

Portugal and the Netherlands in Timor, 1945-1949

Steven Farram

The post-Second World War Dutch-Portuguese relationship in the context of Timor appears to have been friendly and co-operative. Nevertheless, the two European administrations had different views on how to engage their subject populations, and were competitive in their efforts to develop their territories. Otherwise, post-war anti-colonialism gave the two colonial powers a mutual identity previously lacking. A related issue was the establishment of the United Nations (UN) as a body for resolving international disputes. The Dutch and Portuguese also had to respond to Australia's determination to play a greater role in the region.

Following the Japanese capitulation, Australia occupied the eastern Indonesian archipelago for the Allies. Both the Dutch and Portuguese expected that their representatives would accept the Japanese surrender in their respective halves of Timor, but Australia thought otherwise. Australia informed the United Kingdom (UK) that it believed Portugal had been 'an acquiescent spectator in the Pacific War' and was 'unfit to be entrusted with defence of territory so important to the security of this area'. Australia proposed that after accepting the Japanese surrender, its forces should remain in Portuguese Timor until Portugal and Australia concluded defence and economic arrangements first proposed in 1943. The UK countered that an Australian occupation would have a negative effect on the UK, which wished to maintain good relations with Portugal to ensure continued use of bases on the Azores Islands. Australia then suggested that Portuguese Timor could be placed under UN trusteeship (Addison 1989, 377-380; Commonwealth 1989a, 374-376; Commonwealth 1989b, 391-393).

By this time, Australia had learnt that the Japanese had not established separate commands in eastern and western Timor, so that only one surrender ceremony was necessary, which took place at Kupang on 11 September 1945, but with the Dutch denied any major role (Farram 2007, 57). Australia remained determined to appear as the victor in Portuguese Timor also and on 23 September, Brigadier Lewis Dyke of the Australian forces arrived in Dili. Dyke formally notified Governor Manuel de Carvalho of the surrender of Japanese forces on Timor. At Dyke's suggestion, he and Carvalho made speeches at a public ceremony the following day acknowledging Australia's association with the liberation of Portuguese Timor (Forsyth 1989, 470-472).

Some Australians believed that the best way to protect Australia's north was to take control of Timor. In August 1945, an Australian representative asked the Portuguese ambassador in London how his government would respond to the suggestion of a 100 year lease of Portuguese Timor to Australia. The ambassador replied that Portugal could not relinquish sovereignty of any of its territory (Farram 2007, 57). In January 1946, Australia's first consul to Portuguese Timor, Charles Eaton, arrived in Dili to keep an eye on Australia's interests. West Timor had not been forgotten, however, and in April 1947, it was suggested to Dutch officials that the Netherlands could diminish its war debt by allowing Australia to administer West Timor. The following month, Eaton travelled to West Timor, partly to investigate means of Australia gaining a long-term lease of the territory or some parts of it. Eaton, however, could make no suggestions on how to gain concessions there from the Dutch (Farram 2010, 1, 35). The fact was that Dutch officials had been instructed to have no discussions on the matter.

Despite some ambitions, Australia's post-war military presence in Timor was short-lived. Following Australia's departure, Portuguese-Dutch relations returned to the pre-war routine where the main disputes were those concerning the Timorese. For example, in October 1946 the head of the Dutch administration, Resident C.W. Schuller, reported that there had recently been crossings from both sides of the border that had resulted in a number of killings. The Dutch and Portuguese set up a joint commission to investigate the incidents and agreed to a number of measures for maintaining order (Schuller 1946). These included:

- Both parties to punish subjects who cross the border with weapons
- Both parties to prevent subjects shooting across the border

- Both parties to report monthly on the number of immigrants
- Border patrols to be carried out by police, not soldiers

Many of the problems were caused by livestock theft. In March 1946, the *controleur* (controller) of the Dutch sub-division Belu reported cattle thefts organised from Portuguese territory (De Rooy 1973, 474). A year later, Schuller reported 200 buffaloes had recently been stolen from Netherlands territory (Schuller 1947). And in February 1948, it was reported that 100 head of cattle had been driven into Oecusse from Netherlands Timor in October the previous year. According to the Dutch, the cattle were transported by sea to Dili and other places in Portuguese territory (Schuller 1948). Then in April 1948, it was reported that a *chefe de posto* (administrative head of a sub-district) in Portuguese territory near the central border was implicated in receiving stolen horses (Van Es 1948).

