



Disarming For Peace in Aceh: Lessons Learned

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Abstract

On December 9, 2002 the Government of Indonesia and the separatist group Free Aceh Movement signed a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement to bring an end to the nearly quarter of a century of civil war in the province. Lauded as a “golden promise to move on to a life of peace”, the agreement seemed a beacon of hope for a province long accustomed to war. However in less than six months the peace accord had failed and martial law declared. The crucial disarmament and demilitarization phase of the agreement disintegrated and has since ushered in hostilities worse than those before the brokered peace deal. The key question then is why did this phase fail? What could have been done differently to accomplish successful implementation? This research draws upon the successes and failures of many disarmament programs implemented as part of peace processes around the world, most especially the much-heralded program conducted by the United Nations in El Salvador. Using the lessons learned in these programs, and the guidelines they provide for successful disarmament, the paper analyzes the Acehnese disarmament phase and provides a model for restarting the disarmament process in Aceh. Numerous primary and secondary sources have been utilized as well as confidential interviews conducted in order to thoroughly examine the nature of the Achenese conflict and what may have gone wrong in the pursuit for peace.

Executive Summary

Fueled by uncertainty in the new international system and the global circulation of war remnants from Cold War arsenals, intra-state conflicts have become increasingly commonplace in the post-Cold War atmosphere. The Indonesian province of Aceh is one such place where years of resentment over economic exploitation and human rights abuses at the hands of the Indonesian military, have found greater and more violent expression in the 1990s in conflict between the government and Achenese insurgents. This has led to a cycle of insecurity and underdevelopment that has cost many lives and the livelihoods of the Acehnese people. In December of 2002, a peace agreement was reached between the insurgents of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Government of Indonesia (GOI) to begin the road to recovery. Within six months however the situation had once again disintegrated into conflict. The causes for the resumption of hostilities are multi-fold, but one area where the peace agreement perhaps failed was in it's the negotiation and implementation of the critical phase of disarmament. Experience has shown that the integration of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs into peace agreements spell a greater chance for success in conflict resolution. Key criteria for successful disarmament are conducting prior weapons assessment, identifying the target populations for disarmament, targeting the types and numbers of arms for collection, planning and implementing a realistic timetable, deciding on incentives offered if any, identifying and preparing of collection sites, and planning for the disposal of the collected arsenal. In Aceh, although disarmament was considered very important in ending the conflict and a central component of the peace agreement, the provisions for disarmament were not spelled out in detail in the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. This paper recommends should the opportunity arise to restart the peace process in Aceh, any new

agreement should incorporate the following: the assessment of GAM's weapons prior to beginning disarmament, a more stringent and comprehensive timeline including the almost immediate disarmament and demobilization of 20% of GAM combatants and the withdrawal of 10% of GOI forces from Aceh, the demobilization and reintegration involving job training and employment opportunities for GAM to encourage disarmament, a provision for storage and disposal of weapons, including the public destruction of the first 20% of weapons collected to foster confidence in the process for both sides and the community, and include clauses which further stipulate the reciprocal commitment needed from the GOI.

Introduction

A terrible conflict now rages on in the little known province of Aceh. Located on the northern tip of Sumatra, Indonesia's largest island, and at the mouth of the vitally important Malacca Strait, sits the battlefield of one of the world's longest running separatist movements. Without the kind of media recognition given to conflicts such as those in Northern Ireland or the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka, and lacking the charismatic leadership of someone like the Dalai Lama or international champions such as Australia, Portugal and the UN for East Timor, Aceh has nonetheless been embroiled in a violent conflict for decades. Depending from when the line is drawn, the civil war in Aceh can be said to have begun in 1989 or as far back as 1873. Though there are certainly distinctive elements to the Acehnese situation, it is in fact a prototypical case of the many intra-state conflicts that have become all too common in the post- Cold War political landscape. A United Nations paper on intra-state conflicts reported that all ninety of the armed conflicts to occur in 1993 were within territorial boundaries and of all the conflicts in the nineties to have erupted up until the date

of publication, only two of those were interstate.¹ Between 1990-2000, there were 56 major armed conflicts recorded in 44 locations around the world.² Of those only three were not intra-state, between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Pakistan and India, and Iraq and Kuwait. 2002 recorded 24 major armed conflicts, with only one classified as inter-state.³ Fifteen of the most deadly intra-state conflicts of 2002 have lasted for eight years or more. Aceh ranks among these most deadly. As in many armed conflicts beginning in the nineties, the root causes of ethnic, religious, social, or economic disparities simmering for years found expression in the new emerging international order and have been equipped with the discarded weapons of the old.

In September 2000 the member states of the United Nations pledged to work towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to eradicate poverty, improve education opportunities, increase maternal and child health and facilitate sustainable development for all people of the world.⁴ However in areas of the world engulfed in conflict such as Aceh, the meeting of the MDGs are made even more difficult as humanitarian and development projects are unable to reach populations in need due to the prolonged and persistent violence. The presence of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in conflicts contributes to numerous deaths, injuries, suffering, and other direct and indirect consequences such as forced displacement. An estimated fifty percent of conflict-related

¹ Swades Rana, Small Arms and Intra-State Conflicts, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) Research Paper, no. 34 (New York: United Nations, 1995), 1, 7.

² SIPRI, SIPRI Yearbook 2001: Armaments, Disarmaments and International Security (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 15. A major armed conflict is defined as a conflict where the “use of armed force between two or more organized armed groups resulting in the battle-related deaths of at least 1000 people in any single year and in which incompatibility concerns control of government, territory, or communal identity.”

³ SIPRI, SIPRI Yearbook 2002.

⁴ The eight Millennium Development Goals are 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, 2. Achieve universal primary education, 3. Promote gender equality and empower women, 4. Reduce child mortality, 5. Improve maternal health, 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, 7. Ensure environment sustainability, and 8. Develop a global partnership for development. The UN is committed to meeting these goals by the year 2015. <<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>>.

deaths are attributed to SALW.⁵ Weapons in conflict pose particular risks for women, as they become targets for sexual attack, and through the loss of their husbands and children, often find themselves in poorer circumstances.⁶ In Aceh the incidence of armed conflict has contributed to numerous acute and chronic human security threats such as population displacement, loss of property, fear of physical violence and the intimidation of humanitarian and human rights workers, as well as retardation of development in the province. As the conflict has grown in intensity, so have the humanitarian costs.

Fueled by the new global environment and domestic situations in Indonesia, particularly the fall of the country's long time authoritarian leader Suharto and the East Timor referendum, the Acehnese civil war has gradually grown in intensity throughout the nineties. Dismayed by the increase in violence, a heretofore little known international organization, the Centre of Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC)⁷, began to negotiate a peace deal between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia (GOI) and the leaders of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM).⁸ After three years of consultations, on December 9, 2002 the two sides signed the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) declaring an end to the conflict and a commitment to disarm and demobilize. However by the time the disarmament was to begin in February of 2003, problems were already emerging, and by May the process broke down completely with the GOI declaring martial law in the province on the 19 of May. The humanitarian situation in the province continues to deteriorate with the GOI extension of martial law on the 6 of November 2003.

This paper will carefully examine the second phase of the peace process, disarmament and demilitarization, as it was at this stage the peace process in Aceh collapsed.

⁵ Small Arms Survey 2002: Counting the Human Cost, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 157.

⁶ Small Arms Survey 2002, 172.

⁷ Previously known as the Henry Dunant Centre, the organization changed its name in 2002.

⁸ GAM stands for Gerakan Aceh Merdeka in Indonesian.

The key question then is why did this phase fail? What can be done differently to ensure the disarmament and thus the peace process will be successful in the future? The paper will provide an overview of the Acehnese conflict, the humanitarian situation in the province, and the steps taken in the peace agreement and its implementation toward disarmament. To assess the disarmament process in Aceh, the paper will take an in-depth look at the role of DDR in peace building, the key recommended guidelines drawing upon the successes and failures of many disarmament programs implemented as part of peace processes around the world, most especially the successful program conducted by the United Nations in El Salvador. The lessons learned from these plans will be used to provide a model for hopefully restarting the process for successful disarmament in Aceh leading to demobilization and reintegration of combatants and finally an opportunity for peace and development in this beleaguered province.

