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Structural power, agency and national liberation: the case of East Timor

James F Glassman

The struggle for independence in East Timor, which came to fruition in 1999, illustrates both that agency can be exercised in ways that change social structures and that changing structural relations are necessary for the effective exercise of agency. This paper presents a basic Marxist theoretical framework for analysing structural power, contrasting this with the understanding of structure developed by structurationists. It then examines the Timorese independence struggle at two crucial turning points, showing how differing structural contexts enabled different outcomes at those turning points.

key words East Timor national liberation struggle geo-political economy structural power agency social theory

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Introduction

On 30 August 1999, more than 400 000 East Timorese, nearly all of the adult population of East Timor, voted in a UN-monitored referendum on the Indonesian government's autonomy proposal. Nearly 80 per cent of those who voted rejected special autonomy within the Indonesian state, opting instead for independence (Robinson 2001, 58). In doing so, they articulated electorally the position they had previously expressed through nearly 25 years of resistance to Indonesian occupation. The referendum set in motion a process of transition, under United Nations auspices, that led to a formal consummation of this resistance with the inaugural independence day celebration on 20 May 2002, and the swearing in as President of Xanana Gusmão, long-standing leader of the independence struggle.

The cost of Timorese resistance was high to the bitter end, as it had been throughout the occupation. From the time of Indonesia's invasion in late 1975 until the beginning of the 1980s, it is estimated that warfare and militarily imposed starvation and disease cost at least 150 000–200 000 Timorese lives, and possibly over 300 000, making the war in East Timor the most relatively genocidal of any in modern history (Budiardjo and Liong 1984, 51; Tanter *et al.*

2001, 260). The entire period of resistance was marked by massacres – the most noted of these in the outside world being the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre of hundreds of Timorese at a Dili cemetery (Carey 1995b, 48–55) – along with routine repression and torture (Carey and Bentley 1995; Taylor 1999; Tanter *et al.* 2001).

When the possibility of East Timor gaining independence through a referendum finally emerged in 1999, the response of the Indonesian military (TNI) was to immediately mobilize local militias that had been used throughout the occupation in order to intimidate Timorese into voting for autonomy (Kingsbury 2000, 70–1; Kammen 2001, 179–82). The death toll inflicted by these militias prior to the election has been estimated by the Timorese Catholic church to be at least 5000–6000 people (Taylor 1999, xiii). When the intimidation tactics failed and the referendum yielded a decisive victory for the independence struggle, these same militias – under direct supervision by TNI members – rampaged through the territory, killing untold thousands, burning virtually every structure in the major cities and towns, forcing over 200 000 people into hiding in the mountains, and forcibly evacuating more than 200 000 across the border and into refugee camps in Indonesian West Timor (Taylor 1999, xvii–xix; Kammen

2001, 156–57; Chomsky 2001, 144; Tanter 2001, 193). When the destruction was finally ended weeks later, by the intervention of a UN peace-keeping force, East Timor's independence seemed humbling and bitter. Moreover, the painfully slow and sometimes politically otiose process of reconstruction leaves significant doubts about the meaning and consequences of independence in the new state of Timor Leste (Tanter *et al.* 2001).

All of this having been said, however, it would be cynical and callous to assert that nothing has been accomplished through the achievement of independence, even if it takes decades of continued effort for many people in Timor Leste to benefit from the possibilities that have been created. Moreover, the liberation struggle in East Timor and the final shedding of Indonesian occupation stands as a remarkable – if seemingly untimely – concluding chapter to a century of revolutionary anti-colonial struggle, coming long after the era of national liberation movements has presumably ended. It is thus a process worthy of not only respect but careful analysis.

In this paper, I argue that a viable analysis of how, why and when East Timor gained independence requires an account of the workings of structural power. More specifically, I argue that though the manoeuvrings of different actors in the Timorese resistance struggle were necessary conditions of liberation, they were not sufficient and required the enabling context created by shifts in structural forces that had sustained the basis for the Indonesian invasion and occupation.

As a prelude to this analysis, I present a basic outline of Marxist conceptions of structural power, contrasting these with the conceptions of structure put forward in structuration approaches, showing that a Marxist conception can both account for agency and avoid economic reductionism. Indeed, I use the term 'structural power' to refer not only to economic power narrowly conceived, but to what, following John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, we might refer to as 'geo-political economic power' (Agnew and Corbridge 1995, 6) – a conception I explain in the first section of the paper. The notion that the outcomes of independence struggles may hinge on such power has been suggested by various authors, including world systems theorists (e.g. Taylor and Flint 2000, 129–44, 225–6). But whereas world systems theorists have identified the structural context largely with long waves of economic activity (Taylor and Flint 2000, 116–18), I want to suggest that the structural context can be

taken to include somewhat more specific political economic developments. Those developments may be less patterned or cyclical than economic long waves, thus making prediction of when and where independence struggles will be enabled hazardous at best, but this specificity is precisely what is required to account for a case like that of East Timor.

After outlining this basically Marxist theoretical framework in the first section of the paper, I turn in the second section to an analysis of the Timorese liberation struggle. I focus in some detail on two crucial turning points in this struggle: (1) the period from 1974 to the beginning of the 1980s, when the liberation struggle developed, but was very nearly annihilated by Indonesian aggression; and (2) the period from the mid-1990s to the present, when the protracted resistance struggle drew increasing international support and finally achieved its immediate goal of ending Indonesian occupation and creating the conditions for formal political independence. In the conclusion, I will suggest some theoretical as well as political implications for the reading of national liberation struggles as enabled and constrained by structural power.

Recuperating structure from the critique of 'structural Marxism'

Endorsing a notion of structural power is not equivalent to endorsing structuralism. The latter, in its many forms, has come in for a variety of criticisms over the years, and most Marxists who have been labelled in these terms – notably Louis Althusser – have denied that they are structuralists. I am in agreement with this rejection of the equation between 'structural Marxism' of the sort that Althusser championed and the structuralism critiqued by Giddens and various post-structuralists.¹ What is important for the theoretical argument here, however, is merely to note that whether or not one considers 'structural Marxism' structuralist, there are no grounds for considering analyses of structural power to be either (1) in tension with notions of human agency or (2) economically reductionist. Moreover, precisely because Marxist analyses of structural power are not economically reductionist, they require theorization of (3) the political forms and territoriality of structural power.

Structural power and human agency

The first of these two points has been somewhat obscured by the debate about structure and agency

inaugurated in the work of Anthony Giddens and followed up in wide-ranging discussions in the social sciences throughout the 1980s (Giddens 1979 1984). I need not rehearse those debates here, but instead I want to assert one basic claim that sidelines much of the supposed problem of structure and agency – namely, that from a Marxist perspective structure is merely the agency of large collectivities of people.² This means, among other things, that the exercise of agency referred to under the heading of structure connects groups of people across time and space, in ways often neglected by the conceptions of agency that have prevailed in the debates around structuration.

