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Why did peace emerge following the tsunami in Indonesia but not in Sri Lanka ?

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Preface

I would like to thank some people for their support in writing this master's thesis.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my promotor, Prof. Jan Weuts, for his confidence in my ability and for his useful tips and new insights.

I also would like to thank my copromotor, Prof. Lieven De Winter for the time he spent reading my thesis as well as Mr. Janaka de Silva for the useful information about the Sri Lankan civil war and the Tsunami he gave me during my internship at his office.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, brother and sisters for the encouragement and support.

List of acronyms

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
DOM	Daerah Operasi Militer or an area of military operations
EPRLF	Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front
EU	European Union
GAM	Geran Aceh Merdeka or Free Aceh Movement
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Force
JVP Front	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna or People's Liberation Front
LLRC	Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam or Tamil Tigers
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs
P-TOMS	Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure
TNI	Indonesian Army

TRO	Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination

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1. Introduction

After the tsunami of 2004 in the Indian ocean, Sri Lanka and the region of Aceh in Indonesia were the most hit. Both regions were at that time plunged in a protracted conflict: in Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese were fighting against the Tamil Tigers, while in Aceh, the conflict opposed the rebels of the Liberation Movement of Aceh (GAM) against the Indonesian government. During the post-emergency intervention, the Tamil Tigers collaborated with the government, putting the conflict aside. But once the humanitarian intervention for the tsunami was done, it would take 5 more years to put an end to this conflict. In Indonesia, however, the rebels put the conflict aside to assist the population. Putting aside the conflict accelerated the peace process and in August 2005 a peace agreement was signed in Helsinki.

The subject being established, my research question is: “Why did peace emerge following the tsunami in Indonesia but not in Sri Lanka regarding the limits and dilemmas of the humanitarian intervention?”

In order to find an answer to this question, I will first explain the principles of humanitarian aid then I will give a theoretical frame about the reciprocal impact of conflicts and natural disasters. After that I will outline the situation in both areas before the tsunami, then explain how the humanitarian intervention was established and how on short term the (inter)national community in Aceh managed to end the conflict while in Sri Lanka they struggled putting an end to it.

Several variables must be taken into account to find an answer to the question. Indeed, it isn't the natural disaster by itself that brought peace in Indonesia or more violence in Sri Lanka. The tsunami must be seen as a catalyst. It is a sum of factors that all need to be analysed. Factors such as the role of the media, a certain dichotomy between victims in the aid delivery, the will of the presidents to end the conflict or not, ... All these factors are analysed in this thesis on whether they had an impact on the outcome of both wars or not.

It is also important to mention that even if the conflicts are finished, it is still a sensitive issue. Indeed, during my internship in Sri Lanka it was at my own risk and

cost to talk about the past conflict. I had the opportunity to meet a former Colonel of the Sri Lankan Army, Major Sanjaya Liyanage. I was expecting him to explain the war in details but the only thing he did was telling about how well he led his troops and never spoke about any loss or counter offensive of the LTTE. Another case was during my free weekends when I had the chance to travel up North to the Jaffna district. The Jaffna area is a Tamil area. Until the end of 2014, tourists needed an authorisation from the authorities to enter the northern province. There again it was risky – even more than down south – to have a conversation with locals about the war. They start getting aggressive as the subject clearly hits a raw nerve. For the Tamils everything is the government's fault. Some of them even admit still having some weapons 'in case of'.

As the war is a recent war it is still very present in the people's mind. This can be a positive aspect but also negative as not much articles have been written about the impact of the tsunami on the Sri Lankan and Indonesian conflict. Most of them were relevant and the main ideas came back in mostly every article. Of course some articles were more useful than others and some were biased depending on which party had written it.

In general, the information found was relevant and very useful for the writing of this thesis.

This thesis is part of a hypothetic-deductive approach. The point of departure is indeed made up of different global theories concerning the relationship between conflicts and natural disasters. From these theories derive some assumptions. These are then confronted with the reality, in this case the Sri Lankan and Indonesian context to discuss the validity of the hypothesis and to give an answer to the research question.

2. Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian aid has long been perceived as a just act. Judged indispensable for the victims, it seemed obvious to those who had been spared. Its motto was to be impartial and free from any political background. Today, even though the humanitarian community is bigger and more diverse than ever, and the people are globally supportive, its action is constantly being questioned.¹

Even the most commendable actions can cause problems. Humanitarian aid has consequences for the social, economic and cultural conditions of crisis areas. It acts in the presence of parties in conflict and military forces, it is exposed to the interests of local and international political actors, it must deal with the donors and the media. Humanitarian organizations are often faced with political, economic or social dilemmas, which place them facing impossible choices and oblige them to disown some of their principles.²

It may be necessary to recall that humanitarian aid alone will never solve all crisis situations. It is often overtaken by political or geostrategic issues. It is then up to the international community to mobilize, through pressure, and even through the intervention of peacekeeping forces. The treatment of crises by the roots of the conflict is the price to pay for sustainable humanitarian aid.³

Before analysing the humanitarian intervention for the tsunami during both the civil wars of Sri Lanka and Indonesia it is important to define what a humanitarian aid is as well as its principles.

Humanitarian aid can be defined as the following: it is an international assistance designed solely to save lives and protect human dignity, and alleviate suffering

¹ REYMOND Philippe, MARGOT Jonas, MARGOT Antoine, *Les limites de l'aide humanitaire*, Lausanne : Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Projet SHS de 1ere année de Master, 2007, p1.

² Idem.

³ Idem.

during and in the aftermath of emergencies.⁴ Humanitarian aid must be distinguished from other activities such as those of political, religious, ideological or military nature. Humanitarian aid should be consistent with the four main principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.⁵ These four principles form the basis of all humanitarian action. Based on the International Humanitarian Law, they are necessary to establish and maintain an access to affected populations whether it is during a natural disaster, an armed conflict or a complex emergency.⁶ At the heart of these principles is the shared belief in humanity that requires that humanitarian aid must be granted to any sick or suffering person, regardless of race, religion or culture. The adherence to the principles establishes a certain confidence essential for the acceptance of the delivered aid. It is thanks to this trust that the NGO's, the Red Cross and the Red Croissant agencies, and the UN agencies manage to save lives in political and complex security contexts.⁷

The four main principles are explained as the following⁸:

- *Humanity*: humanitarian aid must save human lives and alleviate human suffering wherever it can be found. The main goal of the humanitarian action is to protect life and health, and to guarantee the respect of humans.⁹
- *Neutrality*: the actors of the humanitarian aid may not favour any side taking part at the hostilities or cannot embark on political, racial, religious or ideological polemics.¹⁰
- *Impartiality*: Humanitarian action must be carried out solely based on the needs by giving priority to the most urgent situations without doing a distinction based on nationality, race, gender, religion or politic opinions. Discrimination between or within affected populations is not allowed.¹¹

⁴ GHD, *Guidelines for humanitarian aid*, Stockholm: Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, 2012-2015, p6.

⁵ ECHO, Brussels: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/who/humanitarian-aid-and-civil-protection/humanitarian-principles_en (online), last update 25 January 2016, consulted on 8 March 2017.

⁶ BAGSHAW, S., *What are humanitarian principles*, New York : OCHA, June 2012, p1.

⁷ CARITAS EUROPE, *Réconcilier la politique et la pratique*, Brussels : Caritas Europe, Octobre 2011, p10.

⁸ BAGSHAW, S., *What are humanitarian principles*, New York : OCHA, June 2012, p1.

⁹ Idem.

¹⁰ Idem.

¹¹ Idem.

- *Independence*: Humanitarian action must be independent from political, economic, military or other objectives in the areas where it is implemented.¹²

If the humanitarian principles are considered as a solid fundament for the humanitarian aid for several decennia, they however prove to be fragile in certain situations. The humanitarian principles are susceptible of eventual political manipulation. This has been a growing concern in recent years. At a time when global humanitarian needs have reached new levels, the risk of coercion of humanitarian aid by those who would use it for political ends, or those who consider it as a tool for "winning hearts and minds" is also increasing. This has complicated the efforts to deliver aid to those who need it.¹³

¹² BAGSHAW, S., *What are humanitarian principles*, New York : OCHA, June 2012, p1.

¹³ CARITAS EUROPE, *Réconcilier la politique et la pratique*, XXXX : Caritas Europe, Octobre 2011, p11.

3. The Sri Lankan Conflict

Sri Lanka had been plunged into a civil war opposing the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE¹⁴ during almost three decades. The Tamil Tigers fought against the Sri Lankan army to establish an independent state called Tamil Eelam in the Northern and Eastern part of the island.¹⁵

With more than 80 000 casualties and a great economic loss, the Sri Lankan civil war became the deadliest military operation in Asia of the new millennium.¹⁶

According to official Sri Lankan government statistics, some 20,000 Tamil rebels were killed in 15 years of conflict (since 1985); while the rebels reported 16,000 deaths. Since 1995, more than half a million Tamils from Jaffna had been on the road to exodus: 80% of homes were destroyed in the town of Jaffna, shortages of food, electricity and medicines, killings, torture, and destruction pushed the Tamils to move to other areas or even abroad.¹⁷ Some speak of "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing" carried out by the Sinhala forces against the Tamil people. After 26 years of intensive fights between the two opponents, the Sri Lankan army finally managed to put an end to the war in May 2009.¹⁸

a. Roots of the war

But what are the roots of this conflict? How could such a well-organized society turn into a major civil conflict?

The ethnic antagonism between the Tamil and the Sri Lankan people had been a significant stimulant in Sri Lanka's conflict as Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic society.¹⁹ In 1948, the Sri Lankan population fought to get their independence from Great Britain after more than 100 years, in response of British favouritism towards the

¹⁴ Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, also known as Tamil Tigers.

¹⁵ BAJORIA, J., *The Sri Lankan Conflict*, Council on foreign relations, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/sri-lankan-conflict/p11407> (online), latest update May 18, 2009, consulted on 10 March 2017.

¹⁶ Idem.

¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ Idem

¹⁹ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p94.

Tamil population.²⁰ During the colonial period, they felt like left behind, discriminated by the British and they wanted to put an end to it.²¹ Barely independent, the new government didn't hesitate to put in place different laws to the detriment of the Tamils.²² The government deprived the Tamil migrant workers from their rights and in 1956 the Sinhala Only Act²³ was implemented. Following those decisions and this discrimination, the Tamil minority started holding peaceful protests that quickly escalated to more violent ones.²⁴

During the 1960's and 1970's several armed rebel groups came up, including the famous LTTE, created in 1976.²⁵ The Sinhalese, who loathed English bias towards Tamils during the colonial period, disenfranchised Tamil plantation workers from India and made Sinhala the official language. In 1972, the Sinhalese changed the nation's name from Ceylon and made Buddhism the country's essential religion.²⁶

The literature tells us that different elements may be at the roots of the conflict. First, the religion can be taken into account even if it is considered as an uneven catalyst of the conflict.²⁷ In the LTTE group a lot of Hindu Symbols and religious principles can be seen. However, the LTTE didn't convey a religious aspect in their battle. In the other warring party, the utilization of Buddhism in support of the war applied a more prominent critical impact in the south.²⁸ In the southern part of the country, Buddhism has an encompassing presence in the day by day life. Several Buddhists consider the war as being a just war. Their ongoing resistance towards any constitutional reform is a noteworthy component in the conflict.²⁹ By supporting the

²⁰ BAJORIA, J., *The Sri Lankan Conflict*, Council on foreign relations, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/sri-lankan-conflict/p11407> (online), latest update May 18, 2009, consulted on 10 March 2017.

²¹ PERERA, S., *The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka: a historical and socio-political outline*, Colombo: World Bank, February 2001, p7.

²² Idem.

²³ "Official Language Act No 33 of 1956", Government of Ceylon, 1956.

²⁴ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p94.

²⁵ BAJORIA, J., *The Sri Lankan Conflict*, Council on foreign relations, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/sri-lankan-conflict/p11407> (online), latest update May 18, 2009, consulted on 10 March 2017.

²⁶ Idem

²⁷ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p94.

²⁸ GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UN, *Report of the secretary-general's panel of experts on accountability in Sri Lanka*, 31 March 2011, p7.

²⁹ Idem.

war and considering it as being justified they are willing to protect the Buddhism and the Buddhist's sphere of influence. The increasing Tamil nationalism and their will of a separate state has a huge influence and could limit the Buddhist's range of prominence.³⁰

A second element at the roots of the war is the language.³¹ The Tamils, experiencing a lack of economic development in the North, moved to the capital city Colombo to find government jobs. In 1946, 33% of the civil service jobs and 40% of the judiciary sector were exercised by the Tamils.³² This impelled the Sinhala politicians towards a linguistic nationalism. They imposed the Sinhala language as the administrative language, the educational language and the language of legislature. This supremacy of the Sinhala language achieved its apogee in 1956 when Bandaranaike became prime minister and made the promise of a Sinhala-only act.³³

The Official Language Act No 33 of 1956 was a milestone in Sri Lanka and blocked Tamils from entering the administrative service. This act accentuated the separation between the Tamil in the Northern and Eastern provinces and the Sinhalese in the South. It also led to an emigration of the English-speaking burghers. Several Tamil protests came as a reaction to this act: black-flags, non-violent protests, protest marches, and an increasing interest for separatism.³⁴

Anti-Tamil violence from the Sinhalese escalated in 1958, 1977 and 1983. This violence led to different steps in the Tamil-Sinhalese ongoing tension. In 1958, the Sinhala-only act was modified. Tamil was from then on permitted as a medium of instruction in school, at universities, in public examinations and for administrative purposes in the Northern and Eastern part of the country.³⁵ But the law did not change the deteriorating situation for the Tamils especially since the legislative provisions were not applied.³⁶ In 1965, Tamil was also allowed in judicial

³⁰ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p94.

³¹ Idem, p95.

³² Idem.

³³ Idem

³⁴ GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UN, *Report of the secretary-general's panel of experts on accountability in Sri Lanka*, 31 March 2011, p8.

³⁵ OBERST, R., *Federalism and ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka*, Oxford: Oxford University Press Vol 18, No3, p183.

³⁶ *Sinhala Only Bill*,

proceedings and in the 1978 constitution Tamil got the status of a national language.³⁷ In 1987 Tamil was recognized as an official language, getting the same status as the Sinhala language. But even with that, the Tamil kept feeling disadvantaged and there was a lack of political will and resources. They felt a sense of alienation from the state. It is at that time that the desire to free themselves from the central state and to assert their autonomy was born.³⁸

As if the Sinhalese government had not understood the real issues at all, in 1961 it nationalized the Tamil schools, which obliged the Tamils to learn Sinhalese.³⁹ Until 1969, Tamil students had to score 20 points more than the Sinhalese students to be admitted at university. In 1974, university places were distributed according to district quotas. This had as outcome a quick decrease of Tamil students in Sri Lankan universities.⁴⁰

Sinhala nationalism then sort of enabled the emergence of Tamil militancy. From then, ethnic conflicts between Sinhalese and Tamils periodically tore the country apart, threatening the very existence of the state. If the new independent state had had the presence of mind to proclaim Sinhala and Tamil as the two official languages of the country, it is likely that Sri Lanka could have avoided this long war. Moreover, the suppression of English in the state apparatus was more difficult than expected. English had continued to serve as a social, cultural and economic value, despite the valuation of Sinhala.⁴¹

The conflict between the Sri Lankan population and the Tamil took a new twist in the 1970s when the LTTE demanded the creation of an independent state in the Northern and Eastern provinces.⁴²

³⁷ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p97.

³⁸ Idem.

³⁹ *Root causes of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka*: Tamil Guardian, <http://www.tamilguardian.com/content/root-causes-ethnic-conflict-sri-lanka> (online), 19 February 2009, consulted 18 March 2017.

⁴⁰ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p97.

⁴¹ Idem.

⁴² Idem.

But the Constitution of 1972⁴³, which detached Ceylon from the United Kingdom, and officially created the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, did not alter the balance of power between Tamils and Sinhalese. On the one hand, this constitution made the Sri Lankan state the protector of Buddhism, which irritated the Tamils, of Hindu religion.⁴⁴

A third aspect is the territory.⁴⁵ The North and the East of Sri Lanka, two regions considered by the Tamils as their homeland, had been the physical site and the heartland of the armed struggle during several years. The state maintained the Tamils in an economic underdevelopment and even decided to establish Sri Lankan settlers in the traditional Tamil provinces because of the Tamil dominance in those areas.⁴⁶ The lack of economic development in the Northeast was also a stimulant for the Tamil population. This area was underdeveloped compared to the rest of the country.⁴⁷ The Northeast faced a big income disparity between rich and poor and between rural and urban areas. This implemented a cleavage between the Sinhala south and the rest of the country as many development projects were in the South compared to very few in the North and East.⁴⁸

The Tamil and their representatives rejected the constitution of 1972 and demanded to the government to modify it and to recognize the constitutional rights of the Tamil nation without necessarily jeopardising the unity of the country.⁴⁹ But the government totally ignored these requests and a lot of ethnic conflicts flared. The constitution was finally abrogated in 1978.⁵⁰

⁴³ “*The constitution of Sri Lanka (Ceylon)*”, Government of Sri Lanka, Colombo, May 22, 1972.

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ *Root causes of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka*: Tamil Guardian, <http://www.tamilguardian.com/content/root-causes-ethnic-conflict-sri-lanka> (online), 19 February 2009, consulted 18 March 2017.

⁴⁶ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p98.

⁴⁷ *Root causes of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka*: Tamil Guardian, <http://www.tamilguardian.com/content/root-causes-ethnic-conflict-sri-lanka> (online), 19 February 2009, consulted 18 March 2017.

⁴⁸ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p98.

⁴⁹ “*The constitution of Sri Lanka (Ceylon)*”, Government of Sri Lanka, Colombo, 1978.

⁵⁰ Idem.

