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Final Report on

ASEAN-Timor Leste: The Journey of the Admission into ASEAN and the Stance of Cambodia

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ABSTRACT

Timor-Leste joining ASEAN is one of the exciting topics for now. This report will examine the Timor-Leste journey to its membership accession and Cambodia's assistance. Looking at the actual situation, the writing will be studied on the requirement for Timor-Leste under International Law on the admission process, an analysis of the future possibility of admission into ASEAN, and the requirement for Timor-Leste to join ASEAN.

As Cambodia concludes its chairmanship during the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summit, one of the main highlights is the accession of Timor-Leste in the Association of South East Asia Nation "in principle". Also, it was a long journey and a critical obstacle for this young developing country to strengthen itself.

However, Timor-Leste has much more to develop in any sector, such as the political, economic, human resource, security, and education sectors. The state has been seeking cooperation, and as a part of the Southeast Asia country, Timor-Leste has improved to obey the principle of ASEAN. Moreover, there is still a requirement for Timor-Leste to fulfill in order to officially become one of the ASEAN members. The requirement for Timor-Leste under international law on the admission process under the ASEAN Charter, Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, and the 40th & 41st ASEAN Summit and related summits.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

ACC	:	ASEAN Coordinating Council
AEC	:	ASEAN Economic Community
AICHR	:	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission human rights
AOIP	:	ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific
APAEC	:	ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation
ASE	:	ASEAN Sustainable Energy
ASEAN	:	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EITI	:	The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EU	:	The European Union
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
UN	:	The United Nations
US	:	The United States
VCLT	:	The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties
WMD	:	Weapons of Mass Destruction

INTRODUCTION

Timor Leste has been attempting to advance and innovate as part of its ASEAN membership, which is a crucial milestone. By concentrating on its historic state reconstruction, particularly on infrastructure and security, Timor has made progress in many areas. Timor was one of the states that had poor infrastructure, few medical services, little access to good water and sanitation, extreme poverty, and on top of all that, internal and regional conflicts that tore at the fragile structure of society, leaving the country in a state of crisis of repair.

The main objectives of Timor Leste are to further its economic system's development and maintain steady export and import levels while maintaining market equilibrium. Timor-Leste is developing quickly. Thus, the environment shouldn't be held as a ransom. Strict legal guidelines and oversight of the excessive trash created by businesses and consumers are necessary to stop pollution and preserve biodiversity. After 2012, guidance Timor-Leste will only be able to attain long-term prosperity through sustainable growth. Timor-Leste anticipates protecting the profits from its natural gas and oil resources for future generations through its sovereign wealth petroleum fund. The nation used withdrawals from the fund to front-load infrastructure, supply energy, and reconstruct the nation's transportation network.

Additionally, the 40th and 41st ASEAN summits in Cambodia, respectively, saw the adoption of the Leaders' Statement on Timor-Leste's application for ASEAN membership and the Leaders' review and decision on the Implementation of the Five-Point Consensus.

The main focus of this research paper will be mainly focusing on the progress and the journey of Timor Leste's admission into ASEAN. By viewing the current state of Timor Leste, it is the right time and the most beneficial time to be a part of ASEAN due to geographical, legal, economic, and historical purposes. Moreover, it will be a core value and the most

significant way for Timor to gain and pave the way for developing with the member state of ASEAN for share interests.

Research Problem

The only nation not belonging to ASEAN in Southeast Asia is Timor-Leste. Timor-Leste feels optimistic about joining ASEAN since it will grant access to the ASEAN market in addition to its geographic location and shared cultural heritage. That would be a critical challenge for Timor-Leste to boost its economic growth due to the ASEAN members' inability to come to a consensus during ASEAN Summits. Its attempt to apply for membership has been postponed multiple times. However, this journey contains issues for Timor itself should develop in the context of the strengthening of coordination and cooperation within ASEAN member states and the supportive assistance from the kingdom of Cambodia.

Research Question

Regarding the process and possibilities of Timor Leste in ASEAN admission with the law as a background, this paper's main objective is to seek suitable answers to the following questions:

1. What are the critical reasons that Timor should be admitted into ASEAN as a new member state?
2. What is the stance of Cambodia as an ASEAN chairman throughout the journey of admission?
3. What will be the future possibilities and the future view regarding the accession of Timor Leste?

This research paper will respond to these questions according to the actual situation with many points of view and perspectives, which consists of the practical on the core principle, international law, and the future vision of the possible scenarios.

Research Objective

This research paper will mainly concentrate on the development and journey of Timor Leste's entry into ASEAN. Considering Timor Leste's current situation, it is appropriate and advantageous for the country to join ASEAN for geographical, legal, economic, and historical reasons as a fundamental principle and the most important means of progress and development for Timor with the ASEAN countries for mutual benefit. Therefore, this paper will address Cambodia's contribution to Timor-Leste's journey as well as its route to membership. In light of the actual situation, it will be examined with regard to Timor-Leste's legal obligations regarding the admissions procedure, a potential admissions scenario, and gain the ability to analyze which contains strategy and chance Timor joins ASEAN. In the paper, there will be a lot of mention of international cooperation and ASEAN, which has significantly contributed to the accession of the new member state into the association. Although to gain a deeper understanding of how the general public perceives the admissions process, we will make reference to some of the key statements we retrieved, and we have identified a commonality on how well the association is able to put the related instruments into practice with the international law linked of the scenarios and to understand deeply on how the state responds and stance toward the situation and adopted the vision towards the future.

Scope and Limitation

This research paper will focus on the historical view and current situation of Timor Leste's intentions to be a part of ASEAN as a member state. The research will also scope on the essential progress and the critical evaluation of the member states regarding Timor to joining the associations, especially the stance of Cambodia as a chairman of the 40th and 41st ASEAN summits and related summits in 2022. Furthermore, it will focus on the perspective, analysis of

the possibility, and recommendation on the Timor case as a stepping stone towards the next step to advance their foreign policy in the field regionally and internationally.

Research Methodology

Given the journey of the accession as a member state in ASEAN with the importance of following international law and the main principle of the association, the majority of the research for this thesis is based on secondary sources from numerous reliable sources, which could be found in the official statements, journals, news, and a range of other publications that mainly discuss on the application and foremost purpose of Timor to join ASEAN. Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and reports from multiple international organizations provide supporting solid data. We gather the most recent updates on the issue, the perspective of the scholars, and works by well-known authors to make our thesis paper even more substantial.

Structure of Research

This research topic will be ordered in 4 chapters. The first part of the paper contains an introduction to the issue, research problem, research question, research objective, scope and limitation, research methodology, and literature review. Second, the first chapter focuses on the historical view, which consists of the situation of Timor Leste before joining ASEAN and the political, economic, and security roadmap. This chapter will discuss an overview of the transformation of this young developing state and how the commitment of this country to the desire to be a part of ASEAN. In the second chapter, we will focus on the requirement for Timor-Leste under international law on the admission process, which will illustrate the crucial principle of the ASEAN Charter, The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, and the statement from the 40th and 41st ASEAN summit and related summits in order to admit the new member state. In Chapter 3, we will address the analysis of the future possibility for Timor

Leste with the connection of perspectives and the outcome by viewing on legal grounds, political grounds, and geographical dynamics. Chapter 4 will be emphasized the stance of Cambodia as a chairman of the 40th and 41st ASEAN summit that consists of Cambodia's interest regarding admission along with the recommendations. Finally, the last part of this paper is the conclusion of the research.

