In 2006, a mere seven years after the overwhelming vote in opposition to Indonesia’s final offer of ‘broad autonomy’ and only four years after the restoration of independence, massive communal violence erupted in Dili, the capital of East Timor. One of the least understood aspects of this crisis is the use of labels for the people from the eastern and the western districts. East Timorese refer to the three easternmost districts as Lorosae – the land of the rising sun – and the population is known collectively as Firaku. The western districts are referred to as Loromonu – the land of the setting sun – and the population is known collectively as Kaladi. When communal violence erupted in May 2006 these labels were bastardized: Firaku was shortened to ‘Iraq’, implying terrorist and intended as an attack on Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão, who is of Yemeni descent. The term Kaladi was at times replaced by the supposed antithesis of Iraq – ‘Amerika’. In the Indonesian-era housing complexes of Dili, where communal violence was particularly severe, the words ‘Firaku’ and ‘Iraq’, ‘Kaladi’ and ‘Amerika’ were scrawled on houses and businesses. There was also more hate-filled graffiti: ‘Firaku are terrorists’, ‘Firaku are hypocrites’, and ‘Firaku are thieves. Long live Loromonu’. How, one wonders, so soon after the achievement of what Nobel Peace laureates José Ramos-Horta and Bishop Belo once called ‘the impossible dream’, had some East Timorese come to think of their new nation-state as a divided society? Why, furthermore, had they come to think of their society as being analogous to the US invasions of Kabul and Baghdad?

Popular wisdom holds that the terms firaku and kaladi were created by the Portuguese colonial rulers to divide the population of East Timor. Dionísio Babo Soares (2003:269-70), an East Timorese scholar, writes: ‘both terms might

1 This phrase was used by Ramos-Horta during public lectures after 1999, and in 2002 a poster commemorating the restoration of independence was titled ‘Even the most impossible dream became reality!’ For a reproduction of the poster and discussion, see Kammen 2009.

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have their derivations in [the] Portuguese words *calado* (lit. silent, quiet) and *vira o cu* (lit., to turn their backsides [to the speaker]). The Portuguese used the word *calado* to refer to the people from the west because of their slow, quiet, taciturn attitudes. In contrast, the eastern people are associated with the term *vira o cu* because of their temperamental attitude and stubbornness. As a group they would not hesitate to turn their backs – or backsides – to their masters when called to observe instructions. According to this version, both words have been adopted by the East Timorese whereby *calado* is pronounced *kaladi*, and the term *vira o cu* [is] pronounced *firaku*. One of Soares’s informants suggested that these stereotypes were popularized in Dili during the 1940s.

A competing explanation is that these communal labels are derived from local languages, not Portuguese. In this view, the term *firaku* comes from the Makassae words *fi* (we, us) and *raku* (relatives), hence meaning those who speak Makassae, while *kaladi* is derived from the Malay/Tetum word *keladi*, which is a kind of taro that grows in mountainous areas (Duarte 1992:58; Soares 2003:270). In a variation on this theme, the Portuguese anthropologist Paulo Castro Seixas speculates that the words *kaladi* and *firaku* are indigenous terms adopted by the legendary Tetum-speaking overlords of Timor based in Wehali (located on the south coast in present-day Indonesian West Timor) to classify and hence subjugate ethnic Mambai and Makassae in the eastern half of the island. Seixas (Trindade and Castro 2007:12) writes:

[*] the term Firaku, which in Makasae means ‘our comrades’ became a Tetum word for ‘people living in the (north-)eastern mountains.’ The term Kaladi might have been an auto-classification by the Mambai and was adapted to Tetum, derogatorily referring to this ethnic group as ‘mountainous people of the West.’ The pre-existing imaginations of Firaku and Kaladi were passed down and even though there are many Timorese today saying that the terms actually originate from ‘virar-cu’ and ‘calado’ it is rather the other way around. The Portuguese in alliance with the Belos took over the Tetum derogatory terms and used existing tensions to divide and rule.2

The problem with the first account of the origins of *firaku* and *kaladi* is that the qualities attributed to westerners and easterners – the former quiet, obedient and perhaps even taciturn, the latter stubborn, temperamental and rebellious – are at odds with much of the historical record. The problem with the second account is that historically these terms emanated from coastal centres of authority, not from those living in the mountains. This essay seeks to solve two puzzles. First, what are the origins of the terms *kaladi* and *firaku*? Second, why did these terms resonate so profoundly within East Timorese society so soon after independence? In answering these questions, this article seeks to

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demonstrate that historically the paired regional and communal signifiers *lorosae* / *firaku* and *loromonu* / *kaladi* were not opposed to one another, but rather marked exclusion from or subordination to central authority. These terms have resonated most deeply and tragically at precisely those moments when elite struggles over central authority and its perquisites have threatened regional exclusion.

Disobedience and submission

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Portuguese trade and missionary activity in the ‘islands at the end of the world’ was conducted first from Solor and later from Larantuka, on Flores. By the middle of the seventeenth century the Dutch emerged as economic as well as diplomatic rivals in the region. Both the Portuguese and the Dutch viewed Timor as being divided into two ‘provinces’ – Servião in the west, which was comprised of about 16 ‘kingdoms’, and Belos in the east, with about 50 different named polities. The first Portuguese governor of Solor and Timor was appointed in 1702 and based himself in the rowdy settlement of Lifau, on the north coast of Timor. The Portuguese made efforts to enforce terms of vassalage over the numerous ‘kingdoms’ in Belos, achieving greatest success in the eastern half of the island among polities that had come under missionary influence. However, successive governors in Lifau faced repeated challenges from the ethnically-mixed and partially-Lusified community that came to be known as the Larantuqueiros (also referred to as Topasses and Black Portuguese), from the representatives of the Catholic Church, from indigenous kingdoms unwillingly pressed into vassalage, and from the twin Makassarese sultanates of Gowa-Tallo’ located in south Sulawesi. Matters were made worse in 1716 when the Viceroy of Macau, César de Meneses, banned the sale of sandalwood from Timor elsewhere in Southeast Asia, a decision that was staunchly opposed by the Larantuqueiros (De Matos 1993:439).

These multiple tensions converged in 1718, when Bishop Manuel de Santo Antonio excommunicated Governor Mello de Castro and sailed to Larantuka to ask the Larantuqueiro leader Francisco Hornay for military assistance

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3 In addition to these political ‘spheres of influence’, eighteenth-century Portuguese documents also employ the parallel set of geographic designations *lorosae* and *lorotoba* for the eastern and western halves of the island. It is not clear when or why this dichotomy became applied to the eastern half of the island or why *lorotoba* was replaced by *loromonu*. For a detailed account of early European conceptions of the geographic partition, see Hägerdal 2006.

