

World Media on East Timor, September 7, 1999

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Tuesday, September 7, 1999, from Berkeley, California, USA

The United States Information Agency (USIA) distributed the following digest of international media reports on the violence in East Timor. The digest includes items on PRC-Taiwan tensions, the expected DPRK missile test, and other regional security issues. The digest is comprised of an overall summary followed by summaries of selected items.

EAST TIMOR: 'A NIGHTMARE THAT CANNOT BE IGNORED'

The weekend's events in the East Timorese capital of Dili and elsewhere in the province--where bands of armed, pro-Jakarta militias have rampaged for four straight days following the announcement Friday of last week's referendum on autonomy--provoked an outpouring of editorials from nearly all quarters of the globe. Indonesian opinion aside, editorialists in all regions placed the blame for the killings of pro-independence Timorese firmly on the Indonesian government, which, they held, had done nothing to "rein in" the militias. In debating what steps to take next, the overwhelming majority of commentators favored the deployment, "sooner, rather than later," of an armed UN peacekeeping force to East Timor. A few, including writers in Hong Kong, New Zealand and Thailand, also advocated the suspension of World Bank and IMF assistance to Jakarta in order to force the Indonesian government "to honor its many pledges to maintain order and let East Timor have the freedom it chooses." A number of dailies--mostly in Europe--drew parallels between

East Timor and Kosovo, and feared that the intervention of UN or other peacekeeping forces might be too late to prevent "genocide behind closed doors" and a spiraling civil war on the island. Following are highlights in the commentary:

VIEWS FROM INDONESIA: Nearly all major Indonesian dailies weighed in with their opinions on East Timor. A fair number reacted defensively to the "outside world's" insistence that the Indonesian government should live up to its commitments to maintain security in East Timor. Leading, independent Kompas, on the other hand, noted grudgingly that, "however galling such a blase stance may be," the Indonesian government should "do its best" to restore order in the territory, adding: "We should not forget that it was we who opened [the door]" to independence for East Timor. In contrast, independent Media Indonesia, pro-government, Islamic-oriented Pelita and Muslim intellectual Republika, railed against "foreign interference" and criticism, and judged that such forces were intent on "thwarting" Indonesian President Habibie. The leading, independent Jakarta Post stood alone in congratulating the East Timorese for their "courage" and "perseverance," and observed that "a free...and democratic East Timor" could make "a valuable contribution to the progress of the [Asia-Pacific] region."

SUPPORT FOR UN INTERVENTION: Arguing that if the international community delays too long, the "brutal cleansing of East Timor will have finished," editorial upon editorial called for the deployment of an armed UN peacekeeping force to maintain order in the province. As one German paper put it: "The determined and cruel way that the armed militia is slaughtering supporters of independence in East Timor shows that they are in a hurry to resolve the conflict on their terms before the UN or other international organizations can respond." Dailies in Australia likewise stressed that "every hour of delay...is being measured in innocent lives," and urged the "immediate" stationing in East Timor of a "multinational security force...with or without the facade of a joint operation" with Indonesian security forces. Observers in Brussels and Bangkok lamented the "lack of U.S. leadership" on East Timor, but another Bangkok writer would not rule out the intervention of a U.S. "rapid deployment force" in East Timor.

EDITOR: Kathleen J. Brahney

EDITOR'S NOTE: This survey is based on 57 reports from 22 countries, August 4 - 7. The following editorial excerpts are grouped by region; editorials from each country are listed from the most recent date.

EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC

INDONESIA: "Order, Security In East Timor Are Our Responsibilities"

Leading independent Kompas insisted (9/7): "The UN, its branches, and certain countries have little interest in learning the details of the complicated situation [in East Timor]. The outside world's only interest is that Indonesia be responsible for security and order there. No matter how galling such a blase stance may be, we cannot ignore the perceptions of the UN and other countries. We must treat them seriously.... We must do our best to restore order and security in East Timor. We have to lead the transition to independence that the East Timorese have chosen. We should not forget that it was we who opened [the door] for that option."

