Chapter-6

Germany and the Crisis in East Timor

In the immediate aftermath of the Kosovo war the international community was faced with another crisis in East Timor where a long-smouldering conflict turned into butchery and terrible suffering. Keeping with the trend in the post-Cold War the crisis in East Timor was also an internal one, marked by the collapse of the state, civil war, massacres of the civilian population, ethnic cleansing and large-scale violation of the human rights. As a result UN was forced to give a wide mandate to its peacekeepers to remedy the situation. The tragic incidences of East Timor caused outrage in Germany like everywhere else in the western world. Germany participated in the multilateral UN peacekeeping operation, which took place in the wake of popular consultation and tragic events. But the German participation was at a level much below in comparison to what the world had seen in the context of former Yugoslavia especially in Kosovo. The German participation gave the impression that it was to show to the world that Germany remained equally concerned about crises in other parts of the world especially after the Kosovo crisis it could not have asked for a special role. Germany also wanted to strengthen the capabilities of multilateral institutions to solve crises so that confidence could be restored in their effectiveness.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF EAST TIMOR PROBLEM

Located in Southeast Asia, East Timor has Indonesia as its neighbour. But both belong to different ethnic groups. East Timor came under the colonial occupation of the British, the Dutch and the Portuguese. The Portuguese controlled East Timor for more
than four centuries after the Netherlands ceded it to Portugal under an agreement. A long spell of Portuguese rule led to the spread of the Christianity. East Timor continued as a Portuguese colony even after the World War II when decolonisation took place. Its status changed only with the changes in the Portugal itself.¹

Portuguese gave scant attention to East Timor, as economic returns were far less than five African colonies they controlled. When the left wing army came to power in Portugal in 1974 it started a decolonisation process. It also made attempt to promote democracy in East Timor. As a result three political parties, Democratic Union of Timor (UDT), Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT), and Timorese Democratic People’s Union (APODETI) were born. ASDT was a left leaning radical organisation and it advocated total independence. The APODETI was in favour of integration with Indonesia. In the local elections that were held in early 1975, the Revolutionary Front for Independent East Timor (FRETILIN) won 55 per cent of the vote and the UDT came a close second. Nearly 90 per cent of the people supported these two parties. With the tacit support of Indonesian army UDT staged a coup in August 1975. FRETILIN challenged it through an armed struggle and was able to establish its supremacy. Meanwhile Portuguese strength continued to diminish and the last remaining Portuguese including the governor secretly left Timor on August 27, 1975. Thus no formal handover of administration took place nor East Timor was officially decolonised. In fact FRETILIN repeatedly requested Portuguese to come back so that some order could be restored and a peaceful transfer of power could take place.²

² Ibid., p. 1469.
In the Civil War FRETILIN had the upper hand. But fearing imminent Indonesian intervention FRETILIN declared independence on November 28, 1975 to pre-empt any Indonesian move. Indonesia used prevailing chaos in East Timor as a pretext for its invasion on December 7, 1975.

The International Dimension of the Problem

The crisis in East Timor had an important international dimension. By the early 1970s the former Soviet Union had emerged as a major power gaining military parity with the United States. It was actively promoting and supporting communist movement in the third world. By the mid-Seventies communists were well entrenched in the three countries of the Indo-China and their influence was rising in the other countries. In Indonesia President Sukarno was deposed in a military coup in 1965 and his place was taken by General Suharto who came to power after massacring nearly a million people. He emerged as an anti-Communist crusader in the area, which the West was looking for. The FRETILIN led movement in East Timor was feared by both Indonesia and the West as it was considered left oriented.

Another major country in the region Australia was aware of the Indonesian plans to invade East Timor. They had no objection to even Indonesia taking over East Timor as its independence could have been a source of future problem. East Timor was of interest to these countries for geo-political reasons. The threat of communist intervention was looming large. Hence it was generally agreed by the Indonesia and the west that the incorporation of the East Timor was in the best interests of the region.3 It was also

3 Ibid., pp. 1469-72.
believed that the Indonesian invasion of East Timor had the tacit approval of the United States. Without US support, the annexation would not have taken place, and without US material, the war against the Timorese resistance forces of FALINTIL (Forcas Armadas de Libertacao de Timor Leste Independente) would not have been successful. Australia also approved Indonesian takeover to get hold of the oil for big oil companies in the Timor Gap.

