Chapter - IV

EAST TIMOR AND OTHER ISSUES
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The foreign policy of the United States has always been guided by its self-interest which accommodates other country's interests only when it does not clash with its own. The change in US policy posture on East Timor illustrates it very clearly.

The Origin of the Controversy

The controversy over East Timor, a former Portuguese island, started with the intervention of Indonesia on 7 December 1975. East Timor was not a part of the Indonesian Republic at the time of its independence in 1945. Before its integration with Indonesia, until 1975, East Timor was a Portuguese colony for more than four centuries. It was incorporated as Indonesia's 27th province in mid 1976.

The current phase in the history of East Timor began in mid-1974, when the Portuguese Junta Salvacao Nacional (Junta of National Salvation) was established after the change of regime in Portugal on 25 April 1974.1 It intended to relinquish its control over all the Portuguese overseas territories. As a result of this

1For the detailed history of East Timor, see J. Stephen Hoadley, The Future of Portuguese Timor : Dilemmas and Opportunities (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1975).
decision the Portuguese abruptly withdrew from East Timor, setting off a power struggle among several Timorese political factions. Thus, suddenly East Timor became a major source of international tension.

Soon after the April 1974 change, three political parties sprang to life in East Timor. An avowedly Marxist, the Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente, (FRETILIN--originally Associacao Social Democrata Timorese) demanded immediate independence and had support from junior civil servants, teachers, urban workers and students. The Uniao Democratic de Timor (UDT, originally Partido de Uniao Democratica) wanted "progressive autonomy" but always under the Portuguese flag. UDT consisted of the "higher civil servants" (such as the Mayor of Dili, Costa Mouzinho), the native chiefs who served as petty territorial officers, villagers, who regarded the Portuguese flag as a mystical symbol, some Chinese businessmen, and the Portuguese community. The Associacao Popular Democratica de Timor (Apodeti - Originally Associacao Para Integracao de Timor na Indonesia) called for "an autonomous integration into the Republic of Indonesia in accordance with inter-
national law" on the grounds of ethnic and historical links".2

There was little co-operation among these parties for several months after their formation in 1974. Gradually, the Fretilin achieved military supremacy and viewed itself as the only legitimate representative of the people of Timor. In the last few months of 1974, Fretilin began pragmatically altering its demands and thereby tried to gain wider acceptance of its legitimacy, especially by Portugal, Indonesia and Australia.

**Indonesia's Concern**

Following the outbreak of fighting among the various political factions in East Timor in August 1975, the effective loss of Portuguese control and the assumption of a dominant position by the leftist, anti-Indonesia Fretilin group in an area contiguous to the

2The leader of Fretilin was Francisco Xavier do Amaral, who was trained in Macao for the priesthood and was a customs officer in the Portuguese administration in East Timor before entering the political struggle. The founder of UDT was Joao Carrascalao, a wealthy planter who soon resigned his leadership due to his well-known association with unpopular Portuguese. He was replaced by Francisco Lopez do Cruz (who had fought for Portugal in Africa). Apodeti was headed by Arnaldo dos Reis Araujo. See, David Freney, *Timor: Freedom Caught Between the Powers* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975). Jill Jolliffe, *East Timor: Nationalism and Colonialism* (Queensland: University of Queensland, 1978).
Indonesian territory alarmed the Jakarta Government. In the Indonesian perception, an independent Portuguese Timor was a threat to its security as it would have provided an opening for communist influence and subversion. Neither could it welcome the alternative prospect of East Timor's gradual self-determination and its continued association with Portugal, for fear that a weak and non-viable Lisbon government in East Timor would make it vulnerable to communist insurgency and takeover.

This fear prompted the Indonesian leaders to protect their country from the imminent danger of communist subversion. Therefore, reacting to events in East Timor, the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Indonesia Armed Forces, General R. Surono stated in New Zealand on 15 February 1975 that, "Indonesia was willing to annex Portuguese Timor if that was what its people wanted." In a similar vein, Suara Karya, the official organ of the Golkar, the ruling political party, warned in March 1975 that Indonesia would not tolerate Portuguese Timor becoming a communist trouble spot. The

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Indonesian government also repeatedly announced that every necessary steps would be taken which would in turn save the Timorese from Portuguese colonialism, infiltration by communists, and the deception by Fretilin.

**Outbreak of the Civil War**

In the meantime, events were heating up in East Timor. On 11 August 1975, a civil war broke out in East Timor when the Democratic Union of Timor (UDT), moderate anti-communist group demanding gradual self-determination for East Timor, launched a coup attempt against the Fretilin communists. UDT seized key installations in Dili (capital of East Timor) and demanded immediate independence for East Timor. In retaliation, the Fretilin forces quickly occupied Dili and most of the rest of the country, thus, pushing UDT troops towards the Indonesian border.

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7 The Indonesian News, 12 August 1975.
The Indonesian Invasion

In the ensuing civil war, Indonesia did not immediately come to UDT's aid, since it did not want to get involved directly. But after a five-day battle, when about 200 people were killed and Fretilin gained complete control of Dili, it was reported that the Indonesian President Suharto asked the Portuguese government for assurances that "Lisbon won't oppose Indonesian takeover of Timor". With this statement, the Indonesian naval forces blockaded East Timor in order to prevent the supply of arms to the Fretilin forces and the Jakarta government sought a somewhat indirect diplomatic solution of the problem by requesting Portuguese intervention. In response to that appeal, Portugal suggested the Organization of a combined military force of Portugal, Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia. But both Australia and Malaysia refused to participate and Portugal declined to join the military intervention by Indonesia. As no decision could be arrived at over the issue, the Indonesians no longer

