kepa

KEPAN TAUSTASELVITYKSET N:O 11
KEPA'S WORKING PAPERS N:O 11

Up in Smoke

Impoverishment and Instability in Post-Independence Timor Leste

Henri Myrttinen (2007)

Henri Myrttinen has been involved with issues relating to Timor Leste since 1999 and has visited the country on a regular basis since. He is currently finishing up his Ph.D. at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, on the topic of masculinities and violence in Timor Leste. Henri Myrttinen was Kepa's liaison officer in Indonesia from 2003-2006.

Kepa's working papers 11, 2007

ISSN 1796-6469
ISBN 978-952-200-070-5 (pdf)
ISBN 978-952-200-069-9 (pb)

layout: Jukka-Pekka Jänkälä
cover: suvi savolainen

Kehitysyhteistyön palvelukeskus
Töölöntorinkatu 2 A
00260 Helsinki, Finland

Tel +358-9-584-233
Fax+358-9-584-23-200
kepa@kepa. fi
www.kepa.fi

Service Centre for Development Cooperation - KEPA is Supported by official development aid by the ministry for foreign affairs of finland.

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations Used

ABRI –	Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (Indonesian Armed Forces pre-1999)
ACP –	African, Caribbean and Pacific signatories of the Cotonou Agreement
ADB –	Asian Development Bank
ADF –	Australian Defence Force
AFP –	Australian Federal Police
ASDT –	Associação Social Democráta Timorense
ASEAN –	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AusAID –	Australian Agency for International Development
Brimob –	Brigade Mobil (Paramilitary wing of the Indonesian police)
DDR –	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
EPA –	Economic Partnership Agreement
Falintil –	Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste
F-FDTL –	Falintil-Forças de Defesa de Timor Leste
FPU –	Formed Police Unit
Fretilin –	Frente Revolucinária de Timor Leste Independente
GBSV –	Gender-based sexual violence
GNR –	Guarda Nacional Republicana
IDP –	Internally Displaced Person
ISF –	International Stabilisation Force
NTT –	Nusa Tenggara Timur (Indonesian Province)
PACER –	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
PD –	Partido Democrático
PKF –	Peacekeeping forces
PNG –	Papua New Guinea
PNTL –	Policia Nacional de Timor Leste
PSD –	Partido Social Democrático
PSHT –	Persaudaraan Setia Hati Terate (martial arts group)
RAMSI –	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
SALW –	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SSR –	Security Sector Reform
TNI –	Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Armed Forces after 1999)
UDT –	União Democrática Timorense
UNDP –	United Nations Development Programme
UNMISET –	United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor
UNMIT –	United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor Leste
UNOTIL –	United Nations Office in Timor-Leste
UNPOL –	United Nations Police (also sometimes called CivPol, Civilian Police)
UNTAET –	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
USD –	United States Dollar
WFP –	World Food Programme

Prologue

The scenes in Dili in late May 2006 were reminiscent of a previous wave of violence that had gripped the East Timorese capital. As in September 1999, the town was burning, armed gangs roamed the streets and a large part of the population was huddled together in the squalor of makeshift camps, where shops remained locked up, shots rang out across town and Australian Defence Force (ADF) troops secured the airport perimeter for evacuations.

Apart from a sense of dejà vu and these superficial similarities, however, the situation in 2006 was very different from 1999. On the one hand, it was much simpler: it was not a campaign of orchestrated, all-out violence committed by a heavily armed occupation force with its paramilitary proxies in defiance of the international community that needed to be brought to a halt. The violence in 2006 was on a much smaller scale. But the problem was also much more complicated this time around, as the perpetrators were members of Timorese society and finding workable solutions to the crisis was far harder.

At the end of May 2006, the humanitarian situation in Dili was dire and the security situation precarious. Of the city's approximately 150,000 inhabitants, almost half were in 'internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps. The fighting of the previous few weeks had left at least 37 dead. In addition to perhaps hundreds of houses, much else had gone up in smoke – trust in the central institutions of the state, trust in key political figures, trust in the international community, trust in the power of the intervening peacekeepers to provide security and, perhaps most seriously, trust in one another's neighbours, in the neighbouring communities and even in the unity of the nation. Much had gone up in smoke.

Almost a year and a half on, the violence has subsided to a level where it is almost a kind of 'background noise.' There are gang fights, occasional killings, random cases of arson and cars are still stoned on a regular basis, but the violence is usually restricted to certain areas – which then tend to be avoided by all who do not live in them. Few people move around after dark any more. Tens of thousands of Timorese remain in IDP camps, most of them in and around Dili. A new government has been elected, numerous peace and reconciliation efforts have been launched but a long-term solution still seems elusive.

1. An introduction to Timor Leste

Timor Leste, or Timor Loro Sa'e, as it is called in Tetum, occupies about half of the island of Timor, some 500 kilometres north of Darwin, Australia. The other half of the island, West Timor, is part of the Indonesian province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT). Its anomalous shape and position, half of an island plus the small exclave of Oecussi, surrounded by Indonesian islands, goes back to the whims of the colonial powers: while the Netherlands was in nominal control of the rest of the Indonesian archipelago, it did not, for reasons best known to itself, seem to have any additional ambition to try and dislodge the Portuguese from their small, distant Timorese outpost. The Portuguese on the other hand were far too weak a colonial power to try to expand their foothold in the archipelago, having been driven out of their other outposts by the British and the Dutch.

Today, Timor Leste is a country of almost one million people, a population that is rapidly growing. With one of the world's highest birth rates, the population is expected to double to over 2 million by the year 2025. According to the UNDP, the country is the poorest in all of Asia and the Pacific region, with the majority of the population still live off less than a dollar a day. According to the national census of 2004, 54.2% of the population are illiterate. Unemployment is high and the population is young – 43.5% of the East Timorese population was in 2006 less than 15 years old, and given the high birth rates this percentage is expanding rapidly (UNDP, 2006).

The population of Timor Leste is predominantly Roman Catholic, with small Protestant and Muslim minorities. Though Portuguese is the official language, it is only spoken by about 5-10% of the population. The main (and national) language is Tetum, spoken by about 40% of the population. Depending on the counting method, a total of some 16 local languages are spoken in the country.

A brief historical overview

Timor Leste (re)gained its independence at midnight on 20 May 2002 when UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced the end of the two-and-a-half year UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor) interregnum. The path to national independence of the East Timorese people was an exceptionally bloody one. Timor Leste, had been – mais ou menos – under Portuguese control since the 16th century, though this control was rather tenuous. The territory was administered through Macao and Portuguese presence was rather minimal. The Portuguese period was interrupted violently during the Second World War by a brutal occupation by the Japanese Imperial Army.

Though there were some minor, localised uprisings, Timor Leste did not experience a similar sustained armed struggle for independence as in Portugal's African colonies. The nascent Timorese independence movement was however influenced politically and ideologically by its counterparts in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. Events in far-away Portugal, however, accelerated the pace of events. When the left-wing "Carnation Revolution" ousted of the fascist dictatorship of Salazar and Caetano in 1974, Portugal began a rapid, even hasty, decolonisation process.

As was the case in Portugal's former African colonies, Timor Leste was ill-prepared for independence and found itself quickly caught up in the web of Cold War superpower politics. During the short period of decolonisation, fractures emerged within the East Timorese political landscape which eventually led to a brief civil war between the pro-socialist Fretilin (Frente Revolucinária de Timor Leste Independente) and the more conservative UDT (União Democrática Timorense). Fretilin and its armed wing Falintil emerged victorious. The fissures caused by this brief episode would reverberate in the unrest that has gripped the country since early 2006. During the Portuguese hand-over period, Indonesia played a destabilising role, supporting a pro-Indonesian party and organising small-scale military incursions.

