In theoretical terms, peace in Aceh was barely possible. The transition from conflict and disaster to peace and new development by way of democracy flies in the face of conventional wisdom and most theoretical predictions. On the one hand the dominant discourse for many years has favoured the ‘liberal peace’ approach via political and economic liberalisation. On the other hand many critics have recently argued that too many freedoms and too much democracy generate more conflict and abuse of power than is resolves and that democracy should thus be ‘sequenced’ (e.g. Mansfield and Snyder, 2005). In Indonesia, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Vice-President Jusuf Kalla have attributed violence in Poso, Central Sulawesi to excessive democracy (opting instead to promote peace through secret and profitable deals with powerful elites and big business).

Recent events in Aceh suggest otherwise. Firstly, this book argues that Aceh proves the ‘sequencing of democracy’ thesis wrong. Peace and development in Aceh is due to more, not less, democracy. Secondly, the book also maintains that it is a question of ‘social democratic’ rather than ‘liberal’ peace. Logically therefore,
current and future problems should be addressed by deepening rather than abandoning this original framework for peace building.

So what more exactly was democracy’s role? How was democracy even possible in Aceh? Is it still relevant to the problems and challenges facing Aceh today – and is it sustainable? These are some of the critical questions addressed in this book.¹

We begin below with an analysis of why peace was possible in Aceh, paving the way for the identification and analysis of current problems in subsequent chapters. Thereafter this chapter summarises the main arguments presented in the subsequent chapters followed by the main conclusions of the book as a whole.

Entrenched problems

Up until mid-2005, the predominant view on Aceh was that most indicators spoke against sustainable peace and effective reconstruction (e.g. Aspinall, 2005a; Shultze, 2005). It is true that the tsunami disaster had created a sudden impetus for unified endeavours. Peace negotiations had begun and the influx of foreign aid, experts and reporters opened Aceh up to the world. Yet senior analysts pointed to the importance of five deeply entrenched problems.

The first was the problem of ethnic nationalism. By the mid-seventies, Acehnese opposing the dominance and ‘colonialism’ of Jakarta had given up on previous ideas of an Indonesian federation. Aceh, it was now argued, was special, a region with its own specific history and which had nothing in common with the rest of the archipelago. Seen from this perspective, Aceh had the right to ‘regain’ independence under the old Sultanate and to launch an armed struggle for liberation under the leadership of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka). It is true that the student

¹ Draft versions of this text have been written and updated since December 2004 along with research on and support for democracy building in Aceh. Numerous colleagues, reflective activist and friends have contributed assistance, comments and advice. It is impossible to mention everyone by names, and some need to remain anonymous – but warm thanks to all of you! Valuable comments on texts towards the final version were provided by Teresa Birks in addition to Ed Aspinall, Shadia Marhaban, M. Nur Djuli, Gerry van Klinken, Kristian Stokke, Gyda Sindre, Silje Vevatne as well as the participants in the EUROSEAS Aceh workshop in Naples 2006 and several seminars in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Norway.
activists in Aceh who grew strong after the fall of Soeharto were primarily motivated by opposition to Indonesian oppression and authoritarian exploitation. Yet they too found no alternative to the idea of ‘regaining’ pre-colonial independence. Thus there was no major challenge to ethnic nationalism.

Identity politics was particularly worrying within Aceh itself. Some twenty percent of the population are non-ethnic Acehnese. Seven percent are Javanese. On the one hand GAM turned at times against the Javanese as part of its strategy to render Aceh ungovernable. (Schulze, 2004) On the other, the military in particular exploited minorities’ fear of domination as part of its strategy to fight GAM and boost militias.

The second stumbling block was the ingrained preoccupation within the Jakarta administration, military leadership and most members of parliament with a unitary and centrally led Indonesian nation. For instance, the military and its political supporters tried to prevent foreign relief and reconstruction efforts from also reducing people’s dependence on military and central state ‘protection’. Militia groups, moreover, had been initiated, partly like in East Timor. It is true that the new President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Vice-President Jusuf Kalla had a less hawkish track record and a fresh electoral mandate to professionalise the army, sustain decentralisation and promote peace by negotiations. But even after the tsunami disaster they made it very clear that while much was negotiable they were not prepared to make any compromises around what GAM really wanted: independence or (as indicated in the beginning of the Helsinki negotiations) meaningful constitutional change (Merikallio, 2006; Kingsbury, 2006). And given that GAM in turn insisted on independence or the nearest thing to it and needed a ceasefire to heal its wounds as well as hoping to gain credit for facilitating relief and reconstruction, it was easy to predict that there would be a deadlock. In fact the starting positions in the new peace negotiations under Ahtisaari were much the same as during the previous talks facilitated by the Henry Dunant Centre. (Aspinall and Crouch, 2003)

Third, there was a risk that Yudhoyono and Kalla would apply similar conflict management approaches in Aceh as they had in a number of other disturbed areas during their previous periods in office as ministers. In the Maluku and Poso, peace had been
negotiated secretly with local elites by promising them development funds and beneficial positions in profitable cooperation with sections of the military and business contractors. This approach resulted in new, equally divisive problems which exacerbated corruption, exploitation and environmental destruction.\(^2\) Thus, if a similar approach were applied in even more disturbed Aceh, the prospects for both peace and reconstruction would be bleak. Corruption was already widespread among politicians and bureaucrats in Aceh (e.g. Sulaiman with Klinken, 2007; McGibbon, 2006), and the military in particular but GAM too were deeply involved in the primitive accumulation of capital through illegal taxation, exploitation and trade of natural resources as well as security rackets and extortion (Schulze, 2004; Kingsbury and McCulloch; 2006, Aspinall, 2007a: Ch 6; Large, 2008).

A fourth concern was that GAM and the pro-independence civil society campaigners might see little advantage in entering into negotiations and constructive compromises. Both were in weakened positions and short of alternatives other than intractable resistance. GAM had suffered severe military losses and human suffering (among combatants as well as supporters) during President Megawati’s renewed military campaign during 2003 and 2004 (ICG, 2005) but had not been offered any alternative other than to admit defeat. Civil society activists had experienced a number of set-backs too. The middle class groups that had attempted to extend democratic transformation from Jakarta to Aceh had been unable to alter the predominance of corrupt practices. And the more radical students convened under SIRA (Aceh Referendum Information Centre - Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh) that gained initial momentum by calling for a referendum failed to receive the support of the international community as per East Timor. The civil society groups had little success in their attempts to facilitate an end to violence and implement humanitarian measures through the Henry Dunant Center in Geneva. (Aspinall and Crouch, 2003; Aspinall, 2007a) As both GAM and their civil society allies were thus

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\(^2\) These issues will be discussed further in Chapter 4 of this book. For the dynamics of local conflicts see e.g. van Klinken (2007) and Aragon (2007) and for the persistent problems of corruption in Poso e.g. ICG (2008a) I also draw on interviews with local democracy activists in Palu, Poso and Tentena in January 2007 and in the Maluku in April 2007.
short of alternatives, the risk was that they would either be forced to negotiate with Jakarta in a distinctly disadvantages position or hold on to the conviction (as was the case in the earlier negotiations) that time was on their side since Indonesia was in any case a colonial and elitist construct that was about to crumble since the dismantling of Soeharto’s regime (c.f. Schulze, 2006:243).

The fifth and final major obstacle was growing international scepticism of attempts to build peace through democracy, as attempted in the Helsinki talks. Scholars like Mansfield and Snyder (2005) had already pointed to the increasingly negative experiences from promoting so called liberal peace (Paris, 2004; Richmond, 2007) – e.g. by promoting and combining liberal democracy and markets. This critique resembles much of Samuel Huntington’s (1965) old argument that liberal modernisation lead to chaos (and radical popular revolt) if solid political and administrative institutions are not established a priori. If necessary, institutions for the rule of law, efficient governance and property rights must thus be introduced by authoritarian means, such as Indonesia in 1965 or the ‘middle class coups’ in Latin America that followed. The slogan at the time was ‘politics of order’. The similar contemporary argument is that freedoms and elections without pre-existing, stable institutions for the rule of law and governance in particular tend to foster identity politics and thus likely to engender more conflict. There is thus, the argument goes, a need to ‘sequence democracy’ through elitist crafting of established ‘rules of the game’ ahead of popular sovereignty.\(^3\) In the Indonesian context, the most frequent thesis is not a new version of ‘middle class coups,’ as is the case in Thailand, but that there must be greater political stability and economic opportunities prior to ‘excessive’ freedoms and elections. Otherwise, according Vice President Jusuf Kalla amongst others, politicians are likely to abuse religious and ethnic solidarities to mobilise votes and gain political power as was the case in the Maluku and Poso.\(^4\)

By early 2005, this logic was of course applied to Aceh too. Weak

\(^3\) For a more extensive critical review, see Carothers, (2007a and 2007b.)

\(^4\) For instance Kalla’s recent statements to this effect in *Jakarta Post* April 8, 2007 (‘Peaceful solution to conflict cheaper: Kalla’), January 17, 2008 (‘Prosperity the goal, not democracy’), June 16, 2008 (‘Kalla slams inefficient poll system’), and September 2, 2008 (‘Vice President pushes for simplified political system’)
institutions concerned with the rule of law, ‘good governance’, civil rights and the limitation of military power coupled with GAM violence had already undermined the previous peace talks (McGibbon, 2006, p.344 ff). In this context therefore, it was argued that more democracy would be the cause of more problems rather than offering any solutions.

**Beyond crisis management: conflict transformation**

Given the emerging politics of ethnicity, the intractable nationalism on both sides, the possible application of the same ‘profitable peace’ approach as in other disturbed areas, the risk that hard pressed combatants and civil society activists would opt for a waiting game and foster the disintegration of Indonesia, and the new international preference for elitist institution building ahead of popular sovereignty – given all these obstacles the prevailing response after the tsunami was to prevent yet another catastrophe. Experience from other disaster areas indicated that the problems might be further exacerbated with the influx of money, donors, experts, civil society groups, businesspeople, smart politicians and bureaucrats and more. True enough, Indonesia was far from being a failed state like Somalia. Even conflict ridden Aceh had a comparatively strong public administration and of course military organisation. Yet the disaster was of such magnitude, Indonesia’s reputation for abuse of power, corruption and violence so widespread, and previous attempts at peace and development in Aceh so poor, that the immediate reaction was to protect reconstruction and development in Aceh from potential abuses and failures. Moreover, the new regime in Jakarta was keen to manifest good behaviour and attract foreign collaboration and investment. This called for strong international presence, the participation of various NGOs, and cooperation between donors and comparatively disciplined central level administrators, officers and development experts. (Barron, 2008; Barron and Burke, 2008)

At times conditions were chaotic. The military and orthodox nationalists tried to protect their dominant positions. Business entered into the arena and the civil war continued, albeit at a low level. Meanwhile, peace negotiations in Helsinki continued. The main expectation was that they would at least help resolve the
‘security problem’ so that relief and reconstruction work could proceed more effectively.