Faced with the relentless rise of Tamil claims, the Sinhala majority considered the 1978 Constitution⁵¹ as a compromise. Article 18 of the 1978 Constitution stated that “the official language of Sri Lanka is Sinhalese”⁵²; that “Tamil is also an official language”⁵³ and that “English is the vehicular language”⁵⁴. This provision allowed for an official role for the Tamil language in the Northern Province and the Eastern Province for administration, justice and education.⁵⁵

But the tensions persisted and continued to increase due to growing economic inequalities, which even led to a hardening of the Tamil claims.⁵⁶

b. Outbreak of the war

As ethnic strain developed, in 1976, the LTTE was shaped under the administration of Velupillai Prabhakaran, and it started to battle for a Tamil country in Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka, where the greater part of the island's Tamils lives.⁵⁷ In 1983, the LTTE trapped an armed force guard, slaughtering thirteen fighters and activating mobs in which 2,500 Tamils passed on. July of the same year got called the Black July. From then on, a huge wave of uprising against the Tamil population took place. The civil war officially started.⁵⁸

c. Evolution of the war

Between 1983 and 2009, the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamil Tigers were immersed in a bloody and violent conflict.

⁵¹ “*The constitution of Sri Lanka (Ceylon)*”, Government of Sri Lanka, Colombo, 1978.

⁵² “Article 18 of the constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka”, Government of Sri Lanka, Colombo, February 4, 1978.

⁵³ *Idem.*

⁵⁴ *Idem.*

⁵⁵ “*The constitution of Sri Lanka (Ceylon)*”, Government of Sri Lanka, Colombo, 1978.

⁵⁶ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p98.

⁵⁷ HOSKEN, A., *I realised we would never win*, UK: BBC, http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_8033000/8033150.stm (online), last updated 5 May 2009, consulted 19 March 2017.

⁵⁸ KEARNEY, R.N., *Tension and conflict in Sri Lanka*, Syracuse: Syracuse University, 2000, p112.

The Sri Lankan civil war can be divided in 4 main stages⁵⁹. The first phase, also called the Eelam War I, started in 1983 after the assassination of thirteen Sri Lanka Army soldiers by the LTTE in Jaffna and the following bloodbath against Tamil civilians in the month known as Black July. This first phase ended in 1987 with the arrival of the IPKF^{60, 61}.

1990 can be considered as the start of Eelam War II.⁶² That same year was characterized by the withdrawal of the IPKF from Sri Lanka. In 1994, this second stage ended when the Sri Lankan soldiers had been pushed back by the LTTE in the North West of Kilinochchi. This also led to the electoral defeat of the leading United National Party government.⁶³

The third phase is what is called “War for peace” or Eelam War III and lasted from April 1995 until July 2001 when the LTTE forces attacked the international airport of Colombo. This attack had severe economic repercussions for the country.⁶⁴

Between 2002 and 2004 a lot of negotiations went on and the Norwegian government even succeeded to implement a cease-fire across the country. But this cease-fire ended with the collapse of these talks in 2006. That same year is the start of Eelam War IV that ended on May 19, 2009, with the assassination of the LTTE’s leader.⁶⁵

In 1987, after the Sinhala armed forces ended an offensive on the city of Jaffna, the governments of India and Sri Lanka signed an agreement that called for concerted political and military action to end the conflict in the north.⁶⁶ At first, the Tamil secessionists agreed not to confront the Indian troops in exchange for promises of autonomy, but reversed their position. This Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement of 1987 recognized some concessions to the Tamils and specified that Tamil and English were also official languages.⁶⁷ It also planned to delegate administrative powers to

⁵⁹ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, pp99-100.

⁶⁰ Indian Peace Keeping Force

⁶¹ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, pp99-100.

⁶² Idem.

⁶³ Idem, p99.

⁶⁴ Idem.

⁶⁵ Idem.

⁶⁶ SALTER, M., *To end a civil war: Norway’s peace engagement in Sri Lanka*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, pp15-20.

⁶⁷ Idem.

these two provinces. These would be temporarily united for one year, after which the inhabitants of the Eastern Province could decide by referendum whether they wished to form a separate administrative unit. But there was no significant change in the rights of the Tamils.⁶⁸

The following year, it was the Sinhalese citizens who protested the presence of foreign troops on their territory.⁶⁹ In 1991, the LTTE had the backs up of its most important ally, by sending a suicide bomber killing Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in retaliation for an Indian peacekeeping mission that went bad.⁷⁰

On August 3, 2000, the government of Sri Lanka presented a draft of the Federal Constitution to the Parliament, which devolved power to the Tamils to end the war.⁷¹ Since the beginning of the rebellion in July 1983, this project has probably been the first decisive step taken by a Sri Lankan government towards the Tamils, who are complaining about the many measures of discrimination of the Sinhala community towards them.⁷²

However, the autonomy in question is not independence, because the government proposed to the Tamils a form of federalism.⁷³ That is why the LTTE rejected this constitutional revision and reiterated their call for outright independence. For its part, the Sinhalese government had warned that if the Tamils rejected these proposals, the war would continue. It had continued!⁷⁴

d. The tsunami⁷⁵

On December 26 in 2004 at 7:58 am, an earthquake of magnitude 9.3 caused a giant wave in the Indian Ocean. Over the course of the day, the tsunami will devastate

⁶⁸ SALTER, M., *To end a civil war: Norway's peace engagement in Sri Lanka*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, pp15-20.

⁶⁹ WILLIAMS, R., WEAVER, M., *Timeline: Sri Lanka conflict*, : The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/may/18/sri-lanka-conflict> (online), 18 May 2009, consulted on 20 March 2017.

⁷⁰ Idem.

⁷¹ *Simulation on Sri Lanka*: United States Institute of Peace, September 2001, p14.

⁷² Idem.

⁷³ Idem.

⁷⁴ Idem.

⁷⁵ Annex 3.

twelve countries and cause more than 230,000 deaths, mainly in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, almost 40 000 people died along the coastlines.⁷⁶

The natural disaster happened the day after Christmas, the Catholics were at home. The fishermen didn't take off as it was a Sunday and a Poya day, full moon day. They were all surprised by the devastating waves that ripped everything on their path. The beneficial sea that fed thousands of people annihilated them in only 30 minutes.⁷⁷

When the tsunami of 26 December 2004 swept over Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese authorities reacted slowly before rescuing the Tamil north. The Tigers criticized the Sri Lankan government for the delay in sending aid to Tamil-stricken areas.⁷⁸ Obviously, Colombo asserted that there was no discrimination in the distribution of aid between the Tamil and the Sinhala in the south. The Liberation Tigers also accused the government of not allowing private donations to these areas to pass because the Sri Lankan army had invaded all the charity centres and demanded that emergency supplies should be handed in to them and not directly to the population.⁷⁹ The Ministry of Defence rejected these accusations, claiming that its services were simply seeking to ensure an equitable distribution of aid. The actual situation in the northern territories remained difficult to verify because the Sri Lankan government restricted access to the Tamil regions. The President of Sri Lanka would have personally intervened to prevent the UN Secretary-General from traveling to the Northeast to prevent the Tigers from exploiting the visit for political purposes.⁸⁰ It was hoped that the international community would become more interested in Sri Lanka because of the tsunami, which would have helped to resolve the conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese.⁸¹

⁷⁶ JAYASURIYA, S., MCCLAWAY, P., *The Asian Tsunami: aid and reconstruction after a disaster*, Northampton : Asian Development Bank, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010, p123.

⁷⁷ Visit at the tsunami museum, Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka, 16 December 2016.

⁷⁸ SALTER, M., *To end a civil war: Norway's peace engagement in Sri Lanka*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, p 202.

⁷⁹ Idem.

⁸⁰ Idem.

⁸¹ Idem.

e. End of the conflict

The last stage of the Sri Lankan civil war was the bloodiest stage of the 26-year war. The end was near but for a lot of civilians the violence and the horrors intensified. In 2009, not less than 40 000 persons were killed. The UN says that both parties committed war crimes and crimes against humanity during the conflict but especially during these last months.⁸²

During the last stage of the civil war, three successive civilian Safe Zones were established unilaterally by the Sri Lankan army.⁸³ Those No Fire Zones were settled in areas under LTTE control. All the three Safe Zones were being shelled repeatedly, while the LTTE did everything to prevent the civilians from fleeing.⁸⁴

During late 2008 and early 2009, the LTTE was pushed towards the Vanni, in the North of the island.⁸⁵ When the Tamil Rebels' capital, Kilinochchi⁸⁶, was captured by the Sri Lankan government in early 2009, violent retaliation started from the Tamil suicide bombers as a revenge.

This capture was « a major blow to the rebels » and a turning point in the war.⁸⁷ It could mean the beginning of the end of LTTE.⁸⁸ The majority of the population fled with the rebels towards the east coast. The government accused the LTTE of forcing the population to follow them while the Tigers claimed that the civilians followed them with their own will, having the same ideals.⁸⁹

The army's advance continued when they also captured the Tiger base at Elephant Pass⁹⁰. From then, the army controlled the entire road from Jaffna to Kandy.⁹¹

⁸² VAULERIN, A., http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2015/09/16/la-sale-guerre-sri-lankaise-au-grand-jour_1383924 (online), last update 15 september 2015, consulted on 13 April 2017.

⁸³ Annex 2.

⁸⁴ GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UN, *Report of the secretary-general's panel of experts on accountability in Sri Lanka*, 31 March 2011, P 23.

⁸⁵ BATTY, D., *Sri Lanka claims capture of Tamil Tiger capital*, London : The guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/02/sri-lanka-tamil-tigers-capital> (online), 2009, consulted on 13 April 2017.

⁸⁶ Annex 1.

⁸⁷ BATTY, D., *Sri Lanka claims capture of Tamil Tiger capital*, London : The guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/02/sri-lanka-tamil-tigers-capital> (online), 2009, consulted on 13 April 2017.

⁸⁸ Idem.

⁸⁹ Idem.

⁹⁰ Annex 5.

⁹¹ SALTER, M., *To end a civil war: Norway's peace engagement in Sri Lanka*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, p337.

On January 21, the Sri Lankan army decided unilaterally to establish a Safe Zone or No Fire zone. Intentionally a good decision, this Safe Zone made the humanitarian situation even worse.⁹³ During the first eight days, the Safe Zone endured intense blasts by the army with a lot of civilian casualties as a result. Civilians testified that the situation worsened with the establishment of this Safe Zone.⁹⁴

On January 25 the same year, the last main base of the Tigers, Mullaitivu⁹⁵, got captured by the Sri Lankan army. All the civilian population was then sent into the 35 square kilometres of the “government’s self-declared safe zone.”⁹⁶⁹⁷ The situation got worse each day and even the UN and the ICRC ordered their staff to evacuate and leave the zone. Here again, the rebels fled away with the civilian population further than Vanni but got driven back by the army and were blocked by the army near Puthukkudiyiruppu.⁹⁸⁹⁹

After the fall of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu, the civilian casualties increased to more than 5000 and more than 2000 fatalities. Added to this were the critical and difficult challenges that the displaced population had to face in the battle zone as well as in no fire zones: lack of food, insufficient medical care, and lack of shelters.¹⁰⁰

In February, the Sri Lankan government again declared a No Fire Zone in the North of Mullaitivu and handed out tracts to civilians inviting them to take shelter in the zone.¹⁰¹ But the LTTE redoubled its attacks against the Sri Lankan army, having many losses as a consequence. However, the exact number is not verifiable because it was forbidden for journalists and humanitarian organizations to gain access to the combat zones.¹⁰² Consequently, between March and April 2009, an increasing

⁹² Annex 5.

⁹³ *War on the displaced: Sri Lanka and LTTE abuses against civilians in the Vanni*, New York: Human Rights Watch, 2009, p13.

⁹⁴ SALTER, M., *To end a civil war: Norway’s peace engagement in Sri Lanka*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, p341.

⁹⁵ Annex 5.

⁹⁶ SALTER, M., *To end a civil war: Norway’s peace engagement in Sri Lanka*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, p341.

⁹⁷ Annex 2.

⁹⁸ Annex 2.

⁹⁹ SALTER, M., *To end a civil war: Norway’s peace engagement in Sri Lanka*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, p342.

¹⁰⁰ Idem.

¹⁰¹ MACCHI, J., MATTERN, R., *Sri Lanka : situation actuelle*, Berne : 7 July 2009, pp4-5.

¹⁰² Idem, p5.

number of civilians gained the regions controlled by the government, seeking for more security.¹⁰³

In early April 2009, the army announced the regrouping of rebels and all civilians in the conflict zone in Putumatallam's "no-fire zone"¹⁰⁴, the third safe zone already.¹⁰⁵ On April 12, the government announced a 48-hour humanitarian ceasefire on 13 and 14 April to allow civilians to flee the fighting zone and to have access to humanitarian aid. A limited number of civilians managed to flee.¹⁰⁶ On April 14, on the second day of the ceasefire, the LTTE imposed a permanent cessation of hostilities under international mediation. Fighting nevertheless resumed on 15 April.¹⁰⁷ On April 20, the Sri Lankan Army successfully penetrated the LTTE protection wall around the safe zone. They launched a 24-hour ultimatum for the Tigers to surrender, which they ignored.¹⁰⁸ The breakthrough of the protective wall made it possible for civilians to leave the combat zone by tens of thousands. Nearly 100,000 civilians were able to leave the combat zone. According to the UN 50,000 people were detained by the LTTE as human shields.¹⁰⁹ On April 26, the Tamil rebels demanded a ceasefire again, which President Rajapakse immediately rejected. The government announced the cessation of heavy weapon attacks and aerial bombardment, which was interpreted as the admission of the disputed use of heavy weapons. When the army decided to enter the "no-fire zone", it was understood that there would be mass casualties among the civilian population.¹¹⁰

Little is known about the final phase of the military operations that led to the end of the civil war.¹¹¹ During the entire offensive, the Sri Lankan army harassed the civilian population making the conditions in the region unbearable.¹¹² The rebel territory had been reduced to a narrow coastal strip of only a few kilometres between

¹⁰³ MACCHI, J., MATTERN, R., *Sri Lanka : situation actuelle*, Berne : 7 July 2009, pp4-5.

¹⁰⁴ Annex 2.

¹⁰⁵ SALTER, M., *To end a civil war: Norway's peace engagement in Sri Lanka*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, p343.

¹⁰⁶ Idem, pp358-360.

¹⁰⁷ Idem, p374.

¹⁰⁸ MACCHI, J., MATTERN, R., *Sri Lanka : situation actuelle*, Berne : 7 July 2009, p5.

¹⁰⁹ Idem.

¹¹⁰ Idem.

¹¹¹ SALTER, M., *To end a civil war: Norway's peace engagement in Sri Lanka*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, p374.

¹¹² MACCHI, J., MATTERN, R., *Sri Lanka : situation actuelle*, Berne : 7 July 2009, p6.

the sea and the lagoon, on which tens of thousands of Tamils were crowded. The government having banned the presence of observers and media in the combat zone and the thousands of witnesses being interned today in camps without any contact with the outside world, it is impossible to know what really happened.¹¹³

A few days later, on the 17th, the Tigers announced they wanted to put down the weapons to save lives, but the Sri Lankan army continued their offensive operation. On May 18, the Sri Lankan authorities announced that six leaders of the LTTE, including Vellupillai Prabhakaran, the chief, had been killed during their final military operation. Six days later, the LTTE acknowledged the death of Prabhakaran.¹¹⁴

Finally, after twenty-six years of civil war, the death of the rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran in May 2009 sealed the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The regular Sri Lankan army now controls the entire northern part of the country.¹¹⁵

f. Attempts to peace

During the war, there had been several attempts to find non-violent solutions to the war. In 1985, for example, direct talks were held between the government and several Tamil militant groups. They accused each other of inflexibility and the talks failed. Two years later an accord¹¹⁶ was signed between the president of Sri Lanka, Mister Jayewardene, and India. An Indian Peace Keeping Force was then sent to Sri Lanka with one goal: ending the conflict. Amnesty was given to the militants. But after an underlying consent to end threats, the LTTE soon got entangled in war with the IPKF and the ceasefire ended. In 1990, the IPKF left the country after a request of President Premadasa. The IPKF lost 1 200 soldiers, all killed by the LTTE. After the IPKF left, the President Premadasa opened talks with the LTTE.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ MACCHI, J., MATTERN, R., *Sri Lanka : situation actuelle*, Berne : 7 July 2009, p6.

¹¹⁴ Idem.

¹¹⁵ SALTER, M., *To end a civil war: Norway's peace engagement in Sri Lanka*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, p375.

¹¹⁶ *Indo- Sri Lanka Accord*, 29 July 1987, 6p.

¹¹⁷ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p102.

In 1994, the Sri Lankan president Bandaranaike started new peace talks with the LTTE. But the government didn't manage to fulfil the constitutional amendments towards the Tamil and Muslim minorities. In April 1995, the war regained once again after the LTTE attacked the harbour in Trincomalee.¹¹⁸¹¹⁹

Between December 1999 and January 2000, President Kumaratunga welcomed Norway to talk about peace between the LTTE and the State. But in 2000 the president lost the elections and couldn't pursue the negotiations for a peace settlement. In 2001, war resumed and the LTTE attacked the international airport of Katunayake. This economic attack led to new elections at the end of 2001. President Kumaratunga regained her position and her prime minister started peace talks with the Tamil Tigers. Later, that same year, the government and the LTTE signed a ceasefire agreement assisted by Norway¹²⁰. After the agreement was signed the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission was set up to guide the agreement but unfortunately, they didn't have enough mechanisms.¹²¹

Why Norway as a negotiator? Since the early 1990's Norway has been playing a major role in the worldwide peace negotiations. But why did it decide to intervene in Sri Lanka? Back in the 1960s Norway had already built strong ties with Sri Lanka through its NGOs. The Norwegian government furthermore set up a long-lasting cooperation with Sri Lanka through the NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation). In the 1990's Norway also started building ties with the LTTE. Norway was thus unofficially implicated in the peace process since 1998 but was officially invited in 2000 by both the government and the LTTE. Its major role was to bring both parties together to have face-to-face talks. A first face to face conversation was held in 2002. Even though Norway received support from other international actors; it remained the major facilitator and negotiator.¹²²

¹¹⁸ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p102.