Literature Review

According to a book titled “The Paradox of ASEAN Centrality: Timor-Leste Betwixt and Between” edited by Professor Paulo Castro Seixas, Associate Professor at the Institute of Social and Political Sciences, Universidade de Lisboa. This book has elaborated on the significance of the role of cooperation in international under one vision of centrality as an association and the process of admitting Timor-Leste to ASEAN.¹ The author has stated the following view on the importance of Timor-Leste's accession: “There are obvious inter-relational structures on a global scale regarding the process of admitting Timor-Leste to ASEAN, which means clear involvement and influence from various stakeholders with certain interests in the small country (political, strategic, economic, and sociocultural).” In this book also talks about the subject of clear inter-relational frameworks on a global level, which implies involvement and influence from a wide range of stakeholders with specific interests. Moreover, it has clarified on how the association addresses the solution along with the integration of a small, unstable country like Timor-Leste appears to be off the ASEAN's priority list as a result of internal and external pressures that threaten the organization's cohesion.

Mr. Pich Pong, an intern at the Centre for Inclusive Digital Economy (CIDE) of the Asian Vision Institute (AVI), has published a commentary paper on “Timor-Leste's

¹ “The Paradox of ASEAN Centrality: Timor-Leste Betwixt and Between” 2023. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368725028_The_Paradox_of_ASEAN_centrality_Timor-Leste_Betwixt_and_Between. Last access August 11, 2023.

Application for ASEAN Membership: Opportunities and Challenges” elaborates on the historical view and the progress of an application to become a member state of ASEAN.² The author stated that Timor-Leste faces significant obstacles that it must overcome. Due to Timor-Leste's heavy reliance on foreign assistance and subpar economic statistics, ASEAN countries are divided over whether to admit the possible eleventh member, despite the country's apparent desire and readiness to join the regional bloc.

² “Timor-Leste’s Application for ASEAN Membership: Opportunities and Challenges”, 2022.
<https://asianvision.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/220827-AVI-Commentary-2022-Issue-10-PONG-Pich.pdf>.
Last access July 21, 2023.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL VIEW

1.1. Timor With 10 Years Before Joining ASEAN

Timor-Leste, which we have known as East Timor, is an island country located between Southeast Asia and the South Pacific and located in Southeast Asia, on the southernmost edge of the Indonesian archipelago, northwest of Australia, and has a capital city called Dili. Timor-Leste covers an area of around 15,000 square kilometers. On May 20, 2002, Timor-Leste, known as East Timor, formally declared independence. Timor Leste is officially called “The Democratic Republic of Timor Leste”.

Before this time, the region had been a Portuguese colony up until 1975 and was under Indonesian sovereignty from 1976 to 1999. The International Force for East Timor kept the peace following a democratic referendum held in 1999 under UN supervision until official independence was declared in 2002. On May 20, 2002, when the US opened its embassy in Dili, diplomatic ties were established between the US and Timor-Leste.

In addition, there is a long story of Timor-Leste behind it which begin with the Portuguese first settling on Timor in 1520. By early in the 16th century, the Portuguese started trading with the island of Timor, and in the middle of the century, they colonized it. At that time Portuguese Timor was controlled by imperial Japan from 1942 to 1945, but after Japan was defeated in World War II, Portugal reestablished colonial power and got it back. On November 28, 1975, East Timor proclaimed its independence from Portugal but then was invaded by Indonesia for nine days, and in July 1976, it became a province of Indonesia under the name Timor Timur (East Timor). The second arrival in Timor Leste was Spanish in 1522. In 1613, the Dutch occupied the western portion of Timor-Leste.

Moreover, Timor Leste was governed by a British country for three years, from 1812 until 1815. The Dutch and Portuguese fought for control of Timor. Treaties established

Portuguese sovereignty over the island's eastern half in 1860 and 1893, though the latter didn't take effect until 1914. Not only that, some Timor Leste provinces, including the Ambeno enclave, were occupied by the Portuguese until 1975.

A critical milestone of being a member of ASEAN, Timor Leste has been trying to develop and innovate. Timor has advanced in many sectors by focusing on its historic rebuilding of the state, especially on infrastructure and security. Timor was one of a state that have small roads, few health services, limited access to clean water and sanitation, severe poverty, and on top of all that, the internal conflict and regional conflict caused the strained thread of society to tear, and the nation was in serious disrepair. In 2012, people in rural areas continued doing subsistence farming, youth attended high school in the nation's capital city, and women were elected to serve as members of parliament. In a stable and favorable climate, private firms and investments in Timor-Leste have contributed to double-digit economic development. These reasons above could prove that Timor has a stand in suspected of being a member of ASEAN. After 2012, Timor developed a step-by-step. Timor-Leste will not suffer from the resource disaster that affects the majority of developing nations. To reduce financial risks, the government may consider diversifying its assets in addition to the oil fund investments of advancement are being driven by economic and political resources.

Some more reasons related to the conditions listed, which have mentioned the progress of recognition by all ASEAN Member States, the agreement to be bound and abide by the charter, ability, and willingness to carry out the obligations of membership, have made the admission of new members more challenging.³ In contrast to Timor-Leste, it was more straightforward for Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar to become members of the organization than it was for Timor-Leste because the Declaration's criteria solely concerned

³ Article 6 (2), ASEAN charter.
<https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf>. Last access June 12, 2023.

geography and the ability to adhere to its values and goals. Also, the key element of the state to be independent and stable depends on the infrastructure, military, and governmental buildings are largely included. As was already established, Timor-Leste's ability to join ASEAN depends on improvements in its economy and human resources. Timor-Leste is still working to improve in this area, and it will be difficult without assistance.

1.2. The Roadmap on Political, Economy, and Security

1.2.1. The Roadmap on Political

Since regaining independence, the country has held four democratic elections, helping build up a democratic culture. The development of self-governing bodies for voting, human rights, and anti-corruption is a significant advancement. The process of decentralized institutional building capacity and improving the functioning of the justice system will all contribute to the consolidation of peace, the advancement of the rule of law, and improved accountability.⁴

After the General Election in 2017, which resulted in the formation of a minority administration, the political environment in the nation has been disorganized, fluid, unpredictable, and unclear for more than three years. Politicians fought for control over who had the authority to rule under the Constitution. The Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor-Leste - Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente (Fretilin) won the 2017 general parliamentary election with a simple majority, winning 23 of the 65 seats in the national parliament.

The people were concerned on many different levels about the power play in Dili-centered politics. Rui Feijo, a renowned political analyst of Timor, claims that the political level

⁴ Timor-Leste's Road to ASEAN Membership Will Be Challenging: An Economic Integration Perspective. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/cms/timor-lestes-road-to-asean-membership-will-be-challenging-an-economic-integration-perspective/#.ZBsXFBala_Y. Last access May 25, 2023.

has seen "a new configuration of presidential powers seem to have emerged with potential consequences in the mid to long term" due to the way the president has used his powers throughout the period. More significantly, it hampers efforts to address urgent development concerns including economic stagnation, petroleum dependency, a lack of job opportunities, inadequate basic infrastructures, etc. while senior leaders vie for control.

1.2.2. The Roadmap on Economy

The significant challenge for the state in the process of development is inflation which Timor has been suffering from the amount of the increasing in food prices and beverage, real estate, and transportation prompted the inflation rate to soar from 8% in 2010 to 13.5% in 2011. Timor-Leste may lose out on international competitiveness if prompt action is not taken to stop the inflation rate's upward trend. Over the past five years, the growth of national income per person has risen by 230%, reaching a value of about US\$2,650.⁵ In addition, almost seventy percent of the population relies on subsistence farming and lives in rural, remote areas. There are limits to advancing agriculture growth, including tropical hurricanes, weather instability (made worse by climate change), inadequate road and transportation infrastructure, and a lack of foreign investment.

There were concerns of social displacement due to the country's openness to foreign-trained labor, new wealthy immigrants taking on building and land leases, and Timorese being consigned to menial activities and low-paying jobs even when doors are opened to foreign direct investment with smallholder-based companies to promote markets, and land rights disputes which must be handled.

⁵ "Timor-Leste Economy, Politics and GDP Growth Summary - the Economist Intelligence Unit." n.d. Country.eiu.com. <https://country.eiu.com/timor-lest> Last accessed August 11, 2023.

