

POLITICAL SECURITY OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES OF TIMOR-LESTE'S ASEAN MEMBERSHIP

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Abstract

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste has implemented its foreign policy by participating in various international organizations. To enhance its relation with other countries, particularly at the regional level, Timor-Leste is working hard to achieve its full membership in ASEAN and has already shown its seriousness to do so, submitting a formal application in 2011. This research focuses on political-security, aiming to find and describe the obstacles and challenges to political security in Timor-Leste, in support of the country joining ASEAN in the near future. Obstacles that have already been resolved by Timor-Leste, include the political security crisis of 2006, a problem of displaced persons, reconciliation and issues regarding veterans. The issues that still need serious attention from the government, in order to be overcome, include unlawful martial arts groups, boundary issues, and comprehensive security. While, political security challenges for the country are good governance, democracy, human rights, the electoral system, and national security.

Keywords: Political Security; Obstacles; Challenges; Timor-Leste; ASEAN; ACCWG

INTRODUCTION

The formation of ASEAN in 1967 came about for many reasons; for example, there were a number of states either at war or at least in sharp conflict with each other, notably the two Vietnams and the two Koreas. There was also the confrontation between Malaysia, supported by the United Kingdom, and

Indonesia. Moreover, the activities of Communist dissidents were continuing problems for countries such as Thailand and the Philippines, and even to some extent Malaysia. These countries felt the need to group together in what was seen as a middle ground between the Communist and non-Communist worlds. The first attempts at a regional grouping date from 1961, when the

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Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) was formed by Malaya, Thailand, and the Philippines. Two years later, MAPHILINDO was formed by Malaya, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Neither of these organizations was effective, largely owing to disputes between the members over the formation of Malaysia in 1963. Finally, with the end of the confrontation, all of these states agreed to form a regional cooperation, which was established in Bangkok on 8th August 1967 at a meeting of political representatives from the five founding members: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand (Roberts, 2009). Based on the ASEAN Regional Forum, the formation of ASEAN was announced in the ASEAN Declaration, also known as the Bangkok Declaration. Another five members later joined ASEAN, including Brunei Darussalam on 8th January 1984, Vietnam on 28th July 1995, Laos and Myanmar on 23rd July 1997, and Cambodia on 30th April 1999.

The objective of ASEAN was to promote political cooperation as well as to foster regional stability and peace (Chirathivat, 2004), while the root motivation for the establishment of ASEAN was various security concerns, occurring during the Cold War era, and with a heavy influence of communism in the region. The basis for membership in ASEAN is provided in the fourth part of the Bangkok Declaration: "*The Association is open for participation to all States in the South-East Asian Region subscribing to the aforementioned aims, principles and purposes.*" As a result of this provision, the association has expanded its membership to ten members, the notable exception being the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (Abdulrahim, 2013).

One of Timor-Leste's cardinal foreign policies is to maintain its relations with neighbouring countries, as is stipulated in Timor-Leste's Constitution:

(1) In the conduct of foreign relations, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste shall be guided by the principles of national independence, the right of the people to self-determination and independence, the permanent sovereignty of the people over their wealth and natural resources, the protection of human rights, the mutual respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and equality among States and the non-interference in domestic affairs of other States;

(2) The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste shall establish relations of friendship and co-operation with all other peoples, aiming at the peaceful settlement of conflicts, controlled disarmament, the establishment of a system of collective security, and the establishment of a new international economic order, all of which should contribute to ensuring peace and justice in the relations among peoples;

(3) The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste shall maintain privileged ties with the countries whose official language is Portuguese;

(4) The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste shall maintain special ties of friendship and co-operation with its neighbouring countries and the countries of the region.

Another section of the Constitution that supports this foreign policy is Section 115, paragraph 1(h) on the competence of the government, which ensures the representation of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste in international relations.

The country's key foreign policy objectives consist of pursuing cooperation with other states, both in bilateral and multilateral bases, especially through membership in the United

Nations and several other international organizations; integration into ASEAN; restoring relations with Indonesia; and membership in the Community of Portuguese Language Countries, known as CPLP. In addition, Timor-Leste also assigns significant importance to respect for human rights and fundamental freedom, democracy, and the rule of law (Soares, 2011). At the present time, the primary focus of Timor-Leste's foreign policy is to join ASEAN. However, it is not easy to become an ASEAN member. There are several requirements for membership, both explicit and implicit. The explicit requirements can be seen in the ASEAN Charter, Article 6:2, which reads: admission shall be based on the following criteria:

- a) Location in the recognized geographical region of Southeast Asia;
- b) Recognition by all ASEAN Member States;
- c) Agreement to be bound and to abide by the Charter, and
- d) Ability and willingness to carry out the obligations of Membership.

The implicit requirements are, among other things, to act and be seen as an ASEAN member, with all necessary administrative structures (Ortuoste, 2011). Timor-Leste is facing several obstacles and challenges to fulfil the above-mentioned requirements. These obstacles and challenges as a whole, inhibit its progress toward membership with respect to various aspects of political security, the economy, and socio-cultural affairs.

ASEAN has three pillars, namely the political-security community, economic community, and socio-cultural community. These pillars were initiated by the ASEAN leaders through the Bali Concord II in 2003,

with the agreement to transform the organization into an ASEAN Community with one vision, one identity and one community. The ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) are very important for ASEAN member states. The purpose of the APSC is to ensure that countries in the region live at peace with one another and with the world in a just, democratic and harmonious environment. The APSC blueprint was adopted by ASEAN leaders at the 14th ASEAN Summit on 1st March 2009 in Cham/Hua Hin, Thailand. The characteristics of the AEC include: 1) a single market and production base with free flow of goods, services, investment, capital and of skilled labour; priority integration sectors, including food, agriculture and forestry; a highly competitive economic region with competitive policies, consumer protection, intellectual property rights (IPR), infrastructure development, taxation, and e-commerce; 2) a region of equitable economic development that supports the development of small and medium enterprises (SME), and an Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI); and 3) a region fully integrated into the global economy with a coherent approach towards external economic relations and enhanced participation in global supply networks. This community has a goal for regional economic integration by 2015. The AEC blueprint was adopted in the Cebu Declaration on 13th January 2007.

