

ASIAN SURVEY

A Bimonthly Review of Contemporary Asian Affairs ■ University of California Press

Vol. XLII, No. 4, July/August 2002

THE LEGACY OF VIOLENCE IN INDONESIA

■ The Legacy of Violence in Indonesia • LOWELL DITTMER ■ Rethinking Aspects of Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Indonesia and East Timor • PETER ZINOMAN and NANCY LEE PELUSO ■ Unresolved Problems in the Indonesian Killings of 1965–1966 • ROBERT CRIBB ■ History, Memory, and the “1965 Incident” in Indonesia • MARY S. ZURBUCHEN ■ Indonesia: A Violent Culture? • ELIZABETH FULLER COLLINS ■ Problematizing the Place of Victims in *Reformasi* Indonesia: A Contested Truth about the May 1998 Violence • JEMMA PURDEY ■ The Making of “Ground Zero” in East Timor in 1999: An Analysis of International Complicity in Indonesia’s Crimes • JOSEPH NEVINS ■ On the Uses and Abuses of the Past in Indonesia: Beyond the Mass Killings of 1965 • ANN LAURA STOLER ■ Democratization and Regional Power Sharing in Papua/Irian Jaya: Increased Opportunities and Decreased Motivations for Violence • TIMO KIVIMÄKI and RUBEN THORNING ■

THE MAKING OF “GROUND ZERO” IN EAST TIMOR IN 1999

An Analysis of International Complicity in Indonesia’s Crimes

Joseph Nevins

“If you want independence, six months from now you will be eating rocks.” These are the translated words of one of the first pieces of Indonesian-language graffiti I saw as I walked through the flattened neighborhoods of Dili, the East Timorese capital in May 2000. I had returned to the former Portuguese colony for the first time since having fled the territory on September 4, 1999. With a mix of deep sorrow and relief, I had made my way overland to Indonesian West Timor as the destruction began. I was part of a convoy of hundreds of vehicles largely containing fleeing Indonesian civil servants and their families, several hours after the U.N. had announced the result of the U.N.-run “popular consultation.” The outcome had revealed overwhelming support for independence from Indonesia.

The graffiti was one of the more benign manifestations of the terror and destruction the Indonesian military (TNI) and its paramilitary (or militia) forces visited upon East Timor after learning the result. During the approximately three weeks that followed, the TNI and its militia destroyed an estimated 70% of the territory’s buildings and infrastructure, forcibly deported about 250,000 people to Indonesia, raped untold numbers of women, and killed upward of 2,000 people—to create what many have called “ground zero.” Arguably, Indonesia’s scorched-earth campaign was unprecedented in

Joseph Nevins is a Ciriacy-Wantrup Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of California, Berkeley. The author is grateful to John Roosa and the anonymous reviewer for *Asian Survey* for comments on earlier drafts of this article.

Asian Survey, 42:4, pp. 623–642. ISSN: 0004–4687

© 2002 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved.

Send Requests for Permission to Reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center St., Ste. 303, Berkeley, CA 94704–1223.

R

terms of its degree of destruction in the context of departing colonial powers in the 20th century.

What made such violence all the more outrageous in international eyes was that it occurred in the presence of a U.N. mission charged with organizing and running the August 30, 1999, plebiscite that allowed the people of East Timor to express their wishes regarding their political-territorial status. Furthermore, the climax of the violence and terror was preceded by a concerted and successful effort to drive out almost all international media and foreign observers, a campaign that ultimately succeeded in forcing the U.N. Assistance Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) to leave the territory as well.

While explanations for the September 1999 violence are multiple and varied, there are two principle schools of thought. The first one might be called the “rogue element” school. According to this explanation, pro-Indonesia East Timorese paramilitaries, enraged and surprised by the result of the ballot and supported by certain elements within the Indonesian military hierarchy, went on a rampage. Despite their best intentions, political and military elites in Jakarta (such as President B. J. Habibie and the military’s commander-in-chief, General Wiranto) had lost control of the situation. Once they realized this and understood the depth of international outrage, they allowed the international community to send troops and restore order. Implicit in this explanation is that the violence was generally spontaneous or unplanned in any sort of systematic sense. Many Indonesian elites and their supporters in the “international community”—especially in governments long supportive of the Indonesian military—put forth this line of argument.¹

The second school of thought rejects the rogue element theory and ascribes responsibility to the military hierarchy in Jakarta, without whose preparation, knowledge, and permission, if not direct orders, such large-scale violence could not have taken place. Proponents of this explanation see the militia as a mere smokescreen for the Indonesian military. Indeed, they point out, many members of the so-called militia were actually TNI members in civilian clothes. At the same time, they highlight a large body of evidence that documents the role of top military commanders in carefully planning and directing the wave of terror and violence. Parties who have a fundamental critique of the Indonesian military and of the Indonesian state more generally put forth this explanation most commonly. Given the available evidence in the form of intelligence gathered by Western governments and the documents of the In-

1. See Chapter 3, “Regional Developments,” in Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *2000 Diplomatic Bluebook*, available at <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2000/III-a.html>>. Also see Ian Timberlake, “Wiranto Claims Role of Peacemaker,” *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia), April 5, 2002.

donesian military, this second explanation is far more persuasive than the first.²

While the competing explanations have significant differences in terms of their assumptions and political implications, they share an important characteristic. Both spatially delimit their explanations to actors within the boundaries of Indonesia (which, at least in terms of September 1999, included—de facto—East Timor). And both explanations focus on a limited time frame—one that encompasses at best (in the case of the second explanation) the year 1999 and, at worst, just a few weeks (in the case of some versions of the rogue element theory). In doing so, the explanations delimit the geography of the making of the violence as well as its historical roots. In doing so, they exculpate a variety of players that enabled the Indonesian military's crimes in September 1999. More explicitly, they exonerate what were effectively the Indonesian military's partners in crime: a number of national governments that provided large amounts of military, economic, and diplomatic support to Jakarta for the Indonesian military's crimes in East Timor over an almost 24-year period.

