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# Reconsidering reintegration: Veterans' benefits as state-building

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In Timor-Leste, newspaper columns, blog posts and roadside debates crackle with questions about the relationship of the past to the present: Why should former resistance members give up their weapons and cede control to young police officers? What is the benefit of replacing efficient 'jungle justice' with lengthy court processes? On what grounds can state administrators tell former resistance members that they do not qualify for a pension? These are questions about legitimate domination and justifying a new regime. These are questions about the relationship of the past to the future.

Many Timorese look to the resistance movements that fought against the Indonesian occupation (1974–1999) for political legitimacy, indigenous governance models and structures, and narratives for what independence should mean. In the vision of those who participated in the resistance, the past provides a template for the new state. As one former leader argued:

> We need an organ to clear up and organise [the state] … the body should be structured like it was in the jungle. If you spoke you had to pause first; you had to speak truthfully, to the point. And everyone understood this.[1]

However, efforts to preserve the resistance-era political order clash with the development and consolidation of a neoliberal statist order. This can be observed in a lack of resolution about where authority should reside, as well as in repeated clashes between state authorities and former combatants.

While the independent Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste has been internationally recognised for over a decade, the process of state-building is ongoing. Not sewn from whole cloth, the new state depends upon artefacts of the pre-existing order; simultaneously, it is also defined in opposition to the resistance movement. In particular, the state-building challenge has revolved around renegotiating the relationship between the new state and the resistance movement, which until the end of the 24-year Indonesian occupation served as the legitimate site of authority, popular sovereignty and coercive force. The central puzzle of state-builders in Timor-Leste thus has been *how* to consolidate power with the state. This entails the delicate dance of moving from multiple sites of legitimate force and authority towards a Weberian monopoly, while also continuing to draw upon the symbolic power of the resistance movement and its leadership. In the context of pervasive state weakness, this process has involved incorporation and 'grafting' as well as exclusion and delegitimisation.

Reintegration programs, which connect the nascent state and former resistance members, are a key technology for state-building. More specifically, I examine registration and the performative elements of data verification practices and demobilisation ceremonies through this lens. I connect reintegration programs and state-building by arguing that reintegration programs exemplify Aretxaga's 'local encounters' (2003), which communicate the presence of the state in people's lives and shape their actions accordingly. In a country with poor infrastructure and non-existent or destroyed personal records, reintegration programs are

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1    All quotations are derived from the author's fieldwork, unless indicated otherwise. This fieldwork took place in two waves in 2010 and 2012, during which the author conducted 224 survey interviews using randomised cluster sampling and a further 90 elite interviews using purposive sampling. The interviews were conducted in Tetum when possible.

a significant state undertaking, engaging a powerful cohort. Since the early 2000s, reintegration programs in Timor-Leste have registered 250,000 former resistance members, bringing them into contact with the state.

This chapter seeks to contribute to the literature on both Timor-Leste and its future, as well as to broaden the way scholars think about state-building and its mechanisms. Reintegration programs relocate centres of legitimate authority from conflict-era institutions to the inchoate state; viewed this way, they are not about controlling spoilers or rewarding heroes. I identify reintegration programs as an example of how states are built from – but also destroy – the power structures of the past. Reintegration programs enlist a vision of the modern bureaucratic state, one with all the tools of technocratic power: registration forms, ID numbers, stamps and pension databases. This perspective moves beyond a narrow, security-driven view of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) as the monopolisation of coercive force. Instead, it looks at the role of reintegration in drawing new boundaries between state and non-state, defining and regulating veterans, and extending the state's reach. This argument is supported by critical and anthropological theories of the state.

## Reintegration in Timor-Leste

On 20 May 2002, Timor-Leste achieved independence following a brutal Indonesian invasion and occupation (1974–1999) and a period of United Nations trusteeship (1999–2002). Independence marked the putative end of the resistance movement that had fought against the occupation. Diverse and dynamic, the movement went through major strategic shifts and periods of fracture and rebuilding. In the post-conflict period, key leaders of resistance organisations, including clandestine groups, the diplomatic front and the armed resistance, sought office and became the backbone of the country's new political elite. These former resistance members brought with them longstanding alliances and tensions (often in the same relationship), as well as obligations to their networks of men and women who served under their command.

