

Independent small nations (East Timor)

SDPCW-6, Class notes by Dr. Tim Anderson

Overview

1. The Independence of East Timor
2. Neo-colonial disputes
3. An oil curse?
4. South-South cooperation with Cuba
5. Summary: small nations, 'lost causes' and independence dilemmas



Question

What key factors allowed the little nation of East Timor (Timor Leste) to regain its independence over 1999-2002? What lessons might this have for other small nations?

Wider questions:

- In what circumstances can small nations assert their independence?
- Is there an 'oil curse', what does this really mean? How important are natural resources?
- In what circumstances can a small nation make advances in human development?
- What is south-south cooperation and what advantages does it have?

Readings:

Jonathan Di John (2011) Is There Really a Resource Curse? A Critical Survey of Theory and Evidence, *Global Governance*, Vol. 17, No. 2, The Governance of Extractive Resources (Apr.- June 2011), pp. 167-184

Babo Soares, Dionisio (2003) Political developments leading to the referendum, pp. 53-73 in James J. Fox and Dionisio Babo Soares (2003) *Out of the Ashes: Destruction and Reconstruction of East Timor*, ANU Press, Canberra

1. The Independence of East Timor

Overview

1702-1975	Portugal colonises East Timor (Timor Leste);
1974-75	Portugal withdraws and East Timor declares independence;
1975	Indonesia invades and annexes ET;
1975-1999	Indonesian colonial period, faces constant popular resistance;
1997-1998	Asian Financial Crisis, fall of Suharto, political transition in Indonesia
1999	Referendum (President Habibie) - accept or reject 'special autonomy'?
1999	UN force led by Australia in transition;
1999-2002	UNTAET transitional authority;
2002	Timor Leste Independence ceremony
2000+	A series of new, neo-colonial disputes

East Timor's colonial history

- ❑ 1515: Portuguese traders arrive at this eastern island, between Asia and Melanesia;
- ❑ 1556: Dominican friars establish a village and mission;
- ❑ 1702: Portugal annexes part of the island of Timor, alongside the Dutch colonisation of many islands that would later become Indonesia;
- ❑ After more than **four centuries**, the local people speak Portuguese and are mostly Catholic, but maintain **distinct and syncretic** traditions, culture and languages;
- ❑ 1974: a left military coup in Portugal leads to Portugal abandoning all its colonies.





1974 Left Military Coup in Portugal, after the defeat of the Portuguese army in Guinea Bissau - Portugal abandons all her colonies

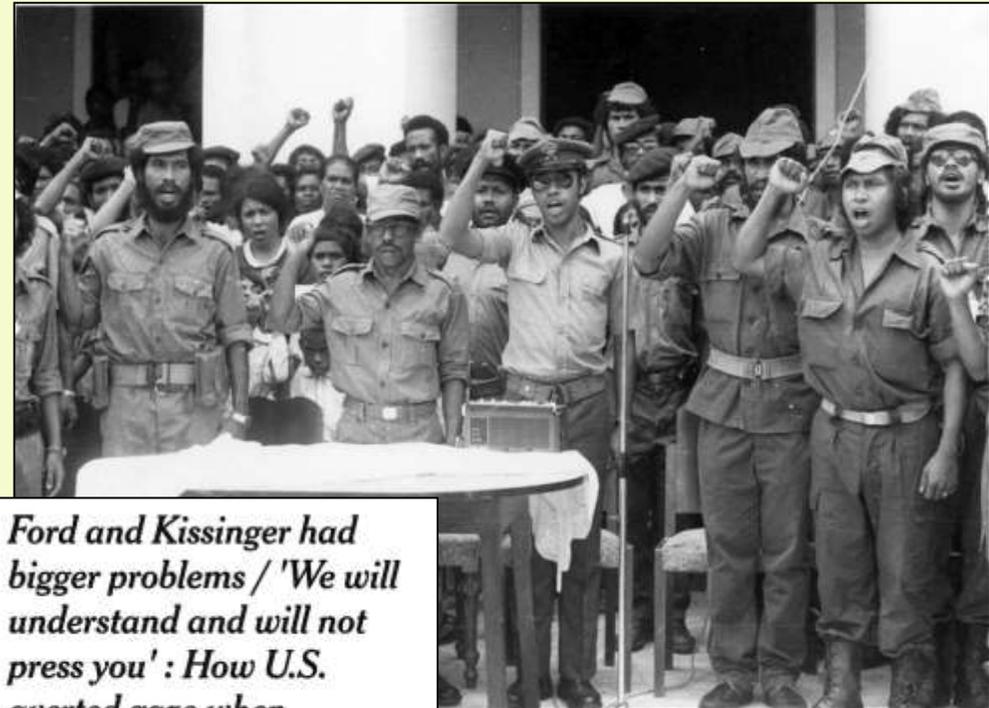
- Pedro Ramos Pinto (2008) 'Urban Social Movements and the Transition to Democracy in Portugal, 1974-1976', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Dec., 2008), pp. 1025-1046
- Piero Gleijeses (2002) *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa, 1959-1976*, University of North Carolina Press, pp.209-213

After a brief internal struggle Timor Leste proclaims its independence, on 28 November 1975

1975

August Portuguese forces withdraw from Timor Leste
November After a brief internal struggle, the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste proclaims independence.
December Indonesian forces invade and annex East Timor, using violent repression.

Washington privately supports the invasion and Australia acquiesces, with PM Gough Whitlam saying East Timor was 'not viable' as an independent nation.



