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Reaching a Mutual Agreement: Readiness Theory and Coalition Building in the Aceh Peace Process[1]

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Abstract

The study presents an analysis of the conflict resolution process in the Aceh conflict between the Government of Indonesia (GoI) and the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerekan Aceh Merdeka* or GAM). Starting with unofficial efforts by the Indonesian side from mid-2003, which eventually led the parties to the negotiation table and to the signing of the MoU in August 2005, the peace process put an end to the 30-year conflict over the independence of Aceh. The peaceful resolution of the Aceh conflict will be examined using readiness theory, which posits the factors that lead parties to negotiate, and the theory's hypotheses will be applied to understand the factors that contribute to success in negotiating a peace agreement. The study also examines the Aceh peace process from the perspective of central coalition theory, which relates to the readiness of the actors in the internal political debate to negotiate and reach an agreement.

The phenomenon of *intractable conflicts* has been the subject of extensive theoretical exploration in the fields of conflict resolution and international relations during the past three decades (Coleman, 2003, 2006; Crocker, Hampson, & Aall, 2005; Gray, Colman, & Putnam, 2007; Kriesberg, 1998; Kriesberg, Northrup, & Thorson, 1989). Some research in this area has focused on the conditions that lead parties in a conflict to enter into negotiations and to reach an agreement that resolves the conflict (Diehl, 1998; Diehl & Goertz, 2000; Maoz & Mor, 2002; Pruitt, 1997, 2005, 2007; Pruitt & Olczak, 1995; Zartman, 2000, 2008). As part of this research trend, the current case study presents an analysis of a conflict resolution process that was conducted in the conflict between the government of Indonesia (GoI) and the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerekan Aceh Merdeka* or GAM) over the independence of Aceh. This process culminated in the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in August 2005. The Aceh peace process will be examined using readiness theory, which posits the factors that lead parties to negotiate, and the theory's hypotheses will be applied to understand the factors that contribute to success in negotiating a peace agreement. The case study will also examine the Aceh peace process through the lens of central coalition theory, which relates to the readiness of the actors in the internal political debate to negotiate and reach an agreement.

In August 2005, after three decades of violent conflict in Aceh entailing an armed struggle for Aceh's independence from Indonesian rule (Aspinall, 2003; Schulze, 2007), GAM and the Indonesian government

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signed the Helsinki MoU, a broad framework agreement for peace. The process was mediated by the former president of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, who chairs the Finnish nongovernmental organization Crisis Management Initiative (CMI). The success of the Helsinki process—which produced a peace agreement in only 7 months and included different conditions than the parties had previously demanded—is especially salient in light of past failures to reach an agreement (Aspinall, 2005, 2008; Aspinall & Crouch, 2003; Biswas, 2009; Iyer & Mitchell, 2007; Schulze, 2006, 2007).

The official negotiations between the GoI and GAM stopped when the Geneva talks reached a dead end with the collapse of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) in May 2003. The Indonesian army then launched a military campaign in Aceh to destroy GAM (ICG, 2005; Morfit, 2007; Schulze, 2007). In parallel to the military campaign, in mid-2003, unofficial efforts by the Indonesian side began, when Yusuf Kalla, with Megawati's unofficial approval, sought to establish contacts with GAM to explore the possibility of reaching a peace agreement. These efforts became official Indonesian government policy upon the election of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) as president and Kalla as vice president in October 2004, yet GAM did not reciprocate constructively until late 2004 (Morfit, 2007). After the tsunami disaster, the reconciliation spiral accelerated: GAM declared a unilateral ceasefire and announced its willingness to talk with the Indonesian government to facilitate the flow of humanitarian assistance. Although the Indonesian army continued its activities in Aceh, President SBY welcomed the unilateral ceasefire and called upon all sides to work together to end the conflict so that all efforts could be directed to the reconstruction of Aceh after the tsunami (ICG, 2005; Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2009).

On January 26, 2005 a CMI-sponsored meeting took place between representatives of the two sides in Helsinki. During the first round, both parties held to their positions steadfastly: GAM insisted on winning Aceh's independence from Indonesia, and the GoI insisted on maintaining Indonesian territorial integrity while granting Aceh a substantial degree of autonomy. A significant breakthrough in the talks occurred during the second round, when GAM agreed to withdraw its previous demand for Aceh's independence from Indonesia and to discuss a political framework for self-rule (Aspinall, 2005; Schulze, 2007). In light of the disagreements over various issues in subsequent talks, both parties had to compromise and retreat from their initial positions. After 15 drafts, the parties reached an agreement and the MoU was signed on August 15, 2005. The six chapters of the agreement included the governance arrangements in Aceh and the relations between the province and the central government, the division of Acehnese resources between Aceh and Indonesia that was more preferential toward Aceh, human rights issues, amnesty and the integration of GAM's fighters in the society, security arrangements, and monitoring mechanisms for implementation of the agreement.

The aim of this study is twofold. The first aim is to better understand the factors that led to the conflict resolution in Aceh. Toward this end, the study will address three central questions: (1) Why did the antagonists agree to negotiate? (2) Which factors led the parties to reach an agreement? (3) Is there a correlation between the factors that led the parties to the negotiating table and the success of the process? The second aim of this research is to offer a systematic examination of the assumptions of readiness theory, which has been the subject of few case studies to date. These include the process that led Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to sign a Declaration of Principles (DOP) in September 1993 and the process that led Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland to sign the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (Pruitt, 1997, 2005, 2007). Further to this, the research will attempt to broaden the focus and, for the first time, examine whether readiness theory and its hypotheses can assist in explaining the process of concession making in negotiation and shed some light on the dynamics of the process of reaching an agreement in intractable conflicts.

This article includes three main sections. The first section presents a concise explanation of readiness theory and central coalition theory, followed by the research questions, assumptions, and method. The second section describes the factors that led to the success of the Aceh process through the lenses of the hypotheses of readiness and central coalition theories, first presenting the factors that brought the parties to the negotiating table and then presenting the factors that affected the outcome of negotiations. This

will be followed by studying the internal political factors and internal coalition-building process affecting the peace process. The third section includes a discussion of the assumptions of readiness theory as applied to the case study and an examination of the extent to which its hypotheses can assist in explaining the fact that the negotiations culminated in an agreement. This concluding section will also present the theory's limitations as revealed by this analysis.

Theoretical Overview and Method

Readiness Theory

A survey of the studies and approaches to research on the termination of intractable conflicts—such as the work of Zartman (2000, 2008), Diehl (1998), Diehl and Goertz (2000), and Maoz and Mor (2002)—reveals that each of these is limited in its ability to explain certain aspects of the resolution of these conflicts and that there is room for the more comprehensive perspective that readiness theory proposes. The literature on enduring international rivalries (EIR) is limited to conflicts involving states, and the work in the area of ripeness theory provides a limited understanding of the dynamics of the stages beyond the prenegotiation stage or of the factors that lead parties in nonviolent conflicts to choose negotiations. Readiness theory, in contrast, which refers to a number of conditions that have the potential to bring parties to negotiation, provides an opportunity to examine various factors that influence the de-escalation process of conflicts that are not necessarily interstate, intrastate, or violent in nature. Pruitt noted that readiness theory is potentially useful for researchers seeking to scientifically test hypotheses about the significance of various factors in conflict resolution processes in different conflicts. That is, while readiness theory focuses on the processes that lead the parties to sit at the table, it may also be useful in examining the factors that influence concession making during negotiation (Pruitt, 2005, 2007).

According to Pruitt, readiness theory describes the conditions appropriate for commencing negotiations in the language of psychological variables, with a focus on the processes underway on each side separately (Pruitt, 1997, 2005, 2007). *Readiness* is a characteristic of a party in a conflict that reflects the thinking of the leadership regarding the conflict, and it can vary within a wide scale of conciliatory behavior (Pruitt, 2007). A low level of readiness fosters moderate conciliatory gestures. As the readiness level rises, the party's behavior becomes more conciliatory and might take the form of a ceasefire or commencement of negotiations. In order for the parties to continue negotiating and make concessions, an additional increase in readiness is needed; thus, the greater the readiness on both sides, the more likely they are to negotiate (Pruitt, 2005, 2007). According to readiness theory, each side might have different reasons for entering negotiations (Pruitt, 2005).

Readiness theory is comprised of two parts (Pruitt, 2007). The first part explains what will bring the parties to a readiness to solve the conflict; this part of the theory relates to the parties as unitary actors. The second part, central coalition theory, relates to the internal politics of each side and examines the effect of the level of readiness of political parties on achieving and implementing a peace agreement (Pruitt, 2005, 2007). According to Pruitt, both parts of the theory can be used to explain the success or failure of peace processes (Pruitt, 2007).