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wanted to take the risk after Fretilin forces declared independence of East Timor on 28 November 1975.¹⁰

Fretilin's action was strongly disapproved by the Indonesian leaders. Reacting to the independence of Timor, the Indonesian Defence Chief Ali Murtopo told Dan Coggin, a reporter of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, "we do not want to be a naughty boy in this case. But neither does Indonesia want to sacrifice its stability over the issue".¹¹

In a press statement, the Information Minister Mashuri said that Fretilin's action was clearly contradictory to the efforts being made continuously by the Indonesian government to ensure the right of self-determination of the Timorese people through negotiations as had been agreed in the Rome Memorandum of Under-standing, approved by Portugal, Indonesia and the three warring parties.¹²

¹⁰The *Indonesian News*, 29 November 1975.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²The statement was read out by Information Minister Mashuri, which was issued following a sudden meeting between President Suharto, Foreign Minister Adam Malik, Information Minister Mashuri and the Chief of Staff for Operation, Defence Ministry Marshall Sudharmono at Merdeka Palace. Ibid., 1 December 1975.
The development in East Timor forced the Indonesian government to undertake its first large-scale military operation since independence. A few days after the Fretelin forces declared independence of East Timor, the Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik stated in Jakarta on 1 December 1975 that, "the solution of the Timor question now "lay on the field of battle", and on 7 December 1975 several thousand Indonesian paratroopers and marines officially called "volunteers" - invaded East Timor by land, sea and air, and siezed control of Dili and Timor's second city Baucau.\textsuperscript{13}

The invasion was immediately followed by several meetings of the Indonesian top officials for the incorporation of East Timor into its territory. After a prolonged discussion among the parties concerned, East Timor was finally integrated into Indonesia on 17 July 1976 as its 27th province.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid, 8 December 1975.

\textsuperscript{14}The process of integration at the request of the people of East Timor started in May 1976 when the Indonesian government appointed a "provisional legislature" after an elaborate preparation. On 7 June 1976, the pro-Jakarta provisional government of East Timor issued a petition asking Indonesia to accept and ratify within the shortest time, the full integration of the people and the territory of East Timor into the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia. After the petition was issued, President Suharto sent a fact finding mission of Indonesian government, officials, members of Parliament, and representatives of various (continued...)
International Response

Indonesia's intervention in East Timor and its integration with Indonesia provoked international disapproval. Most of the countries of the world interpreted the event as a symbol of Jakarta's desire for national aggrandizement. On 7 December 1975, the day on which invasion took place, Portugal broke off all diplomatic relations with Indonesia accusing it of "armed aggression".15

Indonesia's relationship with Australia were also severed. Australia repeatedly said that it deeply regretted the course of events in East Timor, and made it clear that it would play no major role in the situation. Prime Minister Peacock declined to send any organizations to East Timor, in order to "ascertain the wishes of the people" and being reassured by it about the "wishes of the people", integrated East Timor with Indonesia on 17 July 1976. See, "International Conference on East Timor and Indonesia", Conference Report, Bonn 25-26, June 1976, Journal of Contemporary Asia (Sweden), vol.6, no.3, 1976, pp.360-76; S. Nicheertlain, "Struggle for East Timor : Preclude to Invasion", Journal of Contemporary Asia, vol.7, no.4, 1977, pp.486-96; Michael Leifer, "Indonesia and the incorporation of East Timor", World Today (London), vol.32, no.9, September 1976, p.349; and Facts on File (New York), vol.36, no.1864, 17 July 1976, p.543.

14(...)continued

diplomatic observers to the People's Assembly in Dili on 31 May 1976. 16

As for the Soviet Union, Pravda only expressed concern over the affair and support for Timorese self-determination without openly denouncing Jakarta. 17

China condemned Jakarta in a 9 December article in the People's Daily by saying, "the struggle of the people of East Timor for national liberation and independence is an integral part of the third world people's struggle against colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism, and demanded the immediate withdrawal of all invading armed forces". 18

The USA spoke out against the use of force in East Timor. After the word of invasion reached the United States, The New York Times expressed its concern over the matter, and hoped that the conflict would be resolved peacefully. 19 Another article in The New York Times stated that, the rising criticism of Indonesian massacres in the Western press would have an adverse


17 William, n.15, p.102.


effect on foreign investment, not to mention Indonesia's standing in the world community" and a December 8 editorial in the same newspaper strongly endorsed "projected Portuguese moves to bring independence to the territory". It charged that, overt Indonesian military action in the eastern half of Timor particularly with the use of American material, would jeopardize the proposal for more military aid to Indonesia. In another editorial, the paper commented: "by any definition, Indonesia is guilty of naked aggression in its military seizure of Portuguese Timor, however, the takeover would encourage Congress to examine carefully a pending proposal for $43 million more in military aid to Indonesia".

Reacting to Indonesia's takeover of East Timor the Time magazine reported, "the aggression in East Timor has brutally altered the process of decolonization" and demanded that the people of Timor must now be given the right to decide their own future in a free election”.

The US government like the Australian government also expressed scepticism about the authenticity of the

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20Ibid., 8 December 1975.

21Ibid., 13 December 1975.