For a long time West remained more interested in the booming economy of Indonesia rather than the atrocities committed on the East Timorese. Germany was no exception. It even sent 39 war vessels and 5000 metric tons of ammunition from the former East German army, and five submarines, to the Suharto regime.

Perpetual Human Rights Violations

Indonesia failed to assimilate East Timor as the latter was of different language, culture, civilisation, religion and ethnicity. The feeling against Indonesian occupation was widespread among the East Timorese and they were kept in control only by the powerful Indonesian army. In the process province lost nearly one fifth of its population. East Timor continuously remained on the international agenda because no important country other than Australia recognised Indonesian occupation including United Nations.

Massive deployment of troops did not help Indonesia to subjugate the FALINTIL (the armed wing of the pro-independence movement) whose members grew despite a

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high toll of Casualties. The recurrent incidents of atrocities and wanton killing by the army kept the East Timor issue alive in the international fora. On November 12, 1991 army indulged in the massacre of the unarmed peaceful protestors. In the ensuing enquiry few soldiers were court marshalled. In 1993, the United Nations Human Rights Commission strongly indicted Indonesia for its human rights violations in East Timor. The end of the Cold War and mounting international pressure forced Indonesia to hold high-level talks with exiled resistance leader Jose Ramos Horta in October 1994. The basic issue had been the question of referendum, which Indonesia was reluctant to hold.⁶

Although Indonesia had realised by the mid-1990s that something urgently needed to be done to settle the East Timor issue, it could not do so because it had settled a large number of Indonesians in East Timor. It had also pumped in hundreds of millions of dollars towards developmental activities to stem the agitation.

Change in Attitude of Western Nations

The issue of East Timor got lot of media attention in Germany when two East Timorese were chosen for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996.⁷ Before that Germany had strong business relations with Indonesia, and it even sent weapon shipments to it. After receiving the Nobel Peace prize Carlos Ximenes Belo met both German chancellor Kohl and Foreign Minister Kinkel. Both German leaders stressed the need for a peaceful, fair and harmonious solution for East Timor, particularly with respect to the maintenance of

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⁶ Naidu, n.1, pp. 1474-75.
human rights and the cultural identity of the people in that region. Probably this was the beginning of change in German as well as Western attitude towards East Timor problem.

**Political Changes in Indonesia**

Meanwhile political changes took place in Indonesia and B.J. Habibie came to power after Suharto was forced to quit office in May 1998. He promised to reduce the number of troops in East Timor and withdrew two combat battalions totalling about 1000 soldiers in late July following increased pressure from the UN and Portugal. In a major departure from longstanding policies of former President Suharto the new President offered special status to East Timor. He also proposed limited autonomy for East Timor. But the many members of the pro-independence East Timorese denounced Habibie's proposal as insufficient. There was also a gradual change in the attitude of the Indonesian military. Many of its members thought that the East Timor problem was unsolvable without political concessions. The change in attitude of army and government was confirmed when few army officers were dismissed for committing atrocities on East Timorese.

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GERMAN CONCERNS FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS IN EAST TIMOR

In November 1998 the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Joschka Fischer, created the post of Commissioner for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid as head of an independent unit in the Foreign Office and appointed Gerd Poppe. The Commissioner maintained a close contact with the East Timorese leaders Xanana Gusmao and José Ramos Horta.

From 26 February to 8 March 1999 the Commissioner visited Indonesia and East Timor where he had discussions with former president Habibie, Xanana Gusmao, the East Timor opposition leader who at that time was under house arrest, and various Indonesian NGOs, journalists, police and military representatives. His efforts led to the release of a group of long-serving political prisoners, a development which received considerable press coverage in Indonesia. His attempts to secure the release of Xanana Gusmao, also after the visit, proved fruitless at first, however. The visit confirmed the information that the military authorities and pro-Indonesian militias in East Timor were collaborating with one another to prevent the island's peaceful transition to independence.12

