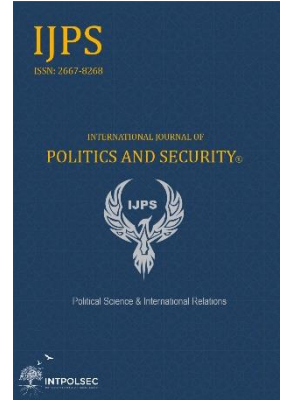


## International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS)

ISSN: 2667-8268

<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/ijps>



---

### Examining the East Timor Problem on the Axis of Conflict Analysis and Peacebuilding: Analysis of Regional Effects

**Author(s) / Yazar(lar) :** Bekir Aydeniz

**Source / Kaynak:** International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS) / Vol. 6 / No. 2 / Oct 2024, pp. 152-167

**DOI:** 10.53451/ijps.1529953

**Date of Arrival** : 07.08.2024

**Date of Acceptance** : 24.09.2024

#### To cite this article:

Bekir Aydeniz. "Examining the East Timor Problem on the Axis of Conflict Analysis and Peacebuilding: Analysis of Regional Effects". *International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS)*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2024, pp.152-167, DOI: 10.53451/ijps.1529953

All intellectual property rights of this article belong to the International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS). IJPS allows the use of articles and shares by providing proper attribution (BY) without permission in advance except for commercial use (NC). But prohibited the sharing of its adaptations (ND), and should be released under the same license (SA) by mention IJPS. The ideas stated in the article belong only to the author(s).



## Examining the East Timor Problem on the Axis of Conflict Analysis and Peacebuilding: Analysis of Regional Effects

Bekir Aydeniz<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*East Timor's complex historical background and political dynamics will be examined within the discipline of conflict analysis and resolution and evaluated from a peacebuilding perspective. Conflict analysis is a basic approach used to analyze the origins of conflict, relations between parties, and conflict dynamics. Factors such as the origins of East Timor's conflicts, social structure, ethnic differences, distribution of economic resources, and political understanding will be provided. The social solution process in East Timor will be discussed together with the peacebuilding activities carried out with the participation of the local community, and the success factors of this process will be analyzed. This comprehensive analysis will help us understand in detail the conflict dynamics, solution strategies, and peacebuilding process in East Timor and will make an important contribution to ensuring regional stability.*

**Key Words:** Conflict Resolution, East Timor, Peacebuilding.

### 1. Introduction

East Timor issue; It is presented as a complex case study in the context of Conflict Analysis and Resolution and the implementation of UN Peacebuilding. A wide variety of dynamics are considered in this problem, including postcolonialism, conflict of geopolitical interests, ethnic and cultural tensions, and the influence of international actors. In order to understand this multifaceted interdisciplinary problem, it is necessary to comprehensively examine the dynamics of power and resistance in the historical context and the roles played by both "glocal" and "global" organizations in peacebuilding.<sup>2</sup>

Examining these dynamics in the East Timor axis will show the impact more clearly at the regional and international levels. In particular, while the extent of the impact of dynamics is revealed to what extent they affect collaborations at the international level, in this context, examining potential collaborations, potential missions, and precedent decisions are included in the context of this research.

East Timor, which became independent after 2002, continues its integration process into the system, and collaborations at regional and national levels and continues its integration

---

<sup>1</sup>Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul/Türkiye, bekiraydenizz@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-1481- 6564.

**Date of Arrival:** 07.08.2024- **Date of Acceptance:** 24.09.2024

<sup>2</sup> Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, *Toplumlar Arası Çatışmalarda Barışı İnşa Etmek: Birleşmiş Milletler Barış Güçleri ve Alternatif Uyuşmazlık Çözümü*, (Bursa: Dora Publish, 2015), s.9.



process to end instability within itself. Therefore, although the East Timor problem has officially ended, it continues, affecting internal and external factors.

The East Timor issue's conflict analysis and resolution will be evaluated within the framework of peacebuilding and its regional effects will be analyzed, the effect of conflict theory and the negative and positive peace situation in peace theory on a region will be investigated in detail and how much it will affect potential scenarios will be analyzed. The hypothesis of this study; How much has the discipline of conflict analysis and resolution affected the peacebuilding process in East Timor, one of the successful missions of the UN, and what has been the effect of this effect on regional crises or status? All these have been on the axis of what is the potential scenario.

