

# President of Timor-Leste EXPOSES Western Hypocrisy & Downfall | H.E. José Ramos-Horta

President José Ramos-Horta of Timor-Leste joins Felix Marquardt to discuss Europe's loss of credibility on international law, the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, the Iran crisis, the collapse of UN authority, energy and shipping risks, moral limits in war, freedom fighters and terrorism, the Nobel Peace Prize, and Timor-Leste's approach to diplomacy and peace. Links: President José Ramos-Horta (Official): <https://presidenciarepublica.tl/> President José Ramos-Horta (Personal): <https://ramoshorta.com/> Black Elephant Experience: @TheBlackElephantExperience Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction 00:00:31 Europe and Asia in a fractured world 00:07:58 Europe and the collapse of credibility 00:15:15 Ukraine Iran and global energy shock 00:20:58 Iran regional war and deterrence 00:32:39 Freedom fighters terrorism and Gaza 00:44:27 Nobel Peace Prize and moral authority 00:47:38 Timor-Leste diplomacy and peace

## #Pascal

Welcome back, everybody. Tonight, we've got a very special episode for you, because for the first time here on Neutrality Studies, we've got an acting president with us. My colleague, Felix Markhardt, interviewed President José Ramos-Horta, the head of state of the Southeast Asian nation, Timor-Leste. Here you go.

## #Felix Marquardt

I'm Felix Markhardt, and this is the Black Elephant Experience. Today, it's our immense honor and privilege to welcome the president of Timor-Leste, José Ramos-Horta.

## #José Ramos-Horta

Welcome, Mr. President. Thank you.

## #Felix Marquardt

A couple of years ago, which was the last time we met in Lisbon, it was a few months after October 7. And I spoke of the drift, what I saw from Europe as the drift towards European irrelevance. And

I'm very curious to hear from you, two years later, what is your take on the situation, especially seen from Southeast Asia?

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

Well, in Southeast Asia, we are obviously relatively at peace. There are the conflicts in Myanmar, but it is an internal conflict, a civil war, we would say, but it is not a conflict that involves other countries. It is not a conflict that has spilled over to other countries. It is contained there. Of course, with a lot of implications — Myanmar today is one of the biggest, maybe the biggest exporter of drugs, or maybe the second — rampant organized crime, but it is contained within the confines of their borders. We have tensions in the South China Sea. The tension is increasing with activities by some countries, but still, we cannot say that this is a regional or global threat.

And, of course, you have then the situation in Afghanistan, that endless war. And then in West Asia, the Middle East, Yemen, North Africa, with ramifications all over — the endless war in Ukraine, already four years. What I would say is that if we start the conversation by saying the Security Council, particularly the P5, they are the prime guarantors of peace and security in the world. They are the ones who are entrusted by the rest of the international community, being permanent members, hugely prestigious, with huge responsibility — A, to prevent conflicts, and if and when conflicts happen, we cannot always prevent them, but when we do not succeed, then the next step is trying to mediate to end these conflicts.

But then when you have of the P5, at least three are directly involved in Ukraine, for instance, and I'm not making any value judgment about it. I'm just saying they are involved. Russia is the aggressor in invading Ukraine. Russia can come up with all kinds of arguments, and that we all know. It goes back to the end of the Cold War when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved. NATO not only did not dissolve but expanded very fast toward the borders of Russia. And then the pro-Russia leader in Ukraine was ousted with direct interference by some of the Western countries in fomenting the unrest.

And then when you have a regime in Ukraine that's obviously pro-NATO, anti-Russia, in the perception of Russia, then Moscow is worried about the naval base in Crimea. So the first action Russia took was to invade Crimea, to prevent it from being annexed by NATO, together with Ukraine joining NATO. And then, maybe because the Palestinians realized that their fate is under threat of being sealed by the U.S., Israel, and some of Israel's allies, that another nail would be put in the coffin of the Palestinians, Hamas did the October 7th attack. The rest we know — one of the most tragic, catastrophic wars in memory.

The devastation of Gaza, the killing of tens of thousands of innocent people—children, women—the carpet bombing of Gaza, hospitals, universities, private homes, factories, hotels, and so on, all destroyed, you can see. And then, not able to resolve the Gaza conflict, the U.S. and Israel not able to resolve it, Israel didn't win the war against the Palestinians in Gaza or the West Bank, launch a

war against Iran to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, when Iran has stated it has no ambition to acquire nuclear weapons and there is no evidence whatsoever that they have nuclear weapons. So that's where we are. What a catastrophic situation. And the U.S. is almost completely sidelined.