Fearing an impending full-scale Indonesian invasion, Fretilin declared the territory independent on 28 November 1975. Nine days later, on 7 December, Indonesian paratroopers landed in Timor Leste after receiving a green light from the visiting US President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger. Australia also indicated its preference for an integration of the territory into Indonesia. One of the driving forces behind this invasion was a fear in Washington, Canberra and Jakarta of a new, leftist "domino" falling in Southeast Asia. Earlier in the year, Saigon, Phnom Penh

and Vientiane had been taken over by left-wing forces.

Upon landing in Timor Leste, the Indonesian armed forces, ABRI, met with the resistance of the Falintil. The initial phase of the fighting, which lasted until 1979, was the bloodiest. Estimates of the number of Timorese killed vary, but the common one is that between 200,000 to 300,000 Timorese were killed in this phase. The guerrilla war of the Falintil and the atrocities of the ABRI continued at varying levels of intensity until 1999.

Following the downfall of the Suharto dictatorship in 1998, the Indonesian government announced that a UN-supervised referendum on the future of Timor Leste was to be held in 1999, with the Timorese people given the choice between special autonomy as a part of Indonesia, or full independence. The run-up to the referendum on independence saw a new level of violence, with the Indonesian armed forces, now renamed TNI, setting up and arming Timorese pro-Indonesian militias as proxies.

These militia groups were established across the territory and enjoyed the overt and covert support of the Indonesian administrative structures as well as of the security forces. While the Falintil voluntarily withdrew to cantonment areas and did not engage in the fighting, the Indonesian security forces showed little inclination to stop the numerous massacres, individual killings, rapes, arson and lootings carried out by the militia in the run-up to the referendum.

Immediately after the announcement of the result of the ballot – in which 78.8% voted in favour of independence – the militias, supported by the TNI and Brimob, the paramilitary mobile brigade of the Indonesian police, began an unprecedented rampage. A common conservative estimate is that around 1,500 unarmed civilians died in this phase. Utilising a "scorched earth" policy, the infrastructure of the territory was systematically destroyed. An estimated 70% of buildings and houses in the territory were razed.

Over a third of the population, about 250,000 people, were forcibly deported, mainly to militia-run camps in West Timor. There have been persistent reports of serious human rights abuses, in particular sexualised violence, in the militia-run camps. In addition to rapes, young women have been forced into sexual slavery and/or forced into marriage with militia members.

For a detailed summary of the human rights abuses starting with the civil war in 1974 and up to the referendum, see CAVR (2006), the final report of the East Timorese truth and reconciliation commission.

The international outcry over the violence after the August 1999 referendum led to the deployment of an Australian-led United Nations peacekeeping force (INTERFET) in September 1999 and the establishment of a temporary UN administration (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor – UNTAET) in the territory. UNTAET administered the territory until its independence in 2002. The UN has continued with three follow-up missions: UNMISET, UNOTIL and, at the time of writing, UNMIT.

The years immediately following independence were marked by economic and social instability as well as a growing political crisis. Events came to a head in March 2006, when the government sacked around 600 members of the country's armed forces who had been protesting against their working conditions, alleging discrimination based on their geographical origin. These soldiers were to become known as 'the petitioners'. After the sacking, firefights erupted between the rebellious troops and pro-government forces, between police and army units as well as between police units and between armed gangs (for an in-depth study of these events, see UN 2006a).

Australian-led international peacekeeping forces (International Stabilisation Force – ISF) landed in Timor Leste in late May 2006 and the UN Police (UNPOL) component of the UN mission was strengthened considerably, but have, at the time of writing, not been able to bring an end to the violence. A key addition to the UNPOL force, there have been the formed police units, with the Portuguese GNR having the highest profile amongst them.

Despite efforts by the government to clear the IDP camps, tens of thousands still remain in them well over a year after the beginning of the crisis. Many of the internally displaced persons are women, children and the elderly. An issue of growing concern has been camp security. There have been reports of intimidation by armed gangs taking place in the camps as well and, as always in situations like this, women are at a heightened risk of becoming victims of sexual abuse and rape. Gangs also regularly stone the IDP camps.

The nature of the fighting has changed a number of times during the course of the crisis. What was initially a struggle between various

branches of the security forces soon became, for a short while, an inter-communal struggle between 'westerners' (loro monu or kaladi) and 'easterners' (loro sa'e or firaku). This was then superseded by fights between various gangs that control much of the outlying 'bairos' of the capital. At times these gangs fight against each other, at others they have focused their violence against the ISF or UNPOL. The charismatic leader of the petitioners, the renegade Major Alfredo Reinado also plays a role in the crisis. He was briefly arrested by the ISF but was more or less able to walk out of Becora prison and has since been staying in the western region around Same. A failed Australian attempt to arrest him in March 2007 led to widespread violent protests in Dili.

A further factor in the violence has been the political tensions in the country, mainly between Fretilin, which was the ruling party from 2002 to 2007, and the opposition. Though the two rounds of presidential elections and the parliamentary elections held between April and June 2007 were more peaceful than expected, politically motivated violence broke out in various parts of the country in August 2007 when a new government, which excluded Fretilin, was announced by the present Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão.

What are the reasons behind this breakdown in Timorese politics and society? What are its implications for Timor Leste itself, for the region and for the international community in general? There is of course no clear-cut, single answer for explaining how the current 'situasaun,' or 'krize' as it is called in Tetum, came about. The exact sequence of events and the underlying reasons are at the time of writing a matter of intense debate. A UN report (UN, 2006) on the matter was published in October 2006 but did not give any direct answers, recommending further investigations instead. Several aspects of the current state of the Timorese society will be examined in this article, such as political and socio-economic factors, security issues, 'cultural' reasons (i.e. issues of gender, of ethnicity and culture), and the role of the international community. At the end there is a short outlook on the future of Timor Leste.

2. The Political Crisis

The most obvious trigger for the current, on-going crisis is the struggle within the Timorese political elite. Without getting into too much of the intricate and contentious political history between the outbreak of the 2006 crisis and the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, I will attempt a brief outline of the political events of this period.

Timeline of events (based in part on UN, 2006a)

09.01. 2006	The 'petitioners' submit a written petition to Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak and President Gusmão
17.02.2006	The petitioners abandon their barracks
16.03.2006	The 591 petitioners are dismissed from the armed forces
23.03.2006	President Gusmão makes a speech criticising the dismissal of the petitioners referring to the "east versus west" issue
24.-28.04.2006	The petitioners hold a demonstration in front of the Government Palace in Dili. Violence erupts outside the Government Palace on the last morning of the demonstration, with two civilians killed. More violence in other parts of Dili, with at least 3 more civilians killed
03.05.2006	Major Alfredo Reinado abandons the F-FDTL Military Police, taking with him other military police officers, PNTL officers and weapons.
23.-28.05.2006	Widespread violence in Dili, first between members of various factions of the security forces, followed by inter-communal and gang violence
01.06.2006	Minister of the Interior Lobato and Minister of Defence Rodrigues resign
25.06.2006	Minister for Foreign Affairs Ramos-Horta resigns
26.06.2006	Prime Minister Alkatiri resigns
10.07.2006	Ramos-Horta is sworn in as Prime Minister
26.07.2006	Major Reinado is arrested by ISF forces
30.08.2007	Major Reinado escapes from Becora prison with 50 other inmates
04.03.2007	Failed attempt by Australian special forces to capture Reinado in Same leads to widespread violence in Dili
09.04.2007	First round of presidential elections, Fretilin candidate Francisco 'Lu Olo' Guterres and independent candidate Ramos-Horta reach the second round
09.05.2007	Second round of presidential elections, Ramos-Horta wins resoundingly
30.06.2007	Parliamentary elections, Fretilin wins the largest number of seats but falls well short of majority
07.08.2007	After weeks of negotiations, Gusmão's AMP alliance is able to agree on forming a government which excludes Fretilin, leading to politically-motivated violence in Dili, Baucau, and Viqueque. Fretilin leader Alkatiri calls appointment of Gusmão and government that excludes Fretilin 'unconstitutional'

Regardless of how one thinks the blame should be divided, it is clear that the political elite of the country has been unable to resolve its internal problems and schisms, many of which go back to the brief civil war of 1974. This has led to widespread disenchantment with the political class or 'ema boot' (the 'big people'), which are often collectively held responsible for causing the crisis. Regardless of this disenchantment, there does seem to be still a resilient (or residual) trust in democracy, as shown by the high turnout rates in the three elections and the degree of spread in support to various candidates and parties.

