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TIMOR LESTEPRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2017: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The present article aims at underlining epistemological and political view point on the Timor Leste Presidential Election 2017 by highlighting the conceptual and dynamic preparation toward the election itself in providing ways to analyze and scrutinize more profound about the dynamics and perceptions on the Emergence and Ideological Formation of Political Parties in East Timor; The Preparation for Elections; Electorate and voting trends; The political and electoral debate; and finally looking at the challenges of the future.

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INTRODUCTION

The Presidential Elections that was held on March 20 represented the opportunity to consolidate the political stability and security that Timor-Leste enjoys since the recovery of the 2006 crisis. In addition to the official task of choosing the next President of the Republic, Presidential Elections meet a second purpose that was to prepare the way and to probe the popular vote for the legislative elections scheduled for June of that same year. The President of the Republic is the head of State of Timor-Leste, elected by popular vote for a term of five years. In spite of its symbolic role, and as defined in the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, the Presidency exercises important functions of defense oversight and the mandate to ensure "the proper functioning of democratic institutions" (Article 74 to Article 91 of the CRDTL which defines the role, eligibility and duties of the President). The Timorese Constitution also defines the role of the President of the Republic as that of a moderator, which is associated with the successive election to the position of three independent candidates. On the other hand, the figure of the President of the Republic emerges as central to the process of rooting and consolidating democracy. Although his executive role is somewhat limited, the President has veto power over

legislation and, following the elections, is the President who, as a rule, appoints the leader of the largest party or majority coalition to take office as Prime Minister of Timor-Leste. As head of government, the Prime Minister presides over the Council of Ministers. The single-chamber parliament is the National Parliament, whose members are elected by popular vote for a five-year term. Timor-Leste has a multiparty system with 12 parties represented in the National Parliament. UNTAET Regulation 2001/01 established a Constituent Assembly (later called the National Parliament) with 88 parliamentary seats, of which 75 were contested through party lists and the remaining 13 were allocated to districts and elected on the basis of proportional representation (Leach, 2008, p.76). Since the independence of East Timor, the Presidency has taken on increased importance, in part because of the charismatic character of the two men who have taken up the role so far, Xanana Gusmão and Ramos-Horta, and partly because of the few positions available to all those who have played Politically important roles in recent history. The President also formally determines who will form the Government after the legislative elections, and this makes the position is key in the Timorese political configuration.

The Emergence and Ideological Formation of Political Parties in East Timor

Timor-Leste only gained independence in May 2002, almost three years after the overwhelming majority of the people voted for independence in a referendum held on 30 August

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1999. The referendum was followed by the country's tragic destruction by Indonesians military personnel and their supporters. In October 1999, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1272/1999 established UNTAET to prepare Timor-Leste for independence, as well as to oversee reconstruction efforts. One of UNTAET's main tasks was to lay the foundations of a democratic East Timor. To help achieve this, he organized elections for a Constituent Assembly, whose mandate was to write the Constitution of Timor-Leste. The emergence of political parties in East Timor dates back to April 1974, when a military coup took place in Portugal and allowed the decolonization process to begin. As such, five political parties emerged in Timor-Leste: the Democratic Union of Timor (UDT); Social Democratic Association of Timor (ASDT), which later became the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor (FRETILIN); Popular Democratic Association of Timor (APODETI); KliburOan Timor Asuain (KOTA); and Labor (Work).

The Portuguese Government intended to complete the process of decolonization in 1976, but the UDT carried out a coup d'état in August 1975 which was followed by a counter-coup. On November 28, 1975, Fretilin unilaterally proclaimed Timor-Leste's independence, precipitating the Indonesian invasion and occupation on December 5, 1975. Under Suharto's dictatorship, Indonesia ceased the activities of all political parties based on Timor-Leste. The three Indonesian parties - Golkar, Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) and United Development Party (PPP) - operated in the province without a strong follow-up, although the East Timorese people were forced to participate in the five-year electoral process known in Indonesia as The "festival of democracy" (Saldanha, 2008, 70). Even during the occupation, new parties emerged in East Timorese - the East Timorese Nationalist Party (PNT) and the Christian Democratic Union (UDC) - in Timor-Leste and in exile, especially in Portugal. In addition, in the 1980s, XananaGusmao, the leader of the resistance in East Timor, established with another resistance fighter, José Ramos-Horta, the National Council of National Resistance (CNRM) to accommodate other resistance groups. In 1998, the CNRM was replaced by the National Council of the Resistance of Timor (CNRT) as the central organization of the resistance movement, gaining great support not only national but also international (Ibidem).

