



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

LECTURE

**BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND SECURITY
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ON THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK MODULE FOR
TIMOR-LESTE WITHIN THE PILOT COURSE ON
DEFENCE AND SECURITY**

**“REVIEWING RESISTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING THE
PRESENT”**

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC
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A – Lessons from the Resistance

1. The Indonesian intelligence services started to operate in our territory after the Portuguese revolution on 25 April 1974. Military intelligence offices, disguised as traders, were infiltrating in order to collect a wide range of information on our political, organisational and military capabilities. They also observed and understood our weaknesses, which was apparent and included:

- our political immaturity
- our inconsistencies
- our continuous misunderstandings
- our lack of consensus on matters of strategic interest
- our internal divisions

All of these factors were carefully watched and analysed. Indonesia then began to undertake small test raids, in order to prepare for larger scale action.

2. Although we were aware of these preparations, we were too busy with the quarrels among ourselves to give necessary attention to them.

After 3 weeks of fratricide war, the Indonesian incursions at the border in September to November 1975 increased in firepower and strength, with the use of artillery and cavalry, and were pushing our forces back.

On the afternoon of 28 November, during the ceremony of unilateral proclamation of the RDTL, we could see the smoke from the Indonesian frigates near Ataúro, as if to show how unprotected our sea was.

On 7 December, in Dili, and subsequently in Baucau and Lospalos, the dropping of paratroopers also showed that we had no air security.

During the first few weeks the warships in the bay of Dili and the cannons in the mouth of Comoro vomited fire on the entire slope of the capital.

3. In the first two years, and although outnumbered in terms of soldiers and material, we managed to hold the enemy advances, by carrying out a war of defending positions, so as to safeguard large areas, which we called liberated areas and which were the support bases where all the population moved and worked.

During that time we had to endure raids that caused material and logistic damage, as well as human losses and the impact on morale. The defence of these large areas that housed the population required all our Forces and prevented us from carrying out significant offensive initiatives that might turn the tide of the struggle, and working against a fundamental military principle that attack is the best defence. This was a struggle that we were fated to lose, since we could not resupply and renew our military material and had to deal with communication and coordination problems due to the lack of an integrated command.

Soon the successive annihilation of our military regions forced us to resort to guerrilla warfare. By learning to fight like this we managed to overcome our main weakness:

self-sufficiency in terms of material, namely weapons and ammunition. This was essential for us to be able to continue fighting at all.

B – Country’s Defence and Security – present time

In order to understand the country’s defence and security, we must look at the legal and political framework that ensures the legitimacy of the actions of the State in that sector.

This takes us to Part V of the Constitution of the Republic, on national Defence and Security.

Section 146, on Armed Forces, reads as follows:

“FALINTIL-FDTL shall guarantee national independence, territorial integrity and the freedom and security of the populations against any aggression or external threat, in respect for the constitutional order”.

On the other hand, section 147, on Police and Security Forces, says that:

“The police shall defend the democratic legality and guarantee the internal security of the citizens...”.

We understand that the ‘democratic legality’ expressed in section 147 has the same connotation as section 146 when it talks about ‘respect for the constitutional order’. Its legal sense can be seen in section 85 (g) and (h) on the ‘exclusive competencies’ of the President of the Republic.

Sub-paragraph (h) says that it is exclusively incumbent upon the President of the Republic:

“To declare war and make peace following a Government proposal, after consultation with the Council of State and the Supreme Council of Defence and Security, under authorisation of the National Parliament”, while the previous sub-paragraph states that these same conditions are required to ‘declare the state of siege or the state of emergency’.

This is reinforced in section 87, on ‘Competencies (of the President of the Republic) with regard to international relations’, with sub-paragraph (a) reading the following:

“To declare war in case of effective or imminent aggression and make peace, following proposal by the Government, after consultation with the Supreme Council for Defence and Security and following authorisation of the National Parliament or of its Standing Committee”, with only the lapse that the State Council does not have to be heard.

However it must be said that this entire process of proposals and consultations will not work in practise in situations of ‘imminent aggression’ and even less in situations of ‘effective aggression’. As such, we believe that these restrictions of competencies are meant to safeguard the democratic rule of law by preventing unconstitutional propensities.

Thus we could ask: What is defence? What is security?

Is talking about ‘defence’ the same as talking about ‘preparation for war’? Let us recall section 146, which reads the following:

'FALINTIL-FDTL shall guarantee national independence, territorial integrity and the freedom and security of the populations against any aggression or external threat...' and this only means that the Armed Forces should be prepared for the eventuality of any war.