The perception involved in this claim is deeply sociological: humans may act individually, but they always do so as social beings, and the actions they undertake that shape the sorts of phenomena under study by social scientists – as opposed to, perhaps, biographers – are always collective to a greater or lesser degree. The structure–agency debate, in which Marxist notions of structure have sometimes been improperly identified with economic forces beyond conscious human control (e.g. Thrift 1983), thus mistakes the accurate claim that individuals and sometimes even collectivities cannot change the behaviour of larger or more powerful collectivities of humans for an assertion of human impotence in the face of ‘impersonal’ forces.

If the view that structural power represents something like ‘the impersonal forces of history’ is asserted, it is easy enough to disprove. But few if any advocates of ‘structural Marxism’ have ever seriously endorsed such a view. On the other hand, if structure is simply seen as the agency of large collectivities of people, then there is no special structure–agency problem to be resolved. The only issues are whether, where and how some subset of a larger collectivity can gain enough support in its actions to substantially alter relatively long-standing features of the social relations that constitute ‘the structure’.

While it is beyond the scope of the argument here to critique structurationist perspectives in any detail, it is worth noting briefly the crucial differences between Marxist understandings of structure and the concept of structure elaborated in Giddens’ work. First, Giddens’ reading of Marxist historical materialism as a form of functionalism (Giddens 1979, 111–15) – an inaccurate reading in the view of most Marxists – leads him to focus on the problem of how social actors can be understood as consciously

and intentionally producing and reproducing the world around them. Within Marxist conceptions of structural power, this is not a fundamental problem. While Althusser’s loaded reference to humans as ‘supports’ and ‘bearers’ (*träger*) of class positions (Althusser and Balibar 1970, 180, 252) has led to the claim that this conception evacuates any notion of conscious agency, such a claim would only be true if it were the case that agency can only be conceived in individualist terms rather than in class and other collectivist terms.

Marxist notions of structural power, instead, centre on the shared conditions of various collectivities of humans within the processes of material production and social reproduction. Althusser’s rather hyperbolic assertion notwithstanding, most Marxist theory has insisted that individual humans can and do – as members of classes and class fractions – act to both reproduce and change social structures. Moreover, whether or not they do so intentionally is somewhat beside the point. Marx clearly appealed to workers to understand their shared interests in a particular way (i.e. to develop class consciousness and revolutionary commitments), but historical materialist analyses have recognized that while people act intentionally their actions also frequently produce unintended consequences because of the ways humans relate to one another as members of collectivities with differing projects and interests. Thus, the important analytic task is not to show what people intended – as Marx put it, ‘our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself’ (Marx 1977c, 390) – but rather to show how in the working out of the projects of different collectivities with different interests societies are either reproduced or transformed.

Giddens’ reading of the issue of structure also differs from Marxist readings in a second basic sense, one already implied in the discussion of this first difference. From a Marxist perspective, Giddens’ reading is not only implicitly too individualist but also too idealist. Giddens’ identifies structures as ‘rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems’ (Giddens 1979, 64). The conception of rules as crucial to structure is worked out in such a way as to support Giddens’ contention that humans are conscious (i.e. rule-comprehending) actors in the reproduction of society.

Marxist conceptions of structure, while not denying that individuals and collectivities act consciously and intentionally, do not construe structures in terms of idealist conceptions of rules consciously

comprehended but rather in terms of webs of social relations centred on those productive activities without which life and livelihood would be impossible. As Marx puts it,

Men do not in any way begin by 'finding themselves in a theoretical relationship to things in the external world'. Like every animal, they begin by *eating, drinking*, etc. that is, not by 'finding themselves' in a relationship but by behaving actively, gaining possession of certain things in the external world by their actions, thus satisfying their needs. (They thus begin by production.) (Marx 1977a, 581)

Moreover, humans do not simply construct the social relations of production *ex nihilo*. Rather,

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. (Marx 1977c, 389)

None of this means that humans act unconsciously or without choice but, rather, that those choices – and consciousness of the possible choices – are both enabled and constrained by what can be done in the way of producing and reproducing material social life.

A third and final sense in which Marxist conceptions of structure differ from that of structurationists is in the degree to which the discussion of structure focuses on either reproduction or social change. Giddens certainly addresses both in his writings, but much of the theory of structuration is devoted to explaining how it is that social structures are reproduced through the conscious and intentional behaviour of individuals. Giddens' own intentions notwithstanding, this has the effect of imparting a somewhat conservative cast to the discussion in that it leads to weak theorization of the conditions that lead to social transformation.

Marxist conceptions of structure have, by contrast, been focused typically on the issue of what would lead to structural transformation. While a variety of Marxist approaches to this issue can be identified, most such approaches take various kinds of crises – political, economic and ecological, for example – as crucial. This is not because crises are taken by Marxists to lead automatically to system change (cf. Gramsci 1971, 184), but rather because they manifest disruptions of the 'normal' processes that make social reproduction occur more smoothly. For this reason, a significant amount of research by historical materialists has focused on the ways in

which crisis tendencies develop and/or are countered within capitalist societies, as well as the ways different collectivities both act to produce and act to capitalize on crises, rather than on the ways in which workers knowingly reproduce the social structures around them. For most Marxists, the routine and knowing reproduction of social structures is not surprising. As Marx put it, 'mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve' (Marx 1977, 390), and the task of radical social change is insoluble in contexts where most of the population can, exploitation notwithstanding, successfully reproduce itself – and where it would be faced with severe repression in attempts to promote social change. Nonetheless, for Marxists, it is not these 'normal' conditions that are of the most interest but rather the comparatively more rare circumstances in which larger collectivities than usual may act to transform social structures. It is in relation to this concern with the forces of change – not reproduction – that historical materialists study structure, and such a concern animates my analysis of independence struggle in East Timor, below.