The ASCC aims to contribute to realising as ASEAN Community that is people-oriented and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the people and ASEAN Member States. It seeks to forge a common identity and build a

caring and sharing society which is inclusive and where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the people are enhanced. The ASCC blueprint was adopted in 2009. The characteristics and elements of the ASCC are: 1) human development through advancing and prioritising education, investing in human resource development, promotion of decent work, promoting information and communication technology (ICT), facilitating access to applied science and technology (S&T), strengthening entrepreneurial skills for women, youth, elderly and persons with disabilities, and building civil service capability; 2) social welfare and protection through poverty alleviation, a social safety net and protection from the negative impacts of integration and globalization, enhancing food security and safety, access to healthcare and promotion of healthy lifestyles, developing improved capabilities to control communicable diseases, ensuring a drug-free ASEAN and building disaster-resilient nations and safer communities; 3) social justice and rights through the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities; protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers, and promoting corporate social responsibility (CSR); 4) ensuring environmental sustainability by addressing global environmental issues, managing and preventing transboundary environmental pollution, promoting sustainable development through environmental education and public participation, promoting environmentally sound technology (EST), promoting the development of high quality of living in ASEAN cities or urban areas, harmonizing environmental policies and databases, promoting the sustainable use of coastal and marine environments, promoting

the sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity, promoting the sustainable use of water resources, agriculture and environment, responding to climate change and addressing its impacts, and promoting sustainable forest management (SFM); 5) building an ASEAN identity with the promotion of ASEAN awareness and a sense of community, preservation and promotion of ASEAN cultural heritage, promotion of cultural creativity and industry, and engagement with the community; and 6) narrowing the development gap.

Based on the roadmap for building an ASEAN Community 2009-2015, the three pillars are expected to work in tandem to establish the ASEAN Community in 2020. Among the three pillars of ASEAN, political security is the one that is of the utmost concern to ASEAN member states for granting membership to the organization.

US legal online defines political security as the defence against any form of political oppression. It is concerned with whether people live in a society that honours their basic human rights. A secure community is defined as a group whose members can maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change for a long time (Archarya, 2001). Theories on security describe political security in terms of organizational stability and social order, whereby non-military threats are contained by political units other than states, and political security in defence of system-level referents, such as international law and society.

Prior to or after joining the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN countries face various political and security related obstacles and challenges, often related to the shift of leadership power, frequently dubbed leadership crises in several ASEAN countries,

such as those that occurred in the Philippines and Indonesia (Keling, M. F., Som, Hishamudin Md., Saludin, M. N., Shuib, Md. S., & Ajis, M. N., 2010). The security development in this region has the aim of stopping external intervention and internal rebellion. The expansion of membership and function of ASEAN members involves 10 countries with Southeast Asian backgrounds, and the target is to keep the peace and maintain the security of the region. Before Timor-Leste restored its independence, the country's political security obstacles and challenges mostly came from outside, such as the invasion of Indonesia, which became a barrier for Timor-Leste to achieve its freedom. Even after the country obtained international recognition of its independence, it still faces obstacles and challenges in the political security sector. These obstacles and challenges to political security in Timor-Leste are further elaborated in the findings.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Politics is a peaceful means of determining who holds the power and influence in society (SAGE, 2014). Harold Lasswell defines politics as a way of determining, without recourse to violence, who receives power and resources in society, and how they get them. Power is the ability to get other people to do what you want them to, while resources might include government jobs, tax revenues, laws that help you get your way, or public policies that work to your advantage. The tools of politics are compromise and cooperation, discussion and debate, and sometimes bribery and deceit (SAGE, 2014). Politics is a fundamental and complex human activity, reflecting our capacity to be political – to

cooperate, bargain, and compromise (SAGE, 2014). Political is an adjective that describes belonging to or concerned with the form, organization, and administration of a state or part of a state, and with the regulation of its relations with other states. Political also pertains to public life and affairs involving authority and government; relating to or concerned with political theory and practice (Brown, 1993).

The term security is derived from the Latin *securus* meaning safe and secure. This term can be used with three meanings: 1) the traditional meaning of security as an attribute of state, the absence of military conflict; 2) security used in a broader sense, yet still referring directly to the phenomena taking place in international relations, or directly and indirectly caused by inter-state relations; and 3) security in a universal sense of a unit and of a social entity, i.e., human security (Mesjasz, 2006). The design of security might be expanded in various directions through the combination of the following features (Mesjasz, 2006):

- Reference object – state, region, alliance, society, various social groups – nations, minorities, ethnic groups, individuals, and the global system

- Areas or sectors in which existential threats are emerging – political, military, economic, ecological, societal

- Methods of prediction and identification of threats – beginning with the search for “objective” threats and ending with subjectively perceived threats, and resulting from social discourse (“securitization”)

- Methods of planning and accomplishing extraordinary actions aimed at monitoring, preventing or eliminating existential threats

This shows that all directions of development of the concept of security provide

a method for the prediction and identification of threats, and for the planning and preparation of actions that are the main goals of any policy-oriented investigations into security (Mesjasz, 2006). Security must be interpreted in the broadest possible sense; if national or regional security is viewed as the overall strength and capacity of a nation or region in coming to grips with perceived threats, there are two dimensions of security. First, external security: there are political and military dimensions that are involved in security, to cope with and deter potential and perceived external threats. Second, internal security, with the sense of reducing and even solving internal sources of insecurity, as well as building and strengthening stability and resilience through development. This could be termed the development dimension of security (Xuto, 1983).

The concept of security from the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations describes security as a condition in which states consider that there is no danger of military attack, political pressure or economic coercion, so that they are able to pursue their own development freely and make progress. Other examples of security include the balance of power, deterrence, equal security, collective security, neutrality, non-alignment, and peaceful coexistence. Various concepts of security have a common purpose; it is for the protection of national security in changing political, military, economic and other circumstances. The concept comprises different elements such as military capabilities, economic strength, social development, technological and scientific progress, as well as political co-operation through the use of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, also involving international organizations. Security may be defined as a protective condition that

statesmen either try to acquire, or preserve, in order to guard the various components of their polities from either external or internal threats.

This research concentrates on the political security area and focuses on previous studies, which can be categorized into two groups based on the opinions of the scholars. The first group consists of supportive opinions, and the second group is critical opinions.

