Security, Development and Nation-Building in Timor-Leste

A cross-sectoral assessment

Edited by
Vandra Harris and
Andrew Goldsmith

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Despite Timor-Leste's high expectations when it became independent from Indonesia in 2002, the country is ranked among the least-developed countries in the world. It has found itself at the centre of international attention in the last decade, with one of the biggest interventions in UN history, as well as receiving among the highest per capita rates of bilateral assistance in the Asia-Pacific region.

This book draws together the perspectives of practitioners, policy-makers and academics on the international efforts to rebuild one of the world's newest nations. The contributors consider issues of peace-building, security and justice sector reform as well as human security in Timor-Leste, locating these in the broader context of building nation, stability and development. The book includes two demographic studies that can be used to critically examine the nation's possible future. Engaging in deliberate consideration of both practical and theoretical complexities of international interventions, this book will be of interest to academics and students in the fields of development, security and Southeast Asian studies.

Vandra Harris teaches International Development on the graduate programme at RMIT University, Australia. Her research focuses on cultural change and human development in Southeast Asian nations, and effects of human movement.

Andrew Goldsmith is Executive Director, Centre for Transnational Crime Prevention, and Professor of Law, University of Wollongong, Australia. His main research interests are in transnational policing and counter-terrorism.

Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series

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Contents

PART III
Justice, law and security   101

PART IV
Economy and demography   183

PART V
Looking forward   225

Illustrations

Box

Contributors

M. Anne Brown is a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, the University of Queensland (a research and practice centre). Research and practice interests focus on political community across division, peace-building and state formation in hybrid states, social dialogue processes and changing forms of citizenship. Publications include S*ecurity and Development in the Pacific Islands: social resilience in emerging states*, (ed.) Lynne Rienner, and *Human Rights and the Borders of Suffering: the promotion of human rights in international politics*, University of Manchester Press.

Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Women's Studies and the Centre for Development Studies at Flinders University, South Australia. Her principal research interests and publications have been in the field of gender politics and development and focused on Brazil, Central Asia, Mongolia and East Timor. She has acted as a consultant to the UN as well as international and national NGOs.

Gouranga Lal Dasvarma is Associate Professor and Director, Graduate Program in Applied Population Studies, Flinders University, Australia. He teaches theoretical and applied courses in population studies. His research covers most of his teaching areas. He has published a large number of journal articles and presented many conference papers. He has been consultant to the governments of Indonesia, Cambodia and South Australia, and international agencies such as United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Development Programme, AusAID, USAID, the Ford Foundation and the Population Council. Besides Australia, he has worked in India, Indonesia, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea.

Grant Edwards joined the AFP in 1985 and has worked in Sydney, Newcastle, Canberra and three years as a Police Liaison Officer in Los Angeles, USA. In January 2008 Grant was posted to Timor-Leste in a multifaceted role as Security Advisor to the Secretary of State for Security within the Government of Timor Leste and responsible for managing the enhanced Timor-Leste Police Development Program (TLPDP) and the AFP's United

Nations commitment (UNMIT) in Timor-Leste. Grant holds a Diploma in Environmental Management, a Bachelor of Arts (ANU) majoring in Anthropology, Australian History and Indigenous Studies and post graduate qualifications in leadership and policing studies through the Australian Institute of Police Management and Charles Sturt University.

Andrew Goldsmith is Executive Director, Centre for Transnational Crime Prevention, and Professor of Law, University of Wollongong, NSW, and Adjunct Professor of Law and Criminal Justice, Flinders University, SA, Australia. His main research interests are in transnational policing, security sector reform, and counter-terrorism. His most recent book was *Crafting Transnational Policing: Police Capacity-building and Global Policing Reform* (edited, with James Sheptycki), published by Hart Publishing, UK (2007). He has undertaken consultancies with the Open Society Justice Initiative, UNDP, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, the Victorian Ombudsman, Australian Federal Police, and the Attorney-General's Department (South Australia).

Laura Grenfell is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Adelaide Law School, Australia. She researches in the areas of post-conflict justice, legal pluralism, human rights law, public law and comparative constitutional law. She completed her PhD at the Australian National University in 2009 on 'The Relationship between the Rule of Law and Legal Pluralism in South Africa and Timor-Leste'.