The Importance of DDR in Conflict Resolution

The United Nations defines the DDR terms as the following⁹:

Disarmament: The collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population

Demobilization: The process by which armed forces (government and/or opposition or factional forces) either downsize or completely disband, as part of a broader transformation from war to peace

⁹ United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO), Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in a Peacekeeping Environment: Principles and Guidelines (New York: United Nations, 2000) <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/lessons/DD&R.pdf> (26 November 2003), 15.

Reintegration: Assistance measures provided to former combatants that would increase the potential for their and their families' economic and social reintegration into civil society

DDR have become an essential if not critical component in conflict resolution strategies. The failure to incorporate such strategies often lays the stage open for an easy return to conflict and violence. In the short term, the availability of weapons and idle ex-combatants often contributes to a relapse of hostilities. Over the long term these factors may produce a society characterized by high armed-crime rates. Peace agreements are often time sensitive and fragile plans. The slightest perceived mistake, the smallest doubt by either side may easily plunge a war-weary population back into conflict. Through years of experience in a dozens of conflicts around the world, the international community has found the greater success stories are those that integrate comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants programs into the peace plan. In peace agreements DDR needs to be a priority. They do in fact form a “natural continuum,” an ideal process toward peace: when disarmament activities end, then demobilization and reintegration programs begin.¹⁰

The Critical Phase: Disarmament

Disarmament is perhaps the most difficult part of the peace process. In surveys of personnel involved in United Nations peacekeeping missions in Cambodia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Somalia, disarmament ranked almost across the board as very important to the success of the mission (see Appendix). Despite this it is often overlooked

¹⁰ United Nations, “Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: An Essential Component to Peacekeeping,” Press Kit Fact Sheet 8 <http://www.un.org/events/peacekeepers/docs/ddr.htm> (26 November 2003).

by agencies in a rush to end a conflict and implement later stages such as reintegration of ex-combatants or to begin development programs. In Iraq, for instance, the importance of SALW collection has been for the most part disregarded despite efforts to begin reconstruction, thereby severely restraining the development process due to poor security.¹¹ In Afghanistan too, the delay in the implementation of DDR programs has had significant security repercussions for restoring order in the country.¹² This has also been seen in East Timor where the push for development has overwhelmed any real measures to disarm. This can have consequences in the post-conflict stage, especially if demobilization and reintegration phases are also rushed, in that remaining weapons will often be used for criminal purposes.

Disarmament is also difficult in that it is not only the first stage toward building confidence in the peace process, but also a phase that relies heavily on the trust and political will of the parties involved. Outside mediators and NGOs have less control per se over the disarmament process than perhaps in the demobilization and reintegration phases, in the sense that the onus for compliance is placed on the factions disarming. In intra-state conflicts, the insurgent group is often battling against the state military. Depending on the situation, it may be difficult for insurgents to surrender their weapons without guarantees from the government and/or mediators that they will be safe to do so. In a protracted war, the weapons may have become part of the identity of the combatant and a symbol of the cause he/she has been fighting for. It is extremely difficult to surrender such an identity. Both the Northern Ireland and Sri Lankan peace processes have been stalled for years in the disarmament phase.

¹¹ Rachel Stohl, "Iraq Small Arms are a Big Threat," Christian Science Monitor 5 November 2003. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/1105/p09s02-coop.htm> (12 November 2003).

¹² Carlotta Gall, "Disarming of Afghans Called Vital to Security," New York Times 26 October 2003.

The international community has over years of experience determined guidelines for successful disarmament in peace building. First and foremost DDR must embody a central part of the peace agreement. Secondly, the framework for DDR strategies should be as detailed and comprehensive as possible in the agreement. Although successful disarmament is not an exact science, the following aspects should be stated as clearly as possible in the agreement:

- Weapons assessment. Prior to disarmament it is essential to determine the stock of arms and ammunition, the specific types of weapons available, those who possess the weapons and how they obtained them. Without this information the success of any weapons collection program is difficult to determine.
- Target Audiences. Who is to be disarmed? The military? Insurgent groups? The public? All of the above?
- Targeted Items. Disarmament needs to be defined in each context; it does not always signify the collection of all weapons. What then is the goal of the disarmament process? To build confidence between parties in their commitment toward the agreement? To decrease the availability and visibility of armed weapons? To increase awareness of the violence perpetrated with such weapons? Based on the numbers ascertained during assessment, what is the target number and type of weapons to be collected that will achieve this goal?
- Timetable. It is essential that a clear but flexible timetable for the commencement and conclusion of disarmament be included. The timing for the beginning of disarmament is also critical. It should begin at the earliest

possible stage; if possible directly after the signing of the agreement because the immediate “shock of peace” creates favorable conditions and attitudes towards disarmament. Waiting too long can cause security and trust to deteriorate and a return to conflict more likely.

- Inducements. Is the disarmament by command or voluntary? If voluntary, what incentives are offered for people to turn in their arms?
- Collection Sites. The number and location of sites should be established. They should be located in areas easily accessible and secure to those participating in the program. There should be space available to store weapons and ammunition securely. Who should staff the collection sites should also be taken into consideration as sometimes the presence of police or military will put off combatants from turning over weapons.
- Disposal of the Collected Weaponry. Once arms have been collected, how then will they be disposed of? Collected weapons can be transferred to the government, sold off, or destroyed. The third option is often preferred, especially in situations where the government is one of the warring parties. Combatants would then be more likely to turn in weapons if they know they will be destroyed. Public ceremonies held to destroy weapons can create an atmosphere of completion for the community, a sense of having moved beyond conflict. Weapons can be used for monuments or museums celebrating the struggle for peace, then in the past.

The Case of El Salvador

El Salvador is presented here, as the test case because it has been considered one of the most successful disarmament exercises in conflict resolution to date, and, like Aceh, was a protracted intra-state conflict ended with a peace agreement brokered and implemented by an outside third party. The roots of El Salvador's civil war lay in the dissatisfaction with a government, which perpetuated a long-standing social and economic system benefiting only a small group of elites. There was also widespread discontent over violent abuses performed by the country's security forces. An October 1979 military coup only exacerbated the tenacious human rights situation, and 1980 saw the first rumblings of conflict. By January 1981, the situation had degenerated into all-out war.

Exacerbated by Cold War power politics (with weapon support from both the United States and the U.S.S.R) and similar clashes in the neighboring countries of Nicaragua and Guatemala, the conflict was to last 12 years. In that period an estimated 75,000 people were killed, an average of 17 a day, and over a million people driven from their homes to become refugees or internally displaced persons. At the macro level, the civil war aggravated an already shaky economic situation, devastated the country's physical infrastructure, and retarded development. Of course the poor economic performance affected everyone in the country, and the standard of living dropped to half of what it was before the beginning of the war.¹³

On January 16, 1992, the El Salvadorian government and the coalition of resistance fighters, the Farabundo Frente Marti de Liberacion Nacional (FMLN), under the auspices of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), signed a landmark agreement formally ending their twelve-year civil war and ushering in the lengthy transition

¹³ Paulo S. Wrobel, Disarmament and Conflict Resolution Project-Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Nicaragua and El Salvador (New York and Geneva: United Nations, 1997), 125.

towards peace. The agreement was the fruit of many years of difficult negotiations beginning at the regional and national levels.¹⁴ It was not without its setbacks, but through the perseverance of both sides the hope for peace gradually became a reality. The comprehensive agreement carefully detailed the DDR process. Here the disarmament components of the agreement will be outlined according to the criterion listed above:

- *Weapons Assessment.* Both the El Salvadorian troops and FMLN were to supply ONUSAL with detailed information on their numbers of combatants, weapons, and other war related materials. Initially there was lack of cooperation, but eventually under pressure from ONUSAL, observers were able to count and register all weapons held by FMLN.
- *Target Audiences.* Both sides were involved in disarmament and demobilization with the complete disbandment of the FMLN and the reduction in size of the El Salvadorian military. Once mobilized in the designated sites, they were not allowed to leave without ONUSAL permission.
- *Target Items.* In the designated mobilization sites, all weapons and military equipment, with the exception of the personal rifle and equipment of the combatant, were locked into special deposits. The personal rifles and other equipment kept by the combatants were surrendered when they left the sites for reintegration.
- *Timetable.* The ceasefire began February 1, 1992. The armed conflict was then to end formally October 31, 1992. The separation of forces to begin 5 days into the ceasefire, with FMLN withdrawing to 15 designated sites in the former conflict zones. In addition over the following 24 days the El Salvadorian armed forces were

¹⁴ To read in detail the negotiation processes see Paulo S. Wrobel, Disarmament and Conflict Resolution Project, 117-129 and United Nations, The United Nations and El Salvador 1990-1995 (New York: United Nations, 1995), 6-34.

to gradually fall back to peacetime positions. The FMLN reintegration was to be carried out in five stages between 1 May and 31st of October, with twenty percent officially returning to civilian life each month. Eventually this timetable was extended but demobilization was completed by 15 December 1992. The reduction of the El Salvadorian troops to approximately half its war-time size was to be completed by January 1994.