The Indonesian authorities, although they did not officially authorize more parties than the three registered blocs, allowed the PNT to be established in 1999. A coalition between the UDC and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) was established in Portugal in 1998 as a fragment of the UDT. This coalition was later divided into two parties - the UDC which integrated the Catholic wing and the PDC that represented the Protestant wing - in order to be able to submit separate candidacies to the 2001 elections. Another party to emerge in the 1990s, during the Indonesian occupation, was the Socialist Party of Timor (PST) with underground activity (Ibid., p.71). The political parties in Timor-Leste were revived when UNTAET began to organize the elections of the Constituent Assembly. In fact, 16 parties registered to participate in the May 2001 election, including parties that established the Portuguese colonial period, namely Fretilin, KOTA, Labor and UDT. APODETI did not register, thus giving place to a separatist faction, APODETI Pro-Referendum, founded in the 1990s to combat the Indonesian occupation. The Social Democratic Association of Timor (ASDT) also resurfaced in

2001 and applied separately from Fretilin, with Francisco Xavier do Amaral, the founding president of both parties, to leave Fretilin to resume its position as president of ASDT. Of the 16 political parties registered for the 2001 elections, only 12 gained sufficient votes to be represented in the Constituent Assembly (Ibidem). Eight new parties emerged to participate in the 2001 elections. These were: Liberal Party, Democratic Party or PD, Democratic Party of the Democratic Party (PDC), Timor People's Party (PPT), Social Democratic Party (PSD), Maubere Democratic Party (PDM) Parentil and Uniao Democratica Crista / Partido Democratico Cristao (UDC / PDC). The narrow ideological divide between the parties can be attributed to the fact that, with the exception of Fretilin, the UDT and the Pro-Referendum APODETI, they are all newcomers to politics and can represent regional elites. If we put the political parties in East Timor along a left-right axis, we can identify three clusters: left, center and right; And three other parties (PDC, PNT and PPT) without clear ideologies or declared platforms. The left-most party is the Socialist Party of Timor (PST) aimed at a classless, socialist state. Other parties ideologically close to the PST are Fretilin and ASDT (Ibid., p. 72).

With the end of occupation and the issue of independence resolved, parties have had to redefine their ideological differences, even if they have similar platforms. Fretilin needed to reinvent itself in order to face new internal and international circumstances. He went from a radical, leftist and revolutionary party to a moderate one, with a less dogmatic ideology, demanding even radical changes in Timor-Leste's society, such as: a compulsory school system and, as far as health policy is concerned, defends the use of traditional medicine; argues that Timor-Leste should become a member of the International Socialist Organization alongside center-left parties around the world. Its latest Policy Manual strongly emphasizes the dominant economy and liberal democracy, including multi-partyism. ASDT made a dramatic shift to the right. The Party Manual states that, as a vanguard party, it values liberal politics and an open market economy. A different basis from the initial position of the ASDT in 1974, when it was established as a leftist party (becoming more radicalized when it was absorbed by Fretilin). Now, ASDT is trying to establish itself as a center-left party that embraces key political and economic ideas. The leader of the ASDT is Francisco Xavier do Amaral, the founder of the party and later president of Fretilin, until he was captured and imprisoned, first by Fretilin cadres and then by Indonesians. Unable to return to this position after independence, Francisco Xavier do Amaral decided to revive ASDT as his personal political vehicle (Ibid., p.74).