This article provides an overview of the various forms of support, arguing that a number of governments allied with Indonesia were in a position to prevent the carnage and destruction. These same governments, while officially supportive of the UNAMET-led consultation process, did not signal as strongly as they could have to Jakarta that they would not tolerate the commission of any more crimes in 1999. These governments had the power to stop the Indonesian TNI by using the threat of a cut-off of economic and military ties. Because they did not make and thus did not act upon such threats, the TNI assumed that it could act in East Timor with impunity, as it had in the past. My position is that these governments had a moral and political responsibility to prevent violence by the TNI as their support for Indonesia for almost two and a half decades had the cumulative effect of decisively enabling Jakarta to invade East Timor in 1975, maintain its brutal and illegal occupation of the former Portuguese colony, and undertake its final act of terror and destruction following the August 30, 1999, ballot. In this regard, the making of "ground zero" in East Timor that September was very much a collective effort, one that involved an international community not normally depicted as such.

In making this argument, I am not suggesting that states make and pursue their foreign policies principally on the basis of moral considerations. As the case of East Timor demonstrates, political-economic and geostrategic con-

2. See, for example, Hamish McDonald, "Silence over a Crime against Humanity," *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 14, 2002. Regarding the TNI's documents, see Samuel Moore, "The Indonesian Military's Last Years in East Timor: An Analysis of Its Secret Documents," *Indonesia*, no. 72 (October 2001), pp. 9–44.

cerns were, not surprisingly, the decisive factors in informing the policies of the governments of the various countries allied with Indonesia. Now that Jakarta's occupation is over, these same governments present their behavior in the 1999 era as largely benign and supportive of the UNAMET process and, when asked, generally claim that they did everything within their power to prevent Indonesian atrocities. At the same time, they tend to present themselves as external to the terror that unfolded. Thus, if for no other reason than greater levels of historical accuracy, it is important to problematize such representations.

Background

What happened in September 1999 was only the final act of more than 20 years of atrocities and destruction perpetrated by the Indonesian military in East Timor. Well over 200,000 East Timorese—about one-third of the pre-invasion population—lost their lives as a result of Indonesia's December 7, 1975, invasion and subsequent occupation, an outcome that many scholars have characterized as genocidal in nature. In addition, Indonesia's war and occupation entailed a massive alteration of the society's social structures, systematic rape and sexual enslavement of untold numbers of East Timorese women, the damaging of social bonds of trust, and profound generalized psychosocial trauma.

The U.N.-managed ballot that took place on August 30, 1999, came about as a result of a U.N.-brokered agreement signed on May 5 of the same year by the governments of Indonesia and Portugal. At the time, Portugal was still the territory's "administering power" under international law as the U.N. did not judge East Timor as having undergone a proper process of decolonization. The accord provided that "[t]he Government of Indonesia will be responsible for maintaining peace and security in East Timor in order to ensure that the popular consultation is carried out in a fair and peaceful way in an atmosphere free of intimidation, violence or interference from any side."³

In retrospect, such a provision was clearly inadequate. But even at the time of the signing of the accord, making the Indonesian military and police responsible for peace and security hardly seemed like a wise proposition—at least to anyone who was remotely familiar with Indonesia's history of involvement with East Timor. But to have challenged it, many point out, was to effectively destroy the May 5 accord and thus eliminate a historic chance for the East Timorese people to express their political wishes regarding continued association with Indonesia and independence. There was no way, pro-

3. "Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Portuguese Republic on the Question of East Timor," May 5, 1999, East Timor Action Network/U.S. homepage, <<http://etan.org/etun/agreemnt.htm>>.

ponents of this position assert, that Indonesia would have accepted foreign troops on what it regarded as its soil. From Jakarta's perspective, to do so would be to admit to being an illegitimate occupying power, something Indonesia's political elite was not (and still is not) willing to do. And the East Timorese leadership certainly did not want to risk losing the opportunity offered by the May 5 agreement.⁴

The assumption behind this analysis is that the powers-that-be in the international community did all that they could to ensure that East Timor had maximum security while still having the opportunity to vote in the planned "popular consultation." But before interrogating this assumption, one should first ask how the people of East Timor arrived at a point at which they could express their opinions about their right to self-determination through a formal electoral process but not do so with sufficient security mechanisms. To the extent it is true that forcing the issue of an effective international security presence in East Timor before and after the ballot would have been a "deal breaker," one needs to understand why. And to do this, it is necessary to break out of the historical-geographical black hole surrounding the year 1999 in East Timor.

The International Context

Five days after Jakarta's full-scale invasion of East Timor, the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution that "strongly deplored" Indonesia's invasion and that demanded Jakarta withdraw its troops "without delay" to enable the territory's inhabitants "freely to exercise their right to self-determination and independence." Furthermore, it called upon all states to respect East Timor's right to self-determination, asked the Security Council to take urgent action to protect East Timor's territorial integrity and its people's right to self-determination, and requested that the international body send a fact-finding mission to the territory as soon as possible. Seventy-two member-states voted in favor of the resolution and 10 against while 43 abstained, a group that included the U.S., Canada, and most Western European countries. Ten days after the first General Assembly resolution, on December 22, 1975, the Security Council met and unanimously passed a resolution similar to that of the Assembly. And in April 1976, the Council passed another resolution, one that largely restated the text of the first. (This time, however, the U.S. and Japan abstained from the vote.) While the Security Council would not vote again on East Timor until 1999, there were annual votes in the U.N. General

4. See Neil King, Jr., and Jay Solomon, "Diplomatic Gambles at the Highest Levels Failed in East Timor," *Wall Street Journal*, October 21, 1999.

