

10<sup>th</sup>

# News in Review

November 1999

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### East Timor: Free At Last?

CBC foreign correspondent Patrick Brown takes us to this former part of Indonesia where highly coveted oil and gas reserves have consistently heightened tensions in the area and exacerbated violent repression, lootings, and killings, in particular by the Indonesian army and army-backed militia groups. Despite an overwhelming vote for independence by the East Timorese, Indonesian attempts to retain control have led to another peacekeeping mission on the part of the world community although in many people's view it is a belated response. The international force led by Australia and in which Canada once again has a direct role struggles to restore and maintain order and repair the shattered lives of civilians.

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Bosnia: A Peacekeeper s Nightmare, September 1992

Asian Economies: Toothless Tigers? February 1998

Indonesia: Falling to Pieces? September 1998



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## Introduction

### East Timor: Free At Last?

Our homeland is ours. We will develop our new country. We know what we want and we will recover from the damage. We meet again in very sorrowful circumstances, but from today nothing can stop us. We East Timorese people have fought for 25 years. Today, we finally find our liberation.

With these words, José (Xanana) Gusmao, greeted the people of Dili, East Timor, at an emotional rally in front of the white-washed governor's residence on October 22, 1999. Gusmao is the leader of Falintil, the pro-independence Timorese group that stubbornly resisted the Indonesian occupation of their homeland since 1975. He was making his first appearance in the devastated capital city since being freed from imprisonment in Indonesia.

For him and the people he addressed it was a moment for both triumph and sorrow. After a quarter-century of suffering and oppression, East Timor now found itself on the verge of independence. But Gusmao and the other independence fighters who were preparing to assume leadership positions recognized that they faced a daunting task. This was because after years of a brutal occupation that had left an estimated 200 000 dead, the Indonesian forces and their local militia allies had used their final months in control of East Timor to wreak havoc on the entire island.

For years, Indonesia's dictator Suharto had flouted world opinion

by maintaining an iron grip on East Timor after his forces invaded it in 1975. Moreover, for their part, many Western countries, including Canada, were willing to turn a blind eye to Suharto's illegal occupation of a small, insignificant southern Pacific territory for fear of threatening lucrative trade and investment links with Indonesia. But after José Ramos Horta and Bishop Carlos Belo won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 in recognition of their struggle for East Timor's freedom, it became increasingly difficult for other countries to remain silent. In 1998, as a result of the Asian financial crisis, Suharto had fallen from power in Indonesia. The new government of President B.J. Habibie was anxious to improve its international image so as to attract new foreign investment into the country. For this to happen, Indonesia had to change its hard-line policy on East Timor.

In April 1999, Portugal, East Timor's former colonial ruler, brokered a deal with the United Nations and Indonesia that would permit the East Timorese people to vote on their future. They would choose between continuing their link with Indonesia with a grant of local autonomy, or outright independence. Indonesia promised to respect the results. On August 30, 1999, under the watchful eyes of United Nations election observers, over 99 per cent of the people of East Timor turned out to vote. Many had emerged from hiding to do so. When the result of the referendum was announced a week later the verdict was clear. The East Timorese had overwhelmingly endorsed independence by a margin of almost 80 per cent. Tragically, things had to get worse before they got better; and it required again the intervention of the world community.

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## Too Little, Too Late?

### East Timor: Free At Last?

In the aftermath of the voting, a reign of terror descended on East Timor. Gangs of well-armed paramilitary militiamen, recruited, equipped, and directed by the Indonesian troops occupying the territory, began attacking civilians at random, and burning and destroying houses, businesses, and property. As foreign observers withdrew to safety in neighbouring Australia, the militias ran amok, conducting an orgy of massacre and mayhem that lasted for almost a month. In Dili and all over the island, people fled into the remote jungles and mountains for safety, or were forcibly deported to Indonesia-controlled West Timor, as their homes were ravaged and burned to the ground.

Stunned by its abject failure to guarantee the East Timorese a peaceful outcome to their referendum, the United Nations met in emergency session and demanded that Indonesia put a halt to the violence immediately. When it became clear that Habibie and the military leaders behind the scenes were either unable or unwilling to do so, the UN authorized the urgent dispatch of a 16-nation peacekeeping mission under Australian direction to East Timor. Its goals were to put an end to the bloodshed, oversee the disarming of the militias, supervise the orderly withdrawal of Indonesian forces, and assist the East Timorese in reconstruction efforts. On September 20, to the joy and relief of the East Timorese, the first troops of INTERFET (International Force for East Timor) landed in Dili harbour.