Undergirded by both a normative obligation to support those who served and the political mobilisation of potential beneficiaries, state benefits programs for former resistance members – namely, pensions and one-off payments – have been a core yet costly feature of the state's post-conflict development. In 2013, the Timorese pension program accounted for over

14 per cent of the social protection budget and 5 per cent of the total state budget. Since 2002, over 250,000 self-identified former resistance members – approximately 60 per cent of the population over the age of 30 – have registered. This number far outstrips historical estimates of participation (CAVR 2005: 39). This level of investment cannot be explained through conventional understandings of DDR programs as a strategic response to spoilers, concerns with security, or even political pressures.

As an alternative, I suggest that reintegration programs are a means of the state to exert control over 'unruly' subjects. The 'veterans problem' hinges on the rival status of ex-combatant networks in relation to state power, and the state has sought to gain control over these subjects through techniques that register, categorise and track them. As former prime minister Gusmão acknowledged, registration is important – as 'once there is oversight, we'll know who's who' (*Timor Post* 2010). This process of capturing 'who's who' has driven state-building: first, by necessitating the expansion of the state's institutional apparatus – more cars, databases, enumerators and ministry offices – and second, by increasing state power through the 'knowing' and ordering its subjects (see Widder 2004). The growth of state power can be understood to occur when 'more power relations are referred through state channels – most immediately, that more people must stand in line and await rubber stamps to get what they want' (Ferguson 1994: 274). Similarly, Loveman (2005: 1679) describes the extension of disciplinary state power through 'infrastructural penetration and administrative "ordering" of everyday life'.

Veterans' reintegration has also entailed the exertion of new practices that model the state's 'verticality' as above civil society, a concept borrowed from Ferguson and Gupta (2002). The authors argue that through 'spatialization', state actors 'help to secure their legitimacy, to naturalize their authority, and to represent themselves as superior to, and encompassing of, other institutions and centers of power' (ibid.: 982). From the construction of matching memorials and ossuaries in each of the country's subdistricts to demobilisation ceremonies in the capital, these performances draw upon a language of authority and communicate the modernity and centrality of the state. In the following two sections, I will first explore the extension of disciplinary power through the registration process and will subsequently address state performance in data verification processes and demobilisation ceremonies.

# Registration and disciplinary power

In Timor-Leste, the identification and classification of individuals through registration provides a key example of how the new state has extended its disciplinary power. Once classified, groups such as 'veterans' are naturalised, becoming 'problems' for the state and thus the objects of intervention and regulation. State actors first actively define the population subject to the intervention by producing knowledge on the cohort. This expert 'knowledge' becomes the source of power ('knowledge/power'), as it justifies and facilitates differential treatment and intervention (see MacKinnon's excellent summary, 2000: 296). Technologies for creating these identities include enumeration, classification and mapping. These practices engender standardisation, radical simplification and institutionalisation, and make state surveillance and control possible (see Anderson 1991; Bernal 1997). The legal development of identity categories in Timor-Leste used for administering pension benefits also provides an example of this knowledge/power nexus.

The creation of these identity categories allows for a range of disciplinary action, particularly through the exercise of 'biopower' – the control of bodies and populations – and the creation of docile bodies (see O'Neill's analysis, 1986: 43). As Ferguson argues, government services extend disciplinary state power into the realm of how people live and how they control their bodies. He writes:

> 'Government services' are never simply 'services'; instead of conceiving this phrase as a reference simply to a 'government' whose purpose is to serve, it may be at least as appropriate to think of 'services' which serve to govern. (Ferguson 1994: 253)

The view of the state as instrumentalised through the extension of disciplinary power is of particular relevance to this thesis; here, government services, including benefits programs, are a means of regulating identities and bodies, reframing reintegration programs as a form of disciplinary biopolitics. In this light, the introduction of state controls or programs (e.g. permits, forms, taxes, identification, services) marks the extension of state power and thus a form of state-building.