Ford and Kissinger had bigger problems / 'We will understand and will not press you' : How U.S. averted gaze when Indonesia took East Timor

Resistance after 1975



Fallen national leaders, Nicolau Lobato, Konis Santana and David Alex

- ❑ Abandoned by most of the world, Timorese resistance continues, in many areas the resistance fighters are decimated, yet popular support remains strong;
- ❑ Little help from the Non-Aligned movement, as Indonesia is an important member;
- ❑ Nicolau Lobato, first Prime Minister, Dec 1975 - Dec 1978; KIA 1978;
- ❑ The National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM) is formed in 1975; in 1998 it is renamed CNRT (National Council of Timorese Resistance) at a meeting in Portugal;
- ❑ 1988: Commander Xanana Gusmao announces split between Falantil (resistance militia) and the lead political party, Fretilin;
- ❑ 1991 Popular resistance inflamed after Santa Cruz massacre of 250 in Dili;
- ❑ 1992: Commander Gusmao is captured and held prisoner, until 1999;
- ❑ 1993: Konis Santana becomes Falantil commander; KIA 1998;
- ❑ 1997: Resistance leader David Alex KIA;
- ❑ 1999: Falantil refrains from direct intervention during militia violence of 1999.

Mathew Jardine (1997) 'The Life and Death of David Alex and the Ongoing Struggle for East Timor', Cultural Survival, online: <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/life-and-death-david-alex-and-ongoing-struggle-east-timor>

Janet Gunter (2011) 'East Timor: Konis Santana, a Humble Guerrilla Hero', Global Voices, online: <https://globalvoices.org/2011/03/16/east-timor-konis-santana-a-humble-guerrilla-hero/>

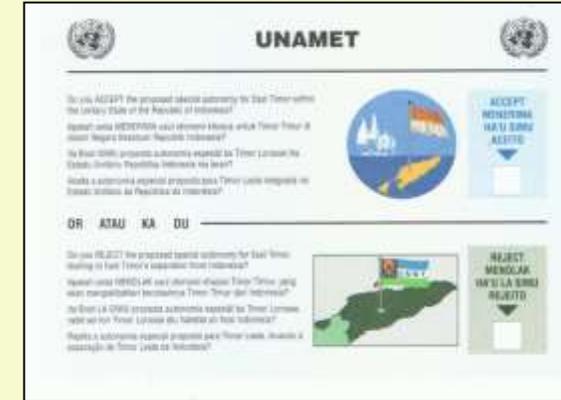
From Resistance to Referendum: 1975-1999

- ❑ Resistance continues, until political crisis in Indonesia ends the Suharto dictatorship and a referendum (conceded by Suharto's successor B.J. Habibie) on 30 August 1999;
- ❑ The East Timorese people were invited to accept or reject 'special autonomy'; rejection of special autonomy would mean a vote for independence;
- ❑ in a UN supervised vote, 78.5% of the people (97% turnout) reject 'special autonomy';
- ❑ The Indonesian Army (TNI) is directed to leave East Timor, but as they leave their loyalist ('red and white') militia carry out revenge, killing and burning;



The transition: 1999-2002

- ❑ The United Nations Mission for East Timor (UNAMET) supervised the referendum but withdrew during the post-vote violence;
- ❑ An International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), led by Australia, was invited by Timorese leaders to help quell the violence
- ❑ The United Nations Transitional Authority for East Timor (UNTAET) functioned as a trustee from October 1999 to May 2002;
- ❑ UNTAET, with some Timorese participation, acted as the de facto government and controlled all aid money until May 2002.
- ❑ The UN encourages the 2001 disbanding of the national unity group the CNRT in favour of multi-party system.
- ❑ Elections in Aug. 2001 lead to a Fretilin-led coalition government.
- ❑ UN Support Mission (UNMISSET) remains until May 2005.



East Timor's first election
'glowing example' to world
community: Annan



VIDEO: 1'26" - Independence in East Timor

- ❑ "Each colonised country must be free"
- ❑ Kofi Annan (2002): "Independence is not an end, it is the beginning of self-rule"
- ❑ "If we do not manage [our land and] the environment, it will be taken over by other countries, or rich people"

full video 'Ukun Rasik An' (12 min) is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIJXTgP7O0s>



2. Neo-colonial challenges

- ❑ **Agriculture** In the transitional period the World Bank refuses to allow the use of aid money for agricultural reconstruction, where that involves public facilities;
- ❑ **Internal crisis** Split in the leadership exposes the little nation to a new round of foreign intervention - the costs of disunity;
- ❑ **Oil resources** Australia shifts its resource sharing agreement with Indonesia (over the Timorese province) to the new Timorese government, but on extremely unfair terms; ongoing struggle to secure oil and gas resources;
- ❑ **Land** USAID begins a program to parcelise and commercialise land previously held under customary title, under cover of resolving transitional land disputes.

2.1 East Timor's agricultural dispute with the World Bank

- Over 1999-2002 Timorese leaders saw as urgent the need to restore agriculture and grain production, damaged during the transition crisis, they wanted to use aid money to rebuild rice fields, grain silos, agricultural service centres and public abattoirs;
- The World Bank, entrusted by UNTAET with aid money - and despite adopting the language of self-rule - refused these requests, saying that:
 - "the government should not own revenue generating enterprises, such as meat slaughterhouses, warehouse facilities [and] grain storage facilities ... [this] would inhibit private sector entrepreneurship (IDA 2000)."
- Timorese remembered that the World Bank, under Indonesian rule, backed forced sterilisation programs, transmigration and the TNI backed militias, all of which were seen as hostile.
- After independence, the Timorese government did try to create partial food sovereignty

Anderson, Tim (2003) 'Self-determination after Independence: East Timor and the World Bank', *Portuguese Studies Review*, Vol 11, No 1

Table 2 shows the increase in rice and other staple food production after independence; this collapsed again during the internal crisis of 2006.