¹¹⁹ Annex 4.

¹²⁰ "Agreement on a ceasefire between the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam", February 22, 2002.

¹²¹ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p103.

¹²² PARAMANATHAN, M., *Peace negotiations of Sri Lankan conflict in 2000 – 2006 : the ceasefire agreement facilitated by Norway is at Stake*, Jönköping: University of Jönköping, March 2007, p 17.

The Norway's peace process was a major failure "in terms of bringing an end to the civil war."¹²³ But Norway can't be blamed as being the only responsible for this failure. Norway's intervention led to several intermediate steps in the way to peace: the ceasefire agreement, the Oslo meeting to find a federal solution, and the signing of the P-TOMS.¹²⁴

In 2006, new negotiations between President Rajapaksa and the LTTE were held in Oslo and Geneva. But the peace talks failed and the violations of the ceasefire continued. The LTTE affirmed the ceasefire is obsolete and reiterated his demand for a separate state.¹²⁵

In January 2008, power-sharing ideas are proposed to form the basis of potential constitutional changes. The last period of the war between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE happened between January 2008 and May 2009. The Sri Lankan government concentrated on a military answer for the ethnic clash and vanquished the LTTE on May 19, 2009. Thousands of Tamil civilians in the Northern and Eastern province were displaced from their homes during the last six months of the war and were restricted to camps for several months.¹²⁶

Thousands of Tamil civilians in the Northern and Eastern territories were uprooted from their homes during the last six months of the war and were confined to camps during several months. President Rajapaksa and his government, won against the LTTE. A political solution still needs to be found to respond to the needs of the Tamil and Muslim minorities. In 2010, the LLRC¹²⁷ was created and implemented by an intergovernmental agency to be sure that all the recommendations were respected.¹²⁸

¹²³ NORAD, *pawns of peace: Evaluation of Norwegian peace efforts in Sri Lanka, 1997 – 2009*, Oslo: NORAD, Oslo, September 2011, p. xv.

¹²⁴ Idem.

¹²⁵ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo : University of Colombo, 2012, p103.

¹²⁶ Idem.

¹²⁷ Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission

¹²⁸ DE MEL, N., SAMUEL, K., SOYSA, C., *Ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka: Trajectories and transformations*, Colombo: University of Colombo, 2012, p104.

4. The Indonesian Conflict

The conflict in Indonesia that ended in August 2005, started back in the 1970's. More precisely in 1976 when the Free Aceh Movement, or GAM¹²⁹, was formed by its leader Hasan di Tiro. The conflict was considered as the first one in which a movement demanded Aceh's independence from Indonesia.¹³⁰¹³¹

Since its begin, GAM had experienced three phases.¹³² The first one was at its creation in 1976 to the year 1979 when it was practically wiped out.¹³³ The second ascent and fall was from 1989 to the mid 90's when it got subsidies from foreign countries.¹³⁴ The third stage was a consequence of gaining support across Aceh thanks to donations and coercion as well as to an expansive gathering of potential soldiers who had lost relatives in the past uprising.¹³⁵ In 1998-99, after the fall of the dictator Suharto, there was a huge anti-government political action in Aceh. A mass protest movement got in the streets and demanded independence. After an attempt to negotiations in the late 1990's until mid 2003, the government declared a military emergency in May 2003.¹³⁶

After the tsunami of December 26, 2004, other negotiations started in early 2005. These negotiations were ruled by the Finnish organisation, CMI¹³⁷. In July the same year, the two parties found an agreement in Helsinki and on August 15, they signed a Memorandum of Understanding¹³⁸ that developed a plan for peace. This plan included the disarmament of the GAM and the reduction of Indonesian troops as well as amnesty and reintegration of former combatants. Several powers were also given

¹²⁹ Gerakan Aceh Merdeka

¹³⁰ Annex 6.

¹³¹ ASPINALL, E., *Aceh/Indonesia: Conflict analysis and options for systemic conflict transformation*, Canberra: Australia National University, August 2005, p2.

¹³² SCHULZE, K., *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): anatomy of a separatist organization*, Washington: East-West Center, 2004, p4.

¹³³ Idem.

¹³⁴ Idem.

¹³⁵ Idem.

¹³⁶ Idem.

¹³⁷ Crisis Management Initiative.

¹³⁸ *Memorandum of Understanding between the government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement*, Helsinki, 15 August 2005.

to the territory of Aceh under the “Law on the governing of Aceh”.¹³⁹ An Aceh Monitoring Mission¹⁴⁰ had also been set up in which in the EU and ASEAN¹⁴¹ representatives were involved to regulate the implementation of the peace agreement.¹⁴²

a. Roots of the war

The conflict was basically about identity. Many Acehnese nationalists said that the conflict had covered a struggle for self-determination. Other analysts said that the conflict emerged due to specific grievances in Acehnese society about financial, human rights, religious and other issues. In fact, personality and grievance issues are connected and commonly strengthening.¹⁴³

What is important to say is that the conflict, even if it was a conflict about identity, wasn't the same as the one in Sri Lanka.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, in Indonesia we don't speak about a minority facing a nation-state dominated by one majority ethnic group as it was the case between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Moreover, GAM never dominated the entire Aceh's territory, as it was the case of the LTTE in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka.¹⁴⁵

Successive Indonesian governments gave a Special Status to Aceh.¹⁴⁶ The Sukarno government was the first one doing this in the late 50's by naming Aceh a Special Region and giving it rights over “custom, training and religion.”¹⁴⁷ But the Suharto government (1966-1968) didn't actualize the Status, which led to more frustration by the GAM revolt.¹⁴⁸ In 2001, Aceh received a Special Autonomy Status towards the “Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Law”. This Special Autonomy Status included the

¹³⁹ *Memorandum of Understanding between the government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement*, Helsinki, 15 August 2005.

¹⁴⁰ *EU Monitoring Mission in Aceh (Indonesia)*, September 2005 – December 2006.

¹⁴¹ Association of South East Asian Nations

¹⁴² ASPINALL, E., *Aceh/Indonesia: Conflict analysis and options for systemic conflict transformation*, Canberra: Australia National University, August 2005, p6.

¹⁴³ *Idem*, p3.

¹⁴⁴ *Idem*.

¹⁴⁵ *Idem*.

¹⁴⁶ *Idem*, p6.

¹⁴⁷ *Idem*.

¹⁴⁸ MCCULLOCH, L., *Aceh: then and now*: Minority Rights Group International, 2005, p7.

allowance of greater parts of the Sharia, a bigger share of natural resources and their incomes, and direct elections of the governor and the district heads.¹⁴⁹

If this law had been implemented in the early 1960's we could have avoided the radicalization of GAM. But instead it had almost no effect on the ongoing conflict.¹⁵⁰ Firstly, GAM didn't accept the law because they believed that their independence campaign was nearly achieved and because the law sent safeguards to be sure the GAM wouldn't hijack the law. Secondly, there were significant issues to implement the law because of corruption at a local government level as well as due to renewed struggle and military strength.¹⁵¹

The following grievances had been considered as important stimulants contributing to the conflict.

First, the Islam. In the 1950's *Darul Islam*'s main goal was to implement the Islamic Law (Sharia) in Aceh and whole Indonesia.¹⁵² When the GAM was created, these Islamic demands remained the major goal of the movement.¹⁵³ But during the third phase of the conflict, the Islamic issues became a second role.¹⁵⁴ The GAM didn't aim at an Islamic State and the government of Indonesia allowed some aspects of the Sharia.¹⁵⁵

A second cause of the conflict would have been the natural resources.¹⁵⁶ An important factor in the increase and the creation of GAM in the 1970's was the development of the Arun fields into one of the world's largest sources of natural gas.¹⁵⁷ A large portion of the gas incomes were consumed by the central government, moderately few local individuals were employed in the industry, and nearby groups

¹⁴⁹ ASPINALL, E., *Aceh/Indonesia: Conflict analysis and options for systemic conflict transformation*, Canberra: Australia National University, August 2005, p6.

¹⁵⁰ Idem, p4.

¹⁵¹ Idem.

¹⁵² NOSALEK, J., *Explaining conflict over Aceh*, Brno: Masaryk University, May 2015, p7.

¹⁵³ Idem.

¹⁵⁴ ASPINALL, E., *Aceh/Indonesia: Conflict analysis and options for systemic conflict transformation*, Canberra: Australia National University, August 2005, p4.

¹⁵⁵ Idem.

¹⁵⁶ Idem, p5.

¹⁵⁷ *Conflict and Peacemaking in Aceh: a chronology*, Washington: World Watch Institute, <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/3929> (online), consulted on 20 March 2017.

were affected by land alienation, pollution and the negative impacts of enclave development.¹⁵⁸ Such figures have been important in producing grievances, however the administration found a way to determine this issue by accommodating a more liberal portion of gas and oil incomes to the provincial government in the “Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam law”. But the local communities didn’t see much benefits from this reallocation of revenues.¹⁵⁹

A third grievance were the human rights and specifically the human rights abuses committed by the National Army. These abuses had been a major contribution to the conflict as they intensified the separation with Jakarta.¹⁶⁰

A fourth one was about governance problems. Indeed, the Indonesian government as well as the army were well known for being corrupt and ineffective.¹⁶¹ Aceh was often being characterized as the Indonesian province with the most corruption.¹⁶²

A fifth grievance was the structural poverty.¹⁶³ In the 1970s Aceh was a province with a very low rate of poverty and strong social indicators. But because of the ongoing conflict and especially in the 1990s those rates got worse and Aceh became country’s worst province regarding poverty.¹⁶⁴

b. Outbreak of the war

Indonesia had been plunged in violence before the creation of the GAM and the start of the 30- year during conflict. There were already some tensions during the colonial expansion of European countries. In 1873, the Netherlands started conquering Aceh but it had lasted 30 years before the Dutch gained complete control of the region.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁸ *Conflict and Peacemaking in Aceh: a chronology*, Washington: World Watch Institute, <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/3929> (online), consulted on 20 March 2017.

¹⁵⁹ ASPINALL, E., *Aceh/Indonesia: Conflict analysis and options for systemic conflict transformation*, Canberra: Australia National University, August 2005, p6.

¹⁶⁰ *Idem*, p5.

¹⁶¹ *Idem*.

¹⁶² *Idem*.

¹⁶³ *Idem*.

¹⁶⁴ *Idem*, p6.

¹⁶⁵ *Conflict and Peacemaking in Aceh: a chronology*, Washington: World Watch Institute, <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/3929> (online), consulted on 20 March 2017.

However, they never fully conquered Aceh.¹⁶⁶ From 1942 until 1945, during World War II, Aceh was taken by Japan.¹⁶⁷ On August 17, 1945, Indonesia proclaimed independence from the Netherlands.¹⁶⁸ In 1949, Indonesia officially achieved sovereignty. That same year, Aceh, that took part in the anti-colonial struggle, accepted to become a part of Indonesia, which they would regret very soon.¹⁶⁹ In the beginning, Aceh had certain autonomy, but the Indonesian government quickly sought an expanded centralization toward a unitary state. In August 1950, Aceh lost its special status and its autonomy and was entirely integrated in the province of North Sumatra.¹⁷⁰ In the late 1950's several Islamic rebellions were held in West-Java with the attempt to establish an Islamic state. Acehese rebels supported this rebellion but with the aim to secure autonomy from Indonesia. Following the rebellions, the decision of 1950 was deleted to guarantee peace in the region.¹⁷¹ Aceh got its status of special territory back but again, the government didn't pursue its promises, which led to dissatisfaction among the Acehese.¹⁷² In the mid 1960's, General Suharto seized power. His regime was based on the military institution.¹⁷³ The military became the dominant sector in all aspects of Indonesian life. In 1971, natural gas deposits were discovered in Aceh and became a major source of Indonesia's natural gas production as well as a worldwide exporter.¹⁷⁴ But this had also some negative effects as the local population didn't get any compensation which pushed many of them into poverty. The security of the factory was provided by Indonesian soldiers. Several human rights activists claimed that the company was complicit with these forces as they carried out killings, beatings and rapes.¹⁷⁵ In

¹⁶⁶ *Conflict and Peacemaking in Aceh: a chronology*, Washington: World Watch Institute, <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/3929> (online), consulted on 20 March 2017.

¹⁶⁷ *Timeline: Aceh's struggle for Independence*, UK: The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/may/21/indonesia> (online), 21 May 2003, consulted on 20 March 2017.

¹⁶⁸ Idem.

¹⁶⁹ Idem.

¹⁷⁰ BRAITHWAITE, J., BRAITHWAITE, V., COOKSON, M., DUNN, L., *Aceh in "Anomie and violence: non-truth and reconciliation in Indonesian peacebuilding"*, Canberra: ANU Press, 2010, p350.

¹⁷¹ Idem.

¹⁷² Idem.

¹⁷³ *Conflict and Peacemaking in Aceh: a chronology*, Washington: World Watch Institute, <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/3929> (online), consulted on 20 March 2017.

¹⁷⁴ Idem.

¹⁷⁵ MILLER, A-M, *The conflict in Aceh: Context, Precursors and Catalysts*, Wales: Conciliation Resources, <http://www.c-r.org/accord/aceh-indonesia/conflict-aceh-context-precursors-and-catalysts> (online), 2008, consulted on 20 March 2017.

1976, Aceh's special status was again removed. That same year, GAM was launched because of excessive centralization, human rights violations and unfair exploitation of Aceh's resources.¹⁷⁶ Their main goal was the independence of Aceh. Three years after their creation, the Indonesian military crushed the little uprising and a lot of GAM members were arrested. Their founder Hasan Di Tiro went into exile to Sweden.¹⁷⁷

c. Evolution of the war

The conflict got worse with the fall of president Suharto in 1998. It is only more than 20 years after their creation that GAM increased and gained a popular base, source of arms and that it adopted a well-organized command structure.¹⁷⁸ In 2001, GAM controlled much of Aceh and had a strong presence in the more populous districts.¹⁷⁹ The economic grievances led to increasing violence but the immediate catalyst was the failure of the post-Suharto governments to address human rights misuse of the past committed between 1990 and 1998.¹⁸⁰

In 1989, GAM-guerrillas returned from Libya to Aceh with a new training experience to give the ongoing rebellion a new lease of life.¹⁸¹ From then on, a lot of attacks on military and police posts occurred. Following these attacks and this type of violence, the government declared Aceh as an area of military operations (DOM) in May 1990. Jakarta increased the number of troops to 12,000, and suppressed GAM by early 1992.¹⁸²

During the first three years of the DOM more than thousands Acehnese civilians were killed and not less than ten thousand of civilians were imprisoned and tortured

¹⁷⁶ *Conflict and Peacemaking in Aceh: a chronology*, Washington: World Watch Institute, <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/3929> (online), consulted on 20 March 2017.

¹⁷⁷ *Idem*.

¹⁷⁸ BRAITHWAITE, J., BRAITHWAITE, V., COOKSON, M., DUNN, L., *Aceh in "Anomie and violence: non-truth and reconciliation in Indonesian peacebuilding"*, Canberra: ANU Press, 2010, p356.

¹⁷⁹ *Idem*, p358.

¹⁸⁰ *Idem*.

¹⁸¹ ASPINALL, E., *Aceh/Indonesia: Conflict analysis and options for systemic conflict transformation*, Canberra: Australia National University, August 2005, p8.

¹⁸² SCHULZE, K., *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): anatomy of a separatist organization*, Washington: East-West Center, 2004, pp4-5.

in military camps and rape cases were strongly present among the civilians. An estimated 9 000 to 12 000 people were murdered between 1989 and 1998.¹⁸³

These abuses were observed until the end of DOM in August 1998. With the resignation of president Suharto, the same year, a feeling of hope crossed Aceh.¹⁸⁴

Acehnese civilians expected that the truth would be revealed, that justice would be done and that victims would be compensated. But even after the apologies, nothing was done for the victims.¹⁸⁵ In November of the same year, GAM continued its activities and started growing to a mass organization with an increasing alienation from Jakarta. This marked the beginning of a new phase of conflict and more military troops were sent to Aceh.¹⁸⁶ The independence movement kept growing and becoming more popular among the civilians thanks to four key elements: it became a well-organized guerrilla organization, there was a nascent pro-independence political movement, the population mobilized more and more because of a feeling of frustration with Jakarta that didn't recognize the past abuses, and there were a lot of missteps in Jakarta.¹⁸⁷

In October 1999, Abdurrahman Wahid became the new president of Indonesia and apologized from the past abuses.¹⁸⁸ Wahid wanted to give Aceh a larger share of the profits from the natural resources and proposed to conduct a referendum in Aceh.¹⁸⁹

But this proposal was rejected by the Parliament. One month later, million Acehnese civilians came together in Aceh to demand a referendum on independence. The military reacted by resuming a brutal counter campaign: civilian massacres took place and several human rights activists were killed.¹⁹⁰

In the early 2000, negotiations started between the government and GAM, regulated by the Swiss-based centre for Humanitarian dialogue.¹⁹¹ In June 2000, a ceasefire

¹⁸³ Idem, p5.

¹⁸⁴ BARRON, P., RAHMANT, E., NUGROHO, K., *The contested corners of Asia: the Case of Aceh, Indonesia*: Asia Foundation, 2013, p11.

¹⁸⁵ BRAITHWAITE, J., BRAITHWAITE, V., COOKSON, M., DUNN, L., *Aceh* in "Anomie and violence: non-truth and reconciliation in Indonesian peacebuilding", Canberra: ANU Press, 2010, p356.

¹⁸⁶ Idem, p358.

¹⁸⁷ Idem.

¹⁸⁸ Idem, pp361-362.

¹⁸⁹ Idem.

¹⁹⁰ BRAITHWAITE, J., BRAITHWAITE, V., COOKSON, M., DUNN, L., *Aceh* in "Anomie and violence: non-truth and reconciliation in Indonesian peacebuilding", Canberra: ANU Press, 2010, pp 361-362.

