader is likely to have and vice versa. Even where an *aldeia* may be linguistically homogenous, this does not guarantee peace, as there may be a number of different families from different rural *aldeias* within that area, who may even be in conflict with each other in their rural area of origin. In rural *aldeias*, while there are certainly exceptions, traditional authorities generally have some measure of control over youth groups, MAGs and gangs – and are often the ones who are manipulating these groups, as is frequently the case in Dili. In the more heterogeneous parts of migrant suburbs, such as *Aldeia Moris Ba Dame* in this study, traditional authorities often only have a tenuous hold, at best, over these groups. While in many more established *aldeias*, residents have accepted, over time, the authority of leaders from other descent groups, in these new *aldeias*, it is unlikely that a *chefe de aldeia* will have authority over any groups other than their own descent group. In some *aldeias*, where one descent group predominates, for example, the *chefe de aldeia* will have more authority, but some *chefe de aldeias* may only represent an enclave of their *aldeia* – a cluster of a dozen houses in one case.

As stated earlier, cyclical and permanent rural urban migration can also change the demographic status overtime, so that one group may decline in numbers while another grows, which may lead to the undermining of *chefe de aldeia* authority and even a leadership change at election times. A common complaint too is that many rural youth newly arriving in an *aldeia*[116] do not recognise the authority of traditional leaders, as they do not come from the same *aldeia* or extended family.

Perumnas is a migrant neighbourhood, and so most groups' source of traditional authority resides in their district and *aldeia* of origin. As described earlier, people are constantly returning to their *aldeia* of origin for traditional ceremonies and to rebuild their *uma luliks*. This is where their communal landholdings and family networks are located and these must be constantly

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[115] Interview with Lospalos born Perumnas resident, Melbourne, August 14, 2010
[116] A common theme in interviews, conversation and focus groups during my evaluation of the Catholic Relief Services peacebuilding project was the impact of such people from outside in reigniting dormant tensions or derailing peace treaties.

maintained, and so this is where people's primary loyalties lie. Accordingly, many people keep a dual residency in both Dili and the districts. Therefore, given the recent nature of settlement, it is hardly surprising that there are few traditional leaders such as *dato* or *lia na'in* who have the authority for performing the necessary rituals for the *tara bandu* ceremonies now becoming vogue in government or in NGO sponsored community mediation ceremonies, as will be discussed in more detail towards the end of this chapter.

8.2   Dynamics of communal conflict

The previous chapter provided a broad outline of urban-based groups, an examination of local constructions of crime and violence and the phenomenon of multiple identities and memberships. The following section provides a case study of the linkages between the different Perumnas based groups and their communities, and discusses how the fluid and hybrid nature of these groups, and their capacity for multiple identities and memberships, contributes to conflict dynamics.

8.2.1   The groups of Perumnas

While other factors such as unemployment, boredom, inter-regional tensions and ineffective policing play a part, the leadership vacuum and lack of a coherent and cohesive social structure as just described must be seen as a contributory factor to Perumnas's unusually high concentration of gangs, martial arts groups (MAGs) and youth groups. There are more than a dozen of such groups in Perumnas, in addition to a similar number of national level groups, particularly MAGs, in an area not much bigger than a one-hectare block, which makes Perumnas a particularly useful location to examine these groups in their social context. Figure 45 shows a pie graph on the wall of a disused basketball court in the *Moris Ba Dame Aldeia* proclaiming an alliance of nine different martial arts and clandestine/ritual arts groups, including KORK, Seven-Seven, Taekwondo, Karate and Kung Fu Master (PSHT's name was blacked out in 2007 after their conflict with other groups began) but there are other national groups present in this neighbourhood too, such as COLIMAU 2000 and Sagrada Familia.

Figure 45: Perumnas MAG alliance

In addition to these national level groups are an unusual proliferation of around a dozen self-styled 'youth groups', which, as outlined in Chapter Six, in most cases are really hybrids of gang and youth group, but some resemble emergent community based organisations. These youth groups were to a large extent from Western districts, drawn from the same descent groups. While some claim to have Eastern members, these were invariably found to have one parent from the same linguistic group as the others and so were accepted as 'brothers'. The map at Figure 44, derived from an original map hand drawn by a local youth group, BURADO, also shows the neighbourhood divided into youth group territories (identified through the red dots).

In terms of territories, the youth groups are highly localised, found only in particular streets or street corners, with highly defined territories. In most cases, these territories corresponded with settlement clusters of the same descent group, such as in the case of BURADO, who were drawn from the same Maliana District Bunak speaking descent group. Martial arts groups, such as KORK and PSHT and former clandestine groups, such as Seven-Seven, tend to occupy zones largely divided into pro or anti PSHT areas. PSHT occupies the area north of the main road, including part of THT, and most of the anti PSHT groups reside in the south side, including Perumnas.

All these groups claim to provide 'security' for their neighbourhoods, but in many cases they are the chief source of insecurity. Many of them sustain themselves through 'taxes' on local businesses, a fact attested to by the statistic that almost 100 per cent of Perumnas businesses report being intimidated for 'protection' money (World Bank, 2010). This group diversity has ensured that Perumnas is probably one of the most complex, unique, and at times, most violent neighbourhoods in the capital Dili.

8.2.2 Rural urban linkages

While communal conflict often appears random to outsiders, there are some consistent patterns. *Aldeia* and family membership often coincides with membership of martial arts groups and other groups like Seven-Seven or COLIMAU 2000. While this appears to be a more common feature of rural areas, especially those areas harbouring longstanding historical tensions like Atsabe in the Western districts, or Uatolari in the Eastern districts, this is not uncommon in the capital Dili. Such symmetries characterise a number of ongoing communal conflicts in other areas in Dili such as Bebonuk, Fatuhada and Delta in the *suku* of Comoro.