In Timor-Leste, the development of comprehensive registries began with non-state veterans' associations.[2] Of the new groups, the Association of Resistance Veterans (AVR [*Associação Veteranos dos Resistência*]) boasted over 18,000 members by 2002 (McCarthy 2002: 91), many of whom would have had extremely limited fighting experience. The Association of Former Combatants (AAC [*Associação dos Antigos Combatentes*]) also registered putative former fighters, 'demanding cash payments from those who registered in return for an ID card' (World Bank 2008: 9). The engagement of these associations in state-like functions (e.g. issuing identity papers or promising benefits) increased the state's need to establish its own registration program and reassert control over who would take part in these programs. As one Member of Parliament summarised: '[Resistance members] served the state, now it is the state's obligation. They could organise themselves … this would be a problem!'

Accordingly, Timorese programs have focused on creating authoritative data, 'official' records that control who is offered benefits and who is not. More broadly, these data drives have helped the Timorese state account for its populace. Prior to the registration drive, most Timorese registrants had no formal 'identity' in relation to the state apparatus. But registration has done more than just put individuals on the state's radar: the resulting identity categories set the lens through which the state approaches subjects. Here the summation of disciplinarity as *fixing* individuals within institutions is again apt (Hardt and Negri, quoted in Widder 2004: 414). These discursive processes – the categorisation of individuals – fundamentally augment the state's 'control over the production, unification, codification and dissemination of knowledge' (Loveman 2005: 1660).

In Timor-Leste, the registration programs identify subjects who merit special attention and interventions, including recognition and payments, using categories and criteria relevant to state purposes. Legal instruments draw the lines defining and excluding civilians and collaborators, separating high-status 'veterans' from 'former national liberation combatants'. These determinations centre on questions around types of service, with particular emphasis on use of weaponry; the criteria favour the politically powerful (older men) over the less so (women, young people). The title of 'veteran',

2    These included the FALINTIL Veterans' Foundation (FVF), the Ex-Combatants Foundation (AAC), and the Association of Resistance Veterans (AVR), in addition to resistance-era groups, including RENETIL and CPD-RDTL.

which has a distinct legal meaning, establishes subjects' relationships to the state. The categorisation is double-edged, however. As discussed in regards to demobilisation, such an assignation both honours the subject and marginalises him or her, simultaneously underscoring the subject's heroism and marking it as from a bygone era.

The emergence of the state in making these determinations marks a very specific extension of state power. Nationwide registration establishes the state as the maker and keeper of official – and thus consequential – histories, identities and knowledge. Here, state actors draw black-and-white distinctions in a conflict marked by shades of grey, resolving thorny questions around identity and service. This power to resolve ambiguities is, somewhat ironically, highlighted by the state's complicity in 'laundering' fraudulent or inflated service claims. As Scott notes, 'fictitious facts-on-paper' matter: they 'can often be made eventually to prevail on the ground, because it is on behalf of such pieces of paper that police and army are deployed' (1998: 83). The state renders these classifications 'true' by deploying the state apparatus and conferring special treatment on fraudulent registrants. As discussed above, the state's ability to remove people from the list marks a similar expression of this power.

In addition to simply determining who gets benefits (who 'counts'), registration renders subjects visible – countable, measurable – to the state. This allows for the treatment of registered individuals as a coherent group and facilitates monitoring, as well as control through targeted benefits distribution. For example, the provision of financial benefits to identified individuals can be used to disperse – the 'pay and scatter' DDR approach (Alden 2002: 345) – or concentrate problematic populations. In Timor-Leste, benefits payments are disbursed in the subject's subdistrict of birth, requiring regular pilgrimages back to areas in which the subject is 'known'. Veterans' benefits programs have also, for both surveillance and cultural reasons, often focused on housing, placing residences near the road for ease of state visits or envisaging 'veterans' villages' in which former fighters are concentrated. In this manner, data gathering and analysis is disciplinary and key to the extension and effectiveness of the state apparatus.