In June 1948, Schuller reported that old feuds were often the cause of such thefts and were not considered by the Timorese to be a crime, but something meritorious (Schuller 1948). In 1948 in Belu 167 cases of livestock theft were reported, as well as twenty-four other thefts, forty-five murders, and many other cases. How many of those cases involved Portuguese Timorese is unclear, but in one dramatic case in September 1948, thirty-four Portuguese Timorese who had crossed the border several years earlier to live in Dutch territory were carried off by a band of armed men together with livestock and household items (Verhoef 1949).

In his June 1948 report, Schuller claimed that Portuguese Timorese sought refuge in Netherlands territory for three main reasons: to escape high taxation; to avoid *corvée* (forced labour); and to avoid punishment for the commission of crimes. Portuguese officials sent letters weekly to their Dutch counterparts seeking extradition of such fugitives. In most cases the people concerned were simply collected by the police and returned to the other side. The Portuguese performed the same service for the Dutch. The Dutch, however, would not return people who they believed had settled in their territory only to avoid high taxes and heavy labour (Schuller 1948).

Corvée was not continued in West Timor post-war, but in Portuguese Timor it was, with each village providing workers for one month each year. An Australian in Portuguese Timor in 1947 described the system as 'brutal', with workers labouring 'under the whip' 'from dawn to dusk' (Taylor 1991, 14). On top of this, Eaton reported in December 1946 that an increase in the yearly head tax from six *patacas* to sixteen *patacas* had caused 'shock and grumblings' (Eaton 1946b, 1946c).

Meanwhile, Dutch Timorese had to pay a head tax of four guilders a year, failing that they must work for ten days, that is, labour was required in lieu of tax, not in addition to it (Eaton 1946b, 1947). During a tour of the Hatolia, Bobonaro, Marobo and Balibo districts in December 1946, Eaton witnessed collection of the head tax firsthand. Fifty per cent of people had paid, but it was difficult collecting the rest. Some people had 'gone bush' to avoid payment. The remaining tax defaulters were said to be 'bad men' who had co-operated with the Japanese during the war; such people were subject to corporal punishment (Eaton 1946d). No doubt, it was experiences such as these that encouraged some Portuguese Timorese to relocate across the border.

In the meantime, Australian investigators had collected information about Japanese war crimes and cases of collaboration with the enemy. The only cases to proceed, however, concerned maltreatment of Australian prisoners of war and the killing of two Allied servicemen: Australian Corporal J.H. Armstrong and the English gunner Martin (no other name cited). The cases were heard in Darwin in March-April 1946. A number of the Japanese were acquitted and the remainder received light sentences. Lieutenant Colonel Yutani Yujiro, however, was found guilty of ordering the executions of Armstrong and Martin and executed at Rabaul in August 1946 (Farram 2009, 199; Gill 1992, 100).

Following Australia's withdrawal, the Dutch continued investigations. In February 1947, 127 Japanese were held in Kupang, but only nine cases were ready to proceed (Schuller 1947; Versluys 1947). In June 1947, more Japanese accused were brought from Java, but in August 1947, five prisoners escaped. One was soon recaptured and three others were shot dead while on the run. The fifth, Sergeant Major Yoshimitu Sato, was caught in Portuguese Timor. In a Dili prison, Sato unsuccessfully attempted suicide, both by slashing his wrists and hanging himself. He was flown back to Kupang by the Portuguese (Schuller 1947; Pigram 1947). Sato's ultimate fate is unclear. Trials in Kupang proceeded with two cases around the time of Sato's return resulting in one Japanese being sentenced to twelve years imprisonment and another sentenced to death (Schuller 1947). At least three

Japanese were sentenced to death in 1948. Others received sentences ranging from one to twenty years imprisonment. There was at least one acquittal (Van Es 1948; Schuller 1948; Commies-Redacteur 1948).