Until the 2007 conflict, which consolidated MAG territories into more discrete territories, MAG membership in the recently settled *aldeias* in Perumnas was fragmented, with pockets of martial arts groups throughout the four *aldeias* there. The pattern, however, tended to be that these groups belonged to the same descent group, reflecting their membership from the same *aldeia* or district of origin. Rather than arriving in the city and joining groups out of despair or frustration, many, if not most, were already members of MAGs or other ISGs before they arrived. The KORK members, for example, tend to be from Suro in Ainaro, the natal area of their founder, Naimori, or from Uatolari in Viqueque. Therefore, these groups dominate in the areas where their extended family is most numerous. So, for example, one or two blocks will be predominantly KORK members from Viqueque, whereas further up the road there might be another KORK enclave composed entirely of Ainaro youth from Suro Kraik. PSHT members in Perumnas tend to hail from Manutasi in Ainaro (also the natal area of their ex-leader Jaime Lopes) and Bobonaro district.[117] By contrast, in THT, the *aldeia* bordering Perumnas, which as described earlier is composed of pre-1975 Portuguese housing, is split into two, with one half comprised of an extended family from *Aldeia* Molop Tasi in Bobonaro Sub-District, and predominantly belonging to the MAGs *Rajawali* and *Kera Sakti*, and the other half comprised of an extended family unit from *Aldeia* Manu Tasi in Ainaro*,* which is predominantly PSHT.[118]

Therefore, before and after the 2006 violence, MAG violence in Perumnas was characterised not so much by monolithic MAG battles between MAG X versus MAG Y, but family versus family from a particular rural *suku*; for example, a family from Suro, Ainaro District, represented by KORK, fighting a family from Manu Tasi, Ainaro, represented by PSHT. This dynamic can also be observed in many other conflicts in Dili. As described below, much of the contemporary fighting is between members of the same descent group from Bobonaro, divided into KORK and *Kera Sakti* versus PSHT factions. Constant cyclical waves of circular migration

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[117] Focus group with BURADO members, January 16, 2008.
[118] Interview with Perumnas and Molop resident, Dili, July 1, 2011.

operate to ensure that previously dormant disputes are suddenly, and, to outside observers, arbitrarily re-ignited. Evidently, peacebuilding or mediation processes premised on the meta narratives of inter-MAG competition, East-West rivalry or poverty and disadvantage would not address the root causes of these conflicts.

8.2.3   Scale shift

As with group and family affiliations, there are frequently associations between these and political party affiliation. As described in Chapter Six, while there are no formal links between martial arts groups and political parties, PSHT is nonetheless popularly identified with the Democratic Party (PD). KORK, in turn, has been closely associated with FRETILIN, the party of the former government. Both groups have at different times been used for organised violence. Therefore conflict between, for example, KORK and an affiliated family from Suro in Ainaro against a PSHT affiliated family from Manu Tasi or Kasa will take the overt form of FRETILIN versus PD political violence. This phenomenon of political party loyalties dovetailing with family and gang or MAG membership renders some conflicts particularly complex and sets up recurrent conflict patterns; a fight at a wedding party, for example, can become a MAG conflict, drawing in members from outside the *aldeia* and sparking conflict in other *aldeias*, and in turn escalate into a political and communal conflict drawing in a wider field and area of antagonists.

Broad regional-political symmetries formed the pattern of violence for most of 2006 in Perumnas and the rest of the city. Mobs drawn from the ranks of PSHT, Seven-Seven, a collection of Western region gangs like Ameu Van Damme's group and also opportunistic neighbours from all over Perumnas and neighbouring *aldeias* attacked KORK members and Eastern enclaves, which were all conflated as being pro-FRETILIN.[119] By the end of 2006, through a sustained campaign of violence, intimidation and arson, Perumnas was largely cleared of Easterners, except for a few who had intermarried with Westerners or had 'integrated' with the community.[120] Most did not return until mid-2008 or later (Norwegian Refugee Council 2008).

The second conflict to affect Perumnas, and almost the whole country, was very different in nature. Although conflict broke out in a number of rural districts, leading to over a hundred deaths between November 2006 and October 2007 (UNMIT, 2007), in the capital Dili this conflict played out almost entirely between Western districts groups. Easterners, many still

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[119] Interviews with UN Political Affairs July 24, 2006; Belun conflict resolution team member, October 24, 2006; Inter-NGO Conflict Monitoring team member, January 21, 2008; Norwegian Refugee Commission MAG outreach worker, January 21, 2008
[120] Easterners, particularly the Makassae linguistic group, were often framed as outsiders or newcomers, even by WesternWesterners who were equally new themselves.

residing in IDP camps, were now largely spectators. Beginning in November 2006, instead of broad regional lines, this conflict was between families, largely divided along *aldeia* boundaries. In Perumnas, as with Dili as a whole, people largely forgot about East and West and the majority of groups turned against PSHT.[121]

In Perumnas, the conflict was sparked by a series of attacks in early January, 2007, by PSHT members from neighbouring *Aldeia* Ailok Laran on local residents and members of rival groups KORK and Seven-Seven. In one incident in early 2007, that was to spark a conflict that lasted a year and led to dozens of fatalities, a drunken member of PSHT demanded money from a minibus driver, who happened to be the brother of a KORK member. A series of reprisals ensued, ending with the deaths of the minibus driver (who was also an off duty PNTL member) and a highly respected and popular local youth leader who had tried to mediate, Joao Karau.[122] These killings then drew further payback cycles – video footage, for example, of the PNTL member's funeral shows youth waving *rakitans* (homemade guns) and vowing revenge.[123]

By coincidence, however, in reaction to escalating violence in Dili and the Western districts, UNMIT's newly formed Gang Task Force decided to arrest the PSHT leader Jaime Lopes after he refused to cooperate in peace talks.[124] Taking advantage of the arrest of Lopes and many of the PSHT members, in a combined community assault involving not only local groups and community members, but also people from surrounding areas including Caicoli, Vila Verde and Matadouro,[125] the PSHT headquarters and the houses of PSHT members and their families in Perumnas were razed to the ground. The PSHT members were forced to take refuge in IDP camps (sometimes uneasily sharing facilities with the families they had themselves victimised in 2006).

After a temporary lull, PSHT regrouped, with many members and their families resettling in the THT *aldeia*, already a PSHT stronghold and surrounding areas. The road dividing the two communities thereby became a battlefield almost every night for most of 2007. This broader national conflict led to an anti-PSHT coalition calling itself the '*Rai Na'in*' (originals or indigenous) group (*Diario Nacional,* Dili, November 24, 2006, 11). As described in Chapter Six, PSHT was established in East Timor by the Indonesian Special Forces KOPASSUS. PSHT was therefore framed as pro-autonomy, and graffiti equating PSHT with the pro-autonomy Indonesian militias appeared within Perumnas and along the wall that marks the boundary

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[121] Perumnas resident and member of inter-NGO peacebuilding outreach team
[122] Interview with resident of Moris Ba Dame village, Bairro Pite, March 16, 2010.
[123] Amateur video footage taken by BURADO member.
[124] Interview with member of UN Gang Task Force, Dili, January 21, 2008.
[125] Interview with local resident and member of inter-NGO peacebuilding outreach team, January 21, 2008.

between THT and Perumnas (see Figure 44). THT is also the residence of the ex-Police Commander Paulo Martins and his extended family. Martins's former employment in POLRI (former Indonesian police) was therefore claimed as further proof of his pro-autonomy leanings, and, by association, the pro-autonomy leanings of his whole family and *aldeia*.