Yet what seemed like a miracle began to unfold. As the second round of negotiations were about to end in a deadlock, a tentative agreement was reached to discuss ‘self-government’ rather than the Jakarta agenda of decentralisation and special autonomy only. This opened up the potential for constructive discussion of the political role of GAM as well as that of other nationalists and dissidents in Aceh. And as soon as the concept of power-sharing was abandoned, the only possible framework was democratic participation for all.

It is true that the ensuing MoU includes agreements on a number of principles regarding the economy, amnesty-provision, reintegration, security and demilitarisation as well as monitoring. Remarkably however, the main focus was simply the attainment of consensus on a democratic framework (including Human Rights and the rule of law) to enable continued discussion and facilitate agreement on the governance of Aceh. Most importantly, the MoU was generally adhered to and respected by all parties involved, and it certainly provided the necessary preconditions towards the improvement of relief, reconstruction and development work.

As is made clear in this book, enormous problems and challenges remain. Yet analysis of the facts as presented in the following chapters also demonstrates that in stark contrast to frequent and increasingly fashionable scepticism, democratisation as a pathway to peace, reconstruction and development has been proved possible. The ‘only’ remaining questions are what kind of democracy and why? And whether it still makes sense, to Aceh and more generally?

**Why was democracy possible? Sri Lanka vs. Aceh**

The most common explanation for the positive outcomes in the face of the many pessimistic predictions remains the tsunami disaster. In its immediate aftermath, journalists and humanitarian and development actors suggested that the disaster would provide an opportunity for all the main players to relinquish their unyielding positions, save face and focus on more urgent matters, namely conflict resolution and reconstruction. In short, it was argued that the scale and urgency of the disaster coupled with the
close engagement of the international community would unite the protagonists in their efforts to bring relief and reconstruction to the people of Aceh. This argument comes in stark contrast to research on the impact of natural disasters which indicates that they tend to deepen rather than resolve conflicts. (E.g. Wisner et. al., 2004) But from the narrow Aceh perspective, the hopeful predictions seemed to have been vindicated.

Yet even a brief comparison of the positive experience in Aceh with the negative outcome in similarly conflict-torn and tsunami affected Sri Lanka testify to the fact that neither position was correct. Rather, the divergent trajectories suggest that the common denominator, the tsunami disaster, was ‘only’ an all be it critical event that different actors responded to with differing and varied aims and strategies shaped by complicated processes over a long period of time. This implies that the analytical focus should be on the contextual and historical political dynamics of conflict and its transformation from a comparative perspective, rather than a search for a direct causal link between the tsunami disaster and the political outcomes of war or peace.

The Sri Lankan experience

Before focusing on Aceh it is instructive therefore to recall briefly what happened in Sri Lanka. Since 1983, there has been an armed conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the militant Tamil nationalist movement LTTE, (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), demanding self-determination for the Tamil nation in the North East part of the island. After the tsunami, political analysts suggested that collaboration around the provision of humanitarian relief and rehabilitation could lead to a process of conflict resolution. Early reports of mutual good will during the first weeks after the disaster were soon replaced by competition between the Sri Lankan government, the LTTE and other political actors in order to use tsunami relief to gain political legitimacy. Recognising these political obstacles to efficient and fair distribution of aid, international actors demanded that a joint mechanism should be established between the government and the LTTE. An agreement between the GOSL

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5 This section draws extensively on Stokke with Sindre and Törnquist (2008), which also includes further references.
and the LTTE to establish a Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS) was, however, firmly resisted by the political opposition in parliament and although it was eventually signed, it could not be implemented due to a Supreme Court ruling that found key elements unconstitutional. Thus, the opportunity that was created by the tsunami for revitalising the peace process by way of humanitarian assistance was missed.

To understand these dynamics, a longer perspective is needed. This failed attempt was in fact reminiscent of the peace process undertaken between late 2001 and 2003. There were two main features of this process, namely the crafting of peace through narrow elite negotiations and attempts to promote peace by way of humanitarian assistance and aid conditionalities. These features were in turn related to international facilitation by negotiators, monitors and donors.

The problems of development in Sri Lanka and the humanitarian crisis in the North East gave both parties an interest in taking part in the negotiations in exchange for funds. The right-of-centre government in Colombo wanted to gain support for its economic liberalisation, reduce military expanses and capitalise on international aid for post-conflict peace building. The LTTE wanted to address immediate humanitarian needs in ‘its’ region which had been devastated by war and overlooked by government programmes. Thus the peace process allowed both the GOSL and the LTTE to pursue their strategic interests and presumably increase their legitimacy amongst their own constituents. Attempts at closer links between assistance and the peace process were undermined by the fact that most humanitarian aid was disbursed via international NGOs. Further, the search for a mutually acceptable administration for development was deeply problematic. The LTTE wanted an interim administration with as much autonomy as possible to ensure both development needs and demands for self-determination. The opposition in parliament in turn feared that this would represent a first step towards secession. The weak government coalition was thus only able to propose minimal institutional reforms which were rejected by the LTTE as being insufficient, calling instead for an Interim Self-Governing Authority. Meanwhile, conditionalities in terms of demands for progress were vague and criticised for being
imposed rather than negotiated with the parties involved. Finally, all the disagreements provided an opportunity for the opposition to block the peace process.

The actual development model had not really been subject to discussion, but the GOSL, the LTTE and international donors all converged around a technocratic delivery of humanitarian aid in war-affected areas and overall normalisation of neo-liberal development strategy. In Sri Lanka the latter had been introduced in the late seventies and had aggravated a number of inequalities. This was in contrast to the strong legacy of statism and welfarism and deepened the contradiction between the symbolic representation of poor people in political discourse and the material reality of the lower and lower middle classes. These classes were crucial for any party that wanted to win elections. Sri Lankan politics is centralised and based on the British majority system. In spite of economic liberalisation, the stakes within the polity remain high in terms of political, economic and social power. Given ethnic diversity and patronage, this has given rise to fragmentation, corruption, intense intra-elite rivalry and the mobilisation of votes through populism and clientelism. Various political elites that are excluded from government positions, the peace negotiations whilst canvassing for the votes of the poor thus tend to came together in vocal opposition to the peace process, the government and the international actors. In 2004 this brought down the government at the general elections, paving the way for a new regime that combined a militant strategy against the LTTE with concessions to the intermediate Sinhalese classes. Typically therefore, the coalition that comes to power seeks to depoliticise Tamil nationalism without making extensive concessions that may provoke opposition. Such measures have included decentralisation to all provinces, though not primarily to the North East, and autonomy within the existing constitution.

Meanwhile the narrowly defined peace negotiations in terms of both actors and issues have added to the political problems. The process has been limited to the warring parties without any parallel process amongst other stakeholders. Thus the marginalised political opposition that has often undermined the peace process. Moreover, the absence of civil society actors has equally marginalised their recurring focus on social, economic and civil rights. Similarly, the preoccupation with geographic arrangements for power
sharing between the GOSL and the LTTE in the administration of development has postponed questions of devolution of power, Human Rights and especially of political representation. Under the peace processes, Sri Lanka has been characterised as a *de facto* dual state structure. It has not thus been possible to address the problems of either the deficits of the rudimentary democratic Sri Lankan state formation such as elitist identity politics or the problems of centralist authoritarianism in the North East. This points to a dual need for political transformations towards rights-based democratisation.

In short, development has been used as a forerunner to peace, but the chosen model of development has furthered social exclusion. This has enabled fragmented elitist actors, who have not been included in parallel discussions, to gather widespread sympathies through clientelism and ethnic populism. The peace process has thus been undermined and it remains difficult - but maybe not impossible - to alter the framework by focusing more on issues and actors that favour rights-based democratisation.

Aceh is different

The negative Sri Lankan experience thus denounces the tsunami disaster as a direct explanation for the unexpected democratic path to peace and reconstruction in Aceh. So what were the more decisive factors at play in Aceh? Maybe Sri Lanka is a ‘normal’ case while a number of unusually favourable conditions were at hand in Aceh? If so, Aceh is an exception and its success does neither refute the thesis about the need to restrict democracy nor support the alternative proposition that democracy should be expanded. In contrast to Sri Lanka, four positive factors for democratic peace are usually associated with Aceh.

The first is the relative weakness of GAM by late 2004 as compared to the LTTE. Both campaigns were subject to intense international pressure to give up demands for independence and to compromise, but while the LTTE forces were intact and in territorial control of the North East, GAM was on the retreat and largely underground. Having dominated some 70 percent of Aceh’s

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6 It is thus true, as Aspinall (2007; Ch 8) writes, that GAM’s attempt to internationalise its struggle and follow East Timor out of Indonesia had not been supported by the international community – though this applies to the LTTE as well.
territory by 2002-2003, primarily the rural areas, (Schulze, 2004 p.35), GAM had suffered severe losses during the following military emergency (ICG, 2005) This, many say, was a crucial reason why GAM was favourably disposed to new peace negotiations and eager to prevent another collapse of such talks (Aspinall, 2005a, 2007a, p.186ff).

Yet, comparative studies reveal that rebel groups may well continue to cause serious problems for their adversaries even if they lose in the battlefield. The Indonesian military must have learnt that lessons repeatedly in East Timor, from 1975 an onwards. In fact, GAM was not about to collapse. (Miller, 2009, p.154ff) The core sections of GAM were not prepared to concede, only seeking refuge and a strategic pause to their military campaign. There was a firmly-held belief that Indonesia was about to crumble and that time was on the side of the insurgents who only needed to survive whilst doing their utmost to speed up the process by rendering Aceh ungovernable.

Furthermore, the Indonesian government had not gained a strategic victory. Its own campaign beyond the battlefield remained unsuccessful (C.f. Schulte, 2006, p.265). It was not only GAM but also the Indonesian government and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Vice-president Jusuf Kalla that had problems sustaining their campaign. The campaign was not only in itself costly but also prevented potentially very profitable business operations. This held true for Aceh as well as the country at large, which suffered from its bad reputation.

Most importantly, strength was not just a question of arms and combatants but also of political might. It is true that neither the LTTE nor GAM had built genuine political organisations, relying instead on militaristic command, networks and kinship. But GAM in particular was not alone. On the common issue of independence, SIRA was running its own civil and political campaign outside of the command structure and beyond the exiled leaders in Stockholm. Furthermore, although the civil society movement had also been weakened and was short of alternatives, its room for manoeuvre was broader and its capacity to adjust to the new political dynamics was better than that of the militarised rebels.

In short, GAM’s relative military weakness may well have contributed to the democratic transition but it was hardly a major
and direct factor. Political influence and alliances were among the crucial intermediate variables to which we shall return shortly.