The UDT was a major party in 1974, formed by former bureaucrats who worked for the Portuguese Colonial Government and traditional village chiefs, which contributed in part to its decline. In addition to having changed from its original position that Timor-Leste should be a federated state of Portugal to join the CNRT in the 1990s, its ideological position had little change. He is a strong supporter of the application of customary law and of a significant role of elders in the governance of the nation. UDC and KOTA are both derived from the UDT. The UDC talks about Christian humanism, with an emphasis on democracy and justice, is market oriented, but like UDT and KOTA, it defends local culture and tradition. KOTA is a strong supporter of Timor-Leste as a federation of kingdoms. Two new parties - the Democratic Party (PD) and the Social Democratic Party (PSD)

- emerge at the center. The PD was founded only two months before the September 2001 elections by former pupils, intellectuals and clandestine activists disenchanted with Fretilin's strategy and ideology, as well as following resentment against Fretilin exiles such as the Secretary-General of the Mari Alkatiri party that was seen as arrogant, privileged and authoritarian. In addition, accusations continued that Fretilin and his secretary-general marginalized the younger generation that was formed in Indonesia. The contribution of the student movement and urban East Timorese against the Indonesian regime was also underestimated, for example, in the 1991 demonstrations that drew world attention to the human rights violations perpetrated by the Indonesian army (Dwight, 2003: 755). The Democratic Party (PD) has also been strengthened by intellectuals trained in the West, especially Australia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Portugal and Indonesia. Another important component of the PD integrates medium-level resistance figures, many of whom came from the CNRT Clandestine Internal Political Front (FPI) and therefore maintained leadership positions at district, sub-district and village level. Many of this group were members of Fretilin but opted for PD because of their spirit of national unity and inclusion (Saldanha, p.74).

At the moment the DP is the second largest party of the opposition in Parliament, after Fretilin, with seven seats in the National Assembly. Although the DP is still at the stage of forming its ideological platform, its position tends towards the center-left: it supports compulsory primary education and calls for assistance to veterans and war victims. It is in favor of a market economy with selective government intervention. In his last speech, PD president Fernando 'Lasama' de Araújo emphasized the development of an investment climate that favors small and medium-sized enterprises through tax incentives and less regulation. However, the PD suffers from leadership problems and lacks a systematic policy approach to country management, which can be partly explained by the lack of experience of its leaders in governance issues as they have been brought in from the ranks of Political activists. The Social Democratic Party (PSD) is also in the central grouping, although it is still struggling for precise guidance. It defends the policy of minimum wages and intervention in economic development, and is against the death penalty and abortion. Younger leaders have argued that the PSD should be part of the International Socialist Organization. It is interesting to note that the PSD attracted UDT supporters, which could have reduced UDT votes in the 2001 elections.

Preparation for Elections

The election of the President of the Republic on March 20 was the third Presidential Elections since the independence of East Timor in 1999 (followed by the 2007 elections and later 2012). The preparation of the Presidential Elections was marked by the "calm, organized and peaceful environment", as recognized by the Minister of State Agio Pereira and the leader of the European Union Observation Mission (EU) Izaskun Bilbao Barandica. The Government was also releasing the election calendar in order to inform citizens about the electoral process and encourage their participation in the polls. These elections were also remembered as the first national elections to allow the Timorese to vote in the Diaspora, namely in Portugal and Australia. In order to ensure the smooth and regular functioning of the electoral process, the Government approved for the first time, on February 27, a series of

diplomas aimed at regulating the campaign and the electoral process, namely: Government Decree No. 5/2017, which regulates the campaign and electoral propaganda; Government Decree No. 6/2017, which regulates the organization and operation of Voting Centers and Voting Stations; Government Decree No. 7/2017, which approves the procedures for voting, counting of votes and tabulation of results; Government Decree No. 8/2017, which approves the technical procedures for conducting the voting abroad, in order to guarantee the voting process and counting of votes, as well as the calculation of the electoral results of the diaspora; Government Decree No. 9/2017, which regulates the electoral observation activity, performed by natural persons representing a national or international organization; Government Decree No. 10/2017, which approves the technical procedures for carrying out the journalistic coverage activities of the Presidential Election; Government Decree No. 11/2017, which regulates the intervention, exceptionally, of the elements of the National Police of East Timor; Government Decree No. 12/2017, which regulates voting in hospitals and prisons, in order to ensure the full exercise of the right to vote for all citizens; Government Decree No. 13/2017, which regulates the inspection activities of the electoral process (Jornal da República, Series I, No. 8B, of February 27, 2017).

