



Nobel Laureates Dump Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton is « Outstanding... Sensitive to the Rest of the World »

According to Timor-Leste Nobel Laureate José Ramos-Horta

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History should tell us that writing scolding, even scornful letters, to electorates as part of a conversation for persuasion do not work. They are even less effective when coming from outside that electorate, however well-intentioned. Non-voters should be careful to judge and lecture.

Consider the attempt on the part of *The Guardian* to mount its electoral high horse prior to the 2004 Presidential elections in the United States. The prospect of another four years of George W. Bush was hard to stomach for the editors, hence their disruptive project. Operation Clark County was advertised as an effort to write “to undecided voters in the crucial state of Ohio.” The experiment had more than a degree of condescension, slanted, as it were, to the superior across the pond wisdom.

Instead of providing a platform of sobriety, it simply supplied patriotic fuel to US voters to confirm their positions. No one was going to be telling them what to do. Their president was a fool, but was *their* fool. As one letter went, “We Ohioans are an ornery sort and don’t take meddling well, even if it comes from people we admire and with their sincere goodwill. We are a fairly closed community overall.”[1] Even the *New York Times* came forth with an unmistakably frank headline: “British Two Cents Draws, in Sum, a Two-Word Reply: Butt Out.”[2]

Nobel Prize winner and former president of Timor-Leste, José Ramos-Horta, should be more attuned with that recent history. But instead, he has decided to wade into the US elections with another letter of scorn, another experiment in persuasion. To add weight and magnification to the appeal, he is seeking the signatures of fellow Nobel Prize laureates. The direction of this letter promises to be simple: whatever you do, people of the US, don’t vote for Donald Trump next month.

During a brief visit to the northern Australian town of Darwin, Ramos-Horta explained how he and his friends,

“Nobel Peace Prize laureates, are extremely concerned with the tone of a presidential candidate Donald Trump in making disparaging remarks about migrants, about Muslims, and refugees.”

Ramos-Horta insisted that the rise of such a figure was “extremely worrying for all of us and it does not serve US interests.” Along with his fellow laureates, he was hoping to pen a letter that would “alert American public opinion that the world ... cannot afford extremism coming from the White House itself.”

Ramos-Horta provides us a fairly typical, if rusted view, of world power. Empires need the wise and clever to lead them, being repositories of responsibility. Lunacy has no place. “The US is an indisputable global power and global powers have to be led with prudence, with enormous wisdom.”

What of the brakes of moderation and restraint offered by a critical, at times unreasonable Congress, including other measures so carefully thought through by the Republic’s Founding Fathers? We have seen such brakes bringing the Republic to a screeching halt on occasions, notably during the Obama years. These are polarised times in US politics, and not even the supply of finance to public servants is sacred.

This is of little interest to Ramos-Horta, who is convinced that a Trump presidency would have Congress in his deceptively deep pocket to wage war with impunity and engage in a pattern of global mischief making.

“Whatever the US president and US congress may decide on some measure of issues internationally can enhance peace, but can provoke instability and world disorder.” Not that the record book on peace, stemming from US foreign policy in recent years, has been particularly enhancing.

Having dumped generously on Trump, Ramos-Horta admits a swooning admiration for Hillary Clinton, his preferred White House occupant. If there is a candidate bound to embark on more aggressive stances, be it towards Iran or Russia, few could come close. Her recipe is for greater, not lesser belligerence. Free world boisterousness indeed.

Taking leave of his senses, Ramos-Horta suggested that she was “outstanding” and “sensitive to the rest of the world”. With baffling adolescent gullibility, the Nobel Prize laureate saw a Clinton “extremely sensitive to education for poor people, for children”.

A sense of balance might have been appropriate at that point: questionable donations from despotic regimes to the same, supposedly helpful foundation open to helping the indigent and illiterate; or security breaches; or compromised arrangements with Wall Street. The world of power is dark, and maze ridden, and at the end of it usually lurks a Clinton apology.

A Clinton presidency would hardly be that prudent, nor particularly wise, but that is the Ramos-Horta verdict, his own variant of an external endorsement that is bound to fall on deaf ears in the United States. Any ears who receive the message will be dismissive. From a man whose country suffered an occupation that will, in time, find its way into the books of notable genocides, endorsing such a Clinton can hardly be prudent. But then again, power of the massive sort rarely is.

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[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/oct/18/uselections2004.usa2>

[2] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/oct/21/uselections2004.usa4>

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