Ortuoste wrote that Timor-Leste has struggled to achieve sovereign statehood and to gain regional acceptance from the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) since 1975, when Timor-Leste declared its independence from Portugal. There were obstacles and challenges for its membership, due to ASEAN's position towards Timor-Leste at that time, namely: considering East Timor as an imminent communist threat and rejecting its claims of independence in the 1970s, until finally reluctantly accepting its sovereign statehood in 2002; not interfering in Indonesia's incorporation of its 'twenty-seventh province,' but later contributing peacekeepers to United Nations missions in the country; and rejecting Timor-Leste's overtures for ASEAN membership, before granting it observer status. Ortuoste argues that after the 1999 referendum in Timor-Leste, ASEAN had to develop ways to re-engage with Timor-Leste, not only because of widespread international recognition of the new state, but also because of ASEAN's success in maintaining the region's peace and security. As a result, each ASEAN country slowly began to recognize Timor-Leste's sovereign statehood and, three years after independence in 2002, ASEAN formally welcomed Timor-Leste as a 'new member of the international community,' but did not offer immediate ASEAN membership.

She quoted some statements from ASEAN leaders in 2006 in the Shangri-La Dialogue, where Timor-Leste was one of the topics discussed. The Australian Defence Minister, Brendan Nelson, stated that the “region cannot afford Timor-Leste to become a failed state which could ‘become a haven’ perhaps, for transnational crime, for terrorism, and indeed humanitarian disasters and injustice.” Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Najib Tun Razak argued that there were concerns about the potential disintegration of Timor-Leste’s political structure, and that ASEAN needed to be part of any peace process in Timor-Leste in accordance with its vision of an ASEAN Security Community. She further added her strong positive opinion of Timor-Leste’s existence in the region such that, by 2009, ASEAN had included Timor-Leste in the geographic scope of Southeast Asia. The region’s political identity is in flux to accommodate a more diverse membership as well as to lay the foundation for a ‘new’ ASEAN community. It is within this context that Timor-Leste has sought to improve its capabilities to participate in ASEAN activities, as well as to demonstrate the positive contributions it could make in this ASEAN integration effort.

Sahin (2012) discusses how Timorese leaders delivered a statement that the Timor-Leste government’s strategic plan for the ASEAN membership was based on a promise that its presence would not become a “burden” for ASEAN. Thus, Timorese politicians convinced ASEAN member states that their country would not be looking for any financial assistance but would depend on their own resources in order to participate in all activities of ASEAN’s community building. Sahin enhances her argument by showing the UNDP

report in 2010 that the significance of Timor-Leste bid to ASEAN is not only for economic benefits, but also for security-building as well as identity formation. ASEAN membership for Timor-Leste would also help secure the identity of that country by emphasizing its political and cultural difference from its two powerful neighbours: an independent, Portuguese-speaking country and Southeast Asian nation. In addition, the political situation during the 2012 election has shown that Timor-Leste is capable of guaranteeing its internal politics and security sectors to the international community, and is seen as one of the achievements of its government in maintaining peace, stability and sustainable development in the country and in the region as well.

Suárez (2011) posits that the stability and security situation in Timor-Leste is one of the issues that must be resolved for the country to become the 11th member of ASEAN. There are concerns that the organization will be burdened with a fragile state, prone to unrest and internal conflict. He argues that those concerns might be misplaced, giving a strong opinion that in this past decade, there were also areas of unrest and political turbulence in some ASEAN member states as well. Moreover, the conflict in Timor-Leste seems to be more amenable to a solution by means of dialogue and mediation. The result of these efforts has decreased the level of violence. He argues that in terms of regional security, it makes sense to incorporate Timor-Leste into ASEAN due to the international attention paid to its natural resources. He assumes that if the country is admitted into ASEAN, it will open a door for Papua New Guinea to join ASEAN as well.

Horta (2013) opines that Timor-Leste is incapable of fulfilling some basic requirements

for admission into ASEAN. He provides the concrete example that the country has not developed proper security procedures for protecting its borders and airport. For instance, Timorese passports, including diplomatic passports, lack basic security measures, and immigration services are unable to read them electronically.

In her research, Sahin also offers some critical opinions on the readiness of Timor-Leste for ASEAN membership. She argues that the application raises questions about whether the country is capable of preparing its human resources and fulfilling basic requirements to integrate into the organization. She also argues that Timor-Leste does not have diplomatic representation in all ASEAN countries, and thus it is doubtful whether the country has enough qualified officials who are fluent in English to attend the many annual meetings of ASEAN.

FINDINGS

Obstacles

An obstacle is something which blocks, stands in the way of, or obstructs progress (Brown, 1993). The current research found that issues such as the political security crisis of 2006, persons displaced by that crisis, reconciliation between Timorese people who supported and opposed independence from Indonesia, internal disturbances caused by martial arts groups and veterans, boundary issues and comprehensive security may have implications for the political security of Timor-Leste. Some of these issues have been resolved, while others may present challenges for the future. The details of these issues are presented here.

A crisis erupted in 2006, proximately caused by the dismissal of 591 members of Timor-Leste's military (FFDTL) in March 2006. This group came to be known as "the petitioners," and its members were almost exclusively from western districts. They alleged that members of FFDTL from the east of the country had discriminated against members from the west. The conflict resulted in widespread fighting both between and within Timor-Leste's two uniformed security forces. Members of the army and police forces, including their respective oversight ministries, the Ministries of the Interior and Defence, were directly involved in the violence of April and May 2006 (Wilson, 2013). This crisis caused instability within the country, which resulted in persons being displaced and houses being burned. Many people were worried that the country could become a failed state. However, Timor-Leste was able to resolve the crisis in three months, due to the great commitment of its people to the process of independence. This demonstrates Timor-Leste's capacity to achieve and maintain political security, one of the three pillars of ASEAN, and serves as an example of why Timor-Leste should be admitted as an ASEAN member, because it was not easy to resolve such a crisis in such a short period of time.¹

According to the Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, the meaning of the term internally displaced persons (IDPs) is the persons or groups who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of, or in order to, avoid the effects of armed conflict, situational violence, violations of human rights or a natural or human-made disaster, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. Timor-

Leste experienced problems with IDPs, as a result of the 2006 crisis, as this caused the displacement of approximately 150,000 people. The government was able to successfully overcome the crisis. However, some of the IDPs remain in Dili, the capital city of Timor-Leste, and appear to be unwilling to return to their homes in their native districts. This has given rise to a slight increase of the population in the country's capital.

