

A Country Model for East Timor

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The Current Situation in East Timor

I am currently working on a short-term consulting assignment in East Timor. East Timor (Timor-Leste in Portuguese, the official language) is the world's newest country. It is also one of the world's poorest countries, with a per capita income of just \$370 per year. East Timor was originally a Portuguese colony, which was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 when Portugal abandoned its overseas colonies. It gained its independence in 1999, after a bloody fight with the Indonesians.

Here is a short description of the country's beginnings, as described in the BBC News article, "Timeline: East Timor," posted at the BBC News website on April 28, 2006.

Timeline: East Timor

A chronology of key events:

1600s - Portuguese invade Timor, set up trading post and use island as source of sandalwood.

1749 - Timor split following battle between Portuguese and Dutch. Portuguese take the eastern half.

1942 - Japanese invade, fighting battles with Australian troops. Up to 60,000 East Timorese are killed. Japan in control until 1945.

1974 - Anti-Fascist revolution in Portugal leads to promise to free colonies, encouraging parties to prepare for new future.

1975 August - Portuguese administration withdraws to offshore island of Atauro.

1975 October - Five foreign journalists killed along border with West Timor, allegedly by Indonesian troops.

1975 November - After brief civil war, Fretilin (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) declares East Timor independent.

1975 December - Indonesia invades, using its fight against communism as a pretext. It annexes territory as its 27th province, a move not recognised by the UN.

Strong resistance to Indonesian rule followed by repression and famine in which 200,000 people are thought to have died.

1981 - Xanana Gusmao becomes leader of Falintil (Armed Forces of National Liberation of East Timor), the armed wing of Fretilin.

1991 - Santa Cruz cemetery massacre in which troops fire on mourners at a funeral in Dili of Fretilin supporter, killing more than 100 people.

1992 - Setback for the resistance as Gusmao is captured near Dili. In 1993 he is convicted of subversion and given a life sentence which is later reduced.

1993 - Groups of East Timorese enter foreign embassies in Jakarta over the next few years seeking political asylum.

1995 - 20th anniversary of the Indonesian invasion marked by protest by 112 East Timorese and sympathisers who enter Russian and Dutch embassies in Jakarta.

1996 - Acting Bishop of Dili, Carlos Belo, and resistance leader Jose Ramos Horta jointly awarded Nobel Peace Prize, raising international awareness of the East Timorese independence struggle.

1998 - Indonesian President Suharto resigns. Replaced by Habibie who suggests territory may be given special status within Indonesia.

Indonesia's grip loosens

1999 January - Indonesia says it will consider independence for East Timor if people reject autonomy.

1999 February-April - Gusmao moved from Jakarta prison to house arrest. In response to increasing violence by anti-independence activists, Gusmao orders guerrillas to resume independence struggle.

1999 May - Indonesia, Portugal sign agreement to allow East Timorese to vote on their future. Deal endorsed by UN.

1999 August 30 - Almost 99% of 450,000-strong electorate votes in UN-organised referendum.

1999 September - Result of referendum shows 78% voters favoured independence.

Violence erupts as anti-independence militia helped by the Indonesian military resume campaign of terror, leaving up to 1,000 dead. A quarter of the population flees, mainly to West Timor. Martial law imposed. Gusmao freed.

Australian-led peacekeeping force arrives, gradually restores order. Many militia members flee to West Timor to avoid arrest. Indonesian parliament recognises outcome of referendum.

1999 October - Gusmao released. UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) established.

1999 December - International donors at a Tokyo conference agree to provide US \$520 million in aid to help rebuild East Timor.

2000 September - UN evacuates staff from West Timor after murder of three refugee agency workers by pro-Indonesian militia gangs. An Indonesian court jails six men for up to 20 months for the killings, earning international outrage for being too lenient.

2001 July - East Timor, Australia sign memorandum of understanding over future revenues from oil, gas fields in Timor Sea under which East Timor would get 90% of revenues.