As Pruitt noted (2007), readiness entails two psychological variables, which he terms motivation and optimism. These encourage a party to a conflict to agree to conduct negotiations (Pruitt, 1997, 2005, 2007):

(1) Motivation to end the conflict derives from any or all of the following: (a) a sense that the conflict is unwinnable (that is, a sense that one is losing creates greater motivation), (b) a sense that the conflict generates unacceptable costs or risks, and (c) pressure from a powerful third party. The stronger the third party and the greater the pressure it applies, the more the parties will endeavor to demonstrate that they seek an end to the conflict (appearance of motivational change). This appearance turns into

motivation to end the conflict if the third party is consistent, is in the appropriate state of mind, and demands actual motivational change.

(2) Optimism refers to the possibility of concluding negotiations with an agreement that is acceptable to both sides. It requires a certain degree of faith that the final agreement will meet its objectives as well as the perception that the negotiator on the other side can in fact make a commitment on behalf of that side and will indeed adhere to the agreement (D. G. Pruitt, personal communication, March 9, 2008). At the initial stage, when considering the option of negotiations, optimism is a function of trust between the parties. Preserving the optimism requires an understanding that a formula acceptable to both sides is achievable. The greater the apparent distance is between the parties, the lower the level of optimism (Pruitt, 2005). Optimism derives from three states of mind: (a) lower aspirations, (b) working trust, and (c) a state of mind that perceives "light at the end of the tunnel" (leading to a higher level of optimism), meaning that an acceptable agreement is taking shape and that the other side is prepared to make the necessary concessions.

According to the theory, motivation and optimism have the following qualities:

(1) They are necessary variables, and they must exist to a certain degree in order to proceed toward negotiations.

(2) They are mutually related in a number of ways: (a) Optimism determines the extent to which the motivation to deescalate shapes behavior (Pruitt, 1997, 2005, 2007), and (b) motivation to end the conflict can foster optimism through a number of mechanisms, which can potentially generate a confidence-building cycle, leading to negotiations and to mutual concessions once negotiations commence (Pruitt, 2005, 2007). First, motivation moderates the parties' demands, thereby encouraging greater optimism regarding the success of negotiations. Second, motivation often leads to the accumulation of information that challenges preexisting states of mind. The third mechanism is wishful thinking. In seeking information, wishful thinking plays a part; that is, there is a tendency to find selective evidence of the other side's logic or motivation to end the conflict. Fourth, when a party is interested in ending a conflict, it sends conciliatory signals or seeks clandestine contact with the other party. If the latter is also motivated, it will respond to these signals, thereby increasing the first party's optimism and encouraging it to send even more meaningful conciliatory signals. The result is a cycle of conciliatory gestures and an increase in optimism. Fifth, a party's motivation to end a conflict is often discerned by a third party, making the latter more optimistic about ending the conflict. The motivation of a third party to end the conflict can encourage it to take the initiative in bringing the disputing parties to negotiations (Pruitt, 2007). These third-party efforts can increase optimism on both sides and eventually lead to full negotiations. These mechanisms encourage optimism about the success of negotiations and generate new thinking about the rival. Optimism also develops in additional ways, such as through direct contact with people on the other side—for example, through workshops on problem solving.

(3) Each variable can compensate for the shortcomings of the other. Although both variables are necessary to a certain extent in order for negotiations to commence, a greater degree of one element can compensate for a lesser degree of the other (Pruitt, 2005, 2007).

Pruitt noted that the variables presented by the theory as generating motivation and optimism may vary in intensity. Thus, the stronger the above-mentioned states of mind, the greater the readiness of the parties will be. Full readiness exists "when the situation is symmetrical, such that both parties are motivated to achieve de-escalation and both are optimistic about reaching an agreement" (Pruitt, 1997, p. 239).

Furthermore, Pruitt addressed the possibility that readiness theory may assist in explaining concession making and reaching an agreement in negotiation (Pruitt, 2007, 2005). Thus, he noted "Readiness fosters conciliatory behavior. At moderate strength, it encourages mild gestures of conciliation. If it increases in strength, the party's behavior becomes increasingly conciliatory and may eventually take the form of a cease-fire and entry into negotiation. Additional levels of readiness are needed for the party to stay in

negotiation and make concessions. Some readiness is needed on both sides of a conflict for negotiation to start and agreement to be reached." (2007, p. 1525).

With regard to the stage beyond the prenegotiation, Pruitt proposed the hypothesis that the level of readiness can attest to the nature of the agreement reached and suggests that when readiness is unequal, the party with a higher level of readiness needs to make more concessions and therefore will be in a less desirable position in the final agreement (Pruitt, 2005).

While Pruitt proposed that both variables, motivation and optimism, are necessary to a certain extent in order to reach an agreement (Pruitt, 2005, 2007) and that a greater degree of one element can compensate for a lesser degree of the other (2007), he asserted that in order for the peace process to succeed, a higher level of optimism must develop in the form of a perception of "light at the end of the tunnel" (Pruitt, 2007, p. 1529)—that is, a perception that an acceptable agreement is taking shape and that the other side is prepared to make the necessary concessions.

In addition, Pruitt noted that motivation to end the conflict can foster optimism through a number of mechanisms, which can potentially generate a confidence-building cycle leading to negotiations and to mutual concessions once negotiations commence (Pruitt, 2005, 2007). Nevertheless, despite the fact that Pruitt noted these hypotheses on how readiness theory may assist in explaining concession making in negotiation and reaching an agreement, he does not study these hypotheses. However, he sees these hypotheses as offering broad potential for future research on the underlying factors for concession making in negotiations (D. G. Pruitt, personal communication July 16th and 18th, 2013; Pruitt, 2005). Indeed, this research will also focus on the factors affecting the parties' willingness to reach an agreement in light of readiness theory and central coalition theory.

Central Coalition Theory

Central coalition theory constitutes the political dimension of readiness theory. It relates to the readiness of the various factions on each side (and not just the leaders) to conduct negotiations with the other side in the conflict and reach an agreement and describes the internal political mechanism through which the parties decide to enter into negotiations and reach an agreement (Pruitt, 2005, 2007). It also describes the groups participating in peace negotiations as an alliance of doves from both sides and all of the groups that join them—that is, moderates and hawks (Pruitt, 2007). The model can explain why negotiations fail to produce the desired outcome and why, in some cases, the sides do reach an agreement (Pruitt, 2007). The analysis of the readiness of the internal political system must be conducted separately for each part of the political spectrum.

Pruitt argued that in the prenegotiation stage and during the course of negotiations a *central coalition* sometimes coalesces that ranges from the hawks on each side of the conflict, to the moderates, to the doves, with the doves on each side adjacent to each other on this political spectrum (See Figure 1). A central coalition can vary in size—from a very broad coalition that includes neutral factions, doves, moderates, and most of the hawks, to a very narrow coalition that includes only the neutral factions and the doves (Pruitt, 2005, 2007). As Pruitt noted, when there is a large central coalition, "negotiation becomes quite likely; and if the coalition persists, a lasting agreement is likely to be reached" (Pruitt, 2005, p. 26).

On the political spectrum, the hawks have more extreme goals than the others, are more alienated from the other side, and are more willing to take risks to achieve their objectives (Pruitt, 2005). They are often well organized and well armed, a fact that makes them a disproportionately powerful faction on their side. There is a significant social distance between the hawks on the opposite sides of the conflict: They have different and contradictory values and narratives. On the other hand, the doves on both sides have similar views and can be in contact with each other in an effort to promote a peace process (Pruitt, 2007).

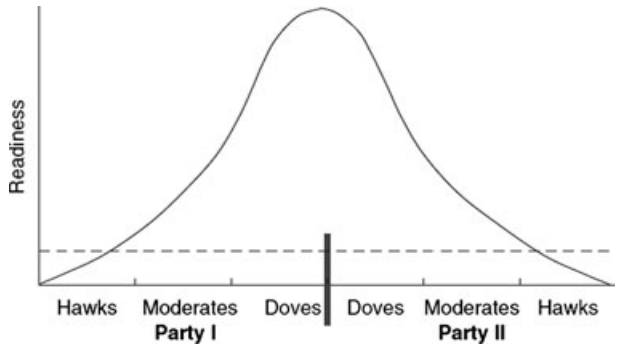

Figure 1. A sketch of a broad central coalition (Pruitt, 2007).

According to this theory, all of the members of the central coalition must be above the threshold of readiness to advance toward an accord and accept it (Pruitt, 2005). This theory contends that (a) the broader the central coalition—that is, the more groups on both sides that are above the threshold of readiness—the more successful the peace process will be, and (b) the central coalition must include most of the armed groups (Pruitt, 2005).

A conflict is ripe for resolution when there is a broad central coalition of people across the political spectrum who are ready to engage in negotiations (Pruitt, 2007). Readiness to negotiate will always be the greatest among doves and the lowest among hawks, who will be less optimistic about the success of negotiations due to the extreme nature of their demands and their lack of trust in the other side. Therefore, they usually oppose negotiations and often act as *spoilers* to undermine an agreement if one is reached (Pruitt, 2005). Nonetheless, Pruitt maintained that hawks sometimes develop readiness for negotiating and become involved in talks that lead to an agreement when they find it acceptable to them. Political pressure from allies and moderate elements can also encourage extremists to opt for negotiations (Pruitt, 2005, 2007). The more well organized and well armed the extremists are on each side, the broader the coalition must be to neutralize the extremists and prevent them from undermining the negotiations and the agreement (Pruitt, 2005). A broad central coalition has a good chance of entering into negotiations, and if the level of readiness of the political factions grows, there will also be a greater chance of achieving an agreement that resolves the conflict. On the other hand, a narrow coalition might produce an agreement, but it will not be binding upon the rest of the group. Thus, it is unlikely to be a meaningful agreement.