A second favourable dimension in Aceh as compared to Sri Lanka was the vibrant and important associations of rights-bearing citizens. In contrast to Indonesia, post colonial procedural democracy had survived in Sri Lanka, but rights-oriented efforts to minimise the democratic deficit were not in the forefront. Many civil society organisations focused instead on social and economic issues, including in relation to the supposedly development driven peace process. In Indonesia under Soeharto, the popular mass organisations that claimed equal civil, socio-economic and political rights where indeed repressed and often physically eliminated. But later on, students, intellectuals and related middle class groups developed their privileged though limited civil capacities to speak up for themselves as well as others and thus oppose the dictatorship. Whilst unable to mobilise the people at large, develop fair representation and later on win elections, the progress made by civil society groups in Indonesia was crucial and remains important in the process of democratisation. (e.g. Aspinall, 2005b; Lane, 2008; Törnquist, 2000).

Aceh was part of this process too. It is true that violent repression and conflict shaped the contradictions and limited the space for civil society groups there, yet this began to change with the fall of Soeharto. Vibrant civil associations, as we know, claimed and broadened the space for action in their attempts to extend the process of reform and democratisation also in Aceh. Quickly radicalised students inspired by events in East Timor even suggested it was necessary to take a vote on independence. They developed organisational skills and a mass movement that was beyond the capacity of NGOs in other parts of the country, (e.g. Aspinall, 2007a). However, the lack of international endorsement for independence was a major setback. The peace negotiations facilitated by the Henry Dunant Center ran aground. Thus most civil society associations experienced similar problems as their counterparts in other parts of Indonesia, namely of an insufficient social base and of political marginalisation (C.f. Törnquist, 2003 and forthcoming; Priyono, Samadhi and Törnquist, 2007; Samadhi and Warouw, 2008). Although it is true that rights driven civil society organisations were more important in Aceh than in Sri Lanka, it
was only when conditions became more favourable again due to the new peace negotiations that some of the activist groups (especially SIRA) took on a more decisive and critical role in Aceh than in other disturbed areas such as the Maluku and Central Sulawesi, where the attempts towards peace and democracy had proved less successful. The importance of civil society groups in the quest for democratic peace in Aceh was thus dependent on a number of intervening factors that remain to be identified and explored.

The third significant factor in Aceh in comparison to Sri Lanka was the positive role of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Vice-president Jusuf Kalla (e.g. Aspinall, 2005a, 2007a; Miller, 2009). They pushed for negotiations, honoured most of the agreements (albeit under pressure from both the international community and nationalists in Aceh) and convinced a majority of the conservative nationalist politicians and military in Jakarta of the need to agree. Both had a clear mandate from the presidential elections to negotiate peace and had proved capable of containing violence in the Maluku and Central Sulawesi. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, a retired Javanese general with a relatively clean track record, was in favour of moderate campaigns against corruption and the promotion of the rule of law as well as the depoliticisation and professionalisation of the military. Jusuf Kalla, a leading Buginese businessman, had recently become Chair of Golkar (Golongan Karya, The Functional Group Party), the major party which had served the Soeharto regime, making it less difficult to gain a majority on controversial decisions in parliament such as on Aceh. The tough line was that there was no need for parliamentary approval prior to the signing of the MoU since Aceh was part of Indonesia and thus not an international issue (Accord, 2008). He also acted forcefully in support of the thesis that the promotion of profitable development for quarrelling bosses, officers and other leaders in the provinces was much less costly than military campaigns.\(^7\) Both wanted to sustain the early post-Soeharto push for decentralisation, though with tighter regulations. All this distinguished the new leaders from Megawati’s administration and was in sharp contrast to Sri Lanka’s weak, less committed and much more compromising political coalitions.

\(^7\) See fn. 4
The positive factors as outlined above do not in themselves however provide sufficient explanation for the success of the transition to peace and development in Aceh. A number of qualifications must be made and additional factors identified and included. In comparison to Sri Lanka, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla acted in a more favourable framework of decentralisation which may in turn represent a crucial additional dimension. Moreover, while Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla were committed to a negotiated settlement, they had not won the elections on the basis of an alternative agenda towards peace and they sustained a military hard line until the negotiations in Helsinki demanded otherwise (Miller, 2009, p.153). In addition, their approach to the promotion of peace and development in Aceh was similar to the previous peace pacts they had brokered in the Maluku and Central Sulawesi - both of which produced less favourable outcomes. These agreements not only succeeded in containing the violence, but also to limit transparency and democratisation. This in turn generated a number of new conflicts in relation to corrupt practices and exploitative business. Early attempts at negotiation in Aceh followed similar lines, and did not succeed. One example was the attempt to bribe and co-opt major actors, including GAM leaders on the ground (Aspinall, 2005a, p.13f; ICG, 2005). In short, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla’s initiatives only came to favour democracy after the tsunami and within the context of a number of additional factors such as business regulation, Ahtisaari’s mediation, the strengthening of the pro-democratic groups and the broadening rather than the containment of political participation.

Finally, many argue that the mediation of Martti Ahtisaari, the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, was more innovative, forceful and capable of getting the process on track than the Norwegian facilitators of the peace talks in Sri Lanka. Katri Merikallio’s (2006) complimentary review of Ahtisaari’s mediation, Damien Kingsbury’s personal account from GAM’s backbenches (2006), and the testimony of other participants in the process8 compared with the view of insiders and experts involved in the Sri Lankan process9 certainly

8 Bakhtiar Abdullah, Juha Christensen, M. Nur Djuli and Shadia Marhaban.

9 I draw primarily on the facilitators’ self reflections in seminar discussions and the
indicate that Ahtisaari took on a different role and approach to that of Norwegians Erik Solheim and Jon Hanssen Bauer in Sri Lanka. Ahtisaari adopted a rather authoritarian and at times aggressively assertive position as an intervening mediator with his own ideas of what could and should provide fruitful avenues to explore and strive for. In contrast, Solheim and Bauer facilitated structured dialogues on the diverse issues that the actors brought to the fore and which might generate agreement. Also, while Ahtisaari framed his straightforward agenda by a democratic oriented institutional or next to constitutional approach towards a comprehensive agreement, Solheim and Bauer focused more on understanding a complicated web of factors, conflicts and cultures within which development assistance and practices could promote joint initiatives, step by step. The latter approach has no doubt suffered from being embedded in Sri Lanka’s neo-liberal development and elitist politics, combined with rigid division of territorial power. A more path-breaking approach in favour of rights based democratisation may have been needed – but not necessarily possible. It is important to remember that while Ahtisaari’s roadmap has proved more conducive to democratic peace and reconstruction, this worked specifically within the context of Aceh. In fact, Ahtisaari’s vital contribution was made during a brief part of a process that was already under way and which continued well beyond the signing of the MoU in Helsinki.

Many of the favourable conditions that Ahtisaari’s approach complemented were rarely acknowledged in the scholarly and activist discourses engaged in at the time. We know that Ahtisaari and his team studied evaluations of the previous negotiations, including Crouch and Aspinall (2003), (Merikallio, 2006, p.59). But it is an open question to what extent Ahtisaari’s team brought along crucial additional knowledge that became basic to the design of the negotiations. In short, Ahtisaari’s mediation was vital but only as part of an existing and on-going process, the dynamics of which remain to be analysed.

insights communicated by colleagues Jayadeva Uyangoda and Kristian Stokke.
Definition

To answer the question why democracy was possible it is necessary therefore to search for additional, more decisive factors that influenced the turning points in the negotiations where democratic peace became a viable alternative for the major actors. Equally useful is the identification of the dynamics that differ from the experiences in the less successful cases of Sri Lanka and other disturbed areas in Indonesia. Five such factors stand out in Aceh: (1) the political rather than ethnic or religious identity in public matters; (2) the undermining of the separatist strategy because Indonesia did not crumble but decentralised and democratised, which in turn paved the way for political solutions; (3) the contained dynamics of authoritarianism and unregulated business; (4) the then fertile ground for Ahtisaari’s focus on political conflict transformation; and (5) the broader space thus generated for politically innovative, resourceful and democracy-oriented Acehnese nationalists.

The primacy of political identity

There is widespread agreement that a general definition of the aim of democracy is popular control of public affairs on the basis of political equality. For a democracy to develop, individuals and groups must thus somehow identify themselves as part of a community, a people, a demos; a demos that is in general agreement on having a number of things in common, some of which they may identify as public affairs and control in an equal way, as citizens of a politically defined society.

Typically the constitution of the demos is a combination of imposed identities from powerful groups – be it by way of economic, political, military, religious or social and ethnic dominance – and opposition against the same, such as during the anti-colonial struggle. Strong communal identities tend to be a problem in the development of democracy. This is because the basis of democracy is political equality in well defined societies. Such societies may of course be shaped by ethnic and religious communal solidarities – as well as a multitude of other identities and common interests such as clan, class or a fenced residential area. But as soon as these identities and common interests do not correspond with territorially defined

10 Beetham, 1999 and for a more detailed discussion see Chapter 3.
societies – which they very rarely do – some coordination and definition of common public affairs of the various communities and other groups is inevitable. In this context then, democracy in general and political equality in particular presupposes equal Human Rights and citizenship – which tend to run against the idea of special rights for various communities, classes and other groups. This is not to say that there are no ways of combining the two without undermining the principles of democracy. Communal rights for example may be limited to specific public affairs such as the right of certain minorities to apply their own customary laws in protecting the forest or water resources that are fundamental to their culture and livelihood. And communal groups may also demand the same civil and political rights as others (rather than special privileges), such as the civil rights movement in the USA, the African National Congress in South Africa and the progressive sections of the subordinated castes in the Indian state of Kerala.

If these theoretical points of departure are accepted, there is no doubt that the primarily ethnic identity factor in conflict ridden Sri Lanka (Singhalese versus Tamil) and religious solidarities in the Maluku and Poso (Muslims versus Christians) are democratically problematic. The prime communal identities are more or less combined (ethnicity combined with religion and vice versa) and relate to both the economic sphere (including property rights) and, most importantly, to state and politics.