- *Inducements.* Initially there were no goods or cash offered for weapons. It was not the job of ONUSAL to disarm Salvadorian society. Following the end of the ONUSAL mission, a goods for guns program was implemented. However during the mission, the incentive to disarm was to make the return to peace, and execute a number of changes in the political and military system of El Salvador. In a previous agreement endorsed in Mexico City on 27 April 1991, the two sides agreed to a package of reforms including a reorganization and subordination to civilian authority of the armed forces and police, and restructuring of the political and electoral systems. There was also a program for the redistribution of land.
- *Collection Sites.* On site at demobilization areas.
- *Disposal of Collected Weaponry.* Originally all surrendered weapons of the FMLN were to be destroyed under the sole supervision of ONUSAL between the 15 and 31 of October.

While the peace process was far from perfect, and at times timetables needed to be renegotiated, one of the great strengths of the El Salvadorian peace agreement is that it not only sought to end the conflict through comprehensive DDR programs, but it also addressed the root causes of the conflict. Before even the signing of the final peace agreement, an agreement on human rights was signed in San Jose, Costa Rica on 26 July

1990. By July of 1991, the UN had set up a Human Rights Mission to investigate human rights abuses. The peace agreement included the formation of a political party for the former FMLN and reforms in the political, judicial, and security sectors, and the establishment of a Commission on the Truth to investigate serious acts of violence committed throughout the conflict.

The Case of Aceh

Background to the Conflict

Aceh has long been considered a region of rebellion. Situated at the northernmost tip of Indonesia's largest and most northern and western island, Sumatra, Muslim traders first introduced Islam into the Indonesian archipelago through Aceh around the 12th century. Commanding a strategic location between the Indian Ocean and the Malacca Straits, it was only a matter of time before the traders established a permanent sultanate in Aceh in the 16th century. For many centuries the Acehnese sultanate remained an independent political entity, but its location and resources the envy of colonial powers.

In 1873, in a bid to keep the British in nearby Malaya from gaining a foothold on both sides of the Strait, the Dutch began a military campaign to capture Aceh. Resistance was fierce and the war became the longest and costliest in Southeast Asian colonial history. Although the last Achenese Sultan Muhammad Daud capitulated in 1903, it took seven more years for the Dutch to completely incorporate its final province of the Dutch East Indies. Though sporadic breakouts of violent rebellion persisted until the final days of Dutch rule, they took greater expression in terms of Indonesian independence rather than moves for a

separate Acehnese nation.¹⁵ On December 27, 1949 Indonesia became an independent nation.¹⁶ Debate arose over what ideology should become the basis of the new country, Islam or the more secular *Pancasila*.¹⁷ Aceh joined several other provinces in revolt when *Pancasila* was chosen as the guiding principle. The revolt, named the Darul Islam (DI, House of Islam) movement took years to put to rest. As a concession, in 1959 the Indonesian government granted Aceh the title “special territory”, granting the province, at least on paper, considerable autonomy. However, Suharto’s highly centralized and authoritarian government crushed any real expression of autonomy for Aceh.

The most recent conflict had its beginnings in 1976. That year Muhammad Hasan di Tiro, a veteran of the DI movement and descendant of Dutch resistance hero Tengku Chik di Tiro, founded the armed resistance group Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM), or Free Aceh Movement.¹⁸ There have been three phases of GAM’s resistance. After its founding in 1976, the group began to target Western companies contracted by the Indonesian government to tap the oil and natural gas reserves in the province. The government responded with heavy-handed military force against GAM. By 1982, much of GAM’s ranks had been decimated; its leaders either killed or forced into exile. Di Tiro himself went into exile in Sweden in 1979, although he has continued to serve as GAM’s de facto leader in absentia. In 1989, a

¹⁵ Edward Aspinall, “Sovereignty, the Successor State, and Universal Human Rights: History and the International Structuring of Achenese Nationalism,” *Indonesia* 73 (2002): 3-4. This article provides an excellent analysis of the evolution of Acehnese nationalist ideology. For more on this also see Kirsten Schulze, “The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 26 (2003): 246-251 and Anthony Reid, “War, Peace and the Burden of History in Aceh,” *Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 1*, June 2003.

http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps03_001.pdf (30 September 2003), 1-9.

¹⁶ Independence was declared August 17, 1945 and Indonesia celebrates this as their Independence Day, but the country had to fight the Dutch for four years before true independence was achieved.

¹⁷ The *Pancasila* is made up of two Sanskrit words meaning “five principles”. They are 1. Belief in the one and only God, 2. Just and civilized humanity, 3. The unity of Indonesia, 4. Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives, 5. Social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia.

¹⁸ Originally named the Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front.

rejuvenated GAM made its reappearance in Aceh. Predictably the Indonesian government again met the challenge with brutal force. Most of the fighting occurred between 1989 and 1992, but the government placed Aceh under *Daerah Operasi Militer* (DOM), or Military Operations Area from 1989 to 1998.¹⁹ Although GAM went underground from 1992, gross human rights abuses were conducted by the military throughout the DOM period. In 1998, with the fall of Suharto and the lifting of DOM, overseas Acehnese, many in Malaysia, began to return to the province. The January 1999 announcement by President Habibie on East Timor's referendum caused a surge of hope throughout Aceh that a similar referendum might be called in their case. It was in this charged political environment that GAM recommenced its resistance activities. Although negotiations for a peaceful resolution began in January of 2000, and several humanitarian pauses called, the conflict remained fairly constant until the signing of the COHA in December of 2002.

The conflict in Aceh has developed along with the evolution of GAM's fighting capacity and support base. When GAM first came on the scene in 1976, it was a small group of some 70 ill-equipped fighters with only a small support base in the district of Pidie.²⁰ Following the near complete eradication of the movement by 1982, the leadership attempted to regroup and strengthen the movement. From the mid-80s, several hundred GAM members were sent to Libya for military training. The political and economic causes of the rebellion had not gone away when GAM resurfaced in 1989. As a result, the sympathy and popular support for the movement had grown. GAM's return was accompanied by the distribution of literature outlining its message of a separate independent history from the rest of Indonesia. Its support base expanded beyond Pidie to Aceh Besar, Central Aceh, and

¹⁹ For an in-depth look at the causes of conflict in Aceh in the period 1989-1992, see Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992* (New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1995).

²⁰ Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 256.

North and East Aceh, and it was active in three of these districts.²¹ Still GAM had only around 750 lightly armed fighters compared to the 12,000 soldiers sent by Jakarta to counter the uprising.²² The brutal counterinsurgency campaign launched by GOI against GAM, including the use of “shock therapy”, only served to bring more civilians to the side of GAM. Again when GAM returned to prominence in 1998, the years of Indonesian military abuses under DOM, in addition to the end of Suharto’s strong-armed rule, only increased public backing for the cause. This time however, GAM had more than just a few weapons. The rise in arms smuggling operations in Southeast Asia of leftover arsenals from Indochina and new production from China, has increased the firepower available to GAM in excess of its homemade weapons and those stolen from the Indonesian military.²³ However a force of some 5,000 with around 2,000-3,000 weapons at their disposal is hardly a match for a trained military contingency of over 30,000 that prefers harsh military solutions to political ones. On the other hand Jakarta’s approach continues to lose the hearts and minds of the Acehnese people. GAM has become a more formidable opponent in terms of both its fighting capability and public support and increases the likelihood of a more protracted, destructive and deadly conflict should a peaceful solution not be found.