2001 August - Election of 88-member Constituent Assembly; Fretilin party wins, taking 55 seats.

2002 - January - Truth and reconciliation commission opens to try and heal wounds of past.

2002 January - Indonesia inaugurates human rights court to hold military accountable for atrocities in East Timor after 1999 independence vote.

2002 February - East Timor assembly approves draft constitution envisaging government run along parliamentary lines.

2002 February - East Timor and Indonesia sign two agreements aimed at easing relations.

2002 April - Xanana Gusmao wins presidential elections.

2002 20 May - UN Security Council sets up UN Mission of Support in East Timor (Unmiset) to help East Timorese authorities.

Independence

2002 20 May - Independence: VIP guests including former US president Bill Clinton and Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri join celebrations in Dili.

2002 September - East Timor becomes 191st member of UN.

2004 January - Portugal announces \$63m (50m euros) aid package.

2004 February - Production at offshore gasfield begins; Bayu Undan project is expected to earn \$100m a year.

2004 November - End of two-year process under which 18 people were tried by Indonesian court for human rights abuses in East Timor during 1999 independence drive. Only one conviction - that of militia leader Eurico Guterres - is left standing.

2005 April - East Timor, Indonesia sign landmark border agreement during Indonesian President Yudhoyono's first visit to Dili since coming to power.

2005 June - Remaining Australian peacekeepers leave.

2005 August - Truth commission, set up by East Timor and Indonesia, holds its first meeting. The body, which has no power to prosecute, will examine the violence that accompanied East Timor's independence in 1999.

Energy deal

2006 January - East Timor, Australia sign a deal to divide billions of dollars in expected revenues from oil and gas deposits in the Timor Sea. Under the agreement, talks on a disputed maritime boundary are postponed.

Report on alleged atrocities during Indonesia's 24-year rule is presented to the UN. It finds that the occupation was directly responsible for the deaths of more than 100,000 East Timorese.

2006 March - 600 soldiers - more than one third of the defence force - are sacked after going on strike.

[End of BBC News article.]

Last week was an exciting one in East Timor. The 591 soldiers who had been expelled from the defense force in March staged a four-day demonstration to protest their treatment by the government. The demonstrations turned violent on Friday (April 28). Cars were burned, about 20 demonstrators were injured, and two demonstrators were killed. Yesterday (Sunday, April 30), the situation seemed to have stabilized.

Here is the BBC News report on last Wednesday's rioting:

E Timor troops riot over sacking

Hundreds of former East Timorese soldiers have rioted in protest at their dismissal from the army.

On the third day of demonstrations in the capital Dili, soldiers and their supporters threw missiles at buildings and market stalls.

Nearly 600 soldiers went absent without leave last month to protest against their working conditions and what they called favouritism in promotions.

The government sacked them all - about a third of the total defence force.

East Timor police chief Paulo de Fatima Martins said dozens of former soldiers broke away from the rally on Wednesday and started throwing stones at buildings and attacking market stalls with sticks.

Hundreds of police from nearby towns were called in, he told the Associated Press, and five people were arrested.

It was not clear if they were soldiers or civilian protesters.

Resentment

Some of the demonstrators invaded houses, the AFP news agency reported.

"I was with my sleeping child when the house was suddenly attacked by people, some wearing fatigues," homeowner Lorenca Miranda said.

"I also saw three policemen in the area run away when the attack was taking place," she said.

The soldiers - many of them from western districts of the country - originally left their posts because they believed they were missing out on promotion to colleagues from the east, according to protest leader Gastao Salsinha.

Many of the troops, who are veterans of the 25-year fight for independence from Indonesia, feel they have not been given the recognition they deserve for their past sacrifices, say analysts.

East Timor's foreign minister said the government would review some of the soldiers' complaints on a case-by-case basis.

The dismissal of nearly 600 soldiers is a serious blow to the army, which numbers only about 1,400 personnel.

A recent UN report said that although East Timor had made some impressive gains in recent years, it also had deeply entrenched problems and is the poorest country in the region.

[End of BBC News article.]

