

# A CRITICAL REFLECTION OF TIMOR LESTE'S SEPARATION FROM INDONESIA IN SEFRIYANA KHAIRIL'S NOVEL *TANAH AIR BETA*: A NEW HISTORICISM APPROACH

Akhmad Taufiq

Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Jember, Indonesia

## ABSTRACT

**Corresponding author:**  
Akhmad Taufiq  
[akhmadtaufiq@unej.ac.id](mailto:akhmadtaufiq@unej.ac.id)

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Timor Leste's separation from Indonesia led to a problematic situation, leaving a deep psychological dilemma for the two countries, with historically strong relationships. This research aims to provide a critical reflection on the political and psychological problems in the aftermath of Timor-Leste's separation from Indonesia, as a sister region. Engaging the new historicism approach, this research delved into data obtained from the novel *Tanah Air Beta* by Sefriyana Khairil, published by Gradien Mediatama in 2010. The data were explored, described, and interpreted with the assumption that the data in the novel were in parallel with historical data external to the novel. These data were pertinent to pictures that reflected the separation, presented along with information on accompanying historical events to ensure depth of interpretation. The research results showed that the separation stemmed from New Order political repression, coupled with political issues. The separation resulted in mental outcomes associated with anxiety, unpreparedness, fear, and refusal of emerging political events. These psychological problems sparked the evolving sense of national solidarity between citizens. It was the same feeling as a citizen who underwent adversity as a result of a political act in choosing one of the two countries. The research underlined the importance of apt coping strategies to address potential separation to preempt similar political and psychological issues. These strategies are essential to mitigate the profound and enduring impact on a region whose inhabitants share close fraternal bonds.

**Keywords:** Timor Leste's separation from Indonesia; novel *Tanah Air Beta*; new historicism approach; political and psychological problems; fallen solidarity

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Political separation for a particular region in a country leaves complex political, psychological, and socioeconomic problems, as in the separation of Timor Leste from Indonesia. Previous researchers, including McCloskey (2000), Connaughton (2001), Kierman (2009), Robinson (2010), Indrawan (2015), Quefi et al.

(2019), and Banda et al. (2023), demonstrate that this political act triggered serious problems in Timor Leste both before and after the referendum on August 30, 1999.

Political issues have been around since the integration of Timor Leste into Indonesia in 1976 and then peaked during the referendum. The military approach taken by the New Order since the integration of Timor Leste into Indonesia adversely impacted the sympathy of some Timor Leste citizens, which culminated during the opinion poll under the authority of the UN, after which separation was decided. Molnar (2009), using a different perspective, views Indonesia as a country carrying out occupation, or invasion as defined by Jannisa (2019). This means that the independence of Timor Leste is encouraged by the disappointment and antipathy towards Indonesia.

Several previous studies have also investigated Timor Leste, but these made no clear allusion to literary perspectives. In addition, studies investigating crucial phenomena by embracing literary perspectives have been very scarce. This lack of emphasis on literary perspective overlooks the underlying values associated with such phenomena, particularly in relation to the attempts at deciphering valuable lessons embedded in the historical narratives. In response to this gaping void, the present study engages literary perspectives to scrutinize the psychological adversity stemming from the separation of Timor Leste from Indonesia.

The novel *Tanah Air Beta* by Sefriyana Khairil (2010) describes the complexity of the problems and the negative impact of separation. This problem arises from politics to the psychological impact on citizens who were forced to leave Timor Leste. Critical reflection on Timor Leste's separation emphasizes the pivotal roles of serious interpretation of political phenomena and the resultant psychological impact. With a new historicism approach, this study offers a new literary-based perspective to understand the separation of parts of a country into a new country. This investigation is guided by the following research questions: (1) What were the political and psychological outcomes of Timor Leste's separation from Indonesian as reflected in the novel *Tanah Air Beta*?; (2) How was the solidarity established as a result of Timor Leste's separation from Indonesia in the novel?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The separation further marked the defeat of the pro-integration party against the pro-independence group. In Bertrand's (2012) study, of the 451,792 registered voters, and with 97% of these voters casting their votes, 78.5% rejected Indonesia's proposal for broad autonomy; implying the desire for independence. Meanwhile, those who chose integration with the concept of broad autonomy were 21%.