The Humanitarian Costs of Conflict in Aceh

The conflict in Aceh, although having some religious and ethnic underpinnings is a war primarily about a series of broken promises expressed by a combination of economic exploitation leading to gross underdevelopment of the province and horrific human rights

²¹ Kell, The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 66.

²² Kell, The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 74.

²³ Small Arms Survey 2002, 98-99; Schulze, “The Struggle for an Independent Acch,” 258.

abuses against the Acehnese people.²⁴ In Aceh these have been both a cause and an effect of the violent struggle played out in the province for decades. The protracted fighting in Aceh has resulted in many negative humanitarian effects from the acute: forced displacement, fear of physical harm such as rape, torture, or murder to the chronic: low school attendance, poor health services and retarded development. As a direct consequence in the escalation of violence in the late nineties to the present, the humanitarian costs too have grown. There is more than likely a link between the increase in armed weapons available to GAM and the escalation of violence.

Over the course of the conflict from 1976 to 2002, an estimated 12,000 have been killed; many of the victims have been non-combatants. The majority of these deaths occurred in the period beginning with the DOM in 1989 to the present, with the conflict growing more deadly each year.²⁵ Although both sides have been implicated in deaths and abuse, it is the Indonesian military blamed for the greater part. Many of the victims suffered torture at the hands of their assailants before being killed. Two of the most shocking incidents occurred on May 3, 1999 and July 23, 1999 when in the first instance soldiers opened fire on protestors in Lhokseumawe killing scores of people and wounding perhaps a hundred more; the second incident at a Muslim boarding school in which 56 students and 1 teacher were murdered and thrown into a mass grave. During DOM, the Indonesian military employed a technique known as “shock therapy”, also used in East Timor, in which bodies of tortured and murdered victims were placed in public places along roadsides for

²⁴ Anthony Smith, “Conflict in Aceh: The Consequences of a Broken Social Contract,” *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (2002): 47-55.

²⁵ Estimates are that approximately 1,000 people were killed in the first three years of DOM from 1989-1992. Since 1999, there have been approximately 4,750 killed in Aceh, with the number increasing each year: 1999: 400; 2000: 850; 2001: 1,500; 2002: 2,000.

instance as a warning to future resisters.²⁶ Since the resumption of martial law and a military offensive by the government in May 2003, a reported 1,000 people have been killed.²⁷

The people of Aceh have also faced other forms of physical harm and intimidation as a result of the violence. Women and girls have been raped or subjected to other forms of sexual abuse in Aceh.²⁸ Following the DOM period, some women began to join GAM in fighting, and they form a small but special battalion known as *Pasukan Inong Bale*, or “Children of Widows”.²⁹ Children have also been killed and abused in the conflict, but more often than not are indirectly affected by the loss of their parents, forced displacement, or even lack of schooling opportunities when their schools close or are burned down.³⁰ Some children have even joined GAM.³¹ Forced displacement has been of particular concern in Aceh since 1998. Some have fled to nearby Malaysia seeking asylum, while many are displaced in Aceh and surrounding provinces.³² In July 2003 following the resumption of military violence in the province, internally displaced persons in Aceh reached a peak of 90,000.³³ In another realm that affects the human security of Aceh’s population, human

²⁶ See Amnesty International, Indonesia: “Shock Therapy”: Restoring Order in Aceh 1989-1993, (New York: Amnesty International, 1993).

²⁷ Global IDP database, “Over 600,000 IDPs Still Wait to Return, While Aceh Crisis Causes New Displacements.”

<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewSingleEnv/IndonesiaProfile+Summary> (3 December 2003).

²⁸ See Amnesty International, Indonesia: The Impact of Impunity on Women in Aceh, (New York: Amnesty International, 2000).

²⁹ Schulze, “The Struggle for an Independent Aceh,” 255.

³⁰ See Amnesty International, Indonesia: A Cycle of Violence for Aceh’s Children, (New York: Amnesty International, 2000).

³¹ Amnesty International, Indonesia: A Cycle of Violence for Aceh’s Children, 6-7. Schulze, “The Struggle for an Independent Aceh,” 255. The children are referred to as *anak korban dom*, or “children of the victims of DOM”.

³² See Jana Mason, Shadow Plays: The Crisis of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Indonesia, and The ‘Least Risky Solution’: Malaysia’s Detention and Deportation of Acehnese Asylum Seekers. U.S. Committee for Refugees, December 1998.

³³ Global IDP database, “Over 600,000 IDPs Still Wait to Return.”

rights and humanitarian workers have in recent years become the target of intimidation, injury, and murder in Aceh.³⁴

Aceh is not a poor province. It is rich in natural resources such as oil, natural gas, timber and fertile land for cash crops. Aceh is ranked nationally as the fourth or fifth richest province in the archipelago.³⁵ The Indonesian government exports approximately \$1.3 billion worth of oil and gas from Aceh each year.³⁶ How much of those profits trickle down to the average Acehnese however is not really known as the majority continue to rely on the agricultural sector, and in the current environment of severe conflict it is hard to access reliable information of any sort. The Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia provides little information in its publishing of 2000 data, as it surprisingly does not provide information such as infant mortality or average life expectancy. In addition, where it does provide data of interest, such as income and unemployment levels or educational attainment it is listed by region and not by province, so one cannot determine where Aceh stands in comparison with other provinces. One interesting table however does indicate that injuries from natural disasters are significantly higher in Aceh than in the rest of Indonesia.³⁷ In 1999 and 2000, there were 48, 628 and 593, 209 injuries respectively as a result of natural disasters. That represents 21.7% and 50% of all such injuries recorded in Indonesia that year. The table does not provide information on what constitutes a natural disaster, nor reasons for the injuries, but it can be inferred the conflict raging in Aceh may have had cause to disrupt services to populations in need following such disasters.

³⁴ See Amnesty International, Indonesia: Activists at Risk in Aceh (New York: Amnesty International, 2000), Amnesty International, Indonesia: Acehnese Human Rights Defenders Under Attack (New York: Amnesty International, 2000), and Jana Mason, Shadow Plays: The Crisis of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Indonesia (U.S. Committee for Refugees, January 2001), 13.

³⁵ World Bank, "Promoting Peaceful Development in Aceh: An Informal Background Paper Prepared for the Preparatory Conference on Peace and Reconstruction in Aceh," 3 December 2002. <http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2002/wb-indo-03dec.pdf> (20 October 2003).

³⁶ SIPRI, SIPRI Yearbook 2002, 47.

³⁷ Statistik Indonesia, Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia 2000 (Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2001), 106.

According to a World Bank study in preparation for the reconstruction of Aceh following the signing of the COHA in December 2002, the conflict has had serious developmental consequences for the Acehnese population. Using data from a 1999 national social economic household survey (last conducted in Aceh in 1999 due to the conflict), 12.3% of households in Aceh are headed by females, compared to the 8.3% national average. Although the Acehnese reported higher levels of education and lower levels of financial poverty than the national average, they scored lower in other critical areas. People in Aceh were less likely to have electricity or access to safe drinking water. In addition, the poor in Aceh report being sick more often and are less likely to seek professional care. Student and teacher attendance is lower in Aceh than the national average. Finally the violence in Aceh has negatively affected development prospects. It is unsurprising the investment climate has deteriorated with the increase in violence. Many goods cannot make it to market because insecurity on the roads has led to irregular deliveries and higher transportation costs. As a consequence some foods are scarce and food prices have risen sharply.³⁸ The situation is only likely to have grown worse since the declaration of martial law on May 19, 2003 and again on November 6. Since the resumption of the government's military offensive in Aceh, humanitarian organizations and the international media have been restricted to the Achenese capital Banda Aceh.³⁹

The Acehnese Peace Agreement and Disarmament⁴⁰

³⁸ Kate McGeown, "Caught in Aceh's Crossfire," [BBC News 28 May 2003](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/2944110.stm) (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/2944110.stm> (13 November 2003)).

³⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Aceh Under Martial Law: Unnecessary and Dangerous Restrictions on International Humanitarian Access," [Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper September 2003](http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/aceh0903-bck.pdf). (<http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/aceh0903-bck.pdf> (24 September 2003)).

⁴⁰ Much of this section is drawn from two confidential interviews conducted with two individuals closely involved with and knowledgeable about the peace agreement and implementation and the situation on the ground in Aceh. Confidential Interview 1, conducted by phone November 20, 2003. Confidential Interview 2, conducted via email, received responses December 2, 2003.

In late 1999, two leaders of an Aceh-based GAM faction indicated interest in negotiating with the Indonesian government.⁴¹ In January of 2000 the Geneva-based NGO the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC) contacted the Indonesian government and GAM to offer its assistance in mediating the conflict. It was an opportune time as President Wahid had already appeared open to a political solution and he agreed to the mediation by the HDC. The following month the first round of discussions began in Geneva although neither side met face to face. However by May the two sides had agreed on a three-month ceasefire, or “humanitarian pause”, to begin in June. The ceasefire was extended in September and again through the following year. Although the violence on the ground never really abated and was in fact worse than ever before, the negotiations were nevertheless a historic step forward for both parties. Never before had both sides agreed to negotiation nor agreed to jointly end hostilities. The talks culminated with the extraordinary signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA-see the Appendix) on December 9, 2002.

There was to be a two-month period for confidence building before disarmament of GAM and the demilitarization of the Indonesian forces in the province were scheduled to begin on February 9, 2002. The Joint Security Council (JSC), whose function it was to investigate reports on incidents in violation of the agreement, was formed on the 20th of December. In two unexpected but significant events, the JSC handed down sanctions to both GAM and the GOI in seven incidents.⁴² The first of the unarmed international monitoring teams, to ultimately be comprised of 48 international members, 48 officials of

⁴¹ Rizal Sukma, “The Acehnese Rebellion: Secessionist Movement in Post-Suharto Indonesia,” in Non-Traditional Security Issues in Southeast Asia, ed. Andrew T.H. Tan and J.D. Kenneth Boutin (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2001), 396.

⁴² International Crisis Group, “Aceh: A Fragile Peace.” ICG Asia Report No. 47, 27 February 2003. http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/projects/asia/indonesia/reports/A400907_27022003.pdf (22 October 2003), 10-11.

the GOI, and 48 members of GAM, arrived in Aceh at the end of December, with the second and third contingents arriving in January and February respectively. The first of the Peace Zones, areas where no weapons are allowed and humanitarian assistance would be concentrated, was established at Indrapuri, Aceh Besar on 20 December 2002. A further four such zones were inaugurated by the beginning of March. After so much conflict the people of Aceh really enjoyed the freedom from fear in these zones.⁴³

Despite much jubilation by the Acehnese and a significant reduction in violence in the initial phase, neither party was prepared to begin the second phase in February. The date was then rescheduled for 9 March. The problem lay in that the day for disarmament to begin was the same time in which parties submitted their plans for conducting the disarmament phase. Despite the long animosity between the groups, HDC did not initially see this as a problem. However after the failure of either GAM to turn over any weapons or the GOI forces to fall back to defensive positions after the 9th of March, the prospect for completion of the agreement began to falter. The GOI already began making plans to launch its military offensive into Aceh, despite GAM's attempts to continue the talks. Almost immediately after the talks were suspended, the armed forces of the GOI launched its most deadly offensive thus far.

This section will now examine the COHA in terms of the internationally recognized criteria for disarmament in conflict resolution:

- *Weapons assessment.* Although the HDC did hire two disarmament specialists, no assessment was conducted of the exact numbers of the weapons or combatants of GAM.

⁴³ Confidential interview 2.

- *Targeted Audience.* Both GOI forces and GAM. According to Article 3b of the COHA – “After peace zones have been identified, the GAM will designate placement sites for its weapons. Two months after the signing of the COH and as confidence grows, GAM will begin the phased placement of its weapons, arms and ordinance in the designated sites. The JSC will also decide on a simultaneous phased relocation of TNI forces which will reformulate their mandate from a strike force to a defensive force.”
- *Targeted Items.* Expectation of all GAM weapons, with 20% to be surrendered each month. Yet without prior weapons assessment, there is no indication how this might be achieved.
- *Timeline.* The only mention of timing in the agreement is the beginning of disarmament two months after the signing of the agreement. Article 5 is actually entitled “Time Frames” yet it only indicates “all acts of violence should cease forever in Aceh” and “Both sides also agree that hostilities and all acts of violence during the first three months from the time when the JSC and the monitoring team(s) become operational are very crucial as indicator of the seriousness of the commitment from both sides.”
- *Inducements.* None designated in the agreement, but the HDC indicates the incentive for GAM was to take accountability and appear credible to the international community.
- *Collection Sites.* GAM designated 32 sites for weapons placement, and some preliminary unilateral missions were sent by HDC in early March to verify the structures were in place to fulfill GAM’s commitments.

- *Disposal of Collected Weapons.* No indication of what to do with weapons after collected and stored.

Lessons Learned - Restarting the DDR in Aceh

By comparing the cases of El Salvador and Aceh and examining the disarmament provisions in both peace agreements, it is clear the COHA was not as explicit as it could have been. With the current hard-line strategy employed by Jakarta, it is unknown when or if the peace process can begin again. However, should an opportunity arise to restart the process, we can employ some lessons learned in the comparison with El Salvador to perhaps ensure a greater chance of success. Any new agreement should try to incorporate as many of the DDR criterion as possible, in as much detail as can be negotiated *beforehand*. It is possible to make adjustments as situations arise, but imperative to begin with a strong comprehensive framework. The failure to ascertain the number of weapons held by GAM is the first of several oversights. Although ONUSAL did have difficulty in determining the numbers of weapons held by the FMLN, it is important to begin with at least a baseline number. Requesting GAM to provide information on its arsenal and troops adds a further opportunity for them to prove their accountability to the agreement. The decision to have the JSC determine during the confidence building phase when and where TNI (Indonesian military) forces would relocate is also of consequence. This should be determined by the GOI in negotiations and set forth in the COHA.

Timing is extremely important in the implementation of any peace agreement. Although timelines often need to be renegotiated, it is imperative to provide one as complete as possible. The timeline provided in the COHA is very vague. In the El Salvador case, the separation of forces and therefore disarmament began almost immediately after the signing

of the ceasefire agreement. This presented an immediate symbol of compliance and confidence building on both sides. In the Aceh case, if 20% of GAM's weapons were turned in and perhaps 10% of GOI forces (if the total amount in the province is to be reduced by one half, though this too is left underdetermined in the agreement) left the province within the first week following the signing of the agreement, this could symbolize a greater level of confidence and adherence to the commitment for peace than any other measure. By waiting two months following the signing of the COHA, the "shock of peace" period was lost. The first weapons collected from GAM should be publicly destroyed to instill confidence in the Acehnese people that the parties are indeed working toward peace. Few Acehnese had confidence the peace would last.⁴⁴ In Mali for example, weapons collected as part of demobilization were burned in a public ceremony called the Flame of Peace. This ceremony was a strong symbolic gesture signifying reconciliation and an end to hostilities. A similar gesture in Aceh would be much appreciated. The storage and disposal of further weapons collected should also be prepared for as part of the agreement, not to be decided on at a later date. In some places a few of the collected weapons have been used to create peace monuments or as parts of displays in peace museums. Either might also serve as a powerful reminder of the hard won peace in Aceh.

Inducements for GAM to turn in weapons should be provided. The HDC admits this was a problem.⁴⁵ A complete demobilization and reintegration program ought to be offered to GAM combatants as many have little money or jobs. The vague promise of an election for Aceh only complicated matters, as Jakarta understood it to mean that the Acehnese would merely participate in the nationwide elections while GAM chose to see it as

⁴⁴ Confidential interview 2.

⁴⁵ Confidential interview 1.

the possibility of a referendum. Any reference to an election should be unequivocally spelled out in any agreement for peace in Aceh.