Reconciliation is a key objective in building sustainable peace and preventing a relapse into conflict. Reconciliation entails rebuilding relationships among people and groups, and between the state and its citizens (UN, 2012). In this regard, Timor-Leste has established a successful policy of reconciliation and peace at the national level by healing wounds across the previous deep divide between Timorese who decided to integrate with Indonesia, and those who opted for independence (Horta, 2013). The reconciliation process, led by *Maun Bo'ot* Xanana Gusmao, was a unique process involving courage, determination, and compassion. It was conducted among people from all 13 of its districts. These reconciliation efforts demonstrated to the world that the Timorese people have great heart in resisting the temptation to exercise revenge in the name of justice (Horta, 2013). Timor-Leste continues to promote the spirit of reconciliation. Although Timor-Leste has had a gloomy history with Indonesia, it has undertaken reconciliation with Indonesia. In a short period of time, the two countries have overcome the problems between them and have left their past behind. Both countries promote friendship and have become good neighbours. Timor-Leste places extraordinary value on reconciliation in the process of state consolidation and construction, and also in its

integration into the region.

A veteran is an old soldier of long service, or a former member of the armed forces (Merriam Webster Dictionary). In other words, a veteran is someone who was in the armed forces, especially during wartime. Since achieving its independence, Timor-Leste has had three well-known veterans groups, centred around the old resistance army or former guerrilla leaders. These veteran groups are the Council for the Defence of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (*Conselho Popular pela Defesa da República Democrática de Timor-Leste*, known as the CPD-RDTL), the *Sagrada Familia* and the *Comando Libertasaun Maubere* (Colimau 2000). The CPD-RDTL's main platform is the declaration of independence on 28th November 1975 and the reinstatement of the original Constitution. The leaders of this group are Olo-Gari Asswain and Paulino Gama also known as Mauk Moruk (Scambary, 2013: 199-200). This group claims, that it is the true Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor-Leste, known as *Frente Revolucionário de Timor-Leste* (FRETILIN) and the umbrella body for the resistance; that Timor-Leste is not yet ready for a multiparty electoral system; and that Timor-Leste should form an interim government of national unity composed of eminent people including veterans, academics, and political leaders (Scambary, 2013: 201-202). Mauk Moruk has also formed an organization called the Revolutionary Council of Maubere (*Consellu Revolucionario Maubere*, or CRM). *Sagrada Familia* is an independent armed movement in the hinterlands of Baucau District formed by Cornelio Gama (also known as L7, or *Elle Sete*) as a result of a clash with the Falintil

High Command. This group formed a political party called UNDERTIM in June 2005 (Scambary, 2013: 202-204). Colimau was originally formed in the mid-1980s by Martinho Vidal in the Hatu Bulico of Ainaro District. When the founding members of this group became inactive, a new generation arose in 2000. The followers of Colimau 2000 have been characterized as poor, illiterate peasants from rural areas. Some members of this group are ex-guerrillas from the fight for independence. Colimau 2000 also claims to have members from other clandestine groups like Seven-Seven, Five Five, Buamalus and ORSNACO (Scambary, 2013: 205).

Of these three main groups of veterans, the CPD-RDTL in particular, led by the ex-guerrilla commander Mauk Moruk, recently became an obstacle to the political security of Timor-Leste. Data from the Local Media Monitoring informed that the government considers the CPD-RDTL to be an illegal group, and the Baucau District Court issued an arrest warrant for the capture of Mauk Moruk and his followers, due to their engagement in acts of violence in that district. The joint operations forces were initially unable to capture the fugitives because they were supported by their families. Meanwhile, the President of the Republic, Taur Matan Ruak, called on Mauk Moruk to surrender for the good of the country's stability. After several months of operations, the joint operations forces finally stopped the movement of the rebel group after Mauk Moruk and three of his followers were killed in a confrontation with armed forces in the area of Fatulia, Baucau during the first week of August 2015. Jose Ramos Horta, the former president of Timor-Leste, described the death of Mauk Moruk as sad and unfortunate, but assumed that it

would not threaten the stability of the country (Everingham, 2015). Timor-Leste has made efforts to overcome the issues of veterans groups. For example, the National Parliament issued Law No. 3/2006 on the Status of the National Liberation Combatants (NLC). Chapter IV of the Law defines the rights and obligations of NLC, particularly Article 22 regarding the rights of NLC, and Articles 24 to 26 regarding the special pension for NLC. NLC obligations are also described in Article 31.

A martial art is any of the traditional forms of oriental self-defence or combat that utilizes physical skill and coordination without weapons, such as karate, aikido, judo, or Kung Fu, often practiced as sport (Webster Encyclopaedic, 1996: 1180). Generally, the purposes of the martial arts are pragmatism (getting the job done), sportsmanship (fair fighting), personal honour or responsibility (fighting your own fight, defending yourself), pacifism (avoiding conflict), nationalism and sacrifice (defending the country), and civic responsibility or keeping the peace (Buckler, Scott and Castle, Paul and Peters, D.M., 2009). There are various martial art groups (MAGs) in Timor-Leste, including groups practicing Taekwondo, Karate, Aikido, Kung Fu, Kempo, Persaudaraan Setia Hati Terate (PSHT), Ikatan Kera Sakti (IKS), and Korca. The MAGs in Timor-Leste have grown significantly in size and influence in recent years, with an estimated total membership between 20,000 and 90,000 spread across all 13 districts. Dili has become the main battleground for MAGs, and fighting is public and frequent. The main factors precipitating these conflicts are property disputes, self-defence, unemployment, predatory crimes, political grievances, and payback killings (revenge)

among the groups (Scambary, 2010). The internal disturbance caused by MAGs is one of the security obstacles confronting Timor-Leste. The government of Timor-Leste is working hard to overcome the issue of MAGs. It has been reported that some members of the army and police forces of Timor-Leste are involved in MAGs. Therefore, on 13th January 2015 the government of Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao conducted a swearing-in ceremony at the Government Palace for 288 members of F-FDTL and PNTL who were previously members of martial arts organizations. This event aimed to remind members of the security forces not to become involved in martial arts organizations. This event was organized in accordance with government resolution 16/2013, issued on 22nd July 2013 to disassociate the elements belonging to MAGs from any oaths they have provided to those organizations whose activities are illegal. The resolution prohibits martial arts activities across the entire national territory.