Framework Agreement on East Timor

As events turned out, it was the Indonesian Government itself, which took the decision to seek a final resolution of the East Timor issue in more clear-cut terms. Dr. Habibie decided to opt for a UN - organised ballot for East Timor by the end of 1999, in which the East Timorese would be offered two distinct choices - to continue as a

province of Indonesia with a substantial degree of autonomy, or choose formal separation leading to eventual independence. This proposal was discussed in New York with the UN and the Portuguese Government. After much argument between Indonesia and Portugal (trilateral negotiations under UN auspices), a Framework Agreement on East Timor was signed on 5 May 1999, together with supplementary agreements on security and the modalities for a referendum. The signatories were the Indonesian and the Portuguese Foreign Ministers, Alatas and Gama respectively, and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. This agreement noted the different positions of Indonesia and Portugal on the issue of East Timor’s future, but both signed a statement saying that in order to further the peace process, the Secretary General “should consult the East Timorese People on the constitutional framework for autonomy”. It was decided that this would involve a UN-administered referendum to decide if the East Timorese accepted or rejected the proposed autonomy. The two governments entrusted the Secretary General with organising and conducting a “popular consultation”. The UN Security Council instructed UNAMET (UN Mission in East Timor) to carry out the referendum on behalf of the United Nations.

However, it was clear that Indonesia, consistent with its strongly held views, would not agree to the establishment of an international security or peacekeeping presence in East Timor before the ballot. President Habibie categorically rejected Australian calls for him to invite a peacekeeping force into East Timor in the lead-up to the vote. In these circumstances, there was no prospect of persuading Indonesia under

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Habibie to agree to accept a UN run election in East Timor along with an international force.\(^\text{15}\)

Germany supported the cause of East Timor in UN as president of the European Union. Its representative Mr. Klaus D. Stein supported the efforts of UN to bring peace to East Timor. It welcomed the signing of the agreement on the future of East Timor on 5 May 1999 by the Secretary General and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Portugal and Indonesia and considered it a major breakthrough on the path of solving a long-standing issue.\(^\text{16}\) It also expressed the commitment of the European Union to bear its share of expenses in implementing the accord and of the UN mission.\(^\text{17}\)

\textit{UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET)}

On June 11, 1999 the Security Council established United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) in its resolution 1246 (1999). The sole responsibility for the security was given to the Indonesia Police, as stipulated in the May 5 Agreement. Thus UNAMET went into East Timor without the protection or armed UN peacekeeping troops. The agreement also prescribed the absolute neutrality of the Indonesian Police and the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) in the referendum process. The duties of the Indonesian police included protection of the UN Staff, disarmament of armed groups, and the supervision of ballot papers and boxes while in transit.\(^\text{18}\)

\(^{15}\) Downer, n.13, p. 6.

\(^{16}\) See German Presidency of the European Union, Statement by Mr. Klaus D. Stein Representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union, New York, \url{http://www.germany-info.org/UN/eu_state_05_24a_99.htm}, 24 May 1999, German Information Center.

\(^{17}\) See German Presidency of the European Union, Question of East Timor, Explanation of position by Mr. Gerhard Kuntze Representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union, New York, \url{http://www.germany-info.org/UN/eu_state_06_25_99.htm}, 25 June 1999, German Information Center.

UNAMET became operational at a very rapid pace. The mission included 240 international staff, 270 civilians police, 50 military liaison offices, 425 UN volunteers, and 668 local East Timorese staff for translation and driving (plus 3600 East Timorese who were hired for five days to run the actual referendum). UNAMET registered 451,792 potential voters among the population of over 800,000 in East Timor and abroad.

**REJECTION OF AUTONOMY AND GENOCIDE IN EAST TIMOR**

The turnout for the referendum on 30 August 1999 was 98.6 per cent. An overwhelming majority of 78.5 per cent voted against Indonesia's offer of autonomy and thus, by implication, for East Timor's independence. Hours after the results of the vote were announced a large-scale violence and destruction was unleashed by the pro-integrationists and the supporters of the status quo. In a three-week campaign, so called Operation Clean Sweep, Indonesian armed forces and locally organised militia executed hundreds of East Timorese. More than 7,000 people were killed. About 75 per cent of the country's population of 890,000 were displaced. Indonesians fled the area, and the remaining Timorese either escaped into the hills of the interior, or were forcibly removed in ships and trucks to West Timor or neighbouring islands.19