## **#Pascal**

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this can happen anytime again. So please consider subscribing not only here, but to my mailing list on Substack. That's pascallottaz.substack.com. The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

Indeed it is, and I think most people would argue that not only is international law sidelined completely, but the credibility of those who've been the guarantors or who've presented themselves to the world as the most adamant defenders of international law, i.e. Western countries and particularly Europe, had absolutely nothing to say about the genocide in Gaza. They had nothing to say about the last intervention in 2025 on Iran. They had nothing to say about the kidnapping of Maduro. And suddenly they woke up and sort of started speaking of international law again when Donald Trump started speaking of Greenland. So, I mean, is it really something that the Europeans can continue talking about—international law?

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

I have to say that the European Union, the French, the conflicts in Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza, the attack on Iran expose the double standards that undermine everyone's credibility. When we use double standards toward similar uses of force with genocide ramifications, the West applauds when the ICC indicts Putin, and then major reaction, incredible reaction against the ICC for the indictment of Prime Minister Netanyahu. Well, the conclusion is, we should conclude that after all, international law, ICC, ICJ, is only for the weaker countries. There was never any difficulty for the ICC to indict African leaders.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

Exactly.

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

There were no difficulties in indicting Milosevic and others from the defeated ex-Yugoslavia. But suddenly, it becomes a major, major crisis when an ally of the West is indicted. So it discredits and undermines the entire security architecture, undermines the credibility of the Security Council as a

multilateral collective security system, and undermines the credibility of Europe because, obviously, how can European leaders lecture on human rights and democracy elsewhere? And then we have one UN President of the General Assembly who, when she was Foreign Minister of one European country, Germany, went out of her way to justify the bombing of schools in Gaza.

She said that. Then she became President of the General Assembly. So that's where we are. But in addition, because all this crisis, conflict, caused so much economic... The European economies are anemic. The U.S. economy is in shambles because of the massive deficit and, of course, ODAs. For the President Trump administration, it's, how you say, anathema to his philosophical beliefs. So USAID was terminated. U.S. engagements with many, many countries terminated. The wars caused enormous dislocation around the world in terms of trade and so on. Europe itself is in economic and financial stress.

So ODA has been reduced everywhere throughout the world by the bilateral donors, by the European Union, everywhere. They have significantly cut it. It doesn't mean that ODA was extremely well managed and resulted in the benefit of the people. So we arrive at a situation where hundreds of millions of people are affected by the war fought elsewhere in Europe, in Iran. People who lost their jobs, the middle class lost their jobs, oil prices skyrocketing, and that impact on shipping, the Strait of Hormuz blockage, conflict impact, we all know of that. So, very dangerous situation.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

Any possibility of a solution?

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

I don't see how. The solution for the war between Ukraine and Russia belongs to the two countries, belongs to the leaders of the two. They have to realize that this war can go on and on, with no victory by one side or the other—mutual destruction, as has been happening the last four years. And like in any situation of conflict, you have to make concessions, both sides.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

The United States has just outsourced the management of that war entirely to Europe. And they're trying to get completely out of it, but basically encouraging the Europeans to continue in this conflict. Meanwhile, a Japanese oil tanker crossed the Strait of Hormuz after paying transit fees in Chinese yuan. Until very recently, the mere idea of this was completely unthinkable. You are the head of a state that is an oil and gas producing country. How do you see this evolution, this new conversation that is happening between Iran and the BRICS in general, but China in particular?

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

The countries that ignited this war with Iran—that is, the United States and Israel, and the almost classic case of Israel—underestimated the other side, overestimated itself, and dragged the U.S. along into the war in Iran. As much as I firmly find it a catastrophic mistake on the part of the United States to get involved with Israel in attacking Iran, this does not spare Iran of its own responsibility in the situation in the region. Let's not be naive. Iran wants to be the power of the region—over Saudi Arabia, over Egypt, over the Gulf countries. That's their ambition. And the U.S. and Israel, in invading Iran, create a condition whereby, A, the United States has to leave. We leave, as it left Afghanistan, after 20 years, tens of thousands of lives lost under President Trump.

