

# Australian imperialism, the 1999 East Timor intervention and the pseudo-left

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September marked the tenth anniversary of the Australian-led military intervention into the previously Indonesian-controlled territory of East Timor. It is also a decade since a layer of pseudo “left” organisations organised a series of “troops in” demonstrations just prior to the deployment—performing a vital service for the government of Prime Minister John Howard and the Australian ruling elite.

The Timor operation was driven by Canberra’s desire to maintain control over the lucrative Timor Sea oil and gas reserves and prevent rival powers, above all former colonial ruler Portugal, from gaining a foothold at its expense in the strategically crucial region. These calculations could not be publicly aired, for obvious reasons, and so a “humanitarian” pretext was concocted for public consumption. Australian troops, the government insisted, were required to halt the destruction and violence unleashed by the Indonesian military and its anti-independence militia proxies after the Timorese people voted to secede.

The public campaign recalled the methods used by the US and its European allies in the lead up to the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia between March and June 1999. British Prime Minister Tony Blair even outlined a new doctrine—dubbed “ethical imperialism”—which insisted on the right of the major powers to disregard international law and national sovereignty, on the basis of so-called “humanitarian concerns” whenever they saw fit. The European ex-left played a critical role in this campaign. The “pacifist” Greens in Germany lent much needed political weight to the bogus humanitarian pretext for the bombing campaign that marked the German army’s first foreign intervention since the defeat of Nazism.

In Australia, the self-styled “radical” groups—working hand-in-hand with the Labor Party, Greens, and trade unions—played a no less vital role in relation to the Timor campaign.

In 1999, in the months prior to the intervention, hostility to the Howard government had been escalating. A year earlier, the prime minister had narrowly avoided losing office after one term—the conservative parties lost the popular vote to the Labor Party but held onto power due to the vagaries of Australia’s electoral system. Just four months before the troops went into Timor the government had succeeded in pushing through a widely despised goods and services tax.

In this context, the Howard government’s ability to posture as a friend and even saviour of the Timorese population was dependent on the political cover provided by the ex-left, led by the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP)—now Democratic Socialist Perspective, the main affiliate within the misnamed Socialist Alliance. The DSP organised rallies demanding that the government intervene to rescue the Timorese masses from violence by pro-Indonesian militias.

In the period immediately prior to the intervention, ~~the~~ DSP’s *Left Weekly* newspaper effectively functioned as the mouthpiece for the most aggressive elements of the Australian military and foreign policy establishment, and for the Fretilin and National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) leadership in East Timor, which had concluded that its road to power was via Australian military intervention.

In the September 15 edition of the newspaper, DSP member Pip Hinman provided legal and military advice to the government in an article titled “Why Howard refuses to send troops to stop genocide”. Noting the objection that to send Australian troops in without a UN mandate would be illegal, Hinman countered: “This claim has absolutely no foundation ... There is no legal obstacle to the Howard government immediately dispatching the 4,500 troops it has said it could have in Dili within 24 hours ... Indonesia’s armed forces have little capacity to carry out a war against Australia. While Indonesia’s armed forces are five times larger than Australia’s in numbers, they are vastly outclassed in weaponry, organisation, and training.”

The “Resistance” lift-out of the same *Green Left Weekly* edition declared: “Rather than strengthening the hand of imperialism, sending troops in runs directly counter to the interests and wishes of imperialist countries like Australia, which do not want to undermine the power or authority of the Indonesian military ... If the movement is strong enough to force an intervention, it would be a massive victory [because] if the solidarity movements and the liberation struggle in East Timor are powerful enough to force the UN or the Australian government to intervene, they will gain confidence that they have the power to force the government to act elsewhere.”

On September 29 *Green Left Weekly* readers were told: “The decision to send troops was a massive defeat for Howard.”

Very different conclusions were drawn by the Australian bourgeoisie. In an editorial published September 15, 1999, the *Australian Financial Review* noted that “as a result of Vietnam it became politically impossible for governments to propose military action abroad ... and Australia’s diplomatic engagement with the region reinforced the domestic taboo on discussion of military intervention in the region.”