In the case of Aceh, however, identities with regard to public matters differ from Sri Lanka and Poso and the Maluku. Most historians agree that ethnic, religious and other communal solidarities have been subordinated to territorial and political identities. Generally, ethnicity and kinship (based primarily on families and clans) as well as religion have been instrumental means of legitimacy and mobilisation for the prime interest in territorial and political control. In short, political (and military) leaders have been at the helm, drawing from time to time on other identities to support their projects. (Reid, 2006; Aspinall, 2007a)

Just as most Indonesians rebelled against Dutch colonialism by targeting the local landed chiefs – in Aceh the uléébalang – through which the Dutch extended their rule, Hasan di Tiro, GAM’s
tenacious leader, initially organised opposition within militant socialist youth groups. In Aceh however, the insurgents soon linked up with the ulama instead – Islamic leaders – which added legitimacy to the cause and broadened the base of supporters. In fact, rebels including ulama spurred a social revolution that was distinctly radical in comparison to similar processes taking place in other parts of the archipelago. This movement fed into the religiously framed opposition in the form of the Darul Islam movement against Sukarno’s unitary constitution in the early 1950s. However, alliances with other anti-Sukarno dissidents in Sumatra, Sulawesi and the Maluku were more broadly concerned with the struggle for greater local autonomy and a federative structure and had very little to do with religious competition. Christians and Muslims were prepared to cooperate and to draw on their respective constituencies. During the second part of the 1950s, as Sukarno came to rely more on the rapidly growing Indonesian Communist Party (PKI – Partai Komunis Indonesia), the regional rebels modified their mobilisation structure once again. Now they identified with the logic of the cold war, adding anti-communism to their ideological arsenal and gaining American support – support which was extended to Muslims as well as Christians. Yet anti-communism was not the key driver of the movement. Though Soeharto succeeded in wresting power from Sukarno, enforcing the anti-communist and pro-American New Order regime, the core of rebel leaders in Aceh held on to their basic opposition against Jakarta dominance. Rebel leaders soon lost faith in a regime that proved equally modernist, centralist and reluctant to share investment opportunities with local entrepreneurs, including Hasan di Tiro, as the old Sukarno order. As Isai Sulaiman (2006, p.140) succinctly concludes, ‘the failure to realise the federation and various other disappointments forced Hasan di Tiro to change his inter-cultural nationalism to an ethno-regional one.’ In other words Hasan di Tiro and his followers who were in search of new symbolic power in terms of legitimacy and authority abandoned their previous focus on federalism in favour of ethnic-nationalism,

11 For comprehensive historical analyses, see Aspinall, 2007a, Sulaiman (2006) and additional contributions to Reid, 2006. C.f. also Sindre in Chapter 5 in this volume.
thus focusing instead on the historical legacy and the arguments that the Acehnese people had distinctive characteristics and the right to restore the Sultanate in accordance with general UN principles.

This is not to say that there is no historical legacy and symbolic power in Acehnese nationalism. But the main thrust is obviously political rather than ethnic. And nationalism has in the main been defined negatively in describing Dutch colonialism and Jakarta dominance, and only then drawing on various solidarities, interests and mobilisation strategies as was the case of much of the opposition to the Soeharto dictatorship in other parts of the country. It is true that the related political and territorial definitions of what constitutes the *demos* (people) and the public affairs are of course not democratic as such. However, in comparison to uncompromising communal solidarities as in Sri Lanka but also the Maluku and Central Sulawesi, it was obviously easier to ally political and territorial identities with the concerns of civil society and Human Rights activists and enter into negotiations about decentralisation and self-government based on democracy.

**Democratic decentralisation as an alternative framework**

The second crucial factor was fledgling democratisation in Indonesia, including freedoms and civil and political rights in addition to elections and a strong emphasis on decentralisation in stark contrast to Sri Lanka’s centralism and deteriorating democracy.

The dismantling of the Soeharto regime was an impetus for radical decentralisation and localisation of power. This undermined Jakarta’s dominance over the archipelago, which GAM and civil society dissidents had been fighting against. However, no reliable alternative structures and institutions emerged as conflict and centrifugal tendencies proliferated. Attempts to extend reforms in Jakarta to Aceh and to foster negotiations failed, paving the way for President Megawati’s renewed military campaign in 2003. Not surprisingly, both militants and civil society held on to the fundamental assumption that Indonesia was about to fragment.

This thesis was rooted in the old dependency theories. It had been advocated since the seventies in the discourse about Portugal and its colonies. Thereafter it was applied in the case of Indonesia and East Timor, including by activist analysts with
TAPOL (the British Indonesia Human Rights Campaign), and applied to exploited frontier areas within Indonesia by scholars such as George Aditjondro. The basic thrust of the argument was that Indonesia was a colonial construct that was sustained by elitist nationalists once they gained control of the state but which would disintegrate in the face of protests against authoritarianism and then liberalisation, decentralisation and certain aspects of democracy. In the case of Aceh therefore, one neither had to concede to nor attempt to initiate compromise. Speeding up the process of disintegration through either violent and/or peaceful disruption of the top down administration of Aceh, rendering the region impossible to govern, was seen as the key strategy.

By 2003 and 2004 however, there were clear signs that Indonesia was not about to collapse. In fact Demos’ all-Indonesia survey of pro-democrats around the country about the problems and options of democracy indicated this. (Demos, 2005) While the old centralistic ideas of a unified nation-state had given way to many new solidarities, movements and organisations, a new and comparatively democratic and unifying political system had emerged in the country. In fact, and in-spite of so many differences in the various provinces, the political system was the same and so were the related problems and options. The major exceptions were the disturbed areas, especially Aceh. In other words, the basic assumption that the country was about to crumble no longer seemed to hold true and Acehnese nationalists clearly needed to seek alternative strategies.

Meanwhile, there were signs that decentralisation opened up alternative ways to manage division of power. Federalism in terms of joint local governance of the central state was out of question, but decentralisation of central government and the devolution of a number of responsibilities was possible. While maintaining a military strategy, in 2004, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla attempted to foster similar power sharing agreements with local elites (including co-opted rebel leaders) and business leaders in Aceh as they had in other disturbed areas. However, this approach failed. Some local GAM leaders were prepared to consider compromises and possibly various forms of ‘compensation’, but the core organisation remained consistent to its aims and demands. (Aspinall, 2005a, p.11ff, p.13; ICG, 2005).
The necessary additional element was stronger democratic momentum in Aceh than in the other parts of the country where participation in organised politics had been monopolised by the powerful elite. Even during the Helsinki negotiations, GAM negotiators continued to refuse co-optation by way of special yet limited privileges. One may ask why the negotiators suddenly engaged in such a principled defence of democracy. GAM itself had not yet attempted to build a political party separate from its militant command structure. The accounts from the negotiations (Merikallio, 2006; Kingsbury, 2006, and fn. 8) indicate that the new opportunities called for the expertise of the pro-democratic sections of GAM and their civilian partners. Another factor was probably that the only chance for GAM to obtain political rights rather than the limited privileges being offered by (and dependent on) Jakarta, was simply to argue in favour of equal political rights for all to participate in the self-government of Aceh – i.e. democratisation by way of extensive public deliberation of the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA)\textsuperscript{12} and the right for all and not only Jakarta-driven, ‘national’ parties to participate in local elections through independent candidates and local parties.

We shall return to the details. But the major argument is that decentralisation thus became an alternative to full independence once it was clear that Indonesia would not disintegrate. This in turn enabled the nationalists to foster a position in favour of political solutions and thus table optimum agreements. Moreover it gave GAM and its civilian partners an interest in more democracy as a means by which to gain as much influence as possible. Last but by no means least, the democracy paradigm forced Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla to soften the strategies that they had adopted in other disturbed areas.

\textit{Foreign donors as unintended business regulators}

The ‘second tsunami’ in the form of massive foreign aid to Aceh, has been subject to severe criticism.\textsuperscript{13} The conventional

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} UU No 11 2006 tentang Pemerintahan Aceh
\item \textsuperscript{13} For a general review of international involvement, see Barron (2008), Barron and
criticism is of poor coordination between the donors, delayed and inappropriate project implementation and of course corruption. Most crucially however were the insufficient linkages between relief and reconstruction on the one hand, and peace and democracy building on the other. Worst of all were the weak attempts by donors to combine their work with the building of new and relatively corruption-free local administration; a local government with vision and capacity to sustain the positive inputs of the huge foreign support and to transform it into a fresh start, much like in the developmental East Asian tiger economies. In fact, the foreign support was the currently single largest reconstruction effort in the developing world (World Bank, 2007) and one of the biggest operations since the Marshall Aid to Europe after the Second World War.

Although the criticisms are correct, it is necessary to make three qualifications. Firstly and in spite of it all, reconstruction work has been quite successful, particularly in comparison to Sri Lanka. Secondly, foreign engagement dismantled the ‘iron curtain’ around Aceh making people less dependent on the relief provided by the Indonesian military. For example, people got a chance to reject the efforts to move the victims to refugee camps under the surveillance of the army. Thirdly – and most crucially, the foreign donors’ fear that they would be restricted and defrauded by Indonesian authoritarianism and corruption made them sceptical of the chances that their ‘usual’ pro-liberal market policies (as in Sri Lanka) would also foster peace and democracy. Thus concerted efforts were launched to combine foreign support with the central Indonesian government’s plans for and supervision of post-tsunami reconstruction and development initiatives in Aceh.

It is true that these plans did not really serve the victims of violence demands for truth, reconciliation and a new life. Neither did they support the reintegration of ex-combatants (Frödin, 2008; Hadi, 2008). This was in part due to central government resistance and partly due to the weakness of foreign donors to counter this resistance by promoting the implementation of the Helsinki MoU. It was also due to the separation between operations by foreign

Burke (2008). This brief analysis is also based on media reports, corruption watch assessments and interviews with relief- and development workers who must remain anonymous.
donors in cooperation with Jakarta on the one hand and the weak and corrupt local administration that called for improvement on the other. These conditions persisted even after the democratic election of the local heads of government in late 2006 although some progress has now been reported as most joint programmes are wound down towards March 2009.

At the same time however, intensive media coverage and the relative protection against abuse of power and corruption meant that the foreign monitors, donors and experts also contained – almost unintentionally – a similar onslaught in Aceh by big business and powerful politicians, administrators and military leaders as that recorded in Chapter 4 with regard to other disturbed areas. It is always difficult to analyse what has been prevented, but the differences between Aceh and other disturbed provinces suggest that these measures have been crucial. There is no doubt that Aceh today suffers from similar predatory practices or more precisely politically and militarily fostered exploitation and accumulation as in many other provinces, but the scale is less extensive. Foreign attention and presence seem to have made the new regime in Jakarta more interested in displaying better behaviour in Aceh than in other disturbed areas, possibly to attract foreign collaboration and investments. In short, the largely unintended regulation of business provided crucial protection of the efforts at democratic peace.

Mediation towards democratic conflict-transformation

It was in this context that Ahtisaari’s concept of mediating peace worked so well. It is true that the second round of negotiations were about to break down and it is reported that the GAM delegation were planning to ask the Norwegians to facilitate more fruitful talks. The Indonesian government was entrenched in its insistence on the already existing special autonomy and no further constitutional changes. Ahtisaari seems to have been supportive of this position and also ruled out any partial agreements, including a ceasefire behind which both parties could consolidate their positions and sustain the conflict on a lower level. Meanwhile GAM persisted with its demand for independence or at least radical changes to a similar effect. In a public appearance outside the framework of the negotiations, however, Ahtisaari used the Finish expression for the
way in which the Swedish speaking Finish archipelago of Åland, located in the Baltic between Finland and Sweden, is administrated, namely by way of self-government. This was picked up by the GAM delegation, Ahtisaari agreed to the adoption of the term and the Indonesians did not totally reject it. A series of discussion and consultation on what would characterise a self-governed province were thus initiated (Merikallio, 2006: especially 50ff; Kingsbury, 2007: especially 42ff, fn. 8).

