

## Canadian Complicity in the East Timor Near-Genocide: A Case Study in the Sociology of Human Rights

Jeffery Klaehn

*Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Wilfrid Laurier University*

**Abstract:** This research assesses the extent to which Canadian economic and political self-interest can be seen to have motivated the complicity of successive Canadian governments in the East Timor near-genocide perpetrated by the government of Indonesia. The research considers ways in which Canada facilitated and legitimized Indonesia's occupation *vis-à-vis* diplomatic actions at the UN, pro-Indonesian foreign policy, direct investment in Indonesia, bilateral aid, and authorization of military export permits, thus in effect "aiding and abetting" the near-genocide. The research is intended to encourage debate concerning the relationship between the political and economic policies of Western nations and the state of human rights elsewhere in the world. © 2003 Portuguese Studies Review. All rights reserved.

Indonesia's invasion and subsequent occupation of East Timor constituted an act of aggression that included war crimes and/or "crimes against humanity" under international law and Canadian criminal law.<sup>1</sup> Taylor states that Indonesia "violated almost every human right provision in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Bill of Rights."<sup>2</sup> The repression and state-sponsored atrocities and gross human rights violations are well documented and uncontroversial.<sup>3</sup> These include programs of forced relocation

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<sup>1</sup> For details of the invasion, see James Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed* (Milton, Qld: Jacaranda Press, 1983); Carmel Budiardjo and Liem Soei Liong, *The War Against East Timor* (London: Zed, 1984); see Sharon Scharfe's invaluable analysis, *Complicity*, for a detailed overview of Canadian complicity in the near-genocide; Sharon Scharfe, *Complicity: Human Rights in Canadian Foreign Policy—The Case of East Timor* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1996); John McMurtry, "Why Does Canada Aid the Oppressors," *Globe and Mail*, 20 Feb 1990, A7; Matthew Jardine, *East Timor: Genocide in Paradise* (Arizona: Odonian, 1997); for details on the role of the US in relation to the near-genocide, see Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, "East Timor: Genocide on the Sly" and "Indonesia: Mass Extinction, Investor's Paradise," Chapters 3.4.4 and 4.1, *The Political Economy of Human Rights, Volume One: The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1979), 129-204, 205-217; see also Peter Eglin's invaluable analysis of Canadian complicity, which focuses on the role of Canadian universities and Canadian academics; Peter Eglin, "Partnership in an Evil Action: Canadian Universities, Indonesia and Genocide in East Timor", *Brock Review* (Vol. 7, No. 1 /2, 1998/99): 58-100.

<sup>2</sup> John Taylor, *The Indonesian Occupation of East Timor, 1974-1979: A Chronology* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1990), 178.

<sup>3</sup> See Amnesty International, *East Timor: Violations of Human Rights, Extrajudicial Executions, "Disappearances," Torture and Political Imprisonment* (London: Amnesty International, 14 May 1985); Amnesty International, *Indonesia/East Timor: Summary of Amnesty International Concerns in*

causing (induced) starvation and disease, programs of sterilization and forced birth control, and psychological programs oriented toward pacification and social engineering.<sup>4</sup> The Indonesian occupation of East Timor was one of the most brutal in post-war history.<sup>5</sup> Noam Chomsky states that the death toll relative to the population was the worst slaughter since the Holocaust.<sup>6</sup> There is a range of secondary literature documenting the extent to which the United States (US) participated in and facilitated the near-genocide.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, Canada's role has received scant attention from Canadian scholars. This is perhaps not surprising, given the extent to which Canadian universities have been involved in joint multi-million dollar Canada-Indonesia "development projects" administered through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).<sup>8</sup> Chomsky remarks that "Canada had enormous leverage over the slaughters in East Timor and never used it. The media were never concerned and the intellectual community was never concerned. In this respect, Canada has contributed materially to the slaughters."<sup>9</sup>

This research considers the extent to which a "unison of political and economic aims" motivated the complicity of successive Canadian governments in the East Timor near-genocide.<sup>10</sup> It assess ways in which Canada facilitated and legitimized Indonesia's occupation *vis-à-vis* diplomatic actions at the United Nations (UN), pro-Indonesian foreign policy, direct investment in Indonesia, bilateral aid, and authorization of military export permits.

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*Indonesia and East Timor Imprisonment* (London: Amnesty International, April 1987); Amnesty International, *Indonesia/East Timor: Summary of Amnesty International Concerns in Indonesia and East Timor Imprisonment* (London: Amnesty International, May 1988); Amnesty International, *Indonesia and East Timor: Power and Impunity—Human Rights Under the New Order Imprisonment* (London: Amnesty International, 28 September 1994).

<sup>4</sup> For details on induced starvation and disease in occupied East Timor, see Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, in cooperation with the Montreal Institute for Genocide Studies, 1990); Scharfe, *Complicity*, 55; David Selby, "Indonesian Expansionism: The Case of East Timor", Chapter 6, *Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Taylor, *The Indonesian Occupation*, 17-20; John Taylor, *Indonesia's Forgotten War—The Hidden History of East Timor* (London: Zed, 1991), 89; for details on sterilization and forced birth control, see Scharfe, *Complicity*, 55; also see Miranda Sissons, *From One Day to Another: Violations of Women's Reproductive and Sexual Rights in East Timor* (Fitzroy, Victoria: East Timor Human Rights Center, 1997); for details on psychological programs oriented toward pacification, see G. C. Gunn, *A Critical View of Western Journalism and Scholarship on East Timor* (Sydney, Australia: Journal of Contemporary Asian Studies, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Will Carey, "East Timor: The Making of an International Issue, 1974-1999," *Brock Review* 7 (1/2) (1998/99): 29-57.

<sup>6</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 204.