It is worth noting that critical realist analyses such as those put forward by Roy Bhaskar (1989 1993), which are broadly compatible with a Marxist account of structural power, have made more of the potential of social agents to produce change. Bhaskar develops a transformational model of social activity (TMSA) that indicates the variety of ways in which social actors can intentionally or unintentionally transform the social structures that emerge from these actors' relations with each other. While Bhaskar's TMSA provides a useful way around the stasis threatened by the structure–agency duality of Giddens' approach, it is also exceedingly general and is established through the continued elaboration of theoretical principles rather than through recursive analysis of empirical cases and development of abstract theory. In contrast to Bhaskar's approach, I rely here on the kind of approach taken by Althusser in his discussions of contradiction and overdetermination (Althusser 1977), who himself follows the approach taken by Lenin and Mao in analysing the Russian and Chinese revolutions. This approach emphasizes concrete analysis of concrete situations, with the theoretical generalizations that are then framed in order to explain the relationship between agency, structural power and social transformation being built by abstracting from the concrete situation. Put another way – one that is theoretically congenial to Bhaskar's own favoured

methods – the approach here is ‘transcendental’. That is, my starting point is not the question of whether or not dramatic forms of social change can occur, given a particular theorization of social forces; rather, starting from a concrete case of such social change, I try to theorize the kinds of conditions that made such change possible. It is this approach that I will take in analysing the case of East Timor, though some of the results might be consistent with what would be argued by advocates of the TMSA.

Structural power and economic reductionism

A conventional view of structural power within Marxist theory identifies it with position in the class structure (e.g. Isaac 1987; Winters 1996). Capitalists are seen as having structural power in this context because of their control over investable surplus, which allows them to substantially shape society merely through exercising their politically institutionalized right to invest or withhold investment (Block 1987, 58–9). While these accounts sometimes seem to one-sidedly identify structural power with capitalist control over investment, the same basic conception of structural power could be used to identify the power of workers, whose power is constituted by their ability to collectively supply or withhold their labour power. The historical conditions that gave birth to capitalism have made the latter option particularly challenging for workers, which helps account for capitalist dominance within the structural relations of capitalist society. But the structural power of workers is nonetheless a basis for the struggles they are able to launch in challenging exploitation.

This conception of structural power may be read as economicist – but only insofar as class is equated with ‘economic’, an equation I will challenge.³ Economics refers simply to the social processes by which the material (including social) requirements of existence are produced, and thus the processes by which society is reproduced over time. Class refers to the specific position of collectivities within these processes of production and reproduction, indicating the degree to which one or another group is able to appropriate the surplus labour time of other groups. Class thus mediates (and for Marxists drives) economic processes – but it is not reducible to them. As E. P. Thompson notes, classes are always simultaneously economic, political and cultural entities (Thompson 1978, 287–9). Classes are thus defined by their role in economic processes, but are not themselves merely economic.

This point speaks to the refusal of most Marxist analysis to concede the existence of an economic ‘realm’ that is separate from politics or other moments of society (e.g. Rupert 2000, 2–4). The analytical categories of liberal social science – which construct society as divided into discrete realms of politics, economics, culture and society – are impossible to completely avoid within capitalist society, and Marxist approaches can do so no more than any others. Yet the fundamental commitment of Marxist theory has been to an approach that refuses the idea of an economy that exists distinct from politics or that operates according to immutable economic ‘laws’. Rather, even if economics and politics are admitted to be construed as separate realms within capitalist society, this is a phenomenon that has to be explained by the historically specific development of capitalism, and which is not a function of economics and politics having separate ‘laws of motion’ or dynamics but rather a function of the dynamics of capitalist class relations.

Such a contention has important implications for the concept of structural power within Marxism. If structural power is a function of position within class relations, and if classes are always simultaneously socio-cultural and political-economic, then structural power is itself a socio-cultural, political-economic phenomenon, not a narrowly economic one. Thus, in discussing structural power we cannot settle merely on the investment behaviour of capitalists or the strike activity of workers, even if these retain crucial importance. Instead, the whole panoply of interpenetrating social processes through which class structures are maintained, reproduced or challenged need to be seen as implicated in the exercise of structural power. In this sense, the activities of states, of families, of community organizations and other collectivities are all part of the exercise of structural power insofar as they bear on class issues.⁴

The position for which I am arguing here is consistent with John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge’s assertion of the need for not just a political economy but a ‘geo-political economy’ – one that analyses relations such as the power struggles within and between states as integral to the development of political economy, and thus of class processes (Agnew and Corbridge 1995, 6). It is from this sort of position that one can best begin to analyse imperialism and national liberation struggles in relation to structural power. For the political economy of imperialism is always intimately bound up with

geo-politics (including cultural politics), and thus an adequate account of structural power cannot end with the structural power of capitalist investors and wage labourers but must extend to the ways that class projects are embedded in and carried out by actors within states and resistance movements.

Such a claim also implies that the analysis of structural power must deal with the spatiality of class processes in a global capitalist system that is mediated (and fragmented) by states and resistance movements. I will thus turn briefly, in the next section, to Marxist theories of state power and territoriality, including the way these have been developed in light of the changing geography of global capitalism.

Structural power, the power of the state, and social form in the era of 'globalization'

Marxist theories of the state have by now generated an enormous amount of literature that cannot be reviewed here. Instead, I focus on just a few basic issues that are central to fleshing out a conception of geo-political economic power in an era when nation-states have putatively been outstripped by the 'economic' forces of 'globalization'.

A basic point made by Marxist theorists – and especially forcefully by those of a Gramscian persuasion – is that the notion of strictly economic forces circumventing the state is a non sequitur. Class power always both involves and extends beyond the state (Gramsci 1971; Poulantzas 1978). Since there are no purely economic phenomena, for Marxists, even the most instrumentalist or structuralist conceptions of the state (neither of which are endorsed here) do not in fact reduce the power of the state to economic power. Rather, Marxist theories ground state power in – and connect it to – processes of class struggle, while versions of Marxist theory appropriately sensitized to issues such as gender and race (certainly not all Marxist theory, here), have also regarded struggles central to state power as always already gendered and racialized in specific ways.

The important questions from a Marxist perspective are thus not about whether or not political (as opposed to economic) power is exercised – power always being political-economic and socio-cultural at the same time – but rather in what form such power is exercised. While the neo-liberal 'globalization' thesis asserts declining state power (Ohmae 1995), a more plausible thesis put forward by Marxists

is that *forms* (not necessarily *amounts*) of state power are changing because of the changing territoriality of global capitalism. As a consequence, the national, territorial state is arguably giving up some of its power to statist forms at other scales. A now popular version of this thesis has it that state power and economic processes are simultaneously becoming more localized and more globally interconnected, the process referred to as 'glocalization' (Swyngedouw 1997).

I will not enter debates about 'glocalization' here, but will merely point out that the territorial reach of the nation-state has itself been a long-standing topic of conversation within Marxism, both because of the history of theorizing about imperialism and because of more recent interest in how state power is being transformed by new patterns in the internationalization of capital. Nicos Poulantzas' arguments are important in this regard, both for the general conception of state power that he develops and for his more specific claims about the 'internationalization of the state'. For Poulantzas, the state is grounded in definite ways in class struggles and thus in processes of production. Yet the state is no mere epiphenomenon within this class struggle. Rather, as Poulantzas sees it, the state has a specific role in the social division of labour, one that he identifies in particular with the division of manual from mental labour (Poulantzas 1978, 54). In this sense, Poulantzas' views echo Gramsci's characterization of certain members of the state as 'organic intellectuals' of specific social classes (Poulantzas 1978, 56). States are thus arenas in which struggle takes place over the overall processes of production and social reproduction. They are part of the social division of labour but not reducible to some other presumably privileged part of the production process.