Assembly leading to the passage of resolutions reaffirming East Timor's right to self-determination from 1976 to 1982.⁵

Contemporary accounts of violence in East Timor put forth by powerful countries and international institutions—a collectivity often described as the “international community”—typically barely mentions the pre-August 30, 1999, ballot period. What is perhaps most striking about the discourse of powerful international actors—at least, the discourse intended for public consumption—is the general silence on the matter of external support for Indonesia's crimes in East Timor, especially that of the world's most powerful countries. This silence is crucial as responsibility for East Timor's plight long involved actors far beyond Indonesia. Many of the world's wealthiest and most powerful countries played a key, if not decisive, role in facilitating Indonesia's illegal war of conquest and occupation. That the U.N. took no effective action to enforce its resolutions—especially those passed by the Security Council, the U.N. organ with ultimate responsibility for international peace and security and whose resolutions member states are obligated to carry out—is a manifestation of that complicity.

Here, I do not discuss the role of the U.N., nor do I look specifically at that of the UNAMET mission in 1999 as a number of analysts have already done.⁶ While it is important to evaluate the specific actions (or non-actions) of actors within the U.N. system, however, ultimately the U.N. is only as effective in matters of international peace and security as the countries that dominate the world body allow or encourage. For this reason, I focus herein on Australia, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S., although I could also include countries such as Canada, France, and Germany as well. I focus on the former group because they were arguably Jakarta's most important international allies and two of them are permanent members of the U.N. security council. These countries also emerged (along with New Zealand) in 1999 as the members of the “Core Group” of countries that acted as an informal advisory body to the U.N. secretary-general during the consultation process.

Of all Western countries, Australia was perhaps the one whose support for Indonesia's occupation was most steadfast. Given its geographic proximity, wealth of resources, and sheer size, Indonesia has long been important to Australia. Recent disclosures prove that Australia's government was well

5. For an overview and analysis of the U.N. role regarding East Timor, see Geoffrey Gunn, *East Timor and the U.N.: The Case for Intervention* (Lawrenceville, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 1997); and Matthew Jardine, “East Timor, the U.N., and the International Community: Force Feeding Human Rights into the Institutionalized Jaws of Failure,” *Pacific Review* 12:1 (February 2000), pp. 47–62.

6. See, for example, Geoffrey Robinson, “With UNAMET in East Timor: A Historian's Personal View,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 32:1–2 (January–June 2000), pp. 23–26; and John Martinkus, *A Dirty Little War* (Sydney: Random House, 2001).

aware in 1974–75 of Indonesia’s plans of aggression against East Timor. Officially, Canberra expressed support for self-determination. In reality, however, the Australian government effectively encouraged Indonesia’s action by consulting with Jakarta about its plans for East Timor, and saying and doing nothing to indicate any serious opposition to Indonesia’s planned takeover of the former Portuguese colony. In fact, Australian officials often expressed their preference for an Indonesian-controlled East Timor, rather than an independent one.⁷

Despite officially condemning Jakarta’s invasion, Canberra doubled its military assistance to Indonesia between 1975 and 1981, during a time when the Australian Parliament Legislative Research Service described the situation in East Timor as “indiscriminate killing on a scale unprecedented in post-World War II history.”⁸ Through 1999, Canberra provided significant military training and weaponry, regularly exchanged intelligence information, and engaged in joint military maneuvers with Jakarta. In 1995, Australian prime minister Paul Keating signed a security agreement with Indonesia’s Suharto regime that facilitated closer ties between the two country’s military establishments.

Perhaps no Western country worked as hard as Australia did to provide diplomatic cover for Indonesia’s atrocities in East Timor. Australia even went so far as to extend *de jure* recognition in 1978 of Indonesia’s annexation of East Timor—a necessary step to enter into negotiations with Jakarta over the rights to the seabed of oil and natural gas deposits between northern Australia and East Timor’s south coast. In 1993, while visiting the U.S., Prime Minister Keating called upon the Clinton administration to lessen its criticisms of Suharto’s human rights record in East Timor. This stance represented a role reversal of sorts. An August 1976 report in Melbourne’s *The Age* cited anonymous “U.S. officials stationed in South-East Asia” as reporting that high-ranking members of the Ford administration had warned Canberra’s Fraser government to back down from his criticisms of Indonesia’s takeover of East Timor for fear that such criticisms could hurt overall U.S. and allied interests *vis-à-vis* Indonesia.⁹ While Canberra had made some public criticisms following the invasion, its actions—as already shown—spoke differently. In this regard, Washington’s chiding was ultimately not

7. Hamish McDonald, “The Price of Betrayal,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 13, 2000. Also see Wendy Way, Damien Browne, and Vivianne Johnson, eds., *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974–1976* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2000).

8. Quoted in Noam Chomsky, *East Timor and the Western Democracies* (Nottingham, U.K.: Russell Peace Foundation, Ltd., 1979), p. 3.

9. Michael Richardson, “Fraser Given Blunt Warning at Washington Talks: ‘Don’t Anger Jakarta,’” *The Age*, August 3, 1976.

especially important, although it did further expose the level of Washington's complicity.