Despite their threats to meet the peacekeepers with force, the

militias put up only sporadic resistance, and were quickly subdued. On October 21, the Indonesian National Assembly officially ratified the results of the referendum, and recognized the fact that East Timor had chosen independence. By the end of the month, as the first Canadian units were arriving, the last Indonesian occupying forces began their final pullout. After 25 years, the people of East Timor could finally look forward to the dawn of a new era of freedom and peace. But their new country would enter the world community with serious problems and disadvantages.

The population had been decimated during the occupation, and the final months had seen untold destruction and great human and financial loss. The entire infrastructure of schools, hospitals, roads, water, electricity, and other essential facilities lay in ruins. The East Timorese would have to rebuild their new land from the ground up, and would need significant international assistance to do so. But the newly arrived INTERFET troops were struck by both the warmth of the greeting extended to them and by the quiet determination and resilience of a people who had withstood decades of brutal oppression, and were convinced that their time of liberation had come at last.

#### International Intervention

As you watch this News in Review report, pay close attention to the involvement since the 16th century of the international community in this tiny area. Then, focusing on the present, summarize the chain of events, reasons, and motives for the international community finally coming to the aid of East Timor in 1999. Was it too little, too late?

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## The Unending Struggle?

### East Timor: Free At Last?

#### The Colonial Factor

**FOCUS FOR READING:** Suggest how colonial ambitions and rivalries and cultural domination have shaped the history of the people of East Timor.

East Timor is a territory occupying the eastern half of the island of Timor, located 500 kilometres north of Darwin, Australia, in the southern Pacific. Most of its terrain is rugged and mountainous. Its population of approximately 850 000 comprises a mixture of cultures and languages, of which Tetum is most widely spoken. Because of their long history of colonization by Portugal, the vast majority of East Timor's people are Roman Catholic. In terms of both their ethnicity and religious affiliation, the East Timorese are quite different from the major population groups living in Indonesia.

East Timor was first colonized by the Portuguese in 1642 as a trading post for their operations in the East Indies. The island itself offered them sandalwood, highly valued for its fragrant aroma and medicinal oil. In 1749, the Portuguese fought their colonial rivals, the Dutch, at the Battle of Penfui. This conflict resulted in the division of the island, with the Dutch occupying the western half while the Portuguese claimed the east. Under Portuguese rule, most East Timorese were converted to Catholicism, and many also learned how to speak the language of their colonial masters.

During the Second World War Japan seized East Timor, and held it despite fierce battles with Australian troops and local guerrilla forces. Over 60 000 East Timorese were killed during the fighting, which lasted until the war ended in 1945. Two years later, the former Dutch colonies of the East Indies, including West Timor, united into the new republic of Indonesia. However, even though its fascist government had been supportive of the Axis powers (Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan), during the war, Portugal was allowed by the victorious Allies to reclaim East Timor once the war was over.

On April 25, 1974, a coup led by a group of progressive young officers brought down the dictatorship in Portugal. These military leaders had become increasingly frustrated at the government's insistence on continuing to wage hopeless and unwinnable colonial wars in the African colonies. The new government of the MFA (Armed Forces Movement) pledged to free all of Portugal's colonial possessions, including East Timor. On August 27, 1975, the Portuguese governor and the entire colonial administration withdrew from Dili, the East Timorese capital, to an offshore island. After a brief conflict involving rival pro-independence factions, the leftist FRETILIN (Front for the Liberation of East Timor) movement emerged victorious. On November 29, FRETILIN's leaders proclaimed East Timor's independence from Portugal to an enthusiastic crowd in Dili.

#### The Occupation Syndrome

FOCUS FOR READING: Suggest why if the world had paid attention to the lessons of history there should have been no doubt that Indonesia's expansionist aims were not legitimate.

