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Mobile**Economist.com****NEWS ANALYSIS: TOP STORY****Timor-Leste****Timor-Leste's fresh start**May 11th 2007 | BANGKOK
From Economist.com**José Ramos-Horta, a Nobel peace laureate, wins the presidency**

AFP

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LAST May, Timor-Leste descended into violence as its police and army collapsed, prompting the hasty dispatch of a UN peacekeeping force. This week, with UN troops and police patrolling the streets, the tiny nation of fewer than 1m people held a second, peaceful round of voting for a new president. The candidates in the run-off represented rival factions of the former resistance movement against Indonesia's brutal occupation of what was then called East Timor. On Friday May 11th, the election commission announced that José Ramos-Horta had won a landslide victory over Francisco Guterres, a former guerrilla running under his *nom-de-guerre*, "Lu-Olo".

The result, with Mr Ramos-Horta getting 69% to his rival's 31%, is a crushing defeat for Mr Guterres's Fretilin party, the resistance movement's political wing which has governed the country since it gained full independence five years ago. It had looked increasingly likely after five of the six eliminated first-round candidates backed Mr Ramos-Horta. Mr Guterres, despite his credentials as a resistance fighter, was a lacklustre candidate, seen as the puppet of Fretilin's real leader, Mari Alkatiri. Mr Alkatiri resigned as prime minister during last year's violence, which he had triggered by sacking almost half of the army for going on strike. Since then Mr Ramos-Horta has been prime minister, in an uneasy cohabitation with Fretilin.

The outgoing president, Xanana Gusmão, once led the resistance's armed wing but fell out with Fretilin years ago. He and his ally, Mr Ramos-Horta, criticise Fretilin for failing to solve deep poverty and unemployment, despite the money that has started rolling in from offshore oil and gas fields. Mr Ramos-Horta's victory is the first stage in a planned job-swap with Mr Gusmão. In parliamentary elections next month, Mr Gusmão will seek the prime ministership, hoping to wipe out Fretilin's

majority with his new party, the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction.

The size of Mr Ramos-Horta's victory suggests this plan may well succeed. The question is how well Fretilin's militants would accept losing the privileges of office. Towards the end of the presidential campaign, its hopes fading, Fretilin accused the Australian-led peacekeepers of helping their rivals. Mr Alkatiri even claimed that soldiers were carrying photos of Mr Ramos-Horta in their rucksacks to show to voters. However, after the results, a Fretilin spokesman said the party would accept defeat "with dignity".

Mr Ramos-Horta portrays himself as a great healer. He jointly won the Nobel peace prize for his efforts as the resistance's chief international spokesman. To impress the many Catholic voters his campaign featured photographs of him meeting Pope Benedict XVI. On his posters he posed in a black tunic, looking almost like a priest. He said winning the presidency would mean carrying a cross almost as heavy as Christ's.

It will indeed be a considerable challenge to soothe the bitterness between Timor-Leste's political factions and end the sporadic clashes between street gangs loosely associated with them. Only then will the tens of thousands who have been living miserably in refugee camps since last year's violence feel safe to return home. Now is Mr Ramos-Horta's chance to really earn that Nobel peace prize.

What might help to heal the nation is proper justice not just for the victims of last year's violence but also for the thousands who died in 1999, when pro-Indonesian militias rampaged after the Timorese voted for independence. The UN says it will soon resume its investigation of the 1999 killings and will push for prosecutions. But the chances do not look good. Mr Gusmão and his successor as president are more keen on seeking good relations with Indonesia than on bringing its former military chiefs to trial.