*Special Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights*

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson found overwhelming evidence of a planned and systematic campaign of gross violations of human rights after visiting Darwin and Jakarta from 10 to 13 September 1999. She

referred to "systematic killings, expulsion, destruction of property" as well as "intimidation by militias and security forces".20

A Special Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights (CHR) on East Timor was held in Geneva from 23 to 27 September 1999. Ambassador Walter Lewalter who was permanent representative of Germany fully supported the convening of the special session. He shared the deep concerns about the dramatic human rights violations and the humanitarian situation in East and West Timor. He appreciated the UN High Commissioner on Human rights for her testimonies on the situation in East Timor. German representative stated that the tragic events that took place immediately after the referendum required swift and determined action by the international community. Germany also welcomed the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1264 authorising the deployment of multi-national force to restore law and order in East Timor and pave the way to a peaceful and lasting solution of the question of East Timor based on the self-determination of its people.21

Germany considered the special session of Commission on human rights as the appropriate complementary action to the resolution of Security Council. It believed that the action by the Commission on human rights will only bolster the credibility of UN. German representative considered the first hand reports of human rights Commissioner on massive violations of human rights as evidence of a deliberate, widespread and systematic campaign of gross violations of human rights including systematic killings,

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displacement, sexual violations, enforced and involuntary disappearances, destruction of property and countless other atrocities carried out by militia groups and elements of the security forces.

Germany showed its concern at the campaign of terror that resulted in a massive displacement affecting almost the whole of the people of East Timor and called for the establishment of an impartial International Commission of Inquiry to investigate cases of human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law. It demanded punishment to all those who planned, authorized and executed the campaign of forced deportation, torture and murder. It also called upon the Commission to initiate the activities of all those mechanisms that were at its disposal to react to the events adequately. 22

Germany urged the authorities of Indonesia, who were primarily responsible for the safety of the civilian population, to take efficient measures to put an immediate end to human rights violations. Commending the Indonesian Government for the cooperation shown with INTERFET it requested them to abide by the agreements of May 5, 1999, especially to fully respect the freely expressed wishes of the East Timorese people on the political future of their territory in the referendum that took place on August 30, 1999.

Germany underlined the need of humanitarian assistance to people in East and West Timor and demanded unhindered access to humanitarian agencies to those in need. It also demanded effective guarantee for free and safe return of all refugees and displaced persons to East Timor and urged the international community to provide assistance in an enormous reconstruction effort while showing the willingness to share its part. 23

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
The special conference adopted a EU resolution, which called for an international committee of inquiry with the appropriate participation of Asian experts. German delegation fully supported the statement of the Finnish EU Presidency. In response to that resolution the UN Secretary General appointed a six-man international committee, one of whose members was Germany’s former Minister of Justice, Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger. Objecting to the committee of inquiry Indonesia set up an Indonesian National Commission for Human Rights to investigate violations of human rights in East Timor (Komnas-Ham). Incidentally both the committees later confirmed the atrocities committed on the East Timor population.24

**German Response to Genocide in East Timor**

German foreign policy initially reacted very cautiously to the escalation of the conflict in East Timor. The Foreign Ministry considered international "measures" necessary if the situation did not improve quickly. As multi-lateralism was the core principle of the German foreign policy there was no question of German government taking a unilateral action. Hence a common course had to be found within the European Union (EU). This aim was tried to be achieved through different fora. Although good business contacts were always maintained with Indonesia, in foreign policy it was not necessarily regarded as a special German area. German government faced difficulties in imposing economic restrictions because most of the business was of private nature, which were outside government influence.

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The basic course of the German Indonesia policy was not to destabilize Habibie, if possible, in order not to provoke a military coup. The government was of the view that the president Habibie was only a transitional figure. In fact Volker Neumann, Indonesia expert in the SPD Bundestag Group, regarded despite all the criticism Habibie and his Foreign Minister Ali Alatas as important tools to advance the process of democratisation.