"Dili Burning, Let Us Reflect"

Nationalistic Merdeka asked (9/7): "What is happening now that the United States and its lackey, Australia, are leaving? 'New colonial imperialist' forces conspire to destroy Indonesia's unity. Now East Timor, with a population of less than a million people, has been liberated by the UN. What is so sad is that no sooner had the pro-independence victory been announced than Dili was afire. Hundreds died."

"East Timor Free, Complications Await"

Independent Media Indonesia stressed (9/6): "History will note that East Timor is now free. However, Indonesia is yet to be free from many questions. It would be better to share such questions with international institutions. Enjoying the fruits [in East Timor] also means the UN must deal with their [sticky] juices."

"East Timor Opts For Independence"

Financial-oriented Bisnis Indonesia had this view (9/6): "There is no sense crying over spilled milk. Whatever the Jakarta political process holds, we call on the East Timorese to exercise restraint, disarm, and begin a peaceful new life. Both the government and the UN are responsible for maintaining security to prevent helpless civilians from continuously becoming victims of violence."

"Aftermath Of East Timor Referendum"

Ruling Golkar Party's Suara Karya maintained (9/6): "To carry out the difficult responsibility [of maintaining security in East Timor], it is important [that Indonesia] cooperate with all parties, including the UN and foreign countries, to avoid exacerbating the situation."

"The Nation Of 'Timor Leste' (East Timor)"

Independent afternoon Berita Buana pointed out (9/6): "[Pro-autonomy] militias increasingly control the eastern part of East Timor, raising the prospect of a civil war. The many calls to deploy peacekeeping forces to [East Timor] are thus no surprise. But UN spokesman Joachim Huetter has confirmed that there is no such UN plan at this point."

"Outcome Of East Timor Referendum"

Pro-government, Islamic-oriented Pelita told its readers (9/6): "Sadness is perhaps the proper expression for our reaction to the poll giving pro-independence factions victory [in East Timor]. So be it.... The 'defeat' of Indonesia, and particularly the pro-autonomy group, is due more to negative press and foreign interference--including by UNAMET personnel. The foreign--and some local--media stressed Indonesia's mistakes rather than its positive accomplishments. All this has compounded foreign countries' reasons for pressuring Indonesia. Yet, we must remain committed to accepting the poll results.... Many difficult times still await us. It is not only Indonesia, but all countries that have contributed to the state of affairs in East Timor--namely Portugal, the UN, Australia and the United States--that have an obligation to ensure security there."

"Land Of East Timor Released"

Armed Forces' daily ABRI underscored (9/6): "Most Indonesians are disappointed with the poll results.... Perhaps, however, it is the best start for the East Timorese and the best choice for Indonesia. As a country that values human rights and democracy, Indonesia can proclaim its superiority before the world. We did not give mere lip service to releasing East Timor. We did it. The United States and Europe, while claiming to be champions of democracy, always apply a double standard toward other countries."

"New History Of East Timor"

Muslim intellectual Republika asserted (9/6): "It is ironic that advanced countries are now lining up to threaten Indonesia, which they regard as incapable of providing security in East Timor and in violation of human rights, among other things. Indonesian politicians are awakening after a 'long sleep' during the New Order era. The success of the pro-independence groups provides additional ammunition to heighten their barrage toward the government. East Timor is a 'capital infusion' for thwarting Habibie, who had initiated a rational international diplomatic policy in the reform era."

"Birth Of A Nation"

The leading, independent, English-language Jakarta Post indicated (9/6): "Jakarta should realize that even the impression that it is assisting the militia or any other group of troublemakers for that matter, will hurt its reputation and credibility in the eyes of the world with possibly serious consequences for the country. As for the people of East Timor and their leaders, who have through all these years inspired courage and confidence in their fellow countrymen by their perseverance and integrity, our sincere congratulations are due. Whatever Indonesians may feel about an independent East Timor, for this country and for this region as a whole, the best bet for securing stability and prosperity is by helping the elected leaders of the newly independent nation to ensure that peace and order are restored and maintained. There can be little doubt that a free, peaceful and democratic East Timor can make a valuable contribution to the progress of this region."