¹⁹¹ Centre for humanitarian dialogue, *Aceh Indonesia*, : <https://www.hdcentre.org/activities/aceh-indonesia/>, (online), consulted 19 june 2017.

was signed and was supposed to last until January 2001. Military leaders sabotaged the agreement and the violence increased. The same year President Wahid was ousted and replaced by President Megawati Sukarnoputri. The new president signed a special autonomy for Aceh, which gave 70% of the natural sources' revenues to Aceh. But the application was limited by the Sharia law and led to new opportunities of corruption.¹⁹²

In early 2002, new peace talks were held and in December a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement¹⁹³ was signed. Following this agreement, peace zones and a Joint Security Committee were created for the reconstruction.¹⁹⁴ Even if the killings decreased, the trust and mutual confidence were missing. The GAM didn't proceed to disarmament but instead acquired new weapons and resumed the fights. The next year the agreement collapsed, there were new negotiations but they failed. In 2004, the government decided to declare Aceh as a state of civil emergency but this didn't make any differences as the violence and repression continued.¹⁹⁵

d. The tsunami and end of the conflict

On December 26, 2004, an earthquake occurred following by a tsunami. This affected strongly the conflict dynamics and increased the pressure for peace. The loss of life brought by the tsunami in Aceh was substantially more prominent than that created by the thirty years of war. This aspect put a certain pressure to both parties to continue the peace negotiations. The presence of international aid provided for the tsunami is another factor limiting the use of strategic violence between both parties. Post-tsunami relief and reconstruction additionally represents an open door for the government to exhibit its good faith and effectiveness, and thus possibly to review the feeling of disregard that portrays Acehnese grievance.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² BRAITHWAITE, J., BRAITHWAITE, V., COOKSON, M., DUNN, L., *Aceh* in "Anomie and violence: non-truth and reconciliation in Indonesian peacebuilding", Canberra: ANU Press, 2010, p363.

¹⁹³ "Cessation of Hostilities Framework Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement", Jakarta, December 2, 2002.

¹⁹⁴ SCHULZE, K., *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): anatomy of a separatist organization*, Washington: East-West Center, 2004, pp45-47.

¹⁹⁵ Idem.

¹⁹⁶ BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster: comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in Journal of Peace Building and development, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, pp8-9.

Late January 2005, peace negotiations between the Government and GAM started in Helsinki and in May the state of emergency was lifted. In July, a Memorandum of Understanding¹⁹⁷ is agreed and a peace agreement is signed.¹⁹⁸ GAM had to demobilize and disarm its soldiers while the government had to withdraw its troops that were not regularly set in Aceh.¹⁹⁹ GAM members were granted amnesty in August and in September the European Union started the Aceh Monitoring Mission to supervise the application of the Memorandum of Understanding. In March 2006, the Memorandum of Understanding had succeeded and the province of Aceh was given a greater autonomy and a greater control over its resource revenues.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ *Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement*, Helsinki, 2005, 8p.

¹⁹⁸ ASPINALL, E., *Aceh/Indonesia: Conflict analysis and options for systemic conflict transformation*, Canberra: Australia National University, August 2005, p6.

¹⁹⁹ Idem.

²⁰⁰ Idem.

5. Impact of natural disasters on conflicts

Several academics have made some research about a possible connection between natural disasters and ongoing conflicts. Do natural disasters have an impact on pre-existing conflicts? Do they matter in peace progress? Or in the contrary, do they have no impact at all on the ongoing hostilities?

Disasters disturb a society's daily life and its social systems whether it is directly or indirectly. Natural disasters kind of create the conditions for instability and conflicts, or in some situations they accelerate the hostilities, by making the grievances and scarcities even worse.²⁰¹

The other situation is also possible and appears in a few cases. It, indeed, happens that natural disasters decrease the violence and contributes to a peacebuilding and leads to a conflict resolution.²⁰²

According to the UN, the definition of a natural hazard is the following: “the consequences of events triggered by natural hazards that overwhelm local response capacity and seriously affect the social and economic development of a region.”²⁰³ A natural disaster thus includes natural hazard, exposure and vulnerability. Therefore, we can't consider a cyclone that hits a desert island as natural disaster nor is it a natural disaster if the local authorities can respond adequately to the natural hazard. Characterizing a natural hazard as a natural disaster also depends on the level of exposure or the level of vulnerability. A natural hazard might not trigger a natural disaster if the vulnerability of the society is low.²⁰⁴

How can the relationship between a conflict and a natural disaster therefore be described? Does a natural disaster contribute to a conflict and vice versa? Can the

²⁰¹ BHAVNANI, R., *Natural disasters conflicts*, Cambridge: Harvard University, February 2016, p1.

²⁰² HARRIS, K., KEEN, D., MITCHELL, T., *When disasters and conflicts collide*, London: Overseas Development Institute, February 2013, pp vii – viii.

²⁰³ FERRIS, E., *Natural disasters, conflict, and human rights: Tracing the connections*, San Antonio: St Mary's university, March 2010, p1.

²⁰⁴ WALCH, C., *Armed conflicts and the management of natural disasters: toward a greater understanding of the linkages*, Uppsala: Department of peace and conflict research and Centre for Natural Disaster Science, p1.

response to natural disasters lead to a peacebuilding process and to the end of the conflict? Or does a natural disaster make the conflict even worse?²⁰⁵

In some situations, a natural disaster may occur where there is already a conflict, where the society has already been disturbed, which is the case of both Sri Lanka and Indonesia, the two case-studies of this thesis. The definition of a natural disaster tells us that a natural disaster is linked to the capacity of a society to respond to such situation, but social systems that are already weakened by conflicts are less ready and able to respond to the impact of the natural hazard.²⁰⁶

a. Grievances

If we analyse every complex conflictual situation, we realize that “numerous interactions exist where natural disasters reduce some conflict drivers while exacerbating others”.²⁰⁷

As said before, in most of the cases, natural disasters worsen pre-existing conflicts by having an impact on grievances, military and political opportunities and feasibility of the conflict.

In the cases where natural disasters have an impact on the ongoing conflict, grievances can be deepened which causes greater resource scarcities.²⁰⁸

Some research on the topic advance that natural disasters may fuel armed conflicts by influencing migration and by encouraging tensions within and between communities and by decreasing the state institution.²⁰⁹ Individuals who have encountered a major squeeze on their livelihoods are more likely to gather into a violent process that can endanger the livelihoods of others.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ FERRIS, E., *Natural disasters, conflict, and human right: Tracing the connections*, San Antonio: St Mary’s university, March 2010, p3.

²⁰⁶ Idem.

²⁰⁷ HARRIS, K., KEEN, D., MITCHELL, T., *When disasters and conflicts collide*, London: Overseas Development Institute, February 2013, pp vii – viii.

²⁰⁸ Idem.

²⁰⁹ Idem, p12.

²¹⁰ Idem.

Researches also show that grievance and resource scarcity leading to a conflict, mostly lead to disorganised conflicts that don't necessarily involve the state. Other studies suggest that in poor countries with a low level of renewable resources the conflict tends to have a low level of armed violence.²¹¹

Moreover, literature shows that it is not only resource scarcity that leads to a conflict or stimulates a conflict; it is a combination of scarcity and abundance. This situation, these dynamics around resources can be emphasized by the occurrence of a natural disaster. This natural disaster then creates an even bigger imbalance between regions of scarcity and abundance.²¹²

The impact a natural disaster has on an ongoing conflict and the stability of a country strongly depends of the government's capacity to respond and of the way it has invested in disaster prevention.²¹³ Several cases can be observed in which grievances increased after a natural disaster had occurred in a weak or corrupt government. Natural disasters often intensify the existing inequalities in access to governmental services and accentuate "such inequalities in ways that help to spur political change."²¹⁴

A government's response doesn't always lead to a conflict or to instability; sometimes the actions undertaken by a government can create a climate of empathy and can stimulate a conflict resolution, as we'll see with Aceh.²¹⁵

International aid responses can also have an influence on the grievances in such a way that the conflict's actors experience an uneven distribution of resources as it was the case in Sri Lanka.²¹⁶

b. Opportunities

When natural disasters occur, they shape and create economic and political

²¹¹ HARRIS, K., KEEN, D., MITCHELL, T., *When disasters and conflicts collide*, London: Overseas Development Institute, February 2013, p12.

²¹² Idem, p13.

²¹³ idem.

²¹⁴ idem.

²¹⁵ Idem.

²¹⁶ idem.

opportunities that can lead to violence.²¹⁷ New resources are indeed introduced in the post-disaster dynamics that require few negotiations among different political actors.²¹⁸ These new resources may have a negative impact on the economy and become a “new goal to be fought for by the warring parties.”²¹⁹

Natural disasters can influence the dissemination of the economic resources, support the appropriation of resources by some groups, and present open doors for criminal activities which can prompt brutality.²²⁰ Furthermore, the decreasing economic opportunities during a natural disaster can prompt a state relying on violence to maintain itself.²²¹

Besides economic opportunities, a natural disaster and the international response to it can establish political opportunities that can lead to an increase in violence. Political associations or governments can appropriate the disaster relief as an opportunity to increase their power or even use it as a political tool by manipulating the distribution.²²² The main political associations that are active in the post-disaster period are religious and welfare agencies, local communities, and temporary coordinating groups. Usually, a third party appears that is neither affected by the disaster nor undertaking aid to the victims. These actors see the disaster as one more social injustice and try to expose the political corruption. They try to regain some power. Additionally, it is also possible that a natural disaster reduces the political opportunities emerging from a conflict.²²³

The State has a key role in emergencies, as it usually contributes to the post-disaster aid by providing services to help the civilization rebuild to how it was before the natural disaster, even if these services sometimes require a return to previous structures of inequality and conflict.²²⁴

²¹⁷ HARRIS, K., KEEN, D., MITCHELL, T., *When disasters and conflicts collide*, London: Overseas Development Institute, February 2013, p14.

²¹⁸ BHAVNANI, R., *Natural disasters conflicts*, Cambridge: Harvard University, February 2016, p17.

²¹⁹ idem.

²²⁰ HARRIS, K., KEEN, D., MITCHELL, T., *When disasters and conflicts collide*, London: Overseas Development Institute, February 2013, p13.

²²¹ Idem.

²²² Idem.

²²³ BHAVNANI, R., *Natural disasters conflicts*, Cambridge: Harvard University, February 2016, p17.

²²⁴ Idem.

Local political organizations, each with their own political agendas, might enter in conflict over post-disaster priorities and plans, as they compete to furnish aid to victims to reconstruct their lives. When a natural disaster occurs in a developing country, the combatant parties take it as an opportunity to attack the power while the government handles recovery, and internal and external pressures. A government's capacity to help the disaster-affected people might be restrained by the opposition. Therefore, the political leaders may use the natural disasters as a basis to provoke conflict, to deflect attention from domestic problems or even "to prevent the government from becoming a scapegoat for problems beyond its control."²²⁵ What follows is political destabilization, particularly if this is joined by a decrease of public confidence.²²⁶

c. Feasibility of violence

Natural disasters can make rebellion easier by debilitating or diverting the political apparatus or by reinforcing the legitimacy of rebel groups.²²⁷ "Crucially, natural disasters can also weaken state capacity and legitimacy, creating opportunities for the disgruntled to engage in violent resistance."²²⁸

The proof that natural hazards can modify the feasibility of a conflict is ambiguous. Governments might use the natural disasters to reinforce their own position, which can prompt an increase in violence or a decrease and cessation. A natural disaster can accelerate or slow down an ongoing conflict depending on the overarching dynamic of the conflict. If for example, rebels are losing and weakened by a natural disaster, the violence will probably be shortened.²²⁹

²²⁵ BHAVNANI, R., *Natural disasters conflicts*, Cambridge: Harvard University, February 2016, p17.

²²⁶ Idem.

²²⁷ ARRIS, K., KEEN, D., MITCHELL, T., *When disasters and conflicts collide*, London: Overseas Development Institute, February 2013, p14.

²²⁸ NEL, P., RIGHARTS, M., *Natural Disasters and the risk violent civil conflict*, Otago : University of Otago, 2008, p7.

²²⁹ ARRIS, K., KEEN, D., MITCHELL, T., *When disasters and conflicts collide*, London: Overseas Development Institute, February 2013, p14.

6. Impact of conflicts on natural disasters

Does conflict make people exposed and vulnerable to natural hazards? Conflict and fragility might indeed increase the impact of natural disasters as conflicts increase disaster risk by displacing civilians to areas with a higher exposure to hazards. A conflict can weaken a government's capacity to supply adequate protection and prevention from natural hazards. Governments can increase the post-disaster suffering by restricting aid on security grounds or by allocating humanitarian aid to support political objectives. A distinction has moreover to be made between states that are willing but unable and states that are unwilling and unable to reduce exposure to disaster risks and impacts.²³⁰

As told in the definition of a natural disaster, a disaster is a consequence of population's vulnerability and exposure to natural hazards. A society's instability or a conflict may affect this vulnerability and disaster risk reduction is more difficult to operationalize in fragile states. Violence, conflict and instability devastate the livelihoods, the infrastructure and basic services that make "a population resilient."²³¹

Disasters are more probable in a violent conflict or in a fragile state. In such a conflictual situation, governmental institutions are limited in their ability to prevent and respond to natural disasters.²³² In some cases, the government takes part to the conflict by inalienably politicizing its decision-making about how it oversees disaster risk.²³³ In other contexts, governments disregard specific districts or ethnic groups, making them more vulnerable against the impacts of a catastrophe.²³⁴

Researchers suggest that in situations where a state is willing and capable to protect its civilians, the part of the population that is relatively protected is probably going to be those esteemed the most politically powerful. Well connected communities are likely to have a greater economic advantage and are probably going to solicit more

²³⁰ ARRIS, K., KEEN, D., MITCHELL, T., *When disasters and conflicts collide*, London: Overseas Development Institute, February 2013, p18.

²³¹ Idem.

²³² Idem.

²³³ Idem.

²³⁴ Idem.

risk-reduction measures than the individuals who are politically feeble or minimized, voiceless, poor and often rural.²³⁵

Powerful groups in instable and conflict states might make it troublesome for national and universal actors to work with populations defenceless and vulnerable against natural disasters.²³⁶

Disaster response doesn't simply belong to the state's capacity to manage the effects of a natural hazard but expresses several strategic choices. Labelling a situation as being a crisis relates strong political dimensions. "States that had recently undergone a major governance transition, such as gaining independence, were more likely to decline aid, claiming to demonstrate internal capacity in dealing with a disaster."²³⁷

The countries intervening and aiding often decide whether intervening or not, decision based on political considerations.²³⁸

Violence, conflict and fragility thus do aggravate the vulnerability when a natural disaster occurs and it hinders efforts to reduce disaster risk. Political obstructions and lever must be considered in the way fragile and conflict affected states address disaster risks. Risks intersect, and efforts to decrease some risks might have positive or negative impacts on others.²³⁹

On the one hand, conflicts exacerbate vulnerability to natural disasters: with weakened structures, the state is less able to react and then to work for recovery, while the populations themselves are less resilient and the displaced persons, because of the violence, are more exposed to disaster risks.²⁴⁰

Similarly, disasters further exacerbate conflict and fragility by undermining livelihoods and displacing people, increasing the pressure on already failing

²³⁵ ARRIS, K., KEEN, D., MITCHELL, T., *When disasters and conflicts collide*, London: Overseas Development Institute, February 2013, p21.

²³⁶ Idem, p23.

²³⁷ Idem.

²³⁸ Idem.

²³⁹ Idem.

²⁴⁰ GHESQUIERE, F., *Fragilité, conflits et catastrophes naturelles : une approche intégrée de la résilience?*, Washington : La Banque mondiale, (online), <http://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/fr/fragilites-conflits-et-catastrophes-naturelles-une-approche-integree-de-la-resilience>, février 2016.

governance systems, and fuelling disagreements under the effects of unfair or inadequate response or adaptation strategies.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ GHESQUIERE, F., *Fragilité, conflits et catastrophes naturelles : une approche intégrée de la résilience?*, Washington : La Banque mondiale, (online), <http://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/fr/fragilites-conflits-et-catastrophes-naturelles-une-approche-integree-de-la-resilience>, février 2016.

7. The tsunami of December 2004

On December 26, 2004 in the early morning, around 8 am local time an earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale occurred in the Indian Ocean off the coast of North Sumatra in Indonesia. Following this underwater earthquake, the seabed rose displacing a phenomenal volume of water.²⁴² The huge waves moved with a speed of 1000km per hour across the Indian Ocean over a giant area.²⁴³ Very little could be done by the affected countries. After touching Indonesia, the tsunami spread outwards and moved quickly to Thailand, Sri Lanka, South-Asia and even to Africa hitting everything on its way and spared no one and nothing. The exact death toll and the full catalogue of physical damage are still unknown and uncertain. However, it is known that almost 230 000 people lost their lives and that more than one million people were displaced. The damage caused to infrastructure and houses is estimated to over US \$ 10 billion.²⁴⁴

When the earthquake occurred, people started running in the streets, buildings and houses collapsed. As soon as the quake stopped, people gathered together to organize immediate assistance. But worse was to come. Huge shockwaves from the deep-sea earthquake were coming from the epicentre. People had no idea a tsunami was on its way.²⁴⁵ Around thirty minutes after the quake, huge crowds were working in the streets to provide direct assistance and to cope with the devastation across the city. At that moment, a huge amount of water started to add up in the sea. In a first stage, the water withdrew and then, in a second stage, a succession of waves rushed forwards. Waves of approximately twenty metres broke into the coastal areas of Aceh, brushing away everything laying on its way. Nothing could resist the immense wave.²⁴⁶

That was only the beginning. The tsunami arrived in series of waves with an interval of 30 minutes between each peak. In most affected countries the third wave was the

²⁴² JAYASURIYA, S., MCCLAWY, P., *The Asian Tsunami: aid and reconstruction after a disaster*, Northampton: Asian Development Bank, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010, p1.

²⁴³ Annex 8.