If this broad conception of the relationship between class power and the state suffices to avoid charges of economic reductionism, it still does not address how one should interpret relationships between classes and state power in an era when class power is increasingly transnational yet state power is confined, by definition, to the national territory. Poulantzas addressed this issue early in the evolution of transnational corporate power within Europe by analysing the 'internationalization of the state' (Poulantzas 1975, 80). Put most simply, this refers to the claim that states do not automatically have a privileged relationship with capital of any particular national origin and can exercise the roles

they play in support of capital accumulation on behalf of capitalists based within different national territories. What this in effect means is that nation-states are not truly national, and particularly not in the era of 'globalization'. Rather, like capitalist classes, states have differing territorial ranges – from the sub-national to the supra-national – dependent not upon the official definition of their sovereign territory but rather on their actual political reach and effective power.

A direct consequence of this, that is important for the discussion below, is that the networks of geo-political economic power exercised by classes and fractions of classes extend across varied geographical scales, often beyond the boundaries of given societies. Moreover, they are linked to one another across national boundaries in ways far more complex than might be implied by images of territorial states as containers of 'domestic' class processes. Class struggles in one location of the global political economy can have immediate if unintended repercussions for struggles elsewhere in the global system, including through the mediation of state activities in the international arena. Indeed, the evolution of struggles in particular localities may depend crucially upon the outcomes of struggles elsewhere and their effects on the exercise of state power – especially those struggles occurring in locations of greater power and global reach. This is to say that structural power – encompassing not only its economic but its political, cultural and other dimensions – is transnational (if not fully global) in scale. Thus, the structural forces that need analysis in Marxist accounts of geo-political economy and struggles for change are not related to one another externally as so many independent, national class struggles to be summed additively. Instead, they are unevenly (and sometimes unpredictably) internationalized social processes connecting classes and segments of classes both across and within borders.

This point can be usefully elaborated in relation to Margaret Archer's claim that structural power links different generations across time, thus making the constraints and enablements relevant to a particular collectivity's actions a function of earlier choices and actions that present generations cannot control. As one example, Archer notes that the development of literacy (or lack thereof) in a particular generation will enable and constrain what can be done a generation or more later in the way of various social and educational projects (Archer

1995, 66–79). Thus, present collectivities encounter structural conditions for the exercise of agency that are not of their own making. These conditions, however, are not the agentless presence of impersonal forces but rather the contemporary manifestation of past forms of collective agency.⁵

In a parallel fashion, what I am suggesting here is that the complex territoriality of global capitalism makes the actions of specific groups of people in particular locations the structural conditions constraining and enabling agency by other groups elsewhere. The 'territorial trapped' tendencies of the social sciences (Agnew and Corbridge 1995) – in particular, the conception of societies as contained territorially by the states that exercise formal sovereignty over the national territory – prevent this point from emerging as clearly as it should. Much debate about agency proceeds as if the major actors relevant to social reproduction or social transformation all exist fundamentally within the spaces of the society in question. Yet in the transnational geo-political economy created by capitalism, such an assumption is generally problematic and often wrong. Transnational political, economic, social and cultural linkages between different collectivities – some of these linkages being consciously constructed, as with trade networks, others being unconsciously evolved, as with the global absorption of 'Western' consumer norms – fracture national social spaces and make actors in given locations the producers of conditions for the agency of others.

In the analysis of the East Timorese liberation struggle that follows, I will employ this broad, non-reductionist and transnationalized geo-political economic sense of structural power. I will suggest that the ability of the Timorese struggle to transcend resistance and attain its major objective of independence hinged crucially on changes in the structural context of struggle, in this broad, geographically expansive sense.

Occupation, struggle and liberation in East Timor⁶

As of only a few years ago, it was common to read lamentations to the effect that East Timor had received little popular or scholarly attention. If that was the case at a crucial point in the Timorese struggle – namely, the 1970s and early 1980s – it can no longer be said, especially in the wake of the significant amount of work that has been done since the Santa Cruz massacre of 1991. In this section, I

rely on this substantial body of description and analysis, focusing on providing an interpretation of two crucial turning points in the Timorese independence struggle: the first, the period from 1974 to the early 1980s; the second, the period from the mid-1990s to the present.

The rise of East Timorese nationalism in the 1970s

It was during the first of these periods that the basic contours of East Timorese nationalism – as understood today – began to emerge. Recent scholarship on East Timor has emphasized that though there had been a long history of popular resistance to colonialism, including a major uprising in the early twentieth century (Gunn 2001), the often highly localized pre-colonial social and political economic structures of Timor remained intact throughout most of the Portuguese colonial period, weakening the prospects for any modern form of anti-colonial nationalism (Anderson 1998; Taylor 1995 1999). Structural, geo-political economic changes that rippled through Portugal and the Portuguese overseas empire in the 1970s, however, created new enabling conditions. Specifically, when the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement (AFM) overthrew the Caetano regime in 1974 and put an end to Portuguese fascism, the door to unhindered development of anti-colonial nationalism was opened, though the phenomenon found expression primarily among a small group of Portuguese-educated East Timorese elites in the capital city of Dili (Jolliffe 1978; Dunn 1983; Taylor 1995).

The most economically well placed of these, including owners of large coffee estates such as the Carrascalão family, played a central role in the creation of the first prominent East Timorese political party, the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT). UDT originally favoured continued, indefinite alliance with Portugal, but as popular support for independence grew in 1974–5 it shifted its position accordingly. Somewhat lesser Timorese elites, including various members of the bureaucracy and military, formed the second major political party, originally called the Association of Social Democratic Timorese (ASDT), but renamed the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, or Fretilin. Fretilin quickly overtook UDT in popularity, championing a broad vision of national liberation, modelled in part on the experiences of national liberation struggles in the former Portuguese colonies of Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau, and gaining

support among the majority of rural Timorese through its programmes in local agriculture, the extension of health services and literacy campaigns – the last of these being modelled on the ideas of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Among a large number of other, smaller parties formed in the wake of the AFM coup, the only important one was the Timorese Popular Democratic Association, or Apodeti, which had a small base of support, primarily among certain traditional local rulers (*liurai*). Apodeti's significance was owed not to its popular base, however, but to the fact that it was established with the help of Indonesian intelligence operatives and was immediately recognized by the Indonesian government as an East Timorese voice calling for incorporation into Indonesia (Taylor 1999, 28; Jolliffe 1978; Dunn 1983; Ramos-Horta 1996, 29–39).