The primary goal of Timor is the progress in developing the economic system and stabilizing the export and import in balancing to secure the market flow.⁶ Timor-Leste is rapidly expanding, and the environment should not be taken hostage. To stop pollution and conserve biodiversity, strict rules of law and monitoring measures against excessive waste produced by businesses and consumers must be in place. Only through sustainable growth will guide Timor-Leste be able to achieve lasting success after 2012.

In expectation, through its sovereign wealth petroleum fund, Timor-Leste is preserving the earnings from its natural gas and oil resources for future generations. The country used withdrawals from the fund to rebuild the country's transportation system, supply energy, and frontload infrastructure.⁷ To lower reliance on oil, make sure that future withdrawals are carefully invested in the factors that promote growth, such as human capital and economic diversification.

1.2.3. The Roadmap on Security

Timor-Leste distinguishes out for having a constitution that is extremely liberal and humanist and prohibits the death punishment. All significant international human rights treaties have been ratified on their own. Timor has done all possible to align our security and diplomatic policies with those of our ASEAN neighbors. Also, the facilitating each and every ASEAN member's application to the different United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. Though, with the support United States, Japan, Portugal, Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand remain their principal security allies.

The soldiers and officers are trained by Australian and Portuguese instructors; an increasing number of young officers have completed or are completing advanced training in

⁶ Timor-Leste and ASEAN: Understanding the relationship and preparing for investment, 2016. <https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/2016/06/22/timor-leste-asean.html>. Last access June 15, 2023.

⁷ Timor-Leste and ASEAN: Understanding the relationship and preparing for investment. <https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/2016/06/22/timor-leste-asean.html>. Last access June 23, 2023.

Australia, Indonesia, Japan, and Portugal. The state has rapidly developed its security which proposed women's representation in the National Parliament and in positions of power related to peace and security has improved in the nation. These have shown the high rates of gender-based violence and advanced women's economic empowerment, and more focus is required. Enhancing women's access to justice and encouraging greater access to land can assist.

Timor has set goals and trying to pursue them in the security field, and there was cooperation in making the most of alliances and properly integrating domestic and foreign resources are essential during this crucial state-building phase in order to finance sustainable growth. Also, new kinds of financing, technology, collaboration in training security officials, and technical support are needed in light of the low levels of public revenue and diminishing levels of international development assistance.

CHAPTER 2: THE REQUIREMENT FOR TIMOR-LESTE UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW ON THE ADMISSION PROCESS

2.1. The ASEAN Charter

Regarding the ASEAN charter, we are aware that the organization's goal is to uphold and strengthen regional peace, security, and stability while promoting a culture of peace. Furthermore, it promotes increased political, security, economic, and sociocultural collaboration to increase regional resilience. In addition, ASEAN was established to safeguard Southeast Asia's status as a region free of nuclear weapons and all other types of WMD. Additionally, ASEAN was created to ensure that its citizens and member states live peacefully with the rest of the world in a just, democratic, and peaceful environment. It also aims to create a stable, prosperous, highly competitive, and economically integrated single market and production base with effective trade and investment facilitation that allows for the free flow of goods, services, and investment, as well as the facilitation of professional and business travel.

Timor-Leste tried to get into the ASEAN many times, but it still didn't work. The Timor-Leste application is still pending since the ASEAN members have not agreed upon anything by consensus throughout ASEAN summits, and some ASEAN members do not want another new country to join ASEAN because they think the new member only brings trouble to the group. After all, the new member cannot fulfill any tasks.⁸ Not only that, Timor-Leste is a county that lacks an economy. For instance, the infrastructure is terrible, like, roads, ports, airports, water sanitation systems, government facilities, and institutional frameworks, and citizens are unemployed, which makes this sector getting worse. Furthermore, Timor-Leste geography is unfavorable because the territory is hard to have, like, sea-way and a lot of

⁸ "Timor-Leste Economy, Politics and GDP Growth Summary - the Economist Intelligence Unit." <https://country.eiu.com/timor-leste>. Last access June 25, 2023.

mountains that are hard to export and import with another country. This obstacle also the sector that causes a terrible economy. Unfortunately, there is a country which is strongly rejected Timor-Leste to be an ASEAN member is Singapore. Singapore is concerned about Timor-Leste's suitability for membership because it worries that Dili would undermine ASEAN's goal of economic unification. Singapore was hesitant to provide aid to Timor-Leste due to its economy's reliance on foreign aid and it is declining oil and gas revenues.

Timor-Leste was approved to join ASEAN as the organization's eleventh member, but as an observer, at the 40th and 41st ASEAN summits, which were hosted by the Kingdom of Cambodia. Based on article 6 of the ASEAN charter on the "Admission of new members" mentioned that the procedure for application and admission to ASEAN should be prescribed by the ASEAN Coordinating Council. Moreover, the admission shall be based on the following criteria such as the ASEAN member should be located in the recognized geographical region of Southeast Asia, the recognition by all ASEAN member states, the agreement to be bonded and to abide by the charter and ability and willingness to carry out the obligations of membership. Also, the admission shall be decided by consensus by the ASEAN summit upon the recommendation of the ASEAN coordinating council. An applicant state shall be admitted to ASEAN upon signing an instrument of accession to the charter. Based on those conditions, Timor-Leste is accepted to be the 11th member of ASEAN but as an observer. This decision was made after the fact-finding missions to Timor-Leste were completed by the ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN economic community, and ASEAN Sociocultural Community. Timor-Leste is permitted to attend all ASEAN meetings as an observer, including the summit plenaries. To formally establish an aim criteria-based roadmap for Timor-Leste's full membership, including based on the milestones noted in the reports of the fact-finding missions carried out by the three ASEAN community pillars, and charged the ASEAN

Coordinating Council (ACC) with developing the roadmap and submitting a report to the 42nd ASEAN Summit for adoption. The provision of capacity development assistance and any other essential and relevant support for Timor-Leste's full membership in ASEAN by all ASEAN member states and other partners in order for it to accomplish the milestones.

The ASEAN charter on Timor Leste serves as a framework for the engagement and cooperation between ASEAN member states and Timor Leste, fostering mutual trust and confidence, promoting deeper economic cooperation and integration, facilitating sociocultural exchanges, supporting education and technical cooperation, and ensuring closer political collaboration. By adhering to the ASEAN Charter, Timor Leste demonstrates its commitment to upholding the principles of peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for sovereignty, and non-interference in domestic affairs as outlined in the ASEAN Treaty of amity and cooperation. The inclusion of Timor Leste in ASEAN further strengthens the grouping's centrality construction, reinforcing its central role in multinational frameworks in the Asia-Pacific region and highlighting ASEAN's capacity as a driving force for regional development.

2.2. The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969)

A treaty between two or more governments is governed by the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT), which was created by the International Law Commission of the United Nations, adopted on May 23, 1969, and came into effect on January 27, 1980. It brings up the unique regulations, privileges, and immunities that permit diplomatic missions to carry out their duties without fear of pressure or harassment by upholding local laws and communicating safely with the governments who sent them.

In connection with the Timor-Leste case, it is related to the article of the Vienna Convention on Law of Treaty (1969). Article 15 of VCLT 1969 stated the consent to be bound by a treaty expressed by accession. The consent of a State to be bound by a treaty is expressed

by accession when (a) the treaty provides that such consent may be expressed by that State by means of accession; (b) it is otherwise established that the negotiating States were agreed that such consent might be expressed by that State by means of accession; or (c) all the parties have subsequently agreed that such consent may be expressed by that State by means of accession. In this section refers to the acceptance of a state into the treaty or accession. Being a member of any organization have to be relevant to their consent to be bound after being a member of that institute and will not interfere with their constitution. Indeed, for this section, the constitutional law of Timor may apply after the success of being a member of ASEAN.

To link with the VCLT, the Constitutional Law of Timor-Leste, Section 158 (1) Confirmation, accession, and ratification of bilateral and multilateral conventions, treaties, agreements, or alliances that took place before the entry into force of the present Constitution shall be decided upon by the respective competent bodies on a case-by-case basis.