Vandra Harris is a Senior Lecturer in the graduate program in International Development at RMIT University's School of Global Studies. Prior to this she was a Research Fellow on two Australian Research Council projects, and lectured in the School of Political and International Studies at Flinders University. Vandra's publications are primarily focused on Australia's international policing in the Asia-Pacific region, and culture and partnerships in international development. She is particularly interested in the intersection of these two research interests, in the nexus between security and development.

Merve Hosgelen is a PhD candidate in Applied Population Studies at Flinders University. She recently completed her Graduate Diploma in International Development at Flinders University and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from one of the leading universities in Turkey. Currently she is working as a research assistant on various development projects including the Futures of Timor-Leste and the HIV epidemic in PNG. Her research interests include socio-economic modelling, gender analysis and sustainable development.

Andrew Marriott is a lawyer specialising in community advocacy and legislative reform. Following work in Cambodia and Sierra Leone, he is currently in East Timor with Columbia University's Center for International Conflict

Resolution, developing a conflict early warning system. He is also completing a doctorate examining the post-conflict role of lawyers.

Sara Niner is an Endeavour Fellow and Adjunct Research Fellow at Monash University, Australia, where she recently completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship researching women, development and handcrafts in Timor-Leste. She is the editor of *To Resist is to Win: the Autobiography of Xanana Gusmão* with selected letters and speeches and author of *Xanana: Leader of the Struggle for Independent Timor-Leste*. She has worked in solidarity with the Timorese community in Melbourne since 1991 and as a volunteer and consultant in Timor-Leste since 2000. She is currently living in Timor-Leste with a research focus on contemporary gender roles in the post-conflict environment.

Tess O'Donnell has extensive experience in working in post conflict environments. She has worked as an Adviser and Manager on Australian funded law and justice programs since 1996, primarily in PNG, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. Her current focus is the development of effective Monitoring and Evaluation systems to measure the progress and impact of interventions in the security sector, particularly in post conflict contexts.

Andrew O'Neil is Professor of International Relations and Director of the Griffith Asia Institute at Griffith University. Before taking up this position in 2010, he was Associate Professor in the School of Political and International Studies at Flinders University. He is presently Chief Investigator on an Australian Research Council Project examining Australia's nuclear choices in the context of a rapidly evolving global nuclear marketplace, continuing weapons proliferation worldwide, and pressures resulting from climate change.

Andrew Rosser in Senior Lecturer in Development Studies at the University of Adelaide. He has held positions at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, the University of Sydney, Murdoch University, and AusAID. His research focuses on issues to do with the political economy of development, particularly in Indonesia and Timor Leste. His recent published papers include ones on the politics of corporate social responsibility in Indonesia, the Asian Development Bank's approach to engagement with 'fragile states', the politics of Australian aid policy, and a literature survey on the resource curse.

Udoy Saikia is a Senior Lecturer in the School of the Environment at Flinders University, South Australia. He has a wide range of consultancy and research experience including the preparation of UNDP's Human Development Report 2007 for Autonomous Region of Bougainville. His research interests include population, gender and development issues especially in transitional societies in the Asia Pacific. He has to his credit nine peer reviewed research publications, several conference presentations, research

collaborations, research grants and awards including two international ones. His professional contributions include membership of the National Council of Australian Population Association.

James Scambary is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne. James has been working in East Timor since 2003, where he has been conducting research on informal security groups and communal conflict. He has previously worked as a research consultant producing a number of reports and briefings for a variety of agencies including the UN, AusAID, the New York Social Science Research Council and the World Bank.

Foreword

In the decade since Timor-Leste won its independence following a long struggle for self determination, our nation faced a number of challenges on the path of development. The challenges lay not only in the reconstruction of the physical infrastructure destroyed in 1999, but in the development of a nation from the ground up. The scale of development over this period has been significant and has touched all areas of Timorese society.

Through these experiences we have seen the symbiotic relationship shared by security and development in the contemporary environment. The events of 1999 and 2006 have demonstrated the obstacles that violence and insecurity can present in development and nation building. While it is indeed possible to undertake development activities in insecure environs, the likelihood of success is significantly diminished. The lesson is that a secure population – physically, politically and economically – will more readily support development and nation-building efforts within the state.