<sup>7</sup> See Noam Chomsky, *The Noam Chomsky Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1987), 303-311.

<sup>8</sup> Eglin, "Partnership in an Evil Action," 67.

<sup>9</sup> Noam Chomsky, cited in Brière, "A Country now Forgotten," *This Magazine*, 25 (1) (June/July): 22-24.

<sup>10</sup> Antonio Gramsci, cited in James Winter, *Common Cents: Media Portrayal of the Gulf War and Other Events* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1991), 53.

### East Timor—The Background

Portugal dissolved its overseas territories in 1974 and announced plans to grant these regions the right to self-determination. Indonesia initially signaled approval of the de-colonization of East Timor, declaring that it had no territorial pretensions toward the region and not intervening in the initial de-colonization process.<sup>11</sup> Three rival political associations emerged in East Timor shortly thereafter. The first grouping, UDT (Democratic Union of East Timor), advocated independence following a brief period of continuing association with Portugal.<sup>12</sup> The second, APODETI (Timorese Democratic People's Union) was sponsored by the government of Indonesia and called for integration with Indonesia. The third, FRETILIN, favored immediate independence.<sup>13</sup> A brief civil war between the three factions broke out in August 1975. Various sources confirm that the civil war ended by November 1975.<sup>14</sup> FRETILIN emerged victorious and went on to assume *de facto* control over the region.<sup>15</sup> A range of sources indicated that between 2,000 and 3,000 Timorese had died in the fighting.<sup>16</sup> Indonesia commenced cross-border incursions from West Timor in November 1975. This same month, on 28 November, the *de facto* FRETILIN government declared East Timor's unilateral independence at the UN in order to defend the region's territorial integrity.<sup>17</sup> Some third world states, including Mozambique, immediately recognized East Timor as an independent state.<sup>18</sup>

On 7 December 1975, Indonesia invaded East Timor outright. Amnesty International estimates that some 200,000 East Timorese perished as a result of Indonesian aerial bombardments, mass executions, induced starvation and disease. Under the leadership of President Suharto, Indonesia is alleged to have used chemical defoliants, military terror and social engineering to consolidate its occupation of East Timor. The invasion violated the same proscriptions of the UN Charter as had Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The two cases, while remarkably comparable in this regard, elicited vastly different responses from the international

<sup>11</sup> Selby, "Indonesian Expansionism," 41; Gunn, *A Critical View*, 85-108.

<sup>12</sup> Heike Kreiger, ed., *East Timor and the International Community: Basic Documents (Cambridge International Series, Volume 10)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xix.

<sup>13</sup> Scharfe, *Complicity*, 73; Chomsky and Herman, "East Timor: Genocide," 134.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Selby, "Indonesian Expansionism," 42. Also see, Jardine, *East Timor: Genocide*, 16. Jardine maintains that the civil war ended earlier, on 24 September 1975.

<sup>15</sup> See Jardine, *East Timor: Genocide*, 16-21, for details.

<sup>16</sup> Scharfe, *Complicity*, 45; Selby, "Indonesian Expansionism," 42; Chomsky and Herman, "East Timor: Genocide," 134.

<sup>17</sup> Budiardjo and Soei Liong, *The War*, 1-8.

<sup>18</sup> Carmel Budiardjo, "Indonesia: Mass Extermination and the Consolidation of Authoritarian Power," in A. George, ed., *Western State Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 202; see also Krieger, *East Timor and the International Community*, xix; Chomsky, 306; Gunn, *A Critical View*, 119; Chomsky and Herman, "East Timor: Genocide," 156.

community. In response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Canada went to war for the first time in 40 years, and justified its actions with moral appeals to Canadians' collective sense of common decency. Canada acted as it did, we were told in the media, in the interests of upholding democracy and international law. Chomsky and Herman charge that the role of the US and its major mass media in the aftermath of Indonesia's invasion of East Timor was one of "implementing the aggression and building a wall of silence around it."<sup>19</sup> Gunn notes that Australia's news coverage was informed by "an ideology that would place trade and investment over such traditional concerns as defence of democracy, labor and human rights."<sup>20</sup> Canada, the largest Western investor in Indonesia at the time of the invasion, pursued a foreign policy mandate that was economically opportunistic and not at all contingent upon human rights considerations.

#### **East Timor—Indonesia's Position**

To explain why Indonesia invaded East Timor, it is important to contextualize the invasion in terms of Indonesia's own justifications and motivations for using violent, repressive means of subjugation. According to the government of Indonesia, then, the majority of East Timor's population had requested that the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) intervene in the civil war in order to provide protection from FRETILIN. Indonesia's position was that the civil war had not ended in November 1975. Indonesia maintains that FRETILIN would have availed the entire region to communist expansionism if it had been allowed to fully establish itself as an independent government within East Timor.<sup>21</sup> Indonesia's foreign ministry maintains that Indonesia did not invade East Timor but rather "intervened" in the civil war in the interests of ensuring "that the democratically expressed will of the majority of the people [was] not overruled by armed terror and unilateral imposition of a ruthless minority."<sup>22</sup> Indonesia charges that civil war had resulted in "the prospect of prolonged political strife, economic upheaval and foreign interference."<sup>23</sup> Other sources indicate that FRETILIN had taken steps to initiate progressive policies, advocated controlling foreign aid and investment, and enjoyed widespread popular support.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Scharfe suggests that the "real considerations" motivating Indonesia's invasion and occupation of East Timor were "political,

<sup>19</sup> Chomsky and Herman, "East Timor: Genocide," 188.

<sup>20</sup> Gunn, *A Critical View*, 132, 135.

<sup>21</sup> Republic of Indonesia, Foreign Affairs, *East Timor: Building for the Future*, no page numbering.