A closer look at the political elite

A key component of the post-independence political landscape in Timor Leste has been an increasingly acrimonious power struggle within the political elite of the country, which eventually led to the breakdown of the government and a complete paralysis of the state functions in May/June 2006.

Given the magnitude of the struggle against the Indonesian occupation, it is of little wonder that most of the political leaders have cut their teeth in the independence struggle, either as part of the civilian opposition in Timor Leste, as part of the armed resistance or from exile. Many in the political elite have been active since 1974/1975 and some of the divisions and personal animosities go back several decades, to the days of the brief civil war or the bitter years of the resistance struggle. This also raises the issue of the generation gap: much of the political elite has been active since well before when the average East Timorese citizen was born, leading to a feeling of a lack of representation on the part of the youth (Grove et al., 2007)

Some of the key actors in the current crisis have been:

- **Xanana Gusmão**, previous Falintil guerrilla commander until his capture by Indonesian forces; President of Timor Leste from 2002-2007. Having successfully cobbled together a coalition after the June 2007 parliamentary elections he is now the prime minister.
- **Mari Alkatiri**, spent the occupation years in exile in Mozambique. Headed the Fretilin government 2002-2006 as prime minister, resigning as prime minister as the crisis wore on; he remains at the helm of Fretilin, which is now the main opposition party.
- **José Ramos Horta**, Nobel Peace Laureate who spent the occupation in exile lobbying for the East Timorese cause. Foreign minister 2002-2006 and became prime minister after Alkatiri stepped down, having won the May 2007 presidential elections.
- **Rogerio Lobato**, spent the occupation years in exile, interior minister from 2002-2006, was reputed to have close connections to various armed groups in Timor Leste during his tenure. Resigned as interior minister in June 2006, he was subsequently sentenced for manslaughter and illegal handing out of weapons to civilians. Lobato was however allowed to leave the counry for medical treatment, raising fears that he may remain outside of the country.
- **Fernando 'Lasama' de Araújo**, leader of the PD party, opposed to Fretilin and seen as being close to Reinado,
- **Francisco 'Lu Olo' Guterres**, former speaker of parliament and Fretilin's candidate for the presidency. The front-runner of the first round, he lost to Ramos-Horta in the second round.
- **Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak**, commander of the armed forces and former guerrilla commander; and
- **Major Alfredo Reinado**, one of the leaders of the rebel factions in the armed forces. Was briefly under arrest in 2006 but escaped from jail. Remains at large in the west of the country. Seen by many as a 'fighter for justice.'

The intricacies of their respective involvement in the crisis are well documented by the UN investigative report (UN, 2006a) and need not be revisited here, as my aim is to look more at the structural problems that the crisis has exposed.

The paralysis of the government at the height of the crisis revealed the degree to which many in the political elite, including the president, prime minister, the ministers of defence and of the interior as well as the armed forces commander were seemingly unable to put aside their personal and political differences for the sake of defusing the crisis. Instead, they were perceived as continuing their political power games. Numerous rumours and conspiracy theories abound in Timor Leste as to who was seeking to do what and with the support of whom.

The main political parties in Timor Leste are Fretilin, the dominant party, and the opposition Democratic Party (PD), Social Democratic Party (PSD) and Social Democratic Association (ASDT). In the post-independence years, numerous rumours circulated in Dili about links between the various political parties and different gangs. Interior Minister Rogerio Lobato was rumoured to be close to disgruntled veterans' groups and martial arts groups, Fretilin is seen as being aligned with the martial arts group Korka, the PSHT gang with PD and PSD, and the Lito Rambo gang with the PD. Colimau 2000 was first in opposition to Fretilin but switched sides after it felt it did not get enough out of its co-operation with the pro-Xanana side (Scambary et al., 2006; UN, 2006a; Watch Indonesia, 2007).

It is an issue of grave concern that all main political parties have associated with or contin-

ue to associate with gangs that are prone to violence and armed. The political parties need to use their influence to rein in the gangs and renounce violence.

The influential Catholic Church has also involved itself in the political power struggle, with members of the clergy openly opposing Mari Alkatiri. Alkatiri has been labelled by members of the Catholic Church and his political opponents as a communist for his secular, nationalist policies and much has been made of the fact that he is a member of Timor Leste's small Muslim minority, therefore implicitly being 'un-Timorese' (see for example Loch, 2007).

Fretilin's unwillingness to accept the legitimacy of the new government under Gusmão continues to contribute to an atmosphere of tension in the country. Furthermore, the fact that two of the key figures sentenced for their activities during the height of the crisis, Alfredo Reinado and Rogerio Lobato, have been able to avoid imprisonment, add to a deep feeling of distrust in the judicial system.

The role of civil society

Many of the key actors in East Timorese civil society organisations (CSOs) began working during the latter years of the Indonesian occupation. While the work of the organisations was severely restricted by the Indonesian security apparatus, these years gave the participating individuals the experience of working in CSOs, formulating policies, lobbying for interests and mobilising grassroots support. Many of these groups had informal links to the clandestine independence movement but were extremely careful not to be seen as being pro-independence by the Indonesian authorities. During the latter years of the Indonesian occupation and especially following the downfall of the Suharto regime in 1998 Timorese CSOs were increasingly able to be in contact with foreign civil society organisations. The East Timorese organisations from this time period included legal aid and human rights organisations, students groups, farmers' groups and a nascent women's movement (Cristalis and Scott, 2005).

The massive wave of destruction following the 1999 independence vote also affected Timorese CSOs greatly, as the Indonesian military and their militia proxies specifically targeted CSO staff and offices as they were seen as having pro-independence leanings. Following the establishment of the UNTAET administration and the influx of international donors and NGOs, the East Timorese CSOs were able to quickly re-establish themselves, with a large number of new organisations springing up and older ones expanding their field of work. The organisations were able to greatly expand their international connections while often retaining strong links to Indonesian civil society organisations. Capacity-building for Timorese CSOs was seen as a priority for many donors. Despite such efforts, however, the capacity of the CSOs to carry out projects often remained relatively low and many of the activities tended to focus only on Dili and its environs. Many CSOs were unable to expand their support base beyond the small, educated middle class in the capital.

The crisis of 2006 had a severe negative impact on many CSOs. Many organisations saw their office compounds become impromptu IDP camps and one-and-a-half years later most IDPs still remain in the compounds. The tenuous security situation has greatly reduced the mobility of CSOs and their capacity to carry out projects. The acerbic political struggle has been reflected, to a degree, in the civil society sphere as well, though there have been concerted efforts to avoid political tensions getting in the way of co-operation between various organisations.