For the literature review, firstly, disciplines were separated into their fields and research was conducted. In this context, books, articles, and electronic publications containing basic information were examined within the scope of Conflict Analysis and Resolution. Within the scope of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, analyses, reports, and articles related to problems similar to the East Timor Problem were also examined and integrated into the East Timor problem. The historical background of the East Timor problem, the solution process, and the peace-making process were examined and within this scope, international reports and scientific articles were examined. After a comprehensive literature review within the scope of Political Science, International Relations (subjects concerning sub-fields such as Political History and International Law), Sociology, and Conflict Analysis and Resolution, all sources were classified according to the relevant field and analyzed by interpreting according to the main method.

In this context, the perspective was expanded by using the theoretical perspective of Prof. Dr. Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz's book "Conflict Analysis and Resolution", United Nations (UN) Reports, articles written about East Timor, and Filippo Aureli's book "Natural Conflict Resolution", which works within the scope of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, and the administrative approach of the UN to the East Timor issue was analyzed on this axis.

Rodney S. Nixon's thesis, "Integrating Indigenous Approaches into a 'New Subsistence State'" added a new perspective to the research on peacebuilding and state reconstruction, and a new perspective was added to the East Timor issue within the framework of UN reports and ASEAN analyses.

The basic theoretical background of this study is the theory of Conflict Analysis and Resolution. In this context, theories of international relations, which include conflict theories,



which are sub-research areas, have been used indirectly, not directly. Since conflict theories constitute the philosophical basis of conflict, conflict theory reflects the output of Realist, Liberal, and Marxist theories. An incident has been solved with data obtained from the discipline of Political History within the scope of conflict transformation and conflict resolution. Within the framework of peace studies, the pre and post-peace status of the East Timor problem has been analyzed based on negative and positive peace theories.

The political background of the East Timor problem, the establishment of the UN's interim government during the peacebuilding process and the explanation of government bodies lie at the basis of the study discipline of political science. In short, an interdisciplinary study has been conducted by creating a theoretical perspective within the framework of the disciplines of political science, political history, and international law regarding international relations, and conflict analysis and resolution in social sciences.

The method of the research is specific to the deductive method. In this context, first of all, the theoretical lock of the problem was opened by explaining the theory/discipline of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, which can examine the East Timor problem from every perspective. Then, the essence of the problem was explained and the situations before and after the problem were explained and space was opened for theoretical analysis. The economic and social effects of the crisis were also explained and the effects of the crisis in different areas were explained. Peacebuilding was explained within the framework of the UN and its philosophy and all the theories that looked at the problem were analyzed.

As a result, the regional effects of the problem were interpreted within the framework of quantitative analysis and the result of the regional effects of the problem was analyzed. Within the framework of all these data and analyses, potential scenarios and suggestions were also presented and the result of the research presented a potential result within the scope of policy proposal studies.

## **2. East Timor Problem: Fundamental Analysis**

East Timor is a region located in western Indonesia and northern Australia. Timor people live in this region. Especially with the geographical discoveries in the 15th century, with Bartolomeo Dias's discovery of the Cape of Good Hope and Vasco De Gama's crossing of the Cape of Good Hope and his arrival in India, there were intense incursions into Asian countries by European countries. In the 17th century, especially Portuguese and Spanish colonies increased in the Southeast Asia region and the colonialism race began in the region. Portugal, which established colonies in the Indonesian archipelago and colonized the region, is one of



these imperial countries. East Timor region remained under Portuguese rule for more than 400 years. Since Indonesia was previously independent from East Timor, it has already integrated into the system and made reforms to maintain its stability.

With Portugal's handover from the region in 1975, Indonesia, which claimed rights over East Timor for its territorial integrity, annexed the region. However, since there are major sociological and political differences between Indonesia and East Timor, local resistance organizations have formed in East Timor. Therefore, a struggle that would last for approximately 24 years began between Indonesia and East Timor. In a postcolonial period, Indonesia, which wanted to protect its territorial integrity and interests, especially in the competitive environment brought about by the Cold War and in an anarchist system, engaged in an intense struggle with East Timor. Fearing that the people of the region would also be affected, regional actors, who are already former colonial countries, tried to prevent the uprising by supporting Indonesia in this regard.<sup>3</sup>

Regional cooperation and representatives of regional cooperation in the international arena perceived this situation as a threat to territorial integrity and implemented various sanctions to prevent the increase of ethnic movements within their structure. This crisis, which took place during the détente period, brought the Southeast Asian region into a political crisis with the uprising against colonialist ideas.<sup>4</sup>

***a. Main causes of conflict and parties***

The East Timor issue needs to be examined in terms of many dynamics. These dynamics; A general analysis framework is formed by the combination of Sociological, Cultural, Political, and Economic dynamics. It is important to understand these dynamics, address the root causes of conflict and problems, and promote stable peace and development. Comprehensive strategies that consider these interconnected dynamics are important dynamics for building a prosperous nation as East Timor continues to build post-independence stability.