However, the target audience of the disarmament was both the GAM and the GOI, but while the incentive to achieve credibility seems to have lain only with GAM, the inducement for the GOI to adhere to their side of the agreement is less apparent. Before negotiations had even completely broken down, Jakarta had already planned its military offensive in April.⁴⁶ GAM wished to continue the negotiations and had already designated the weapons collection sites, but the GOI did not want to reduce its check posts, therefore completing their end of disarmament.⁴⁷ Also in the agreement, the GOI guaranteed it was in control of its TNI forces. This is a very contentious issue. Perhaps requiring TNI to participate in talks and in signing a future COHA might bring more pressure to bear on them to uphold the agreement.

Conclusion

Although this paper has dealt almost exclusively with comparing the disarmament provisions in the Aceh and El Salvador peace plans, no two cases of intra-state conflict are alike, nor can the prescriptive for implementing DDR be the same in every case. There are a few compelling differences in the cases worth exploring further. First is that the Aceh case is one of separatist struggle. GAM's insistence that the peace agreement was merely a stepping stone to independence, and that even mention of elections in the COHA held suggestion to a referendum, may indeed have been one of the weaknesses of the agreement. The government of Indonesia held out that autonomy was the end game; although it is not

⁴⁶ Anthony Reid, "War, Peace and the Burden of History in Aceh," Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 1, June 2003. http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps03_001.pdf (30 September 2003), 14-15.

⁴⁷ Confidential interview 2.

surprising the rebels were unwilling to accept this considering the failure of autonomy in the province before. In El Salvador there was conflict throughout the country, even spilling over the borders into neighboring countries. Aceh is but one of Indonesia's 27 provinces and administrative regions. One can certainly question the efficacy of waging a costly and protracted war in one of the provinces, but after the embarrassment of East Timor, the Indonesian military and government under Megawati are even more committed to the territorial integrity of the country.

A second perhaps crucial difference is in the timing of the conflicts. The El Salvadorian conflict reached a peace agreement in 1992 at the end of the Cold War. The end of financing from the United States and other international actors severely restricted the access to weapons for both sides. The possibility of continued confrontation without a reliable source of arms appeared bleak on both sides and brought them to the negotiating table. Aceh however has had few if any international champions. In fact, it has been through the mediation of the HDC, which as perhaps for the first time legitimized GAM in the international arena. Also the resurgence of the conflict *after* the Cold War ended has perhaps provided GAM access to caches of weapons previously unavailable. The rise in transnational crime in Southeast Asia and Aceh's strategic location has probably aided in the proliferation of arms to GAM.

Thirdly, the existence or non-existence of a gun culture may or may not be important. In Central America, the heavy drug trafficking in the region leads also to heavy arms smuggling and use, but the region is also beset by a long-established gun culture.⁴⁸ Gun possession is tied into a concept of male virility and machismo. This is not the case in Indonesia. Clashes with the military may involve weapons, but much violence is still

⁴⁸ Edward J. Laurance and William H. Godnick, "Weapons Collection in Central America: El Salvador and Guatemala" http://sand.miis.edu/research/2000/jan2000/bicc_elsgua.pdf (10 October 2003), 3.

committed with traditional knives or with the hands in versions of mob justice.⁴⁹ In Aceh the civilians do not possess guns.⁵⁰ Many of the GAM fighters do not even regularly possess weapons. Therefore the reasons for GAM's reluctance to disarm probably do not lay in the culture of gun possession, but instead an unwillingness to expose themselves without any weapons to the Indonesian military, which continually shows a propensity for violent retaliation. The lack of a gun culture may actually make the disarmament process easier once it begins.

We find too a difference in the third party mediators for the peace agreement and implementation. In El Salvador it was the United Nations, a legitimate international actor with a large staff, finances, peacekeepers, extensive experience and coercive power. The HDC is a little known humanitarian NGO, only established in 1999 and getting its first feet wet in the Aceh conflict. There are concerns as to whether the HDC has the capacity and dedication to stay with the process through its completion, even if it takes years. However it may be far too soon to brush off the HDC. They deserve a lot of credit for bringing the two parties to the negotiating table, which had previously never been done. Although the COHA collapsed within six months, the initial phase of the agreement brought about an unprecedented peace to Aceh. Prior to the signing of the COHA, an average of 10 people were killed a day, for several months afterwards there were no casualties.⁵¹ It is important to note the United Nations too is not successful in all of its peace building exercises. Even in El Salvador the process took years to reach completion. Recently other conflicts have been

⁴⁹ For an interesting look at violence in Indonesia see the excellent recent volume *Roots of Violence in Indonesia: Contemporary Violence in Historical Perspective*, edited by Freek Colombijn and J. Thomas Lindblad, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002. Many of the essays, especially those discussing the recent spate of public mob slayings, illustrates that Indonesians generally do not result to armed violence although violence does indeed occur.

⁵⁰ Confidential interview 2.

⁵¹ Confidential interview 2.

mediated through non-UN channels such as in Nepal and Sri Lanka with some levels of success as well. This may perhaps spell the beginning of the “new humanitarianism” in conflict mediation and resolution.⁵²

Finally, laying down arms is only the beginning of the long path toward peace. What the failure may come down to is the lack of political will on both sides to complete the process. Both the El Salvadorian government and the FMLN were committed to ending the battle between them. However in Aceh, whether it was because of disagreement over autonomy and a referendum on independence or a lack of trust on both sides for the other to follow through with their side of the bargain, it may have been that after so many years of conflict both parties were not quite prepared to take the next step. No matter how detailed the agreement is, without the political will to see it through to the end, it will not succeed. It is difficult to know in the current situation of martial law when or if the two sides will have an opportunity to sit down and work again towards a solution. Hopefully both sides will come to understand that restarting the process is in the best interest of the people in Aceh. I would like to conclude by quoting one of my interviewees who provides a ray of hope for a resolution in Aceh:

Finally, people always talk about the failure of the COHA. But if you look at the outcome of it, at least in the beginning of the process, it was really amazing. That proved that the RI and GAM could stop fighting and provide a peaceful environment – peace is not impossible in Aceh.

⁵² Kira Kay, “The ‘New Humanitarianism’: The Henry Dunant Center and the Aceh Peace Negotiations, Woodrow Wilson School Case Study, February 2003
<http://www.wws.princeton.edu/~cases/papers/newhumanit.html> (30 September 2003).

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Appendix

Map of Aceh



Timeline For Aceh

(majority from “Aceh: A Timeline of Insurgency” at CNN.com)

About 12th century AD -- Islam is believed to have first entered the archipelago through Aceh.

1871 -- Aceh is occupied by the Dutch, one of the last parts of future Indonesia to come under Dutch colonial rule.

1873 -- Dutch declare war and invade Aceh.

1903 – Sultan Muhammad Daud surrenders to the Dutch. There follows intermittent conflict with the Dutch until 1942.

August 17, 1945 -- Indonesia declares independence from the Netherlands.

December 17, 1949 -- Aceh province is established and Teungku Daud Beureueh is elected governor.

December 27, 1949 -- The Dutch East Indies ceases to exist and becomes the Federal Republic of Indonesia, led by Sukarno.

August 8, 1950 -- The Council of Ministers divide Indonesia into ten provinces, incorporating Aceh into the province of North Sumatra. The decree on the establishment of Aceh province is disregarded.

January 23, 1951 -- Prime Minister M. Natsir announces the dissolution of the Aceh province and absorption into North Sumatra.

September 20, 1953 -- Daud Beureueh declares Aceh independent from Indonesia as part of Darul Islam movement. Numerous Acehnese back the rebellion.

1959 -- After prolonged conflict with rebels, the central government gives Aceh "special territory" status, conferring on it a high degree of autonomy in religious, educational and cultural matters.

1965 -- Suharto succeeds Sukarno as head-of-state.

December 4, 1976 -- Teungku Hasan M. di Tiro establishes the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) for an independent Islamic state. The Indonesian government responds with mass arrests of GAM members.

1977 -- Disaffection with economic conditions and political oppression under Suharto's regime leads a local election victory over the ruling Golkar party.