Table 2: Staple food production, Timor Leste, 1998-2004

	1996	1998	2001	2004
Rice (tonnes)	52,607	36,848	53,845	65,433
Wetland rice area (ha)	17,418	12,054	na	19,800
Dryland rice area (ha)	2,266	1,772	na	4,321
Maize (tonnes)	106,616	58,931	69,000	70,175
Cassava (tonnes)	53,781	32,092	55,845	41,525
Roots & tubers (tonnes)	44,000	38,000	40,000	43,000

Source: UNDP 2006: 84

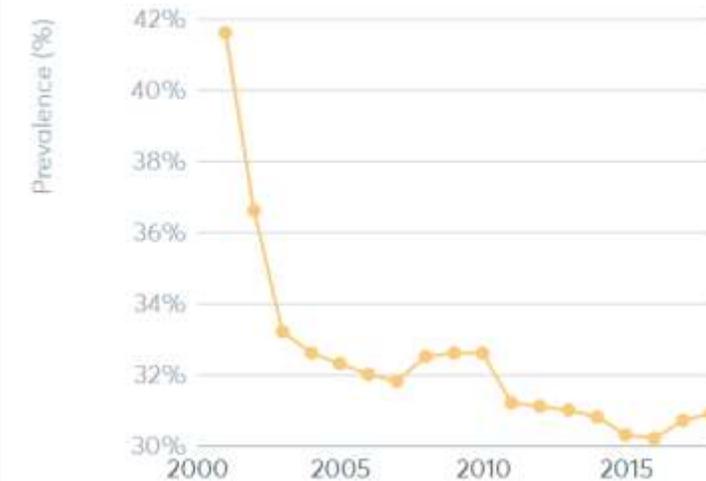
Food security in Timor Leste

- ❑ East Timor has had chronic food insecurity due to (a) political upheavals (b) sharp seasonal changes with a 'hungry season'; and (c) a degraded environment, limited arable land and food import dependence;
- ❑ Sustainable Development Goal 2 (UN 2015) stresses (i) ending hunger and ensuring food access for all (ii) ending all forms of malnutrition (iii) doubling agricultural productivity - but East Timor's food production is low;
- ❑ Undernourishment fell sharply after independence, but remains high, at more than 30% (GNR 2020);
- ❑ Food subsidies have been diverted into corrupt dealings.

Global Nutrition Report (2020) Country Nutrition Profile: Timor Leste, from FAO 2019, online: <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/asia/south-eastern-asia/timor-leste/>

CEPAD (2017) 'Timor Leste Strategic Review: progress and success in achieving the sustainable development Goal 2 [food security]', online <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000015583/download/>

Prevalence of undernourishment



6 month dry seasons are common



2.2 Land and Neoliberal 'Land Reform'

- East Timor's 2001 Constitution (54.4) specifies that only Timor Leste 'natural persons' can own land - that is neither corporations nor foreigners. However the big powers set out to find ways around this;
- USAID became Timor's lead agency on 'land reform', with a land law program (2004), then a 'Framework for Transitional Land Law' (2008);
- The initial 'special regime' (RDTL 2009) adopted was to deal with land disputes arising from overlapping colonial regimes, excluding customary rural land;
- However both USAID and Australian AID have a history of pushing cadastral (mapping) and centralised registers, for the purpose of parcelising and commercialising rural land, for foreign-owned monoculture cropping;
- In fact, in a country with chronic food security problems, agro-fuel projects have been pressed by foreign investors.

La'o Hamutuk (2008) 'Agro-Fuels projects in Timor-Leste', 4 December, online:
<https://landmatrix.org/media/uploads/laohamutukorgagri08agrofuelshtmkomor.pdf>

Anderson, Tim (2010) 'Land reform' in Timor Leste? Why the Constitution is worth defending', in Michael Leach et al (2010) Hatene kona ba/ Comprender/ Understanding/ Mengerti Timor-Leste, Swinburne Press, Melbourne, pp. 213-218, online at: http://tlstudies.org/tlsa_confpro.html

A domestic Land Network **Rede ba Rai** was set up to defend traditional land tenure and traditional land care (*tara bandu*)



<https://redebarai.org>

Land had been degraded under both Portuguese and Indonesian occupations.

"Over 70% of the population of Timor-Leste depends on land for their livelihoods and the vast majority of land is governed by customary mechanisms. It is deemed important for and is fundamental to social identity and the local worldview."

<https://indepth.oxfam.org.uk/land-rights/where-we-work/pacific/>

Lisa Palmera, Demetrio do Amaral de Carvalho (2007) 'Nation building and resource management: the politics of 'nature' in Timor Leste', *Geoforum* 39 (2008) 1321–1332, online: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228488390_Nation_building_and_resource_management_The_politics_of_'nature'_in_Timor_Leste

2.3 Maritime (oil and gas) dispute with Australia

- 1989 - Australia signs treaty with Indonesia to share ET's seabed resources
- 2002 - Australia moves 'shared zone' agreement on to the newly recognised state of East Timor
- 2003 'Sunrise' field agreement
- 2006 CMATS agreement (ended 2017)
- 2018 - maritime boundaries agreement finally signed, after Timor Leste initiated UN legal conciliation



1989: Australia's Gareth Evans and Indonesia's Ali Alatas sign agreement to share East Timor's maritime resources

"Australia withdrew from international maritime boundary dispute resolution processes two months before Timor-Leste became independent in 2002 to avoid legal accountability. However, they overlooked a never-used mechanism in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982, ratified by Australia 1994 and by Timor-Leste 2013)."
La'o Hamutuk 2018



La'o Hamutuk (2018) 'The Timor-Leste-Australia Maritime Boundary Treaty', 21 March, online: <https://www.laohamutuk.org/Oil/Boundary/Treaty/18TreatyArticleEn.htm>

2.4 Internal crisis or 'coup' of 2006

- Leadership challenge by President Xanana Gusmao - an armed insurrection led by Alfredo Reinado helps force Prime Minister and Fretilin leader Mari Alkatiri from office;
- Australian media (ABC) falsely accuses Alkatiri of murdering dozens of his political opponents;
- Another Australian military intervention takes place, for 'stabilisation', but favouring the Gusmao side, as Canberra feels Gusmao may be easier to deal with over the oil disputes
- Many thousands of people are internally displaced, in tent cities inside and around Dili;
- Xanana Gusmao takes over as Prime Minister, as oil revenues begin to flow in;
- A series of corruption issues rock the government;
- Anti-Corruption Commission (CAC) is established in 2009, but scandals persist, with allegations over corrupt rice and construction contracts, Justice Minister Lucia Lobato is jailed.

