

Literature Study: Challenges and Expectations of Timor-Leste as an ASEAN Member State



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KEY WORDS	ABSTRACT
Challenges, Timor-Leste's Hopes, ASEAN Member States.	The purpose of this research is to see how the Literature Study: Challenges and Expectations of Timor-Leste as an ASEAN Member State. The method of this research is descriptive, analytical, and critical. Therefore, the author can comprehensively describe how the Literature Study: Challenges and Expectations of Timor-Leste as an ASEAN Member State. In this study, the authors optimally use two data sources related to this study, namely. Primary data sources and secondary data sources. The main sources of this research are books and scientific journals on Timor-Leste's Challenges and Hopes. At the same time, this research is supported (secondary) by other works of thought related to ASEAN Member States. The result of this study is that ASEAN membership presents a major challenge for Timor-Leste, but it also offers significant opportunities for economic, political, and social growth. Recommendation: The Government of Timor-Leste needs to accelerate domestic reforms. ASEAN must provide support in the form of technical and financial capacity. There needs to be a special integration program to facilitate the transition of Timor-Leste as a full member.

1. INTRODUCTION

Timor-Leste, as a young country that achieved its independence in 2002, faces a number of problems that affect the stability, development, and well-being of its people. Here are some of the key problems facing Timor-Leste: Economic Dependence on Oil and Gas Problem: Timor-Leste's economy is heavily dependent on revenues from the oil and natural gas sector, especially through the Petroleum Fund. This dependence makes the country vulnerable to fluctuations in world oil prices. Declining oil and gas reserves are also a threat to economic sustainability (Khairi, 2021).

Impact: The lack of economic diversification slows down the development of other sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and

manufacturing. High Unemployment and Poverty Problems: Many residents, especially the younger generation, are unemployed due to the lack of available jobs. Impact: More than 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. The emergence of social frustration that can affect political stability. Inadequate Infrastructure Problem: Basic infrastructure such as highways, ports, electricity, and clean water networks are still limited and not evenly distributed, especially in rural areas (Syafuddin et al., 2023).

Impact: Barriers in transportation and logistics. Difficulties in accessing health and education services in remote areas. Limited Education and Human Resources Problem: The education system in Timor-Leste faces

challenges in the form of low teaching quality, lack of trained teachers, and minimal educational facilities. Literacy rates are still an issue, especially in rural areas. Impact: It is difficult for residents to compete in regional and global labour markets. Limited innovation and national productivity (Martins, 2015).

Political Stability and Internal Conflict Problems: Political tensions, frequent changes of government, and public dissatisfaction with government policies can disrupt national stability. Impact: The emergence of social unrest and a decrease in trust in state institutions. Slowing down the national development process. **Limited Access to Health Problems:** The health care system in Timor-Leste is still limited, both in terms of facilities and medical personnel. Infectious diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis are still major health problems. Impact: High infant and maternal mortality rates. Life expectancy is relatively low compared to other ASEAN countries. **Food Security, Problem:** Many Timor-Leste's population relies on subsistence agriculture, which is particularly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. Impact: High rates of malnutrition, especially in children. Dependence on food imports drains the country's foreign exchange (Astawa et al., 2024).

Challenges of Regional Integration (ASEAN)
Problem: Timor-Leste faces the challenge of meeting ASEAN's economic, political, and social standards in order to contribute effectively as a new member. Impact: Slow adaptation may limit the benefits of ASEAN membership.
Economic Diversification Hopes and Solutions: Develop the agriculture, tourism, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sectors to reduce dependence on oil and gas. **Education Investment:** Improving the quality of education and training to create a skilled and innovative workforce. **Infrastructure Development:**

Promoting infrastructure development to support economic growth and improve community welfare. **Regional Collaboration:** Leverage ASEAN membership to strengthen trade, investment, and technology exchange with neighboring countries. **Strengthening Government Institutions:** Increasing transparency and accountability in governance to build public trust. By overcoming these problems, Timor-Leste has the opportunity to develop into a more stable, prosperous, and competitive country in the Southeast Asian region (Auliyani & Putri, 2024).