<sup>22</sup> Indonesian Foreign Ministry, cited in *The Economist*, reprinted in the *Globe and Mail*, 28 September 1992, A19.

<sup>23</sup> Kreiger, *East Timor and the International Community*, xxi.

<sup>24</sup> Jardine, *East Timor: Genocide*, 15; Chomsky and Herman, "East Timor: Genocide," 134; Selby, "Indonesian Expansionism," 42.

economic, commercial, strategic, and ultimately racist.”<sup>25</sup> “The tacit compliance of other states,” Scharfe adds, “suggests that their considerations are similar.”<sup>26</sup>

On 31 May 1976, a “People’s Popular Assembly” officially requested that East Timor be incorporated into Indonesia and annexed as its 27<sup>th</sup> province. East Timor was incorporated into Indonesia on 17 July 1976. Indonesia’s position is that the decision to forego self-determination had been unanimous.<sup>27</sup> This view is incongruent with other accounts. Budiardjo and Soei Liong state that the People’s Popular Assembly was “a creation of the puppet Provisional Government of East Timor established immediately after Indonesian troops took control of Dili in December 1975.”<sup>28</sup> Both Portugal and FRETILIN rejected Indonesia’s claim that the Indonesian military was *invited* to “intervene” in the civil war in East Timor. Indonesia has rebutted allegations that its *incorporation* of East Timor was illegal.<sup>29</sup> Indonesia’s argument, that a FRETILIN-controlled East Timor would engender communist expansionism should be contextualized in relation to Indonesian President Suharto’s concern to maintain order, guarantee stability and “dam up pressures for change” in the face of civil disorder and nationalistic struggle elsewhere in the archipelago.<sup>30</sup>

#### East Timor at the United Nations

On 12 December 1975 the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 3845 (XXX), recognizing that Indonesia’s invasion had breached the principle of self-determination laid out in Articles 1 and 55 of the UN Charter and UN Resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV).<sup>31</sup> Use of force was forbidden under Article 2, paragraph 4 of the UN Charter.<sup>32</sup> Voting in the General Assembly on Resolution 3845 was 72 in favor, 10 against, 43 abstentions.<sup>33</sup> Most states did not publicly recognize

<sup>25</sup> Scharfe, *Complicity*, 37.

<sup>26</sup> Scharfe, *Complicity*, 37.

<sup>27</sup> Kreiger, *East Timor and the International Community*, xxi.

<sup>28</sup> Budiardjo and Soei Liong, *The War*, 96.

<sup>29</sup> See Budiardjo and Soei Liong, *The War*, 16; Kreiger, *East Timor and the International Community*, xxiii.

<sup>30</sup> B. Anderson, “East Timor and Indonesia: Some Implications,” in P. Carey and G. Carter, eds., *East Timor at the Crossroads: The Forging of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 144; see also Chomsky and Herman, “East Timor: Genocide,” 215; Chomsky, 304-305; Elaine Brière, “Feeding the Cyclops,” *Briarpatch*, May 1988, 20-23; Elaine Brière, “East Timor: Genocide Continues,” *Briarpatch*, October 1988, 35; Elaine Brière, “A Country now Forgotten,” *This Magazine*, 25 (1) (June/July): 22-24; Elaine Brière, *Bitter Paradise: The Sell-Out of East Timor* [video documentary] (Mission, British Columbia, Canada: Snapshot Productions, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> Scharfe, *Complicity*, 82-83.

<sup>32</sup> Carey, “East Timor: The Making,” 32.

<sup>33</sup> See Budiardjo for additional details (Budiardjo, “Indonesia,” 202); see also Chomsky, 60-61; Chalk and Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, 409.

Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor as legitimate.<sup>34</sup> The UN Security Council reaffirmed East Timor's right to self-determination on 22 April 1976, voting in favor of Resolution 389 which again denounced integration. By this time, approximately 60,000 Timorese had already been killed as a result of the Indonesian invasion and occupation of the territory.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s the UN General Assembly adopted seven additional Resolutions reaffirming General Assembly Resolution 3845, rejecting Indonesia's position that East Timor had been lawfully integrated, reaffirming East Timor's right to self-determination, and calling for an immediate military withdrawal. It is important to highlight that the Resolutions resulted in no significant action on the part of the international community.

Traditionally, Indonesia has enjoyed the diplomatic support of many third world countries, including those that have experienced their own anti-colonial struggles. This helps to explain the absence of a consensus reaction to the actions of the Indonesian government.<sup>36</sup>

To fully understand why the international community took no action to see that the Resolutions were enforced, however, it is necessary to delineate the broader context, particularly the US position.

#### **East Timor—The Broader Context**

Indonesia's invasion of East Timor was delayed in order to allow US President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger the time to depart Jakarta, where they had been on an official state visit with Suharto. Before departing, Kissinger is reported to have told Indonesian reporters that "the US understands Indonesia's position on the question of East Timor."<sup>37</sup> US involvement in the Asia-Pacific region dates back to the post-World War II era.<sup>38</sup> The direction and tone of post-war US foreign policy was forged accordingly. In 1948, US State Department Director of Policy Planning George Kennan emphasized the importance of Indonesia's future political orientation. Kennan cautioned that the US would potentially be deprived of "an area of the highest political, economic and strategic importance" should Indonesia be lost to communist expansionism or indigenous left-wing political movements.<sup>39</sup> Post-war foreign policy aimed to establish

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<sup>34</sup> Krieger, 129-133.

<sup>35</sup> See Budiardjo, "Indonesia: Mass Extermination," 199; Scharfe, *Complicity*, 83.

<sup>36</sup> "Voting Behavior in the United Nations Concerning the General Assembly Resolutions on the Situation in East Timor between 1975 and 1982," in Krieger, 129-133.

<sup>37</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, 9 January 1987, A9.