At the same time as Indonesia attempted to set the stage for forcible incorporation of East Timor through the promotion of Apodeti, it also attempted to recruit support for integration among UDT members – successfully in the case of conservative UDT leaders such as Francisco Lopes da Cruz, who split from much of the rest of the UDT by 1975 and worked from then on as a spokesperson for the Suharto government. During 1975, Indonesian intelligence worked to convince UDT that Fretilin was communist and was plotting a coup to seize power ahead of elections scheduled for 1976, when the Portuguese had agreed to leave East Timor. The ploy worked, and UDT attempted a preemptive coup on 11 August 1975. UDT had very limited support compared to Fretilin, however, particularly within the ranks of the crucial Portuguese-trained army, and by the end of September 1975 its members had successfully put down the UDT coup and decisively won a brief civil war, in which UDT had already received some support from Indonesia. When the Indonesian government found that the strategy of support for UDT and Apodeti failed to bring the desired results, it resorted to outright invasion, landing tens of thousands of troops in Dili on 7 December 1975, and installing Apodeti as the ruling party, thus beginning a long and bloody process of invasion and occupation that has been painfully and carefully documented elsewhere (Budiardjo and Liong 1984; Dunn 1995; Taylor 1999).

Two aspects of the process leading up to Indonesian invasion are important to highlight here. First, though Suharto himself acquiesced in the invasion plans, he seems to have hesitated somewhat over fear of the international repercussions. Ultimately,

it was the strong desire for invasion on the part of Indonesian military commanders such as Generals Ali Murtopo and Benny Murdani that proved decisive, and it was these military figures who reaped the largest benefits from the invasion, including not only the benefits of opportunities for military 'glory' and attendant promotions, but significantly for the military elites the opportunity to monopolize East Timor's economic exports – something accomplished through the establishment of a company called P.T. Denok Hernandes International (Taylor 1999, 52–3, 59, 125–7).

Second, the US government's 'big wink' towards Jakarta – the popular term used to describe the approving rhetoric of US President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as they visited Suharto on the day before the invasion – was clearly vital to Indonesia's plans. The US and other major Western powers not only tacitly approved of Indonesia's invasion – considering it both inevitable and perhaps desirable, given Fretilin's 'leftist' politics – but supplied crucial military and economic aid to Indonesia in support of the invasion and occupation throughout its entire duration. Though this seems to have had roots in the interests of various Western (especially Australian) oil companies in the oil and gas lying below the Timor Gap, which it was felt would be best served by Indonesian control, it also had especially strong roots in US geopolitical interests, including both its general antipathy to leftist governments and its insistence on access by its submarines to the important Ombai-Wetar Straights (Taylor 1999; Aditjondro 2000).

The results of this fateful coincidence of interest between Indonesian military capitalists, Western oil companies and US geo-political powerbrokers, was the negation of Timorese national independence and the repression that made this negation possible. In this sense, the global geo-political environment and the structural forces at work within it – though they were enabling of the emergence of Timorese nationalism – were fundamentally unfavourable to Timorese independence. The unfavourable climate was only reinforced by the timing of the emergence of East Timor's independence struggle. By 1975, global economic stagnation and the retreat of the US military from Southeast Asia had made US strategists necessarily more willing to look to conservative regional elites in carrying out general policies of communist containment. Suharto's regime was crucial in this regard not only because

of Indonesia's own substantial population and natural resource base, but because of its significance to the region as a whole in the context of Communist Party victories elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Moreover, by 1975 Indonesia's economy was increasingly being reoriented around nationalist policies in which state oil revenues played a central role (Robison 1986; Winters 1996). This made the lure of East Timor's potential resource wealth more important to Indonesian leaders, and not only for its own sake but because of the general dependence of the Indonesian economy on resources garnered in its outer islands – including forcibly incorporated territories like West Papua.

In this context, the class transformations underway within East Timorese society itself were of comparatively little moment. Strong support for Fretilin among Timorese peasants, and the social transformations for which Fretilin stood, were easily suppressed by Indonesian colonialism, even where this necessitated propping up archaic and unpopular leadership groups like certain of the *liurai* or comprador elites such as Lopes da Cruz. In spite of vast popular support for Timorese independence, the structural conditions were not ripe for successful struggle.

To say that imperial intervention and the global moment of structural power in which this was embedded during the 1970s prevented Timorese independence is not to say, however, that it destroyed Timorese resistance to colonization. Though Fretilin was largely dismantled by 1978–9, and its military arm, Falintil, reduced to rather desperate survival strategies, the brutality of the Indonesian invasion in fact catalyzed even deeper support for independence among most Timorese and provided an atmosphere conducive to Fretilin's continuation. In this context, Falintil expanded its already relatively inclusive strategy of liberation struggle to include all Timorese, regardless of class background or party affiliation, a move consecrated by specific changes introduced under the leadership of Xanana Gusmão in 1983. These changes helped broaden the already wide social basis for Fretilin's national liberation project and pulled much of the UDT leadership back into alliance with the Fretilin leadership (Niner 2001, 20).

In addition, the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia produced another unpredicted change. While East Timor today is seen as a Catholic country, the Portuguese had in fact been distinctly unsuccessful in converting most of the Timorese,

and as of the time of Portugal's departure only some 200 000 out of 650 000 East Timorese were Catholic, the rest clinging to various religious views that are typically characterized as animist (Ramos-Horta 1996, 2). Paradoxically, it was the process of incorporation into predominantly Islamic Indonesia that turned most Timorese into Catholics. There were two reasons for this. First, the official Indonesian state ideology of Pancasila requires that all Indonesians officially belong to one of the five major world religions, Christianity being one of these. Thus, many Timorese animists officially adopted Christianity while essentially retaining much of their animist belief. Second, the Catholic Church became, under Indonesian occupation, the only place in East Timor where one could both seek refuge from persecution and have some possibility of contact with the outside world. Thus, many Timorese came to see the Catholic Church as a vital institutional location of political struggle. In this process, the Timorese who entered the Church managed to turn it from a conservative and often effete organization into an institution much more reminiscent of the Latin American Church under the influence of liberation theology (Ramos-Horta 1996, 205; Kohen 1999).