In order to ensure that polling stations, polling stations and voting take place in an orderly and peaceful manner, STAE ensured the necessary logistical, technical and human resources, namely: 693 Polling Centers; 941 Voting Tables; More than 10 thousand employees to carry out electoral monitoring; 120 national civil servants plus two civil servants for each of the country's 67 administrative posts; 693 Brigades (with one person responsible for each polling center); 9,410 electoral officers (10 for each of the 941 voting tables). As a result of the strengthening of the Timorese democratic institutions, these will be the first national elections without the presence and assistance of the United Nations Integrated Mission. At the invitation of the Government and the electoral authorities of Timor-Leste, the Presidential Elections will be accompanied by an Electoral Observation Mission (EOM) of the European Union (as will happen with the July Legislative Elections). The sixth official observer mission of the European Union aims to support the Timorese authorities in the organization and logistics of elections and to ensure the organized and peaceful access of all Timorese to the polling station in order to exercise their right. The work of the EU Observation Mission will result in a final report containing advice and recommendations for future electoral processes. STAE also received the accreditation request as observers from a delegation of the International Republican Institute (IRI). The deadline for submitting the application for accreditation was March 13, seven days before the presidential election.

The three electoral management bodies of Timor-Leste are the Court of Appeal, the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) and the National Commission of Elections (CNE). STAE is a government body organized under the Ministry of Public Administration, whose responsibilities include the elaboration of electoral regulations and codes of conduct, the organization of voter registration and the administration of voting. The fifteen independent commissioners appointed to the CNE supervise this work, approving the statutes prepared by STAE and processing procedural complaints. Criminal complaints are handled by the Court of Appeal, the highest Administrative Court, which is

also responsible for certifying the eligibility of applications submitted. Between January 23 and February 5, 2017, the Court of Appeal received a total of eight applications (five fewer than in 2012 and the same number as in 2007). The procedure for verifying and assessing the eligibility of applications, carried out by the Court of Appeal, was followed by establishing whether they comply with the law, in particular by gathering at least 5000 signatures, of which 100 Each of the 13 East Timorese districts. On February 18, the Court informed the CNE and STAE of the list of applications accepted: all applications were considered eligible:

- José António de Jesus Neves, independent
- Amorim Vieira, independent
- Antonio Maher Lopes, Socialist Party of Timor (PST)
- Ângela Freitas, Labor Party (PT)
- António da Conceição, Democratic Party (PD)
- Francisco Guterres (Lu-Olo), FRETILIN
- José Luis Guterres, from the Frente Cambio (FM)
- Luis A. Tilman, independent

The election campaign began on March 3 and will end on March 17. The electoral campaign period therefore runs for fifteen days and ends two days before the election (according to Article 28 of Parliamentary Law 7/2006, "Election Law for President of the Republic", promulgated on December 22, 2006). After the vote on March 20, the CNE will publish the provisional national results between March 26 and 28. There will then be a period of presentation of possible appeals against the national result that will later be published in the *Jornal da República* on April 2. Given the electoral outcome, two scenarios can happen: i) the election can be decided in the first round, if one of the candidates obtains more than 50% of the total valid votes; ii) if no candidate obtains a majority of the votes, a second round of the elections will be held on April 20, 2017, where the two top candidates in the first round will stand for election, provided that none of them has withdrawn their candidacy - In this case the election campaign will run from April 3 to 17 and results will be scheduled between April 23 and 25. The Court of Appeal shall publish the Judgment with the final result of the ballot on May 3 and the inauguration of the new President of the Republic will be on May 20, the 15th anniversary of the Restoration of Independence of Timor-Leste.

Electorate and voting trends

Following the Electoral Census for the 2017 Presidential and Legislative Elections (whose official data were submitted on January 14, 2017) are registered to vote in last year's presidential and legislative elections a total of 748,584 voters, of which 747,252 were residents in Timor-Leste; 853 were in Australia and 479 are in Portugal, according to information provided by STAE. The elections this year will be the first with a vote of Timorese in the diaspora, namely in Portugal and Australia, in an initiative that the Government wants to extend in the future. This year's Presidential and Legislative Elections will thus have about 120,000 new voters compared to 2012. Of the 13 municipalities in East Timor, Díli has the highest number of voters (156,934), followed by Baucau (85,284 voters) and Ermera (74,290 voters). One aspect of the relevant electorate is the demographic. Of the total number of voters, more than half (51%) are between the ages of 17 and 35. On the other hand, 30% of voters will vote for the first time in these elections - in Timor-Leste they vote for more than 16