When considered sociologically, the social fabric of East Timor has been deeply affected by its colonial history and the subsequent struggle for independence. The population, like every Southeast Asian country, has a complex structure. Linguistic and cultural diversity also affects this demographic structure. East Timor, which adopted Roman Catholicism with a

---

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Heiser, "East Timor and the Joint Petroleum Development Area", *MLAANZ Journal*, 17, (2003), p.60.

<sup>4</sup> Henri Myrtilien, "Timor-Leste A Relapsing 'Success' Story", *Taiwan Jo urnal of Democracy*, 5, No.1, (2024), p.225.



postcolonial memory and used it predominantly, continued to use Portuguese after independence and it had an important place in their identity. The occupation of Indonesia formed the basis of the conflict and made the sociological structure even more complex. The occupation period introduced the people of East Timor to events that fostered a sense of collective trauma and resistance.

The cultural background of the problem lies in the customary traditions of religion, language, and ethnicity, which we consider in a sociological context. Because all these characterizing dynamics have a broad impact on the people of East Timor. The East Timorese people, who have a strong bond with their indigenous cultural practices, including local languages, rituals, and communal land ownership systems, launched an uprising on the grounds that all these characteristics characterize them as being dominated. By balancing this cultural pressure and the revival of traditions after independence with their efforts to become a modern state and nation-state, they have made reforms to ensure stability in order to enter the international system with their own identities.

The resistance that started under the leadership of the Revolutionary Front for Independent East Timor (FRETILIN) gained a political dimension and constituted the "political" leg of the problem. When East Timor, which gained independence from Portugal in 1975, was invaded by Indonesia, they started a resistance and formed a militia force. In this context, local resistance fighters who fought for independence within the scope of "Self Determination" in order to determine their future, engaged in a war of attrition. Although they could not show much political presence until the UN-led referendum in 1999, they continued to fight steadily and turned the armed resistance into a political gain.<sup>5</sup>

East Timor and Indonesia; It was struggling with economic instability during the Cold War. Reasons such as lack of infrastructure human capital and resource scarcity have encouraged these regional countries to provide economic aid. Due to Indonesia's heavy economic sanctions during the occupation of East Timor, local resistance fighters have moved their resistance to different areas to achieve economic gain from this problem. This economic destruction affected both sides greatly.

When all these economic, sociological, cultural, and political factors came together, both the cause and the result of the crisis formed a chain. Problems arose even among local

---

<sup>5</sup> Michael E. Salla. "Creating the 'Ripe moment' in the East Timor conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 34, no. 4 1997, p.455. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343397034004006>. (05.07.2024)



resistance fighters based on these factors, and as there was stagnation in a phase of the resistance, Indonesia's pressure on the region increased.

***b. Effects of the East Timor issue on the region: Economic, political and diplomatic dimensions***

Since the East Timor issue has a "glocal" effect, it has had an impact in more than one area. The local problem has become a global problem, causing reformist effects on both actors and international organizations. It is necessary to analyze the East Timor problem, which is a comprehensive problem affecting geopolitical dynamics, regional security, international relations, and humanitarian interventions, on every dynamic axis.

The resistance movement for East Timor's independence and eventual integration significantly reshaped the geopolitics of Southeast Asia. Indonesia's invasion of East Timor and its subsequent occupation met with international condemnation, which has strained Indonesia's relations with neighboring countries and organizations that form wide-ranging cooperation. This protracted conflict has highlighted the limits of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)'s principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states,<sup>6</sup> resulting in debates and challenges about its role in addressing human rights issues and regional sustainable development within the union. The independence of East Timor brought a new nation-state to the region, changing the regional alignment and leading to the reshaping of diplomatic and economic policies. The establishment of diplomatic relations between East Timor and neighboring countries, including Indonesia, Australia, and other ASEAN members, has taken regional cooperation to a new dimension. In addition, this ethnic nationalist independence movement caused other postcolonial countries to make new reforms on their minorities, slowing down the "Balkanization" process of the countries in the region.

The East Timor conflict had devastating effects on regional security. During Indonesia's occupation, the region caused large-scale violence and human rights violations, as well as a refugee crisis, with many East Timorese fleeing to neighboring countries such as Australia.<sup>7</sup> Many countries and organizations have begun to mediate in order to re-manage this situation and prevent outrage in the region. International military and peacekeeping intervention, particularly the deployment of the Australian-led International Force for East Timor

---

<sup>6</sup> ASEAN, "ASEAN aims", <https://asean.org/what-we-do/>. (15.07.2024)

<sup>7</sup> Amy Ochoa Carson, "East Timor's land tenure Problems: A consideration of land reform programs in South Africa and Zimbabwe." *Indiana International & Comparative Law Review* 17, no. 2, (2007): 395–430. <https://doi.org/10.18060/17554>. (27.07.2024)



(INTERFET) in 1999, set a precedent for regional peacekeeping operations. The fact that regional actors acted in this axis to maintain peace and ensure stability enabled the re-establishment of regional security from the axis of peace.

