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Abstract. This article is based on an interview with Mr. [Jose] Ramos-Horta, the co-winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize along with Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo. The interview was conducted by the IBPP editor. The article is also based on remarks delivered by Mr. Ramos-Horta to an audience at Yavapai College (Prescott, Arizona) and sponsored by that college, Prescott College, and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (Prescott Campus).

As asserted in the citation by the Norwegian Nobel Committee, in 1975 Indonesia took control of East Timor and began systematically oppressing the people of East Timor. In the years that followed, it has been estimated that one-third of the population of East Timor lost their lives due to starvation, epidemics, war, and terror. Jose Ramos-Horta has been the leading international spokesman for East Timor's cause since 1975 and has made sustained and self-sacrificing contributions to his oppressed people--e.g., "reconciliation talks," working out a peace plan for the region, and tirelessly roaming the globe presenting his people's case for the right to self-determination.

Both the interview and Mr. Ramos-Horta's remarks occurred on the evening of April 22, 1999.

On arriving at Yavapai College to hear Mr. Ramos-Horta, one might have noted the black limousine in front of the venue. It turned out to be his means of transport. Would he turn out to be the kind of individual who fits the negative stereotype of some diplomats and figures on the world stage who are actually far removed from the people whom they claim to represent? The kind who relishes the trappings of pomp and circumstance that too often accompanies tragic circumstance? The kind who relishes attention--e.g., the upturned faces of an audience, the respectful and furtive glances in the hallways, the gushing and fawning genuflections of a cocktail crowd?

No: Mr. Ramos-Horta seemed to be the real thing. Closely listening to interviewers, questioners, and conversationalists. Quick to clarify, take Issue, focus on data and sources of data. Fatigued as he seemed to be--as inferred by many in the crowd during lulls in the formal reception preceding his speech--Mr. Ramos-Horta very actively, dynamically, and cogently communicated his perspectives on human rights, peace, and East Timor.

Salient points during the interview.

Mr. Ramos-Horta stated that recent violence in East Timor has been the total responsibility of the Indonesian military--specifically General Wiranto whom many analysts suspect of constituting the supreme authority in Indonesia. Mr. Ramos-Horta related that the military has been inciting, organizing, and supporting the so-called pro-autonomy paramilitary forces in East Timor that have been murdering supporters of East Timor's independence. To underline this phenomemon, he stated that dealing with General Wiranto about a cease-fire would be like negotiating with Jack the Ripper about lowering the murder rate. In fact, as the General was speaking and negotiating about peace, underlings were coordinating the forces of violence and inciting of massacres. Mr. Ramos-Horta did not differentiate between independence supporters who have been engaged in reactive violence and protective violence

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against the pro-autonomy forces from independence supporters who may have been engaged in proactive violence and even violence purely effected to achieve political objectives.

Mr. Ramos-Horta did not advance an adamant position about the possible consequences of the campaign and voting in the upcoming political referendum now scheduled for August 8th with voting to be announced on August 29th. (The referendum is on whether to accept an autonomous arrangement in which Indonesia would only control East Timor's security and foreign relations. Among many political analysts there is some ambiguity about whether the Indonesian president would allow independence if autonomy is rejected and about whether the referendum would ineluctably lead to civil war. This ambiguity remains even with Indonesian President B.J. Habibie's latest promise to abide by the results--a promise made in a joint news conference with Australian Prime Minister John Howard.)

Mr. Ramos-Horta also did not advance an adamant position about what would be the ultimate role of the United Nations (UN) in resolving the plight of East Timor. He allowed that the UN has not always stopped or prevented atrocities--as in Rwanda and Burundi. However, he expressed hope that the role and effect of the UN would be benign in ultimately contributing to the independence of East Timor.