Timor-Leste has shown interest in joining ASEAN since gaining independence in 2002. This process involves lengthy internal preparations, including infrastructure improvements, strengthening state institutions, and increasing human resource capacity. This membership is a recognition of Timor-Leste's sovereignty and its ability to contribute to regional cooperation. Opportunities for Timor-Leste, Economic Integration Joining ASEAN provides wider market access and opportunities to increase international trade, particularly with other ASEAN countries. Timor-Leste's Development Support can obtain technical and financial assistance from other member countries to accelerate national development, especially in the areas of infrastructure and education. **Regional Diplomacy** As a member of ASEAN, Timor-Leste has a platform to strengthen diplomatic relations and increase its influence on regional issues. **Security Stability** ASEAN membership provides an opportunity to collaborate in maintaining political stability and security in the region. **Strengthening Regional Identity** As part of ASEAN, Timor-Leste can strengthen its identity as part of the Southeast Asian community (Rudiany, 2015).

Challenges Faced, Economic Capabilities As a country with a relatively small economy and

dependence on natural resources such as oil and gas, Timor-Leste needs to diversify its economy to compete in the ASEAN market. Infrastructure Preparation Lack of adequate infrastructure can hinder economic integration with other ASEAN countries. Timor-Leste's Administrative and Regulatory Readiness needs to adjust its national regulations and policies to be in line with ASEAN standards. Improving human resources, education and workforce training is a challenge to increase competitiveness in the region (Wartono et al., 2024).

It is hoped that ASEAN Membership will open a new chapter for Timor-Leste to accelerate national development, strengthen stability, and improve the welfare of its people. Through the collaboration and support of fellow members, Timor-Leste is expected to play an important role in building Southeast Asia as a more prosperous and stable region. This success certainly requires a long-term commitment and strategy, both from the Timor-Leste government and from ASEAN as a regional community. Reasons for Timor-Leste to Join ASEAN Timor-Leste's decision to become a member of ASEAN is based on a variety of strategic, economic, political, and social factors. Here are the main reasons why Timor-Leste joined this regional organization: Integration into the Regional Community Reason: As part of Southeast Asia geographically, Timor-Leste wants to be part of an integrated regional community. Benefits: Cementing its identity as part of the Southeast Asian region. Improve connectivity with neighbouring countries (Oktaviani & Riva, 2022).

Access to Economic Opportunity Reason: ASEAN membership opens up opportunities to expand market access, increase trade, and attract foreign investment. Benefits: Integration within the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) provides opportunities for free trade and

economic cooperation. Increasing access to economic development assistance from fellow ASEAN members. Infrastructure Development Support Reason: Timor-Leste still needs the development of basic infrastructure, such as roads, ports, and power grids. Benefits: Obtaining technical and financial support from ASEAN for infrastructure development. Improve transportation and communication connectivity with other ASEAN countries (Riani, 2024).

Strengthening Political Stability and Security Reason: As a young country, Timor-Leste needs political stability and security to support its development. Benefits: Gain protection and support in maintaining regional stability through the ASEAN Political-Security Community. Strengthen cooperation in dealing with transnational threats, such as terrorism, organized crime, and natural disasters. Strengthening Diplomatic Relations Reason: ASEAN membership provides a diplomatic platform to expand international influence and relations. Benefits: Strengthening ties with other ASEAN countries. Being part of a regional forum that has influence in global diplomacy.

Rationale: Timor-Leste needs training and education to improve the quality of human resources. Benefits: ASEAN provides cooperation programs in education, training, and human resource development. Improving the skills of the workforce to compete in regional markets. Learning and Experience Reason: ASEAN has been a successful model of regional integration. Timor-Leste wants to learn from the experiences of other member states. Benefits: Gain insights and best practices in the areas of economic development, governance, and natural resource management.