<sup>38</sup> Jardine, *East Timor: Genocide*, 18-20.

<sup>39</sup> George F. Kennan, "Review of Current Trends, US Foreign Policy," PPS/23, Top Secret. Included in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, Vol. 1, Part 2* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), 509-529.

hegemony in the Southeast Asia-Pacific region.<sup>40</sup> Viewed through the optic of past policy imperatives and the existing world context, the support that the US and its European allies provided Indonesia clearly denotes “a unison of political and economic aims.”<sup>41</sup>

Following the CIA-backed military takeover of 1965 which resulted in the removal of the Sukarno government and led to the Suharto regime’s rise to power, Western investors were privy to a pro-capitalist dictatorial government that sanctioned terror and low wages while extending extremely favorable economic opportunities to the capitalist democracies.<sup>42</sup> In the face of increasing bilateral trade and investment opportunities, the Suharto regime’s crimes against humanity and the environmental degradation that accompanied the influx of corporate capital subsequent to the PKI slaughters of 1965 were largely reduced to political and ideological non-issues in the Western world.<sup>43</sup>

Indonesia’s invasion, occupation and subjugation of East Timor should also be contextualized in terms of the broader “Cold War” context as well as various (geo)political-economic elements. East Timor straddles waterways between the Pacific and Indian oceans. Indonesia began negotiating with the US to permit US nuclear submarines access to these waterways shortly after the invasion, thus affording the US craft the luxury of mobility without coming to surface, to go undetected by Soviet satellites. Beyond this strategic element, however, it should also be stressed that US-based corporations have profited enormously from trade with and investment in Indonesia, and both the US and Australia have profited from arms sales to Indonesia.<sup>44</sup> Chomsky comments that the “nature and scale of the atrocities were partially conceded” afterwards, but the role of the US and government and the media were excised from the story.<sup>45</sup>

Also noteworthy in this context is the continental shelf between northern Australia and East Timor, divided by an area referred to as the Timor Trough,

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<sup>40</sup> Jardine, *East Timor: Genocide*, 40.

<sup>41</sup> Gramsci, cited in Winter, *Common Cents*, 53.

<sup>42</sup> See Chomsky, “Human Rights: The Pragmatic Criterion,” Chapter 5 in *Year 501: The Conquest Continues* (Montreal, Black Rose, 1993); Peter Eglin, “Complicity in Genocide,” *Ontarion*, 21-27 Feb 1995; Brière and Devaney, “East Timor: The Slaughter of a Tribal Nation,” *Canadian Dimension* 24(7), Oct, 31-35.

<sup>43</sup> See Gunn’s invaluable analysis of the Australian news coverage and scholarship on Indonesia and East Timor (Gunn, *A Critical View*); for details on the Canadian news coverage of the near-genocide, see Jeffery Klahn, “Corporate Hegemony: A Critical Assessment of the *Globe and Mail’s* News Coverage of Near-Genocide in Occupied East Timor, 1975-1980,” *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies* 64 (4) (2002): 304-305.

<sup>44</sup> John Sorenson, “Independence for East Timor,” *Brock Review* (Vol. 7, No. 1 /2, 1998/99), 9.

<sup>45</sup> Chomsky, 307. Also see Gunn, *A Critical View*, 78; Chomsky and Herman, “East Timor: Genocide,” 191; Budiardjo and Soei Liong, *The War*, 27-35; Budiardjo, “Indonesia: Mass Extenuation,” 204-205.

which contains oil deposits.<sup>46</sup> Prior to the invasion, Australia had negotiated with Portugal in an attempt to delimit entitlement, but negotiations were inconclusive due to conflicting views over boundaries and applicable legal principles. After the invasion, Australia entered into dialogue with Indonesia, but an agreement could not be immediately reached, in part owing to bilateral relations and public opposition to Indonesia's annexation of East Timor within Australia.<sup>47</sup> The Hawke and Suharto governments ultimately ratified what is known as the Timor Gap Treaty on 11 December 1989.<sup>48</sup> The Treaty laid out terms for joint oil exploration and development of the Timor Sea oil fields. Historically, the contentious issue of legality has been rife with conflicting viewpoints. The title of the Treaty refers to the Timor Gap as "An Area Between the Indonesian Province of East Timor and Northern Australia." The legality of the Treaty has been challenged on the grounds that Indonesia held no legitimate sovereignty over East Timor.<sup>49</sup> John Pilger points out that the Timor Gap Agreement has "a simple analogy in law," such that: "It is acquiring stuff from a thief ... [Indonesia and Australia] have neither historical, nor legal, nor moral claim to East Timor and its resources."<sup>50</sup> Australia had granted its *de jure* recognition of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor in 1976, abstained from the voting on the "Question of East Timor" in 1976 and 1977, voted against all subsequent critical resolutions and defended Indonesia at the UN on 5 November 1979.

Coupled with strategic interests, the broader context of (geo)political-economic elements helps explain the US position on Indonesia's invasion and violent occupation of East Timor. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, US Ambassador to the UN under the Ford administration at the time of the invasion, commented that "The Department of State desired that the UN prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. This task was given to me and I carried it out with no inconsiderable degree of success."<sup>51</sup> The US position affords a partial explanation for the lack of uniform consensus at the UN. While the atrocities perpetrated in East Timor by Indonesian forces prompted severe condemnation from major human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Asia Watch, political and economic self-interest can be seen to have overshadowed humanitarian concerns in relation to the international community's response to the Indonesian aggression.

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<sup>46</sup> See Gunn, *A Critical View*, 160.

<sup>47</sup> "East Timor and the Gulf War," East Timor Alert Network (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada: East Timor Alert Network).

<sup>48</sup> Gunn, *A Critical View*, 121.