²⁴⁴ JAYASURIYA, S., MCCLAWY, P., *The Asian Tsunami: aid and reconstruction after a disaster*, Northampton: Asian Development Bank, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010, p2.

²⁴⁵ Idem, p1.

²⁴⁶ Idem, p1.

strongest. During several hours smaller tsunamis continued to hit the coastal areas of Indonesia while the natural disaster extended to more than a dozen countries in Asia and Africa as the waves spread out across the Indian Ocean.²⁴⁷

The reaction to the tsunami was an unprecedented response. The local communities were the first reacting to the disaster by trying to help as much as they could, in every way they could and using whatever they esteemed to be useful.²⁴⁸ This first immediate response was quickly followed by a national response and later by an international response. International governments, international agencies and millions of people across the world donated to help affected communities. OXFAM and MSF for example collected their full funding budget in a month. In one month more than 300 new INGO implemented in Sri Lanka. The international community showed a real promptness and generosity.²⁴⁹

a. Tsunami in Indonesia

Indonesia was the country most hit by the tsunami. After only one hour from the initial quake, over 160 000 Indonesians had already died. The tsunami of December 2004 is the worst natural disaster in the country's history. Waves with a height between 5 and 30 metres devastated Banda Aceh²⁵⁰ with a speed of 800 kilometres per hour.²⁵¹ In certain place the waves went over two kilometres inland. The death toll only in Indonesia reached almost 170 000 and over a half million people were displaced. Thousands of houses were razed to the ground, more than 3000 kilometres of roads were destroyed, eleven airports were ruined and many more damage.²⁵²

b. Tsunami in Sri Lanka

The earthquake took place at 6:59 am Sri Lankan time and the first wave hit the east coast at 8:35am. In a very short time more than 36 000 people died and over half a

²⁴⁷ JAYASURIYA, S., MCCLAWY, P., *The Asian Tsunami: aid and reconstruction after a disaster*, Northampton : Asian Development Bank, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010, p3.

²⁴⁸ Idem.

²⁴⁹ Idem.

²⁵⁰ Annex 7.

²⁵¹ JAYASURIYA, S., MCCLAWY, P., *The Asian Tsunami: aid and reconstruction after a disaster*, Northampton : Asian Development Bank, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010, p68

²⁵² Idem.

million persons had been displaced. A lot of houses and buildings were destroyed; railways, bridges and other infrastructures were razed to the ground. Like most of the affected countries, it was the first time Sri Lanka experienced a tsunami. Similarly, to Indonesia, the relief effort and the first aid came very fast and were organized by the local communities followed immediately by the government and international agencies.²⁵³

The most affected provinces were the Northern, the Eastern and the Southern provinces with the Eastern province particularly hard hit. The disaster occurred during the main tourist season of Sri Lanka and there was no early warning system in place.²⁵⁴²⁵⁵

26 December 2004 was a full-moon day and a day after Christmas. This means a lot of people went to the beaches and the temples to spend time with their relatives. Others took the train to join their families for the day.²⁵⁶ When a first wave of approximately 3 metres high hit the coast, locals and tourist didn't know what was happening and didn't think of a tsunami. After the first wave, the sea receded. This was an unprecedented natural phenomenon, some locals realised there was something going on and flew, while others went back to the beach and started taking pictures.²⁵⁷ After a 30-minute interval, a second bigger wave with a height of 10 metres hit the coastal area of Sri Lanka. People ignored that when the water went back a second wave would occur. That new wave reappeared much faster and much higher devastating everything on its way.²⁵⁸

After the first wave a lot of people knew about the train coming from Colombo and going along the southern coast to the east. They felt like it was a good idea to run to the train and get on it to escape the at that moment unknown natural disaster.²⁵⁹ They thought it was the best way to escape and to find protection. They had no idea about

²⁵³ JAYASURIYA, S., MCCLAWY, P., *The Asian Tsunami: aid and reconstruction after a disaster*, Northampton : Asian Development Bank, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010, p123.

²⁵⁴ Visit at the Tsunami museum of Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka, 16 December 2004

²⁵⁵ Annex 3.

²⁵⁶ Visit at the Tsunami museum of Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka, 16 December 2004.

²⁵⁷ Idem.

²⁵⁸ Idem.

²⁵⁹ Idem.

a second wave coming towards the coast. 30 minutes later this massive second wave occurred hitting the train going from Colombo to the South with such a power that the entire train was ripped off the tracks instantly, with such a force that heavy forms of underneath the tracks were uprooted and turned entirely upside down. The carriages twisted and turned and got filled with water. The total number of people that lost their life in the train isn't known or will never be told.²⁶⁰

The United Nations and its different agencies were massively mobilised. One day after the disaster, on December 27, a UNDAC²⁶¹ mission was sent to coordinate the actions and evaluate the needs. Thanks to a good visibility and understanding of the conflict, the opening of an office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs came very fast.²⁶²

The NGOs and the civil society had a quick reaction after the wave but due to a lack of means and experience with a natural disaster of such an amplitude, their actions weren't very effective. The international NGOs then quickly established a partnership with the local NGOs to increase the efficacy of the emergency actions.²⁶³ The coordination between all the NGOs had however never been sufficient. The ethnic cleavages had been an important impediment to the coordination of the humanitarian actions. The NGOs had to be very attentive to the compositions of their teams and the NGOs had to explain, in each tampon zone, clearly and with a certain transparency their actions and goals.²⁶⁴

During the emergency phase, the local populations didn't wait for the international solidarity to act and intervene where they could. The inhabitants proved they could face the disasters and showed a great intercommunity cohesion. The ethnic tensions lied up again with the arrival of the foreign rescue.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ Visit at the Tsunami museum of Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka, 16 December 2004.

²⁶¹ United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination

²⁶² Idem, p9.

²⁶³ Idem, p10.

²⁶⁴ HERVET, C., *L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie*, in « Les notes de l'Irasec », n°2, mai 2008, p11.

²⁶⁵ Idem.

8. Pre- tsunami situation

Before going on to the heart of the matter, it may be worthwhile to briefly recall the situations in both countries before and after the tsunami in order to make the comparison afterwards and to see why peace emerged in Indonesia and not in Sri Lanka.

a. Indonesia

As mentioned in the chapter about the Indonesian conflict the roots of the conflict in Aceh can be found in the 1950's after the independence and when president Sukarno presented his objective of "ensuring regional autonomy and forging a secular Indonesian nation."²⁶⁶ The 'Darul Islam Rebellion' was then created based on the claim that Aceh must be considered as a separate state with a different culture, a different language and a different approach to the Islam. When the Indonesian state was formed, the will of the Acehnese was neglected and Aceh was incorporated in Indonesia. The Acehnese felt like they were colonised by the new state and started a rebellion that led to the three decades' war.²⁶⁷ This feeling was strengthened when the government signed a contract with international companies for the mining of the natural resources in Aceh without consulting the Acehnese.²⁶⁸ In 1976, Aceh Sumatra Liberation Front, with its leader Hasan di Tiro, declared Aceh's independence from Indonesia. This movement later evolved in the Free Aceh Movement. Its main grievance was the exploitation of the gas and oil activities by the government and the centralization of power by some elites in Jakarta.²⁶⁹ GAM's struggle increased in the 1980's when they started to get some support from other groups. The government's reaction to this increasing power was to put the region under Operational Military status. The violence escalated, leading to high number of

²⁶⁶ BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in Journal of Peace Building and development, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p7.

²⁶⁷ Idem.

²⁶⁸ JAYASURIYA, S., MCCLAWY, P., *The Asian Tsunami: aid and reconstruction after a disaster*, Northampton : Asian Development Bank, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010, p75.

²⁶⁹ BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in Journal of Peace Building and development, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p7.

fatalities and a rise in the number of internally displaced persons.²⁷⁰ In 1996, the Operational Military Status ended but the military presence wasn't reduced even after the resignation of President Soeharto that same year. It was even thought that the military presence increased in the early 2000's during the Sukarnoputri administration.²⁷¹

In 2000, the Government of Indonesia and GAM came together to discuss a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and signed it in 2002. It was one of the first agreements that seemed to work and to be respected but five months after the signature this agreement was already derailed.²⁷² The government of Indonesia indeed had recourse to military means to kill and destroy GAM so that the "Acehnese would accept special autonomy as a lasting political solution to the conflict."²⁷³ The next two years following the end of the agreement were years of martial law and civil emergency and affected both parties. The press was censored and international actors were not allowed to enter the province of Aceh. The Indonesian army (TNI) used more and more brutal measures and deeply weakened GAM. In one year, GAM saw its supply lines and its communication services being disrupted, their strength in urban areas decreased and they lost support from the Acehnese people.²⁷⁴

In addition, the Indonesian government being involved in other intra-state conflicts, got tired and realised they were kind of unable to destroy and win against GAM. Both belligerent parties concluded that a military solution was not viable and they attempted to find a political solution, but an exit strategy was missing.²⁷⁵

b. Sri Lanka

As explained in the chapter concerning the Sri Lankan conflict, the roots of the war are to be found in the colonial era. During that period, the Tamil minorities were

²⁷⁰ JAYASURIYA, S., MCCLAWY, P., *The Asian Tsunami: aid and reconstruction after a disaster*, Northampton : Asian Development Bank, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010, p75.

²⁷¹ Idem.

²⁷² BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in *Journal of Peace Building and development*, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p7.

²⁷³ Idem.

²⁷⁴ Idem.

²⁷⁵ Idem.

overrepresented in the British administration. With the independence in 1948, this changed. The Sinhalese ruled the new administration exercising their supremacy across the entire country and excluding the Tamil community in the decision-making.²⁷⁶ By 1949, the government was 54% Sinhalese and 41% Tamil and by 1963 it was 92% Sinhalese and only 7% Tamil.²⁷⁷ The Sinhalese population had thus taken power and largely dominated the Sri Lankan state by putting in place discriminative measures to reduce the Tamil influence and representation. The Tamil seeing their rights being reduced year after year didn't accept the Sinhala domination and defend their rights by claiming their own state: Tamil Eelam. The Sinhalese repression in the post-independence era has provoked a Tamil-uprising followed by ethnic conflicts and even a secessionist will from the late 1970's.²⁷⁸

The Black July of 1983 triggered the civil war and the militarisation of Sri Lanka: after the killing of 13 Sinhalese soldiers, the Sri Lankan army started anti-Tamil pogroms. Since the anti-Tamil pogroms in Colombo, the Sri Lankan society had been transformed in a society where violence was a component of the daily life. Along the conflict, the ethnic and religious positions between the Tamil and Sinhalese radicalised.²⁷⁹ During all these years of direct violence, a gap had been formed between the North and the South of the country. The North and East became humanitarian action areas while the South and West remained an important touristic zone.²⁸⁰

Before the devastating wave of December 2004, the warring parties had never found a solid peace agreement, even with the intervention of third parties.²⁸¹

²⁷⁶ HERVET, C., L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie, in « Les notes de l'Irasec », n°2, mai 2008, p5.

²⁷⁷ ²⁷⁷ BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh, in Journal of Peace Building and development, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p8.

²⁷⁸ HERVET, C., L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie, in « Les notes de l'Irasec », n°2, mai 2008, p6.

²⁷⁹ Idem, p7.

²⁸⁰ Idem.

²⁸¹ Idem p8.

9. Post-tsunami situation

a. Post-tsunami in Indonesia

Aceh had been hit by series of waves, as it was located about less than 100km from the epicentre of the earthquake. More than 2.8 million people were affected, 200 000 people died and over 500 000 were displaced.²⁸²

The only survivor was Baitturrahman mosque while all the other occidental infrastructures collapsed. This religious building has become the symbol of God's protection, the symbol of the Muslim identity and the province's will to more autonomy.²⁸³

Both parties were severely affected by the big wave and the Indonesian Government showed some difficulties to rehabilitate Aceh without international support. International presence was perceived as a certain sense of security in the affected areas.²⁸⁴ Before the natural disaster of 2004, only three expats were tolerated in the province of Aceh: two from the international committee of the Red Cross and one from the United Nations. The mediatisation of the tragedy has permitted a reopening of the province to foreign people and an unprecedented movement of solidarity. The conflict in Aceh was a hidden conflict about which nobody knew much. The tsunami exposed the conflict to the entire world.²⁸⁵

The disaster made both parties realise that continuing the war could not eliminate the enemy party and that a political situation was needed. The government realised that the military might not be able to eliminate GAM. Moreover, the government was also involved in other intrastate conflicts and got tired.²⁸⁶

²⁸² BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in *Journal of Peace Building and development*, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p8.

²⁸³ HERVET, C., *L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie*, in « Les notes de l'Irasec », n°2, mai 2008, p17.

²⁸⁴ BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in *Journal of Peace Building and development*, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p9.

²⁸⁵ HERVET, C., *L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie*, in « Les notes de l'Irasec », n°2, mai 2008, p18.

²⁸⁶ BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in *Journal of Peace Building and development*, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p9.

Immediately after the disaster a ceasefire had been declared. In August 2005, a demilitarisation agreement was signed under the aegis of the former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari, and a 'Aceh Monitoring Mission' was sent by the European Council.²⁸⁷

On August 15, 2005 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed: both parties engaged to demilitarize Aceh, to declare amnesty and to reintegrate members of the liberation movement as well as to implement some reforms in the province.²⁸⁸

The agreement was nearly wrecked. GAM, indeed, didn't agree with the number of security forces sent to Aceh. If GAM signed the memorandum of understanding, 14 000 members of the Indonesian army and 9000 police members would be deployed in Aceh. If they didn't sign the agreement they would face the "wrath of the international community".²⁸⁹ GAM decided to go with the agreement and to sign it.²⁹⁰

This post-tsunami situation means that the natural disaster gave both sides a way out of the war, the tsunami appeared as the exit strategy that was missing to find a common agreement.²⁹¹

b. Post-tsunami in Sri Lanka

The tsunami hit the Sri Lankan coasts in the morning of December 26, 2004. Unpredictable event, the authorities and the local populations weren't prepared to such a disaster. Sri Lanka had particularly been affected due to its modest size and its weak capacity of resilience. The government had quickly responded to the

²⁸⁷ BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in *Journal of Peace Building and development*, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p9.

²⁸⁸ HERVET, C., L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie, in « Les notes de l'Irasec », n°2, mai 2008, p18.

²⁸⁹ BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in *Journal of Peace Building and development*, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p9.

²⁹⁰ Idem.

²⁹¹ Idem.

intervention proposition of the international community.²⁹² Huge budgets were mobilised by NGOs or private donators. However, the coordination between the international and the local structures wasn't very effective. Moreover, the political situation and the security context didn't facilitate the intervention.²⁹³

After the tsunami, the ethnic tensions regained and a lot of events suggested the return to war: kidnapping, killing, general strikes, fire on fisher boats, ... The access of the aid programs to beneficiaries had been retarded and their implementation became more and more difficult. The tsunami of Sri Lanka had been qualified as an 'over disaster', as Sri Lanka already was plunged in a severe political crisis.²⁹⁴ Moreover, taking advantage of its new visibility on the international scene, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, leader of the LTTE, made every effort to ensure that the conflict would resume. The instigators of the violence seemed to want a resumption of the conflict.²⁹⁵

The natural disaster appeared at a crucial and fragile moment in the peace process. The negotiations were on hold and attempts to talks between the government and the LTTE failed. At that time LTTE was planning a new military operation. When the tsunami occurred the peace-process between the two parties was already decreasing. The relations between the Muslims and the LTTE were deteriorating, the LTTE split in the North and East, and the violence escalated.²⁹⁶

Directly after the tsunami both parties intervened in the affected areas and an interdependence between the two appeared giving a certain hope that this interdependence would lead to further positive developments. The tsunami offered the opportunity for the two communities to communicate with each other and to get

²⁹² HERVET, C., L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie, in « Les notes de l'Irasec », n°2, mai 2008, p7.

²⁹³ Idem.

²⁹⁴ Idem.

²⁹⁵ Idem, p9.

²⁹⁶ BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in Journal of Peace Building and development, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p10.

rid of all stereotypes.²⁹⁷ But this cooperation quickly disappeared as the Tamils started accusing the government of failing to provide adequate assistance and Muslims felt neglected and discriminated. The hope to positive development was quickly put aside.²⁹⁸ The government prevented that the LTTE started exploiting the tsunami to win “international sympathy, recognition and direct assistance.” The government had even done its utmost to prevent the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan from visiting the Northern and Eastern provinces.

But both parties quickly realised that without any cooperation they wouldn't receive any form of assistance. The international pressure became too strong and both parties finally agreed to set up a joint mechanism: The Post-Tsunami Operation Management Structure (P-TOMS) to plan, implement and coordinate the post-disaster work.²⁹⁹ But the P-TOMS was immediately challenged by Sinhalese nationalists such as the People's Liberation Front. These nationalists pretended that there was no valid basis and obligation for the government to accept this P-TOMS and to enter in a Memorandum of Understanding with LTTE because LTTE was not an entity recognized by law and was more identified as a terrorist group. Even with this in mind, the Supreme Court validated the P-TOMS agreement after striking down three features.³⁰⁰

With the elections of November 2005, the P-TOMS failed and a huge peace opportunity got lost. The old chaos only increased due to the tsunami fuelled by “more money in circulation and fresh grievances based on inequality and inequity of aid”.³⁰¹

The fall of the P-TOMS led to polarization. The Prime minister's positioning with the JVP as well as the new policies against any form of cooperation with the LTTE are clear signals.

²⁹⁷ BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in Journal of Peace Building and development, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p10.

²⁹⁸ Idem.

²⁹⁹ Idem.

³⁰⁰ Idem.

³⁰¹ Idem.

Initially the natural disaster created hope and cooperation among both warring parties, but both parties believed they could prevail militarily; political factors increased and put aside the humanitarian needs and the international pressure. The tsunami thus only postponed the conflict and hit Sri Lanka at a crucial moment. The situation mainly deteriorated into military confrontation due to the politicisation by both side of the humanitarian aid.³⁰²

³⁰² BAUMAN, P., AYALEW, M., PAUL, G., *Beyond disaster : comparative analysis of tsunami interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh*, in *Journal of Peace Building and development*, Vol 3, No 3, 2007, p10.