The foreign policy expert of CDU (Christian Democratic Union) Karl Lamers wanted Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder (SPD (Social Democratic Party) to take a much firmer position against Indonesian President Yusuf Habibie, and criticized Berlin for its indifference to the East Timor problems.

Most German foreign politicians preferred referring the issue to the UN. But it was feared that the China and Russia would surely prevent a mandate from being approved against the will of the government in Jakarta. Hence effort was made to put pressure on Habibie so that he would be more amenable to accept foreign soldiers in East Timor as soon as possible.

Germany followed a more vigorous foreign policy as President of the EU. It urgently demanded together with its partners, by means of demarches, statements and direct interventions at the highest level, that Indonesia act in accordance with its responsibility for security and stability in East Timor on the basis of the Trilateral Agreement signed in New York on 5 May 1999.

Through the personal intervention of the Federal Chancellor and the Foreign Minister, the Federal Government had also helped secure the Indonesian Government’s approval for the assignment of the international peacekeeping force
INTERFET. Speaking in UN General Assembly the foreign Minister Joschka Fischer favoured UN mission to East Timor on the ground of collapse of state and massive violation of human rights. He supported the sending of a multilateral peacekeeping force to implement the Security Council's mandate and asked Indonesia to extend its cooperation to guarantee its success. He demanded an end to the atrocities while promising continued German assistance.

UN Response to the Genocide

The UN had originally planned a three-stage process for transfer of power in case the East Timorese opted for independence. But this plan could not be implemented as unprecedented violence and destruction followed the August ballot precluding an orderly transfer of power to the UN. Instead an entirely new mission had to be hastily devised.

As Indonesia lost the control of the situation on the ground, it led to a more active international response to the crisis. East Timor was not so much a failed state as a territory from which the attributes of the state had been removed. The grave situation forced Jakarta to accept a multinational force into East Timor. On September 13, President B. J. Habibie conveyed to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan that he would accept the Australian led force. Both the Portuguese and the Australians also demanded Security Council action, and the Australians offered to lead a multi-national force – a ‘coalition of the willing’, in the new UN phrase.

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25 Ibid., p. 22.
27 Chopra, n.19, p. 28.
Deployment of International Force in East Timor (INTERFET)

The Security Council, in its resolution 1264 (1999) of September 15, 1999, acting under Chapter VII of the UN charter, authorised the establishment of a multi-national force empowered to use all necessary measures to restore peace and security in East Timor. Its mandate also covered the protection and support for UNAMET, and provision of humanitarian aid. INTERFET, which was placed under Australian command, began operations on 20 September 1999. The resolution noted the ‘worsening humanitarian situation in East Timor’ and expressed concern at ‘reports indicating that systematic, widespread and flagrant violations of international humanitarian and human rights law have been committed’. It also underlined the need to punish those responsible for such violations as may subsequently be verified.28

Establishment of INTERFET troops for East Timor was considered a dangerous venture with nationalism on the rise in Jakarta. Security Council provided INTERFET with fairly robust rules of engagement. But INTERFET forces did not face any serious challenge from the militia groups and were able to enter the main regional towns in East Timor. INTERFET has had a free hand in securing East Timor. It was able to secure the countryside and organise the distribution of relief supplies. But the main challenge to INTERFET was not from the militia, but the retrieval of as many as 260,000 East Timorese forcibly transported to West Timor.29

The German cabinet adopted a resolution on 6 October 1999 with regard to Bundeswehr's (Germany's armed forces) participation in UN measures to be conducted

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28 Cotton, n.4, pp. 127-42.
29 Chawla, n.18, pp. 2294-95.
within the framework of the International Force East Timor (INTERFET). In a vote held on 7 October 1999, the German Bundestag approved it by a large majority.

While INTERFET was busy in the arduous task of restoring security in the territory, Indonesia agreed in principle, to transfer all authority over East Timor to the UN on September 28, at a meeting between Indonesia and Portugal. Indonesia's Parliament formally revoked the 1978 decree incorporating East Timor into Indonesia on 20 October 1999.