22"Invasion in Timor", Time (Chicago), vol.106, no.25, 22 December 1975, p.32.
People's Assembly and declined to send any diplomatic observer.\textsuperscript{23}

A June 1976 report in the \textit{Washington Post} expressed scepticism about the authenticity of the People's Assembly and said that, "the diplomats and journalists were allowed only three hours in East Timor and could not meet any of the ten representatives to the Assembly which voted unanimously to request integration with Indonesia".\textsuperscript{24}

\textbf{Move in the United Nations}

While these events were unfolding, Portugal as well as Fretilin and its friends sought support from the UN for the settlement of the East Timor issue. In a letter dated 7 December 1975, Portugal informed the United Nations of the invasion mentioning: "in the present

\textsuperscript{23}On the political front, the Indonesian sponsored Provisional Government of East Timor, invited the 23 embassies in Jakarta to send observers to a People's Assembly held in Dili on 31 May in order to formally declare the former Portuguese colony as a province of Indonesia. Only seven embassies (New Zealand, Malaysia, Thailand, India, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Nigeria) accepted. The United States, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Singapore and Papua New Guenea, declined to send any observers. See \textit{Facts on File}, vol.36, no.1857, 12 June 1976, p.422; \textit{The Indonesian News}, 2-10 June 1976.

circumstances, Portugal is unable to restore peace in Timor to ensure that the decolonization process is accomplished through peaceful and negotiated means" and urged a meeting of the Security Council".  

As a result of 7 December Portuguese letter, the UN General Assembly met five times between 12 and 22 December 1975. On 12 December the Assembly adopted a resolution on the question of Timor by a vote of 72 in favour to 10 against with 43 abstentions. On both the occasions the U.S.A. voted against Indonesia in the United Nations.  

The General Assembly's resolution No.3485 (XXX), "strongly deplored the military intervention of the armed forces of Indonesia in Portuguese Timor, and called upon it to desist from further violation of the territorial integrity of Portuguese Timor, and to withdraw its forces from the territory immediately, to enable the people of the territory to exercise freely their right to self-determination and independence".  

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26 UN Doc. A/34/pv.75.

27 UN Doc. A/31/PV/8.
On 22 December the same year, the Security Council also adopted a resolution.\textsuperscript{28} Another resolution was adopted by the Security Council on 22 April 1976\textsuperscript{29} with the USA abstaining. Both the resolutions of the Security Council deplored Indonesia's military intervention and called upon all states to respect the inalienable right of the people of Portuguese Timor to self-determination, freedom and independence, and to determine their future political status.

On 1 December 1976, the General Assembly again passed a resolution by a vote of 61 in favour, and 18 against with 49 abstentions, whereby Indonesia was once again called upon to withdraw all its forces from East Timor with the USA joining those favouring Indonesia.

The General Assembly's resolution No.31/53 recommended that the Security Council "take all effective steps" for withdrawal of Indonesian troops from the territory and asked the Anti-Colonial Committee of the General Assembly to dispatch to the territory as soon as possible a "visiting mission" to enable the Timorese to exercise their right to self-determination and independence. The Assembly resolution also appealed

\textsuperscript{28} Facts on File, vol.36, no.1852, 8 May 1976, p.334.

to all the political parties in Portuguese Timor to respond positively to efforts for a peaceful solution through talks between them and Portugal, and requested that country to continue its co-operation with the special committee on decolonization.  

Before all these resolutions were passed by both the General Assembly and the Security Council, a UN emissary, Winspare Guicciardi, met with the pro-Indonesian Timorese in February but was unable to reach Freti-in-held territory.  

Reactions in Indonesia

The Indonesian ambassador to the United Nations Chaidir Anwar Sane expressed his "strong reservations" against the UN resolution and categorically rejected it. Speaking after the vote Anwar Sane stressed that his country was not happy with the resolution because it did not take sufficiently into account, what had really been happening in East Timor since August. He further said that, the Assembly had adopted the resolution on the strength of ridiculous claims and absurd accusations.

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30Ibid., vol.14, no.11, December 1977, p.46.  


made by some countries whose motives had nothing to do with the interests of the people of East Timor. He said, "his government could not support the resolution because of its insistence on the withdrawal of forces".\textsuperscript{31} In his opinion Indonesia had entered the territory in response to requests by the local government and their withdrawal depended upon the decision of that government. The Indonesian ambassador asserted that, "the resolution did not respect the legitimate decision already taken by the people of East Timor."\textsuperscript{34} He was of the opinion that the people of East Timor had freely exercised the right to self-determination and thereby terminated the colonial status of their homeland. After normalcy had returned to the territory, that exercise was organized by the provisional government of East Timor in a manner of the people's own choice. The provisional government had dutifully informed the UN and its relevant organs at each stage of its plans, to implement the right of self-determination. The provisional government, through statements made by its representatives before the Security Council, and through its message and emissaries, had invited the relevant organs to send

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., vol.13, no.3, March 1976, p.43.

\textsuperscript{34}United Nations General Assembly official Record, (New York), 32nd session, 9th meeting, 27 September 1977, p.115.
missions to East Timor, and no mission was sent without the knowledge of the provisional government of East Timor. Therefore, the Indonesians claimed East Timor to be an integral part of Indonesia and its people, as Indonesian citizens, with the same rights and obligations as other Indonesians.

The Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik also seemed to be quite sure on the East Timor issue. He confidently asserted that Timor's fate had been permanently sealed by its integration with Indonesia. In an interview with David Jenkins, the Southeast Asian correspondent of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Malik remarked in Jakarta that, "the resolution No. 1514 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its fifteenth session provided for integration as a legitimate choice in the exercise of the right of self-determination."  

The Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman, M. Gunadirja said, "the Indonesians stand firm on their position regarding East Timor that it is an internal affair of Indonesia". Any decision which is not in line

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with the interest of the people of East Timor and of Indonesia will be rejected", he added. [37]

US Position

The United States was not a supporter of Indonesia in the United Nations in the beginning. During the period from December 1975 until June 1976, it was the policy of the United States to favour a resolution of the problem of East Timor by the Timorese and other Concerned parties themselves. When full scale invasion took place on 7 December 1975, it strongly assailed the Indonesian action and voted in favour of the UN resolution No.5384 and No.384 of 12 December and 22 December 1975 respectively. [38] The US not only supported the UN General Assembly's resolution condemning Indonesia's action but also, according to Senator Tom Harkin (D., Iowa), the Ford administration quietly stopped all military assistance to Jakarta from December 1975 to June 1976 because of the alleged barbarity by the Indonesian troops. [39]


But the United States view over the East Timor issue changed dramatically in 1976. One may ask why this change took place. The reason was that the year 1975 brought a dramatic change to the Southeast Asian region, and it was President Gerald R. Ford who had to face the realities of the immediate post war years. The defeat of the US in the Vietnam War and the debacle of Communist victory in Indochina alarmed the American policy makers and military planners. Emergence of three communist state (Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam) entrenched communism in the region and weakened American strategic position. The growing influence of the Soviet Union created weariness among the Americans and they considered it necessary for the United States to regain its previous power and influence. So in order to keep the balance in its own favour, the US policy underwent a dramatic shift.\textsuperscript{40} Friendly relations with the countries of Southeast Asia were encouraged and all efforts were made to keep the countries oriented towards the West. Therefore, the United States did not intend to earn the

hostility of a pro-Western Indonesia by not supporting it in the United Nations over the East Timor issue.\textsuperscript{41}

The Ford administration which was not supporting the Indonesian cause in the beginning, soon changed its opinion, and towards the end of its brief term, the US President did not make any effort to induce Jakarta to withdraw its forces from East Timor. Rather the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, issued a statement after few days Indonesian invasion of East Timor. He declared that the United States, "understands Indonesia’s position on the question of East Timor."\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{41}That was the reason why even if Indonesia’s action was a clear cut violation of International Law, had no discernible impact on US policy and occupied little American television time or press space. The US media in 1975-1976 were preoccupied with the fall of Indochina and the flight of its refugees. As Kissinger observed in 1975, "Washington had enough problems of greater importance elsewhere not to make an issue of East Timor".

The US Ambassador in Indonesia, David Newson, was under instructions from Kissinger personally that he should not involve himself in discussions on Timor with the Indonesians. The State Department had also instructed the US embassy in Jakarta to cut down its reporting on Timor (according to cables from the Australian ambassador in Jakarta which were leaked to the press). For detail analysis see: Arnold Kohen, "The US Involvement: Invitation to a Massacre in East Timor", The Nation (New York), vol.233, no.6, 7 February 1981, pp.136-39; Donald K. Emerson, "Invisible Indonesia", Foreign Affairs (New York), vol.66, no.2, winter 1987/88, p.373.

Similarly, in replying to a question from the Indonesian press during his two-day visit to that country with President Ford, as to whether the US government would support Fretilin's proclamation of independence, he stated: the US government would not recognize that action".\textsuperscript{43} He also stated, "in Washington's eyes the half-island was in any case better governed by Indonesia than by a leftist "democratic republic".\textsuperscript{44} This was a clear signal to Indonesia that the US had, indeed, decided to support it.

The Western media which had become critical of the Indonesian action soon changed its opinion. Reacting to the invasion of Timor island, The Detroit News wrote on 9 December 1975, "Indonesia's action was not a conquest but a peace and order operation. But the people of Timor must be given the right to decide their own future in a free election".\textsuperscript{45}

The Ford administration, which had given vent to its scepticism about the authenticity of the People's

\textsuperscript{43}Statement by the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger at a Press Conference during his visit to Jakarta, The Indonesian News, 8 December 1975.

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid.

Assembly later changed its opinion and recognized the incorporation as a valid act of self-determination. The US Deputy Legal Advisor, George Aldrich, later defended the US view over the authenticity of the People's Assembly by saying that, "the statement was based on a wrong information about its composition".46

Aldrich made a statement to this effect before the sub-Committee on International Organizations of the House Committee on International Relations on 19 July 1977, in response to the Chairman's (Donald M. Fraser of Minnesota) request for the Congressional testimony on the East Timor problem. He stated:

According to information we have received from Indonesian authorities, the People's Council consisted of 28 members - the majority of whom were said to have been tribal chiefs and other traditional leaders selected through meetings of local leaders - with the representatives from Dili, the capital city, said to have been chosen by direct elections. We actually know very little about the selection process for these delegates, although the process itself took place at a time of military occupation by Indonesia during which considerable fighting was still on.47

Similarly, in response to a question from the chairman in the same session as to why the United States


47American Foreign Policy, 1977-80, n.38, p.1018.
voted against Indonesia in the United Nations, the Deputy Legal Advisor stated:

We supported Security Council Resolution No.384 of December 22, 1975 as well as UN General Assembly Resolution No.3485 of December 12, 1975, Calling for respect for the right of self-determination of the people of East Timor with the hope that, the report of the special representative of the Secretary General would offer a promising course, but due to a number of factors it was inconclusive and again called on the parties to work out a solution.  

With regard to the US abstention in the Security Council Resolution 389 of April 22, 1976, George H. Aldrich said:

We abstained on Security Council Resolution 389 of April 22, 1976, largely because the Security Council did not accept an amendment which would have acknowledged steps taken by Indonesia to begin withdrawal of its forces from East Timor, but at the same time the United States representative reaffirmed... our support of the right of the people of East Timor for self-determination.  