In response to the current state of Timor after being an “Observation State”, Timor will not be able to fulfill the requirement of the Vienna Convention on Law of the Treaties (1969). However, the connection between the Vienna Convention on Law of the Treaties 1969 and section 158 (1) of the Constitutional Law of Timor-Leste will be specified for implementation in the future when Timor is able to participate in the summits of ASEAN as a member state.

In addition, the youngest nation in Southeast Asia will have a window of opportunity after joining ASEAN as its eleventh member. There are important issues, though, that Timor-Leste must deal with. Due to Timor-Leste's heavy reliance on foreign assistance and subpar economic statistics, ASEAN countries are divided over whether to admit the possible eleventh member, despite the country's apparent desire and readiness to join the regional bloc.

Also, Timor-Leste must therefore put more effort into some areas, such as boosting domestic political stability, promoting economic development, and minimizing its reliance on

foreign aid if it hopes to win the support of all ASEAN countries. By providing capacity-building assistance and any other required and pertinent support for Timor-Leste's full membership in ASEAN, all ASEAN Member States and other partners must fully support Timor-Leste in achieving the milestones.

2.3. The 40th and 41st ASEAN Summit

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was founded in Bangkok, Thailand. The organization currently has 10 Member States and the ASEAN's motto is “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”.

In 2022, the 40th and 41st ASEAN summit and related summit were held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship under the theme of “ASEAN A.C.T.: Addressing Challenges Together”, the ASEAN Leaders discussed how ASEAN could continue to uphold the spirit of collective endeavor in the promotion of peace, prosperity, and stability in the region as the purpose view to recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹

It is important for Timor-Leste to join the bloc because the country is in Southeast Asia. According to Article 6 of the ASEAN Charter, a prospective member must reside in Southeast Asia, be acknowledged by all of the other member states, uphold the Charter, and have the "ability and willingness" to fulfill all membership requirements. Fortunately, Timor-Leste fits the criteria for geographic location because it is situated in Southeast Asia. Its application to join ASEAN, nevertheless, still faces obstacles.

During the summit, the statement states that at their meeting in Phnom Penh, regional leaders decided to grant East Timor observer status and the ability to attend ASEAN meetings and summit sessions. Timor-Leste's wish for ASEAN membership has been rejected for more than ten years is a well-known fact. Timor-Leste is just about to give up. Member states had

⁹ The statement of ASEAN Main Portal. Last access July 25, 2023.
<https://asean.org/40th-and-41st-asean-summits-and-related-summits/>.

become discouraged from discussing issues with no apparent solution or conclusion. The matter has been designated as one of ASEAN's key priorities under Cambodia's leadership. Furthermore, it was unable to get the agreement to accept the admission “in principle”. However, ASEAN came to an agreement on this issue and even started to accept Timor-Leste's participation as an observer in all meetings, including at the Summit plenaries.¹⁰ In advance of becoming full members, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam also underwent observership. Due to the reason that has raised that new members to experience and sense the vitality of contacts and involvement as well as the significance of responsibility in attending and chairing those multilateral meetings which it is crucial to be able to see the meetings physically and personally.

By focusing on the statement from the 40th and 41st ASEAN summit and related summits has been released in response to Timor Leste’s case of the application for ASEAN membership, the Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, gathering in Phnom Penh, the Kingdom of Cambodia for the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits and Related Summits, considering the outcomes of the Fact-Finding Missions to Timor-Leste conducted by the ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Sociocultural Community, and agreed on, first, in the principle to admit Timor-Leste to be the 11th member of ASEAN. Second, to grant observer status to Timor Leste and allow its participation in all ASEAN Meetings, including at the Summit plenaries. Third, to formalize an objective criteria-based Roadmap for Timor-Leste's full membership including, based on the milestones identified in the reports of the Fact-Finding Missions conducted by the three ASEAN Community pillars and tasked the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) to formulate the roadmap and report to the 42nd ASEAN Summit for adoption. Fourth, all ASEAN Member

¹⁰ Southeast Asia leaders kick off ASEAN summit in Cambodia, CNBC
<https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/11/southeast-asia-leaders-kick-off-asean-summit-in-cambodia.html>

States and external partners shall fully support Timor-Leste to achieve the milestones through the provision of capacity-building assistance and any other necessary and relevant support for its full membership in ASEAN.¹¹

Additionally, it was nothing short of a miracle that the leaders of ASEAN adopted the Leaders' Statement on Timor-Leste's Application for ASEAN Membership and the Leaders' Review and Decision on the Implementation of the Five-Point Consensus at the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits, respectively.

2.4. The Expression for Timor-Leste's Approval from Cambodia

Although Timor-Leste is not a part of ASEAN, it has established strong business links with a number of ASEAN nations, including Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand. By the way, during the 40th and 41st summits, Singapore has absolutely no desire to admit a country with a massive gap in its economy and no foreseeable potential to reduce the gap in the future. Singapore is doubtful about Timor-Leste's suitability for membership because it worries that Dili would undermine ASEAN's goal of economic unification. Singapore was hesitant to provide aid to Timor-Leste due to its economy's reliance on foreign aid and it is decreasing oil and gas revenues.

About the relations between Cambodia and Timor-Leste, after Timor-Leste proclaimed its independence following a United Nations vote, Cambodia and Timor-Leste established diplomatic ties with the reciprocal visits of the two leaders over the last few years, and relations have greatly improved. According to the bilateral meeting between Cambodia and Timor-Leste in October 2022, Prime Minister Hun Sen raised the initiative to promote ties and partnership

¹¹ ASEAN leaders' statement on the application of Timor-Leste, 2022. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/01-Chairmans-Statement-of-the-40th-and-41st-ASEAN-Summits-2.pdf>. Last access June 25, 2023.

through trade to promote investment in production in Cambodia which included rice export and airline links that have to subsidize it so that it can be cheaper.

The membership of Timor-Leste has also received considerable support from Cambodia. Cambodia would promote cultural interchange and understanding between the two countries by bringing Timor-Leste into ASEAN. Both countries would gain from this since it would strengthen people-to-people ties.¹² Back to the 36th ASEAN Summit on June 20 2020, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen stated, “I am optimistic that the membership of Timor-Leste is not only strategically important for us in the context of geopolitical contest among major powers but also to realize the dreams of the Founding Father to unite all countries in Southeast Asian region under the ASEAN umbrella.”

Timor-Leste's membership has been made possible by Cambodia's leadership. As we can see, Timor-Leste is now one step closer to having official access to ASEAN's multilateral windows of opportunity thanks to Cambodia. the advantages of community-building activities, including the opportunity for high-level multilateral diplomacy, economic integration, and development. Timor-Leste must demonstrate that it is capable of managing ASEAN affairs. The Indonesian chair is responsible for finding a method to ensure full membership of Timor-Leste to ASEAN in the near future, building on the success of Cambodia's chairmanship in 2022.

¹² Cambodia's Prime Minister stated, 2022.

<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/east-timor-seeks-cambodias-help-over-asean-wto-membership>. Last access July 12, 2023.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF THE FUTURE POSSIBILITY

3.1. Perspective on the Future Possibility

Currently, Timor-Leste is a member of ASEAN as an observer that which we have mentioned above. The inclusion of Timor Leste as a member state of ASEAN was a significant development in the organization's history. Timor Leste, a small island nation located in Southeast Asia, gained its independence in 2002. After gaining independence, Timor Leste expressed its desire to join ASEAN, recognizing the potential economic and political benefits of membership. The ASEAN Charter provided a framework for Timor Leste's accession to the organization, setting out the criteria and procedures for becoming a member state. By joining ASEAN, Timor-Leste will get a lot of benefit from it and opportunities for economic growth, regional cooperation, and political stability. One of the key advantages of being part of ASEAN is access to a large market. Timor-Leste's economy heavily relies on oil and gas¹³ exports, and being part of ASEAN allows it to tap into a wider consumer base. This opens up avenues for trade and investment, which can contribute to the country's economic development.