Finally, the classification of 'veterans' also makes possible the articulation of a 'veterans problem'. This problematisation both sets the stage for and justifies intervention. In interviews, state officials depict former resistance members as infirm and doddering, or hot-blooded and not modern – of a different era. This contrasts with state actors, who – despite often

having been in the resistance themselves – now identify with the state and with hybrid organisations like Gusmão's National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction party. This idea of former resistance members as being anachronistic has emerged as the heart of this 'problem', the clash between the old ways of doing things and the 'new' state. The focus of policymakers has thus been on excluding these actors from driving the political process and instead finding more 'appropriate', state-run venues in which they could express themselves – most notably the National Veterans' Council, which was under development at the time of fieldwork in 2012. Settling or solving the 'veterans problem' in this perspective thus revolves around redefining their relationship to the state, and undercutting or coopting these forms of authority.

## Incorporation of the resistance into the state

Tied to the process of extending state power through the constitution of subjects, a key area in which the performance of modern, bureaucratic statehood can be seen is the process of registering and verifying the data of former resistance members. Here, the theatre of this process must be considered independently of its efficacy as a tool of enumeration and authentication. As Appadurai (1993: 316–317, my emphasis) discusses in the context of colonial India, the use of numerical tools such as censuses 'rather than being a passive instrument of data-gathering … became an important part of the *illusion* of bureaucratic control'. Even if the forms and folios have been lost, what matters in this instance is the impression or 'illusion' of modern statehood that the registration and data verification process itself makes on the participants. In Timor-Leste, the audience is considerable, with approximately 250,000 individuals having registered and thousands having participated in data verification.

In the case of data verification, the Commission for Homage, Supervision of Registration and Appeals, observed during fieldwork in 2010, arrived from the capital in a large government vehicle with a driver. The members stayed with local leaders, were fed first and held their audiences from behind a table set up within a commandeered school building. The Data Verification Team's commissioners, many of whom were former resistance leaders, wielded all the tools of officialdom. They slid forms in and out of plastic sleeves, displayed identification cards on patriotic lanyards and had mobile phones clipped onto their belts; they thumped down rubber

stamps with percussive authority. They also trafficked in the currency of the formal state, rewarding the production of official documentation, including birth records and voter identification cards, and looking askance at those who had none. In the wake of these visits, state-authored registries issued from the capital were publicly displayed, advertising the new, singular and official record of the resistance.

The authority and modern rationality of the Homage Commission, and thus the state from which they emanated, were communicated in everything from the organisation of the room to the use of formal documents. It painted the picture of a strong, modern and opaque central state, and marked off boundaries between state actors (commissioners) and subjects (registrants). The hierarchies established by the Data Verification Team recall Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) description of how states are performed as vertical – above civil society and other social groups – and encompassing. Nevertheless, one Timorese academic noted in a 2010 interview with the author that this process had been partial: 'They have not received [benefits] because the government does not yet have control over the data. Some people have given false documents … data is needed for recognition'.

It is important to note, however, that this performance of a modern, apolitical state also masks continuities in conflict-era power relations and the political content of the reintegration program. This dynamic is evident in the widespread appropriation of reintegration resources for patronage, whether the awarding of construction contracts to former comrades or the inflation of years of service in pension registration. This is made possible through the transformation of former resistance leaders into commissioners, the bureaucratic actors working on behalf of the state. Yet this transformation, achieved in part through the theatre of state authority described above, is illusory or partial (reflecting, in part, the very fiction of the autonomous technocrat). While their transformation into 'commissioners' may appear to be a victory for state consolidation, it obscures how non-state actors and institutions that precede the new state gain access to resources in the post-conflict period.