4 In a superb recent article on political contestation in early colonial Timor, Hägerdal (2007:8) breaks from historical convention by rightly noting that while the Portuguese and Dutch referred to the indigenous polities as ‘kingdoms’ (*reinos*, *rijken*), these are better understood as ‘chiefdoms’. This article will retain the term kingdom, but it should be understood in light of the above point.
against the Governor. Hornay, however, rebuffed Santo Antonio’s request and ‘threatened to leave for Makassar to ask for the aid of the Muslims against the Bishop’ (Thomaz 2001:511-2). The following year, quite likely with instigation from the Larantuqueiros, a number of indigenous rulers met in Camenassa, a kingdom on the south-central coast, and made a pact to expel the white overlords from the island. Exasperated by the Bishop, threatened by the Larantuqueiros and their native allies, concerned about Dutch encroachment, and faced with the possibility of Muslim aggression, Governor Mello de Castro abandoned his post and set sail for Goa. Bishop Santo Antonio promptly took over the affairs of state, excommunicated the Larantuqueiro leader Domingos da Costa, and appointed new military commanders in Belos and Servião. In response, in March 1720 a group of leading residents sent a letter of protest to the Bishop in Larantuka warning that if the Bishop attempted to return to Lifau they would call ‘the caladas’ to come and help defend the town. Although the letter does not explain who the ‘caladas’ are, it is apparent that it refers to the indigenous population living in the vicinity of Lifau, not the townspeople. This is the earliest known use of the term.

The parties to the Pact of Camenassa renewed their uprising against the Portuguese in 1725, set off by the murder of two Catholic missionaries in present-day Ermera district. In response, the newly appointed governor, António Moniz de Macedo, called on Portuguese forces and loyal vassals from the north coast to launch a major military campaign which culminated in the massacre of Cailaco in 1726. Portuguese documents from the campaign identify the rebellious kingdoms as Camenassa, Lamquito [Lamakito], Lolotóy [Lolotoe], Cailaco, Lehito, Saniry [Sanir], Atasave [Atsabe], Lameam [Leimean], Asefonaru [unknown], Diribate [Deribate/Diruwati], Hermera [Ermera], Nossadi lhadora [unknown], Clora [Cova], Letipho [Letifoho] and a number of villages in Maubara. These documents repeatedly refer to the people of these kingdoms as callades. A passage dated December 1726 in the diary of the Portuguese military commander Gonçalo de Magalhães de Menezes, who held the title Capitão-Mor of the Province of Belos, reads: ‘The detach-

5 ‘Protesto que fazem os officiais moradores, e mais Pouvo destas Ilhas de Solor e Timor asinados ao Illm Bpo de Malaca Dom Frey Manoel de Santo Antonio, para paz, sucego, quietação e conservação destas Ilhas de S. Mg. , q Ds g’. In Doc. Avulsos de Timor, Arquivo Historico Ultramarino, reproduced in Leitão 1952:249-57, on p. 252.

6 Writing about this period, Thomaz (2001:513) suggests that the term firaco was also in use: ‘When, desperate, [Mello de Castro] fled the island, the Bishop assumed the governorship and excommunicated Domingos da Costa for disobedience to the Church, then persuaded the king of either Amacono or Miomafo, neighbouring to the south, to wage a military attack [on da Costa]; at the same time he sent an expedition commanded by D. Domingos Soares [of Manatuto], capitão-mor of Belos Province, to make the firacos at the tip of the island submit.’ Thomaz does not provide a source for this, and to the best of my knowledge the term does not appear in any document from the early eighteenth century. Until such evidence can be found, one must conclude that Thomaz’s usage is anachronistic.
ment that was led separately by the colonel of Saméro [Samoro] arrived in the jurisdiction of Tulão, in Samoro, and on the border of the callades of the kingdom of Motayel’ (letter in De Matos 1974:380). In the same month Magalhães de Meneses also sent a letter to the Governor of Timor in Lifau explaining his successful military campaign: ‘Last year your Majesty’s forces were sent to punish the callades, who had risen up on the advice of Camanase and other regions, and fidelity was demonstrated’ (letter in De Matos 1974:382). Governor Moniz de Macedo forwarded these reports to his superiors in Goa and Lisbon. In a letter to King João V dated 27 April 1727 the governor noted that ‘[i]n the first year of my governorship, orders were given to punish the callâdes, who, on the advice of [the kingdom of] Camanase, had declared disobedience, and others who then demonstrated fidelity’ (letter in De Matos 1974:386-92). Four days later he wrote a second letter to the Viceroy of Goa, explaining that Magalhães de Meneses had led a military force against ‘the Callades kingdoms, which were defeated and reduced to obedience’.7

The rebellious polities identified by these early eighteenth-century Portuguese sources as calladas/callades were inhabited by upland peoples (including Mambai, Kemak, Bunak and Tocode speakers) in what today are the districts of Covalima, Bobonaro, Ermera, and Liquica. It is interesting to note that a Portuguese list of vassals from 1726 reveals that only two of these kingdoms were ruled by someone with a Christian name (Camenassa, ruled by D. Mateus da Costa, and Cailaco, ruled by D. Aleixo); the remaining polities are either listed as being ruled by heathens (gentius) or no information is provided (De Matos 1974:145-61). The crucial point is that representatives of the Portuguese state used the term callades for people who refused to acknowledge the putative colonial masters; unfortunately, however, none of the original sources explains its meaning. The historian Artur Teodoro de Matos, who studied the early documents on Timor closely, provides a glossary entry: ‘Caladi: “Inhabitants of the mountains” (in Tétum caládi, in Malay keladi: meaning “yam”), probably in deprecating reference to the food eaten by the population in the mountains, which is based on tubers, yams and sweet potatoes’ (De Matos 1974:447).

It is clear that caladas/callades is the plural Portuguese form of the Malay/Tetum word keladi and not, as popular wisdom would have it, a derivation from the Portuguese calado (quiet). The importance of diet in the emergence of collective identities is, in fact, one of the most striking features of early modern Timor. The keladi or talas plant (Colocasia Schot) was the main food crop in Timor (Ormeling 1956:106) prior to the introduction of New World crops such as cassava and corn. The significance of keladi in Timor is nicely illustrated

7 Letter in Morais 1934:71-5. This account is paraphrased (though with the altered spelling ‘callades’) in the famous Sarzedas Document, written in 1811 by the Court of Sarzedas, Bernardo José Maria de Lorena (reproduced in Morais 1943:155).
by the fact that for over three centuries a pair of keladi leaves has served as the royal mark of the Sonba’i kingdom. 8 By contrast, the early Portuguese and Larantuqueiros in coastal settlements grew what rice they could and, when possible, supplemented their harvests with imported rice brought by trading vessels. 9 Both sources of rice were unreliable, however, and so it was only natural that the Portuguese and Larantuqueiros also sought to obtain food from indigenous vassals. As Scott (2009) has argued, lowland powers associated inland and upland peoples with the food they produced, hence the appellation caladas/callades.