<sup>49</sup> Gunn, *A Critical View*, 121, 161-164.

<sup>50</sup> John Pilger, "The West's Dirty Work," *UK Guardian*, 17 February, 1994.

<sup>51</sup> Moynihan, cited in Chomsky, *Letters From Lexington: Reflections on Propaganda* (Toronto, Canada: Between the Lines, 1993), 60.



**East Timor in Canadian Foreign Policy**<sup>52</sup>

Following the invasion of East Timor, Canada could not bring itself to support the ten UN Resolutions that expressed “grave concern for the loss of life,” called upon “all States to respect the inalienable right of the people of Portuguese Timor to self-determination, freedom and independence,” rejected “the claim that East Timor had been integrated into Indonesia,” drew “the attention of the Security Council to the critical situation in East Timor,” and called upon the Indonesian government to “withdraw without delay.” Canada did not support these basic, mild repudiations and exhortations. On the ten votes taken from 1975 until 1982 on the “Question of East Timor” Canada abstained on each occasion until 1980 when it began to oppose the resolutions; it did not vote on the two Security Council Resolutions as it was not a member at the time.<sup>53</sup> In September 1987 Canada’s representative to the UN Human Rights Sub-Commission voted against putting East Timor back on the UN Human Rights Commission Agenda. Canada was the largest Western investor at the time of the invasion. Its diplomatic courtship of Indonesia is generally consistent with its position on other internationally ostracized regimes, nations with long records of human rights violations against their own citizens, and nations engaged in “hostilities.”

Despite its grisly record of mass murder, torture, rape, terror and repression, clearly-established violations of international law and condemnation by the UN and many human rights organizations, the Indonesian regime received consistent and enthusiastic support from Canada and other international investors and donors. Rather than using their substantial economic influence with Indonesia to halt its systematic human rights violations, Canada and other Western nations praised the regime and defended it against criticism of its human rights violations.<sup>54</sup>

Canada’s diplomatic courtship of Indonesia extends beyond its voting record on East Timor Resolutions at the UN. Successive Canadian governments have facilitated Canadian investment in and trade with Indonesia, and Canada has provided Indonesia with hundreds of millions of dollars in Overseas Development Assistance. Traditionally, Canada has sought to facilitate commercial interests in the region, as evidenced by various speeches, government documents, reports and statements.

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<sup>52</sup> Selections from this section first appeared in Peter Eglin, Jeffery Klahn, Bill Ripley and Sharon Scharfe, “Canada, Canadian Corporations, Canadian Universities, Canadian News Media, and Complicity in Genocide in East Timor,” Paper presented at the joint session of the Canadian Law and Society Association with the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association on “State Terrorism/State Violence in the Good and Peaceable Kingdom,” *Learners*, Calgary, 12-14 June 1994.

<sup>53</sup> Sorenson, “Independence,” 12.

<sup>54</sup> Sorenson, “Independence,” 11.

On 3 September 1976, ten months after the invasion, Secretary of State for External Affairs and International Trade Allan J. MacEachen delivered a speech to the Australian National Press Club, where he spoke of “healthy and trouble-free relations” between Canada and Australia. Both countries, he declared, deserved praise for having taken action to “preserve and continue traditions that are dedicated to freedom and dignity.” Discussing the Asia Pacific region, MacEachen remarked that “even old and trusted partners should be alert to new opportunities.”<sup>55</sup> The previous week MacEachen had been in Jakarta where he had spoke at length about Indonesia’s natural resources, large population, and strategic importance. Together, he declared, these elements placed Indonesia “in a key position to play a role in international affairs.”<sup>56</sup> MacEachen noted similarities between Canada and Indonesia and stressed a “reorientation of Canada’s foreign policy” to facilitate increased economic development, shared objectives, and increased cooperation between Canada and Indonesia. Canada was “impressed by Indonesia’s pragmatic leadership,” MacEachen gushed, “which has resulted in steady economic progress.” As Eglin *et al.* highlight, “not one word about East Timor is mentioned. Instead, we have a warm yet business-like, pragmatic endorsement and promotion of Canada’s growing relationship with Indonesia in the framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.”

#### **Canadian Ambassador Shortliffe’s 1978 Visit to East Timor**

Motivated by a desire to facilitate improved public relations, Indonesia granted an international delegation of parliamentarians and news correspondents supervised access to occupied East Timor in 1978. Canadian ambassador to Indonesia Glen Shortliffe was the first Canadian representative to visit East Timor since the invasion.<sup>57</sup> Ambassador Shortliffe and the Canadian reporters who accompanied him viewed first-hand the appalling conditions germane to the military controlled strategic hamlets into which many East Timorese had been relocated by occupying Indonesian forces.<sup>58</sup> Shortliffe received a telegram from External Affairs while in Jakarta instructing him on how to proceed. The (censored) telegram reads as follows:

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<sup>55</sup> Allan MacEachen, Secretary of State, External Affairs Canada, “Canada and Australia Expand Their Untroubled Relationship,” Remarks by Allan MacEachen to the Australian National Press Club, Canberra, 3 September 1976.

<sup>56</sup> Allan MacEachen, Secretary of State, External Affairs Canada, “Canada and Indonesia—the Dialogue Has Begun Well,” Speech by Allan MacEachen to the Jakarta Press Club, Jakarta, 25 August 1976.

<sup>57</sup> See also, H. Winsor, “The Enforcer Is Taking Over,” *Globe and Mail*, 18 June 1992, A6.

<sup>58</sup> D. Todd, “Shameful Silence: Canada Mum on Massacres of East Timor Civilians,” *KW Record*, 28 November 1991, A7.