Mr. Ramos-Horta accepted a common analogy between the crises in Serbia and Kosovo on the one hand and in Indonesia and East Timor on the other--but only so far. He asserted that both involve a more powerful political entity perpetrating atrocities on a weaker target. Both have at times been abetted, mismanaged, and/or ignored by the Western powers. However, in the latter case, East Timor has never been and is not formally and legally part of Indonesia--Kosovo being formally and legally part of Serbia. Yet, in accord with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) policy towards Yugoslavia and Serbia, he recommended that bombing (of Jakarta) was necessary to resolve the crisis between Indonesia and East Timor. (Note how the very language "between Indonesia and East Timor" reinforces the notion of separateness between the two and that the two are different, discrete entities. Also, some readers might feel that it is somewhat ironic that a Nobel Peace Prize laureate recommend bombing to resolve crisis. But, many of Mr. Ramos-Horta's political colleagues as well as international religious and humanitarian noteworthies--some grudgingly, some with ambivalence, some without conflict--would point out that at times violence is the only way to peace.

Mr. Ramos-Horta stated that he has been and is in frequent contact with the United States (U.S.) State Department--especially the appropriate regional assistant secretary of state and desk officers. Accordingly, Mr. Ramos-Horta surmised that the US is very receptive to the plight of East Timor and supported the requisite quest for human and civil rights. His access to State officials was an indicator of this support

Salient points during formal remarks.

Mr. Ramos-Horta stated that, immediately after his remarks, he needed to head for the Phoenix, Arizona airport for a flight to New York City. The purpose of this impending trip was to engage in meetings at the UN about East Timor, the violence, the ceasefire, the approaching referendum, and the intentions of the Indonesian government regarding all of this. (That he was still finding time for public appearances in the US underlined the import he accorded to the support of the US Government and its constituents.)

Mr. Ramos-Horta pointed out that some member countries of the UN that profess support for human rights in general, and those of East Timor's people specifically, are partially responsible for the current

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crisis and the over 20 years of tragedy since Indonesia invaded East Timor. This responsibility, he noted, lies largely with these countries selling weapons to Indonesia and exercising with and training the Indonesian military--as well as allowing these activities to occur by other countries and by various licit and illicit private organizations. And this responsibility seems to be at least publicly ignored. For example, he cited United Kingdom Prime Minister Tony Blair who has stated that the West has learned not to appease dictators and that these dictators can't be allowed to engage in ethnic cleansing. Yet, Ramos-Horta noted, this same West provides the means and expertise to feed armed conflict and create refugees and the displaced. This same West provides the potential for untimely death and tragedy. This same West serves national rulers who have little to fear from external aggression but instead foster aggression on their own people to maintain power and stay in control at all costs.

As an aside, Mr. Ramos-Horta skewered a Christian ethnocentric stance towards time. He did this in the context of a meeting that he attended with other Nobel laureates in Prague at the suggestion of Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel. The theme of the meeting was to reflect on the 20th century and discuss a vision for the 21st. Ramos-Horta's reaction was to look askance at the "magic" of the year 2000. After all, the numerical year is different for the many other calendars that many other people follow. From whence, he asked, comes such narcissism and hubris about the "magic" of 2000? He concluded that the non-Christians need not worry but should just sit by and watch the apocalypse. (Perhaps this aside was also a strong jab at so many policymakers who lack the ability to even momentarily share the perspectives of others who are different than them.)

Mr. Ramos-Horta very strongly advocated that--in the long term--force and repression never win over human rights and freedom. He cited 20th century leaders such as Stroessner, Galtieri, Somoza, Pinochet, and Mobutu Sese Seko as but a few examples of the transience of the iron fist. Yet, he pointed out, too many of such leaders have at one time--often for a long time--been allies of the freedom-loving West.

Mr. Ramos-Horta stated that there might be at least one positive consequence or event associated with the current crisis between Yugoslavia and NATO. For the first time, he noted, here was the West taking the side of a persecuted ethnic minority that was largely Muslim against a side that was largely Christian (Orthodox). Could this have positive implications for some sort of rapprochement or for at least better understanding between the West and the Mideast?