After the rebellions of the 1720s, however, the term callades does not appear again for more than a century. The reason, one suspects, is not that tuber-eaters in the mountains disappeared or were any less troublesome; rather, after the capital was moved from Lifau to Dili in 1769, the Portuguese sought to reinforce and extend the system of vassalage over the indigenous kingdoms, each of which was required to pay tribute (finta) and provide a specified number of men (auxiliares) to serve in the colonial garrison. 10 This meant that when resistance arose – as it often did – Portuguese officials identified the offending kingdom and did not need to resort to a catchall term for the indigenous population in the interior.

Late colonial science

During the mid-nineteenth century, a combination of rebellions, financial strain, and envy of the lucrative Dutch Cultivation System on Java stimulated the first real attempts by the Portuguese to build a colonial state in Timor. Portuguese officials were primarily concerned with the classic functions of the state – suppression of rebellion, conscription, and taxation. To facilitate administrative oversight and the collection of tribute, in the early 1860s Governor Affonso de Castro established new administrative districts, divided along east-west lines. It was in this context that the nascent colonial state came face to face with the Timorese Tower of Babel, and it is here that the term keladi re-emerges and the word firaco first appears in the written record. In a book pub-

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8 VOC 1209, folio 186-187, in: Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, nummer toegang 1.04.02, on a 1655 Dutch treaty with Sonba’i; information kindly provided by one of the anonymous referees. For the continuation of this symbol into the twentieth century, see Ormeling 1956:107, note 1.

9 The most dramatic example of this is the desperate plea made in 1770 by Governor Meneses to King João V for a royal order instructing Macao to send 2,000 piculs of rice every year to feed the new capital of Dili. ‘Carta de António Jozê Meneses, Governador Das Ilhas de Solor e Timor, a D. João V, Expondo a Situação Naquela Ilha Após a Transferência da Capital de Lifau para Dili’, reproduced in De Matos 1974:439-41.

10 The finta was formally introduced during the governorship of Manuel de Soto Maior (1710-1714), but then suspended under the second governorship of Monis de Macedo (1734-1739).
lished in 1867 titled *The Portuguese Possessions in Oceania*, De Castro (1867:328) describes the following languages:

Different dialects are spoken in Timor, among them may be mentioned *Teto*, *Vaiqueno*, *Galalo* and *Calado*. *Teto* is a language that can be said to be official, spoken by the chiefs, and that is generally used in Dilly and more so in the Portuguese towns [presidios] and our kingdoms from the centre to Batugadé. *Vaiqueno* is a language spoken by the inhabitants of the kingdoms of Servião, *Galalo* in the kingdoms in the east, and *Calado* in the mountains surrounding Dilly.

Similarly, in a brief passage in his diary in 1857, Governor Almeida Macedo describes how (ethnic Chinese?) speculators sold forbidden items (guns?) to ‘Callady’ in the mountains.11 The earliest known published uses of the term *firaco* also date from the mid-nineteenth century. In a memo on the languages spoken in Timor, A.G. Brouwer noted that the Makassae and Naueti languages were spoken in different parts of the Firaco region.12 The historian Luna de Oliveira describes an incident between ‘*firacos*’ and two ‘Macassarese’ ships in Laga, located in Baucau district, in 1864.13 Still more intriguing, an item published in the 1868 *Annals of the Overseas Council* notes that ‘all of the auxiliaries of the kingdoms who are in [military] service to the city [Dili], whether they be *firaco* or *calades*, within some months learn Tetum, although after several years have passed they still do not understand Portuguese’.14 Unfortunately none of these sources provides an etymology for the term. While it is possible that the term is derived from the Makassae language, as recent scholars have suggested (Soares 2003; *Exploring Makassae* 2006:21), it is equally possible that the label originates from the Portuguese word *fraco*, meaning weak, and may have been used by coastal kingdoms such as Vemasse to refer to the politically weak polities and clans that came under their jurisdiction.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, as scientific interest in Timor increased, the terms *kaladi* and *firaco* were used with increasing frequency. The English naturalist Henry Forbes, who visited Timor in the early 1880s, described the political and social conditions of the local population of Timor, noting: ‘In East Timor, I believe, there are about 16 dialects; I am not

12 A.G. Brouwer, ‘Geheime nota betreffende Timor en in ‘t bijzonder betreffende die landen welke de Nederlandsche vlag voeren’, 1849, in: KITLV, H 731; not examined by author. I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this information.
14 Quoted in Dalgado 1919, II:475. The odd final ‘l’ would seem to be a typographical error, perhaps a misreading of a handwritten plural ‘s’.
prepared to say they are languages.’ His list begins with ‘Mambai or Kaladi’ which he says was spoken in Turscain, Motaël, Hermera, Kaimauk, Hera and Laicor (Forbes 1884:405). Whereas the kingdoms identified as callades during the great rebellion of 1726 were comprised primarily of Kemak, Bunak and south-central Tetum speakers, Forbes clearly equates Kaladi with the ethnic Mambai who inhabit the central mountains in the current districts of Aileu, Ainaro and parts of Manufahi.15 Following in Forbes’s footsteps, the Portuguese naturalist Alberto Osório de Castro visited Timor from 1909 to 1912 and wrote a highly sympathetic account of the people and natural beauty of Timor. On the question of languages, A.O. de Castro (1943:36) notes:

The collective designation for the Timorese of our territory is Oân Timor, or sons of Timor. The only ethnic designations I know in the modern language are Firácos, which is a self-referential term used by the people situated in Baucau, facing the Banda Sea, to Luca, on the southern coast facing the Timor Sea, and out to the eastern extremity of the island; and Kaládi, or, in Portuguese, Caládes, who are the people of the central mountain range, comprised of two strata, or at least linguistic divisions, those bordering on the Banda Sea to either side of Dili (Hera and Motaël) and Môta-Háin (môta meaning river, háin foz meaning estuary), and from Lamequitos, or Lámak-Hito, to the people in the mountain kingdom of Bubonaro, who are also considered to be Caládes. The rest are people of the kingdom of Manufáhi, of the kingdom of Maubara, or of Motaël, or Hermera, etc.

In the same book De Castro uses the term ‘Firáco’ as a catchall for the ethno-linguistic groups of the eastern part of the island: ‘… the Firácos … speak mîdf Ki, macassái, nauêtè, uaimá and daguedá. Who knows? Dialects of Papuan immigrants, or of autochthonous primitives?’ (A.O. de Castro 1943:53) Given the recent debates in Timor, it is interesting that De Castro does not bother to mention Galoli-speakers in Manatuto or Tetum-speakers in Viqueque and seems to exclude the Cairui-Lacluta region from this designation. In other words, in his view there was a large middle group between the people he identified as Kaládi in the western mountains and Firácos in the extreme east of the territory.