"East Timor And Our Cruel Illusions"

An editorial in the government-oriented Indonesian Observer declared (9/6): "Most refused to accept [the referendum] as the genuine wish of the majority of East Timorese, who turned out in droves last Monday to make their wish known to the world. They still maintain that the referendum result was the result of an international conspiracy against Indonesia.... Indonesia now stands accused of dragging its feet when it comes to putting an end to the violence and rampage perpetrated by the men of the United Front for the Autonomy of East Timor. This is very bad for Indonesia's international reputation."

AUSTRALIA: "Race Against Genocide"

The liberal Sydney Morning Herald ran (9/7) this front-page comment by foreign editor Hamish Macdonald (9/7): "Every hour of delay by Prime Minister John Howard and other responsible leaders on the Indonesian military's outrage in East Timor is now being measured in innocent lives. Jakarta should be told it must agree immediately to a multinational security force entering Dili and securing the streets, with or without the facade of a joint operation with the TNI [Indonesian army.]"

"A Time To Show Leadership"

The populist Daily Telegraph judged (9/7): "It is Australia's responsibility to show leadership in the region and do everything in its power to stop the killing and allow a progression to full independence. There should be an immediate review of the defense and security agreement between Australia and Indonesia which puts us in the hypocritical position of training Indonesian military

that can be deployed in East Timor. No more sitting on our hands: We abandoned the Timorese once. Let us not fail them now."

"Australia's Choices"

The liberal Melbourne Age featured this op-ed piece (9/7): "The people of East Timor have decided emphatically. And for that decision they are in mortal danger. Now we must respond on their behalf. Either we lead the push for an immediate peacekeeping presence or we risk abandoning the Timorese for a second time."

"Indonesia's East Timor Obligations"

The Brisbane Courier Mail (9/4) had this editorial view, "The most pressing need in East Timor is for order to be restored and this must begin with the disarming of the pro-Jakarta militia and any independence agitators who have been forced to strike back against violence. U.S. Secretary of State Albright and the UN leadership have led the international outrage at Indonesia's refusal to deal with the street violence--and to stand idly by in some instances."

JAPAN: "Jakarta Must Honor Its Pledge"

An editorial in liberal Mainichi asked (9/7): "What has the Indonesian government done to stop violence of militias against pro-independence groups and normalize the situation in East Timor?... President Habibie must immediately order the military and police to suppress the militias and normalize the situation in Dili. Jakarta will have to ask the UN to intervene if its military cannot restore peace and order."

"Indonesia Must Stop Bloodshed"

Liberal Asahi editorialized (9/7): "Whether or not Jakarta can stop bloodshed would have a profound effect politically and diplomatically on its future. President Habibie and other Indonesian leaders will have to take all necessary measures as soon as possible to normalize the situation."

HONG KONG: "Why We Must Act To Prevent New Kosovo"

The independent Hong Kong Standard indicated (9/7): "It is both fallacious and facetious for the Indonesian government and, especially, its military to keep saying they cannot control the militias now rampaging through East Timor. The truth is that the militias are under the control of the armed forces and, in the nature of Indonesian culture, will obey if ordered to lay down their arms...."

"There are ways of getting Indonesia to do what is necessary. Withholding IMF funds is one way; Jakarta desperately needs financial help. Threatening to try the leaders for genocide is another.... The situation calls for tough measures. East Timor must not be allowed to become another Kosovo."

"Price Of Freedom"

The independent South China Morning Post's editorial stressed (9/7): "Just what motivates the Indonesian government in the face of escalating violence in East Timor remains uncertain. But the time has come for others to increase pressure on Jakarta to take, for a change, some honest and effective action.... The status quo is intolerable. Other nations are reluctant to dispatch their own peacekeepers without an invitation from Jakarta. But they should seek that permission actively and be ready to follow through. Meanwhile, they should tell Jakarta that World Bank and other loans are blocked until the government honors its many pledges to maintain order and let East Timor have the freedom it chose."