Figure 46: Graffiti equating PSHT with the 1999 militia

The conflict therefore took on two phases. First, largely motivated by a social jealousy driven desire to evict squatters from vacant housing, the conflict was couched in terms of a national cleavage of East-versus West enmity and a FRETILIN versus Gusmão and affiliated parties' rivalry. Then, a localised and most likely family-related dispute arising from a drunken killing acquired the gloss of a MAG conflict, and subsequently became linked to a historically based pro-independence versus pro-autonomy narrative, elevating this conflict to a national scale. This narrative also operated as a convenient framing device, allowing previous adversaries among FRETILIN and PD factions to bond around a common rallying call. This conflict then became woven into a wider, national cleavage. This conflict was to become one of the most heated and deadliest of the 2007 violence in the Dili area, with many of the fatalities that occurred in 2007 taking place in this area and surrounds.[126] There were also multiple paradoxes in this conflict, with MAGs set up by the Indonesian military, such as *Kera Sakti* and *Rajawali*, describing themselves as 'originals' in the anti-PSHT alliance. Some communities or groups in conflict with PSHT had former Ainaro *Mahidi* militia members within their ranks (see Figure 47). This meant that real pro-autonomy militia were fighting members of PSHT falsely accused of being pro-autonomy militia. While considerably mitigated by the presence of a strategically located UN police post at the intersection between the two *aldeia* boundaries, enmity still simmers between the two communities, and while they have accepted Easterners back to their homes, they have refused to take back PSHT members.

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[126] An observation based on a survey of press clippings, UNPOL broadcasts and security updates in 2007. A full archive of UNPOL security briefings from 2006-2007 can be found at the *East Timor Legal News* Archive 2006-2008 at: http://unpol-easttimor.blogspot.com.au/

Figure 47: Fresh *Mahidi* militia graffiti, Perumnas, 2006[127]

Most fighting today, as was the case before 2006, takes place between an extended family from *Aldeia* Mawi in Bobonaro District in the Perumnas *Aldeia* THT, who are members of PSHT, and other members from this same family from the neighbouring Bobonaro *Aldeia* Anapol, who now also live in the Perumnas *Aldeia Rio De Janeiro*, who are predominantly *Kera Sakti* MAG members. Locals claim that the tensions between these families, from the same *uma lulik*, originate in a land dispute between their *aldeias* in Bobonaro District dating back to Indonesian times, kept alive by family members travelling to and from the city. Sometimes the causes for the conflict between these groups may be more local and immediate. *Kera Sakti*, Seven-Seven and PSHT also competed for local gambling and protection rackets, especially for the Chinese brothel (now burned down) that bordered the territories of the two groups. Payback for killings committed in 2007 also drives continued tensions, but also more mundane issues such as garbage disposal, livestock theft and access to clean water.

The dynamics described here are encapsulated in this diagram at Figure 48. As happened many times in 2006-07, the kind of localised, personal disputes that have been described here can 'jump scale' when one or more of the affected parties belong to a MAG – an identity which may in turn be connected to a communal identity, such as family and even a rural village of origin identity – which may in turn be involved in a communal dispute, and attendant political party affiliation. Therefore, a fight over a girl at a wedding in Dili, for example, can turn into a fight between *Kera Sakti* and PSHT. A MAG dispute may in turn escalate to a FRETILIN versus PD dispute, incorporating pro or anti independence narratives, and connect with a rural land dispute. Conversely, political tensions at a national level can ignite previously dormant localised personal or family disputes, as happened in 2006 and 2007. All these conflicts can begin from any point in the spectrum outlined in Figure 48.

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[127] I met the *Mahidi* member who claimed to have painted this graffiti. As mentioned in Chapter Seven, BURADO members vouched for his 'reformed' status, although he displayed fresh wounds denoting a continued propensity for violence.

Figure 48: Conflict dynamics
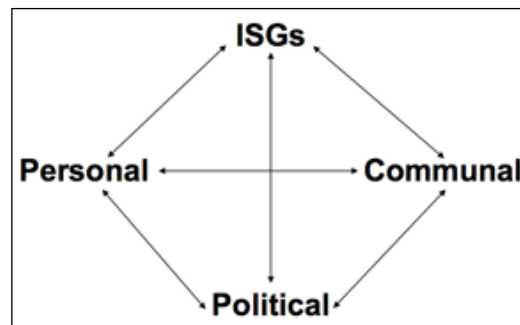
People may also pick times of political and social upheaval as a cover to enact overdue payback killings, so that the violence can appear random or politically motivated, when it in fact has a long history, and an origin not necessarily in the location of the killing. These dynamics reflect O'Lear and Diehl's characterisation of sub-national conflict as highly fluid and dynamic, with multiple levels of overlapping activities and relations of interest linking processes, groups of actors (which may be nation-states, local governments, groups, or individuals), types of networks and places to conflict (2007: 169). Scale, therefore, may continuously change when national tensions spark localised tensions, and vice versa, with national level events such as elections reigniting tensions at a local level.