The essence of the problem leading up to last week's demonstrations is the fact that the members of the resistance movement have never been recognized or properly rewarded for their wresting control of the country from Indonesia. These people put their lives on the line; they endured severe hardship, fought hard, many died, and their efforts succeeded in achieving the independence of Timor-Leste. After independence, they either went back home or joined the defense force. As a group, those who fought against the Indonesians are not even recognized as veterans. The 591 soldiers who were expelled from the army had protested what they perceived as bad treatment – hard living conditions and discrimination in promotion in favor of people from the eastern part of the country.

It would be an easy matter to resolve the problem, since the numbers of people involved is so small. For example, each veteran of the resistance movement could be given a small plot of land (sufficiently large to raise food for one family) and a pension. It is not clear why nothing like this has been done. On Friday, the demonstrations were brought to an end after the government promised to set up a commission to address the demonstrators' grievance.

The United Nations' Approach to Development; The Timor-Leste Human Development Report 2006

On Friday afternoon and Saturday, I was confined to the hotel (since it was not safe to go out), and I spent some time reading. Another hotel guest loaned me a copy of the United Nations Development Programme publication, *Timor-Leste Human Development Report 2006: The Path out of Poverty; Integrated Rural Development* (UNDP, UN House, Caicoli Street, Dili, Timor-Leste, <http://www.undp.east-timor.org> , January 2006). I was appalled at what I read.

The Report describes the current situation in East Timor, with respect to social conditions such as education, health, and poverty. The most striking thing about East Timor is the extremely high fertility rate. The total fertility rate (average number of children ever born to a woman in her lifetime) is estimated to be 7 – about the highest level ever reached by any country. With this high fertility rate, the population is exploding. With explosive population growth, it is virtually impossible for a poor country to rise out of poverty, since it is not possible for economic growth to keep up with the population growth.

The really amazing thing about the *Timor-Leste Human Development Report* (“TLHDR”) is the fact that, although extreme population growth is the most significant factor affecting the country’s development, population growth is hardly mentioned in the Report, and population policy is not mentioned at all. Here follows the discussion of population growth, presented in a small box on page 8 of the report:

Box 1.2 – The population of Timor-Leste

In 2004 Timor-Leste’s estimated population was 923,198. In November 2005 it was estimated to be around 1,011,000. The roots of the people are Melanesian or Malay-Polynesian, mingled with smaller groups that trace their ancestry back to China and the Arab world. In all, they speak more than 20 languages or dialects of which Tetun is the most widely used. Almost half the population can understand Bahasa Indonesia, less than 5% Portuguese and about 2% English.

Around 24% of the population are urban with 14% residing in the major urban centers of Dili and Baucau. More than half the population are to be found in the Central Region, 27% in the Eastern Region and a little more than 20% in the Western Region. The people are predominantly young: over half are under 15 years of age and more than two-thirds are under 25. One-fifth of the population are under 5.

Fertility rates are high – more than 7 children per woman of childbearing age [*sic*: erroneous definition]. And this, combined together with a low rate of contraceptive use (7%), contributes to a 4% population growth rate – with serious implications for employment and for the demand for public services.

[End of box.]

The numbers presented in the box are somewhat different from figures presented earlier by the UN. According to data available from the UN website a few months ago, the total fertility rate was 7.8 in 2003 and 7.6 in 2004; the population growth rate was 5% in 2003 and 5% in 2004; and the population was 500,000 in 1960, 805,000 in 2000, 790,000 in 2001, 795,000 in 2002, 820,000 in 2003, and 880,000 in 2004. The box cites 923,198 as the population in 2004 and

1,011,000 as the population in November, 2005. If the population is growing by 60,000-80,000 per year, the annual growth rate is substantially larger than the 4% figure quoted in the box.

The Report is 95 pages long – 8 pages of introduction, 50 pages of main text, three pages of bibliography, and 34 pages of annexes (notes, definitions, tables). It goes on and on with proposals for economic development, completely ignoring the impossibility of economic development in a poor country with an exploding population.