First term, negotiated with the Taliban for the withdrawal of Americans from Afghanistan. Came Biden, negotiations continued and expedited the withdrawal. After 20 years of war in Afghanistan, tens of thousands of lives lost, they had to leave. They could not claim any victory whatsoever. They just left. This is going to happen also with Iran. The West will leave. Who will come out losing will be Israel. Total loss for Israel. Colossal mistake by Israel. Who is the big winner? Iran. And the consequences of all of this are paid by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, the GCC countries, UAE, the GCC countries, and so forth. And the GCC countries had warned. They had warned the American side, the Israelis: do not start a war with Iran. It will have implications for the whole region. The U.S. side succumbed to the pressure, the lobby from Israel.

So now, what is the solution? For the U.S. to leave, but the consequences of the U.S. departure in these conditions are catastrophic. We're all going to pay a price. The energy market is not going to settle very soon. Even if the war ends today, I don't think they're going to settle the Hormuz issue. And by playing with the Hormuz Strait, free passage—what's going to happen? Who is going to tell a power in Asia that when they want to obstruct free passage, free movement in the South China Sea? Or how about the Malacca Strait? That is as important as the Hormuz Strait. So we create precedent. Precedents are created that will happen elsewhere. Meaning we destroy international law. We destroy the law of the sea, freedom of navigation, settlement of disputes. We create anarchy. And in anarchy, everybody is a loser, including the big power.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

Iran claims that it is leading a defensive war, an existential war. It seems that it is convincing more and more people in the region that its positions are legitimate. I'm talking about Oman, which has great relations with the U.S., but which has a very decent relationship with Iran. I'm talking about Pakistan, which very recently, when Foreign Minister Araghchi flew from Pakistan, from Islamabad—where, by the way, the U.S. negotiators were supposed to show up, whether it be J.D. Vance or Jared Kushner or Steve Witkoff, who in the end did not show up—when Araghchi leaves Islamabad for Moscow, where he had a very powerful, symbolically charged meeting with Putin, the Pakistanis made the decision to implement a directive facilitating a dramatic expansion of transit across Pakistan of third-country goods to Iran.

There's also China that is using rail to ship oil over to China instead of using the sea. So it seems to me that a lot of people are taking the position that Iran's claims, to some extent, are legitimate. And it strikes me that Iran's position is not merely a transactional position. Iran has been defending its resistance movement across the region, working with the Houthis, working with Hezbollah, working with Syria before it was handed over to the former leader of ISIS. The expansionist Greater Israel Project was unacceptable to anyone in the region, not only Iran. And I feel like sometimes we're trying to reduce Iran's position to a strategic position when actually this is a position that is also about anti-colonialism.

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

Legitimate. I do not dismiss it, obviously. For many decades, almost every U.S. administration maintained sanctions on Iran. Obama negotiated a nuclear deal successfully. The situation had the chance of being normalized, and Iran returning to normalcy in their relationship with the West, for instance. And this country, they forget that, you know, in all the terrorist attacks in the West, in Europe, and elsewhere in the past, over the years, there was no Iranian national involved. Not one that we know of. Iran was not involved in attacks in Europe or in the United States.

And so turning Iran into an exporter of terrorism, a supporter of terrorism, is not wise. That Iran interferes in the politics of other countries as they do, but some of the major powers have done that for many decades. And when Iran has stated time and again, time and again, it is not looking to produce nuclear weapons, what else could they have done? The only time when they enriched uranium beyond certain levels was when the negotiations ended, when the Trump administration abandoned the nuclear deal negotiated by Obama, and all of that. They had the International Atomic Energy Agency inspecting, with very draconian inspections.

Sometimes, yes, the Iranians reject it. But having said all of that, I certainly do not agree that, A, Iran would attack Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, and so on. These countries are very vulnerable. They have stated categorically again and again in the recent past that they are against the war. The U.S. didn't listen to them. By expanding the war into the GCC countries, it is Iran also doing what the United States and Israel are doing. Why are you invading? Why are you bombing, targeting civilian infrastructure? They are not targeting only American infrastructure in the Gulf countries; they have been targeting civilian infrastructure.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

They would push back on that. Overwhelmingly, what they have targeted are U.S. bases in the region. Well, if they have targeted only U.S. bases in the region...