"From East Timor See The Double Standard Of The West"

The centrist Hong Kong Daily News commented in its editorial (9/7): "Long before the voting, the pro-independence group and its opponents in East Timor have showed their determination to fight if they lose. How could the UN not know about it? In other words, the 'upheaval after voting' in East Timor is due to the poor deployment of the UN. The UN cannot shun its responsibility.... Indonesia always relies on U.S. support. In order to repay, Indonesia has made its effort in mopping-up communists starting from the era of Suharto up till now. For this reason, when Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975, the United States did not make any noise. Indonesia is an 'ally' of the United States to contain China in the past and at present. From the East Timor incident, we can see the ugly face of the international politics. The West has adopted a double standard to humanitarian issues."

NEW ZEALAND: "East Timor Waits"

The top-circulation, moderate New Zealand Herald argued (9/7): "Certainly nothing Indonesian leaders are hearing from regional capitals will convince them that words of condemnation are likely to be backed by action.... An international peace-enforcement force, whether we like it or not is what the East Timorese people need--not in a month or two, but right now."

"Indonesia's Shame"

Wellington's leading, conservative Dominion said (9/7): "Mr.

Habibie's government is seriously undermining Indonesia's reputation. Financial pressures must be added to diplomatic effort to head off a developing disaster. New Zealand must...express to Indonesia in the strongest possible terms our revulsion over events in East Timor and our dismay over Indonesia's indifference."

"Last Chance For Diplomacy"

The South Island's largest circulation, moderate Press indicated (9/7): "APEC is a forum to tell Indonesia plainly that its permissive pussyfooting in East Timor cannot go on.... None of Mr Habibie's problems are an excuse to treat him lightly over East Timor. APEC's members must make clear to him that his government's prevarication cannot continue.... If Indonesia again refuses to rein in East Timor's rogue elements, the international community will have a license to act."

PHILIPPINES: "UN Force Too Little, Too Late"

Publisher Max Soliven wrote in his column in the third leading Philippine Star (9/5): "The Indonesian government, in a reversal of policy, is making noises about permitting UN peacekeeping forces to land in Dili, the capital of East Timor, to help enforce peace and order. That offer sounds to me as phony as the prospect of a solid gold [Indonesian] rupiah. If and when the UN manages to assemble, equip and dispatch a peacekeeping unit, it will be a case of too little, too late.

"Indonesia Must Control Post-Election Turmoil" Rene Espina wrote in his column in the largest-circulation Manila Bulletin (9/5): "No one would ever believe that [Indonesia] could not stop nor disarm most of the pro-Indonesia militias that it created. Since Indonesia is already in the middle of the process of giving East Timor independence, they might as well do a good job of it."

SINGAPORE: "East Timor Needs UN Force--Now"

The pro-government Business Times told its readers (9/7): "Jakarta should order its ineffective security forces to leave East Timor and invite a UN-backed presence to take up the responsibility of maintaining order until the country's highest legislative body officially accepts the results of the ballot in November.... It is time for President Habibie to show leadership on this issue and use all his political influence to fight those who seem bent on destroying Indonesia's reputation as a mature and responsible regional power."

SOUTH KOREA: "East Timor's Future"

Readers of conservative Chosun Ilbo saw this editorial (9/6):

"Security is the most urgent issue facing East Timor, and we believe that a UN peacekeeping force is the answer for this. The force needs to be sent there to secure and maintain security at least until East Timor gets full independence.... Indonesia's role continues to be critical. So are the roles of the United States and other neighboring nations, including New Zealand and Australia."

THAILAND: "UN Must Hurry"

The lead editorial of popular Siam Rath declared (9/7): "We urge the UN Security Council to convene an urgent meeting to reach a resolution calling for an immediate deployment of peacekeeping troops in East Timor, and the sooner the better."

"Don't Leave Timorese To Mercy Of Militias"

The lead editorial of the independent, English language Nation urged (9/6): "Clearly, the UN and the global community can, and must, do more. In this it will have to do without the United States. Given the absence of U.S. leadership, other countries must lead. Here, perhaps Australia can redeem itself."

"A Kosovo In Indonesia"

Pichian Kurathong made these points in elite Matichon (9/4): "Don't think an intervention in East Timor by a foreign force is far-fetched. So long as the United States maintains its rapid deployment forces in the Pacific, it can always interfere by citing the catch-all justification of 'humanitarian reasons.' The best way out is for Indonesia to effectively rein in its militias and honor the results of the referendum."