years - being the first voters who were born after the Indonesian occupation. For these young people the weight of the 'veterans' of the East Timorese resistance was much lower than for previous generations. Education and employment, on the other hand, are their main concerns. Therefore, there was a significant part of the young population that seeks and desires change, not reviewing past candidates, the so-called Timorese historical leaders. The new generation argues that it was necessary to give place to this new generation. On the other hand, social networks, especially Facebook, have become the main channel for information and political debate, since the Internet reaches places where there are no newspapers or quality television. The voice of young people was very present in social networks and on the internet, having a significant impact on the political debate among the public opinion in the country.

The political and electoral debate

The history of East Timor remains an important concern of Timorese public life. While polls show high levels of popular pride in East Timor's history (Leach, 2012), the very centrality of nationalist resistance has resulted in considerable political debate over the symbolic ownership of this history: who is included, excluded, or recognized. In the central narrative of the *funú* (fight, see Ramos-Horta, 1987) and also so that the younger ones can feel part of the national history. This has been a prominent theme in post-independence electoral contests as well. Events in the struggle for independence, such as the 2002 riots, the Catholic Church's 2005 protests about voluntary religious education, the 2006 military-political crisis, tensions with veteran groups, demand recognition of their principal agents. This debate is present in the 2012 elections, participation in resistance to Indonesian occupation continues to be a powerful source of political legitimacy, and the debates about the inclusion or exclusion of certain actors from the national liberation narrative were tools in the electoral campaign and public discourse (Powles 2012).

The fact that Xanana Gusmao revitalized the name of the former united front of independence (CNRT) as a political party in 2007 gave a new configuration to the debate and political legitimacy over leadership credentials in the military wing of the resistance. In 2012, Gusmao again campaigned as Maximum Leader of the Resistance, with a prominent media campaign, including photos of himself in uniform, which gave full exposure to his role of resistance leader. Similarly, the presidential election campaign of 2012 also featured strong references to the past in Taur Matan Ruak's campaign slogan: "Together with you in the past, our blood has become entwined in our independence. Better future" (Powles 2012). Since 2012 there have been clear signs of a public rapprochement between the two key figures of Prime Minister Gusmao and opposition leader FRETILIN and former Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri. Following the formation of coalitions between non-FRETILIN forces from 2007, the profound nature of the CNRT's victory in 2012 appears to have reduced political conflict among elites, with the emergence of a new political solution or consensus policy. This reflected Xanana Gusmao's successful and long-term strategy of using political victories as the basis for building coalition and building political units. The influence of President Taur Matan Ruak is also seen as a factor in the new work truce between the two leaders (Leach, 2015, p.47). This new style of policy was evident in FRETILIN's unprecedented support for annual budget votes in parliament and the

appointment of Alkatiri as head of a major project to develop the Oecusse enclave as a special economic zone (Suara Timor Lorosa'e 2013). It was also reflected in Gusmão's proposals to the FRETILIN conference of 2014, in which he recognized his key role in the Resistance. On the other hand, Alkatiri publicly acknowledged Gusmão as a former leader of FRETILIN. His party also dropped the "de facto government" label it had used after the 2007 election, when the CNRT had won fewer seats than FRETILIN. The two leaders were often seen traveling together demonstrating unity and consensus, which has become the target of internal criticism, so much so that the Minister of State and President of the Council of Ministers, Agio Pereira (2014), referred to a "new national consensus policy" to overcome the failed state syndrome, and seeing them as an example for other post-conflict developing countries, "to turn belligerent democracy into a consensus democracy." For FRETILIN, he made reference to a new "pact with the regime" that he sees as a "necessary consensus for the construction of the State". The heyday of this "national consensus" took place in early 2015 with the formation of a new government of "national inclusion" that replaced that led by Xanana Gusmão, with the support of all parties in Parliament, including FRETILIN, which offered one of its members to the position of Prime Minister, even if it affirmed to be "in the opposition". In effect, this new government of "national inclusion" assumed the role of the CNRT, since it was dominated by the ministers of the CNRT, but led by Rui Araújo of Fretilin as Prime Minister.

