

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Politics and Society in Southeast Asia

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## INDEPENDENT TIMOR- LESTE

*Between Coercion and Consent*

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## Independent Timor-Leste

### Between Coercion and Consent

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**Abstract:** This Element explores the primary modes by which rulers have exercised power and shaped political relations in Timor-Leste across four distinct periods. The contrast between coercion under colonial rule and consent expressed through the 1999 referendum on independence exerted a powerful influence on scholarship on Timor-Leste's politics and future. Since the restoration of independence in 2002, however, politics in Timor-Leste are best understood in terms of powerful economic constraints during the first Fretilin government (2002–2006), and thereafter, thanks to revenue from the country's petroleum reserves, a ruling strategy based on a wide range of inducements (rather than genuine consent).

**Keywords:** democracy, state-building, national identity, political economy, ruling strategy

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