The Report's Executive Summary summarizes the state of human development in Timor-Leste in the areas of health; education; poverty; food insecurity; gender disparities; infrastructure and communication; and environment. After summarizing the situation in each of these areas, the Report goes on to say that the way to address the problems is through sustained economic growth. Never once does the Report mention, however, that the ultimate source for most of the problems is a high population density. Rather than embarking on a program of ambitious economic growth, which will eventually lead to a higher population and increased degradation of the environment, a far better alternative is to seek ways to reduce the population. There are already so many people in Timor-Leste that the average size of the landholdings in this predominantly rural agricultural society is around 1.2 hectares. If the population were reduced by one-half, for example, (i.e., to the level in 1960) the landholding size could be doubled.

The exploding population is contributing to rapid deterioration of the environment. The Report states, "Most Timorese are critically dependent on the state of the natural environment. Unfortunately this has been deteriorating rapidly. 'Slash and burn' agriculture, combined with decades of unsustainable logging and forest fires, have [sic] exposed the land, and rapid water flows have washed away soil. This is exacerbated by the gathering of fuel wood: the major source of energy for rural residents. This also harms people's health: inefficient burning of wood in poorly ventilated kitchens is a significant factor in respiratory diseases." Once a low-technology rural society has reached the point where it cuts down live trees for firewood, instead of collecting only deadfall, the population has clearly passed the point where the land can support it. All of the environmental problems cited are caused by overpopulation. The small, mountainous island nation of Timor-Leste simply cannot support a population of a million people – or even several hundred thousand – without causing serious environmental damage.

The total land area of Timor-Leste is 14,919 square kilometers, of which only a very small fraction is suitable for agriculture. The area of arable land is about 700 square kilometers (UN data). The population density relative to total land area is 67 persons per square kilometer, and the population density relative to arable land area is 1,429 persons per square kilometer. These densities are extremely high, and unsustainable. They have been enabled and supported only by relying on massive energy inputs from fossil fuel, or by farming severe slopes, which can be done only for a few years before the land disappears. When global petroleum reserves exhaust (worldwide, by 2050), the population of Timor-Leste will fall back to the levels that are supportable on a sustainable basis by solar energy. Timor-Leste's land can support, long-term, only about 25,000 people on solar energy at a low level of living, and only about 250 people long term on solar energy at a high level of living.

Given the seriousness of Timor-Leste's crushing overpopulation problem, and the significance of overpopulation in causing many of the country's human development problems, it is, on the surface, amazing that the Report does not address population policy in any of its recommendations (I say "on the surface" because there is in fact a very strong reason for this fact). It suggests only economic development for an already unsustainable population that is growing at breakneck speed.

The Report presents four basic options for tackling rural poverty. Quoting from the report, “The way forward will probably be through a combination of one or more of four basic options:

1. *Develop government services* – The Government would provide these services for the next five to ten years until the private sector is sufficiently developed to take over.
2. *Encourage local organizations* – The Government and development partners could encourage the formation of cooperatives, farmers’ associations and user groups.
3. *Involve NGOs* (non-governmental organizations) – Strengthen NGSs and other organizations of civil society so that they can provide services.
4. *Encourage the private sector* – The Government could encourage entrepreneurs who are interested in delivering services, through tax breaks and access to credit.

In none of these options is population policy mentioned as a factor.

The HDRTL report contains much material related to the UN Human Development Index and Millennium Development Goals. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite measure of quality of human life that includes consideration of income, life expectancy and educational attainment. The Millennium Development Goals are the following:

- Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4. Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5. Improve maternal health
- Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development

The approach to improving quality of life for Timor-Leste is related to these Goals, as well as to the nation’s National Vision.