While these actors 'act' on behalf of the state, many have used their positions to advance their interests, as well as the resistance-era networks that they support and that in turn maintain their status. Wearing 'two hats', non-state actors – whether as traditional authorities, through patronage networks or via ex-combatant groups – embody state institutions and

retain authority in both state and non-state spheres. Crucially, this result is not entirely unforeseeable. Indeed, the commissioners tasked with gathering and verifying former resistance members' registration data were chosen from the resistance leadership precisely because of their authority within those networks, as well as their knowledge of the area and of those who had participated in the resistance. This dual source of authority adds to their perceived omniscience, again evoking the vertical, encompassing state. The expansion of the state system through the registration program has, ironically, depended upon engaging resistance-era authority and legitimising it by dressing up former leaders.

Here, state actors have increased the impression of the encompassing, omniscient state by incorporating former resistance leaders and their networks – bodies still associated with coercive force and active surveillance. As Dorman (2006: 1086) argues, the institutions and styles of leadership that define the conflict era carry forward in post-conflict styles of politics and governance. I argue that the structures and networks carry over as well. In the case of Timor-Leste, we are reminded that even as the state enacts these boundaries, marking itself as distinct and autonomous from civil society and non-state resistance-era networks, these lines are both strategic and illusory. Rather, the exercise and currency of power remain rooted in relationships and narratives that extend through the state apparatus, and the perception of the state as unitary and autonomous is produced through specific practices.

## State consolidation through exclusion

While the extension of the state's reach is made possible through the transformation of former resistance leaders into 'commissioners', the imagination of the state is also achieved through the *exclusion* of certain non-state actors. Indeed, a key element of the performance of statehood is the articulation of lines separating the state from society: it is via these boundaries that the state takes form and is attributed with autonomy. As Mitchell (1991: 95, my emphasis) argues, '[t]he state should be addressed as *an effect* of detailed processes … which create the appearance of a world fundamentally divided into state and society'. Of particular relevance to this discussion, as I will examine in more detail below, is the

use of demobilisation ceremonies to rearticulate lines of authority and reclassify former resistance actors as 'non-state' and thus as illegitimate authors of coercive force.

To study this boundary, Mitchell (1991: 78, 90; see also Torpey 1998) suggests looking at the 'detailed political processes through which the uncertain yet powerful distinction between state and society is produced' and 'through which a certain social and political order is maintained'. In this reconceptualisation, a key element of state-building is how and where the line defining state and society is drawn. Who can act on behalf of the state? Who is a subject of the state? More broadly, I contend that the key to the modern state's performance and the idea of state autonomy depends on the creation of standard, mutually exclusive roles. These include citizen/bureaucrat, politician/technocrat, veteran/soldier and rebel/soldier, among others. The assignment of such roles as a form of disciplinary state power will be discussed in the next section.

One of the best examples of the redrawing of lines of authority is the demobilisation of armed resistance members, the FALINTIL (the *Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste* [Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor]). In 2006, 2011 and 2013, the Timorese Government demobilised 205, 236 and 219 high-level former resistance members, respectively. In 2012, a further 30,000 diplomas were distributed to former resistance members with shorter terms of recognised service. These ceremonies included the awarding of medals, presentation of new uniforms and martial displays by the new generation of the Timorese military, the F-FDTL. The theatrical ceremonies communicated a passing of the torch – a shift in authority from former fighters (the FALINTIL resistance) to the new state actors (the F-FDTL). The new uniforms, for example, made clear the separation of and distinction between the active troops and those now 'demobilised'. The protracted, expansive and iterative nature of this 'demobilisation' highlights the difficulty of reshaping the relationship between a resistance movement and a 'new' state army.