Ever since independence, Indonesia's rulers had hoped that one day they would be able to incorporate East Timor into their national territory. Portugal's withdrawal in late 1975 gave them their chance. Just two days after FRETILIN's assumption of power in Dili, Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, signed a decree authorizing the takeover. After months of preparation, the Indonesian armed forces launched a full-scale invasion on December 7. Dili and other major centres were bombed, and waves of Indonesian troops landed all over the island. Despite the stiff resistance of FRETILIN units, Indonesia's overwhelming military superiority made the invasion's success a foregone conclusion. Within weeks, Dili was occupied and Indonesia had asserted its control over East Timor. The surviving FRETILIN guerrillas fled to the mountains, where they were to begin their long campaign of resistance.

Indonesia's fight was not just with FRETILIN. It was a war against the entire population of East Timor, and it resulted in the deaths of an estimated 200,000 people or more. Villages were bombed mercilessly, and massacres of civilians were widespread. The Indonesian military launched its notorious "scorched earth" operation in 1978, which involved long columns of soldiers combing remote jungle areas in order to flush out and eliminate guerrilla fighters. Torture and rape were common, and the population's food supply was destroyed in order to produce artificial famines. East Timorese women were forcibly sterilized by Indonesian doctors to lower their birth rate. Communities were uprooted from their homes and forced into "model villages," in effect concentration camps sealed off by armed guards and barbed wire.

On July 17, 1976, less than a year after the invasion, Indonesian President Suharto signed a bill formally declaring East Timor as the country's 27th province. But the United Nations refused to recognize Indonesia's claim to East Timor, and insisted that Portugal remained the administering power. A resolution was passed condemning the Indonesian invasion and calling for self-determination for East Timor's people. However, unlike other UN resolutions, this one remained a dead letter, with none of the major powers choosing to act on it.

#### The Moral Liability

**FOCUS FOR READING:** Suggest what the moral question or responsibility was on the part of the world community in terms of the fate of the East Timorese people. How would you characterize the moral choices that were made? To what extent do you think there was a moral complicity on the part of the world's media and perhaps even media consumers?

In the years following the invasion, East Timor practically disappeared from the radar screen of international attention. Very little media coverage was given to the situation there for a long time. Despite the efforts of humanitarian and religious groups aware of the sufferings of the East Timorese people to present their case before the court of world opinion, most people in Canada and other Western countries remained ignorant of what was happening in a far-away and little-known part of the world. Small lobby groups like Canada's East Timor Alert Network attempted to pressure the federal government to protest Indonesia's illegal occupation of East Timor and the brutal mistreatment of its people. But as trade, mining, and investment opportunities began to attract Canadian businesses, Ottawa was reluctant to take any steps that might harm the increasingly close economic ties between this country and Indonesia.

For the United States, Suharto's Indonesia was a Cold War ally in the struggle against Soviet and Chinese influence in Asia. Suharto had himself led a violent military coup in 1965, which had resulted in the killing of an estimated half-a-million Indonesians who were allegedly linked to that country's once-mighty communist party. Washington was anxious to retain Suharto's favour, and continued to supply Indonesia with the arms it required to conduct its continuing offensive against the people of East Timor. In 1978 Australia went so far as to recognize Indonesia's claim to the territory. Even the Soviet Union and China remained silent, as they too were aware of Indonesia's growing influence as a regional superpower in the Pacific, and its important position among the nations of the Third World.

To the U.S. foreign-policy critic Noam Chomsky, the near silence of the Western mass media over East Timor during this period is a classic example of what he calls the "manufacturing of consent." By this he refers to the tendency of the largely corporate-owned and controlled American media in particular to ignore or downplay massive human-rights violations when they are being perpetrated by nations that are friendly to American interests. At the same time, atrocities committed by countries considered to be enemies of the United States receive a great deal of media attention. To prove his thesis, Chomsky and his associate Edward Herman conducted a thorough study of the amount of coverage given to the situation in East Timor during the late 70s and early 80s in such influential newspapers as *The New York Times*. They then compared it with similar cases of massive human-rights abuses such as the expulsion of the boat people from communist Vietnam or the widespread massacres of the Cambodian "killing fields" conducted during the murderous regime of the Khmer Rouge.