The U.S. authorized Indonesia's invasion and, by doing so, is arguably guilty of aiding and abetting the international crime of aggression. As documented by the formerly classified transcript of the meeting, then-president Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger, his secretary-of-state, gave the green light to invade East Timor during discussions with Suharto, the Indonesian dictator, on December 6, 1975. The next day, about 14 hours after Ford and Kissinger departed from Jakarta, the Indonesian military launched its full-scale invasion.¹⁰ Ford himself later admitted that, given a choice between East Timor and Indonesia, the U.S. "had to be on the side of Indonesia."¹¹ By 1975, General Suharto's Indonesia was firmly allied with Western political and economic interests, making virtually inevitable U.S. and Western acquiescence to and cooperation with Indonesia's desire to annex East Timor. As an unnamed U.S. State Department official explained U.S. de facto recognition of Jakarta's annexation of East Timor in early 1976, "In terms of the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Indonesia, we are more or less condoning the incursion into East Timor. . . . The U.S. wants to keep its relations with Indonesia close and friendly. We regard Indonesia as a friendly, non-aligned nation—a nation we do a lot of business with."¹²

Much of the business was in weaponry: according to the U.S. State Department, American companies supplied some 90% of the arms used by the Indonesian military during the invasion. In the year following the invasion, the Ford administration continued supplying weaponry to Indonesia, although at a reduced amount. But the pattern of the U.S. serving as a reliable supplier of military weaponry to Jakarta was already well established. When it looked as if Indonesia was actually running out of military equipment in late 1977 because of its activities in East Timor, the Carter administration responded by authorizing \$112 million worth of arms sales for fiscal 1978 to Jakarta, up from \$13 million the previous year. U.S. military sales to Indonesia peaked during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, exceeding \$500 million from 1981–86. Although Indonesia diversified its military suppliers (most notably, countries such as Britain, France, and Germany), Indonesia was still receiving 53% of its weapon imports from the U.S. in 1992–94. And over

10. See William Burr and Michael L. Evans, eds., *East Timor Revisited: Ford, Kissinger and the Indonesian Invasion, 1975–76*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book, no. 62, December 6, 2001, online at <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/>>.

11. Jack Anderson, "Another Slaughter," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 9, 1979.

12. Ross Waby, "Aid to Indonesia Doubled as U.S. Shrugs Off Timor," *The Australian*, January 22, 1976.

2,600 Indonesian military officers received military training in the U.S. following the 1975 invasion.¹³

On the multinational front, the U.S. ensured that the U.N. did not take any effective action to enforce its resolutions on East Timor. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, U.S. ambassador to the U.N. during the Ford administration (1974–77), boasted of his skill in preventing the U.N. from taking effective action. Regarding East Timor, he wrote, “The Department of State desired that the U.N. prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. This task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success.”¹⁴

Matters in the U.S. began to change, however, following the Indonesian military massacre of hundreds of civilians at the Santa Cruz Cemetery in Dili on November 12, 1991. In September 1992, in response to grassroots pressure, Congress cut off International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds worth \$2.3 million to Indonesia—the first time Washington had ever refused aid to Indonesia since the invasion of East Timor.

While the Clinton administration that entered office the following January banned the sale of small and light arms, riot-control equipment, helicopter-mounted weaponry, and armored personnel carriers to Indonesia, it also provided over \$500 million in economic assistance over eight years and sold and licensed the sales of hundreds of millions of dollars in weaponry to Jakarta. The Clinton administration even side-stepped the congressional ban on IMET by allowing Indonesia to purchase the training. The administration further circumvented Congress’s intent and provided lethal training to Indonesia’s military. At least 28 training exercises in sniper tactics, urban warfare, explosives, psychological operations, and other techniques took place between 1993 and 1998 in Indonesia through a Pentagon program. The primary beneficiary was the Kopassus, Indonesia’s special forces troops responsible for many of the worst human rights violations in East Timor.¹⁵ While such revelations served to fuel further grassroots and congressional efforts to close military aid loopholes as well as congressional resolutions supporting self-determination for the East Timorese, various forms of economic and military assistance continued through 1999.

Along with the U.S., the U.K. was one of Indonesia’s largest arms suppliers during the 1990s. The roots of British complicity, however, go back to the time of the invasion. In the early stages of Operasi Komodo, the Indonesian military intelligence operation that aimed to create the conditions to en-

13. Matthew Jardine, *East Timor: Genocide in Paradise* (Tucson, Ariz.: Odonian Press; Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1999).

14. Daniel Moynihan with Suzanne Weaver, *A Dangerous Place* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1978), p. 247.

15. Allan Nairn, “Indonesia’s Killers,” *The Nation* (New York), March 30, 1998, pp. 6–7.

sure East Timor's "integration" with Indonesia, for example, Britain took a similar position to the U.S. and Australia regarding East Timorese independence. In July 1975, Sir John Archibald Ford, British ambassador to Jakarta, wrote to the Foreign Office that "the people of Portuguese Timor are in no condition to exercise their right to self-determination." It was in British interest, he opined, "that Indonesia should absorb the territory as soon as and as unobtrusively as possible; and that if it comes to the crunch and there is a row in the U.N. we should keep our heads down and avoid siding with the Indonesian government."¹⁶ Accordingly, Great Britain abstained on all eight votes on East Timor in the General Assembly from 1975 to 1982, while supporting the two weakest ones. In general, Britain's diplomatic role vis-à-vis East Timor was similar to that of the U.S. As one East Timorese resistance representative characterized London in 1992, the British government was "the single worst obstructionist of any industrialized country."¹⁷