"Indonesia Must Be Held Responsible"

The independent, English-language Nation featured this lead editorial (9/4): "Indonesia still has time to demonstrate its goodwill. Its future and its economic recovery could be put in jeopardy if the killings continue. At the very least, the \$43 billion IMF-led rescue program could be further delayed. It would be wise for Jakarta to ensure that the verdict of East Timor's voters is respected. Then and only then will the international community come to grips with the huge dilemma that the world's fourth-largest country has encountered. The incoming government should not fear that East Timor's independence will lead to the destruction of Indonesia's unitary state. Rather the instability and continued bloodshed in East Timor will encourage separatist groups in other regions in Aceh or Irian Jaya to go their separate ways."

EUROPE

PORTUGAL: "No More Time For Timor"

In an editorial in centrist Diario de Noticias, Francisco Azevedo e Silva contended (9/7): "U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared yesterday that Indonesia has two choices in East Timor: either put an end to the violence or request assistance of the international community. But if Albright waits as long to act on this as it took to bring on this public pressure on the government of Indonesia...the brutal cleansing of Timor will have finished. There is a time for diplomacy, but it does no good after the moment has arrived in which all can see that it will be too late. Albright knows the cunning of the Indonesian clock, and that every minute of negotiation is a crime."

"Inferno"

Columnist Jorge Morais emphasized in mass-circulation 24 Horas (9/7): "To imagine the bishop of Dili, in a state of shock, having witnessed the serene diocesan headquarters pillaged and burned, and the dead bodies of those who had taken refuge there-- this should be enough to shake up any responsible statesman and make him obtain, from the UN, an immediate intervention on the island. But now we see, however, how the Clintons of the world are more concerned with businesses that give them the money to buy cigars."

"Can UNAMET Withdraw?"

In centrist Diario de Noticias Luis Delgado averred (9/7): "This is total madness: it is inconceivable, inhuman, disgraceful. If UNAMET pulls out of Timor...then the UN, the Security Council and the secretary general should close up shop...and crawl into a hole. Don't these gentlemen have any shame?... Who was it that asked the Timorese to vote? Who was it that guaranteed the Timorese they were assuming responsibility for the transition?... If UNAMET withdraws...then the Secretariat General is ripping up the New York accord and assuming responsibility for the genocide in Timor."

BRITAIN: "Indonesia's Shame"

The conservative Times' editorial concluded (9/7): "Jakarta should abide by the logic of its own stated position. If, as Indonesia's police chief blithely claims, the situation in East Timor is indeed out of Jakarta's control, and if Indonesia's 20,000 troops in East Timor really cannot be made to do what they pledged when the UN-sponsored referendum was planned in May, then Indonesia should gladly accept foreign help to ensure that East Timor gets its independence."

"Jakarta Discredited"

The liberal Guardian maintained (9/7): "The choice for the international community is becoming increasingly stark. Either summon up the collective will to intervene with an armed, UN-mandated peacekeeping force, or be content to witness the throttling at birth of the world's newest, democratic nation state."

"Peak Of Horror Is Still To Come"

According to an editorial in the centrist Independent (9/7): "When the UN pulls its last staffers out of Dili, it will represent a treacherous abandonment for the Timorese people. The murders in East Timor are not just the work of mindless mobs. These are political killings, and must be acknowledged as such. If the Indonesian government wished to stop the massacres, it could do so at any time. The television cameras which can bring the drama into our living rooms may be gone, but this is a nightmare that cannot be ignored."

FRANCE: "An Asian Kosovo"

An editorial in left-of-center Le Monde asserted (9/7): "This tragedy has the makings of an 'Asian Kosovo,' with the UN paralyzed by a Chinese veto.... This is an emergency situation in which two countries bear a moral responsibility. Portugal, which abandoned East Timor, and Australia, which recognized the annexation of the territory by Jakarta. One would also be tempted to add the United States to the list, for its support of Soeharto.... It is up to these nations to create an intervention force to keep Indonesia from perpetrating new crimes against humanity."