But, the newspaper explained, the pro-intervention rallies had shifted the political climate. “The calls for action in Timor are ironic because many of those who fostered the political climate in which the army was run down were the loudest in demanding Australia intervene there,” the editorial went on. “This call to arms has, for the first time in decades, given broad legitimacy to the proposition that Australia should be able to intervene militarily outside its territory. This raises the possibility of building a domestic consensus, not just in favour of increased defence

spending, but of changing the structure of the defence force.”

Ten years on, it appears that the DSP prefers that its politically criminal role in facilitating this militarist “consensus” be forgotten.

The *Green Left Weekly* maintains an on-line archive, which features every edition of the newspaper published from its inception in 1991, with the exception of those published around the time of the Timor intervention. Ten successive editions—published between August 25 and October 27, 1999—do not appear in the internet archive and can only be scrutinised by those with access to old print editions of the newspaper.

Equally remarkable is the absence of a single statement or article in recent editions of *Green Left Weekly* marking the tenth anniversary of either the “troops in” protests or the “massive victory”—the Australian military intervention. This extraordinary silence is indicative of the DSP’s ongoing complicity in the occupation of the oppressed country, including its backing for the Australian military’s renewed intervention into Timor in 2006.

When prompted, the DSP continues to falsely claim that it was the 1999 protests that forced a reluctant Howard government to send troops to “liberate” East Timor and rescue the East Timorese. Every aspect of this assertion is a lie. The recent release of new documents and material on the 1999 intervention only underscores its neo-colonial character and the role of the ex-lefts in Australia in covering it up.

### **Canberra, Washington, and the 1999 intervention preparations**

Paul Kelly, the *Australian’s* editor-at-large, has written a new book on Australian politics between 1991 and 2007, titled *The March of the Patriots*. The chapter devoted to the Timor crisis brings into sharp relief the Howard government’s active preparations for a military intervention from early 1999—months before the troops were sent in on September 20—as well as the critical role played by US imperialism as the behind-the-scenes “muscle” for the Australian military’s activities.

Kelly’s book has been criticised by several commentators for repeating as good coin the new claim made by Prime Minister John Howard and Foreign Minister Alexander Downer that from the very beginning of 1999 they believed that Timorese independence was inevitable and that they subsequently worked to hasten this outcome. The only supporting evidence Kelly provides is an off-the-record remark made to him by Downer during the World Economic Forum in Davos in January of that year. There seems little doubt that Kelly—who hails the Howard government’s sordid manoeuvres in 1999 as grand statesmanship—ascribes an improbable level of foresight to the former prime minister and foreign minister.

In 1998 and early 1999, the situation in Indonesia and East Timor was highly unstable. After ruling as Indonesia’s dictator for more than three decades, General Suharto was forced to resign in May 1998, in the midst of the 1997-98 Asian economic crisis and an oppositional movement of workers and students. Suharto’s fate was sealed when Washington withdrew its previously firm support for the military junta, concluding that its “crony capitalism” was an obstacle to free market economic reforms. The regime’s crisis triggered unrest across several provinces including

Aceh, Ambon, West Papua (Irian Jaya), and the former Portuguese colony of East Timor.

The Howard government feared the breakup of the Indonesian archipelago and the creation of new “failed states” on Australia’s border. Its preferred option for East Timor—up until it became clear that the Timorese referendum was going to deliver independence—was for the territory to remain part of Indonesia. This would have also prevented any disruption to Australia’s close relations with the Indonesian military clique and obviated the need for any alteration to the arrangements made by the previous Keating Labor government and the Suharto junta for the unlawful carve up of the Timor Sea’s lucrative energy reserves. Howard and Downer did everything possible to maintain good relations with Jakarta—including covering up Australian intelligence reports throughout 1999 detailing the Indonesian military’s funding and arming of the murderous anti-independence militias in Timor.