10. Why did peace emerge following the tsunami in Indonesia but not in Sri Lanka?

Giving the situation of both countries being plunged in a civil war for almost three decades, the tsunami came as a source of hope and expectation among the “international community that something positive would come out of the catastrophe.”³⁰³ How can it be explained that in one situation the tsunami had a positive effect on the ongoing conflict while in the other situation the conflict got worse and escalated? Why and how did the tsunami and the tsunami intervention lead to two different outcomes?³⁰⁴

To answer the research question, several hypotheses must be verified. Does the tsunami itself be considered as the only factor or is it a sum of several variables that led to different impacts on the war? If so, which factors must be taken into account? Did the media play an important role in the conflict ending? Did both parties really want to put an end to the conflict or did they use the tsunami humanitarian aid as a political tool to increase their sphere of influence? What about the international pressure? Would the conflict in Aceh have continued without the international pressure? Could the fact that both countries were at a different stage of the war have an influence on the peace process? Which factors were present in Indonesia and absent in Sri Lanka and led to different outcomes in both countries?³⁰⁵

The following research helps to explain the different political outcomes in both civil wars and draws the context in which the tsunami occurred. It doesn't explain if and how the tsunami itself possibly transformed these conflicts. The different used literatures also show that it is mostly the pre-disaster trends that set the tone for the post-disaster conflict outcomes.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ BAUMAN, P., PAUL, G., AYALEW, M., *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia*: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration, 2006, p3.

³⁰⁴ Idem.

³⁰⁵ JAYASINGHE, N., *Post-tsunami Sri Lanka and the Ethnic Conflict: a critical analysis of vulnerability*, London: London School of Economics, August 2006, p15.

³⁰⁶ LE BILLON, PH., WAIZENEGGER, A., *Peace in the wake of disaster? Secessionist conflicts and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami*, Vancouver: Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep. 2007), p. 418.

a. Role of the presidents

The main factor is the will of both leaderships to end the conflict or not. In the case of Indonesia president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was committed and promised to end the war and to go down the track of peace.³⁰⁷ During his campaign he claimed he would find a non-military solution.³⁰⁸ The Indonesian president and his vice-president obtained a lot of support from different parties in their way to peace. They also got a strong reinforcement from the TNI, which was from a great importance as the TNI played the main role in the negotiations with the GAM. The president and his vice-president therefore received all necessary credibility “to work towards a peace accord”.³⁰⁹

In Sri Lanka, the election of president Rajapakse in 2005 sent another signal. He was strongly allied to the JVP and had strong ties “to the Sinhala-Buddhist national cause.”³¹⁰ Any will to end the conflict by negotiations was thus out of hand.³¹¹

The president furthermore prohibited the UN any access to the northern and eastern areas. Few days after the tsunami hit, President Kumaratunga invited the LTTE to work together for a Special Task Force for Disaster Management.³¹² But any hope of an eventual cooperation between both parties was quickly set aside when it turned out that the government blocked Kofi Annan’s access to the Northern and Eastern LTTE areas.³¹³ The LTTE leader, of course, was furious about the twist the promised cooperation took combined with “an unfair distribution of tsunami relief assistance at the expense of the Tamil people.”³¹⁴ Therefore, the LTTE asserted that all relief destined to areas under its control must pass through its main NGO wing, the Tamil Relief Organisation (TRO).³¹⁵

³⁰⁷ JAYASINGHE, N., *Post-tsunami Sri Lanka and the Ethnic Conflict: a critical analysis of vulnerability*, London: London School of Economics, August 2006, p15.

³⁰⁸ Idem.

³⁰⁹ Idem, p26.

³¹⁰ Idem.

³¹¹ Idem.

³¹² SALTER, M., *To end a civil war: Norway’s peace engagement in Sri Lanka*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, p. 201.

³¹³ Idem, p. 202.

³¹⁴ Idem.

³¹⁵ Idem.

b. Role of the media and internationalisation of the conflict

The media had been of crucial importance in both conflicts. The tsunami was a perfect media event. All warring parties came under pressure due to the mediatisation and internationalization of the conflict.

GAM and the government of Indonesia came strongly under pressure “to achieve a negotiated end to war. The media furthermore provided GAM a favourable bargaining position and hopes of agreement.”³¹⁶

Before the tsunami of December 2004, Aceh was closed from the outside world. Only few foreign actors were allowed by that time: members of the ICRC, Humanitarian Dialogue and the United Nations. Humanitarian Dialogue had been present in Aceh since 1999 and facilitated peace negotiations between both parties between 2002 and 2003.³¹⁷ Aceh had been sealed off under a state of “military emergency”³¹⁸ since May 2003 because of the efforts by Jakarta to continue the 30 years-during armed conflict against the region. Any foreigner, including aid workers and journalists weren’t allowed to enter the Acehnese sole. The earthquake and the wave that mostly hit the province of Aceh reopened the boundaries and made Aceh well known to the international community.³¹⁹ Although the emergency measures were heavily criticized, the “state of emergency” was renewed on November 19, 2004 for six months. On May 19, 2004, it became a “civil emergency” for an imposed duration of six more months. In Aceh, however, no difference at all could be perceived.³²⁰ “Inhabitants' movements were still limited; force was still very often used. And foreigners were still forbidden to enter Aceh except at three isolated places: Sabang, Simeuleu, and Singkil.”³²¹

The days following the disaster, Aceh had been forcibly opened to the international

³¹⁶ LE BILLON, PH., WAIZENEGGER, A., *Peace in the wake of disaster? Secessionist conflicts and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami*, Vancouver: Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep. 2007), p. 419.

³¹⁷ Centre for humanitarian dialogue, *Aceh Indonesia*, : <https://www.hdcentre.org/activities/aceh-indonesia/>, (online), consulted 19 June 2017.

³¹⁸ MAHDI, S., Calang : the influence of Humanitarian aid, in « Indonesia », No. 79, New York : Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2005, p161.

³¹⁹ Idem..

³²⁰ Idem.

³²¹ MAHDI, S., Calang : the influence of Humanitarian aid, in « Indonesia », No. 79, New York : Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2005, p161.

world.³²² Aceh went from a place without any international media to a place with a worldwide media coverage.³²³ Suddenly, Banda Aceh, the capital, became an international city with foreigners of different colours, religions, races and cultures.³²⁴

In a region where foreigners had been forbidden for years, thousands of soldiers came from around the world to rescue the Acehnese. Hundreds of helicopters, tens of cargo's, trucks with tons of food and medicines came to Aceh. Indonesians had never seen such a solidarity towards the Acehnese taken by the Indonesian military power for decades.³²⁵ More than 2000 humanitarian actors coming from 30 different countries, military forces were deployed in the province to help with the emergency aid and the reconstruction. This massive arrival of humanitarian actors triggered the internationalisation of the hidden conflict of Aceh.³²⁶ Preoccupied by the situation, the international community felt invested of a pacification mission. The will to seek for peace in Aceh was mostly linked to a geostrategic interest in the region as Indonesia has had an important demographic weight and many Muslims. Aceh is also an important crossing between the Indian and Pacific Ocean and is a province rich in hydrocarbons.³²⁷ This geostrategic interest had been reflected in the fact that immediately after the disaster, the United States wanted to create a humanitarian international coalition with Japan, Canada, India and Australia. This proposition was quickly rejected by the international community. On January 6, 2005, the group was dissolved during the Jakarta summit and the UN could retake the lead of the operations.³²⁸ The coordination of the delivered aid finally could be ruled by international actors following the opening of the province. The coordination between all those actors had been managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs (OCHA) and the "Global Consortium" mechanism.³²⁹

³²² MAHDI, S., Calang : the influence of Humanitarian aid, in « Indonesia », No. 79, New York : Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2005, p161.

³²³ Idem.

³²⁴ Idem.

³²⁵ HERVET, C., *L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie : les cas du Sri Lanka, de l'Indonésie et du Cachemire*, in « Les notes de l'IRASEC », No 2, mai 2008, p25.

³²⁶ Idem.

³²⁷ Idem.

³²⁸ Idem, p20.

³²⁹ HERVET, C., *L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie : les cas du Sri Lanka, de l'Indonésie et du Cachemire*, in « Les notes de l'IRASEC », No 2, mai 2008, p 20.

The mediatisation and internationalisation of the conflict took a similar way in Sri Lanka. The international community intervened after the local communities had already acted and taken initiatives. The international intervention strengthened the community tensions and accentuated community segregation.³³⁰ The presence of foreign humanitarian organisations was badly perceived and the country had often been qualified as being over-assisted.³³¹ The humanitarian organizations faced some difficulties for staying neutral and not taking any part between the Sri Lankan government or the LTTE.³³²

Conversely to Aceh, the conflict had already been internationalised since 1983 with the Tamil diaspora in the West where they broadcasted their separatists' ideas.³³³ The visibility of the Sri Lankan civil war increased thanks to the media. Conversely to Indonesia, Sri Lanka isn't geostrategically important on an international level as the island is crushed by its neighbour, India.³³⁴

The media furthermore played an important role in making the world but also the rescue organisations aware of the conflict. Regarding this conflict awareness, two categories can be distinguished in Sri Lanka. The first one incorporates all organization being present on the territory for a long time and having competent knowledge regarding the ongoing conflict.³³⁵ These organisations responded and executed the design and implementation of disaster assistance better than other organizations.³³⁶ The second group arrived in Sri Lanka after the tsunami without any knowledge of the conflict and implemented conflict-blind programs creating a lot of tensions between the communities.³³⁷ The situation in Aceh is quite similar. The organizations already implemented in the country before the tsunami hit, were of course aware of the ongoing conflict and “were consequently able to support the

³³⁰ HERVET, C., *L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie : les cas du Sri Lanka, de l'Indonésie et du Cachemire*, in « Les notes de l'IRASEC », No 2, mai 2008, pp 9-11.

³³¹ Idem.

³³² Idem.

³³³ Idem.

³³⁴ Idem.

³³⁵ BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration*, 2006, p6.

³³⁶ Idem.

³³⁷ Idem.

peace process directly and indirectly and hence fundamentally assist its potentially positive conclusion.”³³⁸ But here as well, the majority of the international organizations entered Aceh for tsunami relief lacking knowledge about the conflict dynamics.³³⁹ Some humanitarian aid workers didn’t even know about the existence of any civil war before arriving on the territory.³⁴⁰ Media thus played an important factor in bringing to light both conflicts even though there was little time for humanitarian organisations to really learn about the conflict before going to the field.

c. Differences between both separatist groups

The way both groups are labelled can be considered as another issue having an impact on the conflict outcomes. Both separatist groups were labelled differently. GAM got characterized as being an insurgent, separatist group while the LTTE had been labelled as a terrorist group by several countries such as the United States since 1997 and the United Kingdom in 2000.³⁴¹ In 2006, the LTTE was qualified as being a terrorist organization by the European Union and Canada. These labels are important as “the awareness of the conflicts stems from the use of such labels.”³⁴² The labels also influenced the perception the international community had on the conflicts.³⁴³

Regarding the public opinion, labelling the organization also had an impact. GAM perceived more sympathy from the public as they never attacked outside the province and never attacked a non-member of the TNI, while the LTTE attacked outside the areas and attacked even the capital Colombo. The LTTE got weakened due to its label as terrorist group especially in receiving donations and in having any legitimacy.³⁴⁴ Due to this label the LTTE isolated itself and was isolated by the

³³⁸ BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration*, 2006, p4.

³³⁹ Idem, p6.

³⁴⁰ Idem.

³⁴¹ JAYASINGHE, N., *Post-tsunami Sri Lanka and the Ethnic Conflict: a critical analysis of vulnerability*, London: London School of Economics, August 2006, p15.

³⁴² Idem, p27.

³⁴³ Idem.

³⁴⁴ JAYASINGHE, N., *Post-tsunami Sri Lanka and the Ethnic Conflict: a critical analysis of vulnerability*, London: London School of Economics, August 2006, p28.

outside world “which made them unlikely to enter in any talks.”³⁴⁵ This isolation engendered even more violence as “wounded tigers are dangerous.”³⁴⁶

An additional difference in the separatist groups is related to their relation to the tsunami and the impact the natural disaster had on them. The LTTE lost some members and some infrastructure but could rapidly regain strength.³⁴⁷ The GAM, however, could not. The province of Aceh was completely razed by the natural disaster. As GAM lost a lot of effectives it was “politically more convenient for them to reach a peace accord with the government” as they were too weak to retake the arms and continue the fighting.³⁴⁸

Furthermore, GAM was more coherent than the LTTE and didn’t have to face internal separations. They were also better positioned to search for a peace agreement. As already mentioned, the eastern LTTE branch broke away in 2004. This branch received relative support from the government of Sri Lanka. Because of that the LTTE weakened which led to an outbreak of violence between the eastern branch and the LTTE. The LTTE, therefore, was less likely to work on peace negotiations and to attain a peace process.³⁴⁹

d. Politicisation of the conflict by both parties

In both countries the humanitarian assistance got politicised by the warring parties and the tsunami had a great impact on the political relations between the opponents. Therefore the tsunami and the delivered assistance turned out to be a political issue more than a humanitarian issue.

When the Tsunami occurred the “negotiation process to end the conflict through political means was under severe stress.”³⁵⁰ In Aceh, GAM faced a worrisome

³⁴⁵ JAYASINGHE, N., *Post-tsunami Sri Lanka and the Ethnic Conflict: a critical analysis of vulnerability*, London: London School of Economics, August 2006, p28.

³⁴⁶ Idem.

³⁴⁷ Idem.

³⁴⁸ Idem.

³⁴⁹ Idem.

³⁵⁰ ATHUKORALA, P-M., *Indian Ocean Tsunami: Disaster, Generosity and Recovery*, in « Asian Economic Journal », Vol 26, No3., pp 225.

challenge regarding the national security within the province. Significant presence of the Indonesian army in the province in response to the GAM challenge had fuelled local resentment. In Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam had tested the authority of the central government, and security issues concerning the LTTE had become an overriding concern for the national government.

In Aceh, the tsunami devastation opened the negotiation process to resolve the civil conflict. Eight months after the Tsunami, in August 2005, the Indonesian government and the GAM indeed signed the Helsinki Peace Accord putting an end to the three decades during conflict.³⁵¹

In Sri Lanka, immediately after the tsunami hit, there was hope that the disaster would bring cooperation between the two warring parties, as the tsunami especially devastated the eastern coastline, known as the power base of the LTTE.³⁵² The tsunami destroyed all LTTE assets and the death-toll and economic loss was much higher in the LTTE-dominated area in the east compared to the rest of the island.³⁵³ But, unfortunately, the hope for cooperation was quickly set aside as the government failed to integrate the LTTE as an equal partner in a conflict-sensitive disaster management strategy. The disaster management in Sri Lanka therefore quickly took a complicated political dimension.³⁵⁴

The government and the LTTE had competing and different approaches to the idea of cooperation. On the one hand, the government considered itself as being the only main nation-state of Sri Lanka. Seeing things like this would have meant “the state should be the primary agency of the post-tsunami recovery process covering the entire country.”³⁵⁵ On the other hand, LTTE viewed itself as being the only representative of the Tamil population and nation as well as the political-military-administrative sector of the Tamil ethnic state. People living in areas under LTTE control had suffered in the same way as people living under government control. The

³⁵¹ ATHUKORALA, P-M., *Indian Ocean Tsunami: Disaster, Generosity and Recovery*, in « Asian Economic Journal », Vol 26, No3., pp 225.

³⁵² Idem.

³⁵³ Idem.

³⁵⁴ Idem, p26.

³⁵⁵ UYANGODA, J., *Ethnic Conflict, the State and tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: University of Colombo, 2005, p1.

LTTE thus claimed that it should be considered on the same equal level as the government in the post-Tsunami recovery and reconstruction process.³⁵⁶

The tensions between the two perspectives strongly impacted the delivery of international assistance, as it delayed the flow, “hampered the cooperation between the government and the LTTE and intensified the politicisation of the post-tsunami recovery efforts.”³⁵⁷

One attempt to collaboration between LTTE and the government is the set-up of a joint mechanism that regulates the receiving and the distribution of international assistance and implements reconstruction programs. The Norwegian government assisted the LTTE and the government in the elaboration of this joint mechanism.³⁵⁸ But these efforts “failed to produce a compromise between the two sides until the end of April.”³⁵⁹

This joint mechanism was called the P-TOMS, the Post-Tsunami Operational Management structure. This joint mechanism was initially a moment for cooperation but the mechanism was made defunct by the Sri Lankan Supreme Court in September 2005. According to the government, signing this P-TOMS would give a same level of autonomy to the LTTE and would “concede some measure of legitimacy to the LTTE”.³⁶⁰

All actions taken by both parties thus indicated a possible return to war and violence. To illustrate this, the election of President Mahinda Rajapakse can be mentioned. Rajapakse was indeed against any way of cooperation and collaboration with the LTTE even against the P-TOMS. He, furthermore, was an open ally of the JVP³⁶¹.

³⁵⁶ UYANGODA, J., *Ethnic Conflict, the State and tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: University of Colombo, 2005, p1.

³⁵⁷ Idem.

³⁵⁸ Idem, p2.

³⁵⁹ Idem.

³⁶⁰ JAYASINGHE, N., *Post-tsunami Sri Lanka and the Ethnic Conflict: a critical analysis of vulnerability*, London: London School of Economics, August 2006, p23.

³⁶¹ Janatha Vimukhi Peramuna, People’s Liberation Front.