In October 1946, Raja Pius Rasi Wangge, ruler of Lio on Flores Island, was found guilty of inciting 'rebellion and collaboration' in May 1942. Wangge was executed in April 1947. Roefoes Takoe, a Timorese agent of the Japanese military police, the Kempeitai, was also sentenced to death in October 1946 and executed in February 1947 (Schuller 1946, 1947). And TaEl TaEk, 'the notorious war criminal from Atambua', was sentenced to death in March 1947. Throughout 1947-1948, trials continued in Kupang with other collaborators receiving sentences ranging from a few months to twenty years (Schuller 1947, 1948; Van Es 1948).

In Portuguese Timor there were also people labelled 'collaborator'. In many cases the Japanese instigated the killings of Portuguese officials and civilians, such as occurred in late September-early October 1942, when Captain Freire da Costa, his wife and several officials were massacred at Aileu. On 15 November 1942, the *administrador* (administrator) of Lautem, Manuel de Barros, his wife and three Portuguese civilians were killed. At Aileu the Timorese involved were said to have been mainly from West Timor, but at Lautem they were locals. Japanese instigated killings also took place at Ermera (Chamberlain 2005, 3-4). By 1943, most Portuguese had been interned by the Japanese at Liquiça and Maubara, where some Timorese worked as guards. Meanwhile, members of the Arab community were reported to have been appointed *chefe de posto* or to have worked for the Kempeitai (Gunn 1999, 226). The Dili commander of the Kempeitai, Kato Kazusada, was later returned to Dili by the Dutch to stand trial (Schuller 1947, 1948). The outcome is presently unclear.

In May 1946, the Australian consul at Dili reported that '250 natives who collaborated with the Japanese' had recently been sent to Atauro (Eaton 1946a). In January 1949, the Dutch *resident* (resident) also reported that 'collaborators' were being held there (Verhoef 1949). In 1954, Portuguese Timor's chief justice informed the Australian consul that about 1,000 collaborators had been sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment on Atauro, while about 100 people were still awaiting trial. The slow progress was due to cases only being heard when other legal business was not too heavy. Most of those tried had been involved in the Aileu, Ermera and Lautem massacres. They were all Timorese, although one 'Portuguese half caste' received a ten year sentence for instigating Timorese collaboration in Lautem (Whittaker 1954).

Meanwhile, development of aviation facilities was deemed important by both the Dutch and Portuguese. In the early post-war years, aircraft travelling from Australia to Java used the Penfui airfield at Kupang as a staging post. In May 1947, Schuller was invited by Governor Oscar Ruas to the opening of the Baucau airfield. Schuller noted that Baucau was clearly designed as an international airport and rival to Penfui. Plans were already laid, however, for improvements at Penfui, which from 1 April 1948 would be officially classed as an international airport. In late 1947, Schuller was told by Ruas that it was expected that from 1 January 1948, Constellation aircraft on the Darwin-Singapore-Hong Kong route would stopover in Baucau (Schuller 1947).

By March 1948, improvements at Penfui had still not begun, but neither had the international flights to Baucau, although plans for a Sydney-Darwin-Baucau-Shanghai-Hong Kong route were said to be 'getting stronger' (Schuller 1948). In a March 1948 report Schuller noted that the Portuguese company TAT was expected to soon start flying Douglas DC3 or Lockheed Hudson aircraft, but by June, Schuller seemed almost exultant when he declared, 'In the meantime, the great plans for the TAT to open an international airline with DC3s or other large machines is not so noticeable!' (Schuller 1948). In January 1949, the Dutch noted that nothing had come of the plans for international air traffic at Baucau (Verhoef 1949). In fact, neither Penfui nor Baucau operated as genuine international airports during the period of this study.