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste has two neighbouring countries, Indonesia and Australia. Timor-Leste shares a land border with Indonesia, and the two nations have had border issues since Timor-Leste achieved its independence. Studies on the current border security issues found that most of the disputes involve demarcating the border lines, but other problems in border areas involve cultural and political conditions, poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of natural and human resources. Some of these land border issues have been resolved, but those that remain require urgent solutions. Timor-Leste and Indonesia have undertaken efforts to finalize their land boundary through the implementation of joint border demarcation (Sutisna, S & Handoyo, S., 2006). This joint cooperation

was initiated by Indonesia and the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) in 2000, with reference to the 1904 Treaty between the Dutch and Portuguese, and the Permanent Commission Award of 1914 (PCA 1914). The joint organization was started in 2001 with the Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC), including Foreign Ministers of both Indonesia and Timor-Leste (Liebenberg, E., Collier, P., & Torok, Z. G., 2012).

At the beginning of the joint border cooperation between the countries, there were problems with eight segments of the border. By October 2004, five of these problems had been resolved, including the segments of Mota Malibaca, and Noel Ekat (Sutisna, S & Handoyo, S., 2006). The issues in the remaining three segments of Noel Besi/Citrana and Bijael Sunan-Oben/Manusasi in the West Sector and Dilumil/Memo in the East Sector were still unresolved (Sutisna, S & Handoyo, S., 2006: 178). Through cooperation between Timor-Leste and Indonesia, the dispute over one of these final three segments, Dilumil/Memo, was resolved in 2013. In 2015, the countries adopted an agenda calling for the other two segments to be resolved (KBRI Dili, 2015). Despite minor tensions over these small, unresolved stretches of the land border, Indonesia continues to be the key supporter and sponsor of Timor-Leste's primary foreign policy and ambition of accession to ASEAN (Leach, 2014).

Timor-Leste also has maritime boundary issues with both Australia and Indonesia. The maritime border of Timor-Leste is clearly delimited in Law No. 7/2002 on the Maritime Borders of the Territory of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, which came into force on 20th May 2002 (National Parliament,

2002). However, Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Australia have yet to sign any maritime boundary treaty (Abidin, et al, 2005). In the case of Australia, Timor-Leste has signed three agreements: the Timor Sea Treaty, which was signed on 20th May 2002; the International Unitization Agreement (IUA) in July 2002; and Certain Maritime Arrangements in the Timor Sea (CMATS) on 12th January 2006. These agreements are concerned with management of petroleum development and revenues, and do not define the permanent maritime boundary between the two countries (La'o Hamutuk, 2008). The maritime boundary with Australia is a complicated issue. The CMATS treaty, which has a term of 50 years, forbids both parties from raising maritime border issues (Neves, 2014).

Since achieving independence, Timor-Leste has aspired to exercise full sovereign powers over its national territory and the maritime area that is under its jurisdiction under international law. Accordingly, the government of Timor-Leste enacted Decree-Law No.2/2015 on 14th January 2015 to create a Council for Definitive Delimitation of Maritime Boundaries (La'o Hamutuk, 2008). This council has the powers and functions described in the Article 6 of the Decree Law. In essence, this article states that the government may specifically delegate responsibilities to other departments or government agencies to negotiate international treaties.

The slow pace of resolving land boundary disputes, such as Noel Besi/Citrana and Bijael Sunan-Oben/Manusasi, and maritime boundary issues with Indonesia and Australia, stems in part from the absence of institutions at a national level that specifically manage and handle all aspects of border management.

However, Timor-Leste expects to take advantage of its participation in ARF meetings, particularly on security matters, to talk about international best practices in handling maritime disputes and other matters among states in the region, such as its permanent boundaries with Australia and Indonesia (SEAA-MNEC, 2013).

The problem of political security for Timor-Leste is no longer traditional security, but comprehensive security. Comprehensive security is mentioned in the ASEAN Charter (Chapter I, Article 1, Paragraph 8), focusing on drug trafficking and human trafficking. Timor-Leste must seek to resolve these issues; otherwise, the country could become a centre for these kinds of activities.² The country should also develop its police force and army (PNTL and F-FDTL) in terms of quantity and quality, particularly in the area of intelligence. Timor-Leste needs to guarantee internal security so that investors will feel safe investing in the country.

The unresolved obstacles discussed above, such as MAGs issues, veteran problems, boundary disputes and comprehensive security, may affect Timor-Leste's application for ASEAN membership in both negative and positive ways. The negative impact can be seen from the APSC blueprint, which states that by 2020, ASEAN shall establish a peaceful and stable Southeast Asia where each nation is at peace with itself and where the causes for conflict have been eliminated through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law and through the strengthening of national and regional resilience. Timor-Leste faced a difficult challenge in solving issues relating to veterans, since the veteran group was led by an ex-guerrilla commander who had no intention of accepting

the government's invitation for dialogue. However, the government was able to finally resolve this matter through the hard work of its joint operations forces. The MAGs issue could also affect its ASEAN membership, as the issue could appear to be resolved by Timor-Leste, only to explode again any time there is a group that wants to create instability in the country to further their own interests. Investors will think twice about investing in the country if the political security of Timor-Leste is unstable.

On the other hand, Timor-Leste's membership in ASEAN could have a positive impact for the country in terms of finding solutions for boundary issues and comprehensive security issues. Timor-Leste and Indonesia may refer to the ASEAN Charter, Chapter I, Article 23 regarding dispute settlement for assistance in resolving their land and maritime boundaries. Furthermore, in the same chapter, Article 1, paragraph 8 indicates that one of the objectives of ASEAN is to respond effectively, in accordance with the principle of comprehensive security to all forms of threats, transnational crimes and trans-boundary challenges. Thus, Timor-Leste will be required to tackle all these issues effectively. Timor-Leste will make more important positive impacts, in resolving its problems with comprehensive security, once it joins ASEAN. Moreover, ASEAN countries will also obtain benefits from Timor-Leste's presence in the organization, due to wider cooperation in combating organized crime and transnational crimes that threaten stability at national and regional levels.

Based on the country's experiences in overcoming other obstacles such as the political security crisis in 2006, issues with IDPs,

reconciliation among its people, and issues with veterans, it is likely that Timor-Leste is capable of handling these obstacles.