Following the presidential and parliamentary elections in mid-2007, there seems to be a sense within civil society that the sense of paralysis which has gripped many CSOs since the outbreak of the crisis in 2006 is slowly lifting, with civil society finding its voice again.

3. Socio-economic factors

As mentioned above, Timor Leste continues to be classified as the poorest country in the Asia-Pacific region by the UNDP. The nation-building process has been severely hampered by the destruction of most of the country's infrastructure in 1999 by the Indonesian armed forces and their militia proxies. In some cases, the destruction has meant not beginning from zero, but from less than zero, as the derelict infrastructure had to be removed before reconstruction could begin.

The average East Timorese is only 18 years old and the average Timorese woman gives birth to almost 8 children during her lifetime, giving the country one of the world's highest birth rates. Infant mortality is 87 per 1,000 births, child mortality for under 5 year olds is 124 per 1,000 births. Life expectancy is approximately 55 years. Prior to the outbreak of violence in March 2006, about 40% of the population were living off USD 0.55 a day. The adult literacy rate is 50.3%, with school attendance low especially in rural areas (UN, 2006b, UNDP 2006).

Most Timorese are subsistence farmers, with the average landholding size being 1.2 hectares. The main export crop is coffee but the main crops are maize and rice, which are grown by 81% and 23% of households, respectively. There is very little in the way of industry or services. Many of the stores, restaurants, hotels and other companies are run by non-Timorese. Many basic services, such as the telecommunications network or the banks, are also provided by foreign or foreign-owned companies. The currency is the US dollar (UNDP, 2006).

The UNTAET interregnum with its large presence of well-paid UN staff and other foreigners brought Timor Leste, or at least Dili, an economic boom. The 'boom' was however a mere bubble, as many of the cafes, restaurants and supermarkets which sprang up to cater for the expatriates were foreign-owned and left the country together with the UN staff. Some are run by what amount to modern 'camp followers,' entrepreneurs who follow UN missions across the globe, from Afghanistan to Liberia, from Timor Leste to Haiti.

According to the UNDP, the Timorese economy had been steadily shrinking since the departure of the large UN missions already previous to the current crisis. The 'situasaun' has obviously had a further negative impact on the economic situation of the country, as further infrastructure is being destroyed, key streets are closed down on a weekly if not daily basis by the roadblocks of youth gangs and stores have been looted.

Petroleum to the rescue?

The main source of future income will most likely be revenues from oil and gas that is found in the Timor Gap between Timor Leste and Australia. This will bring in funds to the government but will be unlikely to create many new jobs for Timorese, especially if Australia gets its way and the hydrocarbons are processed in Australia. Much has been made of these fossil fuel reserves in the Timor Gap, or the part of it conceded, grudgingly and after long negotiations, to Timor Leste by Australia, though international law would have called for a much greater share to go to Timor Leste. Oil and gas however do not automatically equal a just, democratic, peaceful society; in fact, the wealth generated, or even the mere promise of it, has often brought misery and strife to the societies in question, leading to the phenomenon of the 'resource curse' which has plagued numerous countries.

If administered well, the funds generated could of course provide the country with a steady financial foundation. The previous Timor Leste government has taken a promising step in this direction by creating a Petroleum Fund, a part of which is to be used for poverty-reduction measures. Nevertheless, there is a massive need for generating jobs, generating economic opportunities in the cities, in the countryside and in the peri-urban areas that span the gap. Creating these economic opportunities for all East Timorese, not just the well-connected; improving access to health care and education; improving infrastructure and natural resources management; creating a sustainable vision for society – all of these will remain long-term challenges for the East Timorese people and for us on the outside who wish to support them.

The issue of how the Petroleum Fund money should be used was a key issue of debate during both the presidential and parliamentary elections. The new administration headed by Gusmão has announced that it will disperse the funds more rapidly than the previous, perhaps more fiscally-minded Alkatiri government (see for example Drysdale, 2007). The new government can also be expected to be more open to international lenders, such as the ADB or the World

Bank, which had been viewed with a critical eye by Alkatiri.

While not being able to solve the macro-economic problems of the country, two of the areas where the previous Fretilin government did achieve results were in the health and education sectors. School fees at primary and lower secondary levels were abolished and free school meals were introduced in three districts. Health care, though rudimentary, is free. Whether or not the new government continues pursuing these propoor policies, which are against standard World Bank orthodoxy, remains to be seen.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity is a further major issue not far off the horizon. Timor Leste, along with many other parts of Southeast Asia faced rice shortages in early 2007 and had to rely on the UN's WFP to import and distribute rice. The adverse weather, continuing crisis with its displacement of IDPs and a locust pest in the west of the country have led to a 25-30% decrease in maize and rice production, according to a FAO/WFP (2007) estimate, necessitating a further 15,000 tons of emergency food aid.

During the Indonesian occupation, rice has become the staple food, replacing locally grown foods such as corn, sweet potatoes, bananas or cassava. This is in fact a regional phenomenon and can be witnessed across the eastern part of Indonesia as well, such as in Papua or NTT. As in other parts of South-East Asia, the rains in Timor Leste were erratic in the 2006/2007 rainy season. The local shortfall in produce was exacerbated by a regional one: rice became scarce across the region and the major exporters' harvests were late. Thus the rice stocks were depleted across the country and the rice price tripled or quadrupled, making it impossible for the average Timorese family to purchase their staple food. A long-term, sustainable solution to the problem would need to include a return to more locally grown staple foods.

Trade, not aid?

Another key socio-economic issue for Timor Leste is the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which the EU was negotiating with the ACP countries at the time of writing. While the EU Commission is presenting the process as a step towards helping the ACP countries, many civil society organisations are concerned by the mismatch between the two negotiating sides and the fact that the ACP countries are essentially asked to sign up to free trade agreements which go beyond what has been discussed at the WTO (Myrttinen, 2007; Oxfam, 2006). The EU has been traditionally one of the main aid donors to Timor Leste and thus its possibilities of saying no to a deal put forward by the EU are relatively small. Furthermore, Timor Leste is seeking to join ASEAN, which itself is in the process of negotiating a free trade agreement with the EU. Upon joining ASEAN, Timor Leste would be bound to this agreement as well.

Another major donor is of course Australia, and the country has been keen on promoting more trade and less aid. Australia's AusAID has charted this way forward for Australian aid to Timor Leste and the South Pacific in its 'Pacific 2020' programme. Furthermore, Australia has signed the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) with its South Pacific neighbours. PACER automatically gives both Australia and New Zealand the same benefits that the EU will get through the EPA process. It is not inconceivable that Australia will seek to have a similar arrangement with Timor Leste.

New-found friends?

Perhaps surprisingly, two new supporters of Timor Leste are Cuba and PR China. Cuba has been giving relatively low-profile help in the medical and educational fields, with 300 Cuban health workers deployed in Timor Leste and medical training being given to 800 Timorese students (700 of which are studying in Cuba). Furthermore, Cuba has been actively supporting an adult literacy campaign in Timor Leste. Chinese investors in the meantime have pledged investments worth over 100 million USD to Timor Leste over the coming years, in addition to which PR China is building a new foreign ministry building in Dili (Anderson, 2007; MacauHub, 2007).

4. Security issues

Security forces – part of the problem, not the solution?

The event triggering the current crisis was the sacking of some 600 soldiers who had been protesting against their working conditions and alleged discrimination based on their geographical origin. The fighting which followed saw members of the armed forces (F-FDTL) fighting members of the police (PNTL) and fighting each other. Tensions between the F-FDTL and PNTL had been simmering for years and there had been armed clashes previously. As Rees (2004) pointed out before the eruption of the crisis, civilian oversight of the security forces was lacking, as were the procedures to control the small arms and light weapons (SALW) procured by the security forces in numbers that were in excess of their needs (Amnesty international, 2003).