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

Well, if they had targeted only U.S. bases in the region, probably these U.S. bases would no longer exist. The UAE alone had taken at least 2,000 missiles. The UAE was able to intercept more than 90%—very effective interception. But all the others... well, look at the attacks in Saudi Arabia, in Qatar itself, which in the past had a good relationship with Iran, one of the few countries that maintains such a relationship with Iran.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

They also have the biggest U.S. base in the region.

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

That's true. Also, like, the U.S. has the biggest base in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, in Japan, in the Philippines, and so on. So, Iran would have a stronger case if it would leave the GCC countries completely out of it. Leave it to public opinion in the Arab world, leave it to the Americans to put pressure on all sides to resolve. But what they're doing is expanding the war.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

America has used all these countries as a means to interfere with the whole region. Had those bases not been there, they would not have retaliated against that American presence and therefore not retaliated against those countries. Following the attacks that took place, the so-called 12-day war that took place last year, they had warned the U.S., if you attack us again, we will retaliate against all your bases in the region. Not taking that into account when you look at what Iran did after they started being bombed by Israel and America seems a bit disingenuous.

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

The reality is, the fact is, it is the U.S. and Israel that attacked Iran. The war is between Iran, the U.S., and Israel, and maybe with other Western countries involved. Then it is Iran that launched ballistic missiles into their neighbors, Arab countries. So that is the reality. So who is expanding this war? The Saudis, the UAE, they had warned the U.S. and Israel, do not attack Iran. War will spill over to the rest of the region. It will engulf the region. They told them that. The Americans, the Israelis didn't listen. They launched the war against Iran. Then Iran expanded the war, made it spill over into the Arab countries. The same countries had warned the U.S., had appealed to the U.S. not to invade, not to attack Iran. And my point is this: Iran, by invading—by attacking, not invading, but attacking—these countries, it is, ironically, the net result. The implication is that they are the ones expanding the war into other countries.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

Yeah, I think they would argue that deterrence for them required attacking the U.S. bases in the region as a whole. That was the only way to show deterrence, to seek deterrence.

### **#José Ramos-Horta**

But the reality is that the planes bombing Iran do not fly out of the UAE or anywhere else. They fly out from U.S. aircraft carriers. Obviously, they fly out from Israel. Israel doesn't fly out from Kuwait or from Qatar or from anywhere.

### **#Felix Marquardt**

No, but the bases around the region are used to carry out these attacks. They are used, whether they are directly used with bombs, like missiles being launched, or planes taking off from them. They are definitely used for intelligence purposes. They are actually part of this war. They are playing a role.

### **#José Ramos-Horta**

So when will Europe be attacked by Iran as well?

### **#Felix Marquardt**

I will tell you, there are U.S. bases. You led the War of Independence of Timor. You were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and I'm very interested in your take on it being awarded to Mrs. Machado. I would first like to hear your take on the question of a guerrilla fighter, like freedom fighter versus terrorist. Earlier in our conversation, you spoke of the attacks on October 7, and you referred to the war on Gaza. The vast majority of genocide scholars in the world are calling it a genocide, and most NGOs are calling it a genocide. I'm curious, what is your position? When does a freedom fighter become a terrorist? Earlier in the conversation, you said conflict and war, and then you called it a genocide. Where do you sit today?

### **#José Ramos-Horta**

My position remains very, very much the same for the last 50 years. I do not excuse violence by one side or another. I accept the laws of war, the realities of war, in that in armed conflicts, the two sides engage in killing, in destruction. I accept that. But there are laws governing all of this because human civilization evolved over the years, and we codify our behavior in situations of war. You don't attack hospitals, you don't kill civilians, you don't kill innocent people, children, and all of that. And I'm not going to change my philosophy, my beliefs. After 50 years, I still believe in that. Those of us who fought or fight for freedom, for human dignity, we cannot descend to the level of those we are fighting against who murder, rape, and destroy hospitals and so on.