Will there be war in the future? Why should we think about that, when section 8.2 of the Constitution of the Republic, on 'International Relations', says that:

'The RDTL with all other peoples, aiming at the peaceful settlement of conflicts, the general, simultaneous and controlled disarmament (and) the establishment of a system of collective security...' which can be assumed to mean the entire world.

Section 8.4 also states that:

'The RDTL shall maintain special ties of friendship and co-operation with its neighbouring countries and the countries of the region.'

Will there or will there not be another war in the future? From a very personal standpoint, I would say that one should never cast aside the possibility of armed conflicts, whatever their nature may be. Our own history has shown us, as well as all the other wars that have been fought and that are still being fought, that wars can be caused for a great many reasons, including to take control over the natural resources of other countries.

What would then be the mission of the F-FDTL? Already in section 146 of the Constitution, the legislative stated that in the event of *'aggression or external threat'* our Forces should dig trenches along the border to *'guarantee territorial integrity'* and thus guarantee *'the freedom and security of the populations'*. In the first few years of the resistance, the defence of the territorial integrity was based on the effort to ensure 'freedom' of movements and 'the security' of the populations in the controlled areas.

Still, upon reading the Constitution, we see that section 6 (a) identifies as one of the main goals of the State:

'To defend and guarantee the sovereignty of the country.'

And the State, in order to defend and ensure the sovereignty of the country, will need an agent, which would obviously be the F-FDTL. As such, should *'sovereignty of the country'* be seen only as *'national independence (and) territorial integrity'*, as stated in section 146 on the mission of the Forces?

No, because when one speaks about territorial integrity one is speaking about territory and this is covered in section 4.3, which says that:

'The State shall not alienate any part of the East Timorese territory or the rights of sovereignty over the land, without prejudice to rectification of borders.'

Here we need to understand what sovereignty is, since section 49 reads the following:

'Every citizen has the right and the duty to contribute towards the defence of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.'

The three concepts are presented separately here, which helps us to understand section 8.1, which says that:

“The Democratic Republic of East Timor shall govern itself by the principles of (...) permanent sovereignty of the peoples over their wealth and natural resources (...)”

Their wealth and natural resources!!! Sovereignty is, after all, the right of possession and enjoyment. Very recently, when the Naval Component of the F-FDTL arrested an illegal fishing boat, there were voices reminding us that this should have been a task for the Police and not the Armed Forces. I believe these to be thoughtless opinions that seek only to shake the dust off from the mantle that covers the cynicism of good intentions, as is already the standard in the modern world, in which the largest threat to populations is the policy of two weights and two measures that is still going strong today.

C – Threats in the globalization age

1 – Lately I am horrified whenever I watch the news. There is an open war against the drug cartel in Mexico and there are pirates seizing oil tankers off the shores of Somalia. In Africa there continue to be internal problems that seem impossible to solve, while in some regions there are problems caused by ethnic tensions, political ambitions or the economic motivations of large multinationals which all conveys image of insecurity and fragility across the entire continent. However, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan give us food for thought as to the reasons for this all.

I am also very frightened by the terrorist attacks by suicide bombers and very recently by the explosive packages sent by mail to European heads of governments, not to mention the cancelling of flights, which is becoming routine in airports. There is much talk about the meeting of civilisations and about the global village, but the truth is that human civilisation is reaching the peak of insanity in terms of political, religious and sectarian intolerance.

The strong continue to want to rule the world, imposing their own standards and imposing duties on others. The wealthy do not cease to try to maintain their economic supremacy, by any means, and reject any models that may come along to level the playing field.

In this imbalance of options, humanity is vulnerable to the threats that arise, either as spontaneous reactions or as planned responses and backstage moves... to give reasons to justify actions over others.

In the troubled setting of today's world, we can see that people are becoming increasingly aware that the real cause of problems is not religion in itself, or an ethnicity or sect in themselves, or human rights in themselves, or democracy in itself, or underdevelopment in itself, or poverty in itself. The real cause of all existing problems is the cold war mentality that still subsists, namely that:

you can only survive by imposing yourself,
you can only impose yourself if you threaten someone,
you are only safe if you attack and destroy, and
in order for one to be strong, there must be those that are weak.

And all of this finds its reason of being in the need to maintain economical and financial hegemony as the basis for political hegemony, which after all is the greatest battle by the so-called civilisations, which have much more room for quarrels today than they did before.