Particularly following the crisis of April/May 2006, the relationship between security and development was unfortunately evident. In the wake of unrestrained violence between armed groups in Dili and its surrounds, large numbers of people fled into what became internally displaced peoples camps and remained for a period of over two years. This had a dramatic cross-sectoral impact as development activities began to stall and significant energy was shifted to the resolution of this unfolding humanitarian situation.

It has been for this reason the Government of Timor-Leste has focused significant time and effort on the issue of security sector development over the past three years. These development measures have included recon stitution and training of Timor-Leste's security and military forces, the passage of significant legislation further defining the roles and relationships of security sector stakeholders and development of close bilateral and multilateral relationships aimed at further developing Timor-Leste's security institutions. It is hoped that focused development in the security sector can provide the stable security environment in which development can thrive.

Our experiences over the past decade have served to highlight the complexity of development issues facing Timor-Leste.

Even development of capacity within the security sector in areas that have traditionally been seen as the domain of the military, such as maritime security, has demonstrated the necessity of consultation and coordination with a wider range of stakeholders than may have been traditionally expected.

For example, as Timor-Leste prepares to develop a National Maritime Authority, the Secretariat of State for Defense will consult closely with representatives of Police, Customs, Fisheries and Agriculture, Quarantine and Bio-security, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Transport, Infrastructure as well as a raft of external stakeholders including the United Nations and regional partner nations. This style of cross-governmental and cross-sectoral approach is becoming commonplace throughout development activities in Timor-Leste, particularly in the security sector.

In support of this approach, Timor-Leste continues to seek the valuable assistance of the international community in progressing development and building our nation. Exposure to the various development models provided by our international bilateral and multilateral partners has been incredibly beneficial for Timor-Leste, however, this in itself can pose challenges for the nation. These approaches can and do conflict at times, and are not always best suited to the Timor context. International development approaches must therefore be coordinated, complementary and, perhaps most importantly, cognisant of the unique national circumstances of Timor-Leste to succeed.

I am extremely pleased to note the great strides made by Timor-Leste in the area of development in recent years. However, Timor-Leste still has some way to go. Regular and detailed analysis of development issues is therefore critical to the ongoing success of development in Timor-Leste.

My congratulations go to all authors contributing to this fine collection of papers, and especially to editors Vandra Harris and Andrew Goldsmith. The works contained within this volume demonstrate the diversity and complexity of not only the security sector, but also development activities in general.

This book provides critical analysis of a range of issues facing Timor-Leste as it moves toward the future. The linkages between economic, social, political and security matters are well explored and provide valuable food for thought for all stakeholders involved in the development of Timor-Leste.

Dr Julio Tomas Pinto
Secretary of State for Defense
Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
June 2010

Acknowledgements

Editors' note on naming

The editors have not sought to impose a singular term of reference for Timor-Leste/East Timor. Each contributor has been allowed to use her or his preferred term. However, for the purposes of the title of the book and the editorial introduction, the editors have chosen Timor-Leste rather than East Timor, in reflection of the nation's post-independence title of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Part I

Setting the scene

1 The struggle for independence was just the beginning

Vandra Harris and Andrew Goldsmith

> Time has passed and healing has begun. Most people are adjusting to this strange new life of peace, absorbed into rebuilding their lives. In this new world you have to work to get money so there is no point continuing violence, even though that has been the only life that anyone my age or younger had ever known. Now self-initiative is what matters. This is a huge shift in thinking after 450 years of colonisation and 24 years of violence. All of the Maubere people have to learn that the struggle for independence was just the beginning, and that the struggle to develop the country as self-sustaining will be even harder. This cannot be done overnight but is a much longer process. However, the Maubere people, compared to western people, are remarkably patient. Once they understand the history and the future processes they are prepared to wait.
>
> (Rei 2007: 279)

In his autobiographical account of a childhood deeply enmeshed in Timor Leste's resistance struggle, Naldo Rei reflects that 'the struggle for independence was just the beginning'. This is an extraordinary statement in light of the fact that the resistance completely consumed Rei's life, eclipsing even his critically important family responsibilities and finally forcing him to leave country and family to stay alive. Yet the statement is also extraordinarily insightful. Timor Leste's people were united in a colossal struggle that had its roots in the resistance to centuries of Portuguese colonisation. At independence from Indonesia in 2002 they reclaimed ownership of a mountainous, isolated country whose population had been scattered and drastically reduced in the preceding quarter century, but who had high expectations for the benefits of self-rule. For these expectations to be realised, extraordinary change and growth must be achieved – change that has eluded many countries before Timor-Leste.