The most extraordinary references to kaladi and firaco appear in a dictionary of Timorese place names compiled by Raphael das Dores, a military

15 This identification was repeated by a number of later authors (Almeida 1994:572, 586; and Duarte 1992:58, who uses it to cover both Mambae and Tocodede speakers). Just before the close of the century, Bento da França Pinto de Oliveira, who served as a captain in the military and was part of a governing triumvirate in 1882-1883, published a work on Macau and its relations with Timor. The word calladi does not appear in the extensive description of the indigenous population and social structure, but crops up almost accidentally in a discussion of produce sold in Dili. ‘There are’, he writes, ‘a variety of fruits grown in the gardens of Dilly and by the Calados, in the nearby mountains’ (Franca 1897:254).
Officer who served in Portuguese Timor in 1871, 1878, 1886 and again in 1891. Under the entry for ‘Calade’ he writes: ‘Denomination that is used for the jurisdictions of various kingdoms in the mountains near Dili, in the interior of the island’ (Das Dores 1903:23). Elsewhere, however, he tells the reader that ‘the indigenous inhabitants of Dilly are called calades’ (Das Dores 1903:27). The use of firáco in Das Dores’s dictionary is far more puzzling. Under the heading ‘Allas’, Das Dores tells his readers that this kingdom is situated on the south coast of Bellos (the eastern half of the island), owes an annual tribute of ‘100 pardaus and 10 auxiliaries’ to Dili, and has a population of 5,700 ‘hearths’ (households) and 40,000 souls. The last two sentences of the entry read: ‘The kingdoms in the district are: Samoro, Bibişçuçu, Dotik, Fahulau, Lamekito, Reimea, Tutuluro, Turiscæ and Manufai. The language spoken is Teto [Tetum], and the calade dialect, which in Dilly is called firáco’ (Das Dores 1903:13). Das Dores also reports that the population of Cairui speaks ‘galale or firáco’, the population of Barique speaks ‘teto, galale or firáco’, and the population of Lautem speaks ‘firáco’. In other words, Das Dores found that firáco was spoken in the south-central region of Alas, in neighbouring Barique and not-so-distant Cairui, as well as in Lautem, but not in Baucau or Viqueque. Das Dores also produced a Tetum-Portuguese dictionary, published in Lisbon in 1907, which includes the following entry: ‘Kalade: a kind of plant that the indigenous eat as a vegetable. In Dilly this is a name for the people who come down from the mountains to sell their produce in the market on Sunday’ (Das Dores 1903:23). Oddly, however, the word firáco, which appears in his 1903 dictionary of place names in Timor, is not included in the 1907 dictionary.16

Throughout these texts there is no indication of tension or hostility between kaladi and firaco; nor is there reason to think that these terms were used self-referentially. These were primarily labels used by the Lusified residents of Dili and other towns on the north-central coast to refer to the population in the interior, and secondarily terms employed by the authorities in Dili to make sense of the bewildering array of kingdoms and ethno-linguistic groups. While salaries and trade provided townspeople with regular access to imported rice, poor soils and irregular rains meant that tubers and corn remained staple crops for kaladi and firaco living in the mountainous interior.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the new colonial practices of taxation and census taking may have made the use of these regional designations more common. In 1908 the Portuguese introduced an onerous head tax on the adult male population. If tax evasion was not possible, many Timorese had no choice but to become indentured labourers on the massive new coffee plantations, or else they slipped into the servitude of local elites who could pay

16 Luis Costa (2000) defines ‘Kaladi’ as people from the mountains and ‘Firaku’ as people from mountains in the east and northeast. Enciclopédia (1984, VIII:945) notes that firaco is a derogatory term.
on their behalf. In the east, where there were large numbers of buffalo, another option was to sell cattle in Dili, which seems to have become a rite of passage for nobles in the 1920s and 1930s (Corrêa 1944). To facilitate tax collection, the Portuguese also began taking an annual head count of taxpayers. But unlike their contemporaries elsewhere in Southeast Asia, most of whom had begun a generation earlier and had quickly converged on a secular, proto-electoral census model employing racial and ethno-linguistic categories (Anderson 1998:39-40), the Portuguese interest was purely that of the tax collector. Data on the indigenous population was initially limited to the total number of taxable men, later to a simple breakdown of the total indigenous population by sex and age in each administrative unit. Even in the 1920s, when a concerted effort was made to introduce international standards for census taking, the Portuguese never adopted ethnic or linguistic categories. The absence of a modern ethno-linguistic census was a crucial precondition for the continued use and even spread of regional terms for easterners and westerners.

The spread of these terms may also have been an unnoticed byproduct of colonial expositions. In 1936 Portugal held a grand exposition in Lisbon, to which Timorese liurai (kings) were taken as live exhibits, and the following year an extravagant exposition was held in Portuguese Timor. In addition to performances, exhibits of local crafts, and the spectacle of half-naked human bodies arranged on the ground to spell out ‘Ten years of the Revolution’ (referring to the establishment of the authoritarian Estado Novo in 1926), thousands of photographs were taken of bare-chested couples representing each kingdom, region and ethno-linguistic group (Loureiro 1999:83-119). Bringing together Timorese from across the territory, labelling them and presenting them as spectacle may have further helped to fuel the use of labels for those from the east and the west. In a work published in 1944, the anthropologist Mendes Corrêa laments the feudal-administrative and socio-linguistic fragmentation of the colony:

[…] a division, an excessive fragmentation into ‘kingdoms’ and independent ‘villages’ each set against the other, expressing the lack of relative ethnic unity. Firacos and Caladi, Belos and Atoni, all ‘kingdoms’, more than forty languages and dialects, various races, exogenous forces, cordially partitioned one against another, this is the reality. Timorese is, then, a simple geographic designation. Timor, the proper name of the island, is, in the Malay-Indonesian language, nothing more than a name for a cardinal point, East […] (Corrêa 1944:20).

17 For the 1911 enumeration of taxpayers, see Boletim Oficial do Governo da Provincia de Timor XII-4:28; for the 1916 population census, see Ministério das Colónias, Anuário Colonial de 1917 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional), p. 961; for the 1927 census, see Boletim Oficial do Governo da Provincia de Timor XXIX-42:277-80.
Decolonization and grupismo

The April 1974 Armed Forces Movement in far-away Lisbon brought an end to the lusotropical indolence of Dili, and the announcement of imminent decolonization opened the door for the establishment of political parties. The two major parties were the pro-Portuguese Democratic Union of Timorese (União Democrática Timorense, UDT), founded on 11 May, and the more radically nationalist Timorese Social Democratic Association (Associação Social Democrática Timor, ASDT), formed on 20 May; a third party, the Association for the Integration of Timor into Indonesia (Associação Integração di Timor-Indonesia), which subsequently changed its name to Timorese Popular Democratic Association (Associação Popular Democrática Timorense, Apodeti), was established on 27 May. The early party platforms were in agreement on the need for freedom of expression, association and religion, and were opposed to racial discrimination and corruption.\(^\text{18}\) They diverged, however, on the means for achieving these goals.