Anderson, Tim(2006) 'Timor Leste: the second Australian intervention', Journal of Australian Political Economy, No. 58, December, pp.62-93

O'Connor, Patrick (2008) 'East Timor: Leaked autopsy report shows alleged "coup" leader Reinado shot at point-blank range', Wikileaks, 2 September, online: [https://wikileaks.org/wiki/East_Timor:_Leaked_autopsy_report_shows_alleged_\"coup\"_leader_Reinado_shot_at_point-blank_range](https://wikileaks.org/wiki/East_Timor:_Leaked_autopsy_report_shows_alleged_\)

East Timor PM: Violence Part of Coup Attempt

Australia - Peacekeeper or Petroleum Predator?

By Kalinga Seneviratne

Inter Press Service

June 22, 2006

Australia as a mediator?

Australia's ABC ran baseless stories about Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, they were used to force him to resign, as Australian troops were invited in to help quell coup-like violence.

ELIZABETH JACKSON: There are disturbing new allegations today against East Timor's embattled Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri.

Political opponents allege that two days ago a group of armed civilians, recruited by the Prime Minister, **shot or bashed four people** who were organising a peaceful protest calling for his resignation.

The claims follow allegations by the leader of a group of rebel soldiers that **forces loyal to the Prime Minister carried out a massacre of 60 unarmed protesters in April**, and dumped their bodies in a mass grave.

Both incidents appear consistent with accusations this week that Mr Alkatiri had recruited a hit squad with specific orders to eliminate his political opponents.



Dili protest calls for PM Alkatiri to go

A UN report found in October 2006 that "no massacre occurred"



confirmed that no petitioners are missing. Accordingly, the Commission states that on the basis of all of the evidence before it, no massacre occurred.

ABC AM (2006) E Timor Prime Minister denies new 'hit squad' claims, 10 June, online: <https://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2006/s1660023.htm>

Anderson, Tim (2006) 'Four Corners and the Coup in Timor Leste', Timor Truth, 6 December, online: http://www.timortruth.com/articles/Four_Corners_and_the_Coup_in_Timor_Leste.pdf

OHCHR (2006) 'Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste', October, online: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/COITimorLeste.pdf>

New political divisions

- ❑ The 2006 Australian intervention had a more partisan aim than that of 1999, as Timor Leste was involved in disputes over a maritime boundary;
- ❑ Apart from demanding privileged access to resources, an Australian elite began demanding (i) 'reform' of Fretilin', (ii) abolition of TL's Army and (ii) adoption of the English language - none of these demands were met;
- ❑ After the crisis of 2006, the body politic remains divided, with Xanana Gusmao leading a coalition of minor parties against Fretilin;
- ❑ Xanana borrowed the acronym of the National Council of Timorese Resistance to form a new party the 'National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction' (CNRT);
- ❑ The Xanana led coalition wins elections of 2007, 2012 and 2017, but Fretilin remains the largest single party (with about 30% of the vote);
- ❑ While the country was divided, sufficient will remained to confront Australia over the oil and gas dispute; but there were sharp divisions over longer term investment of Petroleum resources, which had a limited lifespan;



"Gusmao and Ramos Horta are pro-Australian and cognisant of working with Canberra. By contrast, the Howard Government sees Alkatiri as a 1970s-style pro-Marxist, anti-capitalist" - Paul Kelly, The Australian (2006)

3. An oil curse?

Resource or oil 'curse' ideas:

- Oil for Timor Leste was central to internal as well as external problems;
- Staple theory: (Canada, Australia) spoke of natural resources as a 'leading sector' which helped a nation develop (assuming colonisation);
- Oil curse: (1) 'Dutch disease' (changes in prices to 'crowd out' non-oil commerce) and (2) 'Rent-seeking' (reliance on non-productive extractivism, corruption) theories look less kindly on 'factor endowment';
- The 'oil curse' idea is that countries "rich in petroleum have less democracy, less economic stability, and more frequent civil wars" (Ross 2012);
- However Di John (2011) says the above 'resource curse' problems depend on governance and state capacity, and so are not inevitable.

Jonathan Di John (2011) 'Is there really a resource curse? A critical survey of theory and evidence', Global Governance 17. No.2, 167-184

Ross, Michael L. (2012) The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations, Princeton University Press



Timor Leste's Petroleum Fund

- ❑ In 2005 a Petroleum Fund Law, based on Article 139 of the 2001 Constitution, established a state-run Petroleum Fund "shall be owned by the State and shall be used in a fair and equitable manner in accordance with national interests ... [and establish] mandatory financial reserves"
- ❑ This was a 'sovereign wealth fund', such as exists in many countries, though often frowned on by private bankers and other neoliberals;
- ❑ The idea was to invest funds and use returns for budgetary purposes; but sustainable guidelines did not prevent governments from overdrawing;
- ❑ Contracts from oil money and in particular infrastructure 'megaprojects' became a key medium of corruption (Guterres 2017);
- ❑ An Anti Corruption Commission was set up but could only observe.