The gap between these hopes and the reality of Timor-Leste at independence – and even now, nearly a decade later – is huge. The country is ranked among the least developed countries in the world, experiences widespread food insecurity and has an extraordinary population growth rate. Yet the new nation also has much going in its favour, including the attention and goodwill of the international community – currently expressed in a 3,000-person UN mission and US$825 million in official development assistance (ODA) since independence

(UNDP 2009) – as well as more than US\$1.5 billion in petroleum reserves (UN 2008a: 11). While the enormous international engagement has many positive aspects, it brings commensurate challenges of coordination, integration and competition, as well as an arguably limited history of success. The oil likewise brings competing demands to spend and save, as well as a sensitive relationship to manage with neighbouring Australia (Cleary 2007).

In a statement to the UN General Assembly in September 2008, President Jose Ramos Horta pointed out that the government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste is 'keenly aware of the link between security, stability and poverty reduction' (Horta 2008: 2). To a large extent, security, development and nation-building share the same goals – stability, prosperity and better lives – but in the daily reality of attempting to implement practical measures that will improve living standards in Timor-Leste, it can be difficult to achieve connection across the spheres. While these areas are rarely seen as mutually exclusive, they may nonetheless operate in isolation from each other, perhaps as a result of time and financial pressures, or perhaps due to lack of opportunity for open collaboration, or perceived differences of approach that constitute barriers to such cooperation.

Calls for 'harmonisation' of development assistance and 'coordination' of donor efforts reflect the desire of many international agencies and local governments that these efforts tie in with each other, and that they are based on (or at the very least take into account) the priorities and values of the host nation. If this were an easy process, it would not remain a matter of ongoing debate.

To say that the independence struggle was just the beginning should by no means be taken as an indication that it was anything less than devastating. A Portuguese colony from the mid-sixteenth century, independence was declared unilaterally by the independence movement Fretilin (Revolutionary Front for the Independence of Timor) in the half-island nation on 28 November 1975, but just nine days afterwards Indonesian forces crossed its land border from the Indonesian province of Timor Barat (West Timor), and within six months declared the Indonesian province of Timor Timur (East Timor). In what may be seen by some as an extreme comparison, Kiernan notes that the Indonesian annexation of Timor-Leste occurred just months after Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge took power in Cambodia, and that 'the death toll from the Indonesian invasion and occupation of East Timor from 1975–99 would reach similar proportions [to the Cambodian genocide], approximately a fifth of the territory's population' (Kiernan 2008: 106).

As one of its most remote provinces and as a site of ongoing resistance and conflict, 'Indonesia's attempts at developing East Timor, though claimed as significant, were largely confined to infrastructure (especially roads and bridges) and supporting its own transmigrants and those East Timorese who complied with Indonesian rule' (Kingsbury 2009: 50). The Timorese resisted Indonesian occupation for almost 25 years before a conjunction of domestic and international factors led Indonesia's then-President BJ Habibie to call a

referendum on whether there should be 'special autonomy' or independence for the Timorese. On August 30 1999 a landslide majority voted for independence in the referendum, and in the weeks that it took for international assistance to be agreed upon and arrive, an outraged Indonesian military and its proxy militia groups wreaked havoc as they withdrew. In this time alone it is estimated that 250,000 people became refugees in the neighbouring Indonesian province, 70 per cent of the infrastructure was destroyed (up to 95 per cent in some areas), and three-quarters of the population were displaced while 'possibly upwards of 2,000' Timorese were killed (Earnest and Finger 2006: 4; Chopra 2002: 983).

This strange new life of peace

In spite of this devastation, confidence and hope were high when the people of Timor-Leste emerged into the new millennium as victors 'after 450 years of colonisation and twenty-four years of violence' (Rei 2007: 279). In the wake of havoc created by the departing Indonesian forces, INTERFET (the International Force for East Timor) arrived in late September 1999 to restore order. This was soon followed by a full UN mission, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), which was to preside over arrangements to achieve formal independence. For those who have not seen a nation that has been devastated by war, internal conflict, or profound and enduring poverty, it is hard to understand the physical and social state Timor-Leste was in when it became the first new state of the twenty-first century. In spite of this, when the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste formally became an independent state on 20 May 2002, some international commentators were quick to declare the new nation a success story.