The leaders of the three major parties were drawn primarily from mestiço and liurai families, had been educated at the seminaries in Soibada and Dare, and were employed in the colonial civil service. Although party leaders made national claims, they concentrated on building local support in their home areas. This was particularly true of UDT, which was established by and represented the interests of plantation owners and local functionaries. Similarly, Apodeti built a following in Atsabe (home of liurai Guilherme Maria Gonçalves), Laculbar (home of the Osorio Soares family) and Viqueque (centre of the ill-fated 1959 rebellion against Portuguese rule). At the local level, however, party affiliation did not simply reflect political orientation or ideology; it was driven by long-standing rivalries between neighbouring hamlets, villages and kingdoms. Such cleavages were highly localized and there was never a divide between east and west.

In September 1974, ASDT held a general assembly at which the party name was changed to the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Frente Revolucionária Timor Leste Independente, abbreviated Fretilin) and a new party manifesto was produced. The introduction to Fretilin’s political program praised the ‘various uprisings and rebellions’ against Portuguese rule, but explained that this was not sufficient to prevent colonial subjugation. ‘Our forefathers’ sentiment for independence was restricted by tribal feuds and by geographical divisions. This fact was able to be exploited by the Portuguese colonialists’ (quoted in Jolliffe 1978:331). Soon thereafter the party published a Political Program and Manual, which explained: ‘Furthermore, some of the things they [the colonialists] say divide us. They call some Timorese KALADI and some FIRAKU. They want the Timorese to be divided,

\(^{18}\) The programs of the three political parties are reproduced in Jolliffe (1978:Appendix A).
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calling us Kaladi and Firaku. But we are all from the same land, we are all sons of Timor’ (Manual e programa 1974:3). Fretilin referred to this problem as grupismo and sought to expose the dangers of such forms of false thinking. To overcome these divisions, the party adopted the common name Maubere to personify the poor, ignorant and downtrodden Timorese peasant (Ramos-Horta 1985). This was, in effect, a national version of the regional appellations kaladi and firaku. While many party leaders promoted Mauberism by adopting indigenous names, perhaps the greatest single symbol of Maubere was dietary: at the grassroots level Fretilin supporters referred to cassava and other tubers as ‘pão Maubere’ – the bread of the Maubere people.

From mid-1974 until mid-1975, Indonesia wooed the East Timorese political parties, fuelled their rivalries, and waged a smear campaign alleging that Fretilin was a communist organization. By August 1975 these efforts led UDT to stage an ‘anti-communist’ coup in Dili. Fretilin counter-attacked and after several weeks of fighting, UDT leaders and thousands of followers fled across the border into the Indonesian side of the island. With the flight of the Portuguese administration to the offshore island of Atauro, Fretilin became the de facto government, though it continued to recognize Portuguese rule. Whatever their claims about the strength of popular support for the party, Fretilin leaders were keenly aware that nascent nationalist sentiment was cross-cut by a host of local allegiances and antipathies. In October 1975 Fretilin Central Committee member António ‘Mau Lear’ Carvarino published an article in the party journal on ‘The establishment of new relationships in Timor Leste’. He argued that the labels kaladi and firaku were a serious problem hindering national unity:

One of the variations of tribalism is the division of the population into ‘Loro Mono’ and ‘Loro Sae’, into ‘Kaladis’ and ‘Firakus’ (‘easterners’ and ‘westerners’ in two Timorese languages) and the belief that some groups are superior to others. Still, today, in spite of a year of clarification, we frequently hear our friends saying that ‘the Firakus are better than the Kaladis’ or that ‘the Loro Mono are no good, the Loro Sae are the ones that are good’. These ideas … in no way help our struggle … FRETILIN wants the unity of the people and this is only possible by eradicating the false ideas which come from a colonial and traditional society. (Quoted in Jolliffe 1978:313-4.)

As was the case during the great rebellions in the early eighteenth century and the colonial expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century, the regional labels kaladi and firaku appeared once again precisely at a time when central authority was undermined. But the terms were not fundamentally the expression of ethnic cleavages or a strict east-west divide. Following the Indonesian invasion of Portuguese Timor there are extremely few references to kaladi and firaku. One of the few such instances is a passage in Xanana Gusmão’s auto-

19 This should be ‘westerners and easterners’.
biography, written while he was in prison in Jakarta. Gusmão explains that in 1976, when he was with Fretilin Prime Minister Nicolau Lobato in Same (in south-central East Timor), ‘the Firaku forces wanted to go and fight in their own regions’ (Gusmão 2000:39). However frustrating such sentiments might have been for national leaders, this was a far cry from communalism.

Conquer or divide?

The resignation of President Suharto in May 1998 opened the door for East Timor’s eventual independence, though with unforeseen but far-reaching consequences. Jakarta’s initial offer of broad autonomy in June 1998 did nothing to quell demands for independence, nor did the increasing mobilization of pro-Jakarta militias. In January 1999 Suharto’s successor, President B.J. Habibie, announced that he would allow the people of East Timor the opportunity to vote on their own future. While negotiations were taking place between Indonesia, Portugal and the United Nations, pro-autonomy groups that were organized, financed, and armed by the Indonesian military launched a campaign of propaganda and terror. The resulting human rights violations have been the subject of intense international scrutiny (see Robinson 2003; Final report 2006). Far less attention has been paid to the instrumental uses of regional and communal labels during this process.

The east-west issue was first raised by leaders of the pro-Jakarta militias. On 17 April 1999, the Aitarak and Besi Merah Putih militias held a pro-autonomy rally in front of the Palácio do Governo, attended by senior Indonesian military officers. Addressing thousands of armed militia members, Aitarak leader Eurico Guterres spoke about the possibility of splitting the territory along east-west lines. He suggested that even if people in Lorosae (the eastern districts) favoured independence, Loromonu (the western districts) would remain under a pro-Jakarta administration. Following the rally, the militia rampaged through Dili, attacking the homes of prominent pro-independence figures and killing at least 16 people. The issue of regional identities arose once more during the official campaign period stipulated under the terms of the May 5 New York Agreement. In a televised debate, Octavio José Soares, the son of the Indonesian-appointed governor, Abilio Osorio Soares, argued that pro-autonomy forces had control over ten districts, which would join with Indonesia.²⁰ Although Soares did not specify which districts, East

²⁰ I am grateful to Mariano Sabino, Minister of Agriculture, for this information. Personal communication, 5 October 2007. Over the next few months Indonesian officials developed a plan that, should the results of the referendum reject Jakarta’s offer of autonomy, the territory would be partitioned and the ten western districts (Loromonu) would remain with Indonesia. Personal communication with Sidney Jones, 10 August 1999.
Timorese immediately interpreted this to mean the ten western (Loromonu) districts. Guterres and Soares were both echoing the popular but overly-simplistic view current among young East Timorese that after the fall of the last Fretilin base areas (base de apoio) in the late 1970s it was easterners that had kept the resistance alive. In doing so, Guterres and Soares catapulted the issue of regionalism into the spotlight.

