

## Timor-Leste (Update)

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America has been steadily reducing its active presence in the South Pacific over the past decade. Australia (the deputy sheriff) is expected to 'step up to the plate' and safeguard western interests in that region. Timor is the first test of deputy (dog) in the region and to date the deputy appears to be weakening at the knees.

There are no vacuums in geopolitics and the South Pacific is no exception. Since the measured withdrawal of the US, China, Taiwan and Japan have been vying for greater influence in the region. Fiji, Marshalls, Solomons, Vanuatu have all been approached (and influenced) by the competing Asian powers. The pressure is on Australia and New Zealand to maintain the old colonial status quo.

Since the flagrant theft of the larger portion Timor's oil resources by Australia (facilitated by the 'Gap Treaty') the US via the World Bank and its infamous president, Paul Wolfowitz, have sought to maintain their grip via economic means. Huge loans are readily offered at unrealistic rates allowing large Transnational Corporations to establish a presence and exploit existing resources. This overt exploitation occurs under the banner of 'economic development'. The larger portion of the profits goes to the Transnationals, relatively tiny percentages are appropriated by corrupt leaders, the (usually insufficient) remainder is utilised to service the ever increasing World Bank loan. Precious little remains for the people's welfare.

Emerging nations burdened with these crippling loans rarely 'emerge' from their poverty, however, their wealth is readily appropriated by foreign interests; a neat, legal but transparent trick. To the credit of the Timorese Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri, huge World Bank loans were politely refused. The usual means of economic colonisation were no longer available to foreign interests. The present tragedy in Timor is (their) plan B, militaristic occupation until a compliant government is formed or a permanent 'peace keeping' military presence is established. [Tired strategies familiar to today's analysts.]

However, the presence in the South Pacific of Asian powers jeopardises western interests. Never to be underestimated is the subtle but effective influence of China - and to a lesser extent other Asian powers. China through its strategy of mobilising the poor and oppressed masses (of 'other nations') has succeeded in deposing the Nepalese Monarch. So called Maoists, poor village dwellers, incited by middle-class students from the capital and supplied by Chinese forces, proved to be a very effective force. While affluent nations consider these events irrelevant or characteristic of poor third-world nations, they have great relevance in Timor-Leste.

Unverified reports claim that certain factions are being (indirectly) supplied and advised by China and that 'Maoists' are present in Timor. Under normal circumstances these reports would not be published, however, contradictory announcements made by Brigadier Mick Slater, commander of Australian 'peace keeping' troops are 'telling' to say the least. Slater recently announced that "all" Timorese military forces were safely barracked. Twenty four hours later the Australian media was called (by Oz military) to cover Oz troops in the hills with rebel leader, Major Alfredo Reinado! In view of the beautifully filmed location of rebel forces in the hills of Timor, Mick Slater's previous announcement is not a gaffe it's a tragedy!

Furthermore, following that carefully orchestrated coverage, the Timorese President, Gusmao, was filmed in pure propaganda mode consoling his people in the streets of Dili. The experienced eye easily recognises a contrived scene when it's presented for popular consumption. Neither Gusmao nor Alkatiri would have allowed the situation to degenerate if either considered the hardships that would face their people.

Another factor, which may give some credence to the claim, is the largely unsecured sea-lanes that surround the island and Indonesian Archipelago. Notwithstanding the East-West land border is almost completely unsecured.

The Australian commander is under considerable pressure to perform as the whole world watches, especially Uncle Sam and major financial interests. The servile attitude of the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, to the US has left Australian forces stretched beyond their effective capability. Failure in Timor would be the result of the policies of John Howard rather than the military. Widespread looting in the capital, Dili, is occurring as I write, another indication that control is beyond the capability of occupying forces. [Déjà vu Baghdad.]

The situation in Timor-Leste and the nature of competing forces (including Indonesia) promises that the situation will not end soon or satisfactorily for anyone, especially the long suffering Timorese people.

Timor-Leste will become the first 'middle-eastern' oil tragedy of the South Pacific. We are not deaf to the cries of its innocent and oppressed people; know that the people hold the destiny of their nation in their hands. A call for assistance from an organised resistance of the oppressed people of Timor-Leste would not be ignored. It should be noted that the puppet 'rebel' leader, Major Reinado, represents the interests of the West.

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