Gender inequality in post-conflict Timor-Leste (East Timor) is well-documented and there is pressure for women to conform to ‘traditional’ cultural norms now the war is over, yet a strong women’s movement resists this pressure. However, any rise in status for the majority of women must be made through an engagement with indigenous or ‘traditional’ society as that is culturally dominant in Timor. The impact of recent conflict and violence has been profound for the new nation and its people, with public and private or domestic violence still pervasive. The male political and military elite dominant in Timor-Leste today is seen as largely responsible for outbreaks of violence on a national scale (2004-8) and these contemporary events lead us to define Timorese post-conflict society as militaristic in nature. A strong culture of male political domination in Timor-Leste today holds back the women’s movement, along with development, security and a more expansive version of democracy. While ‘gender’ has featured heavily on the development agenda of Timor-Leste over the last ten years little intellectual analysis has been made of what these trends mean for development, security and democracy there.

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