While Britain sold a variety of military equipment to Indonesia, it was the sale of British-manufactured Hawk ground-attack jets that is most noteworthy. The sale of eight of them in 1978 proved useful to the Indonesian military's saturation bombing of the occupied territory. In 1993, the British government approved the sale of 24 additional Hawk aircraft to Jakarta and in 1996 approved the sale of 16 more. Despite the coming to power of the Labour government of Prime Minister Tony Blair and his "ethical foreign policy" in 1997, the government proceeded with the Hawks' sale and approved at least 22 new arms export licenses for Indonesia. By the late 1990s, Britain, in addition to being one of Indonesia's top suppliers of weaponry, was the country's second-largest foreign investor, having invested over \$30 billion since 1967.¹⁸ Finally, Blair's Labour government strengthened ties with Indonesia's military. Twenty-four of Indonesia's senior members received training in British military colleges between 1997 and September 1999, and another 29 officers studied at non-military academic establishments in the U.K. Government representatives defended the training as a form of "constructive engagement," one that ensures "professionalism" and "encourages higher standards, good governance, and greater respect for human rights."¹⁹

16. J. R. Walsh and George Munster, *Documents on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1968–1975* (Hong Kong: J. R. Walsh and G. J. Munster, 1980), pp. 192–93.

17. Mark Curtis, *The Ambiguities of Power: British Foreign Policy Since 1945* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1995), p. 221.

18. TAPOL (Indonesian Human Rights Campaign), *Ethics, Investments and Repression—Britain and Indonesia: The Test for Government and Business* (London: TAPOL, March 31, 1998). The group takes its name from the word *tapol*, "political prisoner" in Indonesian. Also see Curtis, *The Ambiguities of Power*, pp. 217–28.

19. Ed Vulliamy and Antony Barnett, "U.S. Aided Butchers of Timor," *Observer* (London), September 19, 1999.

While London abstained on all eight General Assembly votes, Tokyo cast negative ballots on all of the Assembly resolutions concerning East Timor. The high level of economic interdependence between Indonesia and Japan is probably the most important factor in explaining Tokyo's support. As the Japanese government's 1992 Diplomatic White Paper explained,

Indonesia has a strong, mutually dependent relation with Japan through provision of oil and natural gas and acceptance of direct investment. And Indonesia is a very important country for Japan because it is located in an area with important international sea routes and because it has a large political influence in Southeast Asia.²⁰

Whereas in 1975, Japan was the second largest foreign investor in Indonesia, it occupied the first position in the late 1990s. According to a 1992 International Monetary Fund report, Japan received 37% of Indonesia's exports in 1991 and provided Indonesia with 25% of its imports. By the 1990s, Japan was providing the bulk of Indonesia's bilateral assistance and was Tokyo's largest recipient of such aid. In 1996, Tokyo's aid package to Jakarta was worth \$965 million.²¹

As international scrutiny and criticism of Jakarta's occupation mounted beginning in the 1990s, Japan remained arguably Indonesia's most unwavering supporter among the wealthy capitalist countries. At the time of the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre, for example, Japan's Defence Agency had accepted a number of Indonesian officers to its Defence College. While the U.S. and some European countries reviewed aspects of their military relationships with Indonesia following the videotaped killings, Japan's Defence Agency refused to review even this minor program, stating that it "did not consider that there were any particular problems in Indonesia."²² And following the 1996 awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to East Timorese Catholic bishop Carlos Belo and diplomat-in-exile José Ramos Horta, the Japanese government refused to meet with Ramos Horta when he visited Tokyo so as not to upset Jakarta.²³

None of these individual actions taken by Japan proved decisive in allowing Indonesia's invasion to take place in 1975, nor in facilitating the continuation of its military occupation through most of 1999. Rather, it was the *cumulative* effect of Tokyo's policies and practices along with those of the other countries discussed above that *was* decisive. Taken together, those pol-

20. Quoted in Akihisa Matsuno, "Japan and the East Timor Issue: The Government, Citizens' Movement and Public Opinion" (paper prepared for the 5th Symposium of Oporto University on East Timor, Portugal, July 1993).

21. Jardine, *East Timor*, pp. 49–50.

22. Quoted in a letter sent to the Japanese Defence Agency from Free Japan East Timor Coalition, dated July 16, 2001, on file with author.

23. *Ibid.*

icies and practices created the space needed for Jakarta to feel sufficiently confident to launch its war of aggression in 1975 while providing the resources needed to conquer and occupy East Timor and also lend the Indonesian annexation of the former Portuguese colony a veneer of legitimacy. Because none of the aforementioned countries called Indonesia's presence what it was—illegal and thus illegitimate—it was politically and diplomatically difficult for those same countries to make demands of Jakarta that would have resulted in sufficient pressure to ensure a radically different security arrangement for the August 30, 1999, ballot, one that would have ensured the safety of the East Timorese population. But more important than any political and diplomatic difficulties such interventions might have entailed was the lack of sufficient collective will within the Core Group in the several-month period preceding September 1999. It is to this time period that I now turn.

Claims of Impotence and Ignorance

As stated earlier, it is now clear that some sort of armed international presence responsible for providing security was needed in East Timor for the consultation process to proceed peacefully. And members of the Core Group were aware of this necessity months before the August 30, 1999, ballot, according to U.S. and U.K. officials based at the U.N. that I interviewed. But to paraphrase one of them, “There was no way we could have got the Indonesians to agree to it. We couldn't get it through the Council otherwise. Our question was would we proceed with the consultation or not.”²⁴ Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer has put forth a similar opinion:

[I]t was clear that Indonesia . . . would not agree to the establishment of an international security/peacekeeping presence in East Timor before the ballot. President Habibie categorically rejected Australian calls for him to invite a peacekeeping force into East Timor in the lead-up to the vote. In these circumstances, there was no prospect of persuading Indonesia under Habibie to agree to accept a UN-run election in East Timor along with an international force. . . . [T]o have pushed the idea with Jakarta would have resulted in the cancellation of the 30 August vote. . . . Jakarta's political sensitivities to this proposition meant this was always a non-starter.²⁵