Growth-Based Economics: A Prescription for Disaster

The HDRTL report prescribes a process for development based on economic growth. This approach to human development has been demonstrated to be a complete sham. After four decades of this program being promoted worldwide, the number of people on the planet living in desperate poverty has grown from two billion to five billion, and the planet’s environment has been seriously damaged – large human numbers and industrial activity cause the extinction of an estimated 30,000 species every year. Despite the demonstrated failure of the approach, the UN, World Bank, and other development organizations continue to tout it, because it makes money for the world’s wealthy elite, who control them. The fact that this approach leads ultimately to the complete destruction of the planet’s biosphere in a few years, and that it leads directly to massive increases in the number of people living in abject poverty, is not of the least concern to these people, who live only for the moment and only for themselves.

The only real issue to address is what the state of the environment of Timor-Leste will be in 2050, after the end of the Petroleum Age and the collapse of global industrialization. If Timor-Leste pursues a program of development based on economic growth, its population will continue to explode, the environment will be completely destroyed, the country will be

deforested, the rural people will migrate to the urban areas, and most of them will live in urban slums in grinding poverty. The UN “economic growth” development model will have generated billions of dollars for the planet’s wealthy elite, and another country will have been totally destroyed as a result of following this development model.

In 1975, I supervised a tax policy analysis study in Haiti. At that time, the Haitian population already exceeded the capacity of the land (4,920,000 people on 27,560 square kilometers of mountainous terrain). At that time, Haitians were farming every available scrap of land, even on slopes of 45 degrees. The problem with that approach is that after about 15 years, the land is all eroded and all that is left is rocks. Cutting trees down from hills, whether for logging, firewood, or agriculture is a completely unsustainable approach. All it results in is the complete destruction of the land within a few years, at which time the population is even greater and has less land than ever to support itself. With its exploding population and forest destruction, Timor-Leste is following in the path of Haiti. Haiti is a complete basket case. It has been the subject of intense study by “international development” groups such as the US Agency for International Development, the Canadian International Development Association, the UN and the World Bank ever since the death of François (“Papa Doc”) Duvalier in 1971. After almost four decades of pursuing “international development” according to the experts, Haiti is no better off, and is in fact much worse off, than it was before.

The *Human Development Report 2006 Timor-Leste* (HDRTL) report is a presentation of exactly the same failed policies and programs that were prescribed for Haiti, and Haiti is now a living hell. Why would Timor-Leste want this as its future? Why would any sane person pay any attention to the policies and program outlined in the HDRTL report, when those policies and program have produced nothing but catastrophic failure time after time, and are leading ultimately to the complete destruction of the planet by global warming and mass species extinction? Why would Timor-Leste allow itself to be destroyed? The answer is clear. The people proposing this approach – economic growth – are the same ones – the world’s economic elite – who are selling the cars, tractors, fertilizers, pumps, computers, telephones, clothes and medicines and other high-tech instruments of their insidious, pernicious trade. They are the owners of the construction firms that will build the buildings, roads, schools, hospitals, bridges, dams, power plants and other modern infrastructure that are invariably required for the prescribed economic development.

And “more” is never enough. As long as the population keeps exploding, there are continuing opportunities to sell goods and build infrastructure. That is why population policy is not mentioned in the HDRTL report. The world political system is guided by “growth-based” economics, which seeks to maximize economic activity by any means and at any cost – and one of the best contributors to continuing economic growth is a growing population. All world political leaders are calling for increased standards of living for their populations, and for increased economic activity, despite the fact that this is destroying the planet’s biosphere. The people proposing economic growth as a solution to Timor-Leste’s development situation are the “Merchants of Death” who will be pleased to sell Timor-Leste goods and services all the way to its grave, where it will join Haiti and a host of other destroyed states who listened to the UN and World Bank proponents of economic development as a path to a better life for their citizens. Rapid population growth will keep demand for economic goods and services high. The fact that it is destroying the environment of Timor-Leste and the quality of life for its residents is not a concern to those in the “development” business. “Economic development” is a false promise of material wealth to the poor – it enriches only the wealthy elite. It is a wicked temptress, promising a high level of material life / standard of living to the poor who would pursue it, but

delivering only a destroyed environment and increased numbers of people living in poverty and misery, while enriching the wealthy who promote it and profit from it.