It was appealing to note that the referendum, not only resulted in separating Timor Leste from Indonesia territorially but also separated many families. Therefore, this incident had a deep psychological impact on those who were directly or indirectly involved. Despite knowing nothing about the issues, these citizens were psychologically shocked and devastated as a result of the separation.

In the theory of new historicism, this phenomenon is seen to hold an equivalent status to any historical events within and beyond literary texts, whether viewed horizontally or vertically (Barry, 2005). According to Greenblatt (2005), new historicism theory holds a reciprocal relationship with sociocultural reality, as long as a literary text contributes to historical phenomena in the dynamics of human culture.

Greenblatt and Gallagher (2000), Hickling (2018), and Barry (2020) contend that the study of new historicism has a strategic side to build and offer new perspectives. This new perspective concerns the relationship between literary texts and historical phenomena grounded in the complexity of social, political, economic, and cultural studies. Greenblatt's view, on the same wavelength, contradicts the common idea noting that literary texts have no sufficient standards to serve as information resources for exploring particular historical events. Attending to this view, the present study holds the view that literary texts can play pivotal roles in the critical interpretation of historical events.

In relation to literary interpretation, Brannigan (1999) states that the new historicism theory connects text and context to important content on broader political dimensions. The interpretation of literary texts based on a new historicism view enables meticulous investigation of the relationship between literary texts as a source of historical information and the social and political context in which they are produced. This perspective also helps to better interpret historical phenomena in that it aids in a more in-depth analysis of dynamic information of an event. As such, literary texts can be interpreted through a more relevant viewpoint, by taking into the contextual attributes associated with a particular event.

In the field of new historicism, foundational studies by Greenblatt (1989), Brannigan (1999), Gallagher (1999), Greenblatt and Gallagher (2020), Taufiq (2016), Hickling (2018), Barry (2020), Lyu (2021), Amanda (2022), and Alkhaerat et al. (2024) have significantly contributed to understanding the interaction between literary texts and historical studies. These works reinforce the theoretical framework linking literature with historical contexts, where literary texts often provide insights and narrative details that real

historical records lack. This interdisciplinary approach creates a reciprocal academic space that strengthens and complements both fields, offering novel dimensions to historical analysis through the lens of literature.

The present study focuses on applying new historicism to examine the separation of East Timor from Indonesia, aiming to provide fresh perspectives on this political event. Traditionally viewed through a political lens, East Timor's 2002 independence from Indonesia warrants further analysis from a humanitarian viewpoint, as suggested by Rustamana et al. (2023). This approach enriches the historical narrative, allowing the study of East Timor's separation to transcend political documentation and highlight the human dimensions intertwined with political change. Thus, new historicism emerges as a valuable scholarly avenue for exploring the complex interplay of political and humanitarian narratives within significant historical events.

Following this theory, the study of the novel *Tanah Air Beta* by Sefriyana Khairil (2010), reflecting Timor Leste's separation from Indonesia, aims to portray strategic and historical urgency, offering a new perspective on the historical phenomenon. The separation is not only a matter of political phenomena but also complex political and psychological problems. The complexity of the political and psychological problems that the people of Timor-Leste had endured, on a macro level, portrays the complexity of humanitarian problems.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed qualitative research guided by a new historicism approach. Qualitative research examines data in the form of words, sentences, and paragraphs. In the new historicism approach, data involves literary text, assumed to be in parallel with external historical data (Greenblatt & Gallagher, 2000; Taufiq, 2016; Hickling, 2018). The approach provides a wider space for how data in literature can reveal a myriad of insights beyond conventional historical numerical data. Moreover, it offers the potential to reveal unreadable and unexpressed data.