The Dutch also had to deal with the independence claims of the Republic of Indonesia. Part of Dutch policy for containing the Republic was an extension of political rights to the Indies inhabitants, with those from West Timor being represented in the parliament of the new state Negara Indonesia Timur (NIT, State of East Indonesia). The system saw some Dutch officials replaced by Indonesians, but senior positions such as *resident* and department head remained in Dutch hands. Nevertheless, there was a decentralisation of authority that created some ambiguity. Thus, in May 1947 when the Australian consul at Dili visited West Timor, he was told by Schuller that he was not happy that he was a representative of the Dutch government, but also an adviser to the Indonesians. This meant he

had to obey the orders of the NIT government in Makassar and the Netherlands Indies government in Batavia (Jakarta). Schuller said he would be glad when it was time for him to leave. Similar complaints were heard from other Dutch officials (Farram 2009, 206-213).

In April 1947, Ruas informed Schuller that he wanted no contact between Liran and Atauro. Ruas claimed that people from Liran, the Dutch island closest to Atauro, were spreading 'Indonesian propaganda' (Schuller 1947). Australia's representative at The Hague reported in October that the Dutch had sought Portuguese assistance to prevent anti-Dutch propaganda entering West Timor from across the border. The Portuguese apparently agreed readily out of fear of repercussions in their territory and even suggested a combined Portuguese-Dutch police force take action if any trouble occurred on either side of the border (Officer 1994). The Australian consul at Dili was asked to comment on the report and replied that in discussions he had with Ruas, the latter denied the existence of any nationalist aspirations in Portuguese Timor and that he had no doubt of the loyalty of the Timorese. Problems on the other side of the border, said Ruas, were due to the 'natives' being imbued with the spirit of 'democracy' (White 1994, 421-422).

The Dutch had considered the Republic of Indonesia to be of little account, but due to outside pressure they had to accept its right to exist. Finally, claiming that the Republic had not maintained security, the Dutch launched a 'police action' in July 1947, attacking Republican territory in Java and Sumatra. This resulted in the case being brought before the UN Security Council. Indonesia's struggle to attain independence and Dutch efforts to prevent it has been described at length elsewhere (e.g., George 1980). Here it is sufficient to note that while the Dutch appear to have considered the Portuguese system of colonialism as practiced on Timor to be an outdated model, they were happy to elicit Portugal's support to help them continue to practice their own version in their half of the island and elsewhere in Indonesia.

On 6 September 1947, H.F.L.K. van Vredenburg, Dutch head of Political Affairs, met the Portuguese charge d'affaires, Mr. Reymao. Van Vredenburg told Reymao how the UN was limiting Dutch ability to deal with the Republic. According to Van Vredenburg, Reymao realised that a worsening Dutch position would have consequences for Portuguese Timor, so he asked how he could help. Van Vredenburg requested that Portugal inform Brazil of the situation with a view that Brazil's representatives in the UN would not make the Dutch position any worse (Van Vredenburg 1983).

The Netherlands was assured of Portugal's support, but Portugal could do little, as it was not a member of the UN. In December 1948, the Dutch launched their second 'police action' against the Republic. The following month, Dutch foreign minister, D.U. Stikker, informed his colleagues of the reactions of various countries. Regarding Portugal, Stikker said that the government had understanding and sympathy for Dutch efforts to neutralise the Republic. Stikker also told his colleagues how the press was dealing with the issue in each place he mentioned. In Portugal, he said, the press did not have an independent version of events, an attitude enforced by a government that had difficulties in its own Asian colonies (Stikker 1992, 32).

The first Dutch 'police action' was condemned by the international community. One result was the creation of the UN Good Offices Committee charged with seeking a resolution of the dispute between the Netherlands and the Republic. The second 'police action' led to further pressure for a solution to be found and even the leaders of the NIT turned against their Dutch mentors. Finally, the Dutch conceded they were no longer welcome and prepared to hand sovereignty to an independent Indonesia from 27 December 1949.