These discussions provided those negotiators in favour of democratic arrangements with an opportunity to develop and propose new initiatives, which will be further elaborated below. Ahtisaari was supportive, arguing in favour of equal political rights for the Acehnese nationalists and resisting ideas about power sharing arrangements and attempts to rely on NGOs rather than political parties. These new initiatives were not only discussed on a formal level in Helsinki but also both in secrecy and more publicly in Aceh and Jakarta as well as in Stockholm between the GAM delegation and Acehnese civil society groups.

Very little of the conflict in Aceh was actually ‘managed’ or ‘resolved’. Rather, the agreement was to transform the conflict from the military battlefield into a democratic framework. A democratic framework based on equal political and civic rights, including the freedom to participate through independent candidates and local parties to thus build regional self-government. All stakeholders would be included and thus get a fair chance at managing problems and conflicts. In short, it is not only the focus on transforming the conflict by way of a democratic framework that contrasts so sharply with the Sri Lankan case, but also the broad inclusion of the various parties to the conflict.

**Democratic space and capacity**

The background to the most crucial factor remains to be told: why democratisation made sense to sections of the Acehnese nationalists. This was not primarily a question of will and ideology.

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14 The course of events discussed in this sub-section is covered in Aspinall (2005, 2007), ICG (2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007), Kingsbury (2006), Merikallio (2006) and Miezner (2007). The analysis has benefitted from my own notes on attempts to promote the pro-democrats in Aceh at the time and conversations with a number of the actors involved (some of whom are mentioned in fn. 8; others include in
It is true that attempts had been made at democracy oriented solutions since the dismantling of the Soeharto regime. However, initial liberalisation, calls for a referendum on independence and the NGO-driven peace negotiations were all aborted. GAM itself was not really engaged in these processes aside from a small number of the ‘intellectual leaders’ in addition to SIRA and a number of other civil society groups. Moreover, armed struggle resumed significance. As one observer put it in 2006, ‘GAM neither has nor ever had a functioning party apparatus. GAM’s leadership may have gained some experience in international diplomacy by brokering three peace deals since 2000, but it has no political experience in democratic politics (...and it also) lacks any kind of political programme going beyond the demand for Aceh’s independence’ (Heiduk, 2006:18). The crucial turning point came instead when self-government became a major item on the peace talks’ agenda. This is in turn the point at which Ahtisaari, and reluctantly the Indonesian government delegation, agreed not only to discuss decentralisation and autonomy within the framework of the existing constitution but also a system of governance that would give the Acehnese dissidents a fair chance to represent their constituencies and compete politically.

Thus the initiative shifted to those negotiators (primarily assisted in this regard by Damien Kingsbury15) who were capable of drafting reasonably detailed and viable proposals for such forms of self-governance whilst simultaneously blocking attempts by the Indonesian delegation to facilitate co-optation. These are the negotiators associated with the campaigns for a referendum and Human Rights, which had their own networks in Indonesia and internationally and who either belonged or were related to a younger generation of activists and militant leaders. The new strategy and policy proposals were not only developed during the formal peace talks. The approach was anchored within wider circles of civilian activists through meetings in Stockholm, Aceh and elsewhere and

particular, Taufiq Abda, Aguswandi, Akhiruddin, Damien Kingsbury (and mail 4/12/2006), Juanda Djamal, Jan Hodann, Munawar Liza, Muhammad Nazar, Erwin Schweissheim, Otto Syamsuddin).

moreover the international diplomatic community responded positively.

Meanwhile the reformists called for the democratisation of GAM itself. This seems to have been accepted partly as an inevitable step to prevent the movement from losing legitimacy and authority. The generally positive diplomatic and international development community (including the Scandinavians) however were preoccupied with post-tsunami disaster relief and reconstruction, largely ignoring support for democratic processes on the ground. This was certainly not due to a lack of information. Aside from formalities on what ‘tsunami relief- and reconstruction money’ could be used for, the ‘oversight’ was rather motivated by the need to be cautious. In reality, however, it was a hazardous and frustrating strategy that put democratic peace at risk. Fortunately, a small number of international pro-democrats (such as Jan Hodann of the Olof Palme International Centre) were able anyway to provide minimal yet critical support to combatants and civilian-political activists who wanted to enhance their democratic capacity in terms of relevant analytical instruments and policies as well as organisational and electoral skills.

Most crucially however, the dynamics shifted to the GAM commanders and civilian activists on the ground. Beyond the world of fine ideas, the key dynamic seems to have been the ability to gain influence and power by building mass organisations and the mobilisation of the majority of the population within an emerging democratic polity. This did not automatically make their policies and organisations democratic of course. As with the democracy movement in Indonesia during the 1990s, the main thrust was a critique of repression and dictatorship and the need to foster peace and democracy – with the lack of democratic alternatives remaining a major weakness. Yet the Aceh activists were more resourceful. Not in terms of democratic policies for the future – this remains a major problem that we shall return to – but with regard to democratic oriented politics. The Aceh activists were simply more capable of making use of democratic opportunities. By way of an historical comparison, they thus acted exactly the opposite way to the Philippine nationalist revolutionaries who applied their Maoist

16 This author was among those providing it.
skills to abstain from taking advantage of the democratic opening in 1986 by abandoning elections, finding themselves on the sidelines of the first demonstration of people-power demonstration and thus turning irrelevant. (C.f. Törnquist, 1990; Rocamora, 1994)

There are three key factors to their success. The first is the already mentioned attempts by some GAM members to transform the command structure of the movement into a more democratic organisation. In Chapter 5, Gyda Sindre expands on this process, adding new dimensions within a historical and comparative perspective. Aside from the efforts to reform GAM’s decision making, the most decisive measure was the dismantling of the armed organisation and the formation in December 2005 of the KPA, (the Aceh Transitional Committee - Komite Peralihan Aceh). The KPA was established to cater to the visions and interests of the veterans and their constituents. After the signing of the MoU this could best be done on the ground in Aceh. Thus the local leaders gained effective control of an increasingly political and development oriented movement.

Secondly, the civic political activists, primarily in SIRA, sustained their organisations from the previous struggle for a referendum and various rights. The new focus was to foster the implementation of the MoU, particularly the LoGA. Indeed it was primarily the popular political movements in Aceh that ensured that the new self-governance legislation was finally accepted and in reasonable congruence with the intentions of the MoU and not just the efforts of the Indonesian heads of state and the international community. Methods included extensive consultation and discussion as well as mass mobilisation. It was only due to GAM’s warnings about the future of the peace agreement coupled with mass demonstrations in Aceh that persuaded the Indonesian parliament and administration in Jakarta to pass legislation which opened up the opportunity in Aceh for independent local candidates to contest the local elections in December 2006.

Thirdly, the thus locally organised veterans and political activists in the KPA and SIRA abandoned the special interest group and civil society organisation approach whilst rejecting cooperation with established national political parties in favour of putting their own candidates forward to stand in the upcoming elections. In order to do so they focused their campaigns on the collection of signatures...
required for candidates to contest the December 2006 election for the governor as well as district and municipal heads. This was the main thrust of the strategy in favour of democratic self-government that they had fostered in Finland and which was deemed a significant enough political opening to give up the armed struggle. It is notable that did they did not abandon this political strategy of independent political participation even in the face of senior GAM leaders in Stockholm's advice to the contrary. In fact, as detailed in Chapter 6, they even proved able to win the elections in areas beyond GAM's traditional stronghold (see also ICG, 2007 and Aspinall, 2008). Both their actions and their success contradicted thus the old leadership in Stockholm who was less able to mobilise people on the ground and thus opted instead for cooperation with sympathetic Acehnese leaders in one of the already existing 'national' Muslim parties with a strong local presence, the PPP (United Development Party - Partai Persatuan Pembangunan). Their success also contrasted with the experience of a number of non-GAM/SIRA related civil society activists who, also unable to gain mass support, acted more in accordance with their counterparts in other parts of Indonesia during the dismantling of the Soeharto regime; counterparts who either retained their civil society organisations, launched unviable ideal-parties or linked up with well-connected liberal politicians within the existing political machinery.

In summary, the young and locally rooted GAM veterans, as well as veteran civil-political activists from the struggle for a referendum, proved politically resourceful enough to avoid the major mistakes of the all-Indonesian democracy movement by using and promoting instead the new democratic space to thus enter into organised politics and, as it transpired, win elections. As already alluded to above, this skilful beginning to democratic politics in Aceh did not equate to the formation of new democratic organisations or the drafting a democratically-driven post-election policy agenda. These remain outstanding, going some way to explain the major and increasingly critical problems facing Aceh today, which we will return to below.
Implications: social democratic peace – half-way there or a dead end?

As identified above, five factors were decisive for peace in Aceh. Firstly, that political rather than religious and ethnic identity was most important. Secondly, that decentralisation in Aceh came with stronger demands for democracy than elsewhere in Indonesia, thereby undermining separatism and providing a framework for political solutions. Thirdly, that the international community, and then Jakarta’s interest is displaying good behaviour, insulated Aceh, at least temporarily, from the thesis that free markets would foster peace as well as the Indonesian plague of capital accumulation through coercion, favouritism and corruption. Fourthly, that this paved the way for forceful negotiations towards democratic conflict transformation and finally, that all this generated a wider space for politically innovative, resourceful and democracy-oriented Aceh nationalists. What are the implications of these factors to our understanding of democracy and peace building?

On the one hand the case in Aceh clearly refutes the increasingly common conclusion by donors and politicians around the world (as well as in Indonesia) that there is a general need to constrain and ‘sequence democracy’ because ‘too much’ freedom and elections are assumed to generate more conflicts and abuses of power. In fact, all of the five decisive factors that brought peace to Aceh are instead about more, not less, democracy. This was not because there were exceptionally favourable conditions for democracy and peace in Aceh, as compared for example to Sri Lanka and other disturbed regions in Indonesia. The destructive factors that the proponents of the ‘sequencing of democracy’ thesis point to were in place in Aceh: weak political and administrative institutions, quick introduction of civil and political freedoms, widespread ethnic and religious identities, and ‘instant’ elections. Moreover, the four most commonly mentioned causes for why Aceh would have been in a particularly favourable position are insufficient explanations.