An Alternative Development Approach for Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste is in a unique position. The Indonesians destroyed virtually all the infrastructure in their unsuccessful campaign to subdue the population. The country is essentially starting from scratch. It is the poorest country in Asia, with a per capita income of \$370 per year. It is in a position to choose what type of development program it wishes.

I have written much material on the subject of planetary management (presented at <http://www.foundationwebsite.org>), and some of it may be relevant to the situation in Timor-Leste. Essentially, I view that the destruction of the planet's biosphere being caused by large human numbers and industrial activity will likely continue until global petroleum reserves are exhausted (which is estimated to occur by 2050), or some other global catastrophic event occurs, such as global warming, global nuclear war, or biospheric collapse from human-caused mass species extinction. No matter which of these alternatives occurs, the global human population, which has exploded to unsustainable levels because of access to fossil fuels, will drop back to pre-fossil-fuel levels of at most a few hundred million people on the planet. At that time – during and after the collapse of the industrial world – there will be a unique opportunity for the survivors to institute a new system of planetary management – a rational, long-term-sustainable system of planetary management in which the probability of extinction of the human species and all other species of the biosphere is kept very low. For this new system, I have suggested a “minimal-regret” population consisting of a single-nation high-technology population of five million and a globally distributed primitive population of five million hunter-gatherers as a feasible alternative. The purpose of the high-tech society is human population control – to ensure that the size of the high-tech and low-tech populations does not increase. The purpose of the low-tech society is to reduce the likelihood that a local catastrophic event would cause the extinction of the human species. The proposed minimal-regret population eschews economics as a guide for social management, and rejects the notion of global industrialization, which is so damaging to a planet's biosphere. (For more details, see my book, *Can America Survive?*)

The minimal-regret population is not based on democracy as a form of government, but on *synarchy*. Synarchy (not to be confused with *synarchism*) is a system of government proposed in the late 1800s by the French philosopher / political scientist / mystic Marquis Joseph Alexandre St.-Yves d'Alveydre. It is similar to the system of government discussed in Plato's *The Republic*. Unlike the anarchic, laissez-faire system currently in place, which is rapidly destroying the planet's biosphere, it is a mission-oriented approach for planetary management in which the planet is viewed as a spacecraft (“Spaceship Earth”), and the role of the leaders is to maintain the viability of its human passengers by ensuring the viability of the entire planetary biosphere. Synarchy is a governmental system that is appropriate for managing a planet on a long-term sustainable basis. The current anarchic system of over 200 sovereign countries, all champing at the bit to out-produce each other – and destroying the planet in the process – is not.

The forces of economic development are very powerful. Through their global industrial empire, they have succeeded in throttling the entire planet in a death-grip strangle-hold, which is unlikely to be loosened prior to the end of the Petroleum Age and the end of “cheap energy” on which global industrialization feeds. It is unlikely that anything significant can be done with respect to establishing a rational, long-term-sustainable system of planetary management until the collapse of the industrial world occurs. Nevertheless, it is of interest to speculate whether a

long-term sustainable society might be established in a single country, such as Timor-Leste, prior to the eventual and inevitable collapse of the industrial world.

I generally employ the methodology of systems engineering to determine the solution to complex problems, and that approach would work well in this instance. (As an example of the application of systems engineering to a social problem, see, e.g., my book on tax reform, *A New Tax System for the United States*.) Since this is just a short article that I am writing on this May Day holiday, I will by no means attempt even to sketch a solution. Instead, I will simply suggest one of the many alternatives that might be considered in place of the economic-growth program proposed by the UN in the HDRTL report. The proposal that follows is not at all the synarchic minimal-regret solution proposed for the planet, which does not permit any economic activity. It is, instead, a solution that involves a very low level of economic activity, and some interaction with the rest of the industrially developed world. Instead of the low-tech population being a hunter-gatherer population, this proposal is based on the low-tech population engaged either in hunting and gathering or in primitive agriculture.