Challenges

A challenge is a demanding task or situation (Soanes, 2006: 620), one that requires a great deal of skill, energy, and determination to deal with or achieve; it can also be an action or idea that questions whether something is true, accurate, or legal. The challenges confronting the political security of Timor-Leste are discussed below.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asian and the Pacific, describes governance as the process of decision-making, and also the process by which decisions are either implemented or not implemented. Governance can be used in several contexts, such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance. Good governance has eight major characteristics: (1) participation, (2) rule of law, (3) transparency, (4) responsiveness, (5) orientation toward consensus, (6) equity and inclusiveness, (7) effectiveness and efficiency, and (8) accountability. Good governance assures that corruption is minimized, that the views of minorities are taken into account, that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in the decision-making process, and that the government is responsive to the present and the future needs of society.

Transparency is the basis of good governance and the first step in fighting corruption. It provides a universal rationale for maintaining good records management systems, archives, and financial regulatory and monitoring systems (IFLA, 2014). According

to a report from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2015, Timor-Leste made improvements between 2005 and 2009 on accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, and regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption. In 2010, Timor-Leste became the third country to comply with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which measures government disclosure practices in the extractive sector, with a score of 70.5/100. The country was rated as one of the top three countries in Asia against the index, and also as having comprehensive revenue transparency.

Corruption is an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish (UNCAC, 2011). Corruption is a phenomenon with negative consequences for social and economic life that affects the principle of the Democratic State of Rule of Law. Therefore, Timor-Leste's IV Constitutional Government proposed to the National Parliament the establishment of a legal framework for an Anti-Corruption Commission. This commission was established on 29 June 2009, based on the United Nations Convention against Corruption. The commission is an independent body that conducts its own investigations and makes decisions independently and objectively to combat corruption effectively. Following this development, Transparency International ranked Timor-Leste 127 out of 178 countries in 2010, an improvement from a rank of 145 in 2009. In 2012, Timor-Leste was ranked 113 out of 176 countries and territories in the Corruption Perceptions Index, which ranks

countries based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be (ETLJB, 2012). The government of Timor-Leste is striving to achieve good governance through various efforts to ensure transparency and fight against corruption (TLMFA, 2012).

Democracy is a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system (Webster Encyclopaedic, 1996: 530). Timor-Leste's democracy is young and therefore imperfect. However, the government and opposition have found common ground on key strategic priorities for the country and have been able to work together to consolidate peace and national reconciliation, creating an enabling environment for sustainable development (Horta, 2013).

The United Nations Human Rights, states that human rights are rights inherent to all human beings without regard to nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. All people are equally entitled to human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible. Timor-Leste has a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), a governmental organization named the *Provedoria de Direitos Humanos e Justiça* (Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice), which is empowered to deal with complaints (La'o Hamutuk, 2012). There is also a Human Rights Adviser's Unit (HRAU) that was established in 2013. HRAU works in partnership with the NHRI, civil society organizations and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) to support efforts to further develop the capacity of partners to promote, protect and mainstream human rights. Abuses

of human rights are mostly focused on marginalized groups, such as women and children, and especially on their ability to access justice on an equal basis (OHCHR, 2010).

Gross human rights violations committed from 1974 to 1999 remain a challenge for the government. The national parliament, particularly members of Committee A, proposed a set of draft laws that would create a national reparation program. However, this legislation is still pending (OHCHR, 2010). Timor-Leste is included in the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, which was established in accordance with the Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 of 18th June 2007. The country's review was held at the 15th meeting on 12th October 2011. It was observed that, before its independence was recognized, Timor-Leste was invaded and annexed by Indonesia, leading to widespread human rights violations. Moreover, the country is one of the few examples in the world where self-determination of a people was accomplished simultaneously with the building of the state, based on the rule of law, democratic principles and respect for human rights. Both Timor-Leste and Indonesia have made efforts to normalize their bilateral relations, based on mutual respect and friendship. Timor-Leste stressed that it cannot and should not antagonize its closest neighbour, and that it had created mechanisms for diplomatic dialogue which would permit past wounds to heal, leading to a more promising future (UNGA, 2012).

The Human Rights Handbook for Journalists in Timor-Leste clearly informed that Timor-Leste has ratified seven international human rights conventions: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

(CCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW).

According to the Minister of Justice, Dionísio Babo, Timor-Leste has ratified the International Convention on Human Rights. Furthermore, Timor-Leste's Constitution guarantees human rights, even though Timor-Leste does not have a guide for dealing with human rights issues. Therefore, on 25th September 2014, the Timorese Ministry of Justice launched the Annual National Action Plan for Research on Human Rights. It is a guide for all citizens and institutions on human rights. Respect for human rights and gender balance, at all levels of the government and the nation, is one of the big challenges for the government of Timor-Leste. However, this young democratic country has shown its seriousness and commitment to promoting and protecting human rights and ensuring the fundamental freedoms of all the people in the country.

The electoral system is the bedrock of a strong democratic state (Lao Hamutuk, 2006). To ensure that elections are conducted in a free and democratic manner, Timor-Leste has two election management bodies: the National Electoral Commission, known as *Comissão Nacional de Eleições* (CNE), and the Technical Secretariat for the Administration of

Elections, known as *Secretariado Técnico de Administração Eleitoral* (STAE). Free, fair and regular elections constitute the foundation of accountable and transparent government. The requirement of free and fair elections is enshrined in the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Elections are regulated by the Law on the Election of the National Parliament (Law No. 6/2006) and the amendments to this law, Law No. 6/2007 and Law No. 7/2011. The country has held six national elections that were free and fair. The first election was on 30th August 2001, selecting the members of the new parliament who were charged with writing the Constitution for the new democracy (Horta, 2013). The second election was conducted under the auspices of UNTAET's Independent Electoral Commission (Lao Hamutuk, 2006), and was held on 14th April 2002. In this election, the Timorese people voted for the first time for a President. The third election was held on 9th April and 9th May 2007, again to elect a president. The fourth election, held on 30th June 2007, was to elect members of parliament. The fifth election was the presidential election held on 16th and 17th March 2012, followed by the sixth election held that same year for members of parliament. Another election that takes place in Timor-Leste, known as the *suco* election, is held in villages (*sucos*) to select local community leaders. The country has conducted two *suco* elections for local authorities. The first, conducted in October 2005, was held in 442 villages and 2,228 hamlets (*aldeias*), and was generally said to be free and fair. The second *suco* election was held in 2009.