The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process of the Falintil guerrilla had left many ex-combatants alienated and disgruntled. There were grumblings about favouritism and privileging people based on their political or personal connections. Given the lack of economic opportunities, integration into the new security forces was seen as a premium prize. The retraining offered by the international community to those who were not incorporated into the security forces was not seen as very efficient (see for example Abdullah and Myrttinen, 2008).

Though the ultimate responsibility for their actions lies of course with the security forces themselves and the Timorese political leadership which rather than effectively controlling them chose to manipulate them for their own ends, a large part of the responsibility also lies with the international community. The whole DDR and security sector reform (SSR) processes were designed and funded by outside agencies (KCL, 2000). The training given to the PNTL and F-FDTL was in the hands of the UN PKF and UNPOL, later supplemented by training by the ADF. The breakdown of the security forces should therefore lead to some introspection on the part of the international community regarding the efficiency and purpose of the way they engage in DDR and SSR processes.

A further problem is the proliferation of arms from police and armed forces stockpiles, which have in part passed over into the hands of youth gang members. While weapons' decommissioning is relatively easy in comparison with dealing with more or less organised groups with political agendas, such as the rebel forces or the government side, disarming youth gangs is a much more complicated task. According to the UN (2006a) report,

"219 PNTL weapons remain outside PNTL custody and control. These weapons comprise 190 Glock 9 mm pistols, 13 Steyr semi-automatic assault rifles, 10 HK33 semi-automatic assault rifles, 2 FN-FNC semi-automatic assault rifles and 4 12-gauge shotguns. [...] 45 M16, three FN-FNC semi-automatic rifles, three SKS semi-automatic rifles and two Uzi weapons previously within the custody and control of F-FDTL are missing."

An undisclosed number has since been retrieved by UNPOL and ISF, though in discussions with UNMIT staff the number of unaccounted weapons in late 2007 was put at about several dozen. However, as the gangs have infiltrated the police force, they are able to use off-duty policemen as 'hired guns' if the need arises.

On another level, the deeper causes of violence beyond a disaffected security sector and marauding youth gangs need to be examined. As mentioned above, various violence-prone groups of mostly young men have for long been a major instability factor in the country. There are numerous reports and rumours of them having been manipulated/co-ordinated by various key figures inside and outside of the government. These allegations need to be examined but the root cause of the problem is not manipulative politicians but the potential for violence – which is also reflected in the high rates of gender-based sexualised violence in the country. Addressing the sources of violence needs reflection and long-term work from within East Timorese society, as well as an improvement in the political and socio-economic framework in which people live in.

In the future, the security forces need to be given more – and more effective – training, and the structures of civilian control of the security forces will probably need to be thoroughly reassessed. In the aftermath of this violence, reconciliation and trust-building work between the communities themselves and between the security sector and the communities has become necessary. Preventive conflict solution needs to be enhanced, especially in the peri-urban trouble areas around Dili, such as Becora, Vila Verde, Comoro or Bairo Pite. This would need to be specifi-

cally targeted at the violence-prone young men in the areas. But none of these efforts can have a long-term effect unless the socio-economic situation of the country is improved.

Public Enemy Number One? – The Gangs of Dili

The breakdown of key state structures in April-June 2006 in Dili brought to the fore a phenomenon that had been a cause of concern already for the previous five years – that of violent gangs. I use the term 'gang' mostly for lack of a better word to describe the phenomenon, though some of these groups prefer to be called martial arts or ritual arts groups.

Local law enforcement specialists and those from the UN, along with local and outside observers had already been alarmed by the rapid expansion and visible presence of these groups, some of whom described themselves as martial arts groups (MAGs), some as 'traditional combat arts' groups and some as veterans' groups (for the most comprehensive overview of these groups to date, see Scambary et al., 2006, for previous warnings see for example interviews in Abdullah and Myrttinen, 2008 and Rees, 2004).

The fighting in Dili and environs since May 2006 has led to close to 100 deaths, forced tens of thousands to flee their homes for the tenuous safety of IDP camps and triggered an outside intervention by the Australian-led ISF and a beefed-up UNPOL force as part of the UNMIT mission. Though the majority of the fighting has been confined to the impoverished outer bairos of Dili such as Comoro, Delta and Becora, as well as the IDP camps, sporadic fighting has also taken place in the centre of the city and in other urban areas around Timor Leste such as Liquica and Viqueque.

History and Structure of the Gangs

The current wave of violence needs to be seen in the context of the post-conflict situation and how it developed after 1999. While some gangs trace their ancestry to the Portuguese colonial era, and others to the times of the Indonesian occupation, many seem to be more recent creations (see also Scambary et al., 2006). Regardless of their historical background, many of the gangs seem to also include former members of the pro-Indonesian militias, ex-Falintil guerrillas and former or current-serving members of the security forces (PNTL and F-FDTL). The widespread DDR process of the former combatants was also a major factor in the outbreak of violence in 2006. Furthermore, the fact that the new security forces, both PNTL and F-FDTL, were to a degree creations of the international donors which were then hijacked by local elites, meant that there was no fully locally accepted, locally organised, disinterested state security apparatus which could now stand up to the gangs. In fact, the gangs had already infiltrated the security forces before the breakdown in law and order due to various cross-cutting political, social, personal and economic ties between members of the gangs, their backers and members of the security apparatus.

For the overwhelming part, the gang members are men, with a wide age span within the groups, ranging from boys in their early teens to leaders in their 50s or even 60s. In general, the hierarchy in the gangs tends to be based on age, with the majority of the 'foot soldiers' being in their early-mid teens.

In Timor Leste, many of the major gangs have very formal membership systems, including at least in the case of PSHT actual laminated plastic membership cards, while others use more traditional gang membership markers such as tattoos or embroidered cloths. Many of the smaller (and newer) gangs do not have similar, formal membership insignia. A very visible aspect of gang violence in Timor Leste is the use of ritual and magic, linked in part to the membership insignia. Many of the above-mentioned gang insignia have a 'magic' or ritual meaning and magic (lulik) amulets and spells are called upon for supernatural skills and protection before confronting other gangs or the security forces.

Weaponry

Timorese gangs seem, for now, to prefer using only what were termed 'offensive weapons' by the UN administration, such as machetes, rama ambon,[1] spears and swords. From interviews with law enforcement officials and from personal experience, it is clear that that the gangs have, since the breakdown of the state security apparatus, gained state-of-the-art SALW, such as assault rifles and automatic pistols. This is also corrobo-

1. Steel arrows or flechettes shot with slingshots, allegedly occasionally dipped into battery acid for additional effect.

rated by the 2006 UN enquiry into the breakdown of order in the country (UN, 2006a). In addition, they have access to home-made handguns (rakitan) capable of firing standard ammunition and hand-grenades. But despite this arsenal, they are very reluctant to display the weapons, let alone put them to use (at least during daylight hours).

One obvious reason for this lies with the UN-promulgated weapons legislation (UNTAET, 2001), which differentiates between 'offensive weapons' and firearms. This piece of legislation still guides the UNPOL and Timorese security forces. While unregistered firearms can be immediately confiscated and the person carrying them charged with unlawful possession of firearms, there is a lot more of a grey area in terms of the 'offensive weapons,' which are not, per se, illegal and do not need to be registered. Confiscating offensive weapons is only possible in situations in which there are used or displayed in an'aggressive' manner.