Indeed, the Catholic Church in East Timor might be seen as exhibiting a specific face of the internationalization process – the internationalization of a 'cultural' yet 'statist' institution (in both Gramsci's and Althusser's sense) that is the site of complex social struggles involving different elements of 'civil society'. From this perspective, Indonesian occupation had contradictory effects: on the one hand, it negated the internationalization of national liberation struggle on the model of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, a form of internationalization stimulated by the rise of the AFM; on the other hand, the Indonesian occupation simultaneously generated an alternative form of internationalization in the Timorese struggle by driving Timorese resistance into the Catholic Church.

The longer-term political consequences of this transformation in the Catholic Church have been extremely significant. By the 1990s, the majority of East Timorese were officially regarded as Catholic, and leading Church figures such as Bishop Carlos Belo had become internationally recognized spokespersons for the struggle in East Timor (Carey 1995a, 10). This made the Timorese independence struggle more internationally visible, and enabled it to win increasingly substantial support from

Catholic Church groups abroad. The significance of this process was highlighted by Belo's receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 (along with Jose Ramos-Horta), an important event in calling international attention to the plight of the Timorese and a serious political condemnation of Indonesia's occupation.

The fruition of East Timorese independence struggle in the 1990s

The changes in the structure of the Timorese resistance that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s were never adequate by themselves to produce independence, however. It was only in the period of the second turning point, from the middle of the 1990s to the present, that transformations in structural power relations became enabling of independence. In standard accounts of this process, the starting point is the Santa Cruz massacre of 1991. This massacre occurred when Indonesian troops killed hundreds of Timorese at a funeral for a young boy who had been killed days earlier. The massacre was filmed and photographed by international media, and the event was thus another international black eye for the Indonesian state. Yet a linear narrative according to which the Santa Cruz massacre was the beginning of the end of Indonesian colonialism would be far too simple. As cases like those of Israeli massacres of Palestinians have shown, there is no level of international embarrassment that by itself necessitates a change of course. Indeed, the fact that it took another five years even for Belo and Ramos-Horta to be recognized by the Nobel committee is indicative of the extremely slow pace and contingency of change.

Indeed, as Ramos-Horta himself notes, changes in patterns of superpower behaviour leading to a negotiated settlement are necessary for successful consummation of liberation struggles (Ramos-Horta 1996, 206). Such changes did, in fact, begin to occur in the 1990s, based on transformations of the global geo-political economy (including within Indonesia). These transformations occurred independently of events in East Timor but eventually – and inadvertently – helped create the impetus for Indonesian withdrawal.

The most general of these transformations was the end of the Cold War and the ascendance of the United States to the position of sole global superpower. With this change, the US government began to look somewhat less tolerantly upon the deviations from neo-liberal economic policy practised by

various of its Asian Cold War allies and pushed for greater economic liberalization. This reflected the increasing intensity of international capitalist competition and the desire of the US government to open new opportunities for US capitalists in a region of the world regarded as dynamic and important to the global economy. The major targets of Washington's drive for liberalization in Asia were Japan and South Korea, but Southeast Asian states such as Indonesia were also encouraged to reduce the roles of their states within the domestic economy and to loosen regulations on capital flows (Tanter 2001, 198–9). Though the Indonesian state did not undo the many forms of 'cronyism' that tied the state to Suharto's family interests, it did open new investment opportunities for foreigners and generally followed a US-backed liberalization strategy similar to those followed by other Southeast Asian states, a shift in orientation that was further necessitated by the decline in oil revenues the state had suffered since the 1980s (Bello 1998; Robison 2001).

These policies contributed to a more specific change in Indonesia's post-Cold War position, generated out of the economic crisis that broke in 1997. The vulnerability of Indonesia's economy to sudden withdrawal of foreign capital – a vulnerability caused by the very liberalization measures advocated in Washington – has been credited with responsibility for the crisis (Winters 2000). In the wake of the crisis, the US government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) used Indonesia's difficulties as an opportunity to demand yet further concessions from the Indonesian state, insisting in particular that Suharto rescind certain state projects that had benefited his family members. When Suharto hesitated in this, the IMF threatened to withhold crucial loans, destabilizing his regime and giving incentive to the political opponents who eventually succeeded in producing his ouster during 1998 (MacIntyre 1999; Higgott 2000; Robison and Rosser 2000). Though Washington and the IMF had probably not set out to depose Suharto, they were no longer afraid to make demands that might lead to this, given the aging dictator's limited value in a post-Cold War era and the obstacles his nepotism placed in the way of expanded opportunities for foreign capital.

The fall of the Suharto regime was to prove a crucial moment in the struggle for independence in East Timor, and pro-independence activists in East Timor quickly seized the opportunity by intensifying

their struggles in the immediate aftermath of Suharto's decision to step down (Taylor 1999, xvi; Kammen 2001, 170–1). Yet there was one more general political economic change that had occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, which was to prove crucial to subsequent events, and without which even Suharto's ouster might not have proven decisive. The economic boom that occurred in Indonesia from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s produced important changes in the class structure of Indonesia. Indonesia's economy has remained more dependent than those of other Southeast Asian countries on primary exports, but a huge influx of Japanese and South Korean investment has created a much more extensive manufacturing base and a larger class of Indonesians whose fortunes depend on manufacturing and related tertiary activities (Hill 2000; Robison 2001). This transformation affected Suharto's family itself, and made him less beholden to the specific interests of military capitalists in the 1990s than he had been in the 1970s. In short, Indonesia had begun to move away from being deeply enmeshed in processes of 'primitive accumulation' to having substantial industrial capitalist interests.

The transformation was well-represented by the rising importance in the 1990s of Josef Habibie, a technocrat who favoured state promotion of higher value added industry and was widely regarded as Suharto's 'right hand man', yet had long-standing conflicts with military capitalists over control of economic resources within the state (Kingsbury 1998; Robison 2001). From his position as Vice President, Habibie was promoted to the Presidency by Suharto on the latter's way out in 1998. The assumption of most political observers was that Habibie would not do anything that Suharto wouldn't, but Habibie turned out to be even less committed to East Timor than Suharto, and proved willing to challenge the interests of the military over this (Taylor 1999, xvii; Kingsbury 2000, 69–70). While the general context of Habibie's willingness to allow a referendum is easy enough to comprehend, the specifics of his decision remain more opaque. According to Australian political scientist and Indonesia analyst Damien Kingsbury, Habibie may have believed that he could turn what was intended to be only an interim Presidency into a longer stay in office by combining his support among the Jakarta-based capitalist elites and bureaucrats with international recognition for moving to resolve the problem that had come to be called 'the gravel in

Jakarta's shoes' (Kingsbury 2000, 70; Anderson 1998, 131). Whatever the precise reasons, Habibie announced in January of 1999, following a suggestion to this effect by Australian Prime Minister John Howard, that he would allow a referendum in East Timor on whether or not to accept special sovereignty, with rejection understood to imply a vote for independence.