Former Justice Minister Lobato loses appeal and is jailed

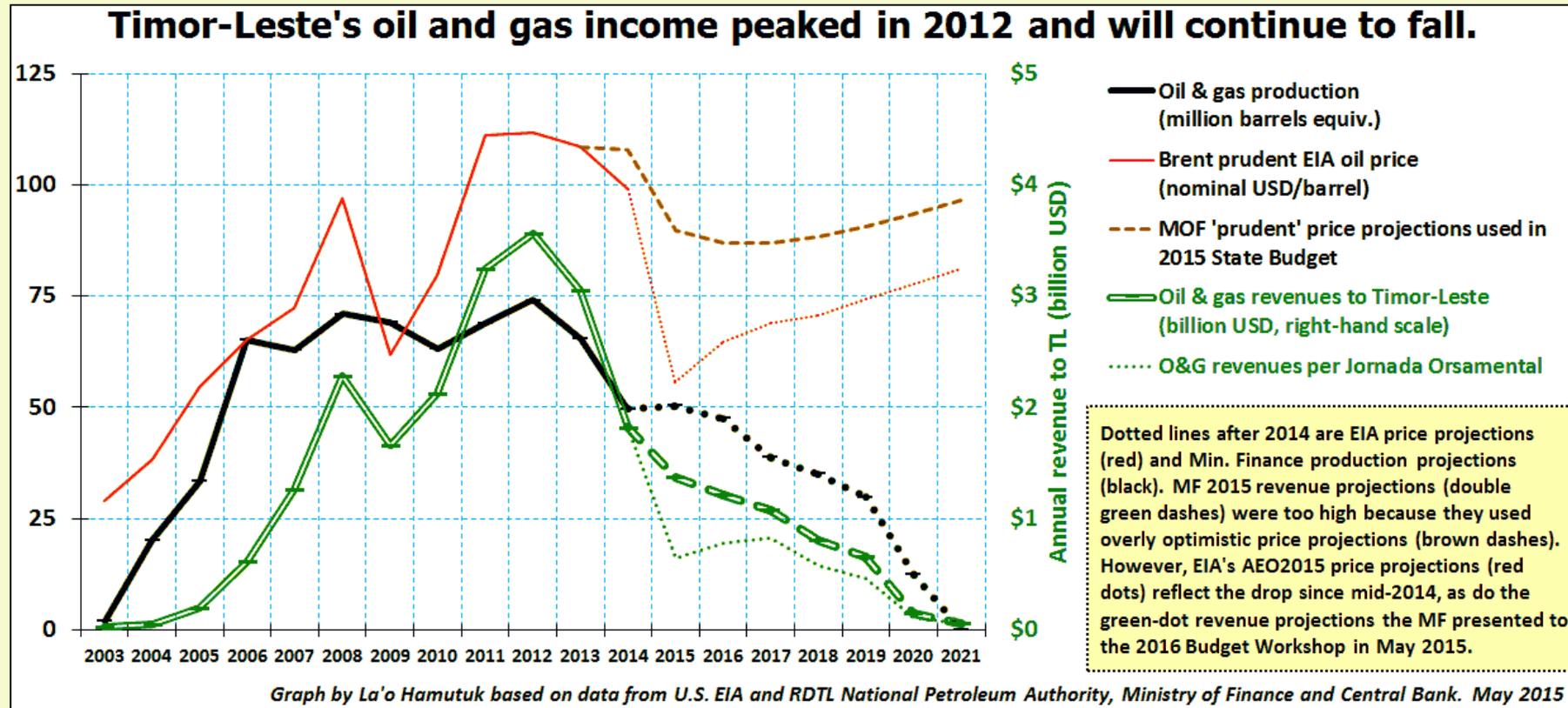


Gusmao faces corruption claims

Steve Holland, Stephanie March for Radio Australia
Posted Fri 26 Jun 2009 at 6:39am, updated Fri 26 Jun 2009 at 7:02pm

Guterres, Jonas (2017) 'The Alarming Nature of Corruption in Timor-Leste', The Diplomat, 7 April, online: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/04/the-alarming-nature-of-corruption-in-timor-leste/>
La'o Hamutuk (2021) Timor-Leste Petroleum Fund, Index (2005-2021), online: <https://www.laohamutuk.org/Oil/PetFund/05PFIndex.htm>

A huge, temporary dependence on oil and gas revenues, shows the fiscal vulnerability of the new republic



La'o Hamutuk (2015) 'How Long Will Timor-Leste's Petroleum Fund Last?', online:
<http://laohamutuk.blogspot.com/2015/06/how-long-will-timor-lestes-petroleum.html>

NB. This does not include future income from development of the Greater Sunrise field

GDP & Human Development

	2006	2007	2008
Timor Leste GDP	327m	398m (+22%)	498m (+25%)
Source: World Bank 2010			



Timor Leste's GDP (national income) increased strongly 2006- 2008

- Economic growth is often said to be very important, so do these strong figures mean that the country 'developed'?
- how might the country benefit from such growth?
- how might such growth NOT assist 'development'?

Measuring the 'oil curse': GNI-HDI

GNI minus HDI rank (2012)			
<i>Best and worst use of national income for human development</i>			
Best performing countries		Worst performing countries	
Cuba	44	Equatorial Guinea	-97
Georgia	37	Botswana	-55
Samoa, Cameroon, Madagascar	28	Kuwait, Oman	-51
New Zealand, Tonga	26	Gabon, South Africa	-40 to -42
Montenegro, Fiji, Kyrgyzstan	24	Qatar, Angola	-35
Palestine, Grenada, Albania, Ukraine	20 to 22	UAE, Bhutan, Swaziland, Turkey	-30 to -32
		Timor Leste, Trinidad & Tobago	-28 to -29

NB: none of the 'best performers' have large oil resources; almost all of the 'worst performers' do

Regression and recovery?: Timor Leste's GDP rank minus HDI rank in 2005 was +16; by 2012 it had fallen to -29; by 2019 it was back up to +3.

Possible explanation: an influx of oil revenues after 2007 inflated GNI but did not flow on to social benefits for some years;

Note: GNI per capita rank minus HDI rank: negative figures mean that the country has greater income than overall HDI (income+education+life expectancy); positive figures mean that the country's overall human development (per HDI) is better than its income. In other words, positive figures show better use of income for human development, negative figures show a relative waste of income. **Ref:** UNDP 2013 *Human Development Report*, Table 1

Public sector budget, proportions of investment, 2004-2016

Challenges and the neglected sectors

- Oil revenues from 2006 onwards allowed big budgets and investment in infrastructure, but agriculture, education and health were neglected
- 'The low schooling rates .. are characterised by a large gender gap .. [which] has costs in health, family planning and labour productivity'
- There was 'prioritized investment in infrastructure .. [but] a case must be made for greater investment in people.'