GERMANY: "Indonesian Military Takes East Timor Hostage"

Marita Tkalek pointed out in centrist Berliner Zeitung (9/7): "Not until November will Indonesia's expanded parliament meet to elect a new president, who will then form a new parliament. Only then will it be possible to determine the consequences of the outcome of the referendum. But that will be too late for the 800,000 inhabitants of East Timor. Their great hope is that a peacekeeping force will be deployed, and that the international community is ready and willing to show Indonesia, either by denying it love or money, that it will not accept the violence in East Timor."

"Jakarta Refuses To Respect Referendum"

Centrist Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich concluded (9/7): "The result of the referendum on East Timor's independence should have

been a reason for joy and hope.... It was the victory of normal people, of the disadvantaged, of those without rights--it was the stuff of democratic dreams. But now it seems that the government in Jakarta--or the power apparatus there, or parts of it--refuses to respect the result of the referendum.... It is the responsibility of the international community to see that the reluctant Indonesians accept the clear will of the people of East Timor."

"Slaughter In East Timor"

Right-of-center Nuernberger Zeitung painted this scenario (9/7): "The determined and cruel way that the armed militia is slaughtering supporters of independence in East Timor shows that they are in a hurry to resolve the conflict on their terms before the UN or other international organizations can respond. Their cynical reasoning is simple: If they are unable to undo the referendum, then at least they can decimate the ranks of those who voted independence from Indonesia. That is one way to correct the result of the referendum."

"Brutality In East Timor"

Right-of-center Suedwest Presse of Ulm had this to say (9/7): "Is it now East Timor's turn? In light of the brutal actions of the Indonesian terrorist gangs, the international community faces a familiar situation: Should the UN intervene militarily to prevent the expulsion and murder of the indigenous population, or should it close its eyes to it? If the UN decides to sit and watch the murders, it will lose all respect. Indonesia should be subjected to enormous pressure, and the population of East Timor should be protected, by UN troops if necessary."

ITALY: "Intervention?"

Left-leaning, influential La Repubblica noted (9/7): "Faced with the deterioration of the situation in East Timor, the United States is not ruling out an intervention by the international community. Yesterday President Clinton called Australian Prime Minister Howard and reaffirmed his interest in Canberra's proposal to send soldiers to the island.... At least for the moment...the UN has decided to send only a high-level diplomatic delegation.... In the meantime, Portugal insists that a UN peacekeeping force intervene in East Timor.... The Holy See is not sitting still, either."

"If The World Looks On"

Pro-DS (leading government party) L'Unita front-paged this commentary (9/7) by Giandomenico Picco: "The nation state has never been so challenged in the past ten years. Now it's East

Timor's turn.... When will the Indonesian government formally validate the vote for independence? Or can we allow this experiment in democracy to be crushed in blood? Whatever is chosen will have its cost."

"An Ethnic Cleansing Against The Catholic People"

Rome's conservative Il Tempo featured this front-page item (9/7) by Also Forbice: "East Timor is now the Kosovo of Indonesia. A country with a population of 800,000, with a Catholic majority, has been subjected for years to ferocious ethnic cleansing by terrible pro-Indonesian gangs.... Will the international community succeed in overcoming difficulties and diplomatic embarrassments and intervene along the Kosovo model? It will not be an easy task, notwithstanding the fact that Secretary Albright talked about the need for the UN to intervene.... Anyway, we do hope that this time the pacifists at home will not spark a new anti-American campaign."

SPAIN: "Terror In East Timor"

Barcelona's centrist La Vanguardia remarked (9/7): "At this point, diplomatic efforts have as their principal objective putting pressure on the Indonesian government to accept an international peace force to curb the ongoing massacre. But everything would seem to indicate that, in the end, it is the Indonesian army, which refuses to accept East Timor's independence, that is in control of the situation, and not the government in Jakarta."