The East Timor issue paved the way for many diplomatic breakthroughs in the region. Regional actors' diplomatic initiatives to establish peace improved the understanding of regional international relations. Australia's relationship and policy with Indonesia and the relationship of other regional actors with Indonesia have shifted towards a different axis again.

One of the biggest outcomes of the East Timor problem has been around humanitarian interventions. The emergence of the refugee crisis has caused regional actors and the public to face challenges in humanitarian terms. In this context, the greatest humanitarian response was given after the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991. <sup>8</sup>It caused both regional and global reactions because Indonesia killed 250 pro-independence people during its invasion of East Timor. The defense of East Timor's right to self-determination also received support from the world public opinion. Lack of infrastructure, sanctions, and instability negatively affected the people of East Timor, and they gained political support as a result of the humanitarian process that resulted in political pressure and a massacre.

### **3. Conflict Analysis and Resolution**

Conflict Analysis and Resolution is a new field that includes practical work, especially for new diplomats and those working in the field of diplomacy. It is the discipline where all theoretical knowledge is used to solve the problem between the parties on the axis of social psychology. In this context, a practical perspective on the conflict problem is tested through an interdisciplinary study. Conflict analysis, which involves systematically examining the root causes, dynamics, and actors involved in a dispute, has a wide place in international relations and diplomacy. In this context, it requires systematic and disciplined work.<sup>9</sup>

Identifying the stakeholders of the dispute is the first step. It is important to identify all parties involved in the dispute and understand their roles by identifying primary and secondary factors. The interests of all parties must also be determined. After all the actors are identified, understanding the cause of the conflict is another stage. The underlying political, economic, social, and cultural factors need to be examined. Analyzing the interaction between the parties,

---

<sup>8</sup> Ben Saul. "Was the Conflict in East Timor 'Genocide' and Why Does It Matter?" *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 2, no. 2 (2001): p. 477. [https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/agis\\_archive.20015205](https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/agis_archive.20015205). (28.07.2024)

<sup>9</sup> Charles Webel and Johan Galtung, edit., *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, New York: Routledge, (2007), p.45.





power dynamics and conflict escalation or de-escalation patterns in the dynamics of the conflict situation improves conflict analysis. On the axis of all these, the impact of the dispute is evaluated. The impact of the conflict at local, regional, and international levels,<sup>10</sup> including humanitarian consequences and economic challenges, needs to be evaluated in terms of its dynamics.

After the conflict is defined on the basis of all these steps, the solution and analysis phase begins. Conflict resolution requires an analysis phase to address the identified core issues and understand all their causes. Conflict resolution involves many stages.

Within the scope of the prevention phase, early warning systems can be developed around the measures taken to prevent the conflict from breaking out or escalating. Confidence-building measures also increase interaction between actors. Confidence-building preventive activities of diplomatic channels prevent conflict situations in advance.

Within the scope of peacemaking, the conflict begins with bringing the parties to the negotiation table after or during the conflict. In this context, it requires the efforts of third parties to ensure peace. These third actors may be states, international organizations, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This stage includes mediation, negotiation, and dialogue.<sup>11</sup> Preserving the current peace after establishing peace is also a way of preventing new conflicts. Deployment of neutral forces and carrying out peacekeeping operations to ensure peace and security in conflict areas ensure the stability of peace.<sup>12</sup>

Within the scope of peacebuilding, long-term studies are required to build sustainable and stable peace by addressing the root causes of conflict. Rebuilding political institutions, economic development, and supporting civil society is also a kind of reconstruction of peace. Reshaping the joint institutions also contributes to the construction of peace.<sup>13</sup>

Reconciliation includes efforts to improve relations between former enemies and increase and build trust. This improves truth commissions and justice mechanisms. In this context, the dispute is resolved and a compromise environment is provided.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Fitzpatrick, *Mediating land conflict in East Timor*, Canberra: Australian National University, p.76.

<sup>11</sup> Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, *Uyuşmazlık Analizi ve Çözümü*, (Bursa: Dora Publish, 2008), p.72.