The Australian state's role in this process also deserves some attention. The acquiescence of Australia in Indonesia's occupation, and its eventual recognition of Indonesian incorporation (coupled with its negotiation of oil concessions), played a crucial role in the ability of the Indonesian state to carry out and maintain the occupation. Despite this, popular opinion in Australia has always run fairly strongly in favour of East Timorese independence – or at least in the direction of condemnation of Indonesia for its brutality. This has been abetted by both racism (the fear of the 'yellow peril') and by the nostalgic attachment of many Australian World War II veterans to their 'mates' in East Timor, who fought with them against the Japanese in World War II – at a cost of some 60 000 Timorese lives, when the Australians retreated (Taylor 1995, 32). Howard's regime was willing to capitalize politically on this sentiment in proposing the referendum. Essentially, the Indonesian crisis allowed Howard's Liberal government to move more strongly in promoting an end to the potentially regionally destabilizing East Timor occupation, while being less fearful of alienating an Indonesian leadership that was in turmoil and focused on many other issues (Huntley and Hayes 2001, 179–83).

When Habibie accepted Howard's suggestion and proposed the referendum, the response of the Indonesian military (TNI), and its commander General Wiranto, was one of outrage. It thus immediately mobilized the militia groups that it had used for years to intimidate East Timorese independence advocates, leading to the thousands of pre-referendum killings already mentioned. Throughout 1999, as the killings escalated, the US government and its international allies continued to supply and support Indonesia, while refusing to demand that it allow international peacekeeping forces into East Timor for the referendum (Chomsky 2001, 128, 136–7; Nairn 2001). This clearly indicates that though the US government was willing to challenge the Indonesian government on issues of interest to its own investors – and even to countenance the removal of Suharto – it in no way intended to promote Timorese

independence or to challenge the Indonesian military on this issue.

In this context, the referendum went ahead without proper security, allowing the well known, horrifying aftermath. Here too, it is important to avoid linear narratives that assume an inevitable outcome to the process. It appears that the goal of the TNI and its militias – part of a plan developed well before the referendum – was first to intimidate Timorese into voting for autonomy, failing that to disrupt the entire vote and failing that to cause complete havoc and destruction, perhaps being able to drive most Timorese into the mountains and to draw a new border between East and West Timor, claiming the richest coffee growing lands in the process (Kingsbury 2000, 73; Kammen 2001, 185–7). There was no inevitability to the curtailing of this savage plan, and if not for a huge outpouring of condemnation in Indonesia and elsewhere – including a massive strike by workers in Australia, who refused to handle Indonesian cargo and successfully encouraged international labour solidarity in this embargo – it is conceivable that the plan might have worked. Both international solidarity efforts and the sensitive position of the Clinton administration – which had worked hard to justify military interventions in Somalia and Kosovo on human rights grounds and thus could not argue effectively against such intervention in the case of East Timor – led to the US government's decision to force international peacekeepers upon an antagonistic Indonesian military. In short succession, the US government announced termination of military shipments, the World Bank President insisted upon an end to the slaughter and the IMF stopped delivery of the latest tranche of its structural adjustment loans (Taylor 1999, xxxii–xxxiii). The response of the Habibie regime was immediate, allowing the entry of international peacekeeping forces and terminating both the slaughter and Indonesia's quarter century of colonialism in East Timor. After this, the vote of the Indonesian parliament to recognize the result of the referendum was largely a formality.

It was thus in 1999 that transformations in structural power relations necessary for Timorese independence finally crystallized. From the account given here, it is obvious that nothing was inevitable in this, and not only the protracted struggle of the Timorese but a series of contingencies and perhaps outright accidents contributed to the final result. The multiplicity of factors that led to independence indicate the deeply overdetermined character of the

process. Yet at the same time, it is evident that among the processes that were crucial to the eventuation of independence were structural transformations in the geo-political economy. It is these transformations that mark perhaps the major difference between 1975 and 1999. Though East Timorese nationalism was extremely young in 1975, popular sentiment for independence was overwhelming even before Indonesia invaded. Indonesian invasion and occupation did nothing to change this, nor did the survival strategies of the Timorese substantially change sentiment, though these strategies were crucial to the maintenance of resistance. Resistance could only achieve its final goal when the geo-political economic forces that had constrained it had been transformed – as they had been by 1999.

In this regard, it is not only the changes in US capitalists' interests, the changes in the Indonesian class structure, or the Indonesian economic crisis that matter. It is also important that changes in the global economic and geo-political situation between 1975 and 1999 had made any pretence of a threat to capitalism from a Fretilin government ludicrous. Moreover, the Fretilin government that formed with independence will inevitably be a far different one from the one that set out to transform East Timor in the mould of African national liberation struggles during 1974–5. The policies that Fretilin will implement are likely to be much more receptive to a kind of integration into the global capitalist economy that wouldn't have been considered desirable in 1975 (Mariano Saldanha 2001). Thus, the independence of East Timor has been procured not only at an enormous cost in human life, but also quite possibly at the cost of any opportunity to implement the kinds of development strategies and social policies that made Fretilin popular in the 1970s. Whether or not this means that Timorese independence will fail to deliver the poor into something other than an independent impoverishment is yet to be determined, but it would be both premature and callous to assume that nothing better will come to the people of East Timor as a result of independence. What matters for the analysis here is simply that the most important immediate goal of the liberation struggle has been attained, something that could not have occurred without a combination of truly heroic tenacity on the part of the Timorese and important shifts in structural relations of power – generally working far beyond the scale of the Timorese struggle itself – over which they had little or no control.

Conclusion

Every case of national liberation struggle has its own particularities, and national liberation struggles as a whole are distinct from many other forms of resistance in the degree to which they are able to mobilize coalitions across class, gender, and sometimes even racial and ethnic lines. Yet precisely because they are a form of broad-based collective action, national liberation struggles like those of East Timor help illustrate important general issues regarding the conditions under which resistance can escalate into something more than opposition and attain major goals of struggle.

The theoretical perspective that I have presented here suggests that approaches such as the structurationist perspective developed in the 1980s, while perhaps useful for analysing the details of how humans knowingly *reproduce* social structures, may not be particularly relevant to the issue of when and how resistance struggles are able to *transform* social structures. Structure and agency can be constructed as highly abstract categories whose relationship to one another poses theoretical issues, but the questions that have often been asked under this rubric about the conditions that enable human agents to change social structures are better seen as socio-spatial scale issues. If structure is merely the agency of large collectivities of humans, exercised across time and across complex spatial networks, then the question of when and how given subsets of such collectivities can act to change them is a question of when and how a large enough portion of the collectivity might act in ways that intentionally or unintentionally enable the changes pursued by the subset in question.