Chomsky and Herman found that while the U.S. media gave extensive coverage to the brutalities committed by communist states, they were practically silent when similar or even more horrendous evils were being carried out by friendly nations like Indonesia. It is estimated that between one-eighth and one-quarter of East Timor's population was wiped out during the years following the Indonesian invasion. This would constitute one of the worst examples of genocide the world has witnessed since the end of the Second World War. But while the mass media provided ongoing and detailed accounts of the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979, it gave scant attention to Indonesia's much longer-lasting campaign of repression against East Timor. To Chomsky and Herman, this was clear proof of what they called the "propaganda model" of the

American mass media's one-sided and ideologically biased reporting of world events.

### The Tipping Point

**FOCUS FOR READING:** Just as we sometimes refer to a dangerous or volatile but predictable situation as an accident waiting to happen, in what ways was the situation in East Timor an evil waiting to be revealed? How would you characterize the revelation that was eventually visited upon the world community? As was the case with the photographs of Nazi concentration camps that emerged toward the end of the Second World War, what is sadly ironic about the aphorism "Seeing is believing"?

For the people of East Timor, the years of occupation were a time of great suffering. On the last day of 1978, FRETILIN leader Nicolau Lobato was killed in a clash with Indonesian forces in the mountains. He was succeeded by José (Xanana) Gusmao. During the 1980s, prominent East Timorese figures who had fled the island sought to promote their people's cause to anyone who would listen in the world outside. In 1982, Pope John Paul II denounced Indonesia's occupation, and expressed the Catholic Church's support for its East Timorese co-religionists. But during the years of the second Cold War when Ronald Reagan, who had strong anti-communist policies, occupied the White House, there was almost no chance that the plight of East Timor would gain any sympathy from Washington.

Finally, it was one instance of Indonesian repression, captured on November 12, 1991, by an East Timorese protester with a video camera, that broke the media's wall of silence on the territory, and gave the lie to Indonesia's claim that it had normalized the situation there and halted its military campaign. A peaceful pro-democracy rally had been violently suppressed, and as demonstrators fled for their lives into Dili's Santa Cruz cemetery, they were pursued by Indonesian troops who opened fire on them, killing at least 100. The horrifying video coverage of what came to be known as the Dili massacre brought East Timor onto the world stage again, as people in Canada and other Western countries demanded their governments take firm steps to protest Indonesia's bloody actions.

One year after the massacre at the Santa Cruz cemetery, Xanana Gusmao was captured and tried for treason in Jakarta, Indonesia. He received a life sentence, later commuted to 20 years. His guerrilla group, now called Falintil, continued to operate in the remote mountain regions of East Timor, despite years of constant Indonesian search and destroy operations against it. A political movement known as the National Council of

East Timorese Resistance (CNRT) was established with its headquarters in Lisbon, Portugal. From there it promoted the cause of self-determination for the island and an end to Indonesia's illegal occupation.

In late 1996, East Timor made the news again, when two prominent members of CRNT, Bishop Carlos Belo and José Ramos Horta, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Belo and Horta had presented a three-phase peace plan for East Timor that would permit an orderly withdrawal of Indonesian forces from the island and an internationally supervised referendum on the issue of independence for its people. This plan began to receive support from countries in the European Union, and later from Japan, Canada, and even the United States. At last, influential world figures such as South African President Nelson Mandela and United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for greater international action to resolve the East Timor situation.

#### The Mixed Blessing of Survival

**FOCUS FOR READING:** In the aftermath of great suffering there can be a kind of peace that in many ways is like a state of emotional anesthesia: a suspension of sensation. And like the Greek myth of Pandora's Box out of which all the evils of the world flew, hope the last element to emerge in the myth is often the enduring and redeeming balm of suffering. Suggest why the people of East Timor and the world community can still hold on to hope.

On May 1, 1998, Indonesian President Suharto fell from power after massive demonstrations in Jakarta and other parts of the country had demanded his overthrow. Indonesia had been plunged into a serious economic crisis after the collapse of its currency during the Asian economic meltdown of 1997. The country's new president, B.J. Habibie, adopted a more conciliatory position on East Timor's future, and in January 1999, he indicated that his government would no longer seek to keep control of the territory against the will of a majority of its people. By the end of April a deal had been reached that would permit the East Timorese to vote in a referendum in which they would be presented with two choices. One was continuing to remain a part of Indonesia, while being given a substantial degree of local autonomy. The other was total independence.