At the same time, however, by late 1998 Canberra recognised that the old status quo was untenable. Prime Minister Howard wrote to the new Indonesian President B.J. Habibie in December to encourage him to follow the example of the French in New Caledonia and offer the Timorese an extended period of autonomy, after which some form of “self-determination” could be considered. Habibie rejected the advice and instead scheduled a vote offering East Timor a choice between limited autonomy and immediate secession.

In the months leading up to the referendum, the Australian government’s public position was that the territory would be better off remaining part of Indonesia. Kelly’s book makes clear, however, that Canberra had a definite “Plan B” in place—military intervention—to protect Australian strategic and economic interests.

Indonesia had been a key topic of discussion in the Australian cabinet’s National Security Committee throughout 1998, and from the second half of the year special focus was placed upon East Timor.[1] A later official study of the military intervention’s management, conducted by the Australian National Audit Office, explained that by February 1999 the Defence Department “had developed a range of military strategic response options”. As a result, the Australian Defence Force was told that it needed to be prepared to “conduct peace operations in support of the UN or a coalition”.[2]

In March 1999, the National Security Committee decided to place a new Ready Deployment Force of 3,000 combat troops in the Northern Territory on “high alert” status. The navy also leased a fast catamaran capable of transporting half a battalion from Australia to Timor.[3] Defence Minister John Moore told parliament: “This is the first occasion in over two decades that Australia has had the equivalent of two brigades at this level of readiness. The government’s responsibility, and our intention, is to be in a position to be able to respond effectively to a considerable range of possibilities.”

In *March of the Patriots*, Kelly explains that the “drivers behind this decision were [Defence Department deputy secretary Hugh] White and Chief of the Defence Force Chris Barrie”. White told Kelly: “Our thinking was that a peacekeeping operation might be needed and, in this situation, that Australia would be expected to lead.” Barrie added: “This was a critical decision. If we hadn’t had that extra brigade, could we have done the job in East Timor? Frankly, I doubt it.”[4]

This vindicates the analysis made at the time by the *World Socialist Web Site*. An article published March 13, 1999 explained: “Thursday’s

announcement [of the troop build-up] marks an acceleration of preparations for establishing a military presence in East Timor, most likely as part of a United Nations force. Amid hypocritical statements of concern for the people in East Timor and other strife-torn areas of the Indonesian archipelago, military involvement is being prepared that will aim to secure the economic and strategic interests of Australian big business, including, in particular, the oil and natural gas deposits in the Timor Sea” (see: “Australian troops placed on alert for intervention in neighbouring countries”).

Shortly after the “high alert” mobilisation, Hugh White has since explained, “detailed thought began to be given within the Australian Defence Headquarters to planning for a PKF [peacekeeping force] to take responsibility for security over from TNI if East Timor opted for independence. A one-star officer was committed to this task, and he visited the United Nations in March/April to begin discussions with the UN headquarters in New York on how such a PKF might work.”[5]

On April 27, Howard met with Indonesian President B.J. Habibie and unsuccessfully tried to persuade him to allow foreign troops into Timor. Two days later the Defence Department created a new position—Director-General East Timor—to assist the government by “monitoring the situation and developing proposals for Defence contributions”. [6]

On May 7 formal operational planning for Australian military involvement in Timor began, under the name of *Operation Concord*. This specifically related to logistical support for the UN-supervised independence referendum that was to be held August 30. On May 11, *Operation Spitfire* was developed to prepare for the potential evacuation of Australian and UN personnel from East Timor; and on May 31 *Operation Faber* was finalised, describing the possible involvement of the Australian military in “contingencies” in Timor. The Australian National Audit Office later explained that while “the precise nature of that involvement was not clear at the time”, *Operation Faber’s* objective “was described as supporting a process in East Timor leading to a peaceful and orderly transition to either autonomy or independence”. [7]

Shortly after the August 30 vote—prior to the outcome being announced five days later—the Howard government was publicly discussing the likelihood that Australian troops would be sent in. On September 3, defence minister John Moore visited the Australian troops massed in the Northern Territory and declared that they “could deploy there [to Timor] very quickly”.