Formal independence however offered no ready panacea to the new nation's problems. The scale of the challenges was neatly captured in a speech by Xanana Gusmão on the first anniversary of independence:

> The problems of the whole country can be summarised as follows: there is little food in the fireplaces; agricultural crops are either not sold or are sold at extremely low prices; the prices of imported goods are an insult to the buying power of the population. There is no prospect for employment for our youth, and both the legal and the infrastructural conditions do not attract investors.
>
> (Gusmão 2005: 229)

As the nation approaches the end of its first decade as an independent state, life in Timor-Leste has changed dramatically yet pervasive poverty remains, as does the Timorese people's extraordinary ability to adapt and survive. Among the poorest countries in the Asia-Pacific, Timor-Leste is one of only two countries outside Africa to be assessed by the UN as being in the lowest category of human development, ranked 162 of 182 countries (UNDP 2009).

Of a population of 1.13 million – whose growth rate of 3.5 per cent is among the highest in the world (World Bank 2008) – almost 10 per cent are internally displaced, and 42 per cent are aged under 15, while over 40 per cent of urban youth are unemployed (CIA 2009). Half the adult population is literate, and life expectancy has risen from 49 years in 2002 to 60 years (UNDP 2009). These figures indicate a challenging environment, but also reflect continuing improvements in gross domestic product (GDP), life expectancy and health since the commencement of the first wave of comprehensive international engagement in 1999 and the massive financial contributions made by nations and agencies in that time.

As Kammen (2009) points out, there is a real danger of deep dissatisfaction emerging in this nation, for 'While most East Timorese rightly hoped for a better future, and while some may have dreamed of a utopian transformation, the reality [has] remained one of unemployment and the emergence of new inequalities' (2009: 386). During the resistance, Timorese were unified by a single vision of an independent nation, but since achieving it, they are discovering that they do not necessarily agree on the detail of that vision. In April 2006, mounting political instability erupted into serious civil unrest that resulted in widespread destruction of property and the displacement of 'around 15 per cent of the entire population' (Zwi *et al.* 2007: 7). This crisis not only reduced confidence in the government and international organisations and agencies, it damaged economic performance, erasing initial 'signs of economic recovery' (RDTL 2008: 3). As time goes on, an undercurrent of anger amongst the population (see Harris and O'Neil, this volume) is fed by feelings of an inadequate response to past conflicts and other tensions, and the reality that living conditions do not appear to have improved substantively for ordinary Timorese.

Perhaps foremost among the issues is the level of poverty: over 75 per cent of the population live on less than US$2 per day, and over half on less than US$1 per day (UNDP 2009: 178). There are fears that the country will descend once more into violence as occurred in 2006 and appeared likely in 2008 (see ICG 2009). Demographic realities including population growth and the youth bulge place enormous pressure on the nation, while services, infrastructure and employment opportunities do not meet current demands. In addition, there is increasing pressure on the international community (especially the UN) to demonstrate success and begin to scale down. Combined with stark development statistics, these pressures mean that Timor-Leste's government and donors cannot afford to be complacent.

The path to sustainable, relevant democracy and development is neither short nor smooth. Timor-Leste has joined a list of nations that symbolise the international community's desire to help a nation in crisis, through massive investment in reconstruction and development. Such intense focus from international agencies and governments draws together significant expertise and finance in the face of the mammoth task of nation (re-)building. It brings competing approaches, potential for exploitation and questions about what happens

when this support is finally withdrawn or dramatically reduced. Naturally it also invites comparison with other countries that face enormous challenges but either have not succeeded in drawing this level of international engagement, or have struggled even with that support. Despite the widely recognized need for coordination among donors and consistency of approach in many areas of assistance, achieving continuity of effort in the Timor case has proven difficult. In the clearest example, the list of UN missions since 1999 reveals a mission extension or replacement nine times in 10 years, which is hardly a recipe for stability, long-term planning or establishment of the kind of relationships on which effective development depends.