8.2.4   Implications for peacebuilding

The dynamics described here have important implications for peacebuilding. Peacebuilding efforts by Government agencies, local and international NGOs have been roundly criticised by Perumnas locals for misdiagnosing both the causes and scale of the conflict. Efforts at rebuilding trust between Eastern families and Western families, as part of the national *simu malu* IDP return process[128] in the neighbourhood, continued well into 2009. These efforts failed to account for the fact that many of the IDP's were not from the east but were instead families of PSHT members from Western districts. While Eastern families had generally committed no crime other than to occupy (in many cases quite legally) houses coveted by others, or have well-paid jobs, PSHT members had committed 'blood crimes'[129] during the violence of 2007, which generated payback obligations among family members. The 2007 violence, therefore, required

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[128] *Simu Malu* and *Fila Fali (receive each other and return)* was the UNDP and IOM supported East Timorese Government initiative to return IDPs back to their communities through a process of community mediation and compensation to victims (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2006c).
[129] 'Blood crimes', unlike mere violence or intimidation trigger strong payback or restorative justice punitive sanctions, as described in Chapter Four.

far more serious sanctions and compensation than merely community mediation sessions. As one chefe de aldeia said, "They have resolved the 2006 conflict, but not 2007".[130]

The increasing utilisation of traditional ceremonies such as *tara bandu* by the East Timorese Government and international NGOs must also be viewed with caution in such a heterogeneous, urban environment. As Boege (2006: 6) also argues, in his discussion of international interventions in non-Western contexts, simplistic assumptions of the legitimacy of traditional authority can undermine the success of peacebuilding programs. One witness described a peace ceremony in another migrant suburb where only one of the antagonist groups appeared at the mediation ceremony, as they were the only group to have a traditional authority present in Dili.[131] In another mediation ceremony observed by the author in Perumnas in 2009, conducted by an international NGO, only leaders of communities not in conflict with each other attended.

In some instances, particular linguistic groups may be more scattered than others and may have no formal or traditional leadership at all. One Lospalos resident of Perumnas reported that despite being violently evicted form their houses in 2006 by many of their neighbours, because their community are scattered in pockets over four *aldeias*, they have never been involved in any peace process, as they do not have a formal leader. They claimed that when the community accepted their return to their original houses they had been driven from, it was not because they had sat down face to face with the community and mediated their conflict, but because the community had made the decision in their absence, and so many of the tensions were still unresolved. These Lospalos residents claimed that while they voted for a widely respected Maliana born *chefe de aldeia* and allowed him to represent them in civil matters, this *chefe de aldeia* could not represent them in the case of a *tara bandu* ceremony, given that this ceremony draws on ancestral sanctions to enforce obedience to peace processes.[132]

Such complexities are, however, beginning to be acknowledged. As one recent Asia Foundation report admitted, *tara bandu* does not always ensure the buy-in of a critical mass of community members. In addition, the incorrect application of the procedures, such as not having the appropriate traditional authorities present, severely undermines the legitimacy of the process. As the report also noted, people from outside who enter the area regulated by a *tara bandu* are not bound by its sanctions, (Asia Foundation/Belun, 2013), so the constant process of rural urban migration must be seen as a serious impediment to the effective application of such traditional processes in urban areas. As the report went on to say, for *tara bandu* to be successful in an urban context, it was vital to 'know the map of Dili', including knowing which communities are

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[130] Focus group, Perumnas, July 19, 2009.
[131] Personal communication with anthropologist Susana Barnes, Dili, January 19, 2008.
[132] Maliana and Lospalos lie at the two most geographically opposite East and West poles of East Timor.

based in which areas and the nature of their historical and present-day interactions (Asia Foundation/Belun, 2013: 24). In any case, if the source of conflict or tensions is misidentified, such as mediating long past 2006 East versus West tensions instead of a 2007 murder, or mediating the wrong communities, a *tara bandu* ceremony, no matter how well conducted, will have little effect.

Community members also complained that mediation sessions were held at a *suku* level, whereas conflict occurred at an *aldeia* level. They also complained that in many cases, people who were not in conflict with each other were being mediated, as described earlier. One example they gave was that of the local representatives of two MAGs chosen to participate in a one-year mediation-training course. Locals claimed that the two were old friends who simply belonged to opposing MAGs, and came from *aldeias* not actually experiencing conflict.[133] Simply gathering leaders, then, from a general area affected by conflict, rather than rigorously assessing the scale, location and dynamics of the conflict, will not effectively identify the key antagonists, the issues driving the conflict, or the actual leaders of the antagonist groups. National level initiatives such as employment programs, scholarships or a National Youth Council (Perumnas youth had no idea who their representative was) may mitigate conflict to some degree, but it will not address the specific and interlinked sources of conflict at a local level.

Given the dynamics described above, the causes of conflict may appear straightforward, but often have a longer and more complex history, so a more ethnographic evidence base is needed to identify and unravel the true cause. Sometimes the source of the conflict may originate in the village of origin, so mediation may need to take place at both rural and urban locations. As other authors have observed of local level conflicts in the Philippines and the DRC, conflict management at the local level may also require actions at a higher, interrelated level to enable the delinking of local conflict from interstate or regional conflict (Autesserre, 2007; 2008; Canuday, 2007).

8.3   Symptoms of alienation or forms of resilience?

Violence and gangs, however, are not necessarily the inevitable outcome of such an environment as described here. As Brown notes, too narrow a focus on problems and their causes can ignore sources of community resilience – the community-driven creative responses and capacities for endurance to such difficult environments (2007: 9). The residents of Perumnas have shown resilience to this environment in a number of ways. There are, as

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[133] Focus group Perumnas, Dili, January 21, 2008.

described in Chapter Seven, a variety of other types of groups in Perumnas. Youth groups and street corner 'crews', given their highly localised, fluid and social nature, exhibit characteristics at considerable variance from MAGs and clandestine groups. While members of MAGs and other such groups emphasise sport and self-defence as primary motivations for involvement, youth group members (who are frequently also members of MAGs) put more emphasis on collective identities and social activities such as art, music and socialising. While they might self-identify as youth groups, it is more useful to view them as social networks. Cattell (2001), in describing the social groups that formed on poor housing estates in London, UK, devised five types of networks. One such group, which Cattell termed the 'homogenous network', is a term most apt for these Perumnas youth groups. The 'homogenous network', in Cattell's typology, is predominantly comprised of an extended family, plus a smaller number of friends and neighbours (2001: 1506). Most of these street corner groups found in the Perumnas area would fall into this category. While a few friends and neighbours might join, they are generally composed of one extended family from a rural district.

The largest Perumnas youth group, BURADO, described in Chapter Seven, organises a variety of civic-minded community activities, including sporting competitions, community educational activities and neighbourhood renewal projects. Before disbanding sometime after 2010, the group claimed over 100 members and a women's division about 30 strong. As the BURADO women members claimed, they formed their group as a way of coping with conflict and adversity, 'to bring people together and help their community'.[134] BURADO have also played a key role in mediation, assisting the return of former residents to their homes. While its members claim it was almost entirely composed of one extended family from Maliana, it grew to over a hundred members and a considerably more diverse membership.