The next day’s announcement of the vote, showing a large majority in favour of independence, was met with an upsurge in Indonesian army and militia violence. The Australian and international media ran lurid reports recalling the campaign that had preceded the Kosovo intervention earlier that year. Wildly exaggerated stories of Indonesian “genocide” were used to generate public support for military intervention, which was backed by the entire Australian political establishment, including the Labor Party, Greens, National and Liberal parties, and the various petty bourgeois protest groups. The CNRT leadership in Timor and in exile played a thoroughly cynical role, instructing the guerrilla Falintil force not to defend people coming under attack from the pro-Indonesian militias out of fear that this would threaten the foreign intervention they were demanding.

On September 6, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan asked Howard to lead a multinational intervention force. The Australian prime minister immediately agreed and said he could have 2,000 troops available within 48 to 72 hours—on condition that he be allowed to call the shots. “I did

indicate to Kofi Annan [that] it had to be understood that Australia would take the lead role,” Howard told Paul Kelly. “I wasn’t going to commit large numbers of Australian forces unless we were effectively in charge. I made that clear.”[8]

The other forces later assembled—from countries including New Zealand, Britain, Thailand, and South Korea—merely provided additional numbers and, most importantly, gave a multilateral gloss for the Australian-controlled International Force for East Timor (INTERFET).

Washington played the critical role. On September 9, Clinton publicly threatened to “crash” the already stricken Indonesian economy unless Jakarta cooperated. Paul Kelly summarises the stand-over tactics that were used: “Clinton moved to smash Habibie’s resistance to a UN force by mobilising the might of the United States. The IMF and World Bank threatened Indonesia’s economic lifelines; the State Department went public; the commander of US forces in the Pacific, Admiral Dennis Blair, went to Jakarta and threatened [Indonesian military head] Wiranto to his face; Clinton warned that Indonesia’s economy was at risk.”[9]

The international markets responded to this campaign by plunging the value of the rupiah 20 percent lower than its already depressed level.[10] On September 12, the Indonesian government caved in and announced it would acquiesce to an international intervention.

The subsequent Australian-led operation was given full backing by the US military and intelligence services.

Kelly’s book provides new and important details. “On the eve of the operation US Secretary of Defense William Cohen went to Jakarta for meetings with Habibie and Wiranto.... Cohen told Habibie and Wiranto that the world expected Jakarta to co-operate with the Australian-led UN operation. He said: ‘This deployment must not be contested. Any Indonesian forces that contest them will meet US forces.’ This was a reference to a 2,000-strong Marine group in the Pacific. ‘The Marines were just offshore and everyone knew they were there,’ [Australian INTERFET commander, Major General Peter] Cosgrove said,” Kelly writes.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade chief Ashton Calvert told Kelly: “The message Cohen conveyed was ‘If you touch the Australians, the United States will come after you’... This gave John Howard a lot of assurance.”[11]

What emerges from Kelly’s account is the predatory character of the entire operation. The official pretext of a humanitarian intervention was further belied by subsequent events. By the time the Australian-led forces landed in Dili on September 20, the violence unleashed by the Indonesian military and their militia proxies in the wake of the referendum outcome, which had been announced 16 days earlier, had largely subsided, leaving most of the territory’s physical infrastructure in ruins and an estimated 1,400 Timorese dead. Once in Dili, INTERFET forces made no effort to extend their control more widely and defend the tens of thousands of people being forcibly transported into Indonesian West Timor.

The situation confronting the impoverished population in Timor a decade after the intervention makes a mockery of Canberra’s claims to have “liberated” the tiny island state, and ensured “national independence”. The WWSW has noted: “The enclave is entirely dependent on and subservient to the imperialist powers; Dili is a nest of intrigue, with officials and corporate executives from Australia, the US, Portugal, China, and other countries manoeuvring for access to the Timor Sea’s

vast oil and gas reserves. At the same time, Timor's 1.1 million people remain among the most impoverished in the world, and subject to an increasingly repressive Western-backed government" ("Ten years since East Timor's independence vote").