The struggle to develop the country … will be even harder

The challenges facing Timor-Leste, at the risk of stating the obvious, are economic, political and social in nature. Without economic development and growth, the other challenges are unlikely to diminish, and probably will only increase. Even a fairly positive 2006 UN assessment of Timor-Leste's ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) notes the scope of the challenge:

> If Timor-Leste is to reduce levels of poverty it will need sustained economic growth. Growth of any kind is still proving elusive … What will be needed in the future, however, is not just any kind of growth but 'pro-poor' growth that is equitable and creates sufficient employment for Timor-Leste's growing labour force. It will also need to be sustainable, and not over-exploit the natural resources – as well as being based on activities that can help enhance national culture and identity.
>
> (UNDP 2006: 3)

A decade ago Amartya Sen (1999: 14) pointed out that development must be more than just economic growth, becoming 'more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy'. This is part of the challenge of Timor-Leste's future development, for if economic growth were the only factor, the nation could rest on its Petroleum Fund laurels. This complexity is also being acknowledged and adopted in policy, as can be seen for example in *Canada's International Policy Statement,* in which an 'integrated "3D" approach' (diplomacy, defence and development) is presented as 'the best strategy for supporting states that suffer from a broad range of interconnected problems' (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada 2005).

The term nation-building – as distinct from state-building – is used deliberately in this volume. While state-building focuses on constructing or reinforcing the organs of state or governance, nationhood refers to the unity and shared values of a people. As Francis Fukuyama (2004: 134) points out, 'only states can be deliberately constructed. If a nation arises from this, it is more a matter of luck than design.' We do not imagine that an external intervention

can create such communities, but do contest that 'nation' must be con-solidated and shaped at the same time as functions of statehood are addressed (Anne Brown discusses the importance of this focus in her chapter). If the nation-state is about both communities and structures, then physical and human security, and human and economic development are closely tied to each other and thus the fortunes in one realm inevitably impact on the others.

Speaking in terms of 'human development' rather than simply economic growth reflects to some extent the hopes of independent Timorese, for this also encompasses measures of quality of life. While the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) measures indicators of income, life expectancy and literacy to create a composite indi-cator, the concept of human development on which it is built is fundamentally 'a process of enlarging people's choices' – and indeed their ability to make those choices (UNDP 1990: 1). Looking more widely than income alone makes us account for the contribution of factors such as maternal health, education, sanitation and political freedoms to people's quality of life. More than this, however, it points to the interaction between these factors in creating (or extinguishing) choices and people's opportunities to live the lives they desire.

Security is a critical factor both contributing to and affected by human development. As Timor-Leste's history since independence has shown, *security*, whether measured in terms of public safety for ordinary citizens, or the establishment of orderly and pacific relations between the principal arms of state security (police and military), cannot be taken as a given, despite the state's assumption of the formal cloak of statehood. In this volume we focus particularly on stability and the organs that facilitate and maintain it, including police, military and justice systems. A quick transition to peaceful coexistence was, in hindsight at least, too much to expect in light of the nation's recent history and particularly the people's conditioned suspicion towards outsiders as well as to each other. Timor-Leste's journey to indepen-dence has been characterised by episodes of extreme violence, particularly in the period under Indonesian rule and immediately following the independence referendum but also notably in 2006 and 2007. This history largely explains the ongoing involvement of the UN since independence in peacekeeping and other roles, as well the contribution of countries such as Australia and Portugal to the development of the PNTL and the justice system.

The International Crisis Group's February 2009 briefing paper – aptly subtitled *No Time for Complacency* – notes that in spite of some successes, significant concerns remain about the security sector, with 'Timorese police increasingly resisting UN supervision', 'signs of worrying disdain for the justice system and civilian control over the army', and 'Presidential interventions … undermin[ing] an already weak justice system' (ICG 2009: 1). For these reasons, security is a key concern, however like development and nation-building, it is not sufficient on its own to bring about lasting change.

For the year 2007–8 the UN committed AU$164 million to work in Timor-Leste, while in 2007 (the latest figures available) official aid disbursements

alone equated to almost $241 per person, which is one-third of GDP (UNDP 2009: 161). The need for intense engagement can hardly be denied, although the appropriate use and possible impact of such resources are often debated. The government of Timor-Leste and international agencies are now focusing upon coordination of effort, as can be seen in such documents as *Working Together* (RDTL 2008), the national priority document of the Timorese government and international agencies. Such coordination is an enormous task even for established governments, let alone for a nation in its infancy that must build an educated and skilled labour force, establish institutions, develop infrastructure and recover from trauma at the same time as it negotiates intervention and attempts to make plans for national development and discover how to achieve them. This point is made not to highlight or imply deficiencies in Timor-Leste, but rather to acknowledge its extraordinary achievements in such a short time.