On another level, the violence in Timor Leste often seems to be more about spectacle and intimidation than actual killing. As during the initial phase of the Indonesian-sponsored militia activities in 1998/99, the public spectacle of 'controlled mayhem,' of bringing a large, frenzied yet disciplined group of young men displaying their readiness to use violence onto the streets seems to be more important than actually using this potentially violent force (similar traditional group warfare). There also seems to be 'method in the madness,' with the seemingly spontaneous outbreaks of violence giving the impression of being 'turned on and off' as well as following a geographical pattern (see also Robinson, 2002, on similar phenomena during the militia-violence in 1999).

Locating gang violence in class and 'the hood'

The walls of the bairos of Dili have for years been covered with slogans and graffiti. During the independence years, various kinds of new graffiti kept emerging, often linked to global cultural icons and occasionally to gangs. With the social, economic, political and quasi-ethnic (or rather: regional) crisis that began unfolding in March 2006, the amount of graffiti has multiplied, often referring to various gangs (thus acting as territorial markers) and often with a derogatory, mostly anti-'easterner' messages.

It is precisely these peri-urban 'bairos' that are commonly seen as the breeding grounds for the violence that has befallen the city. The economy of these urban or peri-urban areas tends to be characterised by what is often referred to as the 'informal' sector, though many inhabitants do commute to work to other parts of the city for more 'formal' employment. Unemployment tends, however, to be high and demographically there is a bias in this towards younger generations.

As Goddard (2006) points out in the case of Port Moresby, the local and international media, public opinion, government authorities and researchers often have a tendency to link gang violence with life in the settlements, and the same can be said for Dili, where the 'hot spots' are the poorer neighbourhoods such as Bairo Pite, Becora, Fatuhada, Delta, Comoro or the IDP camps, with the 'Airport Camp' having gained the most notoriety.

In 1999, many Timorese I spoke to tended to dismiss members of the militias as either being non-Timorese or as being from the lowest classes of society. A similar sentiment is evident today with respect to the gang violence in Dili. As the web blog Return to Rai Ketak (2006) records it:

'The Timorese diaspora, or educated class with good jobs here in Dili, tend to blame the ema beik, the stupid people who have come from the districts and live in these shitty peripheral neighborhoods in Dili. Why do they resort to violence? They are ignorant. Beik.'

The gang violence has thus led to a stigmatisation of the poorer areas of Dili as being 'hotbeds' of criminal activities and their inhabitants as being inherently prone to crime and violence. These neighbourhoods have also therefore been targeted by occasional and often heavy-handed crackdowns by the security forces. Most residents of the 'problem areas' are, however, not involved in criminal activities and seek, where and when possible, to find regular employment, and are more often the victims rather than the perpetrators of criminal activities.

Focusing on the socio-economic problems, important and pressing as they undoubtedly are, also obscures many of the complexities of the issue. Gangs undoubtedly recruit many of their members from what Marx might have termed the lumpenproletariat, but they also have strong links to members of the economic and political elite as well as the security forces. Based on interviews with gang members and UNPOL, a rela-

tively high number of members of the Timorese police force are involved with major gangs such as PSHT, Colimau 2000 and 7-7. Some police officers have even been arrested by the international security forces as suspects in cases of serious crimes, including murders.

Business first?

A striking feature of the gangs of Dili is the fact that they do not seem to be 'in the business' for any tangible economic reason. This view was confirmed by researchers, law enforcement officers and gang members themselves. The gangs in Dili do of course get financial support from somewhere – how else could young men spend their days driving around in cars, chatting on their cell phones, smoking and drinking all day, as both law enforcement officers and gang members themselves asked rhetorically. Unfortunately but perhaps rather naturally, gang members did not divulge information on their own financial resources, but did insinuate that rival gangs were being funded by political parties and other 'ema boot' that were 'manipulating' them. Other possible sources of money are gambling and 'protection money,' where the line between extortion and genuine neighbourhood-based security services (as a protection, for example, against attacks by rival gangs) is thin.

The Australian media (e.g. ABC News, 2006) have also raised the spectre of 'ice' (referred to locally by its Indonesian term shabu-shabu) as being an additional factor in gang violence. This is not necessarily far-fetched, as shabu-shabu is (or at least used to be) the drug of choice in Indonesian provincial towns. Preliminary investigations in Dili would seem to indicate that the drug issue seems to have been exaggerated by the Australian media with not all that much evidence for it on the streets, at least for now. While it may still be an issue in Timor Leste (and will all likelihood become one in the near future), it seems that palm wine and beer are enough at the moment to help the gang members tap into their personal and social frustrations

5. Cultural background

Explaining conflicts by reflecting on cultural reasons is always a tricky matter, for as an outside observer it is difficult to determine what actually constitutes part of the culture and what is a manipulation of culture to justify certain courses of action. Cultural determinism or essentialism is also an easy trap to fall into, often leading to paternalistic or even crudely racist caricatures of the culture and conflict being analysed. While cultural factors need to be examined, it should be kept in mind that instead of being absolute determinants of our actions, "prescrib[ing] that [people] would behave in a certain way because of their culture," we should rather regard "culture as offering a vast repertoire of actions" from which people choose from (Cribb, 2002).

As the crisis unfolded from March 2006 onwards, the defining feature increasingly became the divide between East Timorese of 'loro mono' (western) and 'loro sa'e' (eastern) descent. Several public pronouncements by key figures in the political elite exacerbated this divide, with each 'side' claiming that the other had gotten the better deal in the post-independence period. The commitment of the 'other side' to the independence struggle and to the nation was publicly questioned. Thus, the poison of communalism was introduced into East Timorese society, with the youth gangs picking up on this divide. 'Westerners' forced 'easterners' to leave their neighbourhoods and vice-versa. For a fuller discussion of the 'east/west'-conflict in Timor Leste, see for example Prueller, 2008.

The term 'ethnic conflict' was then quickly used by numerous outside commentators to describe the outbreak of violence. I find that this term does more to obscure than to clarify the backgrounds of the conflict. Instead of helping in analysing the more complex socio-economic issues, the political power games within the government and the governing party as well as the various divisions within the security forces, all of these influences are subordinated to the vague category of ethnicity and ethnic differences. 'Ethnic conflict' is also an easy and convenient term for the Western public to distance itself from a conflict, as it becomes to be seen as a primordial, eternal conflict, the protagonists of which are incorrigible repeat offenders who have hatred and war 'in their blood:' 'those [...enter name of ethnic group in conflict...] have always been at each others throats and always will be...'

As often in communal conflicts, the divide is somewhat arbitrary. This presents the first problem in trying to define the conflict as an 'ethnic' conflict. There is no clear geographical dividing line and both 'the east' and 'the west' are not an ethnic entity but rather consist of numerous ethno-linguistic groups. There have been intermarriages between and 'east' and 'west,' especially in Dili, which itself can not really be defined as either 'east' or 'west.' Nevertheless, the categories did obviously exist as latent communal identity markers that were mobilised quickly in 2006. However, the issue also faded into the background almost as quickly as it emerged.

There has been much debate as to the relevance of the east/west divide to Timorese society previous to the current wave of violence. Some claim that it is a new phenomenon while others trace it to colonial times and/or see it exacerbated by the influx of migrants to Dili both after World War II and the violence of 1999. Conflicts have been simmering in the poorer bairos surrounding Dili over the access to markets between these migrants. As mentioned above, members of the political elite and political parties have played a role in using neighbourhood gangs in attempts to increase their own political power and have manipulated the east/west issue through their public pronouncements for the same reason. The fact remains, though, that a potent and divisive poison has thus now been introduced into Timorese society. It is trickling through its foundations and must therefore be dealt with by the same political elite that first introduced it.