While enormous sums have been spent maintaining foreign forces in East Timor over the last decade, Australia and the other major powers have devoted a pittance to the social needs of the Timorese people. As a result, the country now ranks 162 out of 182 on the UN's Human Development Index, behind such countries as Papua New Guinea, Haiti, Sudan, and Bangladesh. Life expectancy is just over 60 years; infant mortality rates are among the highest in the world, as are fertility rates with an average of 6.5 births per woman; at least half the adult population remains illiterate; 38 percent of people do not have access to what is termed an "improved water source" such as boreholes, protected dug wells, or rainwater collection systems.

East Timor now serves as an important training ground for the Australian military. Troops have been continuously stationed there since 2006, when a renewed intervention was mounted as part of Canberra's regime change campaign against Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri—whose crime was his "closeness" to rival powers Portugal and China. The Labor government's defence minister John Faulkner issued a press release hailing the tenth anniversary of the Australian intervention, noting that about 44,000 Australian individual deployments to East Timor had occurred during the previous 10 years. Graeme Dobell responded on the Lowy Institute's web site: "Just reflect on 44,000 individual deployments from a Defence Force that numbers just over 50,000. Australia's men and women in uniform (and police) are gaining considerable practical experience in the Australian Arc."

The return of Australian troops to Timor in 2006 was just one of a series of overseas interventions that followed the 1999 operation. Indeed, as the *Australian Financial Review* had predicted, INTERFET marked a major turning point in Australian foreign and military policy, with military force utilised in ways that would have been impossible without the Timor precedent. The Howard government, now openly acting as Washington's regional "deputy sheriff", participated in the US-led invasions of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) and also initiated several unilateral military-police interventions in the South Pacific, including the Solomon Islands (2003 to the present).

Moreover, within days of INTERFET landing in Timor, politicians and media commentators were demanding that military spending be ramped up. A series of government announcements of substantially more funding and troop numbers followed. The military is now a far larger institution than ever before and plays a prominent public role, including in domestic security and policing, such as during the APEC summit held in Sydney in 2007 and as part of the Northern Territory intervention, purportedly to assist Aboriginal communities. Timor was also cited as a central reason for the creation of the International Deployment Group—a 1,200 member transnational paramilitary wing of the Australian Federal Police.

Paul Kelly concludes his chapter on the East Timor intervention with a chilling quote from General Peter Cosgrove: "Before the Howard period, we [the Australian Defence Force] were, if you like, seen in traditional terms—turning out on Anzac Day—but from 1999 onwards we came to the front of mind as an ever-present arm of government doing all kinds of things. We were in East Timor, Solomon Islands, responses post-Bali, post-tsunami, you name it and the ADF would be involved. It became an ever-present institution, a vigorous arm of government and with that went money and resources." [12]

## Once again on Canberra's "reluctance" and "unreadiness" to intervene

While the DSP has remained silent, a defence of its role in 1999 has been attempted by the Revolutionary Socialist Party, an outfit that split last year from the DSP over various tactical issues. In an article titled "Howard's new lies on East Timor" in the October 2009 edition of the RSP's *Direct Action* newspaper, Jon Lamb shamelessly embraces the legacy of the pro-intervention protests, repeating the old garbage about the Howard government being forced to intervene on behalf of the Timorese people.

That the RSP chooses to mark the tenth anniversary of Australia's neo-colonial takeover of Timor by *boasting* about forcing the Howard government to send in the troops is indicative of just how far to the right these middle class layers have lurched.

The bulk of Lamb's article is comprised of an outraged reply to rival Socialist Alternative's accurate observation that the Howard government's decision to intervene was made prior to the protests, which merely served as a "left" cover for the militarist operation. (While Socialist Alternative balked at backing Australia's intervention, it still endorses the bogus claims that the independence referendum marked the "victory of the national liberation movement" and "fulfilment of East Timor's basic democratic right to self-determination".)