Pruitt believed that leadership is a decisive component in forging a broad central coalition that is sustainable over time. If a political leader supports negotiations, the central coalition will be larger—especially if the leader is popular and is known as a patriot who can be counted on to protect the group's interests. A third party can also fill a role of similar importance in building a broad coalition, and the role of a third party does not end when an agreement is achieved (Pruitt, 2005).

Method

This research employs the enhanced case study method of a single crucial case study for interpretive and analytical purposes (Bercovitch, 1997; Druckman, 2005; George & Bennett, 2005). The Aceh peace process will be analyzed in terms of the variables presented by the readiness theory and will be used as a theory-testing case study whose purpose is "to strengthen or reduce support for a theory, narrow or extend the scope conditions of a theory" (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 109). Beyond testing the

hypotheses of readiness theory in the prenegotiation stage, this research will try to test whether its hypotheses can explain the negotiation results.

The study includes two structures of dependent variables. The first relates to the beginning of the negotiations and focuses on the readiness that was required for commencement of negotiations. Here, the variables are studied that influenced the decision of the parties to start official negotiations in January 2005. The second dependent variable is the outcome of negotiations. The factors are identified that affected the readiness of the parties to sign an agreement in August 2005. This will be followed by an analysis of the internal political mechanisms on each side and how they affected the willingness of the parties to sign an agreement.

To maximize the theoretical value derived from the analysis, the following questions are addressed: "What were the factors that brought the parties to the negotiating table?" "What role did the third party play during the prenegotiations stage?" "During the stage of negotiations, what were the factors that pushed the parties toward agreement or, alternatively, toward failure?"

In addition, the following set of standardized theory-based questions will be used to generate case-based generalizations:

(1) Is each of the factors cited by readiness theory as a source of motivation to commence negotiations indeed a sufficient condition, as the theory claims?
(2) Is optimism a necessary condition for commencing negotiations, as readiness theory claims?
(3) Can a high level of motivation during the prenegotiations stage compensate for a low level of optimism or even the absence of optimism, in order for readiness for negotiation to increase?
(4) Does the case study confirm the assumption that the less trust there is between parties and the more rigid and disparate their positions (both sources of low optimism), the stronger their motivation to end the conflict must be if negotiations are to ensue (Pruitt, 2005)?
(5) Is increased optimism on both sides necessary for negotiations to begin?
(6) What are the implications of the various sources of motivation for the outcome of negotiations?
(7) When parties approach the negotiating table with low optimism, is an increase in optimism a necessary condition for agreement?
(8) Can an increase in motivation—by urging the parties toward agreement—compensate for a low and unchanging level of optimism during negotiations?
(9) Are there additional factors that affect the prenegotiations process and the negotiations, which are not addressed by readiness theory?

The research presented here uses a qualitative content analysis of primary sources, including declarations, speeches, newspaper interviews, and official reports of a third party as well as secondary sources that include books and articles about the case being studied.

The Aceh Peace Process

Readiness to Negotiate

Motivation

The motivation on the Indonesian side increased from 2003 and was galvanized after the change of government and the tsunami disaster due to the leadership's perception that a continued military struggle would not lead to victory and its appreciation of the high cost of continuing the struggle under the circumstances and international pressure, and the perception of the opportunity to apply preferred policy. In contrast, the increase in GAM's motivation developed at a later stage, toward the end of 2004, as it realized that the risks and costs of continued fighting were too high, especially in light of international pressure to restart negotiation.

The Government of Indonesia

The motivation of the GoI to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Aceh was a result of the complete political commitment of SBY and Kalla to resolve the Aceh conflict. This commitment was grounded in experience gained under previous administrations and derived from the belief that a purely military solution was impossible. In their view, only a negotiated agreement could resolve the conflict and establish a stable peace. SBY, who had a rich military past, served as the coordinating minister for political and security issues in the Megawati and Abdurrahman administrations. In this capacity, he was the major sponsor of the peace talks that took place between 2000 and 2003 (Sukma, 2005). SBY was the main architect and proponent of the integrated approach (Aspinall, 2005) that guided the government in previous administrations, which included both military operations and dialogue (Aspinall, 2005; Biswas, 2009; Schulze, 2007). In Megawati's administration, SBY became a leading advocate of peaceful resolution of Indonesia's conflicts with secessionist groups and was willing to offer concessions to GAM even before he was elected president (Harris, 2010). Kalla was the leading figure in the negotiations that led to the resolution of the conflicts in Maluku, Poso, and Sulawesi during Megawati's administration, and he was also the most active figure in previous attempts to reach an agreement in Aceh. In light of this experience of both leaders, one of the election campaign promises made by SBY and his Vice President Kalla was to renew efforts to resolve the Aceh conflict peacefully (Aspinall, 2005; Awaluddin, 2008; Feith, 2007; ICG, 2005; Morfit, 2007; Schulze, 2007; Wiryono, 2008). It was apparent to both leaders that the military struggle had claimed many victims on both sides and that Indonesian military activities in Aceh since mid-2003 (upon failure of the ceasefire) were very costly and stretched military and economic capability to its limits. It was clear to them that even though GAM had been hurt by three decades of military struggle, the Indonesian army was unable to eliminate the organization. Nevertheless, it appears that SBY and Kalla were not suffering from a sense of hurting stalemate; since mid-2003, the Indonesian army had scored some significant victories and was prepared to continue its military struggle if necessary (Aspinall, 2005; Kemper, 2007; Kingsbury, 2006; Morfit, 2007).

Moreover, SBY and Kalla adhered to the position that a peaceful solution to the problem of Aceh was necessary to improve the state's economic situation and international image, which had been damaged by its insensitive military operations in Aceh and violent actions in East Timor. Indeed, among SBY's election promises were the revival of Indonesia's regional leadership and the advancement of its aspiration of being accepted as a stable and credible international partner. These required a peaceful resolution of the conflict (Biswas, 2009; Kingsbury, 2006; Morfit, 2007).

Additionally, the GoI was subjected to international criticism because of its problematic transition to democratic rule. For this reason, a national consensus in favor of a peace agreement on Aceh could be expected to improve the state's international legitimacy. Therefore, SBY and Kalla entered office committed to strong leadership, reform, and achievement of an agreement ending the conflict in Aceh through a unified policy dictated by the government. Under this policy, civilian authority was vested in the military, which had traditionally been a very strong and significant player within Indonesian politics and had dictated the hard-line policy of past Indonesian governments vis-à-vis GAM (Biswas, 2009; Morfit, 2007; Wiryono, 2008; Yudhoyono, 2005).

By mid-December 2004, the efforts of SBY and Kalla to engage in dialogue with GAM's exiled leadership were successful in securing Ahtisaari's agreement to convene a meeting of both sides. Plans for the first round of negotiations in Helsinki were underway before the tsunami disaster (Gaillard, Clave, & Kelma, 2008; ICG, 2005; Morfit, 2007). At this point, the motivation of the GoI was high. Still, the tsunami disaster of December 26–27 acted as a catalyst and a turning point, and the GoI seized the opportunity for immediate negotiations. In terms of the process itself, the tsunami aggravated the problems facing Indonesia. But the disaster was also seen as an opportunity for SBY and Kalla to realize their long-held ambition and reach a peaceful solution for the conflict (Biswas, 2009; Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2009; Yudhoyono, 2005).

The scale of the disaster in Aceh—deliberately closed to global media and international aid by Indonesia since May 2003—drew international attention and pressure on both sides to seize this limited opportunity to end the conflict with a peace agreement and to focus on the reconstruction of the province. The international community saw the resolution of the conflict as essential for the success of recovery efforts and made it clear that the reconstruction process depended on mutual progress toward peace.

The Indonesian military, which had also been hurt badly by the tsunami, was accused by the international community of blocking aid. The GoI, however, was unable to cope alone with the massive disaster and the international accusations against the Indonesian military, which in the immediate aftermath of the disaster refused to allow foreigners to enter the area. The GoI quickly submitted to the pressure, permitting and even requesting international aid and intervention (Biswas, 2009; Gaillard et al., 2008; Keizer, 2008; Kingsbury, 2007; Schulze, 2007; Wiryono, 2008; Yudhoyono, 2006). Moreover, it appears that SBY recognized the terrible scale of the disaster and the resulting moral, political, and economic obligation to end the conflict and to enable recovery. SBY sensed that the international community was waiting to see how his administration would resolve the conflict with GAM (Biswas, 2009; Morfit, 2007).