TABLE 6.4

Public Budget in Key Sectors, Timor-Leste, 2004–2010

Budget	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2008	2010
Combined sources, \$, millions	203.6	291.6	598.6	502.5	858.9
Education, %	14.9	13.4	10.7	11.7	11.3
Health care, %	12.2	11.3	9.2	8.2	6.9
Agriculture, %	8.8	4.6	5.8	5.9	3.7
Infrastructure, %	—	—	8.8	13.2	26.6
State budget, \$, millions	107.8	120.4	315.9	347.7	660.0
Education, state budget, %	15.3	15.1	11.1	13.0	10.2
Health care, state budget, %	9.0	11.9	8.1	6.9	5.4
Agriculture, state budget, %	1.5	3.7	4.4	4.8	2.5
Infrastructure, state budget, %	—	—	15.8	12.8	28.5

Sources: MOF 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009.

Note: Prior to 2005, the state budget was divided into two accounts, the Consolidated Fund for East Timor and the Trust Fund for East Timor. Autonomous agencies are included among the combined sources of the total budget, but not in the state budget. — = not available.

TABLE 6.5

Public Budget in Key Sectors, Timor-Leste, 2011–2016

Budget	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
State budget, \$, millions	1,307	1,674	1,798	1,500	1,570	1,562
Health, % (\$, millions)	3.2 (42)	3.2 (54)	3.8 (69)	5.1 (76)	4.7 (74)	4.2 (66)
Education, % (\$, millions)	6.4 (84)	7.2 (120)	7.9 (142)	11.4 (171)	9.2 (144)	8.6 (135)
Agriculture, % (\$, millions)	1.1 (15)	1.6 (26)	2.0 (36)	2.3 (34)	2.3 (36)	1.9 (30)
Infrastructure, % (\$, millions)	52.0 (682)	53.0 (894)	49.0 (882)	40.0 (598)	36.0 (570)	—

Source: Data of 2011–2016 in La'o Hamutuk (database), Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis, Dili, Timor-Leste, <http://www.laohamutuk.org/>. Note: The data are taken from summaries of the proposed budgets and not rectified actual spending. The 2004–2010 series shown in table 6.4 is derived directly from government budget documents. The format of the state budget documents has been changed. — = not available.

UNDP (2018) National Human Development Report 2018: Timor-Leste, 'Public Investment in Youth', 102-115, online: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/national-human-development-report-2018-timor-leste>

Timor Leste compared to other developing countries

- NB: strong growth in life expectancy 1999-2015 (health);
- NB: relatively weak years of school and adult literacy;
- NB: high levels of malnutrition;
- NB: the benefits of education of girls and women (Brookings, right)

TABLE 6.2

Human Development Fragilities, Timor-Leste and Developing Countries

Indicator	Timor-Leste	Developing countries
Mean years of schooling, 2015	4.4	6.8
Men	5.3	7.3
Women	3.6	5.4
Inequality in education, 2015, %	47.6	32.3
Child malnutrition, stunting under age 5, 2008–2015	50.2	31
Public health expenditure, 2015, % of GDP	1.3	5.6
Public education expenditure, 2005–2014, % of GDP ^a	9.4	4.7
Adult literacy, 2005–2015	67.5	79.9
Labour force participation rate, ages 15+, 2015, %	55.5	64.3

Sources: DGE, 2015; UIS 2015; UNDP 2016; UNICEF 2015.

Note: GDP = gross domestic product.

a: The UNDP data for Timorese investment in education are anomalous; compare with table 6.6.

UNDP (2018) National Human Development Report 2018: Timor-Leste, 'Public Investment in Youth', 102-115, online: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/national-human-development-report-2018-timor-leste>

tility rates (Wang et al. 1999). The Brookings Institution has published an impressive compilation of evidence to support each of the following 10 assertions about the education of girls and women: (1) it increases economic growth and agricultural productivity; (2) improves women's wages and jobs; (3) saves the lives of children and mothers; (4) leads to smaller, more sustainable families; (5) results in healthier, more well educated children; (6) reduces the incidence of HIV/AIDS and malaria; (7) reduces child marriage rates; (8) empowers women; (9) increases women's political leadership; and (10) reduces the harm to families from natural disasters and climate change (Sperling and Winthrop 2016). This

TABLE 6.1

Selected Human Development Indicators, Timor-Leste, 1996–2015

Indicator	1996/97	1999	2001	2004	2007	2010	2014	2015
Life expectancy at birth, years	54.4	56	56.7	55.5	60.7	67.3	68.2	68.5
Adult literacy, ages 15+, %	40.6	40.4	43	50.1	50.6	58.3	64.1	67.5
Underweight children under age 5, %	51	45	45	43	46	45	38	
Mean years of schooling			2.8	3.3		4.4	4.4	4.4

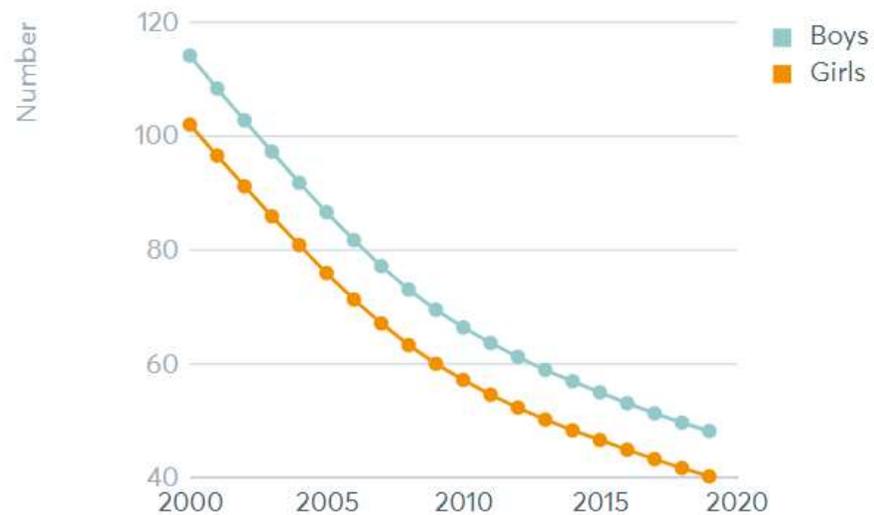
Sources: UIS 2015; UNDP 2006, 2007, 2009, 2015, 2016; UNICEF 2015.