<sup>12</sup> Katharina Schilling, *Peacebuilding & conflict transformation A resource book*, (Berlin: CPS/BfdW Bafoussam, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> D. Gopal, Comp., *Conflict Resolution and Peace Buiding*, (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Open University , 2019)

<sup>14</sup> C. Franke Volker and Robert H. Dorff, Edit., *Conflict Management and Peacebuilding: Pillars of a New American Grand Strategy*, (Ashburn: U.S. Army War College Press, 2013).



**a. East Timor Problem on the Axis of Conflict Analysis and Resolution**

While addressing the East Timor problem within the scope of conflict analysis and resolution, it is important to determine the dynamics of the East Timor problem at all stages. First, the actors within the scope of the dispute must be determined. The primary actors in the East Timor issue are; The people of East Timor, the Indonesian government, and the Portuguese colonial administration. Secondary actors; UN, Australia, Portugal, and various NGOs. Internal Actors; FRETILIN and other resistance groups, local leaders, East Timorese diaspora. External actors; ASEAN countries, neighboring countries with which Indonesia has good relations, and other global powers with interests in the region.<sup>15</sup>

After identifying all the actors, different disciplines are used to understand the cause of the conflict from every angle. The reasons for the East Timor problem include the colonial legacy resulting from the withdrawal of Portugal and the subsequent occupation of Indonesia, geopolitical interests, and cultural and ethnic tensions. These reasons constitute the dynamics of this conflict. Dynamics such as the armed resistance that started with FRETILIN, the formation of international public opinion after the Santa Cruz massacre, the escalation of the conflict, and the reduction of tension have formed the basic dynamics of the conflict.

In the final stage, the impact assessment includes humanitarian impact, regional stability, and economic consequences. Especially the increase in the refugee problem and loss of life due to conflict had a humanitarian impact. The emergence of this dispute and conflict has damaged regional stability by affecting regional cooperation and actors. As a result of the sanctions following the long conflict, economic stability was shaken for both actors.<sup>16</sup>

After all these dispute stages, the ending of this dispute was within the scope of the solution. In order to analyze this, it is necessary to examine the solution made by the UN and mediated by other actors within the scope of stages.

As part of prevention, which is one of the stages of conflict resolution, after the occupation of East Timor in 1975, regional actors provided diplomatic pressure and negotiations to prevent the conflict from escalating. But this conflict escalated further.

After the conflict escalated, countries such as the UN, Portugal, and Australia intervened in the situation and initiated diplomatic initiatives to strengthen dialogue on both sides. In this

---

<sup>15</sup> Shalini Chawla, "Shaping East Timor: A dimension of United Nations Peacekeeping", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 24, No. 12, (2001), p. 2297.

<sup>16</sup> Filippo Aureli, "Natural Conflict Resolution," in *University of California Press eBooks*, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520924932>, p.77.



context, INTERFET was established within the scope of peacekeeping to prevent the conflict from escalating further, and peacekeeping troops were sent to ensure peace and security. By establishing the United Nations Transitional Administration (UNTAET), established by the UN, peacebuilding was achieved and capacity was expanded by reshaping the country's other economic dynamics, especially political institutions and law enforcement forces.

Finally, the "Commission for Truth and Reconciliation" (CAVR) was established and reconciliation was encouraged by addressing human rights violations in East Timor. Justice mechanisms were established and with East Timor becoming independent after the referendum, a compromise was reached between the two parties, and the problem was fully resolved.

### ***b. Peacebuilding***

Peacebuilding, in the context of International Relations, refers to efforts undertaken to establish lasting peace and prevent the recurrence of conflict in post-conflict societies. By addressing the root causes of conflict, it rebuilds institutions and promotes sustainable development.

The most basic keyword in peacebuilding is post-conflict reconstruction. It is based on rebuilding the infrastructure, and governance systems, that is, administration and social issues after conflict and conflict.

Institutional structuring is carried out to ensure the establishment and strengthening of political, judicial, and civil institutions by addressing the rule of law for lasting peace and stability. Economic development also promotes economic recovery and economic development to ensure livelihoods and reduce poverty. Thus, one of the main causes of conflict is addressed.

Reconciliation and dialogue, on the other hand, are diplomatic paths based on promoting social harmony and healing relations between former enemies through justice mechanisms within the framework of certain truths.<sup>17</sup>

Keywords such as Human Security, Capacity building, sustainable development, rule of law, and civil society participation also play an important role in building peace. Rebuilding civil societies in a society-oriented way that affects public opinion is important for stable peace and economy. In this context, the participation of society, as well as mediators, in peacebuilding and their joint work with third parties play an important role in accelerating the construction of peace and creating solid foundations.