The Ford Administration also assured President Suharto of continuing American "security assistance" and resumed military aid to Indonesia. On 3 March 1976, the

48 Ibid.
US House of Representatives did approve a $48 billion foreign aid authorization bill, more than twice than that of the previous year, and in so doing voted down an amendment that sought to cut aid to Indonesia, both for its takeover of East Timor and the lack of civil rights in Indonesia.\(^{50}\) The amendment by Tom Harkin of Iowa, would have eliminated the US$ 19.4 million grant military assistance authorization to Indonesia, though this would still have left US$ 23.1 million in Foreign Military Sales Credits, US$ 2 million as the Foreign Military Training Programme, and US$ 13 million in excess defence articles. Military assistance to Indonesia then was expected to increase in fiscal year 1976 to US$ 57 million over the actual expenditure in fiscal year 1975 of US$ 23.8 million.\(^{51}\)

In Congressional hearings, State Department officials went to great lengths in their attempts to mask the nature of the Indonesian occupation. In Congressional testimony, a State Department legal adviser, George H. Aldrich, admitted that at the time of


the 1975 invasion, Jakarta was "armed roughly 90 per
cent with US equipments." In addition to that US weapons
aid had been substantially increased, notably in the
form of AV-10, Broncos counter-guerrilla aircraft". 52

The Carter Administration proved to be even more
under standing. The State Department, while
acknowledging that the East Timorese had been denied
their right of political self-determination, considered
the unilateral annexation of East Timor to be a fait
accompli. It supported the annexation of East Timor by
declaring that action as an Indonesian effort to protect
their country from the imminent danger of communism.

Appearing before the House Sub-committee on Asia
and Pacific Affairs, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary
for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Robert Oakley stated
Indonesia moved to annex the former Portuguese colony
(East Timor) after a leftist government came to power
there. Indonesia saw that event as a threat to its half
of the island. 53

52 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 1977, p. 365,

53 US Congress, House of Representatives, 95th
Congress, 1st Session, Report of a Special Study Mission
to Asia, April 8-21, 1977, by the members of the
Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the
Committee on International Relations on Security
Assistance to Asia for Fiscal Year 1978 (Washington,
In another Congressional hearing top US officials deliberately misled members of Congress about US military assistance to Indonesia for its East Timor operations. In March 1977, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Robert Oakley, testified before the Asian and Pacific Affairs Sub-Committee of the House that Security Assistant to Indonesia had been suspended for six months in compliance with restrictive human rights statutes.\(^5^4\) The claims were repeated by Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke and by the Director of the Defence Security Assistance Agency, Lieutenant General Howard Fish.\(^5^5\)

Pentagon Computer data presented to the Subcommittee on International Organization in February 1978 showed that at least four separate offers and deliveries of military equipment were made to the Suharto regime during the six-months period of proclaimed "suspension" in 1976 and 1977.\(^5^6\) In addition, the United States increased its military aid to Indonesia - US$ 23 million in 1976, US$ 41 million in 1977, and US$ 58.1 million in

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\(^5^5\)Ibid.

\(^5^6\)Ibid., N.51.
1978 as a symbol of US support for that country. In a Congressional hearing of 12 December 1977, Robert Oakley stated before the house Sub-Committee on International Organizations: Indonesia can use any of the proposed US$ 58 million US military assistance for fiscal 1978, in East Timor, under the subhead of defending its own territory".  


Indonesia's action did not undermine the Reagan administration's support for the Suharto government. On assuming office in 1981 the US President declared that, "his government would like to work in close cooperation

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58 UN Chronicle, vol.14, no.11, December 1977, p.46.
with the government of Indonesia". 62 This view was reiterated by the US Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs John H. Holdridge when he stated before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the House Foreign Affairs Committee in September 1982; "We give due importance to Indonesia's position on East Timor. The United States is prepared to work closely with the Indonesian government in the United Nations as well as outside the organization". 63

The United States under President Ronald Reagan voted consistently in favour of Indonesia in the United Nations. 64 The Reagan Administration also extended its full support to the decision which was taken in 1983 65 by mutual consent of the parties involved (Indonesia, which claimed sovereignty over the territory; Portugal,


65See UN Chronicle, vol. 21, no. 1, January 1984; Asia 1983 Year Book (Hong Kong), 1985, p. 163.
The UN recognized administering power; and Fretilin, an indigenous independence movement) shelve the East Timor issue in the UN General Assembly.66

The US allegiance helped Indonesia to gain more support in the UN Commission IV, Decolonization and Self-determination, which was then discussing a resolution in East Timor. The resolution was submitted by Portugal, which appealed to UN to invite all parties involved to seek peaceful settlement of the East Timor problem. In a vote which took place on 14 November 1982, only 48 members compared with 58 in 1981, supported the resolution. The result of the vote was 48 in favour, 42 against and 54 abstentions. The Foreign Minister of Indonesia Mochtar Kusumaatmadja expressed his satisfaction over the manner of voting in the United Nations.

Speaking after the vote, Kasumaatmadja stated in New York that the result of voting was "very encouraging in Indonesia’s interest, considering that Portugal had launched before the voting a massive diplomatic campaign to rally votes against Indonesia".67

66Rabindra Sen, "East Timor and Indonesian Foreign Policy", Strategic Analysis (New Delhi), vol. 12, no. 11, June 1989, p. 319.

Thus, strong American backing not only enabled Indonesia to gain more support in the UN but also the stopped the adoption of any resolution against Indonesia over the East Timor issue. Towards the end of September 1984, i.e. in late the United Nations General Assembly finally decided not to discuss further over the issue, in that session and deferred the matter to the next meeting for the second consecutive time.\textsuperscript{68}

The decision, however, was considered as a diplomatic victory for Indonesia and brought great relief to the country. Speaking at the final general debate session of the UN General Assembly in New York, the head of the Indonesian Mission Ali Alatas said, "the UN decision has really brought an end to the decade long struggle by the Indonesian diplomats over the question of East Timor. The Indonesians are relieved now."\textsuperscript{69}

In subsequent General Assembly sessions when the Special Committee on decolonization decided to continue its consideration of the item on East Timor (in 1985, 1986 and 1987), the Indonesian representative to the UN, Ali Alatas strongly opposed any discussion of the question. He reiterated that, "East Timor was a province

\textsuperscript{68}UN Chronicle, vol.22, no.8, July/August 1985, p.13.