**United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET)**

On 25 October, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1272 establishing the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), the UN body mandated to oversee East Timor's reconstruction and transformation towards eventual statehood. East Timor was no longer part of Indonesia.\(^{30}\) UNTAET had not only to ensure military security but to build up a civil administration in East Timor. It was given a mandate to establish a transitional administration in East Timor up to full independence. Its period was initially until 31 January 2001. It had a strength of 9,150 troops, 1,640 civilian police, civilian personnel (no figures available). Its cost was US$ 584 million (until 1 July 2000). UNTAET replaced all pre-existing authorities in the territory.\(^{31}\) Germany sent a team of experts to set up a personal registration system.

\(^{30}\) Downer, n.13, p. 7.

\(^{31}\) Chopra, n.19, p. 28.
GERMAN PARTICIPATION

Besides providing political support to the cause of East Timor the German government also gave humanitarian aid for its people. The Federal Government's humanitarian aid was administered primarily through the Federal Foreign Office (Task Force for Humanitarian Aid) and the BMZ (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development). Both of them prefer to work in cooperation with, German humanitarian organizations. But if sometimes situation demands they also coordinate with international organizations such as the ICRC, UNHCR or IOM.

Humanitarian Aid for East Timor

On September 17, 1999, Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer met with representatives of German human rights and humanitarian organizations to discuss the situation in East Timor and the possibilities for German assistance there. A German special envoy visited East Timor shortly after that meeting to prepare recommendations for specific aid measures.

The Foreign Ministry subsequently allocated DM 3 million for immediate humanitarian aid. By October 13, 1999 six organizations had received financial commitments from the ministry totalling DM 2.07 million. Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (German International Hunger Aid) was given DM 725,000 for building and household supplies, cooking supplies and water tanks. The International Committee of the Red Cross received DM 500,000 for emergency medical assistance and material aid. The donation received by UNHCR was DM 300,000 for plastic shelters and cooking supplies.
Another organisation Ärzte in der Dritten Welt (Doctors in the Third World) was given DM 265,000 for food and medical supplies. World Vision received DM 213,000 for blankets and plastic shelters and the share of Terre des Hommes was DM 70,000 for food, hygiene and medical supplies, tents and blankets.\(^{32}\)

Germany has also contributed to the work of UNAMET (United Nations Mission in East Timor), providing 9.8 per cent in the form of mandatory contributions towards the mission’s total budget of $ 87 million. It is sharing a major part of the cost of UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration for East Timor).

In 1999 the BMZ set aside DM 7.5 million. Of this amount DM 5.2 million was made available through GTZ, DWHH, UNHCR and WFP for the supply of food (e. g. beans, rice, maize and protein biscuits) and DM 1 million for emergency accommodation. Germany also contributed substantially towards the European Union effort to provide humanitarian aid to East Timor.

DM 1.3 million was marked for reconstruction projects within the framework of Technical Cooperation. Implementation on the German side was in the hands of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).

Besides funding, Germany also sent a contingent of the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) to participate in the UN peacekeeping mission in East Timor known as International Force East Timor (INTERFET). After the German Bundestag approved involvement on October 7, the Bundeswehr deployed two C-160 Aircraft for medical evacuation and about 100 personnel to Darwin, Australia. Their role was to evacuate seriously wounded or ill members of INTERFET or the civilian UN Mission in East Timor.

\(^{32}\) "Humanitarian Aid for East Timor," [http://www.germany-info.org/newcontent/np/gp_bpi_2.html](http://www.germany-info.org/newcontent/np/gp_bpi_2.html), Background Papers, German Information Center.
Timor (UNAMET) from East Timor to Darwin. The first mission took place on October 20. The cost for this contribution was about DM 5.1 million per month; deployment costs were about DM 3 million.\textsuperscript{33} Germany also provided UNTAET with experts to develop the judicial administration as well as a German team to help build up a registration system.\textsuperscript{34}

Regulation of Voters

In East Timor registration of inhabitants began in April 2000. The project included the establishment of a registration system for East Timor as well as the issue of personal identity documents for the population. A ten member German team of registration experts completed the process on 22 June 2001. The total costs of the project amounting to DM 7 million was funded by the Federal Foreign Office. The registration of all East Timor's 780,000 inhabitants in some 13 districts made possible the timely conduct of elections, which were scheduled for 30 August. The East Timor at that time was administered by the United Nations Transitional Administration for East Timor (UNTAET). These elections were an important step on the road to its independence. This project showed the significance of the civilian components of UN peace missions.