Timor Leste: Human Development Advances, 2000-2019

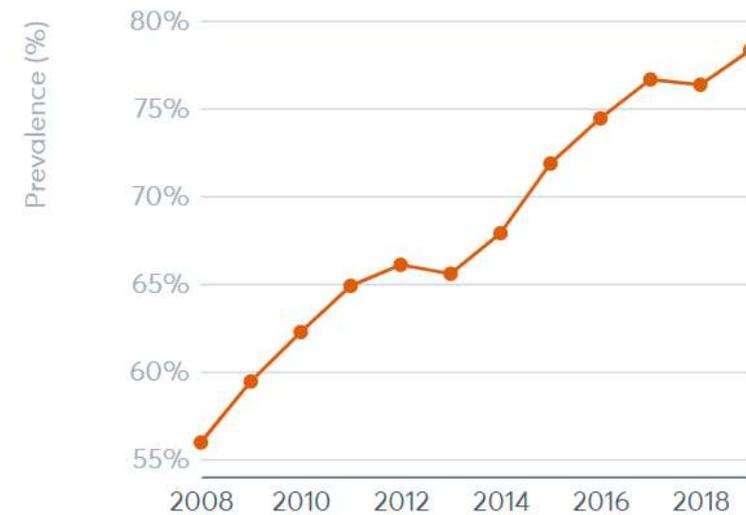
- ❑ There have been some strong advances in health, with infant mortality falling and girls attending some part of secondary school (GNR 2020)'
- ❑ However the 2020 UNDP report shows Timor Leste to have fallen 12 ranks over 2014-2019; greater advances were made over 2000-2010;
- ❑ Mean years of schooling remain low, at 4.8 years in 2019 (UNDP 2020).

Global Nutrition Report (2020) Country Nutrition Profile: Timor Leste, from UNESCO and UNICEF 2019, online: <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/asia/south-eastern-asia/timor-leste/>

Under-5 mortality rate per 1,000 live births



Prevalence of female secondary school enrolment



4. South-South cooperation: Timor Leste and Cuba

Medical cooperation with Cuba - an outstanding success

2003 - meeting with Fidel Castro, NAM meeting in Kuala Lumpur

2004 - first students go to Cuba, first Cuban doctors in to ET

2005 - scholarship offer rises from 20 to 300 to 1,000

2006 - Students keep travelling to Cuba, despite coup at home

2007 - medical faculty set up in Dili, with Cuban professors

2010 - first graduates, in Dili

2012 - largest graduation, 400+ graduate in Dili

2020 - more than 1,000 Cuban trained Timorese doctors working at home (only 60 or 70 local doctors before this program); most are employed in Timor Leste as salaried public sector doctors.



Cuban President Fidel Castro meets East Timor's Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, 2005

Social Medicine in Timor Leste

- Social medicine in the Latin American tradition involves 'active participation', c.f. the European 'social determinants' of health;
- Training of medical students commences in Cuba, but a Faculty of medicine is created in Dili, all graduations occur in Timor Leste;
- Development of social medicine in East Timor has advantages: large scale training, sympathetic culture and political will;
- Dr Rui Araujo [Health Minister]: the medical training emphasised "responsibility to society ... critical thinking, flexibility and openness to knowledge exchange ... [with a focus on] the health of individuals, families and communities ... [not just] the disease of individuals."

Anderson, Tim (2010) 'Social medicine in Timor Leste', *Social Medicine*, Vol 5 No 4, 182-191, online at: <http://www.socialmedicine.info/index.php/socialmedicine/article/view/480/1028>



Araujo, Rui (2009) 'A Snapshot of the Medical School, Faculty of Health Sciences, National University of Timor Lorosa'e, Democratic Republic of Timor Leste, Paper presented at the Expert Meeting on Finalization of Regional Guidelines on Institutional Quality Assurance Mechanisms for Undergraduate Medical Education, WHO/SEARO, New Delhi, 8-9 October

Anderson, Tim (2010) 'Social medicine in Timor Leste', *Social Medicine*, Vol 5, No 4, online: <https://www.socialmedicine.info/index.php/socialmedicine/article/view/480>

Video: Excerpt from 'The First Group' - 4'41"

- ❑ Interviews with the first group of Timorese students, trained by the Cubans in Cuba, just before their 2010 graduation in Timor Leste;
- ❑ These 18 (and another thousand) East Timorese doctors were trained in clinical, epidemiological and social medicine;
- ❑ Notice that they stress preventive medicine, visiting people in their own homes, health education and the active participation of patients;
- ❑ These doctors have now worked as professionals for more than a decade.

Full video (27m): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZx6_mZyd54



Initiative: Saude ba Ema Hotu (Health for Everyone)



Another feature of East Timor's *social medicine* can be seen in Dr Andre Belo's volunteer organisation SABEH – Saude ba Ema Hotu (Health for Everyone) – established in 2018 with the support of Dr Rui Araujo, a former prime minister and health minister.

“We have had 379 volunteers work with us over the years,” said Belo. “They are [medical] graduates who are not yet employed full time. So far 179 have gained work.”

In addition to English, Portuguese and Tetum I discovered nearly all of the volunteers speak Spanish – they were trained by Cuban medical professors who have been working in Timor-Leste since 2004 (Ray 2021).