Support for Economic Diversification Reason: Dependence on the oil and gas sector requires Timor-Leste to diversify its economy. Benefits: ASEAN helps promote other sectors

such as agriculture, tourism, and SMEs. Increasing Timor-Leste's participation in regional and global value chains. Promotion of Identity and Culture Reason: Timor-Leste wants to introduce its culture and heritage to the international world. Benefits: ASEAN membership provides a platform to promote Timor-Leste's arts, culture, and traditions. Supporting the preservation of cultural heritage through ASEAN cultural programs.

Strengthening Relations with Indonesia Reason: As a close neighbour, Indonesia is one of the important partners for Timor-Leste. Benefits: ASEAN is a platform to strengthen bilateral relations with Indonesia and other ASEAN countries. Strengthening trade, education, and security relations with Indonesia. Conclusion ASEAN Membership is a strategic step for Timor-Leste to accelerate national development, strengthen regional relations, and enhance its role in the international community. Despite the challenges faced in the integration process, the opportunities offered by ASEAN can help Timor-Leste achieve more significant progress in various sectors.

2. METHOD

This research is a type of literature research; This means that the information materials used come from library sources in the form of books, encyclopaedias, magazines, journals, newspapers, journals, and others (Sutrisno Hadi, 1987). The form of this research is descriptive, analytical, and critical. Therefore, the author can comprehensively describe how the Literature Study: Challenges and Expectations of Timor-Leste as an ASEAN Member State. In this study, the authors optimally use two data sources related to this study, namely. Primary data sources and secondary data sources. The main sources of

this research are books and scientific journals on Timor-Leste's Challenges and Hopes. At the same time, this research is supported (secondary) by other works of thought related to ASEAN Member States. Such research has never existed so it is very important for the author to convey through this article.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Timor-Leste (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste)

Is a small country in Southeast Asia located in the eastern part of Timor Island, bordering Indonesia in the western part. The country has a long history of independence struggle and is one of the youngest countries in the world after independence from Indonesia in 2002. General Information Capital: Dili Area: ±15,007 km² Population: ±1.3 million inhabitants (2025 est.) Official Language: Tetúm, Portuguese Currency: United States Dollar (USD) Form of Government: Parliamentary Republic. Brief History, Portuguese Colonialism: Timor-Leste was a Portuguese colony for more than 400 years, from the 16th century to 1975. Indonesian occupation (1975–1999): After Portugal withdrew in 1975, Timor-Leste declared its independence, but soon after it was invaded and annexed by Indonesia. This period lasted for 24 years, accompanied by conflicts and human rights violations. Referendum and Independence (1999–2002): Under UN supervision, the referendum in 1999 showed a majority of the people voting for independence. Timor-Leste officially became an independent state on May 20, 2002.

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)

is a regional organization founded on August 8, 1967. ASEAN aims to enhance cooperation in the economic, political, social, and cultural



fields in the Southeast Asian region. Currently, ASEAN consists of 11 member countries. List of ASEAN Member States: Indonesia Capital City: Jakarta The largest population in ASEAN and the largest economy in the region. Malaysia Capital City: Kuala Lumpur Known for its ethnic and cultural diversity. Singapore Capital City: Singapore is one of the world's financial centres with developed economies. Thailand Capital: Bangkok A major tourist destination with a rich culture. Philippines Capital: Manila is an archipelago country with a large population and English as one of the official languages. Brunei Darussalam Capital City: Bandar Seri Begawan is a small country with a wealth of oil and gas resources. Vietnam Capital: Hanoi The economy is growing rapidly with great potential in the manufacturing sector. Laos Capital City: Vientiane A country without a sea rich in tradition and culture. Myanmar Capital: Naypyidaw is experiencing political and social challenges. Cambodia Capital City: Phnom Penh Known for the historical site of Angkor Wat. Timor-Leste (New Member) Capital: Dili Joined as the 11th member to strengthen Regional integration.