On 29 October 1949, *ex-resident* A. Verhoef wrote his last report for West Timor, noting that the Timor residency had ceased to exist on 1 October and all administrative functions had been handed over to local authorities (Verhoef 1949). The strength of the internationally supported Indonesian independence movement had always meant that the Dutch would have difficulties in maintaining their position in the Indies. Australia made some vague efforts in the early post-war years to gain control of all or part of West Timor, but the strident support Australia gave to the Republic of Indonesia in the UN helped to strengthen the Republic's claim for sovereignty over the whole of the Netherlands Indies.

Portugal, in the meantime, did not need to deal with any nationalist movement in the immediate post-war Portuguese Timor. Portugal was also largely immune from international criticism of its colonial system due to guarantees given by the UK and the United States of America (USA) to respect Portugal's colonial possessions after the war as a condition for the military use of the Azores Islands

(Gunn 2011, 9). Australia had agreed to this condition also, but still threatened to occupy Portuguese Timor after the war and also recommended that it come under UN control. Australia was dissuaded from such action by the UK. Australia then sought influence in Portuguese Timor by establishing a consulate there in 1946. By the time the Dutch vacated their half of the island, Australia's enthusiasm for Timor had begun to wane. The Australian consulate in Dili finally closed in 1971, but Australia seems to have lost interest in having a presence on the island well before then (Farram 2010). By December 1975, conditions and policies had changed and Indonesia, with the covert support of Australia and the USA, invaded East Timor, declaring that it had become Indonesia's twenty-seventh province in 1976 (Farram 2007, 58-59). But that is another story.

Bibliography

- Addison, Viscount 1989, 'Addison to Commonwealth Government. Cablegram 344. London, 30 August 1945', in W.J. Hudson and Wendy May (eds), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49, Volume VIII: 1945*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, pp. 377-380.
- Chamberlain, Ernest 2005, *Faltering Steps: Independence Movements in East Timor in the 1950s and 1960s*, self-published, Point Lonsdale.
- Commies-Redacteur 1948, 'Lijst van den op 27sten Augustus 1948 per post aan Z.E. den Luit. Gouv.-Generaal van Ned. Indie, verzonden dienststukken. Koepang, 27 Augustus 1948, De Commies-Redacteur', No. 3260. *Politieke and economic verslagen betreffende de residentie Timor en Onderhorigheden, uitgebracht door de resident in Kupang; 1948 jan-1949 sep* [hereafter, No. 3260], Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag, no pagination.
- Commonwealth 1989a, 'Commonwealth Government to Addison. Cablegram 256. Canberra, 28 August 1945', in Hudson and May, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, Volume VIII*, pp. 374-376.
- 1989b, 'Commonwealth Government to Addison. Cablegram 269. Canberra, 3 September 1945', in Hudson and May, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, Volume VIII*, pp. 391-393.
- Eaton, Charles 1946a, 'Despatch No. 1. C. Eaton, Consul, Australian Consulate, Dili. 5 May 1946', *NAA* [National Archives of Australia]: *A1838, 377/1/3 Part 1*, no pagination.
- 1946b, 'Despatch No. 9. C. Eaton, Consul, to the Rt. Honourable J. B. Chiffley [sic], Acting Minister of State for External Affairs. 27 August 1946', *NAA: A5954, 2269/4*, no pagination.
- 1946c, 'Despatch No. 16. C. Eaton, Consul, to the Rt. Hon. Dr. H.V. Evatt. 4 December 1946', *NAA: A1838, 377/1/3 Part 1*, no pagination.
- 1946d, 'Despatch No. 17. C. Eaton, Consul, to the Rt. Hon. Dr. H.V. Evatt. 18 December 1946', *NAA: A1838, 377/1/3 Part 1*, no pagination.
- 1947, 'Consular series No. 63. C. Eaton, Consul, to the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, A.C.T. 12 May 1947', *NAA: A1838, TS400/1/9/1/1*, no pagination.
- Es, A.J. van 1948, various documents, No. 3260, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag, no pagination.
- Farram, Steven 2007, 'Australian interest in Timor: A historical overview', in Dennis Shoemith (ed), *The Crisis in Timor-Leste: Understanding the Past, Imagining the Future*, CDU Press, Darwin.
- Farram, Steven 2009, *A Political History of West Timor: 1901-1967*, LAP, Köln.
- 2010, *A short-lived enthusiasm: The Australian consulate in Portuguese Timor*, CDU Press, Darwin.
- Forsyth, W.D. 1989, 'Report by Forsyth. Extract. 1 October 1945', in Hudson and May, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, Volume VIII*, pp. 470-472.
- George, Margaret 1980, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.
- Gill, Rob 1995, 'The aftermath of war (Japanese soldiers on trial in Darwin)', *Northern Perspective*, 18(2): 95-100.
- Gunn, Geoffrey C. 1999, *Timor Loro Sae: 500 Years*, Livros de Oriente, Macau.
- 2011, *Historical Dictionary of East Timor*, Scarecrow Press, Lanham.
- Officer, Keith 1994, 'Officer to Evatt. Ministerial Despatch Hag 26/47. The Hague, 8 October 1947', in Philip Dorling (ed), *Diplomasi: Australia and Indonesia's Independence. Documents 1947*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, p. 348.
- Pigram, Norman 1947, 'Ministerial Despatch No. 7/47. N. Pigram, A/Consular Clerk, Dili-Timor, to the Rt. Hon. J.B. Chiffley. A/Minister of State for External Affairs, Canberra, A.C.T.' 9 October 1947, *NAA: A1838, 377/1/3 Part 2*, no pagination.
- Rooy, C.C. de 1973, 'Politieke verslag van chief commanding officer Nica (De Rooy) betreffende Borneo en de Groote Oost, 16 febr.-1 maart 1946', in S.L. van der Wal (ed), *Officiële Bescheiden betreffende de Nederlands-Indonesische Betrekkingen 1945-1950. Deel 2*, Martinus Nijhoff, 's Gravenhage, pp. 470-474.