For me, there is no cause, political cause, no ideology, no religion that can justify carpet bombing, justify indiscriminate killing of civilians, rape of women and their children. Anyone who does it, whether a state — in this case Israel or the United States or Iran — or a national liberation movement, supposed to be a national liberation movement but engages in the killing of innocent people — sorry, I apply the same judgment. They are wrong. All are wrong. I will not accept any argument from any national liberation movement that, oh, we are fighting oppression. Yeah, you fight oppression by killing innocent people, women, children. So that, for me, in my country, in Timor-Leste, our national liberation army, Falintil, never touched a single Indonesian civilian. No Indonesian military people captured in battles were ever summarily executed.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

Not one. You mentioned rape. There is now significant data showing that rape was not used as a weapon of war on October 7th, that every single allegation in that respect was completely fabricated. And so I think it's important to mention that in this conversation. Half the population of Gaza, as you know, is made up of children. And this accusation of rape has a long history of being used publicly to carry out exactions, mass murder, and destruction of schools, hospitals, and civilian infrastructure. And that's exactly what happened after October 7th.

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

I was not referring to any specific situation. I'm just saying the moral standard is this, and I abide by that moral standard, in my opinion. When you carpet bomb a whole city, a whole town, and then make the argument that, oh, because the terrorists, Hamas, are hiding in the hospital, that is totally unacceptable. But at the same time, the other side also — I'm referring to Iran — God, what the Iranian regime has done all these decades. How many prisoners they have there, tens of thousands of Iranians languishing in prison. I disagree. I disagree with the punishment of Iran, the sanctions over the decades. I disagree with the sweeping judgment of Iran, nuclear ambitions, and all of that. But I'm not going to close my eyes to what I know the Iranian regime does to people in Iran.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

I think some of us feel that the reckoning, the reckoning underway, the West had it coming. And as you pointed out, sort of the dismantling of international law and the international order has been essentially the product of the West's behavior. The killing of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure was almost universal to every single American intervention in the world for the last hundred years. I don't disagree with you on the norm that you're describing, which is of not attacking civilians, but I find it not surprising that most people around the world are very dubious about the U.S. talking about this ever, when you look at the number of children that were killed, not by George W. Bush, but by the embargo and the oil-for-food program that affected Iraqi children during the 90s under Bill Clinton.

When you look at the fact that Iran had a democratically elected government in 1953, which made the incredibly daring decision to say that the money from Iranian oil should go to the Iranian people, and immediately there was a coup organized by MI6 and the CIA that got rid of that government, Western credibility and legitimacy on these issues is now completely in shambles. And there is a tendency to look at this as something that happened recently, when actually the track record shows that this has been going on for not even decades — it's a century-long history of killing civilians whenever America wants to kill civilians or European countries want to kill civilians. It's just non-stop.

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

Of course. This is history. This happened in Vietnam. The Vietnamese still suffer the effects of Agent Orange, the chemical orange, with the legacy of it we see in Vietnam. Obviously, Iran, in my view, suffers unfair and unjustified isolation, pressure, sanctions of all sorts all these last 40 years or so. But there was also madness in Iran. When we lead the people, we have to measure everything. If we lead with morality, if I criticize American support for the Shah, the brutalities of the Shah, I try not to replicate, to do exactly what the others have done. So they also created enemies unnecessarily. They also contributed with their speeches, if not in practice, at least in speeches, to their demonization by other people. My point is, I'm no longer naive to find excuses or justification for certain countries, certain regimes, and demonizing all others.

I'm sorry, but I no longer belong to that age of too much romanticism about the left, about the socialist revolution, and that only the right has done wrong and the left has done all well. And I don't buy either. I don't buy either the Western propaganda or the Western narrative about the rest of the world, about China or even about Russia. Putin, obviously, is not a Jeffersonian democrat, far from it. But God, try to live with Putin. Try to live with Russia. Try to live with China. Let China be China. China is not an enemy. China is a rival, a strategic rival, if they want to call it that way — a rival in trade, in science, in technology. But that's all. We are like that. But to label China an enemy, a threat, demonize Putin, but then don't demonize Netanyahu.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

Speaking of Netanyahu, the latest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, Mrs. Machado in Venezuela actually called on Netanyahu, famously, to intervene to free the country from Maduro. What on earth has happened to the Nobel Peace Prize?