Despite such positions, U.N. officials—presumably with the support of Core Group members—did try to get Jakarta to accept stronger security measures. The original U.N. draft of what became the May 5 accord, for exam-

24. Official at the U.S. Mission to the U.N., author interview, New York, February 26 and 27, 2001.

25. Alexander Downer, “East Timor—Looking Back on 1999,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 54:1 (April 1, 2000), pp. 6–7.

ple, required the Indonesian government to disarm all militia groups and confine its soldiers to barracks. Jakarta, however, deleted these sections, while the Indonesian military leadership refused to meet with a U.N. negotiating team sent to Jakarta in April by Secretary-General Kofi Annan.²⁶ At the end of April, Annan wrote a letter to President Habibie, laying out seven “indispensable” security conditions for the U.N. to be able to organize a free and fair vote. Jakarta rejected the letter.²⁷ Nevertheless, the U.N.—with the apprehensive support of the East Timorese resistance—proceeded with the negotiations that culminated in the signing of the agreement.

Given Jakarta’s refusal to allow an international armed presence in East Timor, the only other option would have been to invoke Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter, by which the Security Council is allowed to employ force to maintain international peace and security. But the prevailing thinking within the U.N. was that such an option was also a non-starter. It was thus deemed more practical and cost-effective to pressure Jakarta to live up to its security obligations. Within the U.N., the Department of Peacekeeping Operations put forth this line of argument most strongly, seemingly with the strong support of the U.S. and the U.K.²⁸ Nevertheless, Kofi Annan began secret negotiations in May 1999 with countries willing to deploy troops in East Timor, if necessary. According to Annan, Australia accepted the principle of such a force and even agreed to consider leading it. That said, “[N]o country, I mean no country, would accept to deploy its forces without Indonesia’s agreement,” explained Annan.²⁹

Such a point begs the question of what various countries—specifically the members of the Core Group, all of whom (with the exception of New Zealand) provided significant amounts of material assistance to Jakarta—did to try to secure Indonesia’s “agreement.” The answer, it appears, is little to nothing—at least not until *after* the results of the ballot were known and the scorched-earth campaign of the Indonesian military and its militia was already well underway. The British, for example, never threatened to cut off

26. Steven Mufson and Colum Lynch, “East Timor Failure Puts U.N. in Dock,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, September 30–October 6, 1999, p. 31.

27. Asfané Bassir Pour, “Le Combat Solitaire de Kofi Annan” (The lonely battle of Kofi Annan), *Le Monde*, October 31/November 1, 1999. Annan did attach a private memorandum to the Indonesian and Portuguese governments outlining the main necessary elements relating to security for the ballot to take place. These included the redeployment of Indonesian troops in East Timor and the laying down of arms by all armed groups, a process that was to be completed well before the vote.

28. Geoffrey Robinson, “With UNAMET in East Timor: An Historian’s Personal View” in *Bitter Flowers, Sweet Flowers: East Timor, Indonesia, and the World Community*, eds. Richard Tanter, Mark Selden, and Stephen R. Shalom (Lanham, Colo.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), p. 62.

29. Bassir Pour, “Le Combat Solitaire.”

military aid and sales to Jakarta until after September 4.³⁰ Similarly, the Americans did not threaten to break military ties or cut economic assistance prior to the explosion of violence. Nor did President Clinton even make any sort of presidential statement warning Jakarta of the dangers of not complying with its obligations under the May 5 accord.³¹

Core Group members were aware in the months preceding the vote that they had to do something to increase the security mechanisms available to the East Timorese while lessening the possibility of Indonesian attempts to derail the consultation process through violence. The thinking seems to have been that, by getting Indonesia to agree to allow the presence of a U.N. mission in East Timor, it would give the Security Council a foothold that Jakarta would have to respect. The agreement, according to U.N.-based U.S. and U.K. diplomats, allowed their respective national governments to pressure Jakarta to abide by the May 5 accord—specifically the provisions relating to security. Moreover, there was an assumption that the Indonesian authorities understood the costs (internationally) that a spree of killing and destruction would entail and would thus restrain themselves.

Nevertheless, there were certainly ample reasons—not least Jakarta's conduct the previous 23 years and more—to assume that Indonesia would not abide by its obligations under the May 5 agreement. Numerous incidents of gross violence in the weeks and months preceding the ballot along with the flagrant impunity enjoyed by the pro-Indonesia militias made it clear that, at best, the Indonesian security forces had no intention of living up to the spirit, if not the letter, of their international obligations.³² There were, however, as Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer contends, “developments [that] provided real cause for optimism that the ballot would take peacefully”—such as a generally successful voter registration process and, then, the actual vote, which took place largely violence-free.³³ These contradictory developments led many East Timorese and international observers in the territory (including this writer) to think that there was good chance that the TNI might actually respect the outcome of the ballot while probably engaging in relatively isolated acts of terror on the margins in its aftermath. Yet, there was also a consensus within the East Timorese resistance and among most observers that one could not afford to assume such an outcome but should instead assume a worst-case scenario, a presumption that would have re-

30. Official at the U.K. Mission to the U.N., author interview, New York, March 1, 2001.

31. Official at the U.S. Mission to the U.N., author interview, New York, February 26 and 27, 2001. José Ramos Horta met with Stanley Roth, the U.S. under-secretary of state for Asia and the Pacific, in July 1999 and asked him to urge President Clinton to make such a statement. José Ramos Horta, author interview, San Francisco, May 15, 2001.

32. For an excellent overview of this period, see Martinkus, *A Dirty Little War*.

33. Downer, “East Timor,” p. 7.

quired that the international community ensure a different security arrangement for the East Timorese population than the one that ultimately prevailed.