The data in this study was obtained from the novel *Tanah Air Beta* authored by Sefriyana Khairil (2010). The data were extracted, described, analyzed, and interpreted by emphasizing the critical reflection of aspects in coherence with the current contextual reading model. The data analyzed included: (1) information on the political challenges and psychological effects experienced by the people of Timor-Leste, and (2) evidence of solidarity among individuals affected by the political conflict. This information is supplemented with visual data from credible media sources, providing a basis for a new historicist analysis of Timor-Leste's separation from Indonesia. Visual data comprised images depicting the Timor-Leste region, moments from the referendum, and post-referendum scenes. These images were analyzed within a new historicist framework to explore the phenomenon of Timor-Leste's independence, including the associated psychological impacts on its population. The interpretive process sought to derive meaning and foster critical reflection on the broader implications of Timor-Leste's separation from Indonesia.

Furthermore, in the context of the present study, this approach to reading was deemed necessary for interpreting a political event that occurred 24 years ago. To obtain sufficient information, the investigation of literary text was also supported by images capturing the historical events. This measure was taken in view of drawing critical implications and contributions for Indonesia and Timor-Leste, as well as other nations in anticipating political separation.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research revealed three important findings. First, Timor Leste's separation cannot be interpreted from a purely political perspective. The separation was a result of the New Order's approach to Timor Leste, which was named East Timor by Indonesia. Second, the separation caused severe psychological impacts for the separated citizens, as indicated by anxiety, unpreparedness, fear, and refusal of political events. Third, the psychological decline in the next process gave rise to a feeling of solidarity among citizens. A feeling of shared destiny transcended ethnic and religious boundaries for Indonesia. Table 1 summarizes the causes and effects of the separation.

**Table 1:** The research results on the separation of Timor Leste from Indonesia

No.	Timor Leste's Separation	Causes	Effects
1	Political problems	The dissatisfaction of the majority of Timor Leste citizens toward the repressive New Order	The desire for independence
2	Psychological problems	Separated families	Psychological devastation
3	National solidarity	Emotional solidarity toward the political decision and loyalty to Indonesia	Solidarity among citizens

#### 4.1 Political tragedy and psychological outcomes

The separation brought negative consequences in the form of a wave of riots, followed by massive displacement. Only those directly involved in the opinion polls were in the conflict area. Numerous reasons demonstrated that Timor Leste was an inseparable part of Indonesia. Timor Leste citizens who supported the integration with Indonesia voiced strong belief in that reason, refusing the separation from Indonesia.

The Indonesian government called the Timor Leste region East Timor. The term East Timor was to provide a different administrative category from West Timor (Figure 1), called East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). Before the referendum took place, Timor Leste had been suffering from extensive internal conflict between political groups. The conflict in Timor Leste was caused by poverty, dwindling resources, diversity of ethnicities and political groups, as well as the New Order's political repression (Indrawan, 2015). Of these driving factors, the main drive for independence was the New Order's political repression as identified before independence and the suffering felt by the East Timorese people.



**Figure 1:** The location of West Timor, Indonesia (gray), and Timor Leste (yellow). Source: BBC (2023)

The novel illustrated Timor Leste's separation from Indonesia and its extraordinary impacts on those involved, as described in the excerpt below:

Setelah referendum, banyak anak-anak yang terpaksa hidup terpisah dari orang tuanya. Ada yang sekolah, tetapi lebih banyak yang tidak, karena mereka tidak mampu membayar. Mama Tatiana, atau yang biasa murid-murid panggil dengan sebutan Mama Guru itu, dengan sukarela mau mengajar mereka. Meski di sekolah darurat seperti itu mengajar tidak mendapatkan bayaran, tetapi membuat anak-anak kelak menjadi orang pintar adalah yang terpenting untuknya, karena itu Mama Tatiana mau mendidik anak-anak ini (Khairil, 2010, p. 13).

[After the referendum, many children were forced to live separately from their parents. Some went to school, but many were out of school since they could not afford the tuition. Mama Tatiana, or Mama Teacher as what students called her, volunteered to teach them. Despite the critical circumstance where teachers were not paid for their job, her ultimate priority remained the same, educating these students for a better future.] (Khairil, 2010, p. 13).