While there are undoubtedly those who have gained and those who have lost from the independence of Timor Leste, it is very difficult to say that it has been either 'the easterners' or 'the westerners' have benefited most. For example, while the current crisis was triggered by 'westerners' claiming to be disadvantaged in the Falintil, the most vocal group prior to this crisis claiming that they were being disadvantaged in the build-up of the security forces was the Sagrada Familia-group of Commander L7, which hails mostly from the east.

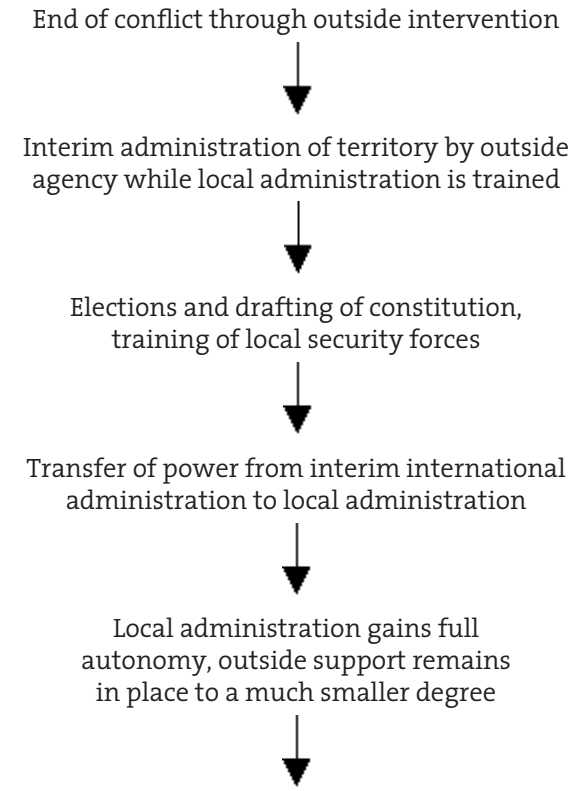
For most of the population, there is equality in (increasing) poverty. The Timorese who have benefited most do not share a common geographical background, since they originate from the east, from the west, from Dili or have recently returned from exile. What binds them instead is access to networks of power in the capital and abroad. Those who have been the most disadvantaged include some of those who riot (e.g. unemployed youths) but also many who are remaining and have remained in the shadows for a long time, such as landless peasants and above all women.

Though many people have been surprised by the descent into violence, the writing had been on the wall. Numerous reports had outlined the serious problems within the security sector (the serious rivalry between the police force and the armed forces, documentations of human rights abuses, problems with crowd control and proper storage of weapons), the rivalries within the government, the deteriorating socio-economic environment, increasing corruption and nepotism and the increased problems with internal stability caused by these factors, often manifested in violent demonstrations or the activities of groups of violence-prone young men (the martial arts groups, the 'ninja' scares or the activities of the various 'veterans'' groups, etc.).

The common factor has been the propensity of men to address their concerns, be they political, social or economic, through means of public displays of violence, mirrored by high levels of private displays of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) at home (see for example Koyama and Myrttinen 2007). Often, the violence is linked to alcohol abuse or, more recently, drug abuse. While this is a definite and serious problem and needs to be addressed by Timorese society – especially the men themselves – it would in my mind be misleading to merely see it as an issue of a "Timorese" or "Melanesian culture of violence." Local social, cultural, political and economic factors cannot be disregarded when examining constructions of gender. But unfortunately, violent displays of masculinities are far too widespread to pin them down on local culture alone.

6. The international community – a paradigmatic failure?

On a conceptual level, the breakdown of the post-independence Timorese political structure presents the international community with a complex problem. Whereas in 1999 there was a paradigm, a plan, a vision for what to do, all that there is now is confusion and a profound lack of new ideas and of new personnel to implement it. The breakdown has thoroughly thrown into doubt the post-Cold War paradigm of conflict solution, of 'benevolent/humanitarian intervention' and nation building, which went approximately as follows:



This basic model has been implemented in its various permutations (and with varying degrees of success) in a number of conflict zones since the end of the Cold War, be it Afghanistan, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Haiti, Solomon Islands or Kosovo. The 'poster child[2],' however, was Timor Leste.

One question that was inevitably raised was how the failure of Timor Leste, the 'star pupil' will reflect on the whole curriculum: if the basic plan failed in the relatively simple and, up to a point, relatively successful case of Timor Leste, what hope is there for the much more complicated cases of for example Afghanistan, Sierra Leone or Kosovo? Does this failure mean that the UN left too early? Or too late? Was too much left in the hands of the fledgling Timorese administration too soon? Or should the transfer have happened earlier? How much did controversial decisions such as the dollarisation of the economy and the adoption of Portuguese as the official language lead to processes of political, economic and social marginalisation? If there is another major outside intervention, how could the mistakes of the first one be avoided? Or was the imposition of foreign political concepts onto a very different kind of society and in ignorance of this society's own concepts, as argued by Hohe, 2002, doomed to be an act of futility?

It is also not as self-evident as some of the would-be nation-builders believe that outside intervention is universally welcomed by the 'subject people.' As far as the UN is concerned, Timor Leste has often been paraded as the most successful UN-led nation-building project. What tends to be overlooked though is that the UN presence, though initially welcomed, was definitely not universally loved throughout its years of administering the territory. Resentment at the slow rate of progress, the slow rate of 'Timorisation,' the imposition of decisions from the outside, the vast discrepancies in income and lifestyle between the internationals and the local community, and against behaviour by international staff that was considered inappropriate (and at times criminal) was relatively widespread and even exploded into anti-UN riots (see for example Koyama and Myrttinen, 2007).

Rivalry within the international community

Given the scale of the tasks, the international community has unfortunately not always been able

2. The term 'poster child' is also indicative of the underlying patronising attitudes of many of these efforts by the international community – and the frustration by the internationals at the locals 'who just don't understand and appreciate' what is being done on their behalf

to speak with one voice. The Portuguese government, for example, refused to place the paramilitary GNR units under ADF/ISF command, while the Australian government on the other hand refused to place the ADF under UN command, thus forcing the Timorese government into a u-turn, as it had previously requested a unified UN force. It seems that narrow national interests rather than the interests of Timor Leste have been motivating factors for the Portuguese and Australian governments. The Timorese political elite and the population in Dili, at least, have often been quick to pick up on perceived splits within the international community and perceived biases towards any one side in the conflict.

While Portugal is seeking to increase the profile of the lusophone world, even if Timor Leste is only marginally Portuguese-speaking, Australia has been keen to shore up its influence. From the current Australian government's perspective, its Southern Pacific neighbours, including Timor Leste, forms an "arc of instability." Over the past years, Australia has intervened militarily or with its police forces in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Timor Leste, Tonga and the Solomon Islands as well as recently increasing its military presence in Fiji. Arguing that it is Australia's responsibility to keep these nations from becoming "failed states," Australia is also seeking to extend its economic and political influence in these countries, be it for Australian companies or through AusAID. Its "Pacific 2020" report outlines the problems faced by its neighbours – and recommends a very neo-liberal approach to solving them (AusAID, 2006)

The current Australian policy of Pacific intervention has also not been always welcomed with open arms. While initial intervention in the name of peacekeeping has often been welcomed, ADF and AFP forces have been seen as overly intrusive and Australian foreign policy as bullying its neighbours. There have been protests and complaints against the ADF in Timnor Leste and PNG, while the Solomon Islands' government has called for the Australian contingent of the RAMSI peacekeeping force to leave. Any intervention led – or seen to be led – by a single country can easily be seen by the local population as an attempt by the lead intervening country to turn the 'protectorate' territory into a economic colony, be it for natural resources, for jobs for aid agency consultants or for contractors.