At the very least, high-level Australian and American authorities were well aware that there was a strong likelihood that the Indonesian military would engage in a campaign of terror and destruction around the time of the ballot. Indeed, Alexander Downer, along with other principals of the Australian government, was fully apprised (and was aware in early 1999) that the Indonesian military—including the senior command structure—was responsible for organizing, arming, and directing the militia violence. They also had gathered intelligence that showed the TNI had the intention of launching a widespread campaign of terror and destruction around the time of the vote. It was for this reason that Canberra tried to get Jakarta to accept some sort of international peacekeeping force under Australian leadership in the May–June period. It appears, however, that Prime Minister John Howard and officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade did not take the warnings from Canberra’s intelligence apparatus sufficiently seriously and were under strong delusions about their ability to influence the Indonesian military through conventional and relatively polite diplomatic and military channels. Publicly, the Howard government—despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary—continued to pretend that the violence perpetrated by pro-Indonesia forces was not the result of any sort of official policy in Jakarta but instead the work of “rogue elements.” Such divisions within the Australian state undoubtedly undermined any attempt by various elements of the government to gain Jakarta’s acceptance of an international peacekeeping force.³⁴

The U.S. government was also aware of what its counterparts in Australia knew given the intense levels of intelligence cooperation between the two countries—in addition to Washington’s own highly advanced intelligence-gathering capabilities. Indeed, a U.S. National Security Agency liaison officer is always present in the headquarters of Australia’s Defence Signals Directorate (DSD), the agency that intercepted most of the communications referred to earlier.³⁵

While Washington, as represented by Stanley Roth, the assistant secretary of state for East Asian Affairs, did suggest at least once (in February) to Canberra that an international peacekeeping force might potentially be neces-

34. See Desmond Ball, “Silent Witness: Australian Intelligence and East Timor,” *Pacific Review* 14:1 (March 1, 2001), pp. 35–62; and John Birmingham, “Appeasing Jakarta: Australia’s Complicity in the East Timor Tragedy,” *Quarterly Essay* (Melbourne), no. 2 (2001), pp. 1–87.

35. Desmond Ball, Australia National University, telephone interview, February 20, 2002. According to Ball, the British also have a liaison officer present at DSD headquarters and thus also would have been well informed. It is also likely that the New Zealand government was apprised given its intense cooperation with Canberra on intelligence matters.

sary—a position with which Canberra disagreed—it appears that, at best, the U.S. provided mixed messages to Jakarta and never seriously pursued the option. Thus, while elements of the State Department were pressuring Indonesia to put an end to the TNI/militia terror, the Pentagon—as represented by Admiral Dennis Blair, leader of all U.S. military forces in the Pacific—did nothing to challenge the TNI. In fact, Blair’s words to his TNI counterparts seemed to endorse their militia campaign of terror.³⁶ Even within the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, the message was ambiguous. The embassy’s political section was strongly advocating the pressuring of Jakarta not simply to “control” the militia forces, but to disband them. Ambassador Stapleton Roy and others in the embassy, however, were arguing for the need to “stay the course” and avoid pushing the Indonesians too hard lest a nationalist backlash occur, one that would hurt U.S. economic and military interests. Given such mixed messages and the lack of any significant pressure from top-level Clinton administration officials, it was easy for Jakarta to ignore the efforts of State Department officials in Washington and New York and Jakarta-based U.S. diplomats working to ensure that it fulfill its obligations under the May 5 accord.³⁷

As for Tokyo, the Japanese government pretended through the entire process that the violence occurring in East Timor was the result of a conflict between pro-independence groups (the East Timorese resistance) and anti-independence ones in the form of the militia. Implicitly, the TNI was not a party to the conflict, but a neutral body mediating between the two warring factions.³⁸ Needless to say, any sort of serious pressure from Tokyo was not forthcoming.

As the violence grew in the immediate aftermath of the vote and in anticipation of the announcement of the results, Core Group members did not even make strong statements that might have pressured the TNI to abide by its

36. Allan Nairn, “U.S. Complicity in Timor,” *The Nation*, September 27, 1999. Blair was supposed to tell his TNI counterpart to shut down the militia terror campaign, but instead, according to a classified cable on the April 8, 1999, meeting obtained by Nairn, Admiral Blair “told the armed forces chief that he looks forward to the time when [the army will] resume its proper role as a leader in the region. He invited General Wiranto to come to Hawaii as his guest in conjunction with the next round of bilateral defense discussions in the July-August ’99 time frame. He said Pacific command is prepared to support a subject matter expert exchange for doctrinal development. He expects that approval will be granted to send a small team to provide technical assistance to police and . . . selected TNI personnel on crowd control measures.”

37. Edmund McWilliams, head of the Political Section, U.S. Embassy in Jakarta (June 1996–July 1999), author interview, Washington, D.C., June 10, 2001.

38. Free East Timor Japan Coalition letter. Also see Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *2000 Diplomatic Bluebook*, to see its characterization of events in East Timor in September 1999 in Chapter 3, “Regional Developments,” available at <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2000/III-a.html>>.

obligations. On September 3, for example, Deputy U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Peter Burleigh ruled out the possibility of some sort of international security force entering East Timor in the short term, calling it “not a practical suggestion.” Instead, he explained, the U.S. was “counting on the Indonesian authorities . . . to create a situation of peace and security throughout East Timor.” Between the date of the statement and the ballot (a five-day period), pro-Indonesia forces had killed at least four local U.N. staff members and three civilians,³⁹ in addition to burning houses throughout the territory, attacking the UNAMET compound, driving most journalists out of the country, and forcing international observers to evacuate from most of the areas outside of Dili.