By integrating Timor Leste into the ASEAN community, the organization aims to foster closer cooperation and dialogue among member states, thus reducing the likelihood of conflicts and promoting peaceful resolution of disputes. Timor Leste's inclusion also sends a message of solidarity and support to the young nation as it continues to build its institutions and consolidate its processes. Furthermore, the ASEAN Charter emphasizes the importance of economic integration and cooperation among member states. Timor Leste's accession to ASE opens up new opportunities for trade and investment in the region. Timor-Leste also aims to expand business with the European Union by joining the EU-Pacific Economic Partnership

¹³ Timor-Leste's Petroleum Revenues, 2022.

<https://th.boell.org/en/2022/03/21/timor-leste-petroleum-fund>. Last access July 22, 2023.

Agreements, which currently include Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and the Solomon Islands.¹⁴

As a member, Timor Leste can benefit from ASEAN's economic initiatives and programs, such as the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). ASEAN economy community (AEC) is the realization of the region's end goal of economic integration. It envisions ASEAN as a single market and production base, a highly competitive region with equitable economic development, and fully integrated into the global economy.¹⁵ The AEC aims to create a market and production base in Southeast Asia, facilitating the free flow of goods, services, and skilled labor within the region. Timor Leste's inclusion in ASEAN allows it to participate in these initiatives and reap the benefits of regional economic integration.

ASEAN membership provides Timor-Leste with a platform for regional cooperation.¹⁶ Through various forums and meetings, Timor-Leste can engage with other member states on issues such as security, climate change, and human rights. This collaboration fosters mutual understanding and strengthens diplomatic ties among nations. Furthermore, being part of ASEAN enhances Timor-Leste's political stability. The organization promotes principles of non-interference in internal affairs and peaceful resolution of conflicts. By adhering to these principles, Timor-Leste can ensure domestic stability while also benefiting from the collective security provided by ASEAN. Additionally, joining ASEAN would enhance Timor-Leste's diplomatic standing on the global stage as an active member of a regional organization with ten other countries. Not only that, Timor-Leste would have increased leverage when negotiating

¹⁴ Timor-Leste sets its sights on regional and global trade integration, 2023
<https://blogs.worldbank.org/trade/timor-leste-sets-its-sights-regional-and-global-trade-integration>

¹⁵ AEC (2023)
<https://investasean.asean.org/index.php/page/view/asean-economic-community/view/670/newsid/755/about-aec.html#:~:text=The%20AEC%20is%20the%20realisation,integrated%20into%20the%20global%20economy.>

¹⁶ Ibid.

international agreements or addressing pressing global challenges such as climate change or security issues.

In sum, joining ASEAN has been advantageous for Timor-Leste in terms of economic growth, regional cooperation, and political stability. As the nation continues to develop and integrate further into the region, its participation in ASEAN will undoubtedly play a crucial role in shaping its future trajectory.

If we talk about the ASEAN Charter, we know that one of the key principles of the ASEAN Charter is the promotion of regional peace and stability. Timor Leste's inclusion in ASEAN can be seen as a step towards achieving this objective. As Timor-Leste looks towards the future, one possibility that holds great potential is its integration into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN member states regularly engage in discussions on political, economic, and social issues that affect the region as a whole. By being part of this community, Timor-Leste can contribute to these conversations and have its voice heard on matters of regional importance.

In addition, Timor-Leste is rich in natural resources, including oil and gas reserves.¹⁷ With its vast potential for energy production, Timor-Leste can contribute significantly to ASEAN's energy security and stability. By actively participating in regional energy cooperation initiatives, such as the ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation (APAEC), Timor-Leste can help diversify energy sources and enhance the resilience of ASEAN member states. Secondly, Timor-Leste's unique cultural heritage can enrich ASEAN's cultural diversity. The country is home to a diverse population with distinct ethnic groups and languages. By sharing

¹⁷ The Impact of Global Energy Trends on East Timor's Market, 2023
<https://www.energyportal.eu/news/the-impact-of-global-energy-trends-on-east-timors-market/38229/>
Timor-Leste Natural Resources, 2023
<http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=2186&lang=en>

its traditional arts, music, and cuisine with other ASEAN nations through cultural exchanges and festivals, Timor-Leste can foster greater understanding and appreciation among member states.

Furthermore, Timor-Leste's experience in post-conflict peacebuilding can serve as a valuable lesson for other ASEAN countries facing similar challenges.¹⁸ Despite its troubled past marked by violence and political instability, Timor-Leste has successfully transitioned into a peaceful democracy. Through knowledge-sharing platforms within ASEAN frameworks like the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), Timor-Leste can provide insights into conflict resolution mechanisms and reconciliation processes.

In addition to economic integration, the ASEAN Charter also emphasizes the importance and cultural cooperation among member states. Timor Leste's rich cultural heritage.¹⁹ The unique traditions can contribute to the diversity and richness of ASEAN's cultural landscape. By joining ASEAN, Timor Leste can promote its cultural heritage and foster a greater understanding of member states. This cultural exchange and dialogue can strengthen the social fabric of ASEAN and promote a sense of regional identity and belonging. However, it is important to acknowledge that the inclusion of Timor Leste in ASEAN also poses challenges and potential drawbacks. Timor Leste is one of the least developed countries in Asia, and its integration into ASEAN may require significant resources and support from other member states. Additionally, the diverse political, economic, and social contexts of ASEAN member states may complicate the integration process for Timor Leste. Therefore, it is crucial

¹⁸ Timor-Leste on the road to democracy. Next stop, Asean? The Nation, 2018. <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/opinion/30349168>. Last access July 25, 2023.

¹⁹ Conserving Cultural Heritage in Timor-Leste to Build Livelihoods, 2013. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/10/29/conserving-cultural-heritage-in-timor-lestes-to-build-livelihoods>. Last access July 11, 2023.

for ASE to facilitate Timor Leste's smooth transition into the organization and ensure its meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

In sum, as an emerging nation within ASEAN, Timor-Leste has much to offer in terms of natural resources, cultural diversity, and peacebuilding experiences. By actively engaging with other member states through various platforms provided by ASEAN frameworks like APAEC or AICHR, Timor-Leste can contribute significantly towards achieving regional goals such as energy security, cultural exchange promotion, and peacebuilding efforts within Southeast Asia.

3.2. The Outcomes from the Study

According to the study on the Timor-Leste case, the strategic matters of their political system and the foreign policy have been played as essential roles to re-organize the community. Throughout the research on the journey of Timor-Leste to join ASEAN is the greatness process which contains a commitment and creates cooperation among the states to stance as one identity as ASEAN. Flashback to the historical view of Timor-Leste, this country was lack of development, and there were concerns of social displacement due to the country's openness to foreign-trained labor, new wealthy immigrants taking on building and land leases, and Timorese being consigned to menial activities and low-paying jobs.

In add, it is a critical milestone to be a member of ASEAN. Timor Leste has been trying to develop and innovate. Timor has advanced in many sectors by focusing on its historic rebuilding of the state, especially on infrastructure and security grounds. Timor-Leste became an independent nation in 2002 and it has been attempting to join ASEAN since 2011. As a critical matter to be eligible for ASEAN membership, the nation must, however, better its economic and political status.

Timor-Leste desires to become a member of ASEAN in order to boost its economic growth. However, because the ASEAN members have not come to a consensus during ASEAN Summits, their attempt to seek membership has been postponed multiple times. This article looks at the motivations behind Timor-Leste's desire to join ASEAN as well as the obstacles standing in the way. In addition, ASEAN participation will support the creation of a regional identity for the Timorese while balancing economic, security, and geopolitical objectives.

To dig deep into the outcomes of the study on Timor-Leste, the three main grounds are legal grounds, political grounds, and geopolitical dynamics.