Another danger inherent in international intervention is that the conflict which the intervention was supposed to solve becomes frozen in time by the intervention, as for example in Cyprus, and that the territory becomes permanently dependent on aid as the local structures, be they political, economic or social, are not able to develop.

Unfortunately, the international community's reaction to the latest East Timorese crisis has, apart from an initial, short-lived bout of soul-searching, not included any sustained analysis of and reflection on the sense, the form and content of outside interventions. Without a thorough analysis, the danger remains that the 'outside intervention as usual'- approach will only lead to new crises in the future.

7. In conclusion...

The current instability that is rocking Timor Leste with all its tragic consequences for the fledgling nation forces the Timorese people, their government and the international community to deal with a very complex set of challenges. The primary challenge is that of providing basic security, of disarming and reining in the various armed groups. Political stability and trust in the basic structures of the nation-state and the society it is meant to represent need to be rebuilt. For these measures to be sustainable, however, the socio-economic situation of the country needs to be improved. The challenge is made all the more urgent by demographic factors, the socio-cultural space available to violent displays of masculinity and the proliferation of small arms.

Given that the current UNMIT mission is the fifth in the country in seven years and that the approximately three billion USD that the UN has spent on these missions has failed to bring stability to the nation, one could assume that there would be more of a process of analysis and introspection on the part of the international community. This does not seem to be the case. At the same time, two of Timor Leste's main aid donors, Australia and the EU, are seeking to negotiate free trade agreements with the country that will potentially undermine the already fragile economic development of the country.

The East Timorese political elites, in the meantime, continue to be locked in a state of mutual distrust and confrontation. The political games and manoeuvres have only served to increasingly alienate the population from the 'ema boot.'

The answers to this multitude of challenges lie with the people of Timor Leste. It is the task of Timorese society and its government to formulate and implement these answers. The task of the international community, be it the UN, individual governments, NGOs or the East Timor solidarity movement is to help in finding and implementing these answers, rather than going in and imposing "answers" from the outside.

References

ABC News, 2006.
'Youth workers blame drugs for Dili gang violence,' *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, 30.10.2006

Abdullah, S. and Myrttinen, H., 2008.
'Gender, SALW and violence in post-conflict East Timor,' in '*Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons*,' Farr, V. and Schnabel, A. (eds.), SwissPeace, Small Arms Survey and United Nations University (forthcoming)

Amnesty international, 2003.
Timor Leste: Briefing to Security Council Members on Policing and Security in Timor Leste. 06.03.2003. AI Index ASA 57/001/2003, Amnesty International, London.

Anderson, T., 2007.
'Challenges for the Xanana Alliance,' *Green Left Weekly*, 17.09.2007, Sydney

AusAID, 2006.
Pacific 2020: Challenges and opportunities for growth. Australian agency for International Development, Canberra.

CAVR, 2006.
Chega! Relatório da Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconcilição de Timor Leste, Dili.

Cribb, R., 2002.
From total people's defence to massacre – Explaining Indonesian military violence in East Timor. In Colombijn, F. and Lindblad, T. (eds.), *Roots of Violence in Indonesia*, 2002. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.

Cristalis, I. and Scott, C., 2005.
Independent Women – The Story of Women's Activism in East Timor. CIIR, London.

Drysdale, J., 2007.
Petroleum revenue management in Timor-Leste: a fork in the road. Presentation at the EuroSEAS 2007 Conference, 14.09.2007, Napoli, Italy

FAO/WFP, 2007.
FAO/WFP crop and food supply assessment mission to Timor-Leste, FAO Timor Leste, Dili.

Goddard, M., 2005.
The Unseen City – Anthropological Perspectives on Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Australian National University Press, Canberra.

Grove, N.; Zen, K.; Bucar, E.; Pereira, L.; Fernandes, G.; Amaral, N., 2007.
Like Stepping Stones in the Water – Youth Perspectives on the Crisis in Timor Leste. Plan Timor Leste and University of New South Wales, Dili.

Hohe, T., 2002.
Totem Polls: Indigenous Concepts and 'Free and Fair Elections' in East Timor. *International Peacekeeping, Vol. 9, No. 4, 2002*. London.

KCL, 2000.
Independent Study on Security Force Options and Security Sector Reform for East Timor. Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London, London.

Koyama, S. and Myrttinen, H., 2007.
'Unintended Effects of UN Peacekeeping Operations from a Gender Perspective – The Case of Timor Leste' In Aoi, C. and de Coning, C. (eds.) *Unintended Consequences of Peacekeeping Operations*, United Nations University Press, Tokyo.

Loch, A., 2007.
Handy, Haus und Hallelluja – Psychosoziale Rekonstruktion in Ost-Timor. IKO Verlag, Frankfurt

MacauHub, 2007.
Chinese investors present projects in East Timor, 20.09.2007.

Myrttinen, 2007.
'The Old Empires Strike Back? – 'Free' Trade and the Pacific Islands. *Pazifik Netzwerk Infostelle, 14.03.2007.*

Oxfam, 2006.
Unequal Partners: How EU–ACP Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) could harm the development prospects of many of the world's poorest countries. *Oxfam Briefing Note*, September 2006

Prueller, V., 2008.
"The 2006 Crisis in East Timor – an ethnic conflict?," MA Thesis, University of Passau, Passau (forthcoming).

Rai Ketak, 2006.
'Communication breakdown,' web blog from 29.09.2006, on *Return to Rai Ketak website*, accessed at http://raiketak.wordpress.com/2006/09/

Rees, E., 2004.
Under Pressure – Three Decades of Defence Force Development in Timor Leste 1975-2004. Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, Geneva.

Robinson, G., 2002.
The fruitless search for a smoking gun – Tracing the origins of violence in East Timor. In Colombijn, F. and Lindblad, T. (eds.), *Roots of Violence in Indonesia, 2002*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.

Scambary, J., Da Gama, H., Barreto, J. 2006.
A Survey of Gangs and Youth Groups in Dili, Timor-Leste. AusAid, Canberra

UN, 2006a.
Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor Leste. United Nations, Geneva, 2006.

UN, 2006b.
World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision and World Urbanization Prospects. Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, New York.

UNTAET, 2001.
Regulation No 2001/5 on Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Offensive Weapons in East Timor. United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, 23.04.2001, Dili. Available at http://www.un.org/peace/etimor/untaet/reg00105E.pdf

UNDP, 2006.
National Human Development Report 2006 - The Path out of Poverty.

UNDP, Dili.
http://www.undp.east-timor.org/documentsreports/nhdr/index.html

Watch Indonesia, 2007.
„Die Wahlen waren in keinster Weise friedlich“ - Interview with Tiago Sarmento, JSMP. Information und Analyse, 16.09.2007, *Watch Indonesia*, Berlin.

Up in Smoke
Impoverishment and Instability in Post-Independence Timor Leste

In 2006, Timor Leste, Asia's poorest and newest nation plunged into a serious political crisis which cast serious shadows of doubt over the capacities of the nation's key structures and political actors to deal with the security, political, social and economic challenges faced by the nation. The crisis also raised fundamental questions about the role of the international community's nation-building efforts given the central role played by the United Nations in Timor Leste since 1999. This report examines the social, economic and political backgrounds to the crisis in Timor Leste and its implications both for the nation and the region.

KEPA's Working Papers

KEPA's Working Papers series offers information on development issues. Studies, seminar memos, and articles produced or commissioned by KEPA will be published in the series. The papers will cover e.g. topics of Southern civil societies, development work and political advocacy work of civil society organisations, development cooperation, impact assesment and international trade issues. The papers will be published in several languages.

The papers are available at KEPA's web site:
http://www.kepa.fi/palvelut/julkaisut/taustaselvitykset

kepa