The overwhelming vote in favour of independence and the horrific violence committed by the Indonesian military and the pro-Jakarta militias led first to the deployment of the Australian-led International Force for East Timor (Interfet), then to the establishment of the United Nations Transitional Administration (UNTAET). Mandated to restore order and oversee the transition to independence, UNTAET’s emphasis rested firmly on state-building. Among East Timorese, all eyes were glued to a single prize looming on the horizon: state power. With the collapse of the umbrella National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), members of the political elite rushed to establish political parties to compete in the 2001 Constituent Assembly election. It was in this context that the kaladi/loromonu and firaku/lorosae issues next emerged, this time from a very different source.

One of the conditions of the New York Agreement was that resistance forces were to be cantoned in specified locations. Following the arrival of the Australian-led peace-keeping force in September and UNTAET in October 1999, the scattered units that made up the armed resistance (Falintil) were assembled in a single cantonment in Aileu, in the mountains south of Dili. In this context it was inevitable that past differences would arise during discussions about the leadership and shape of the security forces for the new country. In April 2000, Falintil regional commander Cornélia ‘Ely Fohorai Bo’ot/L7’ da Gama, who is from Baucau, and many of his followers left the cantonment, taking weapons with them (Rees 2004:44-7). During a military ceremony in Aileu, Colonel Lere Anan Timor is reported to have said: ‘If those of you from Loromonu still want to participate [in the defence force], you should call Rogerio Lobato and Leandro Isaac to lead you.’21 This triggered an angry response from Jaime ‘Samba Sembilan’ Ribeiro, a 24-year veteran of the resistance from Liquica. The following day, he confronted the two highest-ranking military officers, Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak and Colonel Lere Anan Timor, accusing them of fomenting the Firaku/Lorosae versus Kaladi/Loromonu issue. For Samba Sembilan, this was not the first time the problem had arisen. He later explained to journalists that in 1986

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21 Quoted in ‘Pekerjaan saya sekarang adalah penjual kayu bakar’, Talitakum 31, 27 December 2001, p. x. In 1975 Rogerio Lobato, who is from Liquica District, was the first commander of Falintil; Leandro Isaac, whose brother was a Falintil commander in 1975, is from Manufahi District. A similar account is found in an unpublished interview by a Vox Populi reporter with F-FDTL Lieutenant Gastão Salsinha, dated 4 March 2006, in the author’s possession.
Falintil commander David ‘Daitula’ Alex, who was from Baucau district, had made similar comments:

I remember that thinking like this first surfaced in 1986 in Bebaki. Daitula brought it up in a general meeting attended by the deputy commander [of Falintil] and military advisors. Daitula said ‘people from Lorosae are the most heroic now. People from Lorosae are the leaders. We have the presidency, we hold the position of deputy commander. When the war is over we will be the leaders. Everyone from Loromonu has surrendered. Now there are only a few people [from Loromonu] involved [in the armed resistance].’ (Talitakum 31:19, 27 December 2001.)

Angered by the remarks made in Aileu, Samba Sembilan and many of his former subordinates from the western districts walked out of the cantonment and chose not to join the new military.

Although stemming from radically opposed sources and used for very different political reasons, the uses of the kaladi/loromonu and firaku/lorosae labels by pro-Jakarta militia leaders and the senior Falintil commanders reverberated widely in Dili from 1999 until the restoration of independence in May 2002. With hundreds of thousands of people displaced from their homes, extensive damage to housing, and severe shortages of basic commodities, people flooded into Dili. They occupied abandoned houses and laid claim to strategic locations from which they could sell goods. Dionísio Babo Soares explains that this led to the formation of neighbourhoods which were identified as being either firaku or kaladi. He recounts how a clash on New Year’s Eve 1999 between Makassae speakers from Baucau (firaku) and Bunak speakers from Bobonaro (kaladi) led to two weeks of violence in the capital (Soares 2003:278-83). Such conflicts simmered over the next two years. Disillusioned by the situation, former Falintil commander Samba Sembilan commented: ‘Now, after the war is over, there are one or two people who speak in the name of the military but without the military knowing about it. They use the Lorosae-Loromonu issue [as justification] to steal cars, motorcycles, houses, and goods, but without orders from headquarters’ (Talitakum 31:20, 27 December 2001). In early 2002 murders in the Manleuana and Becora neighbourhoods of Dili prompted new alarm over east-west tensions, though East Timorese leaders were quick to downplay the matter. At a seminar on the issue of tensions between easterners and westerners, the commissioner of the newly-formed national police, Paulo Martins, flatly denied the existence of east-west tensions, claiming that the trouble was really a matter of gangs seeking to exert influence, and assured the audience that the police had inter-

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22 The massive influx of people into the capital was of sufficient concern that in 1999 UN staff discussed the possibility of closing the city off, but eventually decided that such a measure was not politically viable. Personal communication, foreign diplomat, 22 June 2008.
nal security well under control. What he failed to appreciate was that under the uncharted circumstances of open electoral competition the east-west issue might resonate in new ways within and between state institutions.

**A changing political map**

On the evening of 20 May 2002, tens of thousands of people gathered in a dusty field on the western outskirts of Dili to witness the transfer of sovereignty from the United Nations to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. With dignitaries from 92 countries sitting on a make-shift podium decorated with colourful woven cloth and illuminated by floodlights and a giant television screen, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan declared Timor-Leste to be independent. President Xanana Gusmão then presided over a military honour corps that raised the flag while fireworks lit the sky. Over the next year the government distributed national flags to each village, and the villages in turn held festivities to celebrate the new nation-state. Even after the restoration of independence, the continued presence of the UN – which trumpeted its (and by extension, East Timor’s) success – refereed the political arena and pumped dollars into the Dili economy. But there were clouds on the horizon. Three issues are of particular relevance for understanding the surprising resonance of the divisive communal identities embodied in the terms *kaladi* and *firaku* so soon after independence.

The earliest and most obvious signs of trouble emanated from the new security forces. The new national police force (PNTL), established by the UN in 2000, included a large number of officers who had served in the Indonesian police, causing resentment among Falintil veterans and those who did not pass the recruitment process. There was a general perception that the senior ranks within PNTL were dominated by individuals from the western districts (ICG 2006:4). Formed a year later, the new national defence force (F-FDTL) was characterized by an even more glaring sociological divide: Battalion I was dominated by veterans from the east while Battalion II was comprised of new recruits primarily from western districts. Even more troubling, although easterners were only a slight majority (56%) of total military personnel, they accounted for 85% of the officer corps (ICG 2006:6). Meanwhile, Minister of Interior Rogerio Lobato (who had served as the first commander of Falintil in 1975 but in 2002 had been denied the new post of Minister of Defence) sought to build a personal base of support by patronizing disaffected veterans, particularly those from the west. F-FDTL soon became associated with Lorosae/Firaku, and PNTL with Loromonu/Kaladi. These profiles gave rise to highly

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23 Personal observation as co-panelist, seminar at East Timor Study Group, Becora, January 2002.
public tensions both within and between FDTL and PNTL (Rees 2004; ICG 2006). In early 2004 a new weekly magazine closely linked to the Democratic Party made the issue of discrimination within the military its lead story, running the headline ‘Keladi vs. Firaku in F-FDTL’. While senior F-FDTL officers viewed this as an attempt to undermine the corporate unity of the military, Prime Minister Alkatiri saw it as an effort to woo the military into joining the emerging alliance between Gusmão, the Democratic Party, and the Social Democratic Party bent on toppling the government.