---

<sup>17</sup> Richard Tanter. "Ten Questions About East Timor for Which We Need Answers." *Policy & Society* 25, no. 4 (2006): 63–75. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1449-4035\(06\)70090-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1449-4035(06)70090-x), p.77.



### ***c. UN Mediation Role***

The UN played a critical role in mediating the East Timor conflict. The UN played a major role in accelerating East Timor's transition to independence in the East Timor conflict after Indonesia's invasion. This engagement is a multifaceted interaction that includes diplomatic mediation, referendum holding, peacekeeping and conflict, and post-conflict peacebuilding. It is necessary to analyze the UN's mediation role in terms of different dynamics.<sup>18</sup>

First of all, the UN joined this conflict early and moved to the negotiation area by understanding the demands of both sides well. The first mediation activities were established by establishing diplomatic channels during the occupation of Indonesia. In this context, the UN was advocating "Self-Determination" for East Timor and was informing the Indonesian administration about this. With the appointment of special representatives, it was ensured that the East Timor issue remained on the international agenda despite geopolitical complexities.

There were many difficulties and tests in the transition to the negotiation phase. In the 1990s, the UN facilitated direct talks between the former colonial powers Indonesia and Portugal under the good offices of the UN Secretary-General. These talks were aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the East Timor conflict. Within the framework of intense diplomatic efforts, a UN-supervised referendum was planned to be held between Indonesia, Portugal, and the UN on May 5, 1999, on the self-determination of the people in East Timor, but this referendum was held on August 30. Later, Sergio Vieira de Mello, a special representative of the UN and Brazilian citizen and Portuguese-speaking diplomat, was appointed to the East Timor mission. De Mello, who has previously taken part in many disputes, carried out keen mediation activities in the East Timor issue, as well as in the dispute between the parties, due to his knowledge of Portuguese.<sup>19</sup>

The UN has conducted many peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions within East Timor. This scope included the UNAMET Mission, the INTERFET peacekeeping mission, and finally the transition management UNTAET mission. Since East Timor wanted to become a separate state after the referendum, the UN played an important role in rebuilding peace as the head of the transitional government in the process of establishing a new state.

---

<sup>18</sup> Kondoch, "The United Nations Administration of East Timor." *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 6, no. 2 (2001): 245–65. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcsl/6.2.245> p.255.

<sup>19</sup> OHCHR, "Sergio Vieira de Mello", <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/high-commissioner/past/sergio-viera-de-mello>. (2024)



Within the scope of UNTAET, the East Timor constitution was prepared and the constituent assembly was established. Capacity-building efforts and restructuring of local governments were also carried out within the framework of this mission. The UN also introduced innovations to the justice mechanism to avoid the difficulties experienced during the conflict period. Human rights violations were examined and economic and social development and all these areas progressed jointly. In this context, the UN received assistance from many NGOs. The UN has accelerated East Timor's integration into the international system through diplomatic mediation, holding a multilateral referendum, use of peacekeeping forces, and comprehensive peacebuilding activities. The UN's activities have resulted in progress both strategically and operationally.<sup>20</sup>

***d. Political Establishment and Organizations of East Timor (Before and After the conflict)***

To understand how much the UN systematically contributed to East Timor becoming a new state after independence, it is necessary to examine the previous governance systems. To examine the political system of East Timor, it is necessary to divide it into four periods. These periods; can be considered as the Colonial Period and the Indonesian occupation period, the Indonesian occupation period, the Transition period, and finally the post-independence period.

East Timor was a Portuguese colony because it was a region located on an Indonesian island. In this case, there was a colonial administration within Indonesia in the region. Local leadership took place among tribes. Due to the Portuguese colony, the people assimilated and started speaking Portuguese. In addition, Catholic Christianity has spread widely on the island.

With the withdrawal of Portugal, the East Timor conflict began. Just like the conflict with China after Britain withdrew from Hong Kong, there was also a conflict in East Timor and Indonesia occupied East Timor. During the occupation, East Timor became the 27th Province of Indonesia. In this context, Indonesia imposed its own provincial structure on the East Timor administration. In this context, local resistance organizations and different resistance groups emerged. These groups; FRETILIN appeared as CNRT (National Timor Resistance Council), CNRM (National Maubere Resistance Council).

After a long struggle and the massacre in 1991, international attention turned to East Timor. In this context, the mediation activities of the UN and other regional actors have increased. A transitional government was established within the scope of the 1999 referendum

---

<sup>20</sup> UN Peacebuilding Office, "UN Peacebuilding: an Orientation", (UN, 2010), p.17.



held under UN supervision. After making public and administrative regulations, the UN transferred all activities to East Timor in 2002.<sup>21</sup>

After independence, all resistance organizations formed during the occupation period entered the parliament and became political parties. Since 2002, East Timor has been trying to integrate into the international system by making efforts for economic stability. Instability also caused the political crisis in 2006. East Timor, which governs in a unicameral semi-presidential system, is frequently on the agenda with instability.