"Jakarta Cannot Be Trusted To Curb Violence"

Liberal El Pais insisted (9/7): "Jakarta cannot be trusted to curb the escalation of violence, nor will international pressure accomplish that end. The UN Security Council's sending a mission of inquiry to Jakarta betrays division and fecklessness rather than a willingness to intervene on the UN's part. In the name of human rights, and without the UN's agreement, the international community recently intervened in Kosovo. There have been 200,000 victims in East Timor since it was taken over by Indonesia 23 years ago, but Timor is far, far away."

"East Timor: Massacre With No Witnesses"

Independent El Mundo judged (9/7): "The ire of those opposed to independence is being directed at those who may be witnesses to their crimes. Journalists and photographers have had to leave the country, thereby making impossible the presentation of graphic evidence of decapitated bodies lying in the streets and guaranteeing the impunity of the paramilitary murderers."

BELGIUM: "An Expected Bloodbath"

Agnes Gorissen argued in independent Le Soir (9/7): "Naivete, irresponsibility, hypocrisy? Suddenly, the entire world is worried. What is going on in East Timor is 'unacceptable' and 'intolerable,' people say. Jakarta had promised. This is a belated concern faced with a bloodbath which was actually predictable since May 5, i.e., since the signing, under UN auspices, of an agreement between Indonesia and Portugal on a referendum for the self-determination of East Timor. The former Portuguese colony's fate was sealed from the moment Lisbon accepted that the security of the ballot, of the territory, and of its inhabitants be trusted to Indonesia--the country which invaded East Timor in 1975, unilaterally annexed it the next year, and has ruled since then under the threat of its bayonets. To believe that this deal was going to work--that Jakarta's army was going to subdue its own accomplices--was a product of the wildest imagination.... Now, at last, the dispatching of a peace force is shaping up. Not under the UN's aegis--the procedure is much too slow and the urgency too great. It could be a force consisting of volunteers from a few countries, including neighboring Australia, with the UN blessing. But how many dead, wounded, and displaced could we have avoided if we had drawn the lesson from the failures in Cambodia or in Rwanda, and if the international community had reacted, as NATO did it, although belatedly, in Kosovo?"

"Five Years After Rwanda, Timor?"

Asian affairs writer Philippe Paquet opined in conservative Catholic La Libre Belgique (9/7): "Like in Rwanda in 1994, it is a genocide behind closed doors which is in the air in East Timor. Here as well, the tragedy was predictable--militias have been terrorizing the former Portuguese colony for months.... The UN...organized a referendum for self-determination for which the security conditions were so deplorable that it should have failed, had the people of Timor not been so courageous and so determined.... The Americans and their Atlantic Allies were severely blamed for having bypassed the UN during the Kosovo crisis. But one can witness the same paralysis--or at least a similar pathetic passivity--of the UNSC today. Australia and Europe claim that they are ready to intervene but that they do not have the authority to do so. ASEAN...won't take the initiative either. And as far as the United States is concerned, it seems to keep a very low profile for a country which trained the Indonesian generals. In the meantime...the UN has put Timor to fire and the sword. Without a prompt reaction, it will have the sad privilege of having created the conditions for another ethnic cleansing."

CZECH REPUBLIC: "Timor, A Hard Test For The World"

Leading, right-of-center Mlada Fronta Dnes commented (9/7): "It becomes more and more apparent that the difficult process of decolonization of the tormented East Timor will not be carried out as peacefully and reasonably as planned by the UN officials. The previous feeling of enthusiasm that citizens of a former Portuguese colony could, after 24 years of extraordinarily brutal Indonesian occupation, freely decide about their future, is now replaced by fear. Fear of the spiraling spread of violence unleashed by the pro-Indonesian militia in the region, which could lead to genocide and protracted civil war. The first few bloody days after the elections proved above all doubt that keeping the peace in Timor cannot be left in the hands of Indonesian politicians and army generals...."

"A quick decision must be made on sending peacekeeping forces, even against the wishes of Indonesia. Even then we cannot be sure that the forces will come in time, and that the world will not be facing another humanitarian catastrophe."