**Figure 2:** The citizens of East Timor in Dili city after the opinion poll. Source: Iswara (2022)

During the 1999 referendum, as Graça Feijó (2020) notes, 98.6 percent of registered voters participated, with 78.5 percent favouring independence and 21.5 percent voting to remain with Indonesia (Figure 2). This overwhelming margin underscores the strong desire among the Timorese people for independence, marking a pivotal political moment. Consequently, on May 20, 2002, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (RDTL) formally gained independence, earning recognition from the international community.

Another unanticipated issue was the critical impact in the aftermath of that referendum, which exerted a deep psychological influence on the people of Timor Leste. Many children were forced to live separately from their parents and dropped out of school; in addition, the transition to independence was accompanied by widespread fear of loss and separation, heightened anxiety, and a pervasive sense of insecurity, compounded by a lack of social support and affection, causing substantial adverse psychological impacts on them and putting their future at risk (Rahmah & Khairi, 2023). As a consequence, those who lost the referendum fled to the nearest Indonesian territory, namely West Timor, or East Nusa Tenggara. The referendum led to social unrest which resulted in the loss of property and even life. Showing their commitment and loyalty to Indonesia, some Timor Leste citizens fled to East Nusa Tenggara to save lives.

Di sebuah Jembatan, tempat perbatasan Timor Leste dan Indonesia, orang-orang yang mengungsi kembali bertemu dengan keluarganya. Mereka saling berpelukan, saling menangis, penuh haru. Beberapa tentara terlihat berada di sekitar untuk menjaga keadaan.

Di jembatan Motaain bukan sekadar penghubung dua wilayah yang telah berpisah. Lebih dari itu, jembatan itu menjadi penghubung bagi sanak saudara yang terpaksa hidup terpisah karena harus mengungsi. Pasca jajak pendapat memang melahirkan duka yang mendalam bagi banyak keluarga. Sayangnya, tidak banyak orang yang mau tahu, atau bahkan memahami nasib mereka yang hidup dalam pengungsian. Sebagian pagar, jembatan itu dipasang kawat berduri dan garis kuning sebagai batas daerah. Benar-benar sebuah jembatan yang penuh air mata, penuh kerinduan dan keharuan (Khairil, 2010, p. 9).

[On a bridge, located at the border between Timor Leste and Indonesia, people who fled were reunited with their families. They hugged and cried to each other, painting a huge emotional relief. Several soldiers were around to guard the situation.

The Motaain bridge was not just a link between two separated regions; it was a connection for relatives forced to live separately because they had to flee. The aftermath of the opinion poll gave birth to deep sorrow for countless families. Unfortunately, only a few spared a thought for those languishing in refugee camps. Barbed wire and yellow lines were installed to mark boundaries. This was a bridge full of tears, brimming with longing, and charged with emotion.] (Khairil, 2010, p. 9).

This extraordinary event drove political and sociocultural outcomes, leading to separation and the dissonance of sociocultural systems. When viewed from a psychological perspective, this incident inflicted deep and lasting wounds on those involved. Banda et al. (2023) contend that this political event is a political tragedy that poses trauma and resentment towards East Timorese citizens.

From the perspective of the pro-Indonesian citizens of Timor Leste, namely West Timor (Timor Lorosae), the political tragedy also gave rise to psychological impacts, and the unendurable emotional turmoil (Khairil, 2010). This psychological crisis was sparked by the uncertain identity of cultural groups. The defeat of the pro-integration party was followed by confusion over the identity of cultural groups within the national

boundary. The separation ushered in the construction of a new national and state discourse; namely the nation and state of Timor Leste. For those residing with the pro-integration party, this phenomenon led to serious identity problems. Unpreparedness and fear permeated their response to the separation. These psychological issues among pro-integration parties were completely understandable because they were desirous for one nation and one state as they believed that Timor Leste was inseparable from Indonesia. The defeat of the pro-integration party ruined their hope, which subsequently led to identity problems (Taufiq, 2017).