At the same time, the tsunami provided the GoI an opportunity to realize its interests, expediting the process toward negotiations and underlining the urgency of reaching an agreement. First, SBY and Kalla sought to leverage the international attention and desire to help after the disaster to reinforce support for their plans to end the conflict, and they encouraged the international community to pressure exiled GAM leaders to agree to negotiate by emphasizing the need to support Aceh's reconstruction (Awaluddin, 2008; Yudhoyono, 2006). Second, while the October–December prenegotiations contacts mediated by Ahtisaari were clandestine to avoid stirring domestic opposition, the tsunami gave the GoI an opportunity to present peace talks as a response to a humanitarian crisis rather than a change of policy (Aspinall, 2005; Harris, 2010).

Gerekan Aceh Merdeka

Gerekan Aceh Merdeka's strategy since the fall of the Suharto regime was directed at attaining international legitimacy and mobilizing the international community to exert pressure on Indonesia to grant Aceh independence, which GAM compared with East Timor's independence from Indonesia. The contacts between GAM and the GoI during 2000–2003 did in fact lead to GAM attaining international recognition and legitimacy, while the organization remained firm in its official stance regarding independence for Aceh. GAM's interest in internationalizing the conflict was the reason it did not respond to the GoI's efforts in 2003 and early 2004 to begin talks outside the formal and international framework (Aspinall, 2005; Kingsbury, 2006; Schulze, 2006, 2007).

Up until the collapse of the Geneva process in May 2003, the military leadership of GAM on the ground believed that Indonesia would not concede Aceh peacefully and that military force was therefore necessary to liberate it. But GAM's circumstances and situation changed between May 2003 and November 2004. During this period, its military, economic, and political situation steadily deteriorated. In May 2003, the Indonesian army launched an operation aimed at ending the conflict by dismantling GAM. This operation had a devastating effect on the organization's military and civilian capability. The number of casualties within the organization grew, morale declined, and public support dropped. The civilian structure of the organization collapsed because its tax collectors were turned over to the authorities. There was less access to food and medical provisions. GAM suffered economic hardship, and the members of its shadow government were caught and put on trial (Aspinall, 2005; ICG, 2005; Schulze, 2006, 2010). The situation worsened during 2004, but its members evidently did not despair—despite the damage and distress facing the organization. GAM's military capability declined significantly, but its members wanted to continue resisting the Indonesian army. Some even argued that the harm inflicted on the general population by the Indonesian military action boosted the enlistment of fighters for the

organization, precisely because it was under fierce attack (Aspinall, 2005; Keizer, 2008; Kingsbury, 2007; Morfit, 2007; Schulze, 2006, 2007; Wiryono, 2008).

The organization's international standing also reached its lowest point since the start of the Geneva process. The international community was disappointed by the failure of the Geneva talks and affirmed Indonesia's right to defend its territorial integrity. During 2004, it became clear to GAM that the East Timor precedent would not be repeated and that they would never defeat the Indonesian army without the foreign support they lacked. GAM was desperate to secure international intervention again (Aspinall, 2005; Kingsbury, 2007; Schulze, 2007; Thalong, 2009). By November 2004, GAM leaders were ready to consider a new approach. An internal debate ensued within the exiled GAM leadership regarding a strategic alternative to the uncompromising position on independence: A step-by-step approach, including an interim agreement (Schulze, 2007). GAM's leadership was ready to explore self-governance as a possible solution, with Jakarta permitting local political parties in Aceh (Kingsbury, 2006, 2007). Still, the organization's official policy remained unchanged until the developments in the second round of the negotiations (Aspinall, 2005; Kingsbury, 2006). Until then, GAM viewed the prenegotiation contacts and even its consent to resume negotiation with Ahtisaari's mediation as only a matter of courtesy (Aspinall, 2005; Cheow, 2008; Keizer, 2008; Kingsbury, 2006, 2007; Schulze, 2007).

The tsunami disaster highlighted the urgency of negotiations for GAM. A return to the negotiating table now appeared much more attractive than continued fighting and offered an opportunity for GAM to realize its interests for a number of reasons, including its problematic military situation, the international pressure to end the conflict for the sake of reconstruction efforts following the massive devastation, and the fresh opportunity to internationalize the conflict. The scale of the disaster had worsened GAM's military and socioeconomic situation and international standing: The organization's channels of supplies and communications had been significantly damaged. GAM was utterly exhausted in every sense (Aspinall, 2005; Dursin, 2006; Gunnar & Patock, 2010; Johansson, 2005; Kemper, 2007; Mahmud, 2005; Schulze, 2007).

Moreover, although GAM declared a unilateral ceasefire immediately after the tsunami in order to enable international aid organizations to operate, the Indonesian army actually intensified its assault and the GoI announced that it was sending an additional 50,000 soldiers to Aceh (Irwandi, 2008; Johansson, 2005). The aftermath of the disaster generated an expectation within Aceh's civil society of continued financial support and reconstruction assistance from the international community. GAM realized that continued fighting would endanger international aid efforts for the disaster-struck population. After the disaster, GAM's prime minister in exile, Malik Mahmud, therefore announced that GAM would welcome any initiative by the international community aimed at transforming the organization's unilateral ceasefire into a formal ceasefire agreement with the Indonesian army (Aspinall, 2005; Dursin, 2006; Gunnar & Patock, 2010; Johansson, 2005; Kemper, 2007; Mahmud, 2005; Schulze, 2007).

Optimism

The Government of Indonesia

Alongside the previous administration's military attempt to eradicate GAM after the collapse of the Geneva talks, Kalla had been seeking unofficial communication channels with senior GAM leaders in Sweden since 2003, aiming to find common ground that would facilitate an agreement to end the armed struggle. These initial efforts were fruitless (Aspinall, 2005; Kingsbury, 2006; Schulze, 2006, 2007). In early 2004, with the assistance of private businessman Juha Christensen, Kalla was able to enlist Ahtisaari in an effort to establish contact between the parties and bring them to the negotiation table before SBY came to power. But these efforts also proved unsuccessful (Aspinall, 2005; ICG, 2005; Morfit, 2007; Schulze, 2007). Thus, immediately upon forming their new administration in October 2004, SBY and Kalla began intensive, clandestine efforts on a peace plan with the aim of finding Indonesia a negotiating partner. In addition to their unsuccessful attempts to create a channel of communication with GAM's leadership in

Sweden, Kalla's team tried to establish a channel with one of GAM's senior officers, Muzakkir Manaf (Aspinall, 2005; Kingsbury, 2006). This attempt ended with a denial and rejection of any contacts or agreement by Manaf and GAM's Swedish leadership (Kingsbury, 2006). In early December 2004, Kalla's team tried approaching senior imprisoned GAM officials. During these attempts, it was made unequivocally clear to Kalla that all contacts must be with the exiled GAM leadership in Sweden (ICG, 2005; Kingsbury, 2006). In mid-December 2004, the efforts of SBY and Kalla to initiate dialogue with GAM's exiled leadership were successful in securing Ahtisaari's agreement to convene a meeting of both sides. Invitations for the first round of negotiations in Helsinki were sent to the parties two days before the tsunami disaster of December 26, but the parties responded positively to the invitations only after the tsunami (Gaillard et al., 2008; ICG, 2005; Morfit, 2007). It appears that some change in Kalla's optimism about the success of the process, as referred to by the theory, occurred only after the tsunami, due to the wishful-thinking mechanism. Plans for the first round of negotiations in Helsinki were indeed underway before the tsunami disaster, but Kalla's agreement to commence full and official negotiations with GAM came only after the tsunami (Gaillard et al., 2008; ICG, 2005; Morfit, 2007). The Indonesian government saw a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, based on the hope that after the tsunami the international community would exert pressure on GAM to demonstrate flexibility. Thus, the government's strong motivation effected some change in its level of optimism through a wishful-thinking mechanism, and its readiness to negotiate was based on wishful thinking more than on any hard evidence of the other side's intentions and willingness to compromise. The Indonesian side realized that GAM policy remained officially unchanged and that there was still a long way to go before reaching an agreement with its government in exile (Aspinall, 2005; Kalla, 2008; Schulze, 2007).

Gerekan Aceh Merdeka

The contacts during 2002–2003 increased mistrust between GAM and the GoI. The inauguration of the SBY–Kalla administration signaled to GAM that the GoI would now be more flexible and supportive of peaceful conflict resolution based on mutual respect. However, from the perspective of GAM's leadership, the new government still had to prove that it would take negotiations seriously (Aspinall, 2005). GAM had plenty of reasons to believe that the government's real strategy was geared toward military victory, not peaceful resolution (Morfit, 2007). In spite of the parties' clandestinely mediated consent to resume negotiations, which was given just days before the tsunami struck, GAM did not trust the GoI to implement whatever agreement might be reached and therefore demanded guarantees that the agreement would indeed be implemented (Irwandi, 2008). In light of the devastation from the tsunami, GAM declared a ceasefire and called for renewed talks; however, this call did not stem from heightened optimism that Indonesia would commit and adhere to an agreement. From GAM's perspective, there was an enormous gap between the GoI's declarations and its activity on the ground. After the disaster, Kalla welcomed the ceasefire and GAM's readiness to assist reconstruction efforts and hold talks, and he stated that Indonesia would make a comparable effort. Yet this statement came a day after the GoI imposed new restrictions on aid workers in Aceh and announced plans to send 50,000 additional soldiers to the area. Moreover, Indonesia's foreign minister declared that Jakarta wanted all aid workers out of Aceh within 3 months (Mahmud, 2005).