NORWAY: "Murder In East Timor"

Independent Dagbladet held (9/7): "While the UN and the international community are overburdened with Kosovo and the world's other regions of conflict, the process toward an independent East Timor has gone completely out of control.... Right now there is little sense in discussing a UN force in East Timor. It is Indonesia that in the first instance must stop the bloodbath, not least because the terror is a violent threat against the country's own move to a more democratic rule."

"Planned Chaos In East Timor"

Foreign affairs editor Erik Sagflaat commented in Social Democratic Dagsavisen Arbeiderbladet (9/7): "The international community bears a great responsibility for what will happen in East Timor. Indonesia must be made to realize that the price of continuing to let the militia play havoc freely will be very high. If they understand that continued attacks will hit them hard economically, it may make the very money-conscious Indonesian officers think twice. If it's still no use, it will be necessary for the UN Security Council to adopt sending an international force to East Timor to create the necessary security for the population."

POLAND: "Perfidious Scenario"

Stanislaw Grzymiski offered this commentary in the centrist Rzeczpospolita (9/7): "Almost 80 percent of the Timorese chose independence even though Jakarta had been sending warning signals to the pro-independence proponents: If you want independence, then you will have it, but you will be totally dependent on

yourselves, without cadres and financial means; we are washing our hands of it. Despite this, the people of Timor gave a firm response: yes to independence, no to autonomy. But then another scenario was triggered, one that is perfidious and cruel. After the events of Bosnia and Kosovo, decision-makers in Jakarta know that the United Nations is not very efficient and that there will be no NATO intervention. Indonesia is obviously trying to keep East Timor. The loyalists representing the Muslim migrants from the overpopulated Java are to do the dirty work. The anti-independence militants, armed by the Indonesian Armed Forces, are using terror to force the native population, mostly Christians, to give in. If the United Nations does not take decisive steps and do it immediately, we may be witnessing a great tragedy."

SOUTH ASIA

INDIA: "Breaking Free"

The centrist Times of India opined (9/6): "By overwhelmingly rejecting the Indonesian government's proposals for autonomy, the people of East Timor have taken a crucial step towards independence for their homeland.... Of course, the process from now on is not going to be particularly peaceful. Armed militias with links to the Indonesian army have vowed to prevent East Timor from breaking free. Presumably, the UN will have to deepen its involvement; an international peacekeeping force will most probably have to be deployed fairly rapidly, armed with an appropriate UNSC mandate.... Indonesia is currently undergoing a democratic transition but the quality and robustness of the final outcome is as yet unknown. If it establishes a vibrant and pluralist democracy, the appeal of secessionism is bound to diminish. But if it doesn't, there is bound to be more violence and instability in the future. And more East Timors."

PAKISTAN: "The Difference Between East Timor And Kashmir"

An editorial in sensationalist, Urdu-language Ummat observed (9/7): "Very few people know that the United States and the UN took special interest in the referendum in East Timor. Why? Ninety percent of the...population of East Timor consists of Roman Catholics and the island is considered to be a poor state. This combination of poverty and the Christian religion offered a great charm to earn U.S. sympathy and interest--for the United States and other Christian countries it is attractive to have access to an independent state on the borders of the largest Islamic country of the world. It removes hurdles and opens the path for pursuing the goals of the United States' New World Order. The interest shown by the UN in East Timor has once again exposed the dual standards with which it treats the Muslim and the non-Muslim world."

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

CANADA: "UN Stands Idle To Killing, Yet Again"

Under the sub-heading, "Add East Timor to its record of significant failures," former Canadian Ambassador Graham N. Green observed in the conservative National Post (9/7): "We may be witnessing the final demise of the United Nations Security Council. For what else can you conclude after watching the Council's total and abject failure to deal effectively with the anarchy and murder that is consuming East Timor in the wake of that territory's overwhelming vote for independence? If ever there was an example of the Council's complete emasculation, this must surely be it.... There have been other significant failures of the Security Council, including Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Angola. It was bypassed when NATO intervened in Kosovo. It has stood on the sidelines while others have tried to settle various African conflicts. It continues to have virtually no role in the search for peace in the Middle East. And now its impotence over East Timor is plain for all to see. If the Security Council will not take effective action to protect East Timor, what moral authority does it have left?"

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