The first, that GAM had been weakened militarily and was thus prepared to negotiate; second, that Aceh had especially vibrant civil society organisations; third that the newly elected Indonesian President and Vice President were resourceful and committed to peace and fourth, that Martti Ahtisaari was particularly forceful and insightful. Although it is true that all these factors contributed to
the favourable outcome, their importance rested with more decisive additional factors. GAM may well have continued the armed struggle had it not been for the more fundamental undermining of its insurgent strategy, because Indonesia did not disintegrate, and that there were new opportunities to negotiate. There were vibrant civil society organisations in other disturbed areas Indonesia, but none were as politically forceful and focused on democracy as those in Aceh. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla’s strategy had generated less peace and democracy in other disturbed areas and did not succeed in Aceh — not until the role of the military and big business was contained by the international community, and not until more transparency and democracy was enabled by Ahtisaari and stronger dissident groups in Aceh. Ahtisaari’s concept was critical, but only within the context of a process where a number of factors favourable to democracy were already at hand and where the potentially democratic forces on the ground were unusually innovative and resourceful.

On the other hand, the refutation of the ‘sequencing of democracy’ thesis does not mean that Aceh provides unconditional support for the ‘liberal peace’ argument, based on liberal democracy and liberal markets. Democratisation in Aceh was not only or mainly driven by civil societies but also by broad political organisations. Institution building was crucial but not as recommended in mainstream theory, implemented primarily through pacts between the already powerful elite. Institution building took place instead within the general framework that had been negotiated and which remained to be defined and adopted through extensive consultation with all the other important stakeholders as well through popular mobilisation. Most clearly, liberal economic development was not fostered as part of peace building, as was done most explicitly in Sri Lanka and (with elements of coercion) in other disturbed areas of Indonesia. In Aceh, liberal economic development was instead contained and regulated through agreements between international donors and the central government in Jakarta.

The peace in Aceh which was attained not by ‘managing’ or ‘resolving’ the conflict, but by transforming it from the military battlefield to the arena of public politics has thus instead been ‘social democratic’ in character. It has been based on political identities and organisation rather than polycentric civil and market initiatives.
It has combined constitutionalism with popular sovereignty and engagement as a means of transforming the conflict. It has benefitted from the extensive containment and regulation of the strong coercive and economic powers of the market. Most importantly, it has fostered the involvement and social and political capacity of potential democratic actors and movements.

*Half-way there or a dead end?*

There is of course more to social democracy than this. While structural and institutional factors are crucial and vary within different contexts, the paradigmatic social democratic practices in Scandinavia point to the importance of a number of core elements irrespective of the specific constraints. Firstly, the primacy of politics (the need and the possibility to act politically) as classical Marxian and other ideas of economic and social determinism have been proved wrong. Secondly, a few core elements of such politics: (a) class alliances and broad political coalitions in favour of dynamic economic growth that can be combined with and even benefit from social and political and civil rights ensuring political equality, and (b) democratic institutions providing the means for interest representation and direct participation in addition to political representation in favour of impartial and accountable public services and regulation of market economies, as well as (c) popular capacity to utilise and expand these spaces for democratic control of public affairs based on political equality.

If social democratic peace can thus be described as this kind of politics which is able to transform conflicts (or as peace through rights-based democratisation), the logical conclusion is that the so far remarkably successful process in Aceh is only half way there – or at worst has been terminated. Hence it is critical to ask if this positive process can be sustained or if will Aceh slide into problems similar to those in other initially social democratically oriented post-colonial societies such as East Timor? The standard formulation in Aceh today is that of ‘transition’. Most problems, including preferential treatment and outright favouritism, are explained in terms of the need for transitional arrangements. And it is true that such arrangements are needed. But are they sufficiently solidly structured by continuously completed and improved version of the democratic framework, as originally visualised and initiated by the
MoU? Is it clear where from and where to the transition is going and roughly how long it will take? Is there a risk that transitional measures and practices will transform into persistent problems?

**Analysing the challenges**

In order to answer these questions, the following chapters address whether and how the crucial factors that constitute the framework for social democratic peace can be sustained and further developed.

This is done firstly by outlining the background to the conflict in Aceh followed by an identification of the problems and options for democracy. Analysis of the least well understood but crucial actors: one in waiting, big business, another in transition, GAM, will be followed by an examination of how the major political groups related to the first democratic elections and by reviewing the new local political parties. Separately moreover, a team of activist Aceh researchers map and discusses how key-local actors react to the major challenges that have been identified in the book.

In *Chapter 2* Stanley Adi Prasetyo sketches the historical background to the conflict in Aceh to enable those readers who are not Aceh specialist to both contribute comparative insights and benefit from the Aceh experience.

In *Chapter 3*, Olle Törnquist defines the intrinsic dimensions of democracy and then use indicative data from Demos’ surveys of democracy in Aceh in comparison with Indonesia at large to establish the main trends as well as to diagnose and give a prognosis of the problems and options. Seven major trends are identified. The first is the rise of ‘a political demos’. Democratic citizenship remains poorly developed. Yet the empirical evidence suggests that people have turned very fast from the negative impact of civil war and natural disaster to political engagement without large scale abuse of ethnic and religious identities and sustained separatism. The second trend is that politics dominates in Aceh. The military have lost ground. Even businesspeople spend much of their energy to engage in politics and administration. Enormous economic reconstruction is largely separated from organised but not from unorganised politics. Thirdly, the successful introduction of a number of freedoms, elections and even the right to put forward independent candidates and form local political parties has not so far resulted in similarly substantive
improvements of representation. Fourth, there is a tendency therefore to turn directly to various institutions of governance. However, this is not facilitated by democratic institutions for direct participation but is largely dominated by patronage and clientelism. Fifth, massive efforts by foreign donors and their Indonesian counterparts to promote reconstruction whilst containing abuses of power has not fostered sufficient support of legal justice and Human Rights, the rule of law and accountable governance. Sixth, several of the problems seem to be particularly serious in the regions where the Aceh nationalists did well in the local elections, which may not be surprising given the previous conflict. However, there are no signs of better political capacity to improve the situation. Finally, most of the stumbling blocks seem to be especially hard for the democracy-oriented actors that carried the framework which put Aceh on track to fight while it is easier for other actors to adjust to ‘normal’ Indonesian standards and ‘practices’. Thus there is the major risk that the positive developments so far are being undermined. In the Appendix to Chapter 3, Willy Purna Samadhi has re-tabulated relevant parts of the fragmented initial data from the Aceh survey (as well as the Aceh section of Demos 2007 all-Indonesia democracy resurvey) that formed part of the analysis. Thus this information can now be used as a basis for supplementary studies and follow-up surveys.

In Chapter 4, Stanley Adi Prasetyo draws on the writings of George Aditjondro to explore the role of big coercive powers and business in disturbed areas of Indonesia in order to better understand the dynamics of the peace-brokering approaches that have been guided by Vice President Jusuf Kalla in particular. Initially similar measures were adopted in Aceh too. After the tsunami, this strategy was withheld in favour of joint-collaboration with international donors and the agreements negotiated in Helsinki and ensuing implementation. However, similar dynamics are likely to affect Aceh now that international cooperation is becoming less important and the democratic framework that has guided Aceh so far is at stake. Analysis of experiences from other disturbed areas in the Maluku, Central Sulawesi and Papua (and initial trends in Aceh) point to peace brokered through secret pacts between the powerful elite, negotiated by central government and backed up by military force. The powerful elites have thus been granted profitable
cooperation with sections of the military, big business and local contractors. The main impact includes new divisive problems of corruption, exploitation and environmental destruction.

In Chapter 5, Gyda Sindre analyses the transformation of GAM. How can one best characterise the organisation and what are the factors that influence its role and dynamics? There is an obvious need to go beyond Aceh and also Indonesia in search for comparative perspectives. However, it is not fruitful to analyse GAM by the conventional concepts that emphasise anti-colonial liberation, separatism, reform efforts or warlordism. One reason is that original grievances and conditions change. Another is GAM’s indistinct social basis and ideology. It is thus more rewarding to focus on the ways in which GAM and its leaders develop diverse mobilisation structures in relation to different political opportunities over time. Viewed thus, GAM stands out as remarkably unified and consistent in promoting independence under which Aceh is able to foster its own development – but also as a highly pragmatic, and inclusive of parallel tendencies and groups when it comes to mobilisation techniques. In this respect GAM changes over time and between related civilian and more military driven sections – from identity politics, terror and warlordism to diplomacy and democratisation. This is not to suggest unpredictability and complete lack of principles on the part of the nationalist movement, but rather the special need for historical and contextual analysis in studies of movements like GAM that do not have a specific social basis and firm ideology. In short, the recent more or less democratic orientation of sections of GAM – as against the temptation to adjust to ‘normal’ favouritism and corruption by returning to the rent-seeking methods of the armed struggle – is less dependent on its own ideas and organisation than on the extent to which the favourable political opportunities from 2005 onwards can be advanced, including by the engagement of supportive GAM leaders and affiliates.

In Chapter 6 a research team led by Stanley Adi Prasetyo (advised by Olle Törnquist) returns to address the more general democratic challenges. The focus is on the local elections of December 2006. This was the first chance for the various actors to apply the new democratic principles and foster political participation. The relevant freedoms were guaranteed and it was possible to put forward independent candidates (by mobilising signatures from
3% of the population) alongside the ‘national’ party candidates. There were three major clusters of candidates. The first is the Aceh nationalists, especially GAM. The second includes the mainstream powerful elite with links to the military, the militias and of course the Jakarta based political parties whilst the third comprises civil society based groups and leaders. How did these actors relate to the elections? What were their internal dynamics? What issues and interests did they prioritise? What mobilisation methods did they use? Remarkably, all of the actors contributed to ensuring that the elections were orderly, free and fair. In addition there were five major characteristics to the way they related to the political competition.

First, the division of GAM between those opting for cooperation with likeminded politicians within mainstream parties and those putting forward independent candidates in cooperation with the civilian activists in SIRA may be described in terms of elitist versus popular politics. While the former group, including most of the Stockholm leaders, were not confident of their ability to mobilise sufficient number of voters, the main strengths of the latter were their local roots and consolidated constituencies coupled with their strategic planning, namely to advance by way of independent political representation. Second, the popular politics faction was able to project itself both as the principled nationalist representatives of the peace deal and as independent of the old GAM structure. And the impressive victories were won far beyond most of the old GAM strongholds too. Third, the ‘national’ party-candidates, who run visibly impressive campaigns emphasising stability, personal qualities, connections and fame, were only able to succeed in their core strongholds. Fourth, the civil society groups other than SIRA failed to establish a sufficient popular base. Thus they followed in the footsteps of their Indonesian counterparts, namely of maintaining their ‘untainted’ civil engagement whilst resorting to similar elitist alliances as the old GAM leaders, though in this case at first hand with those in agreement with liberal politicians critical of GAM. Fifth, no specific interests and policy agendas where presented by the main candidates. Remarkably, none of the candidates had anything specifically to say about how to extend democracy and use it to direct the world’s largest reconstruction and development project since the Second World War. Instead the elections seemed to have served as a referendum which came out in favour of the
nationalist-driven peace and democracy agreements from the MoU and the cluster of actors that had been most positively involved in both Helsinki and thereafter on the ground. Thus the December 2006 elections were both positive and inconclusive in terms of mandates for future policies.