Throughout the summer of 1999, as United Nations election observers from many countries, including Canada, began to arrive in East Timor, the situation there was becoming tense and threatening. During its occupation, Indonesia had depended not

only on its own military forces to control the population, but had recruited into paramilitary militia gangs some local East Timorese along with ethnically similar West Timorese residents. These armed groups began to intimidate pro-independence activists, and warn of violent retaliation if the referendum did not go the way they wanted.

It should have been obvious to the UN observers that East Timor was a powder-keg waiting to explode in the days leading up to the vote. Although the election itself proceeded relatively calmly on August 30, chaos descended on the island with the announcement of the results on September 4. When it became clear that the pro-independence side had won a massive 78.5 per cent yes with almost 99 per cent of the people voting, the militias sprung into action. With the tacit approval, or even assistance, of occupying Indonesian forces pledged to maintain public order, they killed, looted, burned, raped, and destroyed anyone and anything that got in their way. Even though Indonesia imposed martial law on September 7, the violence continued. Hundreds of people fled to the cathedral, where Bishop Belo tried to protect them, or to the headquarters of the UN mission, as surrounding militia gangs threatened them. An estimated one-quarter of the population was herded at gunpoint on to Indonesian trains and boats and expelled to West Timor.

As conditions in East Timor continued to deteriorate, it was clear that Indonesia's declaration of martial law was having no effect. At the United Nations, demands grew for the sending of an emergency peacekeeping force to restore order and ensure that the East Timorese people were given the right to pursue the independence they had so clearly endorsed. After days of intense pressure, Habibie finally agreed on September 12 to permit the UN force to land. Just over a week later, the first of approximately 8000 troops from 16 countries, under Australian command, left their base at Darwin, northern Australia, bound for East Timor.

The UN force, known as INTERFET (International Force for East Timor) expected to face the armed resistance of the militias, and was also unsure how the occupying Indonesian troops would react to their arrival. But aside from sporadic clashes, there was very little opposition. However, the sheer scope of the destruction that had been unleashed on East Timor stunned the UN units as they first secured Dili and Baucau, the territory's two largest cities, and later fanned out into the countryside. Dili was a charred, devastated ghost town. Most of its inhabitants had either been forcibly relocated or had fled to the mountains. In the town of Suai, near the border with West Timor, hundreds of people had been massacred and burned to death as they sought

sanctuary in the local church. INTERFET investigators feared that they would find many more such cases of atrocities as they consolidated their control over more remote regions of the territory.

On October 21, the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly officially ratified the results of the East Timor referendum and declared an end to their occupation. By the end of the month, the final pullout of Indonesian forces was complete. INTERFET had established its presence throughout East Timor and was beginning to assist local residents and returning refugees to rebuild their lives and their communities. The Canadian contingent to INTERFET was also on the scene, after some delay. Xanana Gusmao, Bishop Belo, José Ramos Horta, and other leading figures in the East Timorese independence movement were back, and the beleaguered but triumphant Falintil fighters emerged from the mountains to a rapturous welcome from the people of Dili.

After enduring almost unimaginable suffering for a quarter-century, culminating in a whirlwind of death and destruction in the final months of occupation, the people of East Timor could now finally look ahead to a future of independence and peace. For years the world had largely ignored their plight, only to act belatedly but decisively on their behalf in the fall of 1999. But it would take more than INTERFET troops to help the East Timorese make their long-cherished dream of freedom a reality. Their country lies in ruins, and they need urgent economic assistance from the international community.

An independent East Timor could develop its coffee and agricultural resources, and could lay claim to the potentially valuable oil and gas fields lying offshore in the Timor Gap, separating it from Australia. But before any of this can occur, the people of East Timor will have to rebuild their new country from the ground up. As a UN official in Dili observed, It's much too early to talk about foreign investment. Where do you set up an office? Where do you communicate? This country has to start from scratch. Despite the heroism and perseverance of its people, East Timor will obviously not be able to do this by itself. But it remains to be seen how much long-term development assistance will be forthcoming from the same countries that were prepared to turn a blind eye to East Timor's tribulations for so long.