East Timor is a very small country. Its terrain is very mountainous. As is the case in Haiti, coffee grows well here. Coffee is a good crop for mountainous tropical regions, since the coffee trees need the shade of larger trees, with the result that a coffee producing area can remain totally forested. In my view, East Timor is so small, and its terrain so mountainous, that it should simply be set up to run as a single large coffee plantation, or perhaps several smaller plantations. Quite unlike the UN approach, which attempts to industrialize everything (and thereby destroy everything), this approach focuses on leaving Timor-Leste as a low-technology, agrarian society in which the forest is preserved. Under this scheme, the country could be "cantonized," as is Switzerland, into a small number of plantations run by different families. Each canton would be owned and directly controlled by a single resident family. Each canton would be responsible for preserving its natural resources and controlling its population. Since the population of Timor-Leste already exceeds the carrying capacity of the country, an initial period of negative population growth would be required (implemented, e.g., as in China's one-child system, or by war between neighboring cantons). It is expected that the national rural population would decline to about 25,000 or less – the number that can be supported by solar energy at a low level of living.

The cantons would not be permitted to develop economically, other than as a primitive-agriculture plantation (growing coffee or other crops that leave the forest intact). This arrangement would avoid the Garrett Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" phenomenon, in which common areas are invariably overexploited and eventually destroyed. It is imagined that each canton would be a single plantation, but it may be that some allowance for single-family farms, such as those established by the Germans in North America in the 1700s, might be allowed by the family in control of the canton.

Each canton would be responsible for its own population-control mechanism, and would be free to employ whatever scheme it desired (e.g., birth control, abortion, infanticide, feud, pitched battles, skirmishes, war). The plantations would not be permitted the use of any modern technology, such as electricity. If a canton opted for a hunter-gatherer existence rather than a plantation, the society would be similar to that of the American Indians or the Africans before the arrival of the Europeans. Cantons would be permitted to wage war on neighboring cantons.

There would be a single high-technology center, in Dili, which would monitor each of the cantons and ensure that none of them developed economically, or caused any significant destruction of their forest resources (e.g., by human overpopulation). Any significant economic

development or other degradation of the forest would be terminated by the Dili center. Trade would be allowed only among neighboring cantons, or with Dili. The Dili center would be responsible for all contact with the outside world, including defense agreements with larger nations, such as Australia. The Dili center would be responsible for the reintroduction of exterminated species to the country. The Dili center would be supported by trading the commodities produced by the plantations with the outside world. (They may also take advantage of the oil revenues expected to be received from exploitation of the oil fields in the Timor Sea, estimated at \$16 billion in value. This amount of resources would permit the government of Timor-Leste to implement the proposed development approach with a high likelihood of success. On the other hand, the availability of 16 billion dollars to spend makes the likelihood of considering an alternative development model (different from the UN economic-development approach) pretty low. Access to massive oil wealth seems to be an irresistible lure to spend it on purchase of material goods or on economic development, despite the fact that when the oil runs out, the system comes to a screeching halt, and the environment has been destroyed.)

The proposed scheme is similar (except for the Dili high-tech center) to the agrarian societies set up in the New World by Spain and Portugal in Latin America and by the English plantation owners of the US "Old South." It is an ecologically friendly approach, based on "wood" technology (as existed prior to the industrial revolution (cf. Jeremy Rifkin's discussion in his book, *Entropy*). It is a feudal system, with aspects of republican government à la Plato, Jefferson, and Bolivar (rule of law, defense of the country by the Dili center). It is not at all a democracy (a form of government eschewed by Plato and the Founding Fathers of the United States, among others). Under this system, by 2050, when the industrial world collapses, East Timor should still possess an intact, forested country, in which all people live a good quality of life in harmony with nature. Based on past experience, the UN proposals described in the HDRTL report ensure that Timor-Leste will follow in the footsteps of Haiti to total devastation, with most of the population living in abject poverty and misery. This proposal, based on a very low human population, assures a very high quality of life for all of the human population, whether they be the residents of the high-tech Dili center or the primitive-agriculture / hunter-gatherer cantons in the rest of the country.