In Chapter 7, Murizal Hamzah reviews the second step in the Helsinki agreement on democratic political representation: the right to form local political parties. Having outlined the intentions from the MoU and the contentious deliberations on the legal framework, Hamzah focuses on the development of the new parties. Out of twenty political parties established by the first part of 2007, only six have been deemed eligible to run in the 2009 elections of local parliaments. This was in accordance with a number of criteria, including actual presence in two thirds of the districts, municipalities and sub-districts of Aceh. The party-building process has been rather slow given that key leaders and fledgling political organisations already existed. In addition to legislative problems (which were not finalised until March 2007) and then verification, there are two obvious factors involved. One is the lack of clear-cut constituencies and ideologies based on broad interest based movements such as trade unions, farmers and business organisations. Another is the triangular conflict between the elite-political faction of GAM and the more popular oriented groups within KPA and SIRA.

Finally, the nationalist leaders seem to have prioritised efforts at sustaining and combining the mobilisational capacity of the old GAM networks and the new KPA structures, at the expense of ideology, democratisation and priorities related to ‘good governance’ and policy building. As a result SIRA and close associates opted to establish its own political party. Yet, the concrete plans to constitute an alternative KPA based party too were shelved (c.f. ICG 2008) in favour of the supposedly unified Aceh Party (Partai Aceh), driven by old GAM and senior KPA leaders. This caused a number of other leaders to take more or less independent positions, including Governor Irwandi, the Head of the Aceh Reintegration Body (BRA) Nur Djuli, and GAM’s former Head of Information, Bakhtiar Abdullah. Similarly, other parties too seem to have prioritised the consolidation and expansion of their capacity to organise and mobilise. In short, there were intense party-politicised
conflicts, not so much over policy as the capacity to ‘deliver’ and thus attract followers.

In Murizal Hamzah’s profile of the six accredited local parties it is thus interesting to note that they are all weak on ideologically rooted policy proposals and in the main concerned with the mobilisation structures that proved crucial in the 2006 local elections. The previous KPA-SIRA alliance has been left behind by the Aceh Party (PA), combining most sections of KPA and the old GAM leaders that allied themselves with the Jakarta based PPP party in 2006. Meanwhile SIRA has formed its own party and it remains unclear to what extent it has been undermined by the predominance of Aceh Party leaders within KPA or if the new SIRA Party is able to benefit from its more far sighted democratic principles and policies. Meanwhile, the most party-political oriented sections of the radical students have sustained their ideological and organisational aspirations within the Aceh People’s Party (PRA).

The seemingly most resourceful of the remaining three parties, the Aceh Sovereignty Party (PDA), draws extensively on networks of Muslim leaders and students and may also benefit from close links with the all-Indonesia Star Reformation Party (PBR). In 2004, the PBR attracted many religiously-oriented voters in Aceh. Similarly, the Safe and Prosperous Aceh Party (PAAS) and the Aceh United Party (PBA) seem to benefit from well known senior leaders and their networks (and perhaps political machines) and the main Muslim oriented ‘national’ parties in Aceh, namely the PPP and PAN (The National Mandate Party).

The all Indonesian Democrat Party under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and the Golkar Party under Vice-President Jusuf Kalla are also expected to do well, especially in the election of Aceh representatives to Parliament in Jakarta. Both leaders and their parties have substantial interests in the future of Aceh and have gained widespread respect. However, and in spite of that fact that much of the brokering of tactical alliances and outright horse trading are still going on at the time of writing, Murizal Hamzah predicts that the local initiative will remain with the forces behind the local parties, especially the Aceh Party, the SIRA Party, the PDA and perhaps the PRA.

Before the book concludes in Chapter 8 with commentaries
of the current challenges in Aceh that can be deduced from the results in the book.

**Main findings**

The book concludes in *Chapter 8* with commentaries of the current challenges in Aceh that can be deduced from the results in the previous chapters. Before the concluding Chapter 8 is introduced there is therefore a need to synthesise and systematise the general results.

As pointed out in the first part of this introductory chapter, social democratic oriented peace in Aceh consists of a framework with five pillars: political identity versus ethnicity and religion; democratic decentralisation versus centralism and local bossism; regulation against the abuse of coercive and economic powers; building of democratic institutions as a means to transform conflicts; and improving the popular capacity to promote and use these institutions.

Our main question has been whether and how these pillars can be sustained and further developed. Altogether, the empirical evidence and comparative perspectives indicate that whilst the framework was initially quite successful, it is now insufficient and has been partially undermined. There is therefore a need to address seven problems in particular.

(1) *Beyond the symbiotic political economy?*

Survey data (Chapter 3) points clearly to the primacy of politics in Aceh, including in the context of business and development. The massive reconstruction programmes have largely been separated from local politics. This is a problem in itself to which we shall soon return. But the symbiotic dynamics of local politics and business must be addressed first. This need not to be problematic of course. The most successful late development in the global North (Germany and Scandinavia) as well the global South (East Asia) was largely politically facilitated. Yet the data from Aceh suggests the primacy of symbiotic relations towards easy private gains for all parties involved (by way of best possible contacts) rather than clear-cut division of labour towards increased production based on specific criteria of what type of growth and how. A number of case studies support these indications. Anti-
corruption activists point to favourable treatment and corruption related to reconstruction, in spite of attempts by foreign donors and the Jakarta administration to insulate the post-tsunami development from the vested interests that otherwise characterise the Indonesian political economy. (Interviews Banda Aceh January and December 2007, March and November 2008, Oslo April 2008) Journalists write, for instance, that outside the new governor’s ‘official residence in Banda Aceh, former fighters wait in line to demand money to start new businesses’. (Wright, 2007) Experts and academic scholars also cite frequent examples of patronage-economics and possibly corruption in relation to various efforts by the BRA as well as the newly elected political executives (the governors and of district and municipal heads) to reintegrate former combatants through business opportunities. (E.g. Aspinall, 2007a, 2007b, and Chapter 4 in this volume) This is largely confirmed by development and political experts sympathetic to the newly elected leaders. (Interviews Banda Aceh January and December 2007, March and November 2008; Oslo April 2008).

Yet a few qualifications are crucial. Firstly, the impression that corruption is less crucial than nepotism and that Aceh is not as seriously affected by primitive accumulation as many other Indonesian provinces, though we do not know this for sure. The theories about ‘predatory economics’, ‘the criminalisation of the state’ (Bayart, 1999), the ‘shadow state’ (Harriss-White, 2003), and similar practices in Indonesia (C.f. van Klinken, 2007; Nordholt and van Klinken, 2007, and Chapter 4 in this volume) are often short of instruments to measure the relative importance of such tendencies and to make comparisons beyond illustrative cases. Secondly, that we need theories and concepts to distinguish between different rents and favours. In view of the developmental states and, for instance, preferential treatment of women to foster gender equality, all rents and all favours are not destructive. Previously marginalised civil society activists may be qualified enough to compete for good jobs and projects on the market (including anti-corruption), at least as long as foreign donor offices are around. But former combatants and victims of violence need political measures to improve their capacity and the changes that this calls for. The problem in Aceh, in the view of several senior democracy oriented experts and nationalists, is rather the lack of transparency and clearly defined aims and means.
And this deficit in turn is less a question of will than of unclear rules and regulation, insufficient administrative capacity and of alternative power to change this. (Interviews Banda Aceh December 2007, March and November 2008; Oslo April 2008)

(2) *From profitable to rights based growth?*

The tsunami-disaster, the involvement of enormous foreign resources for relief and reconstruction, the wish on part of the new Indonesian regime to display good conduct, the democratic framework for transforming conflict and especially the increasing capacity of the democracy oriented actors – all these factors called for measures to counter the strategy in other disturbed areas to foster peace by making it profitable for the powerful central and local elite involved.

Yet foreign donors seem to have been engaged more by default in order to protect their own taxpayers’ and donors’ money than because of the need to regulate the dominant forces on markets. Moreover, as the role of the donors is now reduced, as the infrastructure is being reconstructed and expanded, and as Aceh’s new political executives have not been overly successful in engaging alternative investments, the attraction of ‘normal’ Indonesian business opportunities increases. And if there are no alternatives, there is no reason to expect previous GAM commanders-turned businessmen and/or politicians to refuse generous deals with Indonesian conglomerates.

Hence Aceh’s so far insulated social democratic peace is bound to derail – given that no alternative strategy for business regulation towards rights based and production oriented growth (like the old and new developing states in Scandinavia and East Asia respectively) is developed within the framework of political equality that was initiated in the Helsinki MoU,

(3) *From reconstruction to development transformation?*

It is true thus that the foreign support for post-tsunami relief and reconstruction in cooperation with the central government has contained much of the Indonesian plague of corruption, collusion and nepotism. The major problem, however, is that relief and reconstruction has never been an integrated part of the celebrated
concept of democratic conflict transformation, not even in the fine speeches when Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Interestingly, the designers of the reconstruction efforts must have ignored the fact that Aceh’s problems of economic development were a fundamental part of the conflict. It is thus imperative that the reconstruction efforts ensure that they do not reconstruct old inequalities and contentious forms of economic and social development but transform them. Unfortunately however, the efforts at reconstruction have largely been managed separately from the new democratic framework, missing the opportunity to both contribute to and benefit from it. While most of the foreign supported projects in cooperation with Jakarta have not been failures as such they have not really fostered local capacity building according to the donors own main principles: equal justice, Human Rights, the rule of law and ‘good governance’. The most obvious examples include the separation between well-funded reconstruction initiatives and the insufficiently funded reintegration of ex-combatants and the victims of violence. This was largely enforced by Jakarta but it was not inevitable; alternative avenues were available.

In addition to the poor combination of relief and reconstruction on the one hand and democratic conflict transformation on the other, another problem is the neglect of major ‘good governance’ reforms and administrative training implemented in cooperation with the elected local representatives. All relevant indicators in the democracy survey (Chapter 3) are depressing (especially with regard to transparency and accountability). The recent signs of improvement may be inspiring, such as the transparent and fair recruitment of senior government officers, at least in Banda Aceh, but remains limited (Aguswandi, 2008). The most common complaint among newly elected representatives is the weak and unreliable administration.