#### **4. Impacts and Consequences on Regional Stability**

The East Timor issue has many implications for regional stability in Southeast Asia and the Pacific in the context of diplomatic, security, and regional integration. There have been tensions within ASEAN within the scope of diplomatic relations. After Indonesia's invasion, it led to conflicting reactions by ASEAN members. Indonesia has received frequent warnings because member countries are concerned about human rights. However, some actors also supported Indonesia's activities, thinking that since it was post-colonialist, the ethnic groups within itself might desire independence. Regional actors also played an active role in reconciliation efforts to solve the problem.

Concerns about the spillover effect of the long-term conflict in East Timor into the region have also brought security challenges. The movement of East Timorese refugees to countries such as Australia and Portugal has created humanitarian and security problems. This severe instability has caused regional actors to monitor the region more intensively in terms of triggering regional instability and potential independence movements.

Within the scope of the security problem, the international community has formed a peacekeeping force by addressing more disputes. Regional cooperation and joint action in addressing these security problems and maintaining stability have also demonstrated the role of diplomacy in the way security problems are addressed.

The passive attitude of ASEAN members in the East Timor conflict was also negatively received by Indonesia. While ASEAN's approach is considered within the framework of human rights, the passiveness of some members due to triggering potential independence movements has brought about a conflict. East Timor's eventual independence and East Timor's attempt to

---

<sup>21</sup> Rodney S Nixon. "Integrating Indigenous Approaches into a 'New Subsistence State': The Case of Justice and Conflict Resolution in East Timor", Doctoral Thesis, (University of Melbourne: 2008), p.88.



participate in regional cooperation after gaining independence also coincided with ASEAN's<sup>22</sup> inclusion policy. However, East Timor's unstable system has slowed down the regional and international integration process.<sup>23</sup>

The East Timor conflict had far-reaching effects on regional stability in Southeast Asia, affecting diplomatic relations, security dynamics, and the regional integration process. Although the conflict initially strained relations within ASEAN and raised concerns about regional security, the eventual resolution of the conflict provided opportunities for reconciliation, cooperation, and the promotion of peace and stability in the region. Looking forward, lessons learned from the East Timor experience continue to inform regional efforts to address conflict, protect human rights, and promote greater integration and cooperation in Southeast Asia.

### ***Possible Future Scenarios and Suggestions***

After the independence of East Timor, political and economic crises emerged after the UN transitional administration. In this context, a conflict environment has emerged on the axis of instability. In this context, Timor-Leste needs international support for stable governance, social cohesion, and national unity for effective leadership and inclusive governance. Countering political instability and factionalism requires priority to counter governance challenges and social unrest that undermine East Timor's stability. Unresolved grievances due to economic inequalities and weak institutions are increasing day by day, causing instability.

East Timor should attach importance to regional integration and cooperation to eliminate all these. Economic cooperation and security cooperation are important for internal stability in the context of regional integration. Judicial and administrative reforms are required for integration. Regional integration can be facilitated thanks to transparency in management and the rule of law.

Regional integration and administrative reforms can make joint progress along with socio-economic development. Sustainable economic development should be aimed together with local reconciliation, regional reconciliation, and then international reconciliation. Due to the high number of unresolved complaints and the corruption in the administration, this reconciliation is slowing down and becoming impossible day by day. The progress of social harmony strengthens socio-economic development and paves the way for receiving the support

---

<sup>22</sup> USAID, *The Crisis in Timor Leste: Causes, Consequences and Options for Conflict Management and Mitigation*, (USAID: 2006), p.16.

<sup>23</sup> Anne M Brown. *Timor Leste Report*, (Brisbane: The University of Queensland, 2013), p.12.



of third actors. In this way, the regional and international integration process will proceed more healthily and stably. East Timor must realize its natural resources and its characteristic resources sustainably, within the framework of the harmony of international organizations. Thus, resource management will contribute to international treasury and prosperity. Timor-Leste stands at a critical juncture in its journey to peace, stability, and development. By embracing inclusive governance, prioritizing socio-economic development, promoting reconciliation, and strengthening regional cooperation, Timor-Leste can overcome potential challenges and realize its aspirations for a prosperous and peaceful future. Implementing these recommendations will require concerted efforts from government, civil society, and international partners to address the complex and interconnected issues facing the nation.<sup>24</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the East Timor issue represents a multifaceted problem that leaves deep traces on the historical, political, social, and economic fabric of the region. From centuries of colonial rule to a violent struggle for independence and the subsequent journey to nation-building, East Timor's story reflects the complexity of conflict, resilience, and reconciliation.