Lamb writes: "Was it true that the Howard government was planning to intervene militarily prior to the demonstrations and, if so, what evidence is there to support this? SAlt provide none. They cannot, because it was exactly the opposite of what the Howard government position was and what it was prepared to do.... Prior to these demonstrations, there were no advanced [Australian military] logistical preparations, there were no advanced strategic or tactical policy proposals and there were no pre-arranged agreements or prior discussions with the Indonesian government or TNI. The only plan of action in place was the possible evacuation of Australian civilians in the event the situation worsened and their safety could not be guaranteed."

Every part of this statement is false.

The sole source cited by Lamb is a 2004 book by Clinton Fernandes, *Reluctant Saviour: Australia, Indonesia and the independence of East Timor*. In 1999 Fernandes served as an Australian military intelligence officer, reporting on East Timor. After later solidarising himself with the pro-intervention rallies, he apparently developed ties with their organisers. In 2006 he joined the editorial board of "Seeing Red", the now defunct magazine of Socialist Alliance. He currently works as a lecturer helping to train officers at the Australian Defence Force Academy. *Reluctant Saviour*—which purports to prove that "massive protests that increased rapidly in both size and fury" forced an entirely unprepared and unwilling Australian government and military to intervene in East Timor—has been promoted by the DSP and others. An endorsement by American linguist, foreign policy analyst, and darling of the ex-liberal milieu, Noam Chomsky, is featured prominently on the book's jacket.

*Reluctant Saviour* is a deeply dishonest book that misrepresents cited

sources. After absurdly describing the US military contribution to the Timor intervention as “quite marginal”, Fernandes insists that “the [Australian] plan was never to send in a peacekeeping force at all”.

The author simply ignores or dismisses the evidence proving the Defence Department’s contingency planning for a potential intervention from early 1999. Attempting to prove his assertion that there were no prior preparations for an intervention, Fernandes refers to logistical problems experienced by the first wave of Australian troops landing in Dili, including last-minute preparations for fresh food supplies and a shortage of flak jackets (Australian forces ended up borrowing these from the US). All this, however, is as convincing as arguing that the Bush administration had no intention to occupy Iraq in early 2003 because invading US forces used Humvees that had not been fully armoured. It simply underscores the callous indifference, on the part of both the US and Australian administrations, to the well-being and fate of their own troops.

Fernandes cites just two publicly available documents when explaining the Australian military’s supposed lack of readiness to intervene in East Timor. These are an Australian National Audit Office 2001-2002 report reviewing the operation, titled “Management of Australian Defence Force Deployments to East Timor”, and Lieutenant Colonel Susan Smith’s, “A Handmaiden’s Tale: An Alternative View of Logistic Lessons Learned from INTERFET”, a working paper published by the Australian Defence Studies Centre in 2001. *Reluctant Saviour* quotes both documents out of context and in a manner designed to distort their real meaning.

Citing the Defence Studies Centre paper, Fernandes asserts: “That the original plan had nothing to do with peacekeeping was confirmed when military logicians later reviewed the operation.”[13] In fact, Lieutenant Colonel Smith’s study “confirmed” nothing of the sort. It noted problems created by a lack of developed military doctrine in relation to the national division of logistical responsibilities in a coalition intervention. The author also concluded that Australia needed to enhance its independent logistical capacities, warning “it may no longer be acceptable for Australia to continue to gamble on the availability of comprehensive logistic support from the US for every situation where Australia’s military interests may be engaged”. [14] Smith nevertheless noted that “logistic requirements for INTERFET were satisfied by stripping other parts of the ADF to meet the deficiencies.”[15] Her paper did not even mention the flak jacket and fresh food issues emphasised by Fernandes.