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## Unresolved Issues

### East Timor: Free At Last?

Hope is both an expectation and a desire of better things to come. But above all, it is a fragile concept. Hope returned to East Timor, in particular with the arrival of UN forces whose intentions it is to end the campaign of terror that the anti-independence militias and Indonesian occupiers unleashed on the people of this tiny region. But ending the violence is just the first step in what will certainly be a long road toward recovery and reconstruction that lies ahead for an independent East Timor. In addition, this international incident brings into clear focus some significant issues of concern to Canada and the world community that remain unresolved and are likely to determine the shape of future conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere.

**FOCUS FOR ANALYSIS:** For each of the yet-to-be-resolved issues described below, be prepared to suggest how and why they have implications for Canadians and other nations in the world community. Why are great human tragedies like that which occurred in East Timor not isolated events in human history?

#### The Future of Indonesia

The autonomy-or-independence referendum that Indonesia permitted in East Timor may set a potentially dangerous precedent for the future unity of that country. Indonesia is the fourth-largest nation on earth in population and is also one of the most important economies in the Asia-Pacific region. But its newly elected president, the reform-minded Abdurrahman

Wahid, faces some serious problems in the wake of the East Timor conflict. In the oil-rich province of Aceh, a growing Islamic fundamentalist movement is agitating for independence, and is demanding that a referendum be held on the issue. A harsh military crackdown in this area, reminiscent of Indonesia's suppression of East Timor, has aroused considerable international criticism. But if Aceh's people also vote to leave Indonesia, along with East Timor, it could trigger the disintegration of the nation.

According to Dewi Fortuna Anwar, a close advisor to former Indonesian President B.J. Habibie, if the people of Aceh decide today that they don't want to be part of Indonesia, tomorrow it will be the North Sumatrans, the next day it will be the West Sumatrans, and the day after that it will be the Sundanese and the Javanese. Before you know it, there will be 40 different republics in Indonesia. Since achieving its independence from the Netherlands in 1947, Indonesia's fragile national unity has been most strongly upheld by the Javanese, the country's largest single ethnic group. Based on the major island of Java, this people helped the Dutch colonial forces subdue other nationalities, and later came to lead the freedom struggle. The Javanese dominate Indonesia's armed forces and government bureaucracy, and large numbers of them have been sent to East Timor and other parts of the country to act as a loyal counterweight to other restive minority groups.

Indonesia faces another serious separatist movement on the western half of the island of New Guinea, in a province known as Irian Jaya. Forcibly annexed in 1960, this region's Melanesian people, like the East Timorese, are ethnically unrelated to other Indonesians and are eager to be independent. An area rich in mineral and forest resources, Irian Jaya is of great economic importance to Indonesia, and its leaders are reluctant to let it go. In addition, Indonesia also has to deal with existing or potential unrest in the provinces of West Kalimantan (Borneo), infamous to many Canadians as the location of the ill-fated Bre-X gold mine, Sulawesi, and Ambon in the South Moluccas. In all of these territories, the local population strongly resents the policy of previous Indonesian governments of settling large numbers of ethnic Javanese among them.

If Indonesia were to break up into a number of smaller units, this could have a serious effect on the economic and political stability of the Asia-Pacific region. From 1997 to 1999, Indonesia has experienced a major financial crisis, serious political upheaval resulting in two changes of leadership, considerable damage to its international image over East Timor, and now the very real

threat of territorial fragmentation. It is quite likely that Indonesia's future will be a matter of great regional and international concern for some time to come.

#### The Future of the Canadian Peacekeeping

Canada's legendary Royal 22nd Regiment, nicknamed the Van Doos, formed the vanguard of our country's contingent as part of INTERFET, the Australian-led UN peacekeeping mission to East Timor. Taking up their positions in the sensitive region along the border with Indonesian-controlled West Timor, these Canadian peacekeepers faced the very real possibility of armed clashes with unsubdued militia units. In addition to the 250 soldiers of the Van Doos, Canada has deployed 280 naval personnel aboard the supply ship HMCS Protecteur, and 110 air crew delivering much-needed supplies on two Hercules planes out of their base in Darwin, northern Australia.