The second factor fuelling the rise of east-west sentiment was economic. International agencies and the new government announced ambitious plans to stimulate economic growth and create employment. The failure of these efforts is best illustrated by the fact that in 2004 the civil service, the UN, and the NGO sector accounted for approximately three-quarters of all wage-employment, most of it in Dili. The largest employers in the tiny private sector were security agencies. As Moxham (2008:13) correctly explains, ‘the “pull” of Dili’s reconstruction boom and the “push” of agrarian stagnation’ led to the phenomenal growth of Dili’s population. The result was intense competition in Dili over squatting rights, the rapid expansion of the informal sector and, in the words of one East Timorese scholar, the emergence of ‘new ghettos known as firaku and kaladi areas’ (Soares 2003:283). But while East Timorese struggled to cope in the face of unemployment and impossibly high prices of imported basic commodities such as rice and cooking oil, international ‘experts’ continued to applaud Timor as a success story.

The third factor was a conflict within the political elite. During the initial period of UN administration (1999-2002) tensions emerged between Fretilin, under the leadership of Mari Alkatiri, on the one hand, and resistance leader Gusmão and his allies, on the other. During the April 2002 presidential election, Gusmão rejected Fretilin’s support for his candidature and stated that he

24 Vox Populi 1, 29 January 2004. This issue includes an article by Virgilio ‘Lamukan’ Guterres, then director of Timor-Leste Television and Radio, who argues that the terms are not opposed but rather represent two forms of resistance: ‘If it is true that the origins of these stereotypes are from Portuguese, with “firaku” or “vira-cú” meaning “to turn one’s butt” and “kaladi” coming from “calado” meaning quiet, then Timorese should be able to take this as a point of pride. If we view such behaviour […] as signs of resistance to colonialism, why should we use them to put each other down now that we are independent?’ This was an admirable attempt to put a positive spin on a deeply divisive issue within East Timorese society.

25 In 2004 unemployment in Dili was 26.9% (Moxham 2008:14). The 2004 national census (DNE 2006:164) shows a total labour force in the country of 324,422, of whom 17,412 were employed by the government, 3,121 employed by the United Nations, 6,509 employed by non-governmental organizations, 9,832 in the private sector, 32,675 self-employed (the vast majority presumably in the informal sector), 239,455 in farming/fishing, and 5,418 ‘looking and available’. This suggests that a mere 11.3% of the workforce had full-time wage employment.

26 Xanana Gusmão (2005) repeatedly lambasted such ‘experts’. Despite the obvious economic contraction, on a visit to Dili in April 2006 World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz praised East Timor for having ‘established its economy well’ (UNOTIL Daily Media Review, 8-10 April 2006).
wanted to be a ‘counter-weight’ to Fretilin. Sharper criticisms soon followed. In late 2002 Gusmão called for Minister of Interior Lobato to be sacked on grounds of incompetence. Mario Carrascalão, who had served two terms as governor during the Indonesian occupation (1982-1992) and in 2000 had founded the Social Democratic Party (PSD), stated that Fretilin was intent on setting up a one-party state. The following year the youthful leaders of the Democratic Party (PD) complained that Fretilin dominated parliament, and called for the formation of an alliance of opposition parties. Rumours began to circulate that PD and PSD were planning a coup. The emerging Gusmão-PD-PSD opposition alliance was to take on regional overtones: PD’s basis of support lay primarily in four western districts (Bobonaro, Covalima, Ermera, and Ainaro), while PSD was often associated with Liquica (where the Carrascalão family owns a vast coffee plantation) and Dili. For his part, although born in Manatuto, Gusmão’s international celebrity and close relations with the UN mission made him very much a man of the centre – Dili. In other words, the opposition was increasingly associated with the western districts.

In September 2005 leaders of the three largest opposition parties announced the formation of a National Unity Front (Forum Unidade Nasional, FUN). Despite the name, this was clearly an initial attempt to form a coalition opposed to the Fretilin government. After the announcement, Prime Minister Alkatiri quipped that if the aim was unity then Fretilin should be asked to join as well, adding that FUN was little more than a group of frustrated individuals. One of the first rejoinders came from Domingos ‘Dek’ Agusto, a former Falintil guerrilla from Ermera who had been discharged from FDTL in September 2003 and subsequently joined PD, who argued that it was Alkatiri who was frustrated. Not long after this exchange, ASDT leader Francisco Xavier do Amaral announced that his party was willing to join a coalition with PD and PSD to contest the 2007 national election (Timor Post, 16-11-2005). This move was to have major implications for the political map of East Timor. Amaral, who is from Turiscai in the central mountains, had served as the first president of ASQT/Frelinh/RDTL from 1974 until 1977, when he was arrested by the Fretilin Central Committee and tried for treason. In 2000 he had established a new party called ASDT, which drew support primarily from the Mambai-speaking areas of Ainaro, Aileu and parts of Manufahi. (This is precisely the region that the nineteenth-century Portuguese authorities had referred to as Caladas/Callades/Kaladi.) Fretilin leaders were initially concerned about the loss of part of their constituency, but they could rationalize this by viewing ASDT not as a competitor but rather as a junior partner representing the more traditional (and less educated) Mambae-speaking block in the central mountains. They were, after all, part of the old Fretilin and could still be considered part of the Fretilin family. In 2005, however, the combination of PD’s and PSD’s strength in the westernmost districts and
ASDT’s hold over the central Mambae highlands marked a serious threat to Fretilin’s electoral prospects. Where Manatuto district had once stood as a distinct ‘middle’ – neither lorosae nor loromonu\textsuperscript{27} – the emergence of the new PD-PSD-ASDT coalition suggested that the political map of East Timor was being redrawn in a way that pitted Fretilin’s strength in the east against the opposition’s dominance in the west.