Figure 49: BURADO women's division

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[134] Interview with BURADO members, Dili, October 22, 2008.

Seeing the popularity and prestige BURADO enjoyed in the community – and some of the benefits of this popularity such as donated computers and sporting equipment, it began to attract anti-social groups who have demonstrably modified their behaviour in order to participate in BURADO's activities. One such group is JOCAR, an abbreviation of the name of its founder Joao Carau, a former member of a gang headed by the notorious Timorese underworld figure 'Hercules' in Tanah Abang, Jakarta (Wilson, 2006). Mostly drawn from migrant Bunak youth from Bobonaro District, JOCAR had a poor reputation and constantly fought with neighbouring groups and MAGs. When early in 2005, a member of BURADO killed a member of JOCAR, there were fears of reprisals and a major conflict.[135] One of the leaders of BURADO, as described in Chapter Seven, organised joint journalism classes between JOCAR and BURADO, resulting in one JOCAR member finding a job with a local radio station, thereby averting conflict. With the help of this same BURADO member, JOCAR have transformed themselves into a boxing club, who have applied to join East Timor's fledgling National Boxing Federation (see Figure 50). Using the tradition of 'tough love' promoted by their former leader Joao Carau, this group have hitherto kept their *aldeia* 'Avanca' largely free of conflict.[136]

Youth groups are, however, by no means static, having shown over time, as in the case of JOCAR, an ability to evolve and adapt to a changing environment. Some groups have disappeared, while new ones have appeared on a regular basis. BURADO, a largely socially oriented group replaced *Gangtitis-Gangtilis*, an anti-social group. BURADO began life as an impromptu social club of migrant youth from Maliana, but seeing that they could attract funding and donor support, they developed a code of ethics, an organisational structure and opened a bank account, akin to a small community based organisation. Through slow attrition due to leading members studying, getting married or finding jobs, BURADO, while it still exists in name, has largely disbanded, to be replaced by *Fitun* (star). While BURADO was largely composed of one extended family group and located in one village, *Fitun* has membership across a number of linguistic groups and areas of Dili.

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[135] Such reprisals have in the past led to bitter feuds in this neighbourhood – many Perumnas locals still talk of the 2000 street brawl of over 500 people between PSHT and members of a Lospalos gang over a *bola guling* racket (a traditional form of gambling like roulette).
[136] Interview with BURADO member and JOCAR members March 3, 2011.

Figure 50: Bairro Pite Boxing Club (formerly JOCAR)

These youth groups can be reconceptualised not as gangs or merely peer groups, but as informal migrant associations, similar to, for example, the migrant village associations of Peru or Mexico in Latin America (Wilson, 2006) or Cairo in Egypt (Hirabayashi, 1986), which organised voluntary social services and lobbied the government for tenancy rights and access to water, or closer to Timor Leste, the clan based *Toba Batak* migrant associations of Indonesia (Abu-Lughod, 1961). As Graves (1974) points out, these groups provide status and prestige, reinforce ethnic (or in the East Timorese case, descent group or rural district) identity and a connection to their home village. Far from weakening kinship ties and family identity, through group interdependence, urban life may actually reinforce them. They provide their members with a means of individual and collective adaptation to the urban setting and also as a vehicle to leverage resources. In the absence of effective traditional authority and social structures, they provide structure and an assigned role (Graves and Graves, 1974: 137).

8.4   Conclusion

As this case study has shown, while to some extent poverty, a youth bulge and lack of traditional social structures (Arnold, 2009b; Shoesmith, 2007b) can present challenges to social cohesion and mediation efforts, the roots of conflict are much more complex. This case study has demonstrated that communal tensions quite often have a rural origin, for example, connected to land and other issues, and are largely unrelated to poverty and disadvantage. While there are many unconnected itinerant youth newly arrived from the country, the youth of these informal settlements are generally intricately connected to wider social networks in their rural area of origin and bring their MAG and political affiliations with them, often perpetuating rurally based conflicts in Dili. It is also not just poor people who commit crime and violence. Long established and more affluent communities, with presumably higher levels of stability,

social cohesion and more coherent traditional authority structures, can mobilise for violence against more recent and more impoverished communities.

This case study has demonstrated the social complexity of an urban informal settlement, and the limitations of assumptions about the efficacy of traditional authority and stability of social structures and boundaries. It has also illustrated the complex links between ISGs, descent groups, rural urban migration and conflict; that conflict commonly portrayed as MAG conflict is often far more complex when disaggregated down to the micro-level. Intricate rural-urban linkages with villages of origin and constant population movements ensure conflict always has the potential to reignite without warning or apparent reason. Symmetries between descent group, MAG and political affiliation also mean that localised conflict can 'jump scale' (O'Lear and Diehl, 2011: 34), igniting a wider conflict. Such symmetries and multiple identities can also mean that purely localised conflicts can assume the form of national level cleavages, such as regional or pro or anti-independence narratives (Kalyvas, 2003: 483), obscuring the true source of the conflict.

These dynamics have a number of implications for peacebuilding. Approaches, for example, that assume static, cohesive and homogenous communities and chains of authority or rely on traditional sanctions or rituals, will be ultimately ineffective. Approaches that assume that MAGs and other informal security groups are separate or alienated from their communities may be equally ineffective. As demonstrated here, MAG members are part of the community and more often than not, their conflicts merely reproduce pre-existing communal tensions. Failure to recognise the localised nature of conflict, and linkages with broader or national level cleavages or tensions has also impeded peacebuilding initiatives. As suggested by O'Lear (2007), seeing beyond national level cleavages and master narratives such as regional schisms, to identify the true source, scale and actual location of a conflict, is vital to its resolution.

This chapter has also shown how informal security groups, such as those described here, cannot be generalised as symptoms of unemployment and rapid urbanisation and that violence has not always been the outcome. As Rogers argues of similar groups in Nicaragua, such groups can be seen as a sort of street level politics or sub-politics – the small-scale social practices imbued with political authority, with the ability to structure or change living conditions, rather than a source of chaos and disorder (Rodgers, 2006: 288). They can, in many cases, be considered as active responses or adaptations to the challenges of migration and an unfamiliar urban setting. A number of groups in Perumnas have found alternative ways to cope with this environment, attempting to revitalise their neighbourhoods and in some cases, as Richards and Roberts term it, exercise a form of 'direct community governance' (1998: 8). As Lewis contends,

urbanisation and poverty do not necessarily result in societal breakdown; such generalisations may be culturally informed and, as has been shown here, are in need of re-examination (1952: 32).