And if it was not enough, he militarized certain areas in the east with even more military powers than there were before the 2002 Cease Fire Agreement.³⁶²

In a context without any sign of a possible peace agreement, the post-tsunami reconstruction was intensely politicized.³⁶³ The LTTE influenced the humanitarian efforts by controlling the provision of aid. They did this by denying the access to NGO's to the affected regions in the Northern and Eastern provinces.³⁶⁴ The LTTE ordered that all aid relief agencies had to send or channel their relief through its aid agency: the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization. The government tried to control the aid delivered to areas under LTTE management, but instead it reduced and strained its relations with some aid agencies.³⁶⁵ The ongoing conflict thus hindered the country's capacity to effectively implement and absorb humanitarian aid in the reconstruction process.³⁶⁶

Moreover, the country had already suffered economic and social loss due to the civil war. The Northern and Eastern provinces were the first hit by the Tsunami due to their geographical location. In addition, the civil war had created a situation of "dual political-military"³⁶⁷ administration in those two provinces. The power was indeed hold by the Government as well as by the LTTE. The LTTE had an entire control in the Northern province and in some areas in the East. The tsunami thus caused severe damage and destruction in areas under LTTE-influence. The Sri Lankan government didn't have access to this coastal area. The Tigers had established their own armed forces, a police system, a judicial and administrative system and public services. The LTTE kind of maintained a state parallel to the central state.³⁶⁸

Two other major issues showed that any cooperation between the government and

³⁶² BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration*, 2006, p3.

³⁶³ ATHUKORALA, P-M., *Indian Ocean Tsunami: Disaster, Generosity and Recovery*, in « Asian Economic Journal », Vol 26, No3, p 221.

³⁶⁴ Idem.

³⁶⁵ Idem.

³⁶⁶ Idem.

³⁶⁷ UYANGODA, J., *Ethnic Conflict, the State and tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: University of Colombo, 2005, p3.

³⁶⁸ Idem

the LTTE was “non-cooperative and tense.”³⁶⁹ In the first place there are the elections and the regime change of April 2004. The second is “the impasse to which the peace negotiations between the government and the LTTE had reached.”³⁷⁰ The government that signed the ceasefire agreement with the LTTE in April was defeated and the new government showed less enthusiasm in continuing any further negotiations with the tigers.³⁷¹ The government indeed argued that the agreement gave too much military advantage to the LTTE “at the expense of state sovereignty and security.”³⁷²

After the tsunami, both parties wanted to control the international aid. They therefore “mobilized grievances on issues of unequal distribution and discriminatory access to and participation of certain groups.”³⁷³ Instead of helping, both parties used the aid as a political instrument and manipulated it, which thus became a divisive factor between the communities.³⁷⁴

LTTE’s main argument in the post-tsunami recovery was the strategic parity. The LTTE, indeed, claimed to have right to receive direct international assistance and to be recognised as the principal actor in post-tsunami recovery in the North and East. They wanted to be considered on an equal level with the Sri Lankan government. On the other hand, the government claimed having exclusive sovereignty.³⁷⁵

e. Dichotomies in aid delivery

The Tsunami intervention brought to light the lack of aid to the victims of the conflict. They lived in precarious camps and suffered from a lack of psychological

³⁶⁹ UYANGODA, J., *Ethnic Conflict, the State and tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: University of Colombo, 2005, p4.

³⁷⁰ Idem

³⁷¹ Idem

³⁷² Idem

³⁷³ Idem, p5.

³⁷⁴ BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia*: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration, 2006, p8.

³⁷⁵ UYANGODA, J., *Ethnic Conflict, the State and tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: University of Colombo, 2005, p5.

support.³⁷⁶ International aid came for the tsunami victims. This sparked a lot of jealousy and new demands within the various affected communities.³⁷⁷ This dichotomy was mostly present in Sri Lanka.

Aid management indeed weakened both camps in Sri Lanka. The two belligerent parties were facing an atomization: both the government coalition and the Tigers were split. International aid and international pressure led to a splitting of the parties to the conflict. The lack of cooperation by the JVP in the process of establishing the distribution of P-TOMS assistance only delayed the reconstruction phase and increased the feeling of injustice among the victims of the disaster. Faced with the incompetence of the government after the drama of December 2004, the Sri Lankans felt abandoned. Thus, the LTTE could recover maximum support by the ORT. The tsunami had only worsened a situation already weakened by the war.³⁷⁸

There was a general belief that one group of victims received more aid than the other one. Three major categories of suffering can be developed³⁷⁹:

- Sinhalese versus Tamil;
- North and East versus South;
- Tsunami-affected areas versus conflict-affected areas.³⁸⁰

All three dichotomies intensified the already present tensions and increased the hostilities.

The media attention set the cleavage between the Sinhalese and the Tamil, as the media showed mostly images of the tsunami impact in the South, which is predominantly Sinhalese while the North and East are Tamil.³⁸¹

The dichotomy opposing tsunami-affected areas to conflict-affected areas is the fact that, because of the war, many people in conflict-affected areas had their home

³⁷⁶ HERVET, C., *L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie : les cas du Sri Lanka, de l'Indonésie et du Cachemire*, in « Les notes de l'IRASEC », No 2, mai 2008, p 12.

³⁷⁷ Idem.

³⁷⁸ Idem.

³⁷⁹ JAYASINGHE, N., *Post-tsunami Sri Lanka and the Ethnic Conflict: a critical analysis of vulnerability*, London: London School of Economics, August 2006, p21.

³⁸⁰ Idem.

³⁸¹ Idem.

destroyed.³⁸² The tsunami-affected areas also saw destroyed houses, but their houses had been rebuilt way faster than those affected by the conflict. In fact, most of the aid sent to Sri Lanka was sent only for those affected by the tsunami.³⁸³ This arose tensions between the inhabitants as they felt neglected and didn't perceive any incoming aid.

The two most affected provinces were the North and East where most of the civil war was fought during two decades.³⁸⁴

The country had already suffered economic and social loss due to the civil war. The Northern and Eastern provinces were the first hit by the Tsunami due to their geographical location. This was added to the fact that these two provinces were the main playgrounds of the war and suffered a lot of damage.

The Eastern province further differed in demography as well as in political and military characteristics. The demographic point of view is that the three main communities were equally distributed in this province. However, some districts had a greater concentration of one community. The Muslim community was the most-affected ethnic group in that province. Despite the "mixed ethnic composition"³⁸⁵ present in the province, the LTTE declared the province as being part of the Traditional Tamil Homeland.³⁸⁶ During the peace talks between the government and the LTTE, violence escalated between the Tamil and Muslim groups in the province. The Muslims felt like put aside from the peace negotiations.³⁸⁷

Because of organizational mandates and several rules linked to tsunami funds, organisations were obliged to limit their actions to only people affected by the tsunami. People affected by the war and trying to escape it for over two decades barely received aid from the post-tsunami relief and reconstruction process.³⁸⁸ A

³⁸² JAYASINGHE, N., *Post-tsunami Sri Lanka and the Ethnic Conflict: a critical analysis of vulnerability*, London: London School of Economics, August 2006, p21.

³⁸³ Idem.

³⁸⁴ UYANGODA, J., *Ethnic Conflict, the State and tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: University of Colombo, 2005, p3.

³⁸⁵ Idem.

³⁸⁶ Idem, p4.

³⁸⁷ Idem, p3.

³⁸⁸ BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia*: The Mellon-

great majority of tsunami affected areas were in the northern and eastern part of the country. Many war-affected IDPs therefore also became tsunami IDPs. This made the situation really confusing for the donors as well as for the beneficiaries. This explains why in some places the victims of the tsunami and the conflict received help, while in other areas the victims did not receive anything.³⁸⁹ Being exposed to such a situation in which some people received support in terms of housing and psycho-social assistance while their plight wasn't taken into account,

was considered as a flagrant form of discrimination towards the war IDPs.³⁹⁰ This generated a situation of jealousy and frustration begetting inter and intra-groups conflicts among the different communities.³⁹¹

f. Different stage in the conflict

When the tsunami hit, the conflicts were at different stages. In Indonesia, both warring parties were implemented in a peace process when the catastrophe appeared, the situation in Sri Lanka seemed to be far from any possible peace negotiation and appeared to be discouraging.³⁹² However, the first six months in Sri Lanka were a period of great potential, the tsunami seemed to have created a conflict dampening effect.³⁹³ Sri Lanka therefore could use the tsunami as a symbol to “rally national unit for peace.”³⁹⁴ But this opportunity wasn't taken and the Government missed the chance to accelerate the peace process along with the tsunami reconstruction.³⁹⁵ The disaster triggered a solidarity movement among the populations who put the conflict aside for a while. But this social energy didn't reach the main actors and was quickly dissolved.³⁹⁶ The conflict restarted and the political and military objectives of all parties remained unchanged.³⁹⁷

MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration, 2006, p5.

³⁸⁹ Idem.

³⁹⁰ Idem.

³⁹¹ Idem.

³⁹² Idem. p3.

³⁹³ JAYASINGHE, N., *Post-tsunami Sri Lanka and the Ethnic Conflict: a critical analysis of vulnerability*, London: London School of Economics, August 2006, p22.

³⁹⁴ Idem.

³⁹⁵ Idem, p23.

³⁹⁶ JAYASINGHE, N., *Post-tsunami Sri Lanka and the Ethnic Conflict: a critical analysis of vulnerability*, London: London School of Economics, August 2006, p23.

³⁹⁷ Idem.

Conversely, the situation in Indonesia seemed to be more positive. After the tsunami, both warring parties signed the Memorandum of Understanding and entered a program of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration.³⁹⁸

When the tsunami hit Aceh, the rebel group was already weakened by the military strong government. Before the disaster, a lot of small peace talks had already taken place in early 2004. The willing to resolve the conflict was thus present before the Tsunami.³⁹⁹ The tsunami affected GAM even more than it already was as several members lost their lives and families.⁴⁰⁰ The international community's interventions appeared like a push factor for both parties to start peace negotiations. Both parties felt kind of pressured by the international community to sign a peace agreements.⁴⁰¹

From May 2003 until the Tsunami, Aceh had been closed to the entire world. The two years of civil emergency had an impact on both warring parties but especially on GAM. During these two years of civil emergency, GAM got weakened by the government army and was "alienated from the people of Aceh".⁴⁰² The government was also exhausted by the war and realized they won't be able to military destroy GAM. Furthermore, besides the conflict in Aceh, the government faced economic loss and was also involved in other intra state conflicts. Realizing this, both parties got involved in peace talks before the tsunami.⁴⁰³

The situation in Sri Lanka was different. When the tsunami occurred, there was no sign of an active peace process. The situation was, furthermore, deteriorating since the Karuna⁴⁰⁴ split in the LTTE.⁴⁰⁵ This scission resulted in several waves of

³⁹⁸ BAUMAN, P., PAUL, G., AYALEW, M., *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia*: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration, 2006, p3.

³⁹⁹ Idem.

⁴⁰⁰ BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of* Idem.

⁴⁰¹ Idem.

⁴⁰² Idem, p7.

⁴⁰³ Idem.

⁴⁰⁴ Karuna was a major leader in the Eastern province of Talim Eelam and decided to split from the main LTTE (mostly Northern tamil members) in 2004 and to make up his own branch of the LTTE for several reasons.

violence between the two factions of the LTTE. This violence was mostly concentrated in the Eastern province. As there were no negotiations between the government and the LTTE, the intra-LTTE violence was a persisting source of pressure on the cease-fire agreement.⁴⁰⁶

Compared to Indonesia, the government was also strong but had to face one of the most well-organised and sophisticated rebel groups in the world. In addition, the tsunami didn't seem to engender major distortion to the warring parties.⁴⁰⁷ The international pressure to start peace negotiations was minimal and almost ineffective.⁴⁰⁸

Between 2002 and 2004, strong tensions occurred between the government and the Tamil but even between Muslims and Tamils. More and more tensions burst in the northern and eastern parts of the country.⁴⁰⁹ The LTTE controlled a large part of the country as a de facto country with its own administration, army and judiciary units, but however, the split of its eastern commandant made the LTTE weak and nervous. The government then took advantage of this situation. So, even with the cease-fire agreement of 2002 in place, all signs showed that LTTE was ready and preparing to return to war.⁴¹⁰

The tsunami in Sri Lanka didn't much weaken the warring parties' strength. Nevertheless, the deconstruction and the tsunami recovery phase can be considered as major factors of an imminent return to war.⁴¹¹ The non-accomplishment of the

⁴⁰⁵ BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia*: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration, 2006, p4.

⁴⁰⁶ UYANGODA, J., *Ethnic Conflict, the State and tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: University of Colombo, 2005, p4.

⁴⁰⁷ BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia*: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration, 2006, p4.

⁴⁰⁸ Idem.

⁴⁰⁹ Idem, p7.

⁴¹⁰ Idem.

⁴¹¹ BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia*: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration, 2006, p7.

joint mechanism was an evidence that the parties were more polarized than before the tsunami.⁴¹²

In Aceh, the tsunami strongly affected GAM, the Government and the Acehnese. Both sides suffered significant losses.⁴¹³ Because of the high number of losses, both sides felt obliged to stop fighting and to adopt a humanitarian perspective. Before the tsunami, small talks were already held between both parties and they all realized that continuing the fighting wouldn't help anything and was quasi impossible. Both parties were thus seeking for a possible solution to end the conflict, but "they lacked an exit strategy."⁴¹⁴ The tsunami arrived as the missing exit strategy and came as an opportunity for the international community to formalize the peace talks. Moreover, the international presence kept the violence under control and gave a sense of security to the people in the tsunami affected areas.⁴¹⁵

In Sri Lanka, all communities were affected by the tsunami mainly in the southern, the eastern and the northern provinces.⁴¹⁶ Conversely in Indonesia, the most affected area was the secessionist region and the minority group, mainly Aceh and the Acehnese.

The conflict-affected areas in Sri Lanka were overlapping the tsunami-affected areas. But this was not the case in Indonesia. The tsunami furthermore directly affected the areas under LTTE influence but again this wasn't the case in Aceh as the GAM was present "in remote interior areas and only affected by the earthquake."⁴¹⁷

Both conflicts were also evolving in a different way both before and after the tsunami occurred, even if in the immediate aftermath similarities can be found. In Aceh, the conflict could be described as single-sided. It was indeed a conflict based

⁴¹² BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration*, 2006, p7.

⁴¹³ Idem, p8.

⁴¹⁴ Idem.

⁴¹⁵ Idem.

⁴¹⁶ LE BILLON, PH., WAIZENEGGER, A., *Peace in the wake of disaster? Secessionist conflicts and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami*, Vancouver: Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep. 2007), p. 417.

⁴¹⁷ Idem.

on mainly government repression and “counter-insurgency.”⁴¹⁸ One month after, the tsunami official negotiations started and GAM dropped its demand for independence and “conceded ‘self-rule’.”⁴¹⁹ In Sri Lanka, there was a good will in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami but violence regained the battle fields within a year.⁴²⁰

The stage of war is a main factor that can explain the different outcomes in Aceh and Sri Lanka. When the tsunami occurred, Indonesia was in a process of democratization and decentralization. The natural disaster came three months after Yudhoyono’s election. This new leadership promised to end the conflict without taking the weapons but through negotiations.⁴²¹ By the time the tsunami hit, GAM was at its weakest and was already looking for a political exit of the war.⁴²² The situation in Sri Lanka was different as the tsunami hit after three years of ceasefire between the LTTE and the government but any form of peace process was still missing.⁴²³

On a military point of view, the tsunami strongly affected both the Government of Indonesia as GAM but the TNI was more affected than GAM. TNI could, however, rely on its nation-wide resources while GAM’s “lines and support systems were further undermined by the disaster and their willingness to fight after the tsunami was also reduced psychologically.”⁴²⁴ In Sri Lanka the tsunami didn’t challenge the military rule of both parties.⁴²⁵

⁴¹⁸ LE BILLON, PH., WAIZENEGGER, A., *Peace in the wake of disaster? Secessionist conflicts and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami*, Vancouver: Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep. 2007), p. 417.

⁴¹⁹ Idem.

⁴²⁰ Idem.

⁴²¹ Idem, p. 418.

⁴²² Idem.

⁴²³ Idem.

⁴²⁴ Idem.

⁴²⁵ Idem.

11. Conclusion

To conclude this thesis and to find an answer to the research question “Why did peace emerge following the tsunami in Indonesia and not Sri Lanka?” it is important to highlight the main ideas.

A clear answer to the research question won't be found or at least we won't be able to say if and how the tsunami itself transformed both conflicts. The eradication of deep divisions and the success of the will to pacify conflicts depend on the historical anchoring of these conflicts.⁴²⁶

What is commonly accepted is that the natural disaster has been perceived as a window of opportunity for both Aceh and Sri Lanka. In the immediate aftermath both countries, indeed, sent signs of hope that the conflict could eventually end. In both cases, the warring parties gathered together and a great movement of solidarity crossed the countries. For a few moments, the warring parties put aside their weapons to help immediately after the disaster hit.

The international assistance has been essential in the post-tsunami recovery. At the same time, it has been a stimulus for peace. The international aid had the same logic in Sri Lanka and Aceh. What made the impact on the conflicts different is the national management of aid and the internal responses to the crisis. The pre-disaster political trends mostly shaped the divergent conflict outcomes.⁴²⁷

In Indonesia, a wave of sympathy followed the catastrophe, which motivated both parties to cooperate. The situation in Sri Lanka was quite the same immediately after the tsunami hit but the violence escalated within a year and both parties were quickly militarizing the aid and willing to continue the struggle.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶ HERVET, C., *L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie : les cas du Sri Lanka, de l'Indonésie et du Cachemire*, in « Les notes de l'IRASEC », No 2, mai 2008, pp 41-42

⁴²⁷ LE BILLON, PH., WAIZENEGGER, A., *Peace in the wake of disaster? Secessionist conflicts and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami*, Vancouver: Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep. 2007), p. 421.

