

Internationalizing the National – Nationbuilding under the Conditions of a United Nations Transitional Administration: UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, 1999-2002) supervised by Prof. Dr. Gabriele Metzler

Post-conflict societies, especially when faced with the task of a political transition towards independence, require to negotiate the direction of future state policy, institutional state-design, power structures and societal relationships. They need to determine which standards and norms to incorporate, who to affiliate with and why, to take position between past and future – in short: transitional post-conflict societies require collective self-definition. In cases of a transition to independence and the creation of a new state based on the right of self-determination this constructive process of defining the collective self aims at creating a national community, it aims at building a nation(state).

The guiding questions of this research project are: What if this highly self-focused construction process is performed under the conditions of an international transitional administration (ITA)? How do these special circumstances affect national self-definition? How does the necessity to obey to international standards, norms, forms of negotiation and dialogue within the framework of an ITA influence the construction and interpretation of the set of collective memories that is necessary in order to achieve collective identification? And how do strategies of creating this historical identity as a basis for collective identification and legitimacy (prior to democratic elections) have to be adjusted to or collide with the international sphere? East Timor and the United Nations Transitional Administration (UNTAET) are the research object of this case study. In conceptual terms the study is based on the history-theoretical concepts of collective 'historical identity' (Jörn Rüsen) and the categories 'space of experience'/'horizon of expectation' (Reinhart Koselleck).

East Timor looks back on a long history of foreign rule by different authorities. First being a Portuguese colony for centuries, Indonesia annexed East Timor in 1975 and acted as *de facto* authority for 24 years. With Habibie becoming Indonesia's president in 1998, the window of opportunity opened and – as a result of the UN-Secretary-General's good offices – the conclusion of the so called '5 May Agreements' (1999) between Portugal and Indonesia paved the way to a popular consultation (conducted under the auspices of UNAMET – United Nations Mission in East Timor). Now the East Timorese finally could exercise their right of self-determination and express their wish for the future status of the territory. A majority of 78.5 percent voted for East Timor's transition towards independence and, in accordance with the '5 May Agreements', the transfer of authority to the United Nations. Due to the violence that erupted after the announcement of the results of the referendum the UN-Security Council established UNTAET on 25 October 1999 in accordance with the Secretary-General's report on the situation in East Timor. The Security Council by its resolution (S/RES/1272) followed Annan's proposal to “endow[...] [UNTAET, A/N] with the overall responsibility for the administration of East Timor [...] during its transition to independence” (S/1999/1024). Thus, the Security Council awarded one of the most comprehensive

mandates in UN-history.

But the focus of this analysis is not limited to the national level of East Timorese actors – to the contrary: The study aims at elaborating the role of the United Nations in this national process. UN-led transitional administrations do not apply the term or concept of nation-building to the organization's operative actions. But it is evident that the East Timorese nation-building process is necessarily entangled in the international framework of UNTAET and that the involvement of the United Nations in the so called 'question of East Timor' from the 1960s onwards has been a major factor that coined the long way of the country towards independence. Therefore, the UN's interaction with local actors throughout this process forms the focus of attention of the study. To this end, UN archival material – official and internal documents – will be analyzed. The project pays special attention to: a) active UN-bodies and UNTAET's on-the-ground procedures; b) the administration's interaction with local actors. Both, constructions of local historical identity as well as adjustments to or frictions with the international framework are of special interest here; c) finally, the empirical material provides assessments and inputs on the part of the UN and its different bodies and discusses d) the significance UNTAET bears for the UN-System, its institutional development and determination as well as for the development of the UN-instrument Peacekeeping Operation.

So far the case of East Timor and UNTAET have predominantly been dealt with in political science and international law. Integrating these findings, this historical research project aims at historizing UNTAET while paying attention to its local as well as on its international arena. Focusing on the constructive process of collective self-definition offers an approach which allows to contextualize this significant peacekeeping operation with the history of decolonization and internationalization as well as with the development of the UNO in the 20th and beginning of the 21th century.