We believe you should take opportunity in good company... to see first hand what is happening in that territory and to take first steps toward... accepting reality of East Timor's incorporation into Indonesia [censored]... If you are asked about the meaning of your visit you should say that you are taking advantage of an opportunity to see first hand what is happening in East Timor. You should add that Canada accepts that East Timor had *de facto* been integrated into Indonesia and that it is highly unlikely in our view that this will change [censored] ...Canada has not... yet decided what position it will adopt at the UN, but that visit will contribute to ongoing assessment of that position.<sup>59</sup>

After completing the visit, Shortliffe wrote a report recommending that Canada oppose self-determination for East Timor, stating that "Anything undertaken by the Indonesians represents an improvement over conditions which existed hitherto."<sup>60</sup> Shortliffe added, "It is impossible to consider that the bulk of the population is even capable of being politicized in any sophisticated sense."<sup>61</sup> The report demonstrates the extent to which the Canadian government relied upon and accepted "official rhetoric"; even though Shortliffe saw selected atrocities with his own eyes, his report reflects the Indonesian line...<sup>62</sup>

This report, by a man who would become head of the Privy Council, and therefore Canada's top bureaucrat, is more than disturbing. While genocide was being carried out around him, Shortliffe was encouraging his government to continue strengthening its relationship with the brutal Suharto regime. His report is perhaps the clearest example of the blind willingness of the [Canadian] government to link human rights to its foreign policy concerning Indonesia.<sup>63</sup>

In a letter to External Affairs dated 11 December 1978, Shortliffe conceded that Canada's unique relationship with Indonesia had resulted in a "position where benefits to our bilateral interests can be achieved."<sup>64</sup> In succeeding years, while the Indonesian occupation of East Timor advanced, successive Canadian governments would provide Indonesia with diplomatic support at the UN while praising the Suharto regime for having established "stability and order" in the archipelago.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Cited in Scharfe, *Complicity*, 137.

<sup>60</sup> Shortliffe, cited in Linda Hossie, "Will Ottawa Put its Money Where its Mouth is?" *The Globe and Mail*, 4 April 1992, D1.

<sup>61</sup> Shortliffe, cited in Scharfe, *Complicity*, 138.

<sup>62</sup> Scharfe, *Complicity*, 137.

<sup>63</sup> Scharfe, *Complicity*, 142.

<sup>64</sup> Shortliffe, cited in Brière, "A Country Now Forgotten," *This Magazine* 25 (1) (June/July 1991), 22-24.

<sup>65</sup> Jeffery Klahn, "For Gain...for Shame: For 24 Years Canada Has Been Too Reluctant to Criticize Indonesia's Brutal Human Rights Record," *The Record*, 25 September 1999, D3.

### Canadian Aid to Indonesia and East Timor

Following Indonesia's invasion of East Timor, Canadian Overseas Development Assistance (CODA) to Indonesia increased from Can.\$ 19.52 million in 1974/75 to Can.\$ 36.7 million in 1975/76. Canada routinely ranked among the top ten donors throughout occupation period.<sup>66</sup> Eglin points out that "the bulk of CODA to Indonesia is bilateral, that is, government to government aid," "designed as welfare to support Canadian businesses (or business-like institutions like universities) by requiring the "aided" country to buy the donor's goods."<sup>67</sup>

University academics across the spectrum of disciplines—the various social sciences, business, law, engineering, area studies—contribute through research, conference organizing, teaching, cultural exchange and consultancy to the formation and implementation of government policy on "development." This contribution can range from providing publicly subsidized market research for private business, to carrying out major development projects, to training graduate students in the professions, to hosting visiting academics or government officials from the "developing state," to arranging overseas placements, to providing expertise in drafting government policy or technical discussion ... In addition, the views of university faculty can be found across the media opinion slots providing rationalizations or occasionally critiques of state-sponsored actions.<sup>68</sup>

The significant ideological work undertaken by CIDA oriented toward legitimizing Canadian foreign policy warrants mention in this context. In a report entitled "CIDA in East Timor" it is stated that East Timor had been "incorporated as Indonesia's twenty-seventh province in 1976."<sup>69</sup> The statement is prefaced by a map representing East Timor as a province of Indonesia. This map corresponds with two others included, respectively, in a document entitled "CIDA programs in Asia" and in the 1993 special edition of the *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*.<sup>70</sup> Such representations can be seen to perform an ideological function *vis-à-vis* accepting and endorsing Indonesia's illegal annexation of East Timor.

The chronology of major events laid out in "Canada in East Timor" is also illustrative. It states that "conflict" (a neutral term) between Indonesia and FRETILIN followed East Timor's "incorporation," "severely disrupting life in the

<sup>66</sup> Scharfe, *Complicity*, 157-158.

<sup>67</sup> Eglin, "Partnership in an Evil Action," 67.

<sup>68</sup> Eglin, "Partnership in an Evil Action," 67.

<sup>69</sup> Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). "CIDA in East Timor" (CIDA, Asia Branch, 1993).

<sup>70</sup> One of the editors of the *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* at the time this map was published in the journal was Professor Harry Cummings, former Director of the Sulawesi Regional Development Project at the University of Guelph.

region for the next half decade.” The report states that, “Debate in the UN never yielded a concise, unanimous response to the issue” of annexation. Absent is mention of state terrorism, human rights violations, forced relocation, induced starvation and disease. Eglin *et al.* maintain that the report constitutes historical revisionism:

It lacks the courage to lie with abandon, settling rather for weasel lies, half-truths, deceptions, and economies with the truth. In doing so it plays a role akin to that of the “good Germans,” particularly the academic sort who gave themselves to the task of not only seeing what was going on in front of their eyes, but who supplied the horror with an agreeable cover story. Indonesia, the genocidal aggressor, and Canada, the complicit supporter, are written out of history, while Canada the humanitarian bringer of aid to the needy is written in.<sup>71</sup>

Viewed through the optic of the structural-conflict perspective within mainstream sociology, it is not particularly surprising that government agencies such as CIDA perform work oriented toward the political legitimization of Canadian foreign policy, considering the (geo)political-economic linkages that have existed between Canada and Indonesia. There are numerous other examples. Brière highlights the joint CIDA-Indonesia film series, *Indonesia: A Generation of Change*, intended to raise “tourist potential [in Indonesia] and deflect growing criticism by the international human rights and environmental community.”