Negotiations in Helsinki

Motivation

During the negotiation that took place between January and August of 2005, motivation of both parties grew due to third-party pressure on both sides and especially on GAM. As will be elaborated, Indonesia also put pressure on GAM. Several international actors intervened during the various stages of the peace process. Their involvement brought the parties closer to the negotiating table, made them more inclined

to compromise during negotiations, and helped oversee implementation of the agreement. This intervention eventually played into the hands of both sides and served their interests.

The key international actor during negotiations was the mediator Ahtisaari, whose conduct during negotiations, his character, and his connections enabled the negotiations to conclude in only 7 months. Ahtisaari brought substantial experience and authority to the role of mediator. Through his international connections, he secured the necessary international support and backing, which boosted his political leverage. His management of the negotiating process led the parties to moderate their demands and make compromises during the talks, and, as elaborated below, it generated increased optimism in both parties (Ahtisaari, 2008; Aspinall, 2005; Cheow, 2008; Keizer, 2008; Kemper, 2007).

In light of the urgency of the narrow window of opportunity resulting from the tsunami disaster as well as the short-term nature of the planned international intervention (which was based on a recognition of the obvious imbalance of power between Indonesia and GAM), Ahtisaari applied pressure on GAM from the outset, both directly and through diplomats representing the international community (Djuli & Rahman, 2008). The international community was constrained by the various interests it held in Indonesia and therefore applied its pressure toward compromise primarily on GAM. During the first meeting, each side continued to insist on its own position: GAM on independence and the GoI on preserving the integrity of Indonesia, while granting a high degree of autonomy to Aceh. Ahtisaari made it clear to GAM that international support for independence was unattainable and that he would use all his influence to persuade European states and the rest of the world not to recognize Aceh's independence (Awaluddin, 2008). Ahtisaari made it unequivocally clear that he had no time to waste on nonsense during negotiations (Keizer, 2008). The GoI itself also applied pressure on GAM through the threat of continued military operations (Aspinall, 2005; Cheow, 2008; Kemper, 2007). During the second and third rounds of talks, this collective pressure succeeded in leading GAM to concur that a solution to the conflict was possible only in an autonomous framework that would pragmatically and legally address GAM's main concerns while honoring the territorial integrity of Indonesia (Ahtisaari, 2008; Aspinall, 2005; Awaluddin, 2008). GAM realized that they had no alternative under the circumstances and that the GoI would withdraw from the talks (which would then collapse) if GAM did not accept the GoI's demand to discuss only autonomy and not independence (Aspinall, 2005; Djuli & Rahman, 2008).

Although most of the pressure exerted by third parties in the negotiations was directed at GAM—whose initial concession enabled the first significant breakthrough in the process—Indonesia faced some pressure too. The fact that pressure was brought to bear on both sides resulted in an agreement that included mutual concessions. Even though the peace agreement was drafted under conditions it had dictated—for example, autonomy as the basis for discussion and the integration of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in AMM (Biswas, 2009)—the GoI realized that failure to reach an agreement would disrupt the supply of international aid necessary for continued posttsunami reconstruction. Therefore, it recognized the need to make concessions (Aspinall, 2008; Cunliffe, Riyadi, Arwalembun, & Tobi, 2009).

In addition, Ahtisaari's approach forced both sides, and especially GAM, to focus on reaching a workable compromise on the core issues, to set aside the past, and to focus on the future and on achievable demands. He did not allow the parties to digress from the issues on the agenda. He carefully oversaw the information submitted to the media, insisted on direct talks during each round of negotiations, and set a deadline of 6 months for the talks to succeed. Ahtisaari's personality and contacts enabled both sides to satisfy their needs: GAM received international legitimization, and the GoI secured the unity of Indonesia in the agreement (Biswas, 2009).

Optimism

At the start of the Helsinki talks, neither side trusted the other side or believed that during official negotiations the other side would display the willingness and flexibility necessary for reaching a mutual

agreement to end the conflict. GAM was very skeptical about the government's commitment and intentions and did not expect the talks to succeed. It was not committed to the process at this point. Nonetheless, GAM regarded Ahtisaari as a person of high international standing, contacts, and credibility, so it decided at least to listen to what the GoI had to say (Johansson, 2005; Mahmud, 2005; Morfit, 2007). From the GoI's perspective, despite the gathering in Helsinki, GAM's policy remained officially unchanged, and there was still a long way to go before reaching an agreement with its government in exile (Aspinall, 2005; Kalla, 2008). During the first meeting, it became clear to the Indonesian side that it had to persuade GAM to renounce violence and to be more realistic about its political power after the tsunami; the Indonesian representatives to the negotiations also realized that they had to convince GAM that Indonesia had something to offer (Schulze, 2007). The level of optimism did not change in the first round.

During the negotiations, the parties gradually became more optimistic about reaching an agreement, which contributed to the parties' readiness to sign an agreement. This optimism resulted from the mediator's tactics, the willingness of the parties to moderate their demands and compromise, and the third party's willingness to oversee implementation of the agreement. In light of his experience elsewhere and lessons learned from past efforts on Aceh, Ahtisaari appreciated the need for a realistic perspective regarding a peace agreement that would preserve the dignity of each side as well as the need for the gradual building of lost confidence (Ahtisaari, 2008). Therefore, he adopted a negotiating approach and tactics that allowed each side to offer compromises while pursuing its most important interests, all within a limited time frame. It was clear to Ahtisaari that there was little room for compromise on Indonesia's part: The GoI was only willing to offer a special form of autonomy. At the same time, he understood that it was important not to demand that GAM declare a concession on the issue of independence at the outset of the process. Accordingly, he adopted the formula that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" (Ahtisaari, 2008, p. 23). This strategy permitted bridging the foremost gap between the parties without the talks collapsing over initial disputes. This, in turn, made it possible to reach a general agreement that would address the important issues within a reasonable amount of time. Consequently, neither side could claim victory of any sort during the course of negotiations. All points of agreement were included in the MoU and announced only at the end of the process. This approach helped persuade GAM to systematically examine the option of autonomy and allowed the negotiators to work in peace and concentrate on the issues under discussion (Ahtisaari, 2008; Aspinall, 2005; Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2009).

Furthermore, it was clear to Ahtisaari that to reduce uncertainty surrounding the agreement (given past failures), a certain degree of international intervention—to support the agreement and oversee its implementation—was crucial for both parties. Toward this end, Ahtisaari succeeded in enlisting the European Union (EU) to cooperate with the ASEAN[2] in the activities of the oversight committee (AMM) for implementation of the agreement to the satisfaction of both sides.[3]

As noted, the willingness of the parties to moderate their demands and compromise also generated a positive change in the level of optimism. In exchange for GAM's flexibility on autonomy and willingness to disarm, the GoI showed willingness to meet all of GAM's demands in the agreement. For example, GAM demanded that the GoI's term *special autonomy* not be used and insisted on calling the political

[2]The ASEAN organization included Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines, and Malaysia.

[3]The EU enjoyed a special status and advantage over other third parties, which enabled it to be an intermediary acceptable to both sides. In light of the experience of UN involvement in East Timor's independence process, the GoI did not want the UN involved in the peace process for Aceh, but it was interested in the EU's involvement in implementing and monitoring GAM's disarmament (after reaching an agreement with GAM that preserved the state's territorial integrity). In addition, the GoI insisted on including a local actor, such as ASEAN, in the AMM. GAM also wanted to involve a Western partner in the negotiations, but was suspicious of ASEAN. Eventually, in light of the GoI position and ASEAN's expertise in regional politics and diplomacy, the organization was chosen to participate with the EU in the oversight committee. See Aspinall (2008), Gaillard et al. (2008), Keizer (2008), and Kingsbury (2006).

arrangement self-governance. For GAM, the term *autonomy* conveyed the suffering and oppression of the past and the GoI's empty promises (Cunliffe et al., 2009; Kingsbury, 2006). The final agreement included the right to have political parties and hold local elections, partial withdrawal of the armed forces, the immediate release of and legal pardon for imprisoned GAM members, elements of restorative justice, a truth and reconciliation commission, and reparations for victims of the conflict. From the outset, the GoI's acknowledgment of responsibility for human rights violations in Aceh was a salient issue for GAM representatives. At first, they insisted on clauses requiring the GoI to account for past crimes. To lessen GAM's initial insistence, Ahtisaari urged the representatives to focus on the future rather than the past (Aspinall, 2008; Cunliffe et al., 2009). Eventually, GAM's main objective during the talks—establishing its rule over the area through local, democratically elected political parties—overshadowed that demand, and ultimately, GAM acted pragmatically, recognizing that, in the current political reality, it would be unrealistic to conduct trials of Indonesian generals who had committed crimes (Cunliffe et al., 2009).