According to Patrick and Brown (2007: 1), dual concerns about international security and the limitations of development principles and practice have played a large part in raising international attention to fragile states. At the same time, there is a 'convergence' of security and development, which means that 'through a circular form of reinforcement and mutuality, achieving one is now regarded as essential for securing the other' (Duffield 2002: 16). In Timor-Leste political divisions and 'youth unemployment and disillusion' were significant contributors to the security crisis in 2006 (Cotton 2007: 461; also Scambary, this volume), pointing to a very tangible product of interconnection between these three spheres.

There has been criticism that the international intervention in Timor-Leste commenced on the assumption of a political and institutional blank slate, when in reality 'there is never a vacuum as long as there is a population' (Chopra 2002: 891). Such mantras are easy to recite, whether criticising others or ourselves. It is more difficult – by several orders of magnitude – to find ways to act that respond to this challenge. Practitioners and policy-makers alike are under extraordinary pressure to perform, and to do so under very tight time frames. While they may see each other as they go about their daily work in Dili or in the districts, real or perceived organisational or institutional barriers and competition add to time pressures and differing priorities to make connecting difficult.

They are prepared to wait

Rei (2007) asserts that the Timorese people are remarkably patient and will wait if they adequately understand the 'history and future processes'. In spite of his confidence, others fear that the gap between expectations and realities will prove greater than this patience. For this reason – and because nationhood, security and a decent living standard are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – it is important that progress is both rapid and sustainable. The key argument of the volume is that reconstruction in

Timor-Leste is a complex, evolving process, and that understanding the breadth and diversity of local and international action in the nation will enhance the value, appropriateness and effectiveness of all of those actions. A study of this nation as it emerges from colonization through the early stages of independence, with the inevitable setbacks that such transformations bring with them, provides an insight into the challenges of linking improvements in security, governance, and development in particular cases. We also argue that theory, practice and policy are interdependent. They cannot stand apart from each other. Hence we have sought to bring together a variety of standpoints on these themes in the Timorese context: those of practitioners, scholars and policy-makers.

In bringing these areas together it is important to remember that one-size-fits-all or blueprint models '*cannot* work in a post conflict state' (Hughes 2009: 9). While much has been learnt about nation (re-)building, it is also true that much has been experienced repeatedly but apparently not applied to future cases. Discussing a 'lessons learned' document of the USA's Clinton administration, Flournoy (2006: 86) notes that 'ample evidence suggests that many of these lessons have been "unlearned"' under the subsequent administration. Of course each nation constitutes a unique context and such lessons must therefore be taken as guides rather than prescriptions, which is why the chapters in this book form an important whole: they tell a story of the struggle to apply lessons, principles and approaches to the specific and dynamic context of Timor-Leste. Separately they reveal the challenges and detailed experiences of the many bodies and individuals striving to make a difference in Timor-Leste. Together they constitute not a model but rather an exploration of the crossovers between the diverse components that must somehow sit together – and in which in the best cases can complement each other and facilitate the development of a nation.

This collection is distinctive in that it draws together not only academics but also policy-makers and practitioners with extensive direct experience of the diverse international interventions in Timor-Leste. The value of this collaboration lies largely in it crossing the disciplinary and organisational boundaries that often lead to silos of knowledge and practice. By overcoming these boundaries, this work is able to point to areas of complementarity, synergy and potential progress.

Most of the chapters that follow are based on presentations at an international conference on this topic hosted in Adelaide in September 2008. Earlier versions of some of them have appeared in a special issue of the journal *Conflict, Security and Development* in June 2009. The chapters vary in length and this has been a deliberate choice, reflecting the diverse backgrounds and approaches of the authors, as well as the varied subject matter. The book is organized into five sections: Setting the scene; Society and culture; Justice, law and security; Economy and demography; and Looking forward.

In the first section, M. Anne Brown's chapter addresses the question of building a 'nation' as opposed to a 'state' – that is, not just functioning