Consider the Department of External Affairs and International Trade’s report, “Survey of Bilateral Relations Between Canada and Indonesia,” published in 1992. Here the Suharto regime is praised for implementing structural reforms, Canada’s business sector is encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to profit from economic linkages between Canada and Indonesia.<sup>72</sup> There is no mention of systematic human rights abuses, environmental degradation, violations of international law. As in other similar government documents, more acceptable premises are promoted, such as “potential for much greater trade and investment,” “more extensive economic linkages,” and significant opportunities for increased “cooperation in a variety of sectors.” Canadian investors and exporters are invited to “explore the opportunities offered by Indonesia’s markets.” Repressive labor conditions and anti-labor legislation, not conducive to the construction of ideologically serviceable context, are entirely absent from the discourse. External Affairs acknowledges “heavily centralized control has been conducive to economic growth and political stability ...”<sup>73</sup> Human rights violations are thus reduced to ideological non-issues. As noted by organizations such as Amnesty International,

<sup>71</sup> Eglin, *et al.*, “Canada.”

<sup>72</sup> External Affairs and International Trade, Canada, “Survey of Bilateral Relations Between Canada and Indonesia” (Ottawa: External Affairs and International Trade, 1992), 12.

<sup>73</sup> External Affairs and International Trade, Canada, “Survey of Bilateral Relations,” 12.

Asia Watch and Tapol, the Indonesian Human Rights Campaign, by-products of this centralized control have included routine sanctioning of state terrorism, suppression of political opposition, and a whole range of other violations of basic human rights, including arbitrary arrests, detention, rape, summary executions.

Examination of various Canadian government documents, reports, speeches and statements reveals the extent to which hegemony has been effectively centralized to facilitate and well serve the corporate and political agenda.<sup>74</sup> Concurrently, evidence suggests that (geo)political-economic interests were the central determinants of Canadian foreign policy in this context.<sup>75</sup> Canada's foreign policy toward Indonesia has also been aligned with US policy. Ed Broadbent, President of the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Ottawa, has said that if one wants to "look for reasons" to explain Canada's response to the Indonesian invasion and violent occupation of East Timor, and to explain the endorsement of Indonesian misinformation *vis-à-vis* speeches and documents, then "what seems to be an obvious factor is the hundreds of Canadian businesses [located in Indonesia]. My own hunch is that they don't misunderstand history. It just goes against their interests."<sup>76</sup>

#### **Canada and East Timor—The (Geo)Political-Economic Context**

Under what has been described by CIDA as "the steadfast leadership of President Suharto," Indonesia came to be viewed as an "investor's paradise" by Western corporations.<sup>77</sup> The President of Coca-Cola, for example, had this to say about the archipelago: "When I think of Indonesia, a country with 180 million people, a median age of 18, and a Muslim ban on alcohol, I feel I know what heaven looks like."<sup>78</sup> The phrase, *investor's paradise*, was first likened to Indonesia by Jacques Decornoy in *Le Monde* (1972), and was subsequently given wider currency by Herman and Chomsky.<sup>79</sup> It has been used many times since to characterize Indonesia, and for good enough reason. Liberal, corporate-friendly investment laws, availability of cheap, non-unionized labor, tax holidays for corporate capital, lax pollution controls and repressive labor conditions coalesced to create an

<sup>74</sup> Jeffery Klahn, "Corporate Hegemony: The Institutional Nature of Canadian Complicity in the East Timor Genocide," Unpublished MA thesis, University of Guelph (Guelph, Ontario, Canada, 1995).

<sup>75</sup> The most striking illustration can be found in the various statements made by the politicians and members of the business community in Elaine Brière's award-winning documentary, *Bitter Paradise: The Sell Out of East Timor*.

<sup>76</sup> Linda Hossie, "Will Ottawa Put its Money Where its Mouth is," *Globe and Mail*, 4 April 1992, D1.

<sup>77</sup> CIDA, "CIDA Programs in Asia," 5.

<sup>78</sup> Cited in Matthew Jardine, "International Report: APEC, the US and East Timor," *Z Magazine*, January 1995, 34-39.

<sup>79</sup> Chomsky and Herman, "East Timor: Genocide," 205.

environment highly attractive to foreign investment.<sup>80</sup> As noted, Canada was the largest Western investor in Indonesia at the time of the invasion. External Affairs acknowledges that: “Traditionally, Canada has enjoyed a large trade surplus with Indonesia ...”<sup>81</sup> A number of government agencies, including Foreign Affairs and the Export Development Corporation, have facilitated this *vis-à-vis* the promotion of policy designed to encourage linkages, as well as the financing and guaranteeing of export contracts. In the context of the Canada-Indonesia relationship, however, direct Canadian investment has been more significant than bilateral trade.<sup>82</sup>

Canadian corporations not only ignored on-going and systematic human rights violations in Indonesia in order to profit from the low-wage, high repression environment and the lack of environmental regulations but found them extremely advantageous.<sup>83</sup>

Foreign Affairs concedes that direct investment opportunities prompted Canada actively to pursue extensive commercial linkages between Canadian-based corporations and Indonesia.<sup>84</sup> With literally hundreds of Canadian-based corporations doing business in Indonesia, it is not surprising that government documents, speeches, reports and statements portrayed Indonesia in an extremely favorable light, while concurrently diverting attention away from inconvenient facts, thus ensuring that these issues were minimized and ignored throughout the invasion and occupation periods.