These 640 Canadians are part of the 10,000-strong INTERFET presence on East Timor, comprising troops from 16 countries. In addition to this military presence, there are also many Canadian civilians working there for humanitarian organizations such as CARE International. The Canadian mission, code-named Operation Toucan, has highlighted the strengths and the weaknesses of this country's ability to participate in UN-mandated peacekeeping missions around the world. Canada has always been a strong supporter of these actions and currently has troops stationed in conflict-zones scattered around the world. But as the federal government moved to authorize participation in the East Timor mission, there were strong concerns raised about the dangers of overextending this country's military resources.

These concerns were dramatized by the frequent mechanical problems the Hercules supply planes and the aging Sea King helicopters operating from the Protecteur were experiencing. Significant government cuts to the military budget had taken their toll on the forces' ability to deploy and maintain their equipment effectively in the theatre of operations. Many Canadians serving in the military have expressed their frustrations about underfunding in the past, and believe the problems encountered in the East Timor mission only serve to underscore them. In the words of Naval Captain Roger Girouard, the commanding officer of Operation Toucan, "we do good work here, but it is not free. As the dollars have gone down, the missions have gone up. To Girouard and others in Canada's forces, it is clear that the federal government must consider increasing the military budget if it is going to continue to authorize their involvement in future UN peacekeeping missions.

## The Future of Humanitarian Intervention

NATO's military involvement in the Kosovo conflict in the spring of 1999 and the UN mission to East Timor in the autumn of the same year are both considered to be examples of humanitarian intervention by outside powers in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation. In Kosovo, NATO claimed that its action was justified as a legitimate armed response to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's persecution of the Kosovar Albanians. As for East Timor, the UN could not maintain its credibility if it remained unresponsive to the campaign of violence pro-Indonesian militias were directing against the local population in the wake of a massive 'yes' vote to independence in an internationally supervised referendum.

These military actions, and others like them, have reshaped the domain of international relations in the post-Cold War era during the past decade. Unlike previous armed interference by outside powers into local conflict zones, these humanitarian interventions have been widely viewed as appropriate responses by the world community to intolerable situations such as those occurring in Kosovo and East Timor. But there remains considerable uncertainty and disagreement about how likely such interventions will be in other global trouble-spots and which countries will be willing to lead or support them.

At their addresses to the fall session of the United Nations General Assembly, U.S. President Bill Clinton and Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, presented two differing views on the responsibility of the international community to involve itself in humanitarian interventions. During the Kosovo conflict, Clinton had made the commitment that if somebody comes after innocent civilians and tries to kill them en masse because of their race, their ethnic background or their religion, and it's within our power to stop it, we will stop it. But a few months later, at the UN, he qualified this sweeping promise. There, he stated that the way the international community responds will depend on the capacity of countries to act on their national interests.

In the case of Kosovo, Clinton claimed, the United States and its NATO allies had important interests at stake and the ability to act effectively against Milosevic. But in cases like East Timor, he suggested, economic and diplomatic pressure against Indonesia was a more appropriate response than outright military action. He also made it clear that the United States would not play a significant role in the Australian-led UN mission there. To many at the UN, Clinton's warning that the U.S. cannot do everything,

everywhere is just another way of saying that his country will only intervene on humanitarian grounds in areas of the world where significant economic or political interests are at stake for it. In East Timor and Sierra Leone, where terrible human rights abuses have occurred, or in Rwanda, where a full-scale genocide took place in 1994, the lack of any U.S. response indicates that, unlike Kosovo, these are places that do not have much importance for the world's only superpower.

Taking a very different position in his UN speech, Axworthy put forward his human security agenda. He argued that countries that seriously abuse the human rights of the people they rule should not be permitted to use the claim of national sovereignty as a cover for their illegitimate actions. He stated that the sovereignty of states remains a fundamental tenet and key measure of peace and security, but it is neither absolute nor is it a shield behind which the most egregious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms can be protected. Canada's position was clearly at odds with that of the United States, China, and Russia.

Axworthy also proposed the establishment of a UN rapid deployment force, a unit that could be dispatched to a conflict zone like East Timor at a moment's notice in order to halt a serious human-rights crisis. He acknowledged that such an idea was unlikely to meet with much support from what he called the "risk-averse culture" of the UN Security Council, especially its five permanent members, the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France. But he said that the only way the UN could escape its current paralysis and respond effectively to human-rights abuses around the world was to adopt a new agenda, one that would put the lives of innocent civilians ahead of the national interests of countries who mistreat or massacre them.