As the country has conducted almost all of its elections in a free and fair manner in accordance with democratic values, it has

gained international trust, and in September 2013 it received a request from the Transitional Government of Guinea-Bissau to support the electoral process in that country. Timor-Leste officials contributed to the preparation of the electoral process, namely the voter registration phase, which is crucial for credible democratic outcomes so that elections may proceed in a fair and transparent way and receive national and international recognition. The Timorese support for the electoral process in Guinea-Bissau was a success.

National security can be most fruitfully defined as the ability of a nation to protect its internal values from external threats (Herman, C.F). According to Tun Dr. Mahathir, security is not just a matter of military capability. National security is inseparable from political stability, economic success and social harmony. Without these, all the guns in the world cannot prevent a country from being overcome by enemies whose ambition can be fulfilled sometimes without firing a single shot (Keling, M.F., Som, Hishamudin Md., Saludin, M. N., Shuib, Md. S., & Ajis, M. N., 2010). There have been positive signs that the political leaders of Timor-Leste are committed to mutual respect for the promotion of peace, respect for the rule of democracy, and stability during the electoral process (UNSC, 2011). The positive outcomes in Timor-Leste include: (1) strengthening and improving national security; (2) increasing national and political stability to meet ASEAN standards; (3) continued progress in the capacity of its national security forces, both military and police, to cope with national and regional security issues in accordance with the existing rules and regulations of ASEAN; (4) improving and strengthening Timor-Leste's national immigration, customs and quarantine systems

to meet ASEAN standards; (5) maintaining a firm commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes; and (6) increasing the quality of human resources in all government ministries and in civil society to respond to the needs and requirements of ASEAN (TLMFA, 2012).

Analysis on Timor-Leste's Admission Based on ASEAN Charter, Article 6:2

Timor-Leste is situated in the Southeast Asian region, and occupies the eastern part of Timor Island, which itself, is one of the eastern islands of the Indonesian archipelago. Timor-Leste is bounded by Indonesia to the west, the Timor Sea to the south, and the Banda Sea to the north (Molnar, 2010: 6). Thus, the country is geographically part of the region of Southeast Asia.

Since Timor-Leste officially submitted its application to join ASEAN, there have been reactions from ASEAN member states, as well as other countries located outside ASEAN. These can be summarized as follows:

The full support of the Cambodian government for Timor-Leste's ASEAN membership was expressed by the Cambodian Prime Minister, H.E. Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen on two occasions. The first statement by the Prime Minister came on 30th March 2011, when the President of Timor-Leste, H.E. Jose Ramos Horta, made a three-day visit to Cambodia. The Prime Minister stated that Cambodia's support does not depend on whether Timor-Leste is poor or rich, small or big, but reflects the equal rights of the countries in the region (Nimul, 2011). This expression of support was reaffirmed by Mr. Hun Sen during the visit of the Timorese Prime Minister to Cambodia on 5th - 9th September 2013 (Soares, 2013).

The formal application of Timor-Leste was submitted in 2011 during Indonesia's term as chair of ASEAN (Saragih, 2013). From the beginning, Indonesia has shown its statesmanship by fully supporting Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN, even though Indonesia and Timor-Leste have a bitter history (Ximenes, 2014). The Indonesian President, H.E. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, reaffirmed Indonesia's strong support for Timor-Leste during the visit of Timor-Leste's Prime Minister, H.E. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao, to Indonesia on 20th March 2013 (Soares, 2013).

The Government of Thailand established diplomatic relations with Timor-Leste when the country restored its independence in 2002. Both countries have enjoyed close and cordial relations through the technical cooperation under the Thailand International Development Agency (TIDA), (National Multimedia, 2012). The government of Thailand has firmly supported the admission of Timor-Leste to ASEAN on at least two occasions: first, when the Foreign Minister of Timor-Leste, H.E. Mr. Zacarias Albano da Costa, visited Thailand in February 2012 (National Multimedia, 2012); and second, during the visit of Timor-Leste's Prime Minister, H.E. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao, on 25th - 29th April 2013 (Soares, 2013).

At first, Singapore was one of the countries that rejected Timor-Leste's bid to join ASEAN, citing Timor-Leste's lack of development (Padden, 2011). However, during the visit of the Timorese Prime Minister to Singapore on 3rd - 6th June 2013, the Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong noted that Timor-Leste naturally wants to strengthen its ties with the region and desired to join ASEAN. He reaffirmed Singapore's

commitment to the ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group process and Singapore's continued assistance in capacity-building for Timor-Leste (Pereira, 2013).

During the official visit of Timor-Leste's Prime Minister, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao, to the Philippines on 5th - 9th June 2013, President Benigno Aquino III expressed the Philippines' support for Timor-Leste's bid to join the ASEAN community, and stated that he looked forward to working more closely with Timor-Leste in the future, and advancing regional dialogue, which will redound not only to the growth of the people and their countries, but also contribute to the stability and continued development of the region (Pereira, 2013).

Vietnam expressed strong support for Timor-Leste's admission to ASEAN in September 2013 (Soares, 2013). The People's Democratic Republic of Lao initially expressed concern regarding Timor-Leste's economic development, claiming that admitting Timor-Leste to ASEAN could potentially represent a backward step in ASEAN's movement toward the ASEAN Community in 2015 (Initiatives for International Dialogue, 2013). Lao finally manifested its support, and stated that it was ready to share lessons learned in relation to Timor-Leste's application for ASEAN membership, in September 2014 (Initiatives for International Dialogue, 2013).

Prior to Timor-Leste submitting its official application for ASEAN membership, Myanmar had rejected the idea of its membership in ASEAN, stating an issue with President Gusmao's past relationship with Myanmar's opposition movement leader, Aung San Suu Kyi (Rajoo, 2006). However, following the submission of the application, Myanmar gave its full support to Timor-

Leste's accession to ASEAN in September 2013.

Malaysia expressed its support for Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN in April 2014 (Rajoo, 2006).