3.2.1. Legal Grounds

The nation of Timor-Leste is located in Southeast Asia, and its decision to join the union is noteworthy. According to Article 6 of the ASEAN Charter, a prospective member must reside in Southeast Asia, be acknowledged by all of the other member states, uphold the Charter, and have the "ability and willingness" to fulfill all membership requirements. By adhering to the ASEAN Charter, Timor Leste demonstrates its commitment to upholding the principles of peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for sovereignty, and non-interference in domestic affairs as outlined in the ASEAN Treaty of amity and cooperation.

Additionally, Article 15 of VCLT 1969 stated the consent to be bound by a treaty expressed by accession. The consent of a State to be bound by a treaty is expressed by accession when (a) the treaty provides that such consent may be expressed by that State using accession; (b) it is otherwise established that the negotiating States agreed that such consent may be expressed by that State using accession; or (c) all the parties have subsequently agreed that such consent may be expressed by that State using accession.²⁰

²⁰ Article 15, The Vienna Convention on Law of the Treaties (VCLT) 1969. https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/1_1_1969.pdf.

The Constitutional Law of the Democratic Republic of East Timor has stated in Section 158 (1) The relevant competent bodies must decide on the confirmation, accession, and ratification of bilateral and multilateral conventions, treaties, alliances, or agreements on a case-by-case basis that occurred before the coming into force of the present Constitution.²¹

As a framework for engagement and cooperation between ASEAN member states, and Timor Leste, the ASEAN charter on Timor Leste fosters mutual trust and confidence, promotes deeper economic cooperation and integration, facilitates sociocultural exchanges, supports education and technical cooperation, and ensures closer political collaboration. Timor will be unable to meet the requirements of the Vienna Convention on Law of Treaties (1969) due to its current situation after having been an "Observation State." However, when Timor-Leste can attend ASEAN summits as a member state, how it complies with section 158 (1) of the Timor-Leste Constitution and the Vienna Convention on Law of Treaties, 1969 will be determined for implementation in the future.

3.2.2. Political Grounds

The country's political situation has been unstable and uncertain after the 2017 General Election when a minority administration was formed as a result of a power struggle among political actors with the ability to rule under the constitution.

Moreover, there is controversy surrounding Timor-Leste's application to join ASEAN. While some analysts have praised its inclusion, others have criticized it, claiming that letting a new nation into ASEAN would only cause problems for the alliance. Nine ASEAN nations have endorsed Timor-Leste's application for membership.

In this regard, Timor-Leste's proposal has received considerable backing from Indonesia. Indonesia showed its support by making public declarations and taking steps to help

²¹ The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.
http://timor-leste.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Constitution_RDTL_ENG.pdf

Timor Leste join ASEAN as its eleventh member. Due to Timor Leste's position in Southeast Asia, Malaysia also supports its admittance as a new ASEAN member. The membership of Timor-Leste has also received significant encouragement from Cambodia.

Timor-Leste's application has only been denied down by Singapore among the ASEAN nations. Singapore doubts Timor-Leste's suitability for membership for fear that Dili will undermine ASEAN's goal of economic unity. Singapore was hesitant to provide aid because of Timor-Leste's economic dependence on foreign aid, and it is declining oil and gas income.

However, by the rapid growth and the cooperation of Timor-Leste with the other states and significant power, Timor has been able to develop accordingly in their ability and strengthen their human capital needs. Trading within the states is significantly important for pushing the best of foreign policy implementation.

3.2.3. Geographical Dynamics

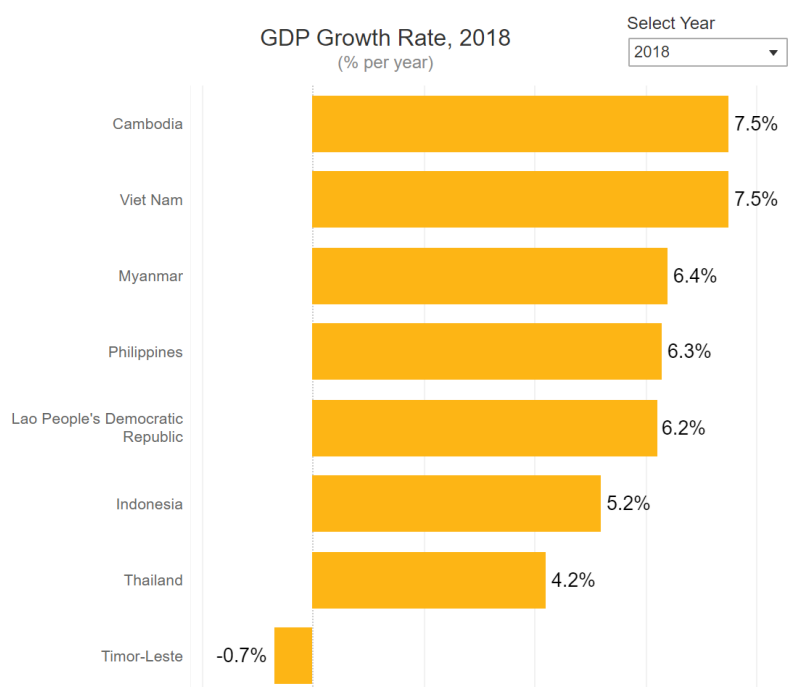
For geopolitical grounds, Timor-Leste meets the geographic location condition because it occupies a spot in Southeast Asia. One of the factors contributing to Singapore's opposition to Timor Leste joining ASEAN is its modest economy.²² Singapore was concerned that Timor Leste would place a significant burden on the region and impede its efforts to realize the ASEAN Economic Community, which aspires to emulate the European economic union.

As a result, it has affected economic development and has distracted government focus from tackling the most important issues, such as inclusive growth, job creation, sustainable development, and economic diversification. Based on the analysis by Dezan Shira, an expert in the field of foreign direct investment, he claims that the industrial sector contributes 77% of Timor Leste's GDP while agricultural only makes up 5.9%. In addition, the 2015 Timor-Leste

²² Timor Strategic Development 2011 – 2030.
<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cobp-tim-2014-2016-sd-02.pdf>. Last access June 30, 2023.

EITI Report revealed a gradual fall in revenues, from US\$3.8 billion in 2012 to US\$1 billion in 2015, due to a drop in oil and gas prices. Timor-Leste is preserving the earnings from its natural gas and oil resources for future generations. The country used withdrawals from the fund to rebuild the country's transportation system, supply energy, and frontload infrastructure.²³

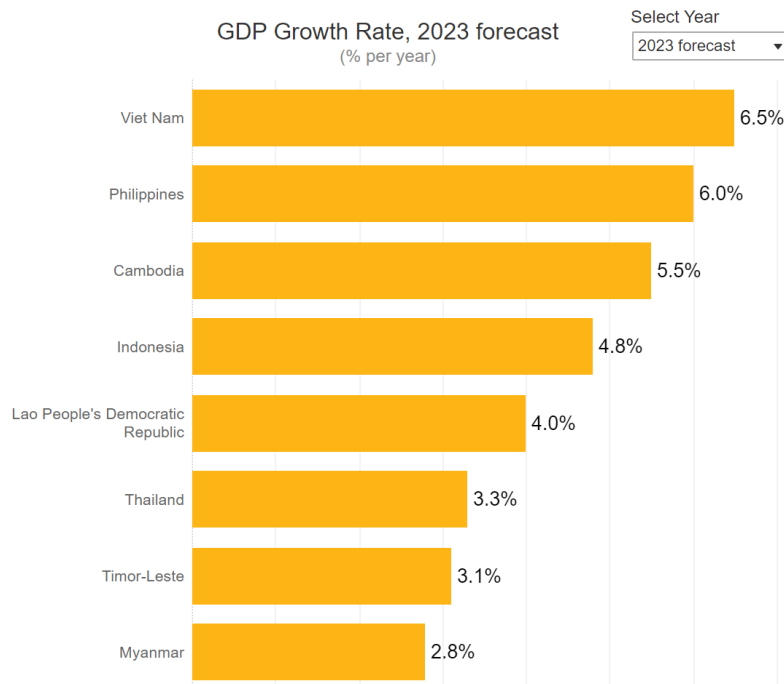
To lower reliance on oil, make sure that future withdrawals are carefully invested in the factors that promote growth, such as human capital and economic diversification. As of April 2023, the economy of Timor-Leste has been growing and developing, which showed the rapid make progress of this country by comparing to the GDP growth rate in 2018.²⁴



Source: Asian Development Bank. *Asian Development Outlook 2023 (April 2023)*

²³ Five ways Timor-Leste is better positioned to address long-term development challenges, UN Sustainable Development Goals, December 2022. <https://unsdg.un.org/latest/blog/five-ways-timor-leste-better-positioned-address-long-term-development-challenges>. Last access August 12, 2023.