The agreement also included an economic dimension whose management influenced the confidence-building process between the parties and that was used as a vehicle to sustain the talks when, during the third round, the parties reached a deadlock regarding international involvement in overseeing the agreement. During this round, the parties were able to reach an agreement on a new division between Jakarta and Aceh of the revenues derived from the gas- and oil-rich province as well as an agreement with regard to the use of Indonesian currency in Aceh. Under this new agreement, 70% of the profits would go to Aceh (Aspinall, 2005; Cunliffe et al., 2009; Wennmann & Krause, 2009). The GoI did not object to the new division of revenues and therefore had no difficulty accepting the agreement, since the parliament had already approved the Special Autonomy Law in 2001 (Wennmann & Krause, 2009).

Two of the key elements at the core of the dispute were also deliberately left to the final stage of the talks, thereby enabling confidence to be built between the parties through discussion of lighter issues: The first was the number of Indonesian soldiers to remain in Aceh, a matter on which agreement was reached only when the talks had nearly collapsed, after tough, marathon-style negotiations. GAM had originally sought a presence of only 4,000 soldiers while the government sought 25,000—an enormous discrepancy. Eventually, the parties agreed on 14,700 soldiers and 9,200 police personnel. Toward this end, the GoI agreed to concede somewhat, but apparently GAM had no choice other than significant compromise to avoid deadlock (Aspinall, 2005; Cunliffe et al., 2009). As two of GAM's negotiators explained, "Had we decided to reject this, the peace talks would have been at a stalemate" (Djuli & Rahman, 2008 p. 30.).

In this respect, GAM's concerns were somewhat eased by one of the AMM's assignments: Ensuring that the Indonesian security forces were indeed engaged in protecting against foreign enemies.

The second element was the government's agreement to allow political parties in Aceh, which was considered a major government concession and a key factor in achieving agreement (Aspinall, 2008; DeRouen et al., 2010; Kingsbury, 2006). From the GoI's perspective, independent political parties in Aceh posed a significant threat. Historically, they had been prohibited, as their existence was seen as encouraging sentiments of secession and threatening national unity. For GAM, the status of political parties in Aceh was the top priority. The significance of recognizing national political parties was that GAM representatives could thus be elected and gain control of the constitution and government of Aceh, which would in turn grant legal and democratic legitimacy to their aspirations and their relations with the central government.

As shown, the parties' readiness to compromise during the negotiations resulted in a warming of relations (Djuli & Rahman, 2008), which, in combination with the mediator's confidence-building tactics and the willingness of the EU and ASEAN to oversee the agreement, increased each side's perception of the possibility of realizing their interests through the agreement (Kalla, 2005a, 2005b; Dursin, 2006; Schulze, 2007). The turning point at which the GoI became gradually and increasingly optimistic about the possibility of reaching an agreement occurred after the second round of talks, when it became

clear that GAM had undergone a paradigmatic shift in its thinking (Kalla, 2005a, 2005b; Schulze, 2007). During the third round, when the serious bargaining began, the Indonesian negotiators publicly expressed optimism about the possibility of an agreement and asserted that Indonesia was willing to compromise on some issues, especially the symbolic ones (Aspinall, 2005). Another factor that increased the GoI's impression that GAM would abide by the agreement was the outcome of a meeting in the jungle during the Helsinki talks between Kalla's personal representative, Farid Husain, and GAM Commander Sofyna Dawood. After this meeting, it became clear to Indonesia that GAM fighters would adhere to an agreement emerging from their talks (Kalla, 2008).

During the negotiations, there was also a change in GAM's perception of the chance of realizing their interests in an agreement. This change was reflected in the following statement by GAM's exiled prime minister: "The policy of previous governments was that they did not want Aceh to gain independence and, at the same time, they imposed a system that was not acceptable to the Acehnese, and this caused many problems. Under the new government, we saw that this had changed. They were more flexible on that point and, of course, we have responded accordingly. If Aceh can achieve what it wants peacefully without separating itself from Indonesia**,** why should we go to war?… So, we feel that we got our rights back" (Dursin, 2006).

The Helsinki Process: Building Central Coalitions

The events of 2004 and the negotiations conducted between January and August of 2005 led to the broadening of the central coalition. More and more groups on both sides of the conflict were crossing the threshold of readiness—whether this stemmed from an understanding that negotiations and an accord were the only realistic option, as occurred in the case of GAM, or whether this was the result of manipulation by a determined Indonesian leadership regarding the essentiality of reaching an agreement at that particular time.

Gerekan Aceh Merdeka

The internal debate in GAM over the possibility of adopting a political path of struggle for achieving independence through peaceful means had started already during the peace process in Geneva. Malik Mahmud, who was then GAM's minister of state, raised the possibility of a step-by-step approach to liberating Aceh, including the acceptance of interim agreements and the creation of a political party to be used for gaining independence peacefully. However, until mid-2003, Malik Mahmud was a lone advocate of this approach. A prominent opponent of this initiative was Zaini Abdullah, who then served as GAM's foreign minister and chief negotiator. He was not interested in any sort of autonomy, not even an interim accord, and completely rejected Malik Mahmud's proposal (Schulze, 2007). GAM leaders in the field were also skeptical about this idea. Leading figures in GAM, such as Amni Bin Marzuki and Irwandi Yusuf, recognized the logic in adopting a political path but did not believe that Jakarta would allow this. GAM's military commanders in the field believed that Indonesia would not relinquish Aceh through peaceful means and were still committed to the military liberation of Aceh (Schulze, 2007). Therefore, until the collapse of the Geneva process in May 2003, the organization remained committed to liberating Aceh by force while adopting a strategic of internationalizing the conflict in order to bring the international community to exert pressure on the Indonesian government to grant independence to Aceh (Kingsbury, 2006; Schulze, 2007).

Between May 2003 and November 2004, this all changed. Difficult questions arose regarding the effectiveness of GAM's strategy. The international community refused to support the organization's independence strategy, and the military offensive by the Indonesian army underlined the heavy price of this strategy. In October 2004, the internal debate started to shift from the dogmatic position of Zaini Abdullah to the step-by-step approach of Malik Mahmud, including the acceptance of interim accords

and a willingness to consider the possibility of a self-government solution if Jakarta would allow local Acehnese political parties (Kingsbury, 2006; Schulze, 2007). After the failure of the ceasefire agreement (CoHA), the tension between GAM's military commanders in the field and the exiled leadership in Sweden intensified. Nonetheless, the organization remained united and loyal to the leadership in exile in Sweden. Leaders in the field strictly obeyed the leaders in exile and recognized its authority to decide on political questions (Aspinall, 2005; Kemper, 2007). Consequently, contacts were initiated in October 2004 between the GoI and GAM about returning to the negotiating table, and two days prior to the tsunami, an official invitation was sent by CMI to the two sides to resume talks.

As noted, when the Helsinki talks began in January 2005, GAM's leadership in exile was still very skeptical about the possibility of reaching an agreement with the GoI. This changed when GAM realized that, in light of the changing reality and international pressure, its interests would be better served by reaching an agreement rather than by pursuing the military option (Cheow, 2008; Keizer, 2008; Kingsbury, 2006). Thus, the change in GAM's level of readiness—the revision of the organization's policy and the positioning of GAM's central coalition above the threshold of readiness—occurred only during the course of the Helsinki talks (Aspinall, 2005).

The Indonesian Side

The civilian leadership and the army had always been the central players in the Indonesian political spectrum who influenced the policy of conflict management in Aceh. In the post-Suharto era, the army and the defense establishment took over the decision-making process in regard to Aceh. Despite the fact that the civilian political elite largely understood that the military option had failed, those who supported the negotiations conducted in 2000–2003 were always a minority in the government and faced constant criticism from those who preferred military action. Those who conducted the negotiations did not receive full government backing. Officially, until the end of 2004, there was a right-wing consensus on the subject of Aceh. Officers in the Indonesian army and their allies in the parliament continued to advocate a strategy of wiping out GAM militarily. However, as noted, during Megawati's presidency, unofficial steps were taken to initiate negotiations (Aspinall, 2005; Biswas, 2009). When SBY was elected president and Kalla his deputy, their open and explicit efforts to promote a peace agreement generated an atmosphere that could be described as *artificial unity* (Kemper, 2007). The change in leadership illustrated that the hardliners in the GoI had lost their influence, and the start of negotiations reflected the growing strength of those who were interested in a peace accord (Aspinall, 2005; Kemper, 2007).

The political dynamics at the national level were better than those of previous governments that had tried to reach an agreement, but the government still faced a suspicious parliament and a tough opposition. Nevertheless, the commitment and determination of the two leaders to achieve a peace agreement, and their personal abilities, enabled them to overcome the obstacles and internal constitutional impediments (Biswas, 2009; Gaillard, Clave, & Kelma, 2008; Sukma, 2005). Kalla invested much time and effort, and political capital and commitment in the negotiations, and SBY's readiness to take risks in decision-making was a key factor in the success of the conflict resolution process (Cheow, 2008; Keizer, 2008).