The fear among Timor Leste citizens, particularly those in the pro-integration party, was driven by concerns about political pressures. The poll marked the rise of extraordinary social conflict. As a way out of the chaos of conflict and psychological turmoil, those involved in the pro-integration party preferred to flee to West Timor (Amindoni, 2022). While this response instigated the separation, this was also meant to be an evacuation which unfortunately did not fully surmount post-poll problems. In addition to these, socio-cultural relations between the two countries that were once united began to be problematic, especially concerned with the territorial boundaries and relationship patterns.



**Figure 3:** The front gate of the Motaain Integrated National Border Post, Belu Regency, NTT.  
Source: Prihatini and Aluliani (2023)

Since August 30, 2005, the Motaain border has been officially opened between the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste (Figure 3). At that time, there were around 70,000 thousand refugees out of around 300,000 post-poll refugees who still chose to live in West Timor (East Nusa Tenggara Province), as described in the film *Tanah Air Beta*. Meanwhile, Bertrand (2012) noted that only 200,000 Timorese residents fled, either to the mountains or to East Nusa Tenggara. These differences in records illustrated how post-poll conditions left extraordinary issues, one of which was the refugee data. The border problem was not as stated by Tam (2022) which concerned group participation. The border problem represented a struggle to save human lives.

This range of events portrayed serious political problems in Timor Leste. The separation not only sparked political problems but also created a critical psychological enigma for its people in a newly independent country, as they were separated from their families. The other impact was the emergence of a wave of refugees to West Timor. The enormity of this wave of refugees exacerbated the pain, further emphasizing how political separation had an adverse psychological impact on literally everyone.

The psychological decline as a result of separation and conflict, if reflected in the current context, would continue to affect refugees adversely. In the present context, the majority of Timor Lest refugees would remain in precarious circumstances since the Indonesian government demonstrated a lack of serious attention to their plight. This issue spanned across generations and persisted through several eras of governance, from the time of President Megawati, and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, to the time of President Jokowi, yet some of these impacts of conflict are still prevalent (Amindoni, 2022).

It was obvious that the separation was an indecent decision from two primary standpoints. First, individuals who fled to Indonesian territory, specifically East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), were entitled to receive fundamental human rights. Second, from the perspective of citizenship, those who opted to become Indonesian citizens must be guaranteed and ensured that their fundamental rights as Indonesian citizens were properly fulfilled.

#### 4.2 Solidarity among the Downtrodden

A further impact of political problems was the emergence of solidarity as a nation. There were two prominent forms: feeling of the same fate and a form of brotherhood. These were appealing to analyze because of their relationship with human psychology. National solidarity is commonly interpreted as the relations between subjects within a nation (Knetsch, 2014). In this study, national solidarity pertains to the relationship between subjects of Timor Leste citizens who choose to become Indonesian citizens, along with the psychological impacts that occur from their stance.

Sejak sering bertemu di pengungsian hingga timbul rasa senasib, Om Abu Bakar menjadi dekat dengan Mama Tatiana. Mereka sama-sama kehilangan anggota keluarga. Mama Tatiana kehilangan suami dan seorang anak laki-laki bernama Mauro, sementara Om Abu Bakar mencari istrinya, Renata. Rumah mereka pun jaraknya tidak begitu jauh. Mereka bertetangga (Khairil, 2010, p. 12).

[Sharing hardships in the relentless crucible of the refugee camp, Uncle Abu Bakar became close to Mama Tatiana. They both lost family members. Mama Tatiana lost her husband and son, Mauro, while Uncle Abu Bakar looked for his wife, Renata. Their house was not that far away. They were neighbors.] (Khairil, 2010, p. 12).

The two characters in the novel described solidarity as they encountered the same fate. Following the opinion poll, the two fled to NTT.