\textsuperscript{69}The Indonesian News, 31 March 1986.
of Indonesia because a decade ago the overwhelming majority of East Timorese people had chosen independence through integration with the Republic of Indonesia. Therefore, the Commission's review of the question was outside its jurisdiction. In all the three occasions Indonesia got full US support.

Apart from the East Timor issue, there were also other spheres of co-operation between the two countries. The United States highly lauded Indonesia's initiative in ASEAN for an early solution of the Kampuchean problem, and did appreciate Indonesia's role in ASEAN for the maintenance of regional peace and stability in Southeast Asia. The United States helped that country in the field of science and technology by providing super computers, advanced fighter aircrafts and in launching its satellites, and for the allround development of Indonesia.

But in spite of the very good relations, there were also differences among the two countries. Their relationship was strained by several developments taking place in both the countries.

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Dispute over the Choice of Envoy to Indonesia

The United States-Indonesian relations was adversely affected in 1982 by the controversy over the appointment of an American envoy to Jakarta. It began in May 1982, when President Suharto refused to accept the Reagan Administration's choice of a top Asian expert Morton J. Abramowitz, as the next ambassador to Indonesia, whose last post was the ambassador to Thailand. The post had fallen vacant since November 1981, when Edward Masters resigned, to go into private business. Although no formal reason was given as to why Indonesia refused to accept the United States choice, it was believed that the refusal was mainly due to the leakage of an "ultra-conservative White Paper" critical of Abramowitz. It was generally understood that the opposition was based on an anonymous hostile memorandum dated 1 October 1981, drafted by the American Conservatives, and apparently circulated within the Reagan Administration.

The document that led to the rejection of the appointment was headed "point papers" on Abramowitz and was stamped "confidential". The memorandum was given to

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71 The Indonesian News, 24 May 1982.

the syndicated columnist Jack Anderson in February, and he gave a copy of that to The New York Times, a few days later.73

It had been stated in the document, among other things that Abramowitz's political philosophy was akin to democratic party politicians like George S. McGovern, Edmund S. Muskie, and Walter E. Mondale, and that his wife Sheppi, worked in the staff of Muskie when he was a Senator, and that Abramowitz was the architect of the proposal to withdraw United States troops from Korea in 1977.74

In a ridiculous way, the document reported that Abramowitz told someone in Thailand that "I am a McGovernite".75 It was said that he was a friend of Richard Holbrooke, who, as President Jimmy Carter's able Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, was a bete noir of the extreme right. It was also reported to the influential US-trained Indonesian General President Suharto that Abramowitz was anti-military.

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73 The New Straits Times (Kualalumpur).

74 Ibid., 24 May 1982.

75 The Bangkok Post (Bangkok), 24 May 1982.
Apart from these allegations the Indonesian President was informed by some Thai officials that "Abramowitz had been interfering in Thailand's internal affairs when he was posted there and was a "tough envoy" and the Indonesians should be beware of him." The most important allegation against him was that "Abramowitz was a Jew." 

A copy of that document somehow reached President Suharto. He was told that the document was a White House Memorandum indicating President Reagan's real view on Abramowitz. Therefore, after thoroughly reviewing the memorandum, the Indonesian President conveyed to Washington that he will not accept Abramowitz.

One may ask what was the reason behind the Indonesian rejection? The main reason was that he was a Jew. As Muslims constituted 80 per cent of the country's population, the Suharto government decided not to


78 The Indonesian News, 26 June 1982.
irritate the Islamic Fundamentalists of his country by accepting a Jewish ambassador.79

The problem was finally resolved, when President Reagan surprised Indonesia by disclosing the name of a new ambassador, whom he wanted to appoint, John H. Holdridge, the Assistant Secretary of State for Asia and the Pacific, to fill the vacancy.80

President Suharto was indeed happy when Holdridge presented his credentials to him in February. The selection of such a highly regarded and experienced professional, to assume the ambassador’s post in Jakarta was viewed in Indonesia as a somewhat overdue recognition by the United States of Indonesia’s importance. The Indonesian President, who was in Washington on a state visit that time, was pleased to hear from the American President during a White House banquet specially arranged for him, to celebrate the occasion.81 President Suharto voiced great appreciation for the decision of the US Government. He called the nomination of Holdridge, a carrier diplomat with long

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79Ibid., 29 October 1982.


experience in Asian affairs as very good, and believed that his presence in Jakarta would contribute greatly to the world peace and the welfare of human kind which are the ideals of Indonesia and the United States."  

A similar view was expressed by the Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja. Appreciating the appointment of a new ambassador to their country, the Foreign Minister spoke to a *Far Eastern Economic Review* correspondent, "President Reagan’s announcement is a very good thing."  

Haji M. Amin Iskandar, Member of Parliament, said that the appointment of Holdridge would be favourably welcomed by the Indonesian government. His appointment, said Amin Iskandar, "gave an indication that the US fully understood the aspirations of the Indonesian people in the fields of politics, economy and defence. The appointment was a sign that the US would like to strengthen the existing friendly relations between the two countries". Thus, the appointment of John

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82 *The Indonesian News*, 21 February 1983.  
84 *The Indonesian News*, 14 October 1982.
Holdridge, as ambassador to Jakarta, brought an end to one of the most diplomatically embarrassing squabbles.  