Influential figures in the government and the defense forces were not open to the idea of compromise (Kemper, 2007), so the GoI came to the negotiations without a unified position. In light of the ambiguous policy of the previous governments, it was clear to SBY and Kalla that it was essential to establish an unambiguous policy vis-à-vis Aceh for a comprehensive solution while coordinating the work of the negotiating team (Morfit, 2007). Thus, it was clear to SBY that, in order for the peace process to succeed, he would have to mobilize all of the domestic players, including members of parliament, the army leadership, army veterans, political parties, opinion makers, and more (Yudhoyono, 2006).

SBY and Kalla had to contend with two sources of opposition to the agreement. The biggest obstacle was the army, which opposed the agreement and the negotiations. The opposition among army circles was the most significant due to its future role in implementing the accord and its past role in undermin-

ing efforts to reach an agreement. Army officers rarely criticized the talks in public, and they were very cautious in their remarks, emphasizing the army's readiness to carry out the government's orders. However, some officers did not conceal their views. For example, the outgoing chief of staff, General Rymizard Ryacudu, insisted that the only solution for the conflict was GAM's unconditional surrender (Aspinall, 2005; Kingsbury, 2006).

A second source of opposition to the efforts of the Kalla and SBY administration consisted of members of Indonesia's civilian political elite and, in particular, various members of parliament. Representatives of the different parties tried to outdo each other in their tough stance against Aceh's independence and against foreign involvement in Indonesia's internal affairs (Aspinall, 2005). Many members of parliament from all ends of the political map expressed their opposition to initiating negotiations, arguing that holding these talks in a foreign country and under the auspices of a foreign organization would lead to international intervention in Indonesia's internal affairs (that is, the Aceh question), which Indonesia had always opposed. They warned that these talks would lead to the recognition of GAM as a legitimate international actor, granting it an equal status to that of Indonesia (Cheow, 2008).

At the beginning of the third round of talks in Helsinki, serious negotiations began between supporters of SBY–Kalla and those who advocated a hard line against a compromise solution. The negotiators on behalf of the GoI publicly expressed optimism about reaching an agreement (Aspinall, 2005). While they rejected some of GAM's demands, they also openly stated that there was room for compromise on other issues and particularly in regard to demands that were essentially symbolic in nature—for example, recognition of the Acehnese flag and anthem. They also agreed to consider the term that GAM proposed—self-government—instead of insisting on a status of special autonomy, which had been the government's policy until then. Although the negotiations were supposed to be secret, enough information leaked to provide those who were not participating in the talks with a general picture of the progress (Aspinall, 2005). And when the negotiations made progress after the fourth round in late May, the opponents of the talks stepped up their attacks (Aspinall, 2005). Kalla and SBY were well aware of the arguments of those who opposed the talks and the draft agreement. However, they were determined to take advantage of the historic window of opportunity for reaching an agreement (Yudhoyono, 2006). But in order for the talks to succeed, it was necessary to change the composition of the government in favor of the peace camp. Thus, as the negotiations advanced, SBY and Kalla worked to change the balance within the government, shifting it toward those who preferred a negotiated settlement (Aspinall, 2005; Kemper, 2007).

In light of the opposition stirred by the Helsinki talks, SBY—a former military man who was well respected by the army—addressed the opposition among army circles, while Kalla took upon himself the mission of winning the consent of the political parties (Cheow, 2008; Keizer, 2008). When SBY realized in February 2005 that the talks had taken a positive turn and that there was a chance of reaching an agreement, SBY replaced the chief of staff, Ryacudu Rymizard, who enjoyed strong support in army circles, with General Endriartono Sutarto (Morfit, 2007). With this move, SBY ensured the support of the army and demonstrated his leadership and the president's control over the army (Morfit, 2007; Tempointeractive, 2009). Ryacudu was the most vocal representative of the antireformist faction in the army. In early 2003, he was also one of the strongest opponents of the peace process in Aceh, and many believe that he played a central role in its failure. As army chief of staff, he had the power to influence the outcome of important political processes through the army's activity in the field (Schulze, 2007). SBY had faith in General Endriartono Sutarto as someone who was capable of seeing the broad picture and supporting the peace process. SBY used Sutarto to help align the army with his policy and forestall opposition to it. And indeed, Sutarto did not disappoint him, as Awaluddin noted "In the beginning, pessimism overshadowed the peace talks. People believed that the armed forces would be an obstacle to peace, because they would lose the economic benefits they had derived from the war. This is wrong. I received full support from the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, General Endiartono. . . . Enough of the war. The armed forces also lost their men in the battle. No general would sacrifice his men," Endiartono said (Awaluddin, 2008, p. 26).

Kalla also utilized his connections to garner political support for an agreement. He was a very charismatic and powerful figure in Indonesian politics and served as chairman of the largest political party in the Indonesian parliament. As such, he also enjoyed a high degree of influence and connections among the Islamic groups (Kemper, 2007; Sukma, 2005). These political assets of SBY and Kalla enabled the government to conduct a peace process and mobilize substantial support for the agreement from the parliament, the army, and the Islamic groups (Sukma, 2005).

Kalla and SBY also feared that if the parliament knew about the negotiation processes, it would express opposition. Thus, they chose not to divulge the details of the agreements until after the signing of the MoU (Kalla, 2008). Nonetheless, Kalla and SBY worked vigorously to win over those who were opposed to seeking an agreement. Contrary to the previous position of unified opposition to negotiations, Kalla chose to publicly defend the peace process in the media during the negotiations, explaining again and again that the alternative to the talks was a bloodbath (Aspinall, 2005). After the agreement was formulated, and in response to those who claimed that the presence of international monitoring forces would violate the principle of treating the Aceh question as an internal matter, SBY–Kalla argued that they had never intended to internationalize the conflict and that the presence of foreign monitoring forces did not constitute interference in Indonesia's internal affairs (Yudhoyono, 2005). In response to those who were opposed to having local political parties, Kalla argued that the parliament had already agreed to local parties in the past and cited two precedents: The first elections in Indonesia in 1955, which included local parties, and the special autonomous status of Papua, which includes a provision for local parties (Kalla, 2008). In response to those who claimed that the resumption of talks with GAM would dishonor those who lost their lives in this fight, SBY argued that the renewal of contacts was aimed precisely to prevent future war casualties among the Indonesian security forces and that it would also be an honorable peace for the residents of Aceh.

Thus, the central coalition grew over time, starting only with Malik Mahmud on GAM's part and SBY and Kalla on the GoI side, and growing slowly on both sides until there was broad enough support that negotiations could take place and an agreement could be reached.[4]

Discussion and Conclusions: Readiness Theory and Explanation of the Outcome of the Peace Process

Readiness theory appears to be attractive as an explanatory theory, as it includes many factors affecting the willingness of parties to negotiate. The concept of readiness theory, which addresses influential factors that vary over time and can lead to negotiations, seems to allow flexibility and an understanding of the complexity of the factors that influence de-escalation processes in conflicts of various kinds. This study tried to assess readiness theory's ability to explain the factors leading the parties in the Aceh conflict to agree to negotiate at the end of 2004. The study also attempted to examine whether the hypotheses of readiness theory and central coalition theory can explain the success of the Aceh peace process in bringing an end to the thirty-year armed conflict. The analysis demonstrates that a combination of readiness theory and central coalition theory, more than any other theories in the field, may present a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of conflict resolution processes, including the relations between internal and external politics. Still, the analysis raises a number of questions with regard to the readiness theory and the application of its hypotheses to the negotiation phase from the empirical and methodological perspectives.

In accordance with Pruitt's analysis in his studies applying readiness theory (Pruitt, 1997, 2007), it may be argued that the peace process in Aceh was characterized by an increase in the parties' level of readiness—to the point of being fully ready to sign an agreement. In the prenegotiation stage, the motivation

[4]I am grateful to Dean Pruitt for his comment, personal communication August 11, 2013.

of both parties increased significantly, while GoI's and GAM's level of optimism rose slightly. During the negotiations, however, both motivation and optimism increased significantly among both parties in the conflict. On the Indonesian side, motivation increased from 2003 and was galvanized after the change of government and the tsunami disaster as a result of the leadership's perception that a continued military struggle would not lead to victory and its appreciation of the high cost of continuing the struggle under the circumstances. The increase in GAM's motivation developed at a later stage, toward the end of 2004, as it realized that the risks and costs of continued fighting were too high. These perceptions on the part of the GoI and GAM served as fertile ground that made it possible, immediately after the tsunami, for international pressure to effect changes in the parties' positions and perceptions of the opportunity to benefit from management of the process and from the outcome of an agreement.