²⁴ Economic forecast for Timor-Leste, Asian Development Bank. <https://www.adb.org/countries/timor-leste/economy>



Source: Asian Development Bank. Asian Development Outlook 2023 (April 2023)

Timor-Leste has achieved enormous achievements in important sectors since gaining independence but still faces the challenge of rebuilding public infrastructure, including roads, ports and airports, sanitation and water systems, government facilities, and institutional frameworks.²⁵

In the meantime, although Timor-Leste has been successful in saving the proceeds from its assets of natural resources, there are still significant obstacles to overcome, including how to boost government spending's productivity and effectiveness and how to guarantee that the environment is preserved as a significant economic and social resource for future generations.

²⁵ The World Bank in Timor-Leste, World Bank.
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/timor-leste/overview>

CHAPTER 4: THE STANCE OF CAMBODIA

4.1. Perspective of Cambodia

The ASEAN Summit 2022 marked a significant moment in the history of Southeast Asia as it discussed the potential inclusion of Timor-Leste into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). As one of the founding members, Cambodia has always been committed to promoting regional integration and cooperation. However, when it comes to Timor-Leste's membership, Cambodia takes a cautious stance. Cambodia recognizes that ASEAN expansion should be based on certain criteria and principles. These include political stability, economic viability, and commitment to democratic governance. While Timor-Leste has made progress in these areas since gaining independence in 2002, there are still concerns about its readiness for full ASEAN membership.

One major concern is Timor-Leste's economic capacity. The country heavily relies on oil revenues, which make up more than 90% of its export earnings. This dependency poses risks for both Timor-Leste and existing ASEAN members in terms of economic stability. Cambodia believes that before joining ASEAN, Timor-Leste should diversify its economy and strengthen other sectors, such as agriculture and tourism. Another consideration is political stability. Although Timor-Leste has made significant strides toward democracy since its independence from Indonesia, there have been occasional instances of political unrest and violence. Cambodia believes that further consolidation of democratic institutions is necessary to ensure long-term stability before granting full membership.

The issue of Timor-Leste's potential membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been a topic of discussion during the ASEAN Summit 2022. Cambodia's Prime Minister, in particular, has taken a strong stance on this matter. Prime Minister Hun Sen

firmly believes that Timor-Leste should be granted membership in ASEAN.²⁶ He argues that the inclusion of Timor-Leste would promote regional stability and economic growth in the future even though Timor-Leste's economy is still limited and has a lot more to develop. In this case from my perspective, why Timor-Leste will promote regional stability and economic growth because Prime Minister Hun Sen expressed his desire to attract investment from Timor-Leste, especially in the creation of rice and animal feed factories that might provide export items for Timor-Leste, also Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture willing to help the agriculture sector of Timor-Leste. Furthermore, to support the agriculture industry in Timor-Leste, the private sectors of both nations must collaborate closely.²⁷ Meaning that, in the future, Timor-Leste will not only rely on oil but agriculture.

Samdech Techo Hun Sen once said, "The relationship between Cambodia and Timor-Leste will be further promoted and will continue to be enhanced and improved"²⁸. Samdech Techo Hun Sen also acknowledges that there are concerns regarding Timor-Leste's readiness for ASEAN membership. However, he asserts that with proper support and guidance from existing member states, Timor-Leste can overcome any challenges it may face. He highlights Cambodia's own experience as a new member state in 1999 and how it successfully integrated into ASEAN. Moreover, Prime Minister Hun Sen recognizes the potential benefits for Cambodia if Timor-Leste were to join ASEAN. Increased trade opportunities and closer diplomatic ties would undoubtedly benefit both countries.

²⁶ PM Hun Sen: Timor-Leste Will Hopefully Become a Full Member of ASEAN by 2023, 2022.
<https://cambodianess.com/article/prime-minister-hun-sen-timor-leste-will-hopefully-become-a-full-member-of-asean-by-2023>

²⁷ PM discusses co-op with Timor-Leste, 2022.
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/pm-discusses-co-op-timor-leste>.

²⁸ Cambodia-Timor-Leste Relations to be Further Enhanced, 2022.
<https://www.cpp.org.kh/en/details/346830>

In conclusion, Prime Minister Hun Sen firmly supports Timor-Leste's bid for ASEAN membership during the ASEAN Summit 2022. He believes that granting membership to Timor-Leste would enhance regional stability, promote economic growth, and strengthen ASEAN's global influence. While Cambodia supports regional integration within ASEAN, it maintains a cautious stance on Timor-Leste's inclusion during the ASEAN Summit 2022. Economic diversification and political stability are crucial factors that need further development before considering full membership for any aspiring nation. By adhering to these principles, Cambodia aims to ensure that any new member will contribute positively to the collective growth and prosperity of Southeast Asia as a whole.

Cambodia and Timor-Leste, two Southeast Asian nations, faced rejection when they sought to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Firstly, Cambodia's bid for ASEAN membership was initially rejected due to concerns about its political stability. The country was still recovering from decades of civil war and genocide under the Khmer Rouge regime.²⁹ ASEAN members were hesitant to include a nation with such a tumultuous past, fearing that it could disrupt regional stability. Similarly, Timor-Leste faced rejection due to its fragile statehood and lack of economic development. The country had recently gained independence from Indonesia after a long struggle for self-determination. However, it lacked the necessary infrastructure and economic stability required for ASEAN membership.³⁰

The rejections had significant implications for both countries. For Cambodia, being denied entry into ASEAN highlighted the need for political reforms and stability. It served as a wake-up call for the government to address issues related to human rights abuses and

²⁹ Cambodia's Engagement with ASEAN: Lessons for Timor Leste
<https://cicp.org.kh/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CICP-working-paper-14-Cambodias-Engagement-in-ASEAN-by-Din-Merican.pdf>

³⁰ "Challenges or Opportunities: Would 10 plus 1 Be Better for ASEAN and Timor-Leste?", February 2023.
<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/seac/2023/02/08/challenges-or-opportunities-would-10-plus-1-be-better-for-asean-and-timor-leste/>.
Last access July 26, 2023.

democratic governance. In contrast, Timor-Leste used its rejection as an opportunity to focus on nation-building efforts. The country worked towards improving its economy, infrastructure, and governance systems to meet ASEAN's criteria in future applications.

In conclusion, Cambodia and Timor-Leste faced rejection when they sought membership in ASEAN due to concerns over political stability and economic development, respectively. These rejections prompted both countries to address their weaknesses and work towards meeting the requirements set by ASEAN. Ultimately, this experience catalyzed positive change in their respective paths toward regional integration.

4.2. Cambodia's Interest in Timor's Admission into ASEAN

Historically perspective, since 2011, Timor-Leste has sought membership in ASEAN. However, some ASEAN countries have expressed hesitation due to uncertainties. For instance, Singapore reportedly had concerns over Timor-Leste's bid to join ASEAN. A story in the Straits Times headlined "Singapore wary of Timor-Leste's ASEAN membership bid".³¹ It stated that "Singapore is wary of Timor-Leste's request to join ASEAN due to concerns over its stability and readiness for membership."