DEBATE IN GERMANY

The German Cabinet gave approval for German participation in East Timor on 6 October 1999, which was also endorsed by the Bundestag the very next day. But the

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

Bundestag reluctantly agreed to Fischer's promised commitment of a medical unit (up to 100 people) for East Timor and there was wrangling about the East Timor mandate for the Bundeswehr medical unit. The criticism from all fractions was very clear. Joschka Fischer was charged with having an inadequate political sense. There were Bundestag members even deep into the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) who thought that the popular Fischer had "lost touch".

The bitter debate in the wake of Bundeswehr's East Timor participation affected Fischer's political standing. It made clear that there was as yet no general consensus with regard to German involvement on peacekeeping operations. Even the foreign minister agreed that the question whether force should be used to uphold the rule of law and in which international operations Germany should participate remained one of the thorniest and most controversial issues in the field of foreign policy.\(^{35}\) He also recognised the need for a fundamental debate over the issue.

Fischer however strongly defended German participation in East Timor and stated that in East Timor not only values but also German interests were involved. The twin aim of Germans were to provide humanitarian aid and to contribute to strengthening the mechanisms that preserve and safeguard world peace. Fischer argued that a strong Security Council of the United Nations would limit the claim of the United States to have the sole right of decision with respect to the course of action in many international conflicts. He included the enhancing of the status of the UN Security Council as a core element of the Red-Green program. Fischer highlighted that to strengthen the multilateral

structures Germany had to contribute to operations in distant parts of the world. The German participation in East Timor was to meet their strategic goal of strengthening multilateralism and the role of the United Nations. A total absence of Germans would have been criticised by the world community especially after all the effort Germany had put into the Kosovo operation.

But the contradictions were evident even in Fischer's statements when he emphasised "European preference" for the German participation in UN peacekeeping operations on the grounds of Germany being a non-maritime and non-colonial power and partly because the way its interests and security needs intermesh. He preferred self-restraint as a principle for operations outside Europe and ruled out a new, global "humanitarian" interventionism. But in the same vein he also said that the "European preference" should not be taken to mean "Europe only". Although the European preference was obvious, drawing a strict line remained difficult as the crisis in east Timor was related with a legacy of European colonialism. The criteria that are to be applied in future individual cases, however, have not been discussed or even determined.

The debate in Germany over East Timor participation made it amply clear that the differences over out-of-area operations are far from being reconciled.

ASSESSING GERMAN ROLE IN EAST TIMOR CRISIS

The crisis in East Timor took place immediately after the war in Kosovo had stopped. But the nature of the crisis was quite similar as it was also marked by a large-scale violation of human rights. Large number of people were killed, and women were
raped. There was also huge displacement of people who were turned into refuges. The large German participation in Kosovo was justified on the humanitarian grounds. So it became difficult for Germany to turn its back from a similar crisis in East Timor. Moreover after participating in combat operations in Kosovo Germany could not have talked about a special role for itself in international politics.

There was a general change in approach towards East Timor problem in the Western World after the vanishing of the communist threat in South East Asia. West now took a moral high ground and the violation of human rights in East Timor became a priority issue. There was no reason for Germany to take a separate stand. Germany provided logistical support in the UN operation in East Timor, which was in line with its image of a major Civilian power.

The lawlessness in East Timor was immediately controlled and the UN force did not face any major local resistance. Hence the crisis subsided soon and it could not test the military dimension of German participation. At the time of crisis in East Timor Germany was also the President of European Union. Its representative in UN was representing the whole of Europe, which also ruled out an indifferent German approach. German participation was also intended to boost the peacekeeping capabilities of the United Nations. Germany wanted to strengthen the multi-lateral institutions as it was at the core of its foreign policy. Moreover the credibility of these institutions was seriously damaged in Kosovo, hence it was time now to restore them. It had also implications for international politics, as it would reduce the tendencies of the major powers to take unilateral decisions not explicitly permitted by the international law.
But the ensuing debate in the aftermath of the German government's decision to participate in the crisis showed that the issue of German participation in peacekeeping operations remained as controversial as ever.