With the resignation of Gusmão from the position of Prime Minister to the post of Minister of Planning and Development, the new Executive came to share the power between the two main parties (CNRT and Fretilin), imparting a great intergenerational change in political leadership (Leach, 2015). The entente CNRT / Fretilin emerges as the result of public efforts to promote "gerasaun foun" (younger generation) rather than "gerasauntuan" (the former guard who was already present in 1975), offering jobs for the younger generation and even the post of prime minister needs to be carefully analyzed. This movement was dubbed as "a transformation of belligerent democracy into consensus democracy." Although the outgoing President (Xanana Gusmão) did not interfere with this development, he soon became a strong critic of the Executive of Rui Maria de Araújo and the political entente that sustains him. Now the two main partners of the entente (CNRT and Fretilin) have agreed to go together to the Presidential Elections (though without an official coalition or formalized support), signaling that they wish to continue the present Government formula after this year's election cycle (even though the place of the minor parties in the coalition is not secure and the vote reached by the PLP's new opposition is open). In addition, they assume that the role of the President has changed, failing to be the guarantor of impartiality, playing a "neutral" role as "president of all East Timorese", to become an active party game player, negotiating their political and institutional support behind the government coalition. When it is considered that the CNRT is the largest party in Parliament and has renounced the right to appoint the Prime Minister (giving it to Fretilin) the question arises as to whether, by losing the presidential elections to his rival / Partner (Fretilin), will the CNRT keep the same discrete attitude after the parliamentary elections if it continues to be the biggest party? With the departure of Xanana Gusmão from the post of Prime Minister, questions are also raised about the new moderation of the political conflict. Will the new consensus continue in a

post-Gusmão electoral environment after the 2017 elections? Will the emergence of the post-75 Generation alter this inter-party dynamics? Can a new generation address social issues of cleavage with the same kind of historical legitimacy as historical leaders? Or, in fact, will it be a generation that will most easily transcend these divisions associated with the Generation '75 leaders?. These questions remain about the role of the military. The army will be out of politics once senior civilian leaders cease to be former FALINTIL commanders, whose political control ensures the government's proximity (Feijó, 2014a). If recognition-style claims from former veteran groups continue to catalyze some popular economic discontent, the combination between high unemployment numbers and a growing disaffected young population could again reveal a latent potential for significant social unrest. On the other hand, it is important to know whether the claims of victims' groups can be treated with money transfers and pensions, in the absence of meeting more difficult requirements, such as justice. Time will tell whether "history wars" are being healed, or simply suspended in elite formal politics (Leach, 2015, 55).

This new moderation of the political conflict also saw the state seek to combat anti-system actors, including CPD-RDTL, with significant developments in 2013 and 2014. Throughout 2013, increased activity and political conflict was evident from groups of veterans including an extensive confrontation of the CPD-RDTL with the police in Manufahi. At the end of 2013, calls from a former FALINTIL commander Paulino Mauk Morak Gama for a "revolution against poverty and early elections" brought to the debate the earliest divisions within FALINTIL's former military resistance. This generated heated debates in the country, as a special forum of political leaders had to be convened, with the President himself mediating the meeting. This conflict has deeper roots in Gusmão's reform of the FALINTIL resistance in the 1980s, from the armed wing of the FRETILIN independence party to a nonpartisan military force representing all nationalists. This movement toward a policy of non-partisanship eventually led to the creation of the CNRT - a broad nationalist front representing all East Timorese nationalists, with no ideological goals beyond national liberation and with FALINTIL as their armed forces. Mauk Moruk was among a small group of disaffected FALINTIL officers who rejected the strategy and attempted an internal coup against Gusmão's leadership (Leach, 2015, 48). The Presidential Elections on March 20 confirm a new political landscape, marked by the political and strategic alliance - although without an electoral coalition - between Xanana Gusmão (CNRT leader) and Lu Olo (FRETILIN), which seems to gather strong popular support and be a favorite victory.