Economy, Natural Resources: Timor-Leste's economy is largely dependent on oil and natural gas, particularly from fields in the Timor Sea. Agriculture: The majority of the population works in the agricultural sector, with major products such as coffee, corn, and rice. Timor-Leste coffee is known to have high quality and is one of the main export commodities. Economic Challenges: Economic diversification is still limited, high levels of poverty and unemployment. Dependence on petroleum funds for the state budget. Timor-Leste's culture has a rich cultural heritage, blending traditional, Portuguese and Asian elements. Traditional Dances and Music: Dances such as *tebe-tebe* and *likurai* music are often performed in traditional ceremonies.

Traditional Woven Fabric: *Tais* cloth is a typical handicraft product that is often used in traditional events. Religious Influence: Most of the population of Timor-Leste adheres to Roman Catholicism, a legacy from the Portuguese colonial period. ASEAN membership, After years of preparation, Timor-Leste became the 11th member of ASEAN. This membership brings new opportunities for regional integration, development support, and increased international cooperation.

Challenges Faced, Political Stability: Timor-Leste needs to strengthen its institutions of government to maintain political stability. Infrastructure: The lack of basic infrastructure, such as roads, ports, and power grids, hinders development. Human Resource Development: Education and training are top priorities to improve community competitiveness. With its resources and support from the international community, Timor-Leste has the potential to develop into a stable, prosperous country and play an important role in the Southeast Asian region. This success is highly dependent on investment in education, infrastructure, and economic diversification.

ASEAN goal: Enhancing peace and stability in the region. Encourage economic growth, social progress, and cultural development. Advancing cooperation in the fields of trade, investment, and infrastructure development. Increasing collective capacity in dealing with global challenges, such as climate change and regional security. ASEAN also has a long-term vision through the ASEAN Community 2025, which consists of three main pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community This organization is an example of successful regional integration and plays an important role in maintaining stability

and development in Southeast Asia.

Timor-Leste as an ASEAN Member State

After years of trying to become part of ASEAN, Timor-Leste was finally accepted as the 11th member of the organization. The joining of Timor-Leste is a strategic step to strengthen regional relations and open up new opportunities in various sectors, such as economy, politics, and culture. As an ASEAN member country, Timor-Leste is faced with a number of significant challenges and expectations: Challenges: Infrastructure Development: Timor-Leste still needs better infrastructure development to support economic growth and the well-being of its people. Human Resource Development: Education and training are key to improving the quality of human resources in Timor-Leste. Political Stability: Political harmony and internal stability are essential for creating an environment conducive to investment and economic growth. Social Welfare: Issues such as poverty, access to health services, and social inequality are still challenges that must be addressed. Adaptation to ASEAN: Timor-Leste needs to adapt to ASEAN's complex regulations, policies, and dynamics.

Hope: Economic Growth: Joining ASEAN provides an opportunity for Timor-Leste to expand its export markets and attract foreign investment. Regional Collaboration: ASEAN membership can facilitate regional cooperation in various fields, such as security, trade, and social development. Infrastructure Development: Support from ASEAN can help Timor-Leste in the development of better infrastructure. Political Stability and Security: With support from ASEAN, Timor-Leste is expected to strengthen regional political stability and security. Economic Integration: By

integrating its economy more closely with ASEAN, Timor-Leste can improve market access and reduce dependence on single sectors. Through cooperation and commitment within ASEAN, Timor-Leste has great potential to overcome the challenges it faces and realize hopes for better growth and prosperity for its people.

4. CONCLUSION

ASEAN membership presents a major challenge for Timor-Leste, but it also offers significant opportunities for economic, political, and social growth. Recommendation: The Government of Timor-Leste needs to accelerate domestic reforms. ASEAN must provide support in the form of technical and financial capacity. There needs to be a special integration program to facilitate the transition of Timor-Leste as a full member. Official documents of ASEAN and annual reports. Journal articles related to regional policy and development in Southeast Asia. Case studies of new ASEAN member states such as Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar.

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