CHAPTER NINE: Conclusion

This thesis has argued that conflict in East Timor is considerably more complex, dynamic and prevalent than current understandings, which has implications for future peacebuilding responses. Conflict in East Timor, and the related social phenomenon of multiple ISGs, is generally portrayed as a recent and urban phenomenon. The bulk of scholarship on post-independence conflict has focussed on a narrow time frame between April and June 2006, during the series of violent events in the capital Dili known as the Crisis. Explanations for the Crisis have been dominated by national level, urban and elite centric master narratives of state-building, political rivalry, ethnicity, and social deprivation theories informed by Western industrialised contexts. Violent and non-violent events at a sub-national level and rural locations long before and after the Crisis have therefore been overlooked, as have more nuanced, more micro-level and ethnographic interpretations of the sources and nature of conflict and violence. This thesis has used the events of 2006 as an entry point to a deeper, multilevel and ethnographic exploration of the sources of conflict in East Timor that integrates both macro- and micro-level analyses. As part of this exploration, this thesis has explored three interlinked research questions:

1 What are the social, cultural and historical factors that drive conflict or violence at a local level in East Timor?

2 What is the origin and nature of contemporary ISGs and what role do they play in their communities and in communal violence in East Timor?

3 What are the mechanisms and dynamics through which local level conflicts become linked with broader, even national level conflicts, as occurred in 2006?

Chapter Four, 'Cultural and Historical Legacies', has questioned master narratives of state-building and elite or political enmities by detailing the multiple and often highly localised cultural and historical factors that generate conflict, and shape the nature of personal and group affiliations or alliances in East Timor. This chapter demonstrated that East Timorese descent based social structures and systems of reciprocal obligation are a far more salient force in shaping personal allegiances and conflict patterns than any form of political ideology. Regional level rivalries between domains and regencies and also localised disputes between extended family groups in Portuguese times have clearly influenced Indonesian era patterns of pro or anti-independence sympathies, and violence, and, subsequently, political affiliations and lines of conflict in the independence era. The Indonesian military's policy of establishing a multitude of informal security groups such as MAGs, and the formation of clandestine groups to oppose the occupation, has created a potent legacy for East Timorese society and further sharpened existing

communal divisions. Payback traditions, embedded in descent lines, have served to perpetuate conflict down through successive generations, adding further layers of complexity. The legacy of contested land claims, in both urban and rural areas, has further fuelled conflict along family lines and also reflects historical enmities.

Chapter Five, 'Continuities in Conflict' illustrated the continuities with these historical and descent based enmities in the post-independence period. Despite dominant portrayals of the 2006 Crisis as a sudden 'explosion' of tensions due to the macro-level factors described above, this chapter demonstrated that there was a range of ongoing micro-conflicts in rural and urban areas long before the events of 2006. Despite a common acceptance of a narrow timeframe between April and June 2006, evidence clearly suggests that the sustained violence continued for at least 18 months at largely undiminished intensity, but with clearly divergent character, location and causes. As post-2006 Crisis conflict patterns reveal, violence was selective and localised, with the worst violence occurring in areas with a history of communal conflict, rather than being generalised, as would be the case if national level cleavages such as political rivalry or poverty were the only causes. The worst and most protracted contemporary conflicts date back up to 100 years or more, long before the birth of any current political parties or informal security groups.

The way that violence expanded, after the early events of 2006, to rural and urban areas previously untouched by the 2006 conflict, indicates a continuation of conflicts, rather than a sudden, unprecedented explosion. These lines of conflict have also influenced patterns of ISG territories and personal affiliations, with the greatest concentrations of ISGs occurring in the areas of longstanding historical tensions. Opposing local level actors have used national level actors instrumentally, adapting to or aligning with each new constellation of forces, be it Portuguese, Japanese or Indonesian occupiers or contemporary political party configurations. These patterns suggest that the national level tensions and conflict of 2006 linked up with multiple and often pre-existing micro-level conflicts. Local level conflicts have also often assumed the appearance of national cleavages, long after those cleavages have gone. This phenomenon is most evident in the mobilisation of pro and anti-independence narratives in ISG disputes, and in the 'political violence' that occurs around election time, but always in the same specific locations experiencing longstanding tensions.

Chapter Six, 'National Level and Rural Groups' examined the origins and nature of the main national level informal security groups. While often dismissed as criminal groups or as passive by-products of national level events, these groups have displayed agency and rational choices in their motivations, objectives and actions. Most of these groups had their genesis in the

Indonesian occupation or before, and are prevalent in both rural and urban areas. Many ISGs also exhibit beliefs reflecting local traditions, rituals and belief systems. Such belief systems and social movements reflect patterns found in wider regional Pacific and Melanesian societies. In many cases, ISGs are based on distinct families or descent groups and specific, sometimes highly localised geographic areas. Rather than being alienated from and external to their communities, they are part of their very fabric. The militancy of movements such as COLIMAU 2000 and the CPD-RDTL can therefore be considered through a more ethnographic perspective as patterns of resistance, or, as a reformulation or assertion of cultural identity in the face of rapid social change. They may serve as vehicles for protest, as pressure groups to advance their own or their community's interests or to access state resources, as sources of security, and a means of effecting justice and retribution.

As this chapter showed, national and local level actors are linked through a number of different mechanisms and dynamics. ISGs have strategically formed new, and sometimes anomalous alliances at different times. These alliances have sometimes been descent based, or based on a common purpose or unifying theme as with veterans' groups. Some alliances have been purely opportunistic, as in the case of alliances between veterans' groups and groups previously associated with the Indonesian occupation. Many of these groups are linked to national level actors such as political party leaders through common descent, or have strategically formed pragmatic alliances with them. Such linkages have allowed these ISGs to utilise the events and divisions of 2006-07 to opportunistically redress their own longstanding grievances. National level ISG leaders, such as MAG leaders, are also often engaged in endemic local level conflicts in their rural villages of origin. As has been argued here, such kinship links and alliances can explain how the national and urban centred political Crisis of early 2006 became linked with multiple, micro-level conflicts. Such linkages and alliances acted to extend the conflict well beyond the generally agreed time frame of April to June 2006, and out of Dili into rural areas, and involve substantially different actors and dynamics.