**Figure 4:** The number of refugees on the rise, marked at around 276 thousand refugees, only 7% of the total population of 1.5 million in Timor Leste (Saturday, September 11, 1999). Source: Jayakarna (2023)

As fellow refugees (Figure 4), the two characters had the same experience, being devastated by the outcome of the post-opinion poll. Uncle Abu Bakar was separated from his wife Renata, while Mama Tatiana was separated from her son, Mauro. Sharing the same fate, they supported one another. Examined in more depth, these feelings of shared fate overcame the differences between the two of them; both from an ethnic and religious perspective. In terms of ethnicity, the two characters were different; Uncle Abu Bakar was of Arab descent, while Mama Tatiana was of Timorese ethnicity. In Ardi's (2015) notes, Timor Leste consists of 300 ethnic groups with 16 languages. Of the many types of language, Tetum is the language widely used today. Gradually, Tetum became the official language after Timor Leste separated from Indonesia, alongside Portuguese. The novel did not make explicit Mama Tatiana's ethnicity. From a religious aspect, Uncle Abu Bakar was Muslim, while Mama Tatiana was Christian. These differences did not interfere with their relationship. The feeling of the same fate as displaced residents encouraged solidarity in a multicultural society. Such solidarity was truly influential in maintaining social cohesion, transcending private and even non-private matters.

This feeling of shared fate was also a fundamental aspect of their relationship and sense of nationalism. The solidarity thus transcended ethnic and religious boundaries. This solidarity is manifested in the empathy category; where one subject can feel what the other feels. Kolers (2012) states that solidarity is a manifestation of bonding between groups driven by a common goal, that is maintaining loyalty to Indonesia. This strong integration is shown in the way that one subject empathizes with another. In such conditions, national solidarity should be constructed by building cultural awareness.

In the following excerpt, Khairil (2010, pp. 66, 74) shows a perspective on national solidarity which is shown by feelings as fellow countrymen.



Koh Ipin kembali dengan membawa baju merah itu dalam keadaan terlipat. Merry tersenyum senang melihat baju itu.

"Berapa, Ci?" "harganya lima puluh ribu. Tapi, karena ini buat ko pung kakak Mauro, kami beri diskon, terserah Merry mau berapa?" Ci Iren menatap Koh Ipin sekilas, dan kembali tersenyum pada Merry (Khairil, 2010, p. 66).

Kasihannya juga sih sama Carlo. Dia tidak punya siapa-siapa lagi selain Om Abu Bakar. Merry juga ingat kalau Mama pernah bilang, kita ini basudara besar, termasuk dengan Carlo juga. Tapi... Carlo menganggapnya sebagai adik, pasti dia tidak akan menjahili Merry dong? Merry jadi ragu juga untuk memaafkannya (Khairil, 2010, p. 74).

[Koh Ipin returned carrying the red shirt folded. Merry smiled happily seeing the clothes.

"How much, Ci?" "The price is fifty thousand. "But, because this is for Mauro's brother, we're giving a discount, it's up to Merry, how much do you want?" Ci Iren glanced at Koh Ipin briefly and smiled at Merry (Khairil, 2010, p. 66).

I feel sorry for Carlo too. He had no one else apart from Uncle Abu Bakar. Merry also remembered that Mama once said, we are big brothers, including Carlo. But... Carlo sees him as a little brother, he won't tease Merry, right? Merry also hesitated to forgive him.] (Khairil, 2010, p. 74).

This perspective was built by portraying Mama Tatiana as a person undergoing an intensive transformation due to the post-poll conflict and the separation of Timor Leste (Figure 5). The national solidarity, which was later derived into the concept of brotherhood, empowered all parties affected by the conflict. The concept of *basudara* or 'brotherhood' afforded social adhesive between ethnic and religious boundaries. In such conditions, the concept of *basudara* amplified the awareness and harmony between cultural groups.



**Figure 5:** Chaos after the opinion poll. Source: Jayakarna (2023)

Mama Tatiana in this context was presented as a key character to intensively mobilize the process of reconstructing *basudara*. Her position was a manifestation of a national political agenda aimed at integrating Indonesia and Timor Leste. Mama Tatiana always intensively promotes this integrative discourse to unite existing cultural groups. Awareness of international ties like this strengthens social bonding in a multicultural society (Parihala et al., 2019; Sunarimahingsih, 2019).

As a figure with a profound desire for social cohesion, Mama Tatiana played a crucial role in maintaining relations between cultural groups. At least, several cultural groups acknowledged her as a central figure in transforming national integration. Uncle Abu Bakar, Carlo, Koh Ipin, Cik Iren, Merry, and the community of children who always learned from Mama Tatiana became a part of a cultural group formed under the *basudara* concept.