- Schuller, C.W. 1946, various documents, *No. 3259. Politieke and economic verslagen betreffende de residentie Timor en Onderhorigheden, uitgebracht door de resident in Kupang; 1946 okt-1947 dec* [hereafter, *No. 3259*], Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag, no pagination.
- 1947, various documents, *No. 3259*, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag, no pagination.
- 1948, various documents, *No. 3260*, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag, no pagination.
- Stikker, D.U. 1992, 'Minister van buitenlandse zaken (Stikker) aan de leden van de ministerraad en de vertegenwoordigers van Nederland in het buitenland, 14 jan. 1949', in P.J. Drooglever and M.J.B. Schouten (eds), *Officiële Bescheiden. Deel 17*, pp. 30-38.
- Taylor, John G. 1991, *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor*, Pluto Press, Leichhardt.
- Verhoef A. 1949, various documents, *No. 3260*, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag, no pagination.
- Versluys, J.D.N. 1947, Various documents, *No. 3259*, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag, no pagination.
- Vredenburg, H.F.L.K. van 1983, 'Aantekening van de chef directie politieke zaken van het ministerie van buitenlandse zaken (Van Vredenburg), 8 Sept. 1947', in Drooglever and Schouten, *Officiële Bescheiden. Deel 11*, p. 56.
- White, Harold 1994, 'White to Burton. Memorandum 152. Dili, 26 November 1947', in Dorling, *Diplomasi*, pp. 421-422.
- Whittaker, F.J.A. 1954, 'FJAW 12/1/1, No. 3. Memorandum for the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra A.C.T. 8th February 1954. Collaboration with the Japanese, Portuguese Timor 1942-1945', *NAA: A1838, 3038/7/1 Part 1*, no pagination.