Chapter Seven, 'Urban, Dili Based Groups' described the different, mostly urban-based youth groups, gangs and clandestine groups. Taking an ethnographic approach to the concepts of crime and violence, this chapter argued that crime and violence, and urban ISGs, are not necessarily symptoms of urbanisation, disadvantage and youth alienation, and the breakdown of traditional social structures. Such concepts are culturally informed, and ambivalence or acceptance of particular forms of crime such as extortion, or interpersonal violence, have deep roots within wider societal attitudes, as seen in neighbouring societies such as PNG. Violence is culturally accepted on a number of levels through a range of justifications, such as in the name of putative redistributive or retributive justice, or rent seeking. Violence and ISG membership is

also not restricted to the underprivileged. Apart from the evidence that many employed, educated and middle class people are leading members of ISGs, and implicated in violence in East Timor, there have been numerous, well publicised and recent cases of relatively privileged East Timorese studying or working overseas being involved in group violence.

This chapter also showed how these urban groups, like national level ISGs, are considerably more complex than dominant portrayals of delinquent youth who have become passive victims of economic and political marginalisation or manipulation. Members of these groups have shown agency in their deliberate and rational decisions made to form or join groups. While some groups exhibit gang style structures or behaviours, many groups are hybrids with both positive and negative aspects, with some making dedicated attempts to transform their communities and provide positive alternatives for local youth. Many groups clearly constitute an assertion of descent group, village of origin or linguistic identity, as a response by group members to a fluid, heterogeneous environment. Multiple identities and group memberships also complicate the task of categorisation and constitute an important conflict dynamic, linking localised and personal disputes to broader level tensions or conflicts.

Chapter Eight, 'A Case Study of Perumnas, Bairro Pite, Dili' linked themes from Chapter Six and seven on group motivations, enmities, composition, identities and origins, and showed how these are reflected in discrete group territories; how cyclical and permanent rural urban migration affects settlement patterns and conflict dynamics. There are a number of implications of such dynamics. As was shown here, compared to rural *aldeias*, such settlements are considerably more fragmented than other parts of Dili in terms of descent group homogeneity, and, therefore, in terms of the coherence of traditional authority. Anomie is not necessarily the end result of this heterogeneous environment, however, and people have adapted in a number of ways. The existence of extended family clusters related to rural villages of origin, and frequent circular migration, for example, means that youth migrating to the city are not necessarily cast free from parental control or traditional authority, thereby resorting to delinquency. It is also not necessarily the case that poverty, social heterogeneity and residential mobility breeds crime and violence, as per classical social theories. As the case study and previous chapters showed, a multitude of issues drive conflict, crime and violence other than poverty and disadvantage, so that sometimes elements from relatively prosperous, established communities, with coherent authority structures, would attack disadvantaged communities such as Perumnas, rather than the reverse. Also, conflicts typified as MAG conflicts, as a symptom of urban youth marginalisation, are more often than not communal conflicts that are rural in origin. Constant cycles of rural urban migration have set up intricate linkages between rural and urban communities and also conflict. Groups or individuals arriving from the districts into Dili or vice

versa can spark previously dormant conflict in rural or urban areas without warning or apparent reason. People do not necessarily arrive in the city and eventually join a MAG out of frustration at blocked aspirations, as they will often already be a member of a particular MAG aligned with their descent group, and also be involved in a conflict in their *aldeia* of origin. This affiliation, and conflict, simply becomes transferred to Dili.

As this case study showed, intergroup conflict is also quite dynamic. Conflict in Perumnas over the 2006-07 period followed two distinct phases, reflecting national level patterns. While the violence of early to mid 2006 conformed to master narratives of politically motivated regionally based violence to a large extent, what followed in the subsequent 18 months clearly did not. Mobilising narratives changed from regional allegiances to pro or anti-independence narratives, and previous allies became bitter enemies. Individuals also utilised the atmosphere of general lawlessness to enact purely personal or family related vendettas. Simultaneously held and interlinked multiple social identities, both local and national, such as family, linguistic, regional, political party affiliation and ISG membership have set up recurrent, complex and seemingly intractable patterns of conflict. Purely localised disputes linked up with broader national level narratives and cleavages, shifting scale, with national level tensions also sparking localised disputes, establishing a circular conflict dynamic. Such a complex, fluid and circular dynamic clearly unsettles master narratives on the root causes of conflict, such as political party rivalry or youth alienation, and presents considerable challenges to successful resolution.

However, conflict, social breakdown and despair are not always the outcome of rapid urbanisation, and many communities and groups within them have responded with innovative and positive forms of resilience. Many groups function as voluntary grass roots community based organisations. Given the heavily migrant character of the Perumnas settlement, the groups found there can be reconsidered as migrant associations, similar to other rural in-migrant groups observed in cities in Indonesia and Latin America also experiencing rapid urbanisation. These groups provide social and recreational opportunities in the absence of state provided services, and maintain family and linguistic identity in highly heterogeneous urban settings.

As has been argued in this thesis, interventions based on macro-level, or monocausal understandings of conflict will have short-term impact at best. As this thesis has demonstrated, in East Timor, a range of mechanisms operate to ensure that local and national level actors, in both rural and urban areas, are intricately linked, so the personal easily becomes the political. Therefore, a multilevel and ethnographic understanding of the complex dynamics of micro-level conflict, and the acknowledgement of the role and agency of local level actors, is integral to the success of peacebuilding. Recognising the scale at which conflict occurs, and disaggregating

conflict into its component parts, is vital to this process. Too often mediation or peacebuilding approaches in East Timor have been ineffective, as they have been targeted at the wrong level – at a national or *suku* level, for example, when they should be targeted at an *aldeia* level. Equally, broad based, scatter gun national public works employment projects or training programs may have some limited success nationally in dampening tensions, but will have little effect on, for example, a localised conflict between three *aldeias* in Bobonaro District that revolves around incidents that took place half a century ago or more. As has been shown here, the assumption of the elevating influence of employment and education underpinning social deprivation theories is in any case not entirely grounded in the local context. Interventions and policy prescriptions based on these assumptions can even become self-fulfilling prophecies, as rural youth are drawn in increasing numbers to the cities in the hope of partaking of the development boom and educational opportunities, thereby accelerating the creation of the as yet embryonic urban underclass that such programs are targeting.