Moreover, in concrete cases like those of East Timor, the reasons why various members of the collectivity act in ways that either reproduce or change structure are not especially complicated to discern. Interests that motivate behaviour – including but not limited to class interests – may be socially and historically constructed, but rarely are they difficult to identify for given social groups in specific contexts. Thus, for example, the interests that can be seen as driving the crucial actions of both foreign investors in Indonesia and major Indonesian industrialists and state officials are neither surprising nor, for the most part, opaque – and indeed most have been consciously identified and openly asserted by the actors in question. To be sure, both the actions of given individuals and the ways in

which the actions of different groups in a larger collectivity interact to either offset each other or crystallize into substantial forces for change cannot be easily predicted. Nonetheless, once a particular interaction of forces has in fact crystallized in specific ways, the processes at work can often be readily explained without recourse to theories that assume a problematic or complicated relationship between structure and agency.

It is such relatively parsimonious explanations of action in the context of structure that are at the core of Marxist analyses of structural power. Marxists argue that groups of social actors in given contexts have interests connected to – though not defined exclusively by – their position in class structures. Through overdetermined processes, the interest-based activities of these groups sometimes interact to produce social changes that were not necessarily intended by all or even a majority of the actors but result from the ways the actions of different groups involved in class and class-relevant social struggles crystallize. Thus, the enabling conditions for Timorese liberation included actions by groups indirectly connected to – but not involved in or intending to affect – the Timorese struggle. These included foreign investors in Indonesia and IMF and US officials, seeking changes in Indonesia's governmental structures to enhance prospects for foreign investment and ownership; Indonesian capitalists, professionals, student activist groups and others, seeking changes in Indonesian government policies for their own various reasons, including the desire for more democratization; and the numerous social actors inside and outside of Indonesia whose actions in pursuit of profits, export growth, higher wages, and the like, unintentionally produced the Indonesian economic crisis. East Timorese liberation could not have occurred without the remarkable and tenacious resistance struggle of the Timorese, but nor could it have occurred without the transformations of structural power occasioned by the activities of these other actors, which were not focused on East Timor and which could not be controlled by the Timorese.

Insofar as this kind of account of the relationship between structure and given acts of resistance is generalizable, the implications are both important and chastening. Resistance can achieve its goals and result in substantial social changes; but the conditions under which it can do so may not be either predictable or subject to any meaningful form of control by groups involved in resistance struggle.

It is for this reason that while some acts of resistance succeed in attaining longer-term goals, most fail. The list of existing national liberation struggles that to date have not achieved their aims and are unlikely to do so anytime soon – including the struggles of Palestinians, Kurds, West Papuans, Acehnese, Tibetans and Shans – is long indeed.

The point, however, is not to encourage scepticism about the prospects of national liberation struggle or other forms of resistance – nor, for that matter, is it to endorse any particular form of resistance struggle. The point here, rather, is to note that since the necessary conditions of successful struggle include structural transformations not under the control of resistance groups, awareness of structural constraints and potential openings is crucial to resistance strategy. It is for this reason that actors in class struggles and national liberation struggles – from US labour organizers in the 1930s to Vietnamese revolutionaries in the 1950s and 1960s – have paid careful attention to the opportunities created by economic crises and changing configurations of geo-political power. Resistance struggles cannot control such developments, but by being alert to their evolution they can construct strategies and time actions in ways that maximize impact. The East Timorese activists who intensified their struggles as the economic crisis in Indonesia grew understood this and made good use of the opening.

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Notes

- 1 Elsewhere (Glassman forthcoming), I have presented an analysis of the roots of Althusser's concept of 'overdetermination', showing its roots in the non-reductionist, non-economistic strategic thinking of Lenin and Mao. In my view, an understanding of how Althusser grounds his analysis in this kind of theoretical tradition argues against readings of his work as structuralist in the same sense as Saussure's linguistics or Levi Strauss' anthropology.

- 2 This is precisely how the matter was recently put by an early exponent of structuration approaches, Alan Pred, in a session during the 2001 meetings of the Association of American Geographers. The view being proposed here is also compatible theoretically with the claim made by Roy Bhaskar, Margaret Archer, Andrew Sayer and other critical realists that reality is 'stratified' and that social structures are 'emergent' phenomena, not reducible to aggregated individuals (e.g. Sayer 1984 2000; Bhaskar 1989 1993; Archer 1995). Though useful in its own way, I do not pursue this critical realist argument here since it is directed at theoretical issues regarding agency in general rather than at the more specific issues of the agency I am addressing, having to do with classes and other social collectivities involved in struggles for change.
- 3 It is worth noting here the gist of the famed passage in Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* in which he makes the statement, problematized by structurationists, that 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please . . .' (Marx 1977b, 300). The constraint upon human action that Marx immediately goes on to cite is not a fundamentally 'economic' constraint but rather the 'spirits of the past' that various social actors conjure up in (vainly) attempting to understand periods of revolutionary crisis. He then counsels – in what might within the stiff categories of liberal social science be construed as an act of 'culturalist' exhortation – that 'The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future' (Marx 1977b, 302).
- 4 This is more fully the case if one considers that other forms of power-laden social relations – such as gender relations – can themselves be seen as structured. Thus, there is structural gender power, and this interpenetrates structures of class power within various social institutions, including households, workplaces and states (Walby 1990).
- 5 Archer develops a 'morphogenetic' approach to realist social theory that draws on Bhaskar's TMSA, among other sources. Like Bhaskar's critical realism, Archer's morphogenetic approach emphasizes that social structure is an 'emergent property' of society, not reducible to the sum of individual agents' actions. While I am in general sympathy with this approach, discussion of emergent properties is beyond the scope of my argument here, and also leads in the direction of attempting to resolve debates about structure and agency through the abstract, theoretical approach characteristic especially of Bhaskar's work. As mentioned earlier, I prefer here to approach such debates through a tactical empirical engagement.
- 6 The evidence in this section is drawn entirely from secondary sources, though some of my understanding of the situation in East Timor is based on discussions with various East Timorese, including the former Acting Rector of the University of East Timor and

now Minister of Education, Armindo Maia. My understanding has also been influenced by conversations over the years with a large number of East Timor solidarity activists in North America. Most of the secondary sources cited are by North American or Australian authors. The majority of these works are themselves first-hand accounts, based on interviews, observations and/or ethnographic fieldwork in East Timor. Some information is also drawn from Timorese sources that have been translated into English, including the accounts of the Timorese resistance given by Jose Ramos-Horta (1996) and Constancio Pinto (Pinto and Jardine 1997), and various other accounts are based on interviews and research in Indonesia, especially regarding Indonesian military strategy and policies.

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