Toward the end of the prenegotiation stage, Indonesia's optimism increased somewhat but remained limited. The same applied for GAM. Although the Indonesian side came to the negotiating table with a certain level of optimism, which derived from the mechanism of wishful thinking, it was nevertheless clear to Indonesia that it would have to work hard to persuade GAM to compromise. Although the inauguration of the SBY–Kalla administration signaled to GAM that the GoI would now be more flexible and supportive of peaceful conflict resolution based on mutual respect (Aspinall, 2005; Kingsbury, 2006; Kingsbury, 2007). In light of the GoI's conduct on the ground, GAM was very skeptical about the government's willingness to compromise. At the start of negotiations, neither side was certain that the other was prepared to compromise on its official position to reach an agreement. The intervention and conduct of various international actors played a significant part in increasing the motivation and optimism of the parties during negotiations; that is, they influenced the parties' level of readiness to sign an agreement. During the negotiations that took place between January and August of 2005, the parties' increased motivation was further reinforced as a result of third-party pressure on both sides, particularly on GAM as well as the pressure Indonesia applied to GAM and GAM's realization that the alternative to the talks would be a return to the path of war, which had already proved to be expensive and useless. It appears that the parties' readiness to compromise led to warmer relations and, together with the mediator's tactics for increasing mutual trust and the willingness of the EU and ASEAN to oversee the agreement, boosted the parties' optimism during the negotiations.

Applying central coalition theory to analyze the process highlighted another aspect of the decision-making process: The changes in the readiness of the internal political systems of both sides to agree to concessions that facilitate an agreement. Application of coalition theory to the peace process in Aceh indicates that it was a fascinating case of pragmatic leadership on both sides of the conflict. The analysis shows how SBY and Kalla, both committed to resolving the conflict peacefully, started a backchannel process with a very narrow coalition and mounted a combined and persistent effort to win over factions in the internal political system that had opposed the process.

It can be argued, therefore, that readiness theory as applied to the case of Aceh can explain the commencement of negotiation and the result of the process. Nevertheless, methodological issues that arise from the application of the theory to the case study challenge the scientific status of the theory by questioning whether its hypotheses are what Popper calls *conclusively decidable* and whether the theory itself meets the criterion of falsifiability (Popper, 1963). For example, the theory holds that the parties' level of readiness influences the extent to which they engage in conciliatory behavior. However, beyond Pruitt's observations that "*Some* readiness is needed on both sides of a conflict for negotiation to start and agreement to be reached" (Pruitt, 2007, p. 1525) and that "…both [motivation and optimism] must be present, in *some degree*, for any conciliatory behavior to be enacted" (Pruitt, 2007, p. 1525), it is entirely unclear what level of readiness is needed in order for negotiations to commence or agreement to be reached, or how fluctuations in the variables that represent readiness are to be measured.

Furthermore, analysis of the Aceh case makes it clear that operationalization of the optimism variable under the theory is not trivial and that the attempt to point out changes in the level of optimism can lead the researcher to some confusion. According to Pruitt, "Optimism is *a sense* that it will be possible to

locate a mutually acceptable agreement… *Some* optimism is required for a party to enter negotiation" (Pruitt, 2005, p. 8). Apparently this *sense* of optimism is not always subject to a precise definition under the theory, and it is especially difficult to measure changes in the level of optimism. The theory itself does not clearly indicate how much change is needed to effect a change in the degree of readiness that will enable movement through de-escalation efforts toward the negotiating table. The case of Aceh demonstrates that it is difficult to know with certainty whether optimism exists at the low level required by the theory for negotiations to begin. According to the theory, it can be argued that the GoI's motivation, which grew stronger after the tsunami, influenced the development of the mechanism of wishful thinking on the Indonesian side, which sought to seize the opportunity to bring a change in GAM's position. Readiness theory contends that this mechanism can effect a change in the level of optimism required for implementing a de-escalation initiative, which in this case study is the beginning of negotiation. The question that needs to be asked when applying the theory is whether these developments indeed led to the certain degree of change in optimism that is required by the theory for the parties to agree to begin negotiations or whether another factor was at work that has nothing to do with optimism as defined by the theory. For it is clear that the parties came to the negotiating table without a relationship of mutual trust, which is another factor indicated by the theory as generating optimism, and not until after the second round did they have a sense that it would be possible to reach a joint agreement. It appears that the answer is a matter of the researcher's subjective interpretation.

Another illustration of the problem of operationalizing the optimism variable can be found in a study by Pruitt regarding the process that led the parties to sign the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Pruitt stated, "*It can be argued* that optimism about the viability of negotiation grew steadily on both sides from 1988 onward. *The sequence of gestures shown …is evidence of growing optimism*. Furthermore, *if we assume* that each side was reacting to the other side's most recent move, we are looking at a conciliatory spiral that helps to explain that growth. When a secret channel of communication opened between British Intelligence and Martin McGuinness in 1990 … working trust presumably grew with all of these actions" (Pruitt, 2007, p. 1530). This analysis indicates that, in the context of the Northern Ireland conflict resolution process, the parties' dynamic of a conciliatory spiral and their sitting down to the negotiating table is what led Pruitt to conclude that their optimism had indeed increased. Apparently, the difficulty of operationalizing the variable of optimism can quickly lead to falling into the trap of tautology.

Moreover, it appears that the inclusiveness of the theory and the complexity of the variables it embodies burden their operationalization and the ability to refute its hypotheses (Popper, 1963). In an effort to address some of the limitations of ripeness theory, Pruitt presented two variables, motivation and optimism, each one of which may depend on a number of factors. What happens, however, when one of the factors influencing motivation or optimism decreases while another increases? How then is the change in the level of motivation or optimism measured? Can researchers conclude that it has decreased or increased? The Aceh case study is a somewhat clear-cut case in which all factors affecting motivation and optimism were increasing at some point. However, it is not always like this. There are cases in which one factor affecting motivation or optimism may grow while the other may decrease. An example of this can be seen in the Sri Lanka peace process that took place between the end of 2001 and beginning of 2004. On the one hand, the pressure applied by a third party increased as the process advanced. However, on the other hand, the ceasefire established on February 2002 created a comfortable situation for the parties, which undermined their motivation to make concessions during negotiations if these concessions did not serve their interests. How would the change in motivation be measured and presented in this situation, as an increase or a decrease? It appears that in such cases determining whether motivation increased or decreased depends on the researcher's subjective interpretation. Another issue the theory fails to clearly explain is how an increase in motivation or optimism can possibly be measured. These questions become even more acute when assessing the extent to which each variable compensates for a deficiency in the other variable, as the theory posits.

With respect to the theory-based questions, a number of conclusions can be drawn from the analysis. First, this study sought to examine whether each of the factors the theory cites as creating motivation to come to the negotiating table is indeed a sufficient condition, as the theory holds. In the Aceh case, a number of factors contributed to the parties' willingness to negotiate, and more than one condition was met. The attempts by the Indonesian side to start a process already began in 2003 when Kalla and SBY considered pursuing the negotiation option for several reasons: Their philosophical belief that there was no military solution to the conflict, their perception of the high costs and risks entailed in continuing the conflict, and third-party pressure. GAM motivation grew gradually by the end of 2004 in light of changing circumstances, growing perceptions of present and future risks, international pressure, and an opportunity GAM recognized in the reinvolvement of the international community in the process. Interestingly, the tsunami catastrophe served as a turning point for both the Indonesian government and GAM, providing them an opportunity to take advantage of the situation and the international community's involvement to improve the chances of reaching an agreement under the difficult circumstances.

This issue corresponds with the questions raised about the importance of strong motivation to end the conflict in cases in which mutual trust is low and a large gap exists between the parties' positions and with respect to the implications of the various sources of their motivation regarding the outcome of negotiations. In the case of Aceh, the sources of motivation for the parties' readiness during negotiations remained valid throughout the process, which was relatively short. The pressure applied by a third party that understood the importance of financially backing its strategies was a significant factor in both sides' realization that the alternative to talks was a return to the bloodshed that had proven to be costly and ineffective. Throughout the Aceh process, the parties' motivation to end the conflict was strong and compensated for their mutual mistrust and the gap between their positions when negotiations began, and it served to soften their stances during the process.

Therefore, with regard to the question about the compensation ability of the variables and whether an increase in motivation can compensate for a low level of optimism during negotiation in pushing the parties to reach an agreement, it appears that the Aceh case confirms Pruitt's argument that "… The compensatory part of the theory implies that with stronger motivation, less optimism is required to create a given level of vigor and concession making and to reach and adhere to an agreement" (personal communication, March 9, 2008).

Interesting conclusions can be drawn from the Aceh case in regard to the question about the theory's claim that optimism is a necessary condition for commencing negotiation and the question about the compensatory potential of the variables—that is, whether increased motivation can compensate for a low level of optimism or even the absence of it during the prenegotiation stage and negotiations. In the prenegotiation stage that took place in the Aceh conflict, the parties' strong motivation compensated for the low level of optimism on the part of the GoI and GAM. This compensatory trait led both parties to seize the opportunity to examine the possibility of reaching agreement. Thus, motivation did successfully compensate for little optimism with respect to the parties' readiness to begin negotiations.

Furthermore, the dynamics of the negotiation process demonstrated that a certain level of optimism and an increase in this variable—that is