The billions of dollars spent on wars in the name of democracy would have been better used to reduce world poverty, within a spirit of solidarity and equality among peoples. I believe that someday an atmosphere of global security may become a joyous reality.

2 - And how is Timor-Leste inserted in terms of defence and security?

Being a territory inserted in the crossroads of Asia and Pacific, between Australia and Indonesia, giant neighbours with different backgrounds that adopted a common policy regarding our destiny in the past, Timor-Leste must strive to steer away from political ingenuities, thinking that its Constitution alone may ensure national independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty over its resources. Even worse would be to assume that others will respect our Constitution.

The future adherence to ASEAN, which should not be rushed, must be viewed more in economical terms than in what regards policies and security. Also, we are not yet ready to meet the great expenses that will result from it, without immediate or medium term benefits.

3 – On Destabilisation Threats

a) Internally,

- we must be prepared against surprises that could be avoided if we all could have a common perception of how fragile we seem in the eyes of others, thereby reducing acting discrepancies, normally under the banner of democratic differences... which only serve to divide.

- we must strengthen our capability to understand emotional agitation and its connections by agents operating in our country, who make use of the full freedom of movements that we themselves grant to them.

- we must put an end to our present complete ineffectiveness of not knowing who may be controlling our communications, and how. Nowadays, technological sophistication puts us at the mercy of the large economic interests that always guide political interests.

In order to solve all of this, we must invest heavily in internal security. In democratic countries established hundreds of years ago, national intelligence services are areas that are not debated. In our Democratic Republic, there is not yet this awareness and this sense of State security, which means that the biggest constraint is always the possibility of public debate by Parliament on the amounts to be allocated. It is necessary to change this attitude because, truth be told, other people know what we say, whom we say it to, what we want and what we do not want. On the contrary, it is we that do not know if the person talking to us, even if they are a Timorese citizen, is serving the interests of our country or has traded their allegiances for a hefty salary.

b) Also internally,

- we must maintain a fast pace in the recruitment of police officers, so that our community police has enough personnel to carry out the task that the Constitution has already given to the PNTL to: 'guarantee the internal security of the citizens'.

For this, we need to use technical assistance to teach our police officers to work in the communities or to be coast guards, while the State must be ready to invest much more on facilities and working conditions, so that our men and women may carry out their duties with efficiency.

In the last ten years, much of the generous technical assistance provided by our development partners has not achieved the desired effect, since our agencies still lack the proper operational conditions. It is time to change this policy, and change must involve investment by the Timorese State. In this matter, all Timorese must have the same approach.

For all of the above, the State must invest:

- in increasing the personnel and in improving conditions and facilities for the border patrol Police;
- in training more soldiers and in establishing more posts throughout the border, so that they can act better, in coordination with the patrolling police unit;
- in increasing the personnel and in improving the action of our maritime police, so as to enable better control over the movements of people and commodities;
- in a better intelligence service, so as to enable previous detection of attempts to infiltrate drugs, weapons and illegal persons.

4 – How can we protect the country?

The principles listed in section 8 of the Constitution seek, in an ideal and idealistic manner, to ensure security for the State, by saying that it:

- 'is ruled by relations of friendship and cooperation with all other peoples', 'by the mutual respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and equality among States' and 'by the establishment of a new international economic order capable of ensuring peace and justice in the relations among peoples'.

In terms of international relations, Timor-Leste must:

- understand the scope of the regional and / or sub-regional forces in order to be able to identify its contextual objectives and our role within that framework;
- understand the impacts in decision-making processes that do not obstruct the security of the country itself, taking into consideration the weaknesses that are inherent to the State building process;
- continue to monitor processes throughout the world in terms of military actions, political reforms and adjustments, and inequality of economic opportunities;
- and avoid running to the arms of cooperation that would hinder our movements and prevent us from issuing legitimate opinions.

However, we all know that Timor-Leste signed in 2005 the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation, under the ARF (Asian Regional Forum), where it participates and discusses issues of Defence and Security every year.

Independence is a relative political process when viewed under the sphere of the interdependency of States, but sovereignty is an absolute concept.

The same way that democratic and developed countries have been worrying about their defence and security for hundreds of years, investing in those vital areas, Timor-Leste cannot hesitate to invest in its Defence and Security, so that it may PROTECT THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE COUNTRY!

Dili, 9 November 2010.

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