#### The Future of International Lending Programs

In September 1999, as Indonesia and its militia allies were conducting a campaign of terror against the people of East Timor, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the world's two major international lending agencies, made an unprecedented joint announcement. These two financial organizations, which had already endorsed major loans to Indonesia, put that country's leaders on notice that if they did not change their policy on East Timor, then future financial aid would not be forthcoming. This was the first time that these two organizations had ever made a direct link between their willingness to lend and the human-rights policies of a prospective borrower.

In a letter to then-Indonesian president Habibie, World Bank president James Wolfenstein stated that keeping its promise to respect the will of the East Timorese people was an essential component to Indonesia's receiving any further loans. Since its 1997 currency crisis, Indonesia had been counting on IMF and World Bank financing for its \$47-billion (U.S.) financial rescue package. The IMF provides credit to countries facing economic difficulties in return for their commitment to control inflation and reduce their fiscal deficits. The World Bank offers financing for development programs. After suffering a major financial crisis in 1997, Indonesia is in great need of such assistance.

A \$460-million (U.S.) payment that Indonesia was expecting from the IMF in October 1999, was put on hold as violence flared in East Timor after the August 30 referendum. In addition, a \$300-million (U.S.) loan from the World Bank promised in May had not been cleared. On September 7, the World Bank issued a statement calling on Indonesia to halt the carnage in East Timor and honour its commitment to the independence process. Two days later, the IMF made a similar call, as its first deputy managing director, Stanley Fischer, characterized the East Timor situation as a humanitarian and political disaster.

In the past, the World Bank and the IMF have been strongly criticized for extending financial support to regimes around the world that routinely abuse the human rights of their citizens. They have also been denounced for imposing harsh structural adjustment policies on poor countries that have done nothing to help their economic situations, but have only increased the misery of their people. The decision of both organizations to link human rights concerns to their willingness to advance credit to Indonesia was believed to be a significant departure from their previous policies. It remains to be seen whether they will continue to adopt this approach in their future financial dealings with other countries.

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# News in Review

November 1999

## Discussion, Research, and Essay Question

### East Timor: Free At Last?

1. Prepare a storyboard or chart displaying information, photographs, and illustrations that you have obtained from newspaper and magazine articles dealing with East Timor.
2. Using the Internet, find out more about the participation of Canadian forces in Operation Toucan, our country's contribution to the United Nations INTERFET peacekeeping mission to East Timor. You can obtain information at [www.hmcsprotecteur.com](http://www.hmcsprotecteur.com), which is the Web site of HMCS Protecteur, the Canadian naval vessel operating off the shores of East Timor and at [www.8wing.trenton.dnd.ca/toucan](http://www.8wing.trenton.dnd.ca/toucan), which is the Web site of the crews running the Hercules transport planes from Darwin, Australia, to Dili, East Timor.
3. Find out more about the views of the famous American foreign-policy critic Noam Chomsky, by reading one or more of his books, or viewing the National Film Board film *Manufacturing Consent*.
4. View the documentary film *Bitter Paradise: The Sellout of East Timor* (directed by Elaine Briere, Snapshot Films, 1996) and discuss the images and information it contains about the situation in East Timor up to the time it was made, and the point of view it presents regarding the role of the Canadian government and business groups in Indonesia's occupation of the territory.

5. Read one of the following books dealing with East Timor, and prepare a book report on it: *Complicity: Human Rights and Canadian Foreign Policy, the Case of East Timor* by Sharon Scharfe; *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor*, by John Taylor.

6. Contact the local branch of a humanitarian aid agency that is working to assist the people of East Timor and find out about the projects it is promoting. Some organizations currently involved in East Timor are Care International, Unitarian Service Committee, Oxfam, and the Canadian Red Cross. Invite a representative from one of these groups to your school to speak to students about the work of humanitarian aid agencies in places like East Timor.

7. Find out more about the work of the East Timor Alert Network, a Canadian organization that has been promoting the cause of the East Timorese people ever since the Indonesian invasion of 1975, and lobbying the Canadian government to adopt a more critical policy toward Indonesia's actions there. This group's Web site is located at [www.etan.ca](http://www.etan.ca).

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