In the days immediately following the announcement, when the TNI-militia campaign of terror, destruction, and forced evacuation was well underway, assuring words continued to flow from Washington spokespeople. Paraphrasing administration sources, the *New York Times*, for example, wrote that the Clinton administration had “made the calculation that the U.S. must put its relationship with Indonesia, a mineral-rich nation of more than 200 million people, ahead of its concern over the political fate of East Timor, a tiny, impoverished territory of 800,000 people that is seeking independence.” It also quoted a senior administration official saying that General Wiranto, head of the TNI, needed more time to replace the bad Indonesian troops with ones loyal to the government in Jakarta. “[Y]ou’ve got to give him a little time to bring them under control,” the official said.⁴⁰ And when a reporter asked National Security Advisor Sandy Berger why Washington was not considering intervening in East Timor given its intervention in Kosovo, Berger flipantly replied, “My daughter has a very messy apartment up in college, maybe I shouldn’t intervene to have that cleaned up.”⁴¹ Taken together, such words undoubtedly had the effect of letting the TNI know that its actions would exact little international cost.

U.S. President Bill Clinton called for an international peacekeeping force on September 9 in the face of growing domestic and international pressure. But he added that he was calling for such a force *only* (implicitly) “[i]f Indonesia does not end the violence”⁴²—a condition that allowed even more time

39. “U.S. Rejects Call for U.N. to Send Peacekeepers to East Timor,” CNN, September 3, 1999, <<http://www.cnn.com/ASIANOW/southeast/9909/02/e.timor.05/index.html>>.

40. Elizabeth Becker and Philip Shenon, “With Other Goals in Indonesia, U.S. Moves Gently on East Timor,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1999.

41. National Security Advisor Sandy Berger and National Economic Advisor Gene Sperling, Press Briefing, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, September 8, 1999, available online at <<http://clinton4.nara.gov/WH/New/APEC1999/brief6.html>>.

42. “Clinton Demands Indonesia Accept International Force,” Agence France Presse, September 9, 1999. Lisbon’s threat one or two days prior to pull out of Kosovo and withdraw from NATO unless Washington supported international intervention might have also significantly in-

for the TNI to continue its scorched-earth campaign. As pressure mounted even more, Clinton announced a suspension of U.S. military sales two days later. The next day, London followed suit and announced a suspension of the delivery of Hawk aircraft. Not surprisingly, Jakarta announced its willingness to allow an international force into East Timor soon thereafter.

In trying to explain the reluctance of powerful countries to support an international intervention in East Timor until that point, the *Financial Times* reported the September 8, 1999, words of one Jakarta-based diplomat: “The dilemma is that Indonesia matters and East Timor doesn’t.”⁴³ It turns out that the diplomat was U.S. Ambassador Stapleton Roy.⁴⁴

Conclusion

According to James Rubin, the U.S. State Department’s spokesperson during the Clinton administration, “[W]e did the best that could be done under extremely difficult circumstances” regarding East Timor in 1999.⁴⁵ Even if Rubin’s contention is accepted, what is striking (but not surprising) about his statement and those of other spokespeople for powerful national governments allied with Indonesia is the lack of any sort of indication of what “we” might have done to have contributed to the making of those “extremely difficult circumstances” in the first place. As this article demonstrates, the history of military, economic, and diplomatic assistance rendered to Jakarta by various national governments effectively made them partners in Jakarta’s crimes against humanity in East Timor.

Support for Indonesia from the countries discussed herein makes perfect sense from a realpolitik perspective. From a normative perspective, however, the history of complicity heightened the moral obligation of Australia, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S.—among others—to challenge Jakarta so as to ensure adequate security for the East Timorese population during the U.N.-run consultation process. Furthermore, as the above account illustrates, there were actions that these countries could have taken to avoid (or, at the very least, to reduce the likelihood of) the horrific aftermath of the August 30, 1999, ballot in East Timor. If Core Group countries did, indeed, not have the power to compel Indonesia to accept an agreement that would have allowed for a se-

formed Clinton’s change of position. To show its seriousness, Lisbon denied permission for 16 U.S. military flights over the Azores. The next day, Clinton made a relatively good statement on the White House lawn before leaving for New Zealand for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. José Ramos Horta interview.

43. Sander Thoenes, “East Timor: Martial Law—Habibie’s Last Card,” *Financial Times*, September 8, 1999.

44. Historian John Roosa learned this from one of the journalists present at the interview. E-mail communication with author, July 1, 2000.

45. King and Solomon, “Diplomatic Gambles.”

curity arrangement more sensitive to the needs of the East Timorese (an unlikely scenario in my estimation), they could have at the very least put far greater levels of pressure on Indonesia than they did in the weeks preceding the ballot and ensured that there was a security force able to enter East Timor *immediately* once the mass violence began in the ballot's aftermath. The relative ease with which the Australian-led InterFET force finally entered East Timor on September 20, 1999, the lack of Indonesian military resistance, as well as—most importantly—the nature of the TNI-militia scorched-earth campaign together made it clear that Indonesia had no intention of staying in East Timor. It is thus likely that any sort of international military intervention without Jakarta's permission would not have resulted in significant TNI resistance. Many of the world's most powerful countries were undoubtedly aware of this well before InterFET entered given their access to intelligence on the TNI's machinations in East Timor. But instead of acting on this intelligence in a manner consistent with their political and moral obligations to the human rights of the East Timorese people, they simply provided the TNI with the space and time to carry out and finish its final campaign of terror and destruction and to depart unscathed. In this regard, the behavior of Jakarta's partners in crimes toward East Timor in 1999 differed little from that begun in 1975.