Even with the atrocities by Serbs against Kosovar Albanians, Mr. Ramos-Horta bemoaned the demonization by NATO of Serbia that seemed very similar to how U.S. President Bush's multilateral alliance demonized the Iraqis before, during, and after Operation DESERT STORM. As Mr. Ramos-Horta noted, these are the same Serbs that were victims of and fought the Nazis during World War II. (And these are the same Iraqis supported by the US in the former's war with Iran in the 1980s. And--if the US emphatically sides against Indonesia--these will be the same Indonesians who have been U.S. allies for so long.)

Mr. Ramos-Horta cited a specific psychological stance towards "the other" as instrumental in atrocity and human rights violations. He stated that the US, Brazil, Italy, and India are examples of countries that at least seriously attempt to include and integrate "the other" and that benefit in strength from this attempt. Indonesian leaders on the other hand view both "the other" and any attempt to include and integrate "the other" as pathways to instability and weakness. He especially cited Javanese racism towards East Timor and West Papua. In this respect, the complaints of leaders of the developing world that the leaders of the developed world are racist ring hollow. The former excel as racists as well.

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Mr. Ramos-Horta rejected the argument that East Timor must somehow remain part of Indonesia because otherwise Indonesia could implode or fragment into many ethnic pieces. As well, he rejected similar arguments that impede the Kurds' quest for self-determination in Turkey and the Kosovar Albanians' in Serbia. His rationale was that similar arguments against encouraging the freedoms of people in the old Soviet Union have proven to be wrong. (Analysts following events in Russia and other former soviet, socialist republics might disagree with this rationale.)

Of Mr. Ramos-Horta's contacts with the US State Department, he stated that he had successfully predicted and conveyed to the Department that there would be rioting in Indonesia during May 1998 with significant mistreatment of the ethnic Chinese population. He also stated that several years ago he had predicted on a Cable Network News broadcast that Suharto would fall in 1998 and that the Indonesian economy would implode. He based his predictions on the rampant nepotism, corruption, kleptocracy, and economic gangsterism that were--he felt--reaching a critical mass. He found that it was difficult for Western authorities to take his predictions seriously as long as the "Tiger" economies were booming. As it were, ersatz trends of "market economies" took precedence over the neoliberal values of the West in these authorities' predictions.

Mr. Ramos-Horta stated that if Indonesia did not agree to appropriate steps supporting the aspirations of the people of East Timor, the European Union, Australia, and the US would agree to sanctions against it. Again, convictions for freedom and justice and liberty would always win out in the end over oppression. As he put it, physical life is only transient, life is eternal, so East Timor will be independent eventually. (One might contend that the "people of East Timor" are actually many peoples--and that some might sincerely and legitimately wish to remain part of Indonesia or wish to separate but for different political rationales and goals than those professed by Mr. Ramos-Horta. To venture such suppositions in politically charged environments might be hazardous to one's health among the many contesting sides of a conflict.)

After the prepared remarks, Mr. Ramos-Horta was to continue his political quest within the constraints of his own psychology. For many who had heard him, this quest was but a momentary diversion, an infomercial, a night out. To others, it was a chance to feel part of something larger than one's own pursuits and problems. To still others, it was an opportunity for psychodynamic activations of unconscious conflict or to validate one's own worldviews.

In many ways, the event was a draw. He needed our support, we needed his. Hopefully, for the victims of oppression it was at least--somehow--a split decision. (See Blumberg, H.H. (1998). Peace psychology after the cold war: A selective review. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, 124, 5-37; East Timor vote on autonomy is set for Aug. 8. (April 28, 1999). *The New York Times*, p. A8; Hakvoort, I., & Oppenheimer, L. (1998). Understanding peace and war: A review of developmental psychology research. *Developmental Review*, 18, 353-389; Ramos-Horta, J. (1998). Children of war. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 36, 333-344; Smith, M.B. (1999). Political psychology and peace: A half-century perspective. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 5, 1-16; The Nobel Prize in Peace 1996. <http://www.nobel.se/laureates/peace-1996.html>.) (Keywords: East Timor, Indonesia, Jose Ramos-Horta.)