Bendera merah putih berkibar. Apapun keadaannya, anak-anak bangsa akan selalu bersama dalam pangkuan Ibu Pertiwi. Ratusan pengungsi lain terlihat ikut juga bahagia bertemu dengan sanak saudara mereka. Cinta Ibu memang tak terhingga sepanjang masa. Tanpa berharap kembali dan selalu ada mengisi relung-relung hati (Khairil, 2010, pp. 117–118).



[The red and white flag fluttered proudly in the breeze. Regardless of the circumstances, the nation's children will always find unity in the bosom of Mother Earth. Hundreds of other refugees were also seen delighted to reunite with their loved ones. It was a moment of unending love and mother's infinite affection. Without any hope of return, there remained a presence that filled the deepest recesses of the heart.] (Khairil, 2010, pp. 117–118).

National solidarity thus played a critical part in maintaining the harmony between the descendants of Arabs, Chinese, and Timorese, to be in the same home, Indonesia. Indonesia was constructed to become a place for fraternal interaction. Solidarity encourages collective survival and the development of nationalism (Malesevic, 2013).

Mama Tatiana, despite the critical political and psychological challenges, seemed to be truly pacified. She was a pure portrayal of a mother embracing her children. In these hard times, she became a beacon of resilience and hope for the nation's children. Her strength ignited a spark of awakening and vigilance, keeping their spirits alive and steadfast. Indonesia, symbolized by the red and white flag upright amidst these conditions, denoted strong evidence of commitment and loyalty to the Republic of Indonesia. Latif (2014) explains that ideological commitment is connected to a solidarity framework that relies on political nationalism based on rationality. This also confirms that nationalism requires sufficient knowledge for identity (Rengganis et al., 2023).

These findings underscore the pressing urgency of the ideology of nationalism. This ideology is manifested in loyalty and willingness to sacrifice for one's country. The separation between Timor Leste and Indonesia unveils a valuable lesson not only for the two countries but also for every single nation in the world, demonstrating that separation can exert substantial multidimensional impacts, ranging from political to psychological adversities to the people of countries in conflict. Nevertheless, such a situation can encourage the rise of solidarity, the feeling of sharing a mutual fate that transcends ethnic and religious boundaries.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Timor Leste's separation from the Republic of Indonesia manifests a complex process. This research has demonstrated the critical role of exploring the issue from both political and psychological perspectives, particularly considering the resultant negative consequences for the two regions with strong historical relationships. Such a critical interpretation aids in revealing the underlying political motives driving the separation of a country. The findings underscore the urgency of anticipating psychological outcomes in addition to political impacts for citizens who experience the adverse impacts of the separation. Notwithstanding, this political phenomenon can bring about a deep sense of solidarity embedded in the same fate among citizens in great sorrow. This solidarity transcends ethnic and religious boundaries in Indonesia.

The separation entails, therefore, a multi-layered process, much beyond the political dimension, entering as it does into the plane of humanitarian consequence. The separation of East Timor from Indonesia should not be viewed simply as a political event but also as a deep humanitarian experience. This is about the psychological impact separation made on both regions bound by close familial and cultural ties. This study, on the other hand, is designed using the new historicism approach to unpack political and psychological issues intertwined along with the solidarity reflected in the novel *Tanah Air Beta* written by Sefryana Khairil. Reflecting critically on this process underscores the urgency of considering both political and psychological dimensions in any nation's separation, as the psychological strain on affected citizens is often overlooked. This strain, however, can foster a deep sense of solidarity—a shared fate and resilience among people who transcend ethnic and religious boundaries for the country they cherish.

The study's implications call for a renewed awareness among nations worldwide to carefully weigh the broader consequences of political decisions regarding separation. Findings from the new historicism analysis of *Tanah Air Beta*, centered on East Timor's separation from Indonesia, highlight the enduring psychological and political complexities of such separations. These challenges continue to spark significant psychological impacts on those involved, serving as a reminder of the human costs that persist well beyond political outcomes.

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