Cancellation of Visit by President Reagan

The US-Indonesian relations again strained when President Reagan postponed his first ever visit to Indonesia. The decision to cancel the visit was announced on 30 September 1983. The reason for the cancellation as given was that, the busy session of Congress would not allow the President to pay visit to the Asian countries including Indonesia.

President Reagan was supposed to visit Indonesia at the end of 1983. It was agreed that, the President’s visit to Jakarta would take place in conjunction with an ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Foreign Ministers’ meeting there.

But the trip was cancelled due to escalating unrest and turmoil in the Philippines. The assassination of Philippine opposition leader and the arch rival of President Ferdinand Marcos, Benigno Aquino in August

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1983, and the massive anti-government demonstrations that followed the incident, led the White House to reconsider the Manila visit.\(^7\)

However, after much discussion the White House finally decided not to visit the Philippines. But Washington did not desire to embarrass Marcos by skipping only his country. Therefore, the whole trip had to be cancelled. Thus, Indonesia and Thailand ultimately fell victim to Washington's desire not to visit the Philippines.

The affair at first glance, seemed not very serious, and the US-Indonesian strategic and economic interests were not affected by the event. President Reagan expressed his regrets over the cancellation of visit and said that, "had Aquino not been killed, the schedule would have been kept".\(^8\)

But the news came as a shock in October (on the anniversary of Suharto's successful 1982 trip to the United States), when the White House finally declared its intention to postpone all three of Reagan's Southeast Asian stopovers for an indefinite period of

\(^7\)Facts on File, vol.73, no.2238, 7 October 1983, p.756.

\(^8\)The Indonesian News, 28 June 1983.
time. In Indonesia, the cancellation of visit by the US President had a mixed reaction. Top defence officials, who favoured closer US ties, were discouraged. While others, including Foreign Ministry officials who sought to maintain some balance in Indonesia’s nonaligned foreign policy were relieved. The latter group had tried though unsuccessfully, to secure an invitation for Jakarta’s Foreign Minister, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, to visit Moscow prior Reagan’s visit as a way of showing Indonesia’s support for East-West balance. But Mochtar was consistent in stressing prior to Reagan’s visit that, talks would centre not on political and military issues but rather on bilateral economic relations. Several key Indonesians were really irritated, as the hospitality of Southeast Asia’s largest and most resource rich nation appeared to have been sacrificed to American solicitude for Marcos (a man for whom Suharto reportedly had little regard). The refusal of hospitality was considered as a most serious breach of etiquette for Indonesia. Reacting to the dropping of Southeast Asian part of the itinerary one analyst in The Tennessean wrote that "the cancellation

89 Asia Year Book, 1984, p.7.

of visit by the US President would keep some distance between the White House and the Indonesian regime which would adversely affect their future relationship.91

The decision of the President to cancel his scheduled trip in early November 1983 to the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand exactly at a time, when he was emphasizing the importance of relations between the United States and ASEAN countries, therefore, really hurt the sentiment of the Indonesian people, as they had hoped to utilize that opportunity for strengthening their country’s ties with the United States of America. For that reason, even after repeated explanation by the American government that, the cancellation was only due to the busy Congress schedule, President Suharto expressed his disappointment over the event.

The episode would have been dismissed and forgotten sooner had the Reagans were not been planning to visit the People’s Republic of China in April 1984, a country with which Jakarta had long-run adversary relationship.

The Indonesians apprehended that US collusion with China would encourage the latter to indulge in

subversion and endanger the security of their country. They were of the opinion that the United States might expedite the sale of relevant US technology and weapons to the PRC which in turn would be used against Indonesia.92

Therefore, Jakarta reacted with displeasure when Washington tried to soothe Indonesian feelings by announcing President's visit to Indonesia on his way to China. This was perceived in Jakarta as an afterthought, and the Suharto government had no interest in being treated that way. However, the problem was finally settled when the US Vice-President George Bush declared that he was going to pay a visit to Indonesia in May 1984.93 According to the White House report, the visit was intended to compensate Reagan's cancelled visit to the three Asian nations. Thus, the announcement gave some psychological satisfaction to the Indonesian people. But the visit by the Vice-President was not the same thing as the visit to a country by the President of the United States. They were not in the same class. Indonesians like every one else understood this very well.

93 Ibid., 3 May 1984.
Winds of Freedom: Reagan's Disappointment

The Americans expressed their disappointment when President Suharto expelled two Washington-based journalists and a The New York Times correspondent from Indonesia during the first ever visit of the US President Ronald Reagan, to that country in 1986.\(^4\) The problem started on 25 April 1986, when President Reagan left for a thirteen day visit to the far Eastern countries, to attend the Tokyo Economic Summit and landed in Indonesia on 29 April 1986.\(^5\) The trip was dubbed as celebration of the "winds of Freedom" as it aimed at spreading democracy and economic freedom among the Far Eastern counties, and particularly, celebrating the stability and growth achieved by Indonesia and the solidarity of its ties with America.\(^6\) Reporting on the forthcoming visit by the US President The Indonesian News quoted President Reagan as saying, "I am going to Asia to reaffirm and renew our economic, strategic and political ties".\(^7\) On another occasion the same newspaper cited President Reagan as saying, "It is a

\(^4\)The Indonesian News, 30 April 1986.


\(^6\)The International Herald Tribune (Paris), 2 May 1986.

\(^7\)The Indonesian News, 26 April 1986.
journey we are sought to set for the trip,\textsuperscript{98} Reagan repeated its "winds of freedom" slogan, saying, "they are brisk and bracing winds, sweeping out the old and, I believe, ushering in a new era of freedom, an era in which democracy is once again recognized as the new idea";\textsuperscript{99} the Indonesian daily wrote.