The redrawing of East Timor’s political map became clear during the second half of 2005 when the first village-level elections were held. Given the logistical difficulties, elections were held at staggered times. While Fretilin, PD, and PSD fielded party candidates, ASDT made the strategic decision that local party figures should run as ‘individual’ candidates, not as party representatives. The overall results showed that Fretilin candidates had won 57% of all village headships, the Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party won a mere 10.7% and 6.6% respectively, and ‘individual’ candidates won 22% (Suco elections 2005). Fretilin leaders declared that this proved that it still had majority support and would sweep the 2007 national elections. Although Fretilin claimed that many of the ‘individual’ candidates were in fact Fretilin supporters, the reality was more complicated, for at least two reasons. First, the large number of ‘individual’ candidates who won office showed that ASDT was the fastest growing party. An ASDT-PD-PSD coalition thus stood a good chance two years down the road. The second key feature of the elections was the geographic distribution: PD, PSD and the ASDT ‘independents’ dominated in the western districts, while Fretilin had mobilized massive government resources and exerted pressure to ensure its own domination in the eastern districts.

Resonance, violence and the ascendance of Dili

How and why, it must be asked, did these forces converge with such explosive effect, leading security forces to engage in open combat in the streets of the capital, triggering massive communal violence, and leaving more than one hundred thousand people displaced from their residences?

The fuse was provided by the ongoing issue of regional discrimination within the defence force. In January 2006, 159 soldiers presented a petition to the President alleging that officers from the eastern districts were discriminating against personnel from the western districts. As formal measures to address the problem faltered, more soldiers left their bases, eventually bringing the number of ‘petitioners’ to nearly 600 (or 40% of the defence force). President Gusmão turned the matter over to Prime Minister Alkatiri, who then gave approval

\textsuperscript{27} When asked about the kaladi-firaku issue, some East Timorese used to joke that Manatuto was ‘kafir’ (Arabic/Indonesian for ‘infidel’) – a combination of ‘kaladi’ and ‘firaku’.
to F-FDTL commander Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak to dismiss the petitioners. The spark that lit the fuse came from political elites: Gusmão and Alkatiri’s mishandling of an internal military affair and inappropriate statements on the east-west issue. Returning from a trip abroad in March, Gusmão gave a fiery televised speech in which he stated that he disagreed with the decision which, in his view, suggested that the military was the exclusive preserve of easterners while those from ‘Manatuto to Oecusse’ [that is, the western districts] were the ‘children of militia’ [that is, pro-Indonesian].

The speech had an immediate impact in two ways. By so clearly and publicly undermining Matan Ruak’s decision […] [it] open[ed] the way for further efforts by FRETILIN to make its influence felt within F-FDTL. And by legitimating western grievances, it seems to have led directly to attacks on easterners in Dili […]. By 27 March, seventeen homes had been burned to the ground and easterners were crowding onto buses to flee the city.⁸

In late April, a five-day demonstration by the petitioners escalated into an anti-Fretelin rally and violence ensued. Early May saw the commander of the military police defect to join the petitioners and Minister of Interior Lobato distribute weapons to westerners. Between 23 and 25 May firefights erupted between the former commander of the military police and F-FDTL, between civilians armed by the Minister of Interior and F-FDTL headquarters, and finally between F-FDTL and the national police. This violence, in turn, ignited the tinder that was the greatest legacy of the UN presence – the tens of thousands of people from east and west drawn to Dili after 1999 in search of the material benefits (jobs and rice) of the long-awaited independence. The deployment of an Australian force barely contained the ensuing communal violence in Dili that was now framed in terms of kaladi and firaku.

The opposition coalition succeeded in forcing Prime Minister Alkatiri to resign (replaced by Foreign Minister José Ramos-Horta, a staunch Gusmão ally), but its leaders, fearing all-out civil war, stopped short of calls emanating from within the Democratic Party for the dismissal of the Fretelin-controlled parliament. Instead, with the backing of a new UN mission, Gusmão and Ramos-Horta portrayed themselves as good democrats who would wait for the scheduled 2007 national elections for a resolution to the crisis. This strategy, however, involved a conscious decision to sacrifice the human security of well over 100,000 people – from both eastern and western districts – who were to remain in squalid refugee camps dependent on humanitarian food assistance. Fretelin leaders were equally willing to keep their supporters, a

⁸ ICG 2006:8. It is worth noting that the UN Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste (Commission of Inquiry 2006:63) chastised Gusmão for making this speech, noting his lack of ‘restraint and respect for institutional channels’.
majority of whom were from the eastern districts, in the camps as a bargaining chip in this new political game.

When national elections were finally held in mid-2007, José Ramos-Horta won the presidency and Xanana Gusmão’s party and allies collectively outpolled Fretilin. The results of the parliamentary election eerily mirrored the earlier political maps of Timor described in the first half of this article. Gusmão’s new party, CNRT, was victorious along the north coast in Oecusse and from Batugade to Manatuto – precisely those areas that had been loyal to the Portuguese 300 years before. PD polled strongest in the western districts (Bobonaro, Covalima, Ermera and Ainaro) that had been home to the callade kingdoms that were the target of Gonçalo Magalhães de Meneses’s military campaign in 1726. ASDT was dominant in the central Mambae-speaking area that had become synonymous with kaladi in the late nineteenth century. Meanwhile, Fretilin’s base of support lay largely in the east – precisely the areas that began to experience the expansion of colonial authority and military campaigns in the late 1800s and only came under direct Portuguese colonial rule during the early twentieth century. The formation of the Gusmão-led coalition government therefore would seem to mark the political victory of the western districts over the eastern districts. President Ramos-Horta and the political parties in the new government quickly sought to downplay regional sentiment. In May 2007, for example, ASDT leader Francisco Xavier do Amaral proposed that a new law be passed making the use of the regional appellations Loromonu/Lorosae and Kaladi/Firaku illegal. He stated publicly that ‘Anyone who says Loromonu-Lorosae, Firaku-Kaladi with the aim of dividing Timor will be considered to be a traitor. Such a person could be punished with the death penalty.’

But the 2007 electoral victory and current resolution to the crisis is in fact illusory. On the one hand, the division of spoils within the current coalition government has bred tensions both between the coalition partners and within several of the parties. In early 2008, angered by the Gusmão-led coalition’s failure to make political appointments on a proportional basis, ASDT pulled out of the coalition government and announced that it would ‘return home’ and in future elections ally itself with Fretilin. In doing so, the Mambae-speaking ASDT constituency of the geographic centre was threatening to rejoin the east in opposition to Dili’s elites. On the other hand, the electoral outcome rests on the fragile guarantee of United Nations backing for the centre. As was the case in early 2006, the eventual lifting of UN guardianship

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will leave East Timorese staring once again into the abyss of competition over scarce resources in which those from Lorosae and Loromonu – and all points in between – will view the distribution of political power and the basic necessities of life in terms of how easterners and westerners fare. As was the case in the early eighteenth century when the townspeople of Lifau threatened to call in the Caladas to prevent the return of the Bishop and the Portuguese military waged a massive campaign to subjugate the population in the western districts, and in late nineteenth-century Dili, when the communal labels Kaladi and Firaku were employed as a means of exclusion, these frames reflect a deeper social ecology that continues to underpin power relations on this half-island: the difference between those who eat rice and those who must rely on a combination of tubers (*keladi*), corn, and simple belt-tightening in the annual lean season.

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