1982 -- Second Golkar defeat in local elections.

1989 -- The GAM, under its new name "Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front" (ASNLF), emerges from underground activity, attacking police and military installations.

1990 -- Aceh is designated a "special combat zone" (DOM) by the Indonesian army, which then directs counter insurgency operations against the ASNLF. An eight-year period of fighting follows leading to the death and/or disappearance of at least 760 people.

August 1998 -- Increasing protests from locals and human rights activists, as well as the fall of president Suharto see Aceh's military rule lifted.

May 2000 -- President Abdurrahman Wahid reduces the presence of non-Acehnese forces in the province.

May 12, 2000 -- The government under President Wahid signs a three-month humanitarian ceasefire agreement with GAM representatives in Geneva, in order to end the violence in the territory.

May 18, 2000 -- A human rights tribunal convicts 24 Indonesian soldiers and one civilian of murdering 57 villagers during a separatist uprising in 1999.

June 2, 2000 -- A three-month ceasefire is implemented in Aceh.

December 2000 -- President Wahid visits Banda Aceh, the capital of the province, for two hours. Rebel leaders refuse to meet Wahid. About 12 people die in the lead-up to visit bringing the year's tally to about 800, double the number killed in 1999.

January 19, 2001-- The seven-month ceasefire is extended for another month, following all-party talks in Switzerland.

March 2001-- Dozens of angry soldiers raze 15 shops, two houses and a village council office after searching for insurgents. Amnesty International says pro-Jakarta forces are using intimidation tactics to chase human rights activists out of the province so they can attack separatist rebels.

May 12, 2001-- A Memorandum of Understanding is signed by Indonesian and Free Aceh Movement leaders implementing a continued ceasefire, with a view to kick-starting the peace process.

August 2001-- Indonesia's new leader, Megawati Sukarnoputri, apologizes to the provinces of Aceh for decades of human rights abuses and promises to restore order in the region.

August 2001-- Security forces announce the discovery of a mass grave containing 48 bodies near Lhong village in the west of the province.

September 2001-- President Megawati visits Aceh, but the talks end fruitlessly.

January 2002-- GAM military commander is shot dead during a raid on his jungle base.

July 2002-- Indonesian Military Commander Gen. Ryamizard Ryacudu says the military and police in Aceh will take tough action against members of GAM, branding the separatists as "terrorists."

July 2002-- Chief Security Minister Bambang Yudhoyono says the government will investigate suggestions that the region's Geneva-based peace talks negotiator, the Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, is taking the side of separatists.

August 2002-- The government issues a 3-month peace deadline to GAM, which is later extended for a further month.

November 2002-- Security forces encircle the Paya Cot Trieng village, north Aceh, with 500 to 1,000 troops in an attempt to force them to sign a peace agreement. The troops fire mortars and rockets from helicopters at the area.

December 9, 2002-- GAM and government of Indonesia sign COH agreement.

January 2002-- Jakarta grants Aceh special autonomy -- including the implementation of Islamic shariah law and greater revenue-sharing of its natural resources.

February 9, 2003-- Disarmament of GAM and demilitarization of province by Indonesian military is supposed to begin but both sides ask for an extension until March 9.

May 19, 2003 -- Indonesia begins military action after peace talks in Tokyo between Indonesian officials and rebels collapse, apparently because rebels would not give up their demand for outright independence.

November 6, 2003 – Martial law extended for possible six more months in Aceh.

**Cessation of Hostilities
Framework Agreement Between
Government of the Republic of Indonesia
And the Free Aceh Movement**

Preamble

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia (GOI) and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) have been engaged in a process of dialogue since January 2000 and concur that the priority in Aceh is the security and welfare of the people and therefore agree on the need for finding an immediate peaceful solution to the conflict in Aceh. On 10 May 2002, the GOI and GAM issued a Joint Statement set out below:

1. On the basis of the acceptance of the NAD Law as a starting point, as discussed on 2-3 February 2002, to a democratic all-inclusive dialogue involving all elements of Acehnese society that will be facilitated by HDC in Aceh. This process will seek to review elements of the NAD Law through the expression of the views of the Acehnese people in a free and safe manner. This will lead to the election of a democratic government in Aceh, Indonesia.
2. To enable this process to take place both parties agree to work with all speed on an agreement on cessation of hostilities with an adequate mechanism for accountability of the parties to such an agreement. This will also provide the opportunity and environment for much needed socio-economic and humanitarian assistance to the people of Aceh.

The GOI and GAM share the common objective to meet the aspirations of the people of Aceh to live in security with dignity, peace, prosperity, and justice. In order to meet the aspirations of the people of Aceh and permit them to administer themselves freely and democratically, the GOI and GAM agree to a process which leads to an election in 2004 and the subsequent establishment of a democratically elected government in Aceh, Indonesia, in accordance with the review of the NAD Law, as provided for in point 1 of the 10 May 2002 Joint Statement.

To this end, the GOI will ensure and GAM will support the development of a free and fair electoral process in Aceh, which will be designed to ensure the broadest participation of all elements of Acehnese society.

In light of the delicate nature of the confidence building process, the GOI and GAM further appeal for the support of all elements of society and request that no party undertake any action which is inconsistent with this Agreement and may jeopardize the future security and welfare of the people of Aceh.

The immediate requirement is to ensure the cessation of hostilities and all acts of violence, including, intimidation, destruction of property and any offensive and criminal action. Offensive and criminal action is deemed to include violent actions such as attacking, shooting, engaging in torture, killing, abducting bombing, burning, robbing, extorting, threatening, terrorising, harassing, illegally arresting people, raping, and conducting illegal searches.

Throughout the peace process the maintenance of law and order in Aceh will continue to be the responsibility of the Indonesian Police (Polri). In this context, the mandate and mission of Brimob will be reformulated to strictly conform to regular police activities and as such will no longer initiate offensive actions against members of GAM not in contravention of the Agreement.

The JSC will be the point of reference for all complaints regarding police functions and action that are deemed to be in contravention of the spirit and letter of the Cessation of Hostilities (COH) Agreement. As such, the JSC will be responsible for defining, identifying and investigating when and if the police have breached their mandate.

With this general understanding, and to bring the peace process forward to the next phase, both parties hereby agree on the following:

Article 1: Objectives of the Cessation of Hostilities and All Acts of Violence

- a) Since both sides have thus agreed that, from now on, enmity between them should be considered a thing of the past, the peace process, which is continued by an agreement on this phase, will proceed by building further confidence and both sides will prove to each other that they are serious about achieving this ultimate common objective.
- b) The objectives of the cessation of hostilities and all acts of violence between both parties are (i) to proceed to the next phase of the peace process, as mutually agreed on 10 May 2002 in Switzerland; (ii) to continue the confidence building process with a view to eliminating all suspicions and creating a positive and cooperative atmosphere which will bring the conflict in Aceh to a peaceful conclusion; and, (iii) to enable, provided hostilities and all acts of violence cease, for the peace process to proceed to the next phases, i.e. the delivery of humanitarian, rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance.

Article 2: Commitment by Both Sides to Cease Hostilities and All Acts of Violence

- a) Both sides explicitly express their commitment to meet the terms of this Agreement to cease hostilities and all forms of violence toward each other and toward the people in Aceh, by implementing the steps stipulated in this Agreement. In expressing such commitment, both sides guarantee that they are in full control of, respectively, TNI/Polri and GAM forces on the ground. GOI and GAM commit to control those groups that do not share their objectives but claim to be part of their forces.
- b) Both sides further commit themselves to immediately after the signing of this Agreement to thoroughly inform their respective forces on the ground of the terms of this Agreement, and to instruct them to cease hostilities immediately.
- c) Both sides agree that, should there be other parties taking advantage of the situation and disturbing the peaceful atmosphere, they will endeavour to take joint action against them to restore the peace.
- d) During this confidence-building period, both sides agree that they will not increase their military strength, which includes re-deployment of forces, increase in military personnel or military equipment into Aceh.
- e) HDC is requested to strictly facilitate the implementation of this Agreement.
- f) Both parties will allow civil society to express without hindrance their democratic rights.