Fretilin proposed Lu Olo, its president (but not its leader, Secretary-General Mari Alkatiri), as it had done in 2007 and 2012. In the last two elections, Lu Olo passed the second round but failed to win the election. This time Lu Olo has the strong support of the largest parliamentary party, the CNRT and its charismatic leader Xanana Gusmão. The CNRT will be the only party with parliamentary representation that will not have a candidate of its own or one that officially supports the Presidential Elections. António Conceição, of the PD and Minister of Education, seems to be the main rival of Lu Olo. After the party has suffered a severe blow with the death of its historic leader Fernando Lasama de Araújo in 2015, the Presidential Elections will also be a test for a possible candidacy for party leadership. The PD is one of the most

credible alternatives to the historic Timorese parties that intends in the legislative elections to be able to gather an active opposition in the National Parliament through the capitalization of young discontentment. António Conceição has the support of the newly created People's Liberation Party (PLP), inspired by the current President of the Republic, Taur Matan Ruak. General Taur Matan Ruak has not reappointed himself and is expected to run for the legislative elections in June, by the newly created PLP and as Party President. According to an analysis by Rui Graça Feijó - *Timor-Leste upcoming presidential elections: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs? - the Timorese Presidents tend to suffer from the "wrong palace syndrome", an expression that reflects the idea that the (supposedly limited) powers conferred on the President of the Republic by the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of East Timor do not allow them to assert their orientation Strategy for the country. Already in March 2007, in preparation for the parliamentary election of the same year, Xanana Gusmão gave up the presidency and applied for legislative elections and was appointed the August 6, 2007 Prime Minister by the CNRT. Taur Matan Ruak seems to follow the same example, although his hypotheses are not considered so high. If Lu Olo can get elected, the kind of relations he is likely to establish with the Prime Minister are totally different, as he is committed to "a majority, a government and a president" - only the president will probably not be the leader.*

José Luís Guterres, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and current deputy of the Change Front (FM). Two non-parliamentary parties also presented candidates: The Labor Party supports its leader, Ângela Freitas, and the Timorese Socialist Party supports António Maher Lopes. Although the PST does not have representation in the National Parliament, its leader, Avelino Coelho, holds an important post in the government. José Neves, a former guerrilla leader and deputy commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission (CAC) until July 2016, is running without partisan support. Amorim Vieira, of whom very little is known other than the fact of having lived in Scotland where he joined the SNP. And Luís Tilman, a practically unknown individual who also presents himself as "independent". The Presidential Elections of 20 March envisage the Timorese "rule" that no President exercises a second term. However, they also envision a new political configuration since it is highly likely that Timor-Leste will have, for the first time, a President who is a member of a political party. The experience of three non-partisan presidents comes to an end not because the rules of the game have been changed but because the political landscape has moved considerably.

All three post-2002 Timorese presidents presented themselves to the electorate as "independent". It was so with Xanana Gusmão (2002-2007), with José Ramos-Horta (2007-2012) and more recently with General Taur Matan Ruak (elected in 2012). Xanana fought the elections with ASDT's Francisco Xavier do Amaral (who was backed by a political party), eventually winning with a comfortable vote of 83% of the popular vote when receiving support from several parties in the second round (but not from Fretilin). Ramos-Horta who was not affiliated with any party was supported by Xanana's CNRT and in the second round defeated the Fretilin candidate Francisco Guterres Lu Olo with 69% of the votes. Taur Matan Ruak, a former guerrilla leader when Xanana was arrested, who had been the first head of the Timorese armed forces, also

appeared without partisan support, gaining support from the CNRT on the first round and defeating the Fretilin candidate with 61% of the votes. The Timorese always preferred the independent candidate, to the detriment of candidates with party affiliation (Feijó, 2014b, p.240). The election of the last three presidents also supports the thesis that Timorese politics remains much more driven by the personality of Timorese candidates and historical leaders than by political and ideological debate. For this reason, the existence of "independent presidents" is more prevalent in the case of young democracies and in transition processes that require greater political inclusion and articulation among constitutional institutions (ibid.). The election of independent candidates who defeat other candidates with partisan support and achieve a victory by very large margins that allows them to exercise a strong mandate as President of the Republic also derives from the electoral system in two rounds that ensures that the winning candidate musters the support of the Other parties and thus obtain an absolute majority of the votes. This was possible in 2007 with Ramos-Horta, who, making use of the distance that separates him from the parties of the second round, transmitted to the entire constituency the confidence that they would be protected if they did not elect a member of the rival party. Ramos-Horta thus came to be regarded as a figure of national unity, above partisan cleavages. Both Xanana Gusmão in 2002 and Ramos-Horta in 2007 showed no inclination for the formation of a government under his direct influence, but neither was a party leader (Ibid., pp. 242-243).