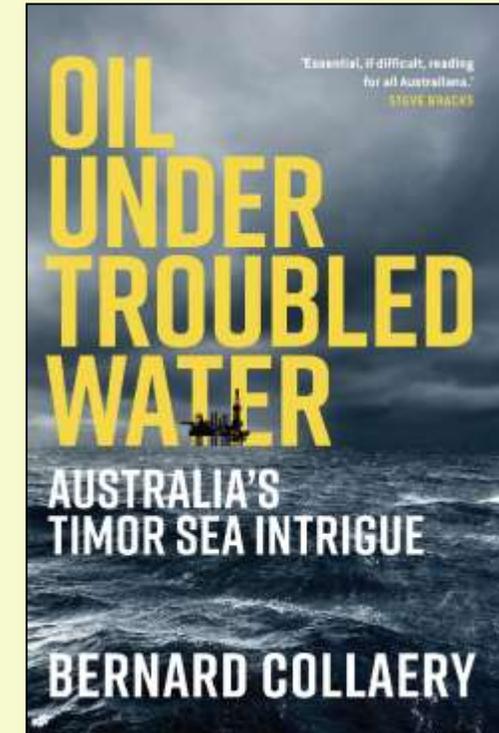
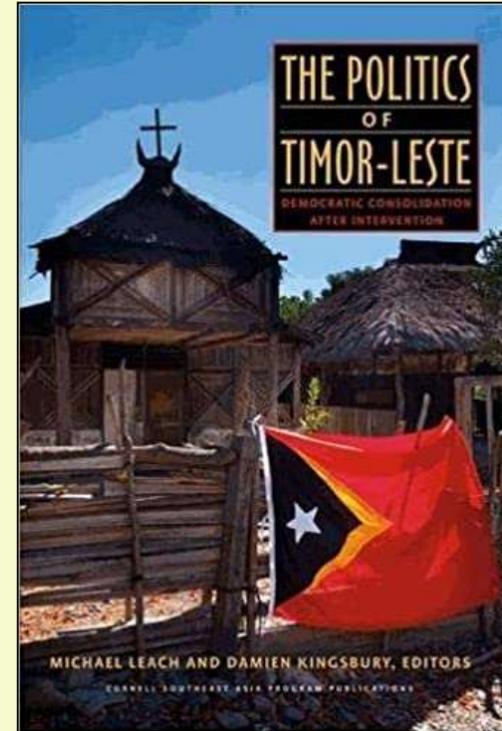
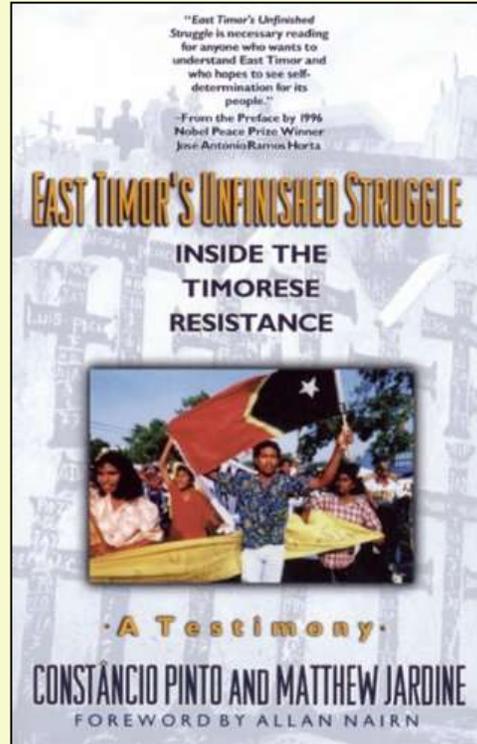
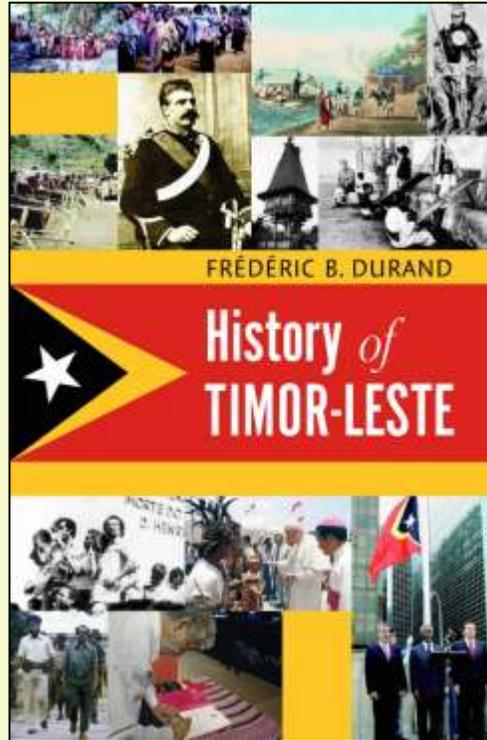
Alex Ray (2021) 'Health for All: The volunteers serving Timor-Leste's remote communities', *Between Deserts*, 19 March, online:
https://betweendeserts.com/2021/03/19/health-for-all-the-volunteers-serving-timor-lestes-remote-communities/?fbclid=IwAR0u9A0qT7XI6LQedp4DVFR_Np4mu-NEwqCak7u88TfzffR3CkivTNzsBeU

5. Summary: small nations, 'lost causes' and independence dilemmas



- ❑ An independent Timor Leste (recolonised in 1975) was considered a 'lost cause', like: Western Sahara (recolonised 1975) and Palestine (colonised in 1948); RETHINK!
- ❑ Key elements for TL independence: sustained resistance, relative unity and the right opportunities (internal crisis in the coloniser);
- ❑ Neo-colonial dilemmas: the new body politic faced challenges: divisions were exploited over agriculture, land and oil resources;
- ❑ Political divisions sapped political will and allowed corruption over oil revenues, but sufficient unity/will managed to confront Australia on several issues (e.g. maritime boundaries);
- ❑ An 'oil curse', while not 'inevitable', certainly was an area of vulnerability;
- ❑ South-south cooperation with Cuba in health, and the development of new forms of social medicine, was one area of outstanding success, emphasising the value of (i) non-colonial relations and (ii) investing in human resources, c.f. reliance on natural resources.

Some further reading



Frédéric Durand (2016) History of Timor-Leste
Constancio Pinto and Allan Nairn (1999) East Timor's Unfinished Struggle: Inside the Timorese Resistance
Michael Leach and Damien Kingsbury (2012) The Politics of Timor Leste
Bernard Collaery (2020) Oil Under Troubled Water