*Reluctant Saviour* asserts that the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report “concluded that the Department of Defence ‘could not provide evidence that formal planning for [a multilateral operation] began until later in 1999’.”[16] Again, this is deliberately misleading—the cited passage is not what the Defence Department “concluded”. Omitted are other parts of the paragraph from which the quote is taken: “Defence stated that, throughout 1999, it ensured that Australia would be well-placed to play a major role if a requirement for a multi-national force were to emerge. The ANAO notes that, during 1999, Defence undertook a number of measures in order to meet possible contingencies in East Timor.”[17]

In other words, while “formal planning” for the precise workings of the deployment (codenamed *Operation Warden*) commenced shortly before the intervention itself, advanced contingency plans had long been in place to allow just such a rapid dispatch of troops, once the government had given the green light.

The ANAO report noted that in the lead up to the operation, the Australian government’s desire to avoid antagonising Jakarta, which

opposed any international force in Timor, meant that “Defence planning and anticipatory action (such as pre-positioning of troops and materiel) were constrained by diplomatic and international relations considerations ... [which] led to very restrictive access practices in the planning processes for possible operations in East Timor.”[18] The official audit concluded that despite these constraints: “Defence’s planning for operations in East Timor was carried out in accordance with the government’s requirements. Defence responded speedily and effectively within the parameters set by government and the international context.”[19]

Far from the pro-intervention rallies “forcing” Howard to intervene into Timor, as Fernandes claims, they only began after the decision had already been made.

The demonstrations received prominent and highly favourable media coverage; the *Australian* even published a “protest diary” to notify its readers of the time and location of events being organised around the country. Despite this heavy promotion, the “troops in” cause never developed into anything approaching a genuine mass movement. The largest rallies were held on September 10 in Melbourne, with about 20,000 people attending, and on September 11 in Sydney, with a reported 5,000 people initially assembling for a march that swelled to about 15,000 people.

The importance of the demonstrations, however, lay not in their size but in their political function. Ten years on, there is no doubt that the Timor intervention marked a watershed in the history of Canberra’s relations with its neighbours in the South Pacific and South-East Asia. It also marked the exposure of the DSP, along with the various other petty bourgeois groups that falsely claim to be socialist, as the direct accomplices of Australian imperialism.

*The author also recommends:*

East Timor’s “independence”: illusion and reality  
[18 May 2002]

East Timor and protest politics  
[17 September 1999]

## References

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[2] Australian National Audit Office (ANAO), 2001/2002, report no. 38, “Management of Australian Defence Force Deployments to East Timor”, pp. 27-28. Available at: [http://www.anao.gov.au/uploads/documents/2001-02\\_Audit\\_Report\\_38.pdf](http://www.anao.gov.au/uploads/documents/2001-02_Audit_Report_38.pdf).

[3] *Deliverance*, p. 236.

[4] Paul Kelly, *March of the Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2009) p. 494.

[5] Hugh White, “The Road to INTERFET: Reflections on the Australian Strategic Decisions Concerning East Timor, December 1998 - September 1999”, *Security Challenges* (volume 4, number 1, Autumn 2008) pp. 75f.

[6] ANAO, “Management of Australian Defence Force Deployments to East Timor”, p. 28.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[8] *March of the Patriots*, p. 505.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 509.

[10] *Deliverance*, p. 260.

[11] *March of the Patriots*, p. 511.

[12] Ibid., p. 516.

[13] Clinton Fernandes, *Reluctant Saviour: Australia, Indonesia and the independence of East Timor* (Melbourne, Scribe Publications, 2004) p. 108.

[14] Lieutenant Colonel Susan Smith, "A Handmaiden's Tale: An Alternative View of Logistic Lessons Learned from INTERFET" (Canberra, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper 65, 2001) p. 9. Available at: [http://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/adsf/working%20paper%20documents/Handmaiden%27s\\_Tale.pdf](http://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/adsf/working%20paper%20documents/Handmaiden%27s_Tale.pdf).

[15] Ibid., p. 13.

[16] *Reluctant Saviour*, p. 109.

[17] ANAO, "Management of Australian Defence Force Deployments to East Timor", p. 28.

[18] Ibid., p. 30.

[19] Ibid., p. 43.



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