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

There were instances in history when they might have given the prize to their own person. And I know for a fact, from the history of the Nobel Committee, that they regretted giving the prize to Henry Kissinger. And the Henry Kissinger counterpart in the Paris negotiations, the Vietnamese envoy Le Duc Tho, was also supposed to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, but he rejected it, he refused. Maybe precisely because he would have received it alongside Kissinger? So... And... They

never gave it to Mahatma Gandhi. Although I heard, I know from history, that actually the year Mahatma Gandhi was going to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, he was killed. And the Peace Prize is not given posthumously, after death.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

Mm-hmm.

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

Serious mistake that they never gave it to Mahatma Gandhi. Serious mistake that they gave it to Kissinger.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

They gave it to this lady from Venezuela.

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

I never met her. I don't know her. Never even close. And I was surprised that she would give the Peace Prize to President Trump when the Nobel Committee—well, they forced the Nobel Committee to come out publicly to state it is not transmissible. And then other statements she made, asking Netanyahu to liberate Venezuela or something to that effect. But that's her judgment. I share the Peace Prize with the people of Timor-Leste. When I won the Peace Prize, I said, this belongs to the people. And I actually didn't keep the Peace Prize. It is in the headquarters of our Defense Force. And why did I give it to them? Because during the struggle, they never touched a single civilian. And when I handed over the Peace Prize to them, just as guardian—it is not transmissible—I said, keep it here to remind you always that the Army must serve the people. It's an army for peace, never to intimidate, never to kill people.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

One last question, Mr. President, before I let you go. I don't think there are many countries in the world that have very good relations with all their regional neighbors, but also with all the superpowers the way that you do. In the liberation struggle of Timor-Leste, you lost several family members. I think it was three of your brothers who died in those times. And yet, where are you today? You have excellent relations with Indonesia. You have excellent relations with Australia, with China, with the U.S. What is your approach to diplomacy, the legacy that you want to pass on to your successors?

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

No demonizing anyone. Of course, there are circumstances where you should not even talk to particular people. When those people are engaged in a full-fledged war of destruction, of genocide, there is no dialogue possible. But my philosophy, my belief is, in situations like Iran, before this war started, in Ukraine, there were ample opportunities to prevent the conflict from happening, the wars from happening. There were ample opportunities. But always, different sides, either they overestimate themselves or underestimate the other side. What happens like this? You have tensions, you have difficulties with the other side, and you start looking at alternatives instead of looking for dialogue.

You start looking at your strength, your force. That's what Russia did in regard to Ukraine, and that's what Netanyahu did in regard to Gaza. He underestimated the Palestinians; he didn't want a war in Gaza. Israel lost as never before. The big problem for Israel is this: self-destruction. How is Israel going to recover morally from all of this? This is a destruction of the values of the Jewish people, of Judaism. How are we going to recover from that? Israeli society is going to go through serious, serious problems—more damage to Israel than in any other war in the past that Israel fought.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

Mm-hmm.

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

At the same time, I totally understand the complexities of diplomacy, the complexities of international relations. It's not that simple. You have Russia and Ukraine. Now what? The war happened, it's ongoing. How to reach a solution? I said four years ago in a talk like this, but with a think tank in Portugal, I said way back four years ago, the sides in this war, Ukraine and Russia, all have to make concessions. In this case, territorial concessions. How can Putin back off? Very difficult. How can Zelensky back off? Very difficult. But this war, I would call it lose-lose. No win-win. It's lose-lose.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

Is it possible to get—this will really be my last question—is it possible to get a win-win when you give the keys to the negotiations to real estate promoters?

## **#José Ramos-Horta**

Well, yes. I don't understand how some of the people involved in the negotiations—in Iran negotiations, in Ukraine negotiations—when the UN appointed the negotiators, mediators for the Iraq war, Afghanistan, Syria... I know at least one of them, an Algerian diplomat, Lakhdar Brahimi, one of the most experienced negotiators ever. He did Afghanistan, he did Iraq, and the last was Syria. He went to Syria and stayed there for three years. At the end of three years, he spoke to the

Syrian people. He apologized. He said, "I apologize that I have failed you. I cannot resolve this." He was the best diplomat the UN could have. The UN found the best diplomat. Before Lakhdar Brahimi was Kofi Annan, but Kofi Annan did only three months. So you cannot send inexperienced people, whether real estate developers or a banker.

## **#Felix Marquardt**

Thank you so much, Mr. President. I'll have you back very soon, I hope. Thank you for your time.  
Thank you.