### **Canadian Military Exports to Indonesia**

Successive Canadian governments have authorized military export permits to Indonesia. Indonesia has been able to acquire the majority of its arms from other countries, predominantly the US, but Canada has sought to profit where it could. In 1995 alone the Chrétien government authorized Can\$ 362.4 million in military export permits to Indonesia. These included permits for Canadian Marconi communications technology, component parts for British Rapier missiles, and component parts for use in weapons systems to be rerouted to Indonesia through the US. In February 1995 the Department of Foreign Affairs published a document entitled “Canada’s Export Strategy: The International Business Plan 1995/1996 –

<sup>80</sup> Chomsky and Heman, “East Timor: Genocide,” 211-212. Resource extraction and exploitation have left a lasting mark on the Indonesian environment. Swamps, rainforests and other ecosystems, as well as bird, fish, and wildlife populations all suffered enormously as a result of economic liberalization and environmental degradation.

<sup>81</sup> External Affairs and International Trade, Canada, 12.

<sup>82</sup> Historically, the largest Canadian-based investor in Indonesia has been PT INCO. For additional details, see Klahn, “Corporate Hegemony: A Critical Assessment of the *Globe and Mail’s* News Coverage of Near-Genocide in Occupied East Timor,” 304-305.

<sup>83</sup> Sorenson, “Independence,” 13.

<sup>84</sup> Foreign Affairs, Canada, “Fact Sheet—Indonesia, April 1999” (Ottawa, Canada: Foreign Affairs).

Defence Products,” which identified Indonesia as “a priority country and a growth market for Canadian arms exports.”<sup>85</sup> While other NATO allies, such as Italy and Belgium, announced arms embargoes against Indonesia, Canada targeted the region as a key market for Canadian-made weapons and military goods.<sup>86</sup>

Scharfe’s excellent analysis reveals the extent to which Canada has pursued and facilitated the sale of arms to Indonesia. Canada’s willingness to authorize military export permits has been incongruent with its own Import/Export Act, which prohibits the sale of Canadian-made military goods to “countries engaged in hostilities and/or to countries whose governments have a persistent record of serious violations of human rights.”<sup>87</sup> There is a wealth of evidence indicating that Indonesia meets both these criteria.

In the final four months of 1996 the Chrétien government approved in excess of Can\$ 32 million in military export permits to Indonesia. These export permits authorized the sale of armored personnel carriers, transport trucks, military aircraft, helicopters, related component parts, and parts, as well as equipment for military training. Canadian military equipment and component parts have also frequently been sold to Indonesia indirectly, rerouted through third countries and in turn re-exported. Canada does not regularly screen indirect military exports. Military goods leaving Canada are frequently classified as “civilian” only to be used in the production of offensive military equipment elsewhere prior to shipment to recipient countries.<sup>88</sup> Canada has also hosted arms bazaars promoting Canadian arms and weapons exports to Indonesia.

### Concluding Remarks

The Fifth Freedom [Noam Chomsky’s concept] is that of the Western world to pillage and exploit the natural and human resources of the developing world. “Welcome to the Third World, where markets are freer, the tax incentives greater, and the red carpet has been rolled out for any multinational that has big bucks to invest,” writes one commentator.<sup>89</sup> The political and economic climate in Indonesia afforded Canadian corporations and Canadian military exporters with unique opportunities to prosper from Canada’s diplomatic and economic ties with the aggressor.<sup>90</sup> The absolute low volume of news coverage accorded the near-genocide and Canada’s aiding and abetting of it virtually ensured that decision-making would be unchallenged within Canada. I have argued elsewhere that the interrelations of state and corporate capitalism and the corporate media effectively circumvented

<sup>85</sup> East Timor Alert Network, “ETAN Newsletter,” Spring 1995, 9.

<sup>86</sup> East Timor Alert Network, “ETAN Newsletter,” Spring 1995, 9.

<sup>87</sup> See Scharfe, *Complicity*, 197-204.

<sup>88</sup> B. McLeod, “Cut off Arms to Indonesia,” *Toronto Star*, 13 December 1991.

<sup>89</sup> P. Cook, “New Tigers Are in the Gate,” *Globe and Mail*, 15 February 1992, B21.

<sup>90</sup> See Eglin, “Partnership in an Evil Action,” for assessment of the role played by Canadian universities and academics, in legitimizing and facilitating.



fundamental democratic processes.<sup>91</sup> Gramsci's phrase, "a unison of political and economic aims" is particularly appropriate when assessing the extent to which "intellectual and moral unity" can be seen to reveal the institutional nexus which gave rise to Canada's complicity in the East Timor near-genocide.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Klahn, "Corporate Hegemony: A Critical Assessment of the *Globe and Mail's* News Coverage of Near-Genocide in Occupied East Timor."

<sup>92</sup> The international community's complicity in the East Timor near-genocide serves as a striking case study in the Sociology of Human Rights. Chomsky writes that the "deterioration of the human rights climate...tends to correlate rather closely with US aid and support." Moreover, "The climate for business operations improves as unions and other popular organizations are destroyed, dissidents are tortured or eliminated, real wages are depressed, and the society as a whole is placed in the hands of a collection of thugs who are willing to sell out to the foreigner for a share of the loot—often too large a share, as business regularly complains. And as the climate for business operations improves, the society is welcomed into the Free World and offered the kind of 'aid' that will further these favorable developments. If the consequences are, for example, that crops are produced for export by wealthy landowners or transnational agribusiness while the population starves, that is simply the price that must be paid for the survival of free institutions" (Chomsky, *The Noam Chomsky Reader*, 218).