Article 3: Joint Security Committee (JSC)

- a) The senior leadership in charge of security from each side will meet, in order to establish the initial contact and understanding between both sides. They should also (i) reactivate the Joint Security Committee (JSC), which was established during the implementation of the Humanitarian Pause, and (ii) commence discussion, in order to reach agreement expeditiously, on a plan of

action for the JSC in discharging its duties.

b) The functions of JSC are: (i) to formulate the process of implementation of this Agreement; (ii) to monitor the security situation in Aceh; (iii) to undertake full investigation of any security violations; (iv) in such cases, to take appropriate action to restore the security situation and to agree beforehand on the sanctions to be applied, should any party violate this Agreement; (v) to publish weekly reports on the security situation in Aceh; (vi) to ensure that no new paramilitary force is created to assume previous functions of Brimob, and (vii) to design and implement a mutually agreed upon process of demilitarisation. Regarding this last task, the JSC will designate what will be called Peace Zones ([see Art. 4\(a\)](#)). After peace zones have been identified, the GAM will designate placement sites for its weapons. Two months after the signing of the COH and as confidence grows, GAM will begin the phased placement of its weapons, arms and ordinance in the designated sites. The JSC will also decide on a simultaneous phased relocation of TNI forces which will reformulate their mandate from a strike force to a defensive force. The GOI has the right to request HDC to undertake no-notice verification of the designated sites. With the growth in confidence of both parties in the process the phased placement of GAM weapons will be completed within a period of five months ([see attached note](#)).

c) The composition of JSC will be senior officials appointed as representatives of the GOI and the GAM and a senior third party personality of high standing agreed upon by both sides. Each senior official from the three parties are to be accompanied by up to four persons as members. The heads of delegations from both sides have to be senior and have the authority to be able to take decisions on the spot.

The third party (HDC) personality needs to be able to command the respect and high regard of both sides in order to be able to assist in resolving problems, as they arise.

d) In order to perform these functions, the JSC is to be assisted by a monitoring team or monitoring teams, which would be provided security guarantees by both sides in monitoring the security situation and in investigating any violation.

e) The composition of each of the monitoring teams are appointed officials as representatives of the High Command of the security forces of the GOI and the High Command of the forces of the GAM in Aceh and a senior third party military officer agreed upon by both sides reporting to the senior third party personality of high standing in the JSC.

f) JSC and the monitoring team(s) would be provided with the necessary technical and administrative staff and logistical support. The HDC is requested to facilitate the establishment of these bodies by providing the necessary funds, logistical and administrative facilities.

g) It is agreed upon that the JSC and the monitoring team(s) will be established and be operational within one month of the signing of this Agreement. Civil society has the right to provide inputs to the JSC.

Article 4: Establishment of "Peace Zones"

a) Following the signing of the COH Agreement, the JSC, with the direct participation of the senior leadership for security from both sides, will immediately identify and prepare locations of conflict to be designated as "Peace Zones". This would facilitate, considerably the work of the JSC since it could focus its attention on these areas in establishing and maintaining security, and these zones, provided peace could be established, will be the focus of the initial humanitarian, rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance.

b) For the first two months after the signing, both parties will relocate to defensive positions as agreed upon by the JSC. Adjustments to these locations could be made by the JSC in order to

separate the forces of both parties with sufficient distance to avoid contact or confrontation. Forces of both parties will refrain from operations, movements, activities or any provocative acts that could lead to contact or confrontation with each other.

- c) In order to build trust and confidence during these crucial months, these zones and surroundings will be monitored by the tripartite monitoring teams. The JSC will be informed by both parties of any significant movements or activities in these areas.
- d) POLRI will be able to investigate criminal activities in these areas in consultation with the JSC.
- e) The designation of identified areas of demilitarised zones such as schools, mosques, health institutions and public places, bazaars, Achehnese meunasahs, market-places, foodstalls, communication centres including bus-terminals, taxi-stations, ferry-terminals, public roads, river transportation services, and fishing ports.

Article 5: Time Frames

- a) Both sides agree that hostilities and all acts of violence by both sides should cease forever in Aceh.
- b) Both sides also agree that hostilities and all acts of violence during the first three months from the time when the JSC and the monitoring team(s) become operational are very crucial as indicator of the seriousness of the commitment from both sides. If indeed hostilities and all acts of violence could decrease dramatically, or even cease altogether, during this first three month period, the Achehnese and other Indonesian people, and the international community, would consider that the peace process would most likely succeed.
- c) During the period between the signing of this Agreement and the time when the JSC and the monitoring team(s) become operational, both signatories to this Agreement commit themselves to exercise the utmost restraint by not making any public statement that would inflame the feeling and sentiment of the other side, including the people, and by ensuring that their forces will not initiate any hostile act toward the other.

Article 6: All-Inclusive Dialogue

The parties agree to support the process of All-Inclusive Dialogue in Aceh as provided for in the Joint Statement of 10 May 2002. The parties agree to ensure, through this Agreement, the necessary security and freedom of movement for all participants in the All-Inclusive Dialogue to enable the process to be conducted in a safe and fair manner, reflecting the views of all elements of Achehnese society. The parties reconfirm their agreement that the process of All-Inclusive Dialogue be facilitated by HDC.

Article 7: Public Information and Communications

- a) To ensure national and international support for the peace process in Aceh, the Agreement of 10 May 2002, and this Agreement and its implementation have to be publicised as widely as possible within one month of the signing of this Agreement. The process of implementation has to be as transparent as possible and the people have to be regularly informed of the progress made and difficulties encountered.
- b) Communications to the public will be given priority, especially through the print and electronic media. Television and radio programmes have to be devised to enable obtaining inputs from the general public provided that they are conducted in a fair and balanced manner. The JSC remains the final reference on this matter.

- c) Other media, such as community meetings, seminars, flyers, bumper stickers, T-shirts, and others could also be considered, as appropriate.
- d) The HDC is requested to look for sources of funding these public information and communication activities.

Article 8: Joint Council

A Joint Council will be established, composed of the most senior representatives of the GOI and the GAM, and of the third party (HDC). The function of this Joint Council will be to resolve all issues or disputes arising out of the implementation of this Agreement, which cannot be resolved by other Committees or Structures established under this Agreement. The Joint Council may amend the articles and provisions of this Agreement.

Article 9: Amendment or Termination

This Agreement may only be amended by agreement between the two parties in the Joint Council. Should either party wish to unilaterally terminate the Agreement then they are obligated to first bring the issue to the Joint Council and engage in and support all efforts by the Joint Council to resolve the problem within a sufficient period of time (no less than 30 days). If the Joint Council is unable to resolve the matter, then either party has the right to unilaterally withdraw from the Agreement.

For the Government
of the Republic of Indonesia
Amb. Mr. S. Wiryono

For the Leadership
of the Free Aceh Movement
Dr. Zaini Abdullah

Witnessed by
Henry Dunant Centre
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Mr. Martin Griffiths

Interview Questions

1. Was the disarmament component a central feature of the COH agreement? How comprehensive was it? Can you tell me the details?
2. Was the JSC ever established? Were it and the monitoring teams in place on time?
3. The monitoring teams. Were they to be armed? In uniform?
4. Were the Peace Zones ever designated? If yes, where? How many? If no, why not?
5. The disarmament of GAM was to take place beginning February 9th. Were any weapons collected at all?
6. What incentives, if any, were offered for disarmament/weapons collection?
7. Was only GAM encouraged to turn in weapons or was the local population also encouraged to do so?
8. Is there a general perception that the civilian population is in the possession of armed weapons or only GAM?
9. Were any kind of negotiations/regulations agreed upon with respect to the storage of arms?
10. Was there sufficient briefing to the general public in the conflict area on the disarming process?
11. Was there cooperation with the local media in explaining the steps of disarmament you were carrying out? Were leaflets distributed?
12. How was TNI to be involved, if at all, in the disarmament process?
13. Did HDC conduct a weapons assessment survey prior to or during the peace agreement?
14. How would you rate the overall importance of the disarmament task for the overall success of the peace process?
15. What were the three major lessons learned from your/ your organization's experience?
16. What other question or questions should I have asked here and how would you answer it/them?