

## A sordid chapter ends... but the story continues

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The history of anti-democratic US foreign policy, and its portrayal in the media, is a long story, but one that everybody needs to know. It is always instructive to examine how the corporate media deals with US foreign policy insofar as it is terrorist and subversive of democracy — and with other important, almost illicit, information.

One of the most sordid chapters in this story closed just a few days ago, when Suharto, former US-supported dictator of Indonesia, died. He came to power in 1965, the culmination of a decade of US efforts to overthrow the independent policies of president Sukarno. This happened under the Democrat Lyndon Johnson. After the coup, political opponents were massacred, estimates of the dead range from the hundreds of thousands into the millions; lists of political opponents were provided by American diplomats, shortly to be butchered by a very efficient death machine. The US government provided vast military aid to Suharto; the US press reported gleefully that Indonesia was open for business. Multinational corporations poured in and were dutifully handed control of the strategically important natural resources of the country, destroying any possibility of economic independence. Suharto invaded East Timor in 1975, and in the ensuing massacres about one third of East Timor's population — about 200,000 souls — were killed. Ford and Kissinger were *in Indonesia* the day before the invasion, giving it the green light; the invasion was delayed until the day after they left. In response to the invasion, the US increased aid. Even Jimmy Carter, the supposed human rights saint, continued military aid to the butchers. (My home country of Australia has done its bit training Kopassus soldiers.) As the killing proceeded, mainstream US media coverage was inversely proportional to the scale of the slaughter. Indeed, through a several month period in 1978 of the very worst atrocities, US mainstream media coverage was exactly zero. In the 1980s, Reagan visited Indonesia as part of his Orwellian-named “wings of freedom” tour. Clinton called Suharto his kind of guy. In 1991, there was a massacre in Dili of hundreds of East Timorese; two US independent journalists were beaten. In response, the US sold Indonesia a batch of fighter planes.

This is relevant today, because Suharto died a few days ago. Check how much of the above was mentioned in mainstream media accounts of Suharto's life and crimes. The US policy here speaks for itself, and it was largely bipartisan. It

is relevant to the current discussion, not only as an instance of the barbarity of US foreign policy, but also as an instance of the barbarity of US foreign policy as applied by Democratic presidents — and today, there is no difference between the parties, nor between the candidates, on many of the outrages that constitute US foreign policy. Everybody will continue to support Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, Pakistan, bomb Somalia, bomb Afghanistan, and so on — quite apart from the ongoing catastrophes in Iraq and Palestine.

Since foreign policy is so rarely mentioned in these presidential debates, but is so important, perhaps the best measure of the prospective foreign policy positions of the candidates is to look at their advisors. Well Hillary has her husband as an advisor, and his record as war criminal speaks for itself: Haiti, Sudan, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Serbia, and so on.

But who are Obama's foreign policy advisors? Well, first, there is none other than Zbigniew Brzezinski, architect of much of the above-mentioned horror — in particular, training fundamentalist Islamist forces in Afghanistan. And then, there are those fighter planes that were shipped to Indonesia in 1991. The man who oversaw that deal, General Merrill McPeak, is another one of Obama's principal foreign policy advisors.

So, the decisions made for Democratic candidate, and then for president, are not only important to Americans — they are also important to those who will be on the receiving end of foreign policy. And for those recipients, it may well be a matter of life or death. Even if all the candidates are probable or certain prospective war criminals, if there is a slight difference, well that difference may amount to thousands of lives. So that is the sort of decision that Americans are confronted with, not a civilized decision, and not a pleasant one, not a decision that people in a democratic nation should have to tolerate. But a system in which these sorts of policies are the norm and are expected is one which is an unspeakable outrage, but one we must confront, and try to change as best we can. The consequences are enormous.