The current vogue for more intuitive approaches to peacebuilding, based on the understanding of the enduring importance of traditional authorities to security provision and social stability, is a welcome sign of a shift away from such broad-brush approaches and a tendency towards prescriptive and generic approaches. To be successful, however, such approaches require a more diversified, multi-level ethnographic, evidence based methodology. This means not just exploring the demographic profile and geography of a neighbourhood but also the dynamics of authority, which may not necessarily reside in easily accessible or recognisable forms such as traditional leaders, but in parallel forms such as in 'big men' and MAG leaders, who are often excluded as 'spoilers'. As this thesis has shown, such figures are not necessarily external to the community, but part of its fabric. Such an exploration must also take account of the types of linkages that can complicate or frustrate resolution, such as between rural and urban conflicts, and the multiple identities of the different actors involved. Such an approach can assist in curtailing conflict at a local level before it links up with other wider or national level tensions.

In summary, this thesis has argued for the importance of a dynamic, multi-layered historical and ethnographic understandings of conflict and the role of ISGs in East Timorese society, to look beyond the events of 2006 to broader patterns of violence and conflict. It is not claimed here that the macro-level analyses described in this thesis are either incorrect or superfluous, but it is important to acknowledge their limitations. Macro-level explanations provide an ideal entry point to understand factors associated with the outbreak and duration of conflict and violence, but are simply not designed to capture the often subtle events that trigger violence at a sub-national level before, and after such major national level outbreaks. Such national level analyses

must be complemented by micro-level, ethnographic studies to provide the necessary evidence base for more sustained, targeted, local level conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes.

There are no quick fixes, however. It is likely that even without major outbreaks of violence, there will always be a certain level of conflict in East Timor, as witnessed in nearby PNG. Rather than disappearing with the onset of the 'modernising' forces of economic development and democracy, conflict and ISGs are likely to remain a feature of life in East Timor for quite some time to come. While some groups may fade with time as they reshape their identity, their leaders grow old, or the issues become redundant, new issues will certainly breed new groups. As current group leaders become co-opted into state clientelist networks with contracts or government jobs, new generations of leaders will emerge in their place. Many tensions only partially resolved through ineffective interventions will also certainly return, particularly during times of political turbulence or instability, as demonstrated here. The array of different ISGs described here, on current evidence, appear to be part of the fabric of East Timor's history, culture and identity. The combination of an inefficient justice system with an ineffectual and under resourced police force also means that communities will continue to look to ISGs for protection, to enact summary 'justice', retribution or to enforce or voice community grievances or demands for rent from the state or other sources. Acknowledging this reality will go a long way to resolving conflict and avoiding a repeat of the 2006-07 violence.

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Appendix 1: Table of interviews

No.	Source	Place	Date
1.	Former PSHT member	Dili	17/03/12
2.	Focus group Fatuhada	Dili	04/02/12
3.	Focus group Kuluhun	Dili	12/02/12
4.	Focus group BURADO and JOCAR members	Dili	03/03/11
5.	Sagrada Familia member	Dili	01/09/11
6.	Molop born Perumnas resident	Dili	01/07/11
7.	Lospalos born Perumnas resident	Melbourne	14/08/10
8.	*Aldeia* Malinamo resident	Dili	16/03/10
9.	Perumnas focus group	Dili	19/07/09
10.	Resident of *aldeia* Moris Ba Dame village, Perumnas	Dili	16/03/10
11.	UN Political Affairs	Dili	05/03/10
12.	Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport official	Dili	05/03/10
13.	Belun international adviser	Dili	05/03/10
14.	Perumnas focus group	Dili	19/07/09
15.	Confidential interview with international aid worker	Dili	14/07/09
16.	Peacebuilding project worker, Catholic Relief Services	Dili	08/07/09
17.	Senior admissions officer, Dili National Hospital	Dili	23/06/09
18.	Focus group Fatuhada	Dili	13/16/09
19.	Confidential source	Dili	18/12/08
20.	Bebonuk resident	Dili	03/12/08
21.	Construction manager for international NGO	Dili,	06/11/08
22.	Discussion with BURADO members	Dili	22/10/08
23.	UNMIT official	Washington	18/07/08
24.	Shop owner and Sola Deus members	Dili	03/03/08
25.	Perumnas focus group	Dili	21/01/08
26.	UN Political Affairs officer	Dili	21/01/08

27.	Norwegian Refugee Commission MAG outreach worker	Dili	21/01/08
28.	UN Gang Task Force Member	Dili	21/01/08
29.	Perumnas resident and member of inter-NGO peacebuilding outreach team	Dili	21/01/08
30.	Susana Barnes	Dili	19/01/08
31.	Focus group with BURADO members	Dili	16/01/08
32.	PNTL officer	Dili	01/01/08
33.	UN Political Affairs officer	Dili	21/01/08
34.	Norwegian Refugee Commission MAG outreach worker	Dili	21/01/08
35.	Inter-NGO Conflict Monitoring team member	Dili	21/01/08
36.	Focus Group, Perumnas	Dili	21/01/08
37.	Red Cross project officer	Dili	09/12/06
38.	Former KORK leader, Nuno Soares	Dili	07/12/06
39.	Eastern Sagrada Familia member	Dili	30/11/06
40.	Lito Rambo	Dili	30/11/06
41.	CPD-RDTL deputy leader Andre da Costa Belo	Dili	30/11/06
42.	FNJP Coordinator Vital Dos Santos	Dili	21/11/06
43.	CPD-RDTL coordinator Ai Tahan Matak	Dili	16/11/06
44.	Colimau 2000 leader Bruno Magalhaes,	Dili	16/11/06
45.	Belun conflict resolution team member	Dili	24/10/06
46.	PSHT, PD and RENETIL leader	Dili	23/10/06
47.	Senior PSHT member	Dili	23/10/06
48.	Bairro Pite youth group member	Dili	16/09/06
49.	Slebor member	Dili	27/07/06
50.	COLIMAU 2000 leader Osorio Mau Lequi, Dili	Dili	27/07/06
51.	Seven-Seven member	Dili	27/07/06
52.	Local business owner	Dili	26/07/06
53.	UN Political Affairs	Dili	24/7/06
54.	Bidau resident	Dili	25/07/06

55.	Comoro area violence witness	Dili	23/07/06
56.	Youth group member	Dili	20/07/06
57.	Joao Da Silva	Dili	20/07/06
58.	Senior PNTL Taskforce Officer	Dili	31/01/06