One circumstance that in the past has been critical in winning the second round is the fact that one of the parties joins all the losers in the first round, making it difficult to preview the final result. The presentation of candidates takes place on the basis of affirmation of their political identity, in view of a negotiation in the second round (as was the case in 2007 and in 2012). However, in the March 20 elections, the two largest parties negotiated a common candidate before the first round, significantly increasing the likelihood of a President-elect in the first ballot. Although there are 12 parties in Parliament, there are four parties (Fretilin, PD, PSD, ASDT) that control 84% of seats, with the remainder divided into eight smaller parties. The small number of effective political parties with parliamentary representation reinforces the notion that Timor-Leste's party system is not so fragmented to the point of causing serious coordination problems. Policy coordination requires time and incentives and can be compromised if there are too many coalitions to manage. In the case of Timor-Leste, a coalition system could be successful because there are only four effective parties (Leach, 2008, Feijó, 2014b). In Legislative Elections, the fact that some small parties are going to get one or two seats in a National Parliament where, it seems, no absolute majority is anticipated, it will require that agreements on governance be made.

Final considerations: the challenges of the future

In terms of political and electoral debate, Timorese politics remains much more driven by the personality of the candidates and political leaders than by their ideas, and it is common for the parties not to debate in the electoral campaign their political platforms and the program they have for the country. Timor-Leste is a developing country that has many potential and specific challenges. One of the most pressing challenges for the new President of the Republic refers to the country's Strategic Development Plan, which, after 10 years of independence, has

had minimal infrastructure development. The Government Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 sets ambitious development targets and promises considerable development in all parts of the country. So far, there has been little political discussion on how to boost human development indicators. Relations between East Timor and its regional neighbors, Indonesia and Australia are an area of the political strategy that has required particular attention in order to peacefully integrate the historical past and future commitments with the Timorese people. Maritime boundary issues can also not be resolved without both sides entering into a structured framework of negotiations and commitments, somewhat hampered by the fact that in 2002 Australia withdrew from the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice on the United Nations Convention On the Law of the Sea and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, on the delimitation of maritime borders.

While many of the problems can not be solved instantly, a large number are the result of the history. We have achieved much since the restoration of independence in 2002, but we are aware that challenges remain. The development process has been hard, but there are many voices who are confident that we are on the right path. We may have to make compromises and political compromises to build consensus. These strategies are, however, short-term and aimed at achieving a specific end goal. Despite all these challenges, the foundations of our society are unshakeable: we continue to believe in democracy as a means and an end; We do not believe that economic development justifies the suspension of civic rights and participation. This democratic option is the right path to the direction East Timor wants to take in its future.

The challenges to democratic consolidation and improvement in Timor-Leste's performance come from many different sources, including the ongoing process of state-building (decentralization), which calls for the commitment of the ruling elite to major reform and the need to adopt appropriate policies in a context in which democratic norms suffer from alternative narratives that can subvert the main principles of the constitutional ethos. The stability that has marked Timor-Leste's development in recent years can not therefore be fully equated with the consolidation of democracy. The performance of the political system also needs to be further strengthened to ensure a firm rooted democratic governance on the political scene at all levels. Particular attention should be given to democratic institutions and their capacity to adapt to the emerging social forces in the country, as well as youth and their projects for East Timor. If democracy is based on the empowerment of citizens to make the fundamental decisions regarding the development of their communities and to take control of their destinies, it must also be able to combine in balanced proportions adherence to standards and procedures recognized as being more adjusted Local values and forms of political legitimation.

“É provável que um país atinja a democracia não copiando as leis constitucionais ou as práticas parlamentares de alguma democracia anterior, mas sim enfrentando honestamente os seus conflitos particulares e criando procedimentos adaptativos para a sua acomodação.”

“A country is likely to attain democracy not by copying the constitutional laws or parliamentary practices of some previous democracy, but rather by honestly facing up to its particular conflicts and by devising adaptive procedures for their accommodation.”

– Dankwart A. Rustow

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