The UN Mission has been present in East Timor for the past six years, during which time it has been advising the Timor-Leste government on development. During that time, no significant progress has been made to improving the quality of life for the Timorese people. Quite the contrary, the population has doubled, the environment has been seriously degraded, and each East Timorese citizen now has the support of half the natural resources that existed since the UN began its mission. This is the same pattern as has been followed in many other countries, and in fact in the entire less-developed world, by poor countries that the UN has advised. The economic-development approach may be successful in generating much wealth for the planet's wealthy elite, but it is destroying the planet's biosphere in the process, and greatly increasing the number of people living in direst poverty and misery. After six years' experience in Timor-Leste, it is clear that the UN approach is a failed approach that is rapidly destroying Timor-Leste. Any approach that totally ignores population policy, and promotes economic development in a country that has already exceeded the carrying capacity of the land, is a failed, perverse one. The pernicious UN approach promises riches, but history has demonstrated time and time again that it will deliver only poverty, disease, a ruined environment, species extinction, and human misery on a massive scale.

If Timor-Leste wishes to avoid this fate – total destruction of its environment, with most of its population living in abject misery in a destroyed rural area or in hellish urban slums – it must

reject the UN's economic-growth-based approach to development. By 2050, by which time global petroleum supplies are exhausted, the entire industrial world will collapse. Human population will fall to a small fraction of its current size. The only significant issue to address is what the ecological state of the biosphere will be after the end of the Petroleum Age and global industrialization. By 2050, most countries of the world, following the paradigm of economic development, will have destroyed their environment, and their few surviving descendants will inherit wastelands. Timor-Leste does not have to follow in this path. Instead, it can choose to adopt a different approach to human development – one that preserves the natural environment and ensures a high quality of life for everyone, not just for the wealthy elite.

But time is running out for Timor-Leste. Recent developments (last week's street demonstrations) illustrate the increasing restiveness of the population relative to the increasing deterioration of their quality of life and environment. This year may be the year of Timor-Leste's "last stand." The population is exploding so fast that most indicators of social progress are doomed to worsen. If Timor-Leste continues much longer with the UN "economic development" paradigm for human development, it will soon enter the "black hole" of no return, into which Haiti and many other countries guided by the UN and World Bank policies and programs have permanently collapsed. Timor-Leste's leaders must decide, and quickly, whether they wish to continue to follow the failed policies of the UN to almost certain destruction, or strike out in a bold new direction, based on a rational awareness of the relationship of mankind to its natural environment. With its expected oil revenues it is in a strong position to manage its own destiny. It does not have to waste these resources, as all other countries have done, to build infrastructure and population that will inevitably collapse when the oil runs out. Timor-Leste is in a unique position – it is starting from scratch, and it has access to very large oil revenues that will enable it to implement whatever social development program it chooses. Unlike many other poor countries that have had no resources and no choice but to accept the UN approach, Timor-Leste, with its oil resources, is in the enviable position of being able to manage its own destiny. It does not have to continue on the path to destruction that the UN development approach virtually guarantees as its result. Over the past six years, Timor-Leste has experienced firsthand the results of the UN approach – the country is deteriorating rapidly, and is in danger of falling apart. Very soon, it may not be able to choose any other path than the UN path to perdition. If it wishes to save its environment and ensure a high quality of life for its citizens, it must act quickly. The time for decision is now.

I will close this article with a quote from my book, *Can America Survive?*:

Economics is the driving force that has corrupted mankind and is destroying the planet. Economics – the dismal science. As mathematician John Maynard Keynes observed (in his 1930 essay, "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren") in commenting on the fatal limitations of economics as a long-term basis for human society:

"Some day we may return to some of the most sure and certain principles of religion and traditional virtue – that avarice is a vice, that the extraction of usury is a misdemeanor, and the love of money is detestable. But beware! The time for all this is not yet. For at least another hundred years we must pretend to ourselves and to every one that fair is foul and foul is fair; for foul is useful and fair is not. Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little while longer."