The bloc is currently facing several geopolitical difficulties as a result of Timor-Leste's admission. In the face of bipolar pressures from great power competition, ASEAN has struggled to demonstrate its centrality and agency. In reaction to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific initiative of the former US administration under Donald Trump and other regional countries' initiatives, which threatened to ignore the multilateral grouping, ASEAN produced the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). The AOIP emphasized a comprehensive regional vision while

³¹ Straits Times, July 25, 2016.
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/opinion/would-cambodia-gain-supporting-timor-lestes-asean-membership>. Last accessed August 11, 2023.

cautioning that avoiding zero-sum thinking and fostering trust are essential due to "the rise of material powers."³²

As we know, Timor-Leste is still working to fulfill the criteria for admission. In addition, the nation has gained considerable backing from other ASEAN members, particularly Cambodia, which has been outspoken in supporting Timor-Leste's membership submission, especially during its 2022 ASEAN Chairmanship. Kupa Lopes, the Timorese ambassador to Cambodia, commended Cambodia for its "unwavering support" in assisting East Timor in joining the group and said Dili was happy to cooperate with any upcoming fact-finding missions to make that happen next year.

Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN, there are some benefits for Cambodia by gaining the alliance association and gaining cooperation with higher exceptions to develop the economic sector.

Regarding, the interests of Cambodia that gain from the accession of Timor into ASEAN by strengthening an alliance in the association. There are included with the promotion of cultural interchange and mutual understanding between the two countries would be aided by Cambodia. Both countries would gain from this since it would strengthen people-to-people ties. Labeling Cambodia as a nation that values peace and fosters inter-state harmony based on social and cultural concord would also have political advantages. In exchange, it would improve Cambodia's positive reputation on the world stage or so-called "soft power". Additionally, Cambodia would support diversity and inclusivity by backing Timor-Leste's ASEAN membership. The member states of ASEAN are a diverse group, each with a very different political system, culture, and viewpoint. Timor-Leste joining ASEAN would show Timor-Leste

³² Hunter Marston, ANU, East Asia Forum.
<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2023/01/03/timor-leste-can-strengthen-asean-centrality-amid-global-crises/>

Cambodia's dedication to these ideals, sending a strong signal to the region and the rest of the world.

Additionally, supporting Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN may be consistent with Cambodia's larger foreign policy goals of fostering regional cooperation and integration. As a regional organization, ASEAN has played a significant role in fostering stability, growth, and peace in Southeast Asia. Cambodia might contribute to the bloc's unification, and centrality and function as a top regional platform for communication and collaboration by supporting the admission of new members, such as Timor-Leste. Moreover, it might also help Cambodia in its efforts to cultivate diplomatic and economic ties with nations other than its close neighbors. Enhanced regional cooperation would be facilitated by ASEAN's territorial expansion if Timor-Leste joined. More chances would arise as a result for Cambodia to improve its ties with Timor-Leste and the other ASEAN members. Likewise, by endorsing Timor-Leste's membership in ASEAN, Cambodia would show its dedication to regional stability and security. Timor-Leste is a tiny, developing nation that has recently encountered considerable political and social difficulties. Timor-Leste would receive a message of support and solidarity from Cambodia and other ASEAN members if it were admitted. As a result, regional stability and security would increase as the mutual respect and collaboration among ASEAN member states would be strengthened.

As a current ASEAN member, Cambodia would gain from an expanded economic sector by trading as well as investment prospects with Timor Leste. For instance, after supporting Dili's application to join ASEAN, Cambodia, a significant rice producer and exporter within the region, has been in talks with Timor-Leste to buy Cambodian rice and make investments in the country's rice mills and storage facilities. Indeed, Timor Leste has extensive oil and gas deposits that could provide Cambodia with a useful energy supply. Thus, for mutual

gain, the two nations might create collaborative ventures in the energy industry. Additionally, joint ventures in the energy industry might be a vital source of income for both nations, aid in the creation of jobs, and promote economic growth. In particular, this would significantly increase Cambodia's energy independence.

CONCLUSION

Timor-Leste became an independent state in 2002, facing challenges in infrastructure, democratic institutions, and addressing social issues. Rich in natural resources, the economy relies heavily on oil and gas. Before independence, Timor-Leste was occupied by Japanese forces after Portugal declared neutrality. The occupation resulted in significant loss of life and destruction. After Japan's surrender, Portugal resumed control but faced growing demands for independence from the local population. Timor Leste aims to develop its economy and maintain export and import levels to prevent pollution and preserve biodiversity, strict legal guidelines and oversight are necessary. The nation plans to protect natural gas and oil resources through its sovereign wealth petroleum fund, using withdrawals for infrastructure, energy, and transportation reconstruction.

Base on the ASEAN charter of article 6 of the ASEAN charter on the “Admission of new members” mentioned that the procedure for application and admission to ASEAN shall be prescribed by the ASEAN Coordinating Council. Moreover, the admission shall be based on the following criteria such as the ASEAN member should be located in the recognized geographical region of Southeast Asia, the recognition by all ASEAN member states, the agreement to be bonded and to abide by the charter and ability and willingness to carry out the obligations of membership. The Timor-Leste case is related to the Vienna Convention on Treaty Law (1969), where Article 15 states that consent to be bound by a treaty expressed by accession must be relevant and not interfere with the constitution. Timor-Leste was approved to join ASEAN as the organization's eleventh member, but as an observer, at the 40th and 41st ASEAN summits, which were hosted by the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Timor-Leste can benefit from joining ASEAN in terms of political stability, regional cooperation, and economic progress. Participation in ASEAN will likely be vital in determining

the country's future course as it grows and further integrates within the region. As an ASEAN member, Timor Leste has access to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and other economic initiatives and projects. The region's ultimate goal of economic unification has been achieved by the ASEAN Economy Community (AEC). According to this vision, ASEAN will have a single market and manufacturing hub, be a fiercely competitive area with equitable economic growth, and be fully integrated into the global economy.

For Cambodia's stance, Prime Minister Hun Sen firmly believes that Timor-Leste should be granted membership in ASEAN. Cambodia's prime minister also desires to have an investment with Timor-Leste in agriculture. So that Timor Leste's economy will no longer rely on oil and gas. Cambodia's leadership as a chairman of the 40th and 41st ASEAN summit enabled Timor Leste's membership in ASEAN, bringing it closer to ASEAN's multilateral windows of opportunity. The community-building activities offer high-level diplomacy, economic integration, and development opportunities. Moreover, Cambodia's foreign policy goals align with fostering regional cooperation and integration by supporting Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN. ASEAN plays a crucial role in Southeast Asia's stability, growth, and peace. Cambodia's support could enhance regional cooperation and improve ties with other ASEAN members, enhancing its position as a central platform for communication and collaboration.

RECOMMENDATION

As for the recommendation for Timor-Leste to become a more potent state which stands as its ability and is able to join among the other nations, Timor-Leste needs to put more effort into improving its core sectors and prove its strong commitment to the ASEAN principle of neutrality and its accession without any reluctance, so that South East Asia region is united. Moreover, Timor-Leste would develop in some areas, such as boosting and improving economic development and promoting bilateral and multilateral cooperation to win over the decision of all ASEAN members.

First, Timor-Leste should strengthen its economic development, which means that to gain more connection within the member states, the economic sector is one of the key roles which shows strong support to most of the advancement in the state. Although, if Timor becomes a member state of ASEAN, there is a must to host the summits as a following as stated by the ASEAN charter. This means that Timor has to improve on its areas and the infrastructure that is linked with economic advancement, which would be the investment from its alliance states.

Second, promoting bilateral and multilateral cooperation regionally as well as internationally is one strategy to gain the connection between bilateral and multilateralism. Moreover, it encourages regional integration and collaboration by working together on a regional and developing more effective solutions to challenges that they face in common. Additionally, coordinate and prioritize the interests and challenges by fostering regional cooperation as a result of the similarities in the regions.

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