A third problem is the apathy of individuals and the deficiency of institutions (rather than the partial shortage of funds) that hampers the design and implementation of the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA) in accordance with the Helsinki MoU. A fourth stumbling block is a marked passiveness when it comes to the fostering of the similarly negotiated and agreed Human Rights guidelines.
Even cautious internal donor reports and evaluations address these problematic issues, and of course experts speak up in private discussions.\textsuperscript{17} In short, while the negative impact of neo-liberal development has been held in check, the possibilities to facilitate a democratic developmental state strategy thanks to reconstruction funds of historic proportions have so far been wasted. This is not to say that the newly elected representatives themselves could not have done more, particularly beyond Banda Aceh. But they could have been given much more support. If this neglect of a developmental state strategy is not altered, the democratic conflict transformation that has been recognised in the form of the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Ahtisaari will be undermined.

\textit{(4) Parties beyond old politics in new clothes?}

The empirical evidence from the democracy surveys (Chapter 3), the study of the transformation of GAM (Chapter 5), the follow-up studies of the December 2006 elections (Chapter 6), the review of the new parties (Chapter 7) and additional interviews (Banda Aceh January and December 2007, March and November 2008, Oslo April 2008) is uncompromising. The extensive political freedoms and right to participate in elections with independent candidates and local parties have been extremely important in the transformation of conflict from the battlefield to politics. But the same measures have been insufficient to foster democratic representation.

Many actors from previously elitist politics as well as commanders and activists from those organisations that aim to curtail the power and dominance of others have adapted their organisations and practices to the new system in their own interests. The hope was that the new parties would transform popular aspirations and interests into public policies, select the best possible representatives and ensure accountability. So far, however, the parties have tended to operate as success teams for individual leading candidates and thus tend to turn into special interest organisations for a particular constituency and set of followers. The Aceh Party, for instance, is

founded almost entirely on the KPA, and according to former GAM leader Muzakkir Manaf, ‘the main goal of the KPA is to see that former fighters get jobs’ (ICG, 2006, p. 3)\textsuperscript{18}.

While it is hopeful that survey data points to a relatively high degree of political interest in Aceh as compared to elsewhere in Indonesia, the indicators of political citizenship remain negative, suggesting that most people are being incorporated into politics as subjects of individual political leaders rather than as citizens with their own organisations. Similarly, the development of party policies and agenda remain weak. Even if these problems may be less widespread in younger generation and in the explicitly democracy-oriented parties such as SIRA and the PRA, self-critical leaders speak privately of facing an uphill struggle. (Interviews Banda Aceh March and November 2008; Oslo April 2008.)

This is of course not unique to Aceh. Critically, comparative experience indicates that it is difficult to address such problems by way of democratic reforms within the parties themselves alone. There is also a need to alter the conditions for party building – the major theme of the three remaining challenges as outlined below.

And of course the issue of Acehnese representation at central Indonesia level remains unresolved too. Local parties can only contest the election of local executives and parliaments. In order that those local parties which are not affiliated to existing ‘national’ parties do not lose out, alternative (if possible pro-democratic) all-Indonesia alliances are necessary.

\textbf{(5) Transforming popular politics}

One of the vehicles for improving representation (and to control politicians and political parties) is through civil society organising and broad popular movements that favour common ideas and interests. The empirical evidence is crystal clear: while a number of civil society organisations are active in Aceh, wider popular movements are weak. Such organisations and movement do also not seem to have been particularly important in either the December 2006 elections or recent local party building.

As mentioned above, the data suggests that the broad

\textsuperscript{18} Quoted by ICG from ‘Riwayat TNA yang Terhenti’, Media Centre Aceh, 28, December 2005.
political engagement has not been accompanied by similarly impressive civic citizenship. Various action groups, NGOs and political organisations (such as SIRA and GAM) have emerged in opposition to old forms of domination and succeeded in rallying people from diverse social and economic groups. Others have focused on specific problems such as corruption or Human Rights. Yet others are rooted in religious and/or ethnic communities. Wider solidarities that are linked to citizen interests and opinions of public (rather than personal) affairs are rare. We know for example from comparative experience that such solidarities are often based on the aspirations of labourers, famers, fisher folk, women, business interests or sustainable development. These are basic aspirations and interests that do not call for immediate party-politicisation but broader co-operation behind a limited number of broader agendas, to thus supervise divisive elite politicians on fundamental matters.

So far the framework for conflict transformation has mainly enabled resistance movements to engage in organised politics. To advance, movements and organisations for wider civic-interest and ideas must also be fostered. Comparative studies suggest three different roadmaps: one ‘from below’, including the extreme position that inter-personal trust is essential; a second, ‘from above’, pointing to political guidance by leaders and parties; and a third which stresses the interrelationship between popular aspirations and political facilitation (Harriss, et.al., 2004; Törnquist et.al., 2009). The latter fits into the form of democratic conflict transformation, that has been initiated in Aceh, namely a politically fought for framework ‘from above’ for democratic work ‘from below’. This framework should also include favourable democratic channels of influence for much needed popular organisations.

(6) From ‘good contacts’ to democratic institutions for direct participation

Insufficient representation through political parties and popular organisations is one of the main factors behind the tendency of leading actors and people in general to try instead more or less direct channels to influence the state and other governance institutions. The survey data (Chapter 3), the study of the December 2006 election (Chapter 6), the review of the new parties (Chapter 7) and supplementary interviews all point to this. The preference
for turning directly to various governance institutions means approaching ‘independent candidates’ (who in turn are dependent of course on powerful backing), influential leaders, ‘good contacts’ and ‘friends’. In fact, this is also the case when both main actors and ordinary people turn to political parties. In reality what they are doing is not so much approaching a political party but rather a specific individual. Lobbying, networking and exchange of services in addition to ‘alternative patronage’ and various forms of payment remain endemic and tend to be at the expense of democratic representation including clear mandates, responsiveness and accountability. This cannot be altered by enlightened ‘command’ via for instance the KPA since, according to a well informed associate of GAM, ‘many of the old commanders are amongst the most corrupt leaders’ (interview Banda Aceh March 2008).

Just as the democratic reform of political parties and popular organisations (discussed in point 5) cannot be implemented only from below, there is a need for political measures that are capable of altering the conditions that sustain these persistent and endemic practices of polycentric activism and patron-clientelism. Comparative experiences point to the need for a demand for political facilitation of democratic institutions to regulate direct popular participation in, for example, public planning and budgeting and the management of schools and hospitals.

(7) Block politics for democratic reforms

The most immediate problem is the weakening of the dynamics that rendered a critical number of Aceh nationalists interested in using and promoting the successful framework for social democratic peace. As the task of enabling resistance groups to participate in organised politics is concluded, the main issues are now to (a) facilitate development of organisations that are policy-oriented representatives of issues and interests and (b) demand from below and facilitate from above democratic institutions for direct popular participation in public governance. These tasks have been neglected so far. Optimistic plans to initiate participatory planning and budgeting for instance have been shelved, due in part to the insufficient support of political leaders and poor capacity within the public administration. In the interim, those actors that are gaining ground are those who are most skilled at adjusting to ‘normal’
Indonesian practices of ‘good contacts’, patronage, bossism and of offering beneficial treatment of their own supporters. In order to prevent being marginalised then, even devoted pro-democrats have to consolidate and expand their own constituencies by providing ‘access’ and favours rather than by engaging people in concrete work for building democratic mass organisations and fair public institutions for participatory planning and budgeting.

There is no easy way out. Comparative experience indicates that there is also a need for enlightened civil society activists as well as party leaders to develop broader platforms at intermediate political levels too. Joint platforms for Human Rights and democracy education, ‘good governance’, democratic participatory planning, sustainable and rights based development and the politicisation of women’s issues for example. With such a framework, it may once again be beneficial for a sufficient number of activists and political leaders to compete for support by way of democratisation, as per the original framework for conflict transformation.

**What can be done?**

In short, the findings of the first seven chapters of the book suggest that the original democratic framework for peace and development in Aceh must be further developed. There is a risk that political identity will be abused if it is not utilised to develop a firm basis in independent citizens with equal rights. More democracy is needed to prevent renewed centralism and local bossism. Alternative local regulations must replace the temporary pact between central government and donors to contain politically (and militarily) facilitated big business. Democratic institutions must be improved and expanded to enable the further transformation of conflicts that are currently being channelled through lobbying, ‘good contacts’, patronage and nepotism. The means of representation through parties, mass organisations, and institutions for direct participation in public affairs must be advanced to promote people’s own capacity to promote and use democracy.

While it is possible to identify problems and options through concerned research, this is not sufficient. There is a need for a broader discourse and deliberation with those actors that have the potential to instigate change. This is not only because they are the ones who have control over the conclusions, of qualifying them,
adapting them as well as implementing them according to their inside knowledge and experience. It is also because policy proposals and implementation need to be developed and considered in view of an enormous number of additional factors that cannot be researched in full. If the latter was possible, enlightened oligarchies (rightist or leftist), or technocratic rather than democratic government would be viable.

Thus the book concludes in Chapter 8 with an outline of some of the current challenges in Aceh based on the main findings of this book, as perceived, discussed and debated by a number of crucial actors of change, including the Governor of Aceh, his deputy, the head of the BRR (Aceh-Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency – Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi Aceh-Nias) and political party leaders, civil society representatives and popular organisations. Based on a number of interviews carried out by an independent team of activist scholars, journalists and educators (supervised by leading pro-democrats in the nationalist movements and the author of this chapter), the aim of Chapter 8 is to thus improve and refine the findings of this book towards the identification of a number of possible policy proposals. Although we would have liked to have interviewed more people, we consider this an attempt to initiative a process which we hope we can continue to engage in.

What are the tentative conclusions? Many of the leaders and experts interviewed respond to the challenges raised in this book by pointing to the more or less unavoidable problems of transition. Interestingly however, no-one was able to identify either the aims of or the timeframe for the transition. This thus raises the question as to whether the framework for transition from conflict to democratic self-governance drafted in the Helsinki MoU remains viable. An increasingly common position seems to be that political transition has been successful and that it is now time to address economic issues, and that the MoU framework is not very helpful in that regard. Similarly, many argue that there are serious problems of nepotism emerging in the way those who were once marginalised are now finally gaining political influence. Others suggest that the main problem remains central government and local parliament’s obstruction or delay of critical decisions, making it difficult for the new political executives to get things done because public administration is poor, coupled with the fact that foreign assistance
is not always entirely appropriate.

Irrespective of their position, few actors link the problems they identify with the lack of sufficiently developed democracy and good governance with which to address and resolve them. This in turn calls for a re-evaluation of how the original democratic framework for transition can be improved rather than set aside. Chapter 8 emphasises the remarkable fact that even those actors who gained political influence by way of popular movements are paying only limited attention to the need to foster increased accountability and democratic governance by the facilitation of popular organising and participation towards broader interests and common aims amongst wider sections of the population.

Following on from this conclusion, the research team that authored Chapter 8 conclude that there is a need for further studies on how to facilitate the channelling and inclusion of aspirations from below through more systematic influence of democratic organisations and institutions towards direct popular participation in planning, monitoring and keeping politicians and administrators accountable.
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