Through the lens of conflict analysis and resolution, we examined the complex dynamics shaping the East Timor conflict, as well as the transformative role played by the UN and other international actors in mediation, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding efforts. The successful resolution of the conflict that resulted in the independence of East Timor serves as a testament to the power of diplomacy, collective action, and the human spirit to overcome challenges.

Looking ahead, Timor-Leste faces both opportunities and challenges as it moves towards sustainable peace, development, and regional integration. Timor-Leste can realize its aspirations for a prosperous and peaceful future by strengthening governance structures, promoting socio-economic development, promoting reconciliation and enhancing regional cooperation.

## References

- Aureli, Filippo, "Natural Conflict Resolution," in University of California Press eBooks, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520924932>. (05.08.2024)
- ASEAN, "ASEAN aims", <https://asean.org/what-we-do/>. (15.07.2024)

---

<sup>24</sup> OECD, "Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities Working Draft for Application Period", (Paris: OECD, 2008), p.15.





- Brown, Anne M., "Timor Leste Report", Brisbane: The University of Queensland, 2013.
- Carson, Amy Ochoa. "East Timor's land tenure Problems: A consideration of land reform programs in South Africa and Zimbabwe." *Indiana International & Comparative Law Review* 17, no. 2 (January 2, 2007): 395–430. <https://doi.org/10.18060/17554>. (27.07.2024)
- Fitzpatrick, Daniel, *Mediating land conflict in East Timor*, Canberra: Australian National University.
- Gopal, Comp., *Conflict Resolution And Peace Building*, New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Open University, 2019."
- Heiser, Anthony, "East Timor and the Joint Petroleum Development Area", *MLAANZ Journal*, 2003, Vol. 17, 54-79. (05.07.2024)
- Kondoch, B. "The United Nations Administration of East Timor." *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 6, no. 2 (December 1, 2001): 245–65. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcsl/6.2.245>. (11.07.2024)
- Myrttien, Henri, "Timor-Leste A Relapsing 'Success' Story", *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Volume 5, No.1, 219-239. (16.07.2024)
- Nixon, Rodney S., "Integrating Indigenous Approaches into a 'New Subsistence State': The Case of Justice and Conflict Resolution in East Timor", Doctoral Thesis, University of Melbourne: 2008.
- OECD, "Guidance On Evaluating Conflict Prevention And Peacebuilding Activities Working draft for application period", Paris: OECD, 2008.
- Schilling, Katharina, *Peacebuilding & conflict transformation A resource book*, Berlin: CPS/BfdW Bafoussam, 2012.
- Shalini, Chawla, "Shaping East Timor: A dimension of United Nations Peacekeeping", *Strategic Analysis*, 2001, Vol. 24, No. 12, 2291-2303. (11.07.2024)
- Salla, Michael E. "Creating the 'Ripe moment' in the East Timor conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 34, no. 4 (November 1, 1997): 449–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343397034004006>. (05.07.2024)
- Saul, Ben. "Was the Conflict in East Timor 'Genocide' and Why Does It Matter?" *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 2, no. 2 (January 1, 2001): 477. [https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/agis\\_archive.20015205](https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/agis_archive.20015205). (28.07.2024)
- Tanter, Richard. "Ten Questions About East Timor for Which We Need Answers." *Policy & Society* 25, no. 4 (January 1, 2006): 63–75. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1449-4035\(06\)70090-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1449-4035(06)70090-x). (02.08.2024)
- USAID, "The Crisis in Timor Easte: Causes, Consequences And Options For Conflict Management And Mitigation",
- UN Staff, "Sergio Vieira de Mello", <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/high-commissioner/past/sergio-viera-de-mello>. (11.07.2024)
- UN Peacebuilding Office, "UN Peacebuilding: an Orientation", UN: 2010.
- Webel, Charles and Johan Galtung, edit. *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Volker C. Franke and Robert H. Dorff, Edit. *Conflict Management and Peacebuilding: Pillars of a New American Grand Strategy*, Ashburn: U.S. Army War College Press, 2013.
- Yılmaz, Muzaffer Ercan. *Uyuşmazlık Analizi ve Çözümü*, Bursa: Dora Publish, 2008.
- Yılmaz, Muzaffer Ercan. *Toplumlar Arası Çatışmalarda Barışı İnşa Etmek: Birleşmiş Milletler Barış Güçleri ve Alternatif Uyuşmazlık Çözümü*, Bursa: Dora Publish, 2015.