⁴²⁸ HERVET, C., *L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie : les cas du Sri Lanka, de l'Indonésie et du Cachemire*, in « Les notes de l'IRASEC », No 2, mai 2008, pp 41-42

In Aceh, however, the tsunami can be considered as an important catalyst and stimulator to peace. Without the tsunami, a rapid and lasting peace accord would have been less likely even if GAM was very weak and both parties were looking for peace.⁴²⁹ In Sri Lanka, the situation was different. Violence would have escalated even without the natural disaster. The absence of a peace process and both parties willing to affirm exclusive sovereignty hastened a return to conflict and violence.⁴³⁰

The main reason of the different outcomes are the divergences in conflict and the representations of the disaster. Both conflicts are separatist conflicts but diverge in several aspects.

A first aspect is the divergence in the presidents' will to cooperate or not with the rebel group. The president of Indonesia was willing and committed to end the conflict while the president of Sri Lanka showed the opposite behaviour. Nothing pointed to a will to end the conflict. The parties, and especially LTTE, were ready and preparing to return to war as soon as possible. A ripe moment to end the conflict lacked when the tsunami occurred and didn't pop out with the relief interventions.⁴³¹

Another main aspect is the mediatisation and the internationalization of both conflicts. The internationalisation of the conflict in Aceh had a positive effect as it was perceived as a pressure to make an end to the conflict while the international pressure in Sri Lanka didn't have any effect on both warring parties. The disaster put Aceh and the conflict in the international spotlight, making it desirable for both parties "to work toward a settlement" as the entire world was watching.⁴³² The incoming worldwide aid became a positive incentive for both parties to cooperate.⁴³³

⁴²⁹ LE BILLON, PH., WAIZENEGGER, A., *Peace in the wake of disaster? Secessionist conflicts and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami*, Vancouver: Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep. 2007), p. 421.

⁴³⁰ Idem.

⁴³¹ BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration*, 2006, p9.

⁴³² BEARDSLEY, K., MCQUINN, B., Political effects of the 2004 Tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, Turin: SGIR – PAN European conference on International relations, 12 – 15 September 2007, p2.

⁴³³ Idem.

A third main element are the differences between the two rebel groups. First, when the tsunami hit, the LTTE was still able to exercise an entire control over the Northern and Eastern district and implement a *de facto* government while the GAM was hidden in forest areas and had already lost much of its governing capacity. Secondly, the tsunami in Indonesia hit exclusively Aceh and the Acehnese while in Sri Lanka all three ethno-religious communities were affected. Third aspect is the fact that the LTTE could manage and regulate the international aid through its administration. GAM couldn't take political advantage from the regulation of the international assistance.⁴³⁴

The disaster highlighted the lack of resources, the shortcomings of administrations, the tightness of leaders who want to take advantage of the situation to establish control over certain populations and regions.⁴³⁵

The international community rarely act out of pure generosity. It is known, and both cases proved it once again, that every major crisis that provokes a great media outcry is an opportunity for foreign countries to tighten their relationships with other countries and to show their generosity.⁴³⁶ Their generosity is more for the geopolitical relations than for the crisis itself.

To conclude this thesis, we might say that the conflict ending was a question of ripeness. Conflicts are more likely to end when both parties are ready to do so, when it is the right timing or ripeness. This mostly happens when both parties are out of alternatives and can't continue the fighting.⁴³⁷ Conflicting parties are likely to find a resolution when this ripe moment is achieved.⁴³⁸ This ripe moment must be taken and seized. In Aceh, the time seemed to be ripe for a peace agreement when the

⁴³⁴ LE BILLON, PH., WAIZENEGGER, A., *Peace in the wake of disaster? Secessionist conflicts and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami*, Vancouver: Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep. 2007), p. 421.

⁴³⁵ HERVET, C., *L'impact des catastrophes naturelles sur la résolution des conflits en Asie : les cas du Sri Lanka, de l'Indonésie et du Cachemire*, in « Les notes de l'IRASEC », No 2, mai 2008, pp 41-42

⁴³⁶ Idem.

⁴³⁷ KINGSBURY, D., *Timing and sequence peace in Aceh*, Leuven: Centre for Research on Peace and Development, 2015, p4.

⁴³⁸ BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration*, 2006, p11.

tsunami hit and both parties seized the opportunity.⁴³⁹ The tsunami offered a way out.

There were no signs of ripeness in Sri Lanka. Both parties seemed to be willing to return to war. Conversely to Aceh, a ripe moment didn't materialise when the tsunami occurred and nothing showed an eventual emergence of such an opportunity. Both parties failed to cooperate and returned to war.⁴⁴⁰

In Sri Lanka, the international intervention didn't change the context or break the tensions between the warring parties. Sometimes, international assistance has a significant influence on the ongoing conflict or creates new tensions. In Aceh however, the international presence and pressure facilitated the way to peace and to a lasting peace process.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁹ ZARTMAN, W, *Ripeness: the hurting Stalemate and Beyond*, in "International Conflict Resolution after the Cold war", Washington DC: The national Academic Press, 2000, p252.

⁴⁴⁰ ZARTMAN, W., *The Timing of Peace Initiatives: Hurting Stalemates and Ripe Moments*, in the Global review of Ethnopolitics, Vol 1, No 1, September 2001, p9.

⁴⁴¹ BAUMAN Peter, PAUL Gazala, AYALEW Mengistu, *Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia*: The Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on Non- Governmental Organizations and Forced Migration, 2006, p18.

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Personal observations

Visit at the tsunami museum in Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka on December 16th.

Conversations with the locals.

Conversation with Janaka de Silva, witness of the Tsunami in Galle and the civil war.

Conversation with a former Colonel of the Sri Lankan Army, Major Sanjaya Liyanage

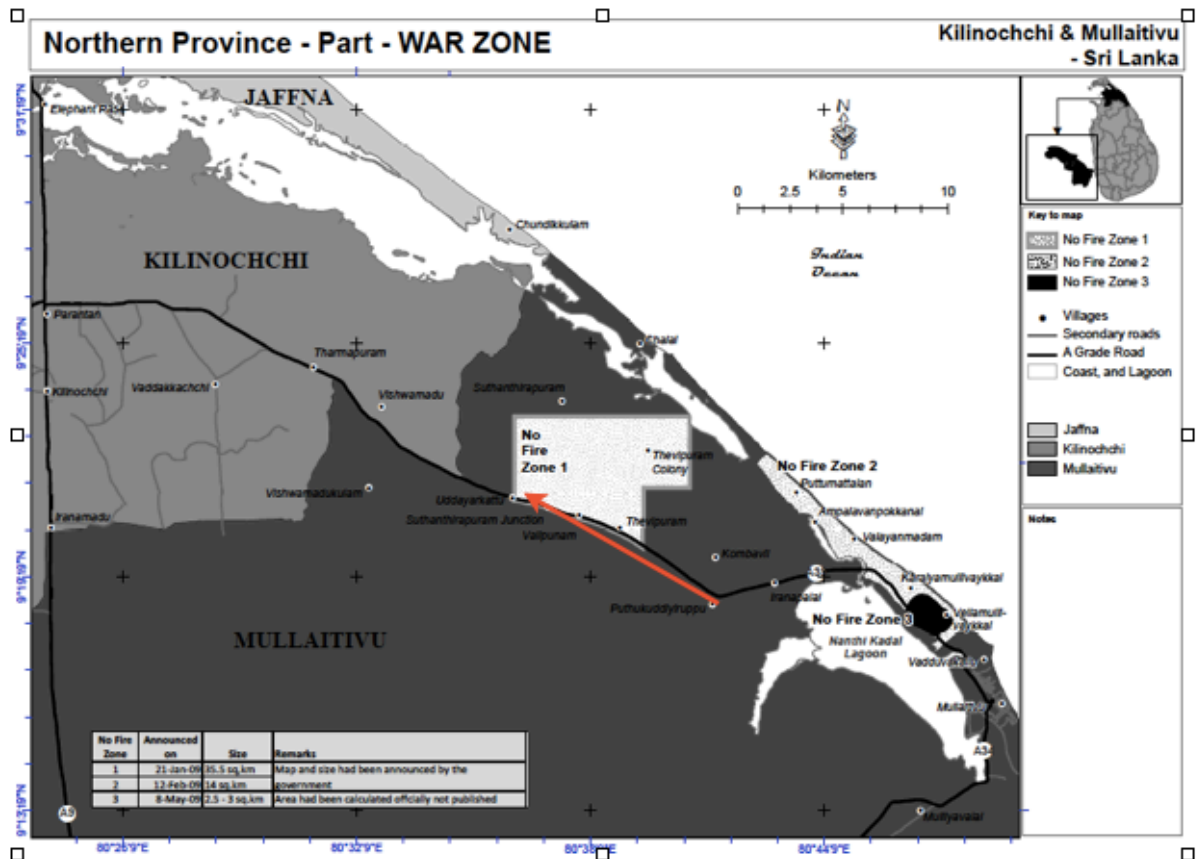
13. Appendices

Annex 1 – Tamil Eelam



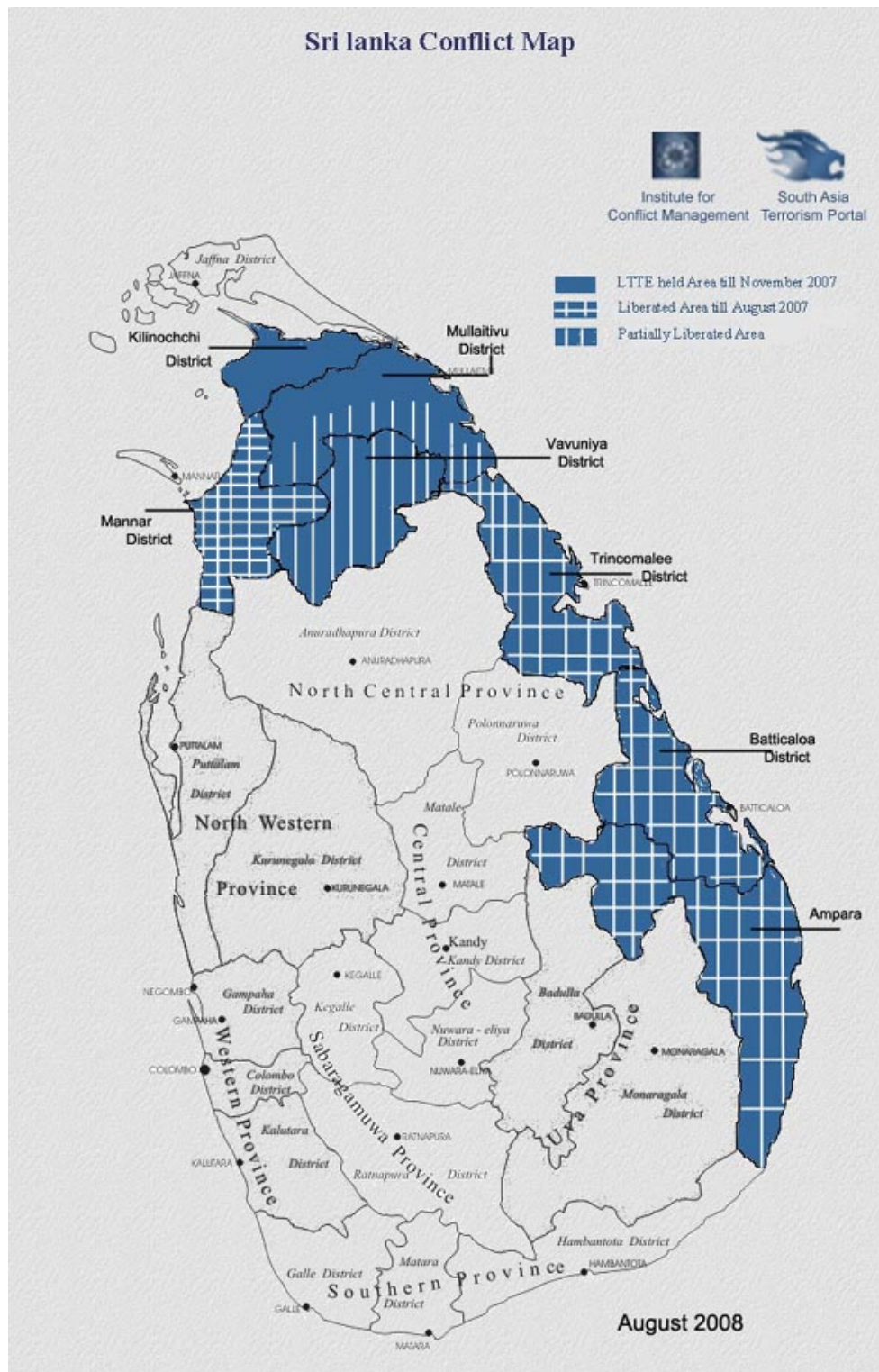
Data source: MARSH, D., *The Tamil Tigers and their quest for an independent homeland in Sri Lanka: The Global State* <http://theglobalstate.com/history/the-tamil-tigers-and-their-quest-for-an-independent-homeland-in-sri-lanka/> (online), last update January 16, 2005.

Annex 2: No Fire Zone – Sri Lanka



Data source: HARRISON, F., *UN: the scene at first light was devastating*, UK: Huffpost UK, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/frances-harrison/un-the-scene-at-first-light_b_5342249.html (online), last update July 16, 2014.

Annex 4: Conflict Map – Sri Lanka



Data source: *Sri Lanka conflict map*: South Asia terrorism portal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/database/srilankaconflictmap.htm> (online), last update August 2008.

Annex 5: Northern Region – Sri Lanka



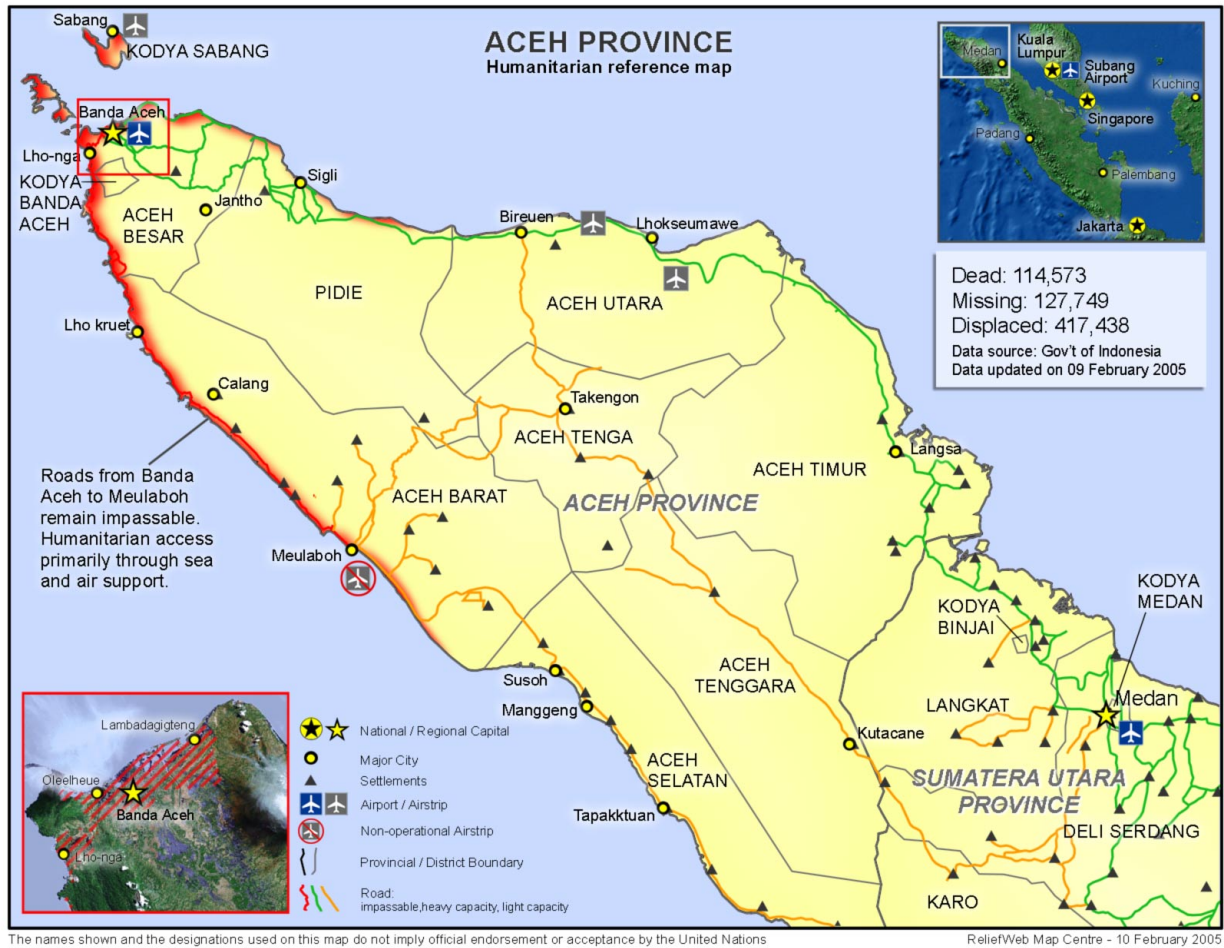
Data source: *Army Takes key Sri Lanka Pass*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7819386.stm (online), last update January 9, 2009.

Annex 6: Aceh province



Data source: UNPO, *Aceh*, Brussels: UNPO, <http://unpo.org/members/7786> (online), last update March 25, 2008.

Annex 7: Tsunami – Aceh, Indonesia



Data source: *Indonesia: Aceh province- humanitarian reference map*, Reliefweb, <http://reliefweb.int/map/indonesia/indonesia-aceh-province-humanitarian-reference-map> (online), last update February 10, 2005.

Annex 8: Tsunami-affected countries



Data source: *Case study Tsunami*, BBC,
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This thesis examines the impact of the tsunami of 2004 on both the conflicts in Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Several vectors led to peace in Indonesia while they fuelled the war in Sri Lanka. It isn't the catastrophe by itself that led to divergent situations but a sum of different factors such as international pressure, military victory, lack of coordination etc. This thesis, after describing both wars, analyses the several variables conducting to peace in one situation and escalating to war in the other one.

Sri Lanka – Indonesia – Tsunami – civil war – natural disasters