Comments by the Japanese ambassador to Timor-Leste, Iwao Kitahara, highlight the underlying narrative of these ceremonies and underscore the fundamental challenge of such a proposition:

> We are entering to a new era. Until now, there were F-FDTL soldiers who were also members of the FALINTIL. But from now on, the F-FDTL will be organised only by F-FDTL soldiers. (Kitahara 2011)

Yet, can such a line distinguishing the two identities be so clearly drawn? The point seems to have been lost that the name FALINTIL remains – as the first 'F' in F-FDTL. Indeed, this ambiguity or overlapping of the FALINTIL and F-FDTL authority was deliberately incorporated in the name. The military was first formed in 2001 as the East Timor Defence Force through the recruitment of 650 cantoned FALINTIL members; under public pressure to acknowledge the FALINTIL resistance, it was renamed the F-FDTL in 2002 (see ICG 2011: 4). The FALINTIL's authority remains, as does its symbolic power; as an institution, it is difficult to raze.

For those being 'honoured', demobilisation has served as a form of exclusion. These ceremonies confer an official status on the demobilised, symbolised through their medals and uniforms, but, concomitantly, they delegitimise these individuals' roles in the active state security apparatus. Even the bowing of each veteran's head to receive his or her medal signals a submission to the supremacy of the new state. Accordingly, some have refused to participate, viewing the ceremonies as a way to mark the resolution of their claims to government assistance. This displacement and delegitimisation of non-state resistance-era actors extends beyond demobilisation. The centralisation of information – for example, the determination of the years and types of service recognised in the demobilisation ceremonies – reproduces these lines of official (state) and unofficial (non-state) knowledge, only one of which 'counts'. These processes result in the alienation of these fighters and *clandestinos* from their histories.

The drawing of state and non-state boundaries and lines of authority is particularly complicated in post-conflict states. As Mitchell (1991: 88) argues, 'the edges of the state are uncertain; societal elements seem to penetrate it on all sides, and the resulting boundary between state and society is difficult to determine'. Many resistance-era actors have parlayed their authority into positions within the state. This is evident for both political leaders, who have drawn upon their conflict-era status to legitimise their claims as well as mobilise former followers politically, and 'Brown Shirt' security guards, who reportedly are often former resistance members who have received their positions through patronage networks. Even in the registration process, as discussed above, the incorporation of former resistance members as commissioners has merged and blurred the authority of resistance-era leaders and state actors. In such a fluid environment, activities that draw the lines between state and non-state are particularly powerful.

# Conclusion

In drawing upon anthropological and post-structural concepts of the state, this chapter has sought to shed new light on state-building and the role of reintegration and benefits programs therein. This lens shifts attention from what is being built (the state as an object or assemblage of institutions) to what effect these processes have (the idea of the state; the drawing of boundaries). And it is worth emphasising that the idea of the state in state-building carries with it a vision of the future, one of Weber's modern autonomous state, exercising bureaucratic power. In this manner, it is a rejection of the patrimonial relations of the resistance era. Analytically, this places focus on 'how the state is performed and experienced in the everyday encounters of state agencies and functionaries with the citizenry or population' (Metsola 2006: 1119).

The re-identification of the state thus reanimates the study of post-conflict reintegration and benefits programs in Timor-Leste, transforming our perspective on seemingly mundane practices such as queuing for registration. This framework, in complicating notions around state autonomy and agency, exposes the complexity around sites of authority, with state and non-state actors appearing to be in competition, but also often highly integrated, with some former resistance leaders 'wearing two hats'. Here we see, ironically, that building the modern state is a process in which resistance-era actors and structures are essential. The idea of the state, expectations of state action and the legitimacy imparted by acting on behalf of the state remain highly relevant – the state maintains this 'meta-capital' – even in a situation like that of Timor-Leste, where state institutions are weak and the reach of the state apparatus, such as through policing, is limited.

In their discussion of state development in Timor-Leste, Richmond and Franks argue:

> East Timor appears increasingly to be a hollow liberal state: the state structure certainly exists, but its liberal substance is virtual and has even been described as a 'Hollywood film set'. (Richmond and Franks 2008: 196)

This chapter, with its focus on the performance of the state and engendering the state-as-idea, recognises a similar theatricality – the 'film set' of state governance – but in that performance, it also finds substance. If we reject

a purely institutional view of the state and recognise that governance extends through the actions of people and infrastructural power, these performances and mythologies are important, drawing new lines between the past, present and future.

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