Brunei Darussalam continues to support Timor-Leste's efforts to join ASEAN. This support was expressed by His Majesty, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, when the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste made a three-day visit to the country on 16th - 18th March 2014 (Kassim, 2014).

The United States of America expressed support for Timor-Leste's membership in ASEAN on 5th September 2012 (Soares, 2013). Australia has recognized the potential for the development of Timor-Leste if it joins ASEAN, stating that this will foster greater opportunities for further political, economic and social integration into its immediate region and would give it a stronger voice in regional and world affairs (Armitage, 2011). The Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) consists of nine member states: Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe, and Timor-Leste. This community fully supports Timor-Leste's membership in ASEAN. A statement of support was released when Timor-Leste hosted the CPLP Summit in Dili on 23rd July 2014 (Soares, 2013).

ASEAN Member States shall be bound and abide by the Charter. This is called the regional universal principle: when Timor-Leste or another nation signs the ASEAN Charter, it is automatically integrated into the community, and gains the legal status given to

all ASEAN member states, with equal rights and obligations.

Some areas of work remain for Timor-Leste before joining ASEAN. For example, the requirement that members accede to all ASEAN Declarations, Treaties and Agreements will require the introduction of legislation or ratification by the Timorese National Parliament. This is no easy task, given the vast amount of Declarations, Treaties and Agreements and the fact that they are not in Timor-Leste's national languages of Tetum and Portuguese (Abdulrahim, 2013: 55-56).

Timor-Leste has taken steps to integrate itself into the ASEAN region. The country has been a full participant in ARF since 2005 and a member of the Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). Timor-Leste has signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and has also served as an observer of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA). Also, in this region of the world, Timor-Leste is a member of the ASEAN Football Federation (AFF), the Southeast Asian National Forum on Human Rights (SEANF), the ASEAN Cooperative Organization (ACO) and a founding member of Asian Peace and Reconciliation (APRC), (Soares, 2013).

Once Timor-Leste obtains permanent member status, it will have rights and obligations under the Charter equal to those of the other ASEAN member states. Member states shall take all necessary measures, including the enactment of appropriate domestic legislation, to effectively implement the provisions of the Charter and to comply with all obligations of membership (ASEAN Charter).

To prepare for and meet the obligations of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and

Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT), Timor-Leste will need a large number of trained technical officers with knowledge in economics, finance and trade in order to understand, introduce and enforce compliance with all the rules and regulations related to ASEAN's Economic Cooperation projects (Abdulrahim, 2013: 56).

Timor-Leste's obligation to keep other ASEAN countries informed of all trade-related laws, regulations and requirements, and any subsequent changes thereto, necessitates the establishment of diplomatic missions in all ten ASEAN member states. This will also enable Timor-Leste to be informed by other ASEAN member states of any changes to their respective rules and regulations (Abdulrahim, 2013). Based on the Overview on Timor-Leste's Preparation towards ASEAN Membership (Soares, 2013), Timor-Leste has already accomplished this step by establishing diplomatic relations with all ten members of ASEAN. It had previously established embassies in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam; and Timor-Leste has recently installed four new embassies in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to complete its representation in all ASEAN member states.

The expectation that Timorese officials will attend and participate in the more than one thousand ASEAN meetings held annually means that Timor-Leste will require a large number of civil servants with an adequate command of English, the working language of ASEAN in order to provide sufficient representatives (Abdulrahim, 2013: 57). Furthermore, the expectation that Timor-Leste will one day take the ASEAN Chair and take responsibility for hosting the ASEAN summit, ARF, East Asian Summit and other meetings

during that year will require significant upgrades in financial and human resources (Abdulrahim, 2013: 57-58). Since its official application was submitted in 2011, Timor-Leste has undertaken many of the preparations for its admission to ASEAN, particularly in building its human resource capacity, as well as the installation of embassies in ASEAN member states.

CONCLUSION

ASEAN member states and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste have experienced a similar history of colonization by western powers. The main aim of the establishment of ASEAN was to enhance and maintain political security. The ASEAN community was initiated by the ASEAN Concord II, in which ASEAN leaders agreed to establish the community in accordance with three pillars: the ASEAN Political Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. These three communities are expected to be formed in 2015.

Timor-Leste has shown its willingness to participate in and contribute to the global community, particularly within its region, as is stipulated in its Constitution regarding its foreign policy. The country has officially submitted a formal application to join ASEAN, and in response the ASEAN member states have formed the ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group, whose main task is to discuss all relevant aspects of the application by Timor-Leste, and its possible implications for ASEAN. Political security is listed in Timor-Leste's Strategic Development Plan as one of the government's priorities, and the establishment by Timor-Leste of an ASEAN

National Secretariat demonstrated to the ASEAN member states the seriousness of its intention to join the organisation.

Based on these findings and the foregoing discussion, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste has resolved the main obstacles in the political security sector, which are mainly internal political security issues consisting of the political security crisis of 2006, the problem of IDPs, national reconciliation and issues regarding veterans. The remaining obstacles that the country has not yet overcome are the MAGs issues, boundary issues, and comprehensive security issues, such as drugs and human trafficking. Timor-Leste will need to undertake additional efforts to overcome these problems. The challenges for Timor-Leste are good governance, democracy, human rights, the electoral system and national security. Timor-Leste has applied democratic values and showed its capabilities in managing good governance through transparency, and combating corruption. Moreover, it has succeeded in conducting free and fair elections. However, the issues of human rights and national security are ongoing challenges for the country that will require more effort.

In sum, Timor-Leste has no major remaining obstacles or challenges to its political security and is ready to be admitted as a member of ASEAN. However, the country must undertake further preparations in the sectors of human resources, infrastructure and the economy, as these issues might interfere with Timor-Leste's membership in ASEAN. This, newest country in the region has gained support from many countries around the world for its efforts to integrate into ASEAN. Furthermore, Timor-Leste can contribute more as a full member of ASEAN in terms of reconciliation, human rights, peace-building,

conflict resolution, transparency, good governance, democracy, and links with other countries such as CPLP, than it can on its own.

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(Footnotes)

¹ An Interview with H.E. Mr. Roberto Sarmiento de Oliveira Soares. Timor-Leste's Secretary of State for ASEAN Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste. It was conducted on 19 September 2014.

² An Interview with Mr. Alarico da Costa Ximenes, Director of the Department of International Relations at the National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL). It was conducted on Wednesday, 17 September 2014.