While the Indonesians were ready to greet the US President on 29 April 1986 an unprecedented event marred their enthusiasm. President Reagan was cordially received and was given a colourful welcome but not the journalists who were accompanying him. President Reagan was shocked to know the refusal by the Indonesian authorities, moments earlier, to allow two Washington based Australian journalists, travelling with the White House Press Corps to enter the country, despite appeals by Reagan aides. The two Australians were Richard Palfreyman and James Middleton, both of whom worked for Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The immediate cause behind for the expulsion of the two Australian journalists was an article that had appeared in the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} on 10 April 1986 under the headline, "After Macros, now for the Suharto

\textsuperscript{98}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{99}Ibid.
Billions".\textsuperscript{100} The Australian journal published a long article detailing the extensive business interests of President Suharto and members of his family. Written by the newspaper's foreign editor, David Jenkins, the article contained little that was not already known. But what irritated the Indonesian authority was the sensational manner of its presentation and the insulting comparison with the deposed Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos.\textsuperscript{101} The article detailed long-publicized charges of corruption in the Indonesian government. Jenkins accused President Suharto's family and associates of accumulating a fortune of US$2 billion to US$3 billion through "Government Contracts" and "Favour" during his early twenty years in power.\textsuperscript{102} The President's wife, Madam Tien had participated in so many questionable business deals that she had long been known as Madam Tien per cent,\textsuperscript{103} said the article.

Officials in Jakarta were reported to be infuriated by the story, as it included little supporting evidence.


\textsuperscript{102}The Indonesian News, 10 May 1986.

\textsuperscript{103}The New York Times, 29 April 1986.
Reacting to the publication of such an article in one of the famous Australian journal, the government sources in Indonesia stated, "the article not only insulted the head of the state, but was a crime against a sovereign power".\textsuperscript{104} As a consequence Suharto ordered the Australian Press out of the country and banned all Australian reporters from covering the US President's visit to Bali.\textsuperscript{105}

The Indonesian government, in a separate order, also told Miss Barbara Crosette, a Bangkok based\textit{The New York Times} correspondent to leave the country who had come to Bali from Thailand. She was taken from her hotel and expelled without any explanation.\textsuperscript{106}

The presumed reason behind the expulsion was her critical comment on President Suharto. The expulsion was probably ordered because of\textit{The New York Times'} Sunday magazine article by A.M. Rosenthal, Executive Editor of the\textit{Times} that listed President Suharto among Asian tyrants.\textsuperscript{107} The objection in the Crosette case came from the military and the State Security Organization,

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\textsuperscript{104}\textit{The Indonesian New}, 2 May 1986. \\
\textsuperscript{105}\textit{The New York Times}, 29 April 1986. \\
\textsuperscript{106}\textit{Ibid.}, 1 May 1986.
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\textsuperscript{107}\textit{The International Herald Tribune}, 2 May 1986.
which were both headed by General L.B. Murdane, a close aide and staunchly loyal supporter of President Suharto.\textsuperscript{108} When the \textit{International Herald Tribune} republished Rosenthal's article, that edition was banned.

The incident created a crisis in the US-Indonesian relationship. The United States had known all along the authoritarian nature of the regime. But had not felt it necessary to rake it up. However, the Indonesian action against American media pushed the issue to the fore. Following it, the United States became critical of the authoritarian rule of the Suharto regime. The Americans were of the opinion that the main purpose of the trip received a great blow due to this unfortunate event. The expulsion of three journalists were an embarrassing development during the trip, which President Reagan had been calling a "winds of freedom", journey, some White House aides said.\textsuperscript{109}

President Reagan said, "he regretted the decision by the Indonesians to deny entry to the journalists".\textsuperscript{110} While expressing concern over the matter, a senior

\textsuperscript{108}The Indonesian News, 2 May 1986.

\textsuperscript{109}The International herald Tribune, 30 April 1986.

Reagan advisor commented that "this unnecessarily distracted from the main purpose of the trip". Another official said, "the winds of freedom have hit a wind shear. The Indonesians have hurt themselves".\textsuperscript{111}

The International Press Institution (consisting of nearly 2000 publishers and editors worldwide) criticized Indonesia's expulsion of two Australian journalists travelling with the US press plane and the banning of an edition of the \textit{International Herald Tribune} which carried articles critical of General Suharto's policies, and appealed to the Indonesian government to allow all foreign correspondents to report freely without much harassment. It stated, "the action is an unacceptable infringement on press freedom and freedom of information and we would appeal to you to allow all foreign correspondents to report freely without harassment".\textsuperscript{112}

In New York, A.M. Rosenthal, Executive Editor of the \textit{Times}, criticized the expulsion of Miss Barbara Crossette from Indonesia, and called the detention and expulsion of the correspondent, as a clear violation not only of freedom of the press but of all accepted standard of conduct. "Coming at a time when the

\textsuperscript{111}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{112}\textit{The International Herald Tribune, 2 May 1986.}
President of the United States is arriving in that country, the action shows disdain for American institutions" Mr. Rosenthal said "we are protesting this action of the Indonesian government and we hope that the United States government will express its point of view". 

Indonesia was not willing to push the controversy beyond a point and jeopardize its harmonious relations with the United States. However, the unpleasant situation was over when the Indonesian government stated that, it would reconsider the expulsion issue.

From the above discussion it can be concluded that the United States and Indonesia had some serious differences of views about international as well as domestic issues. But due to the feeling of friendship, mutual trust and goodwill among the two governments, those points of differences were not allowed to widen or deepen, to overshadow the existing areas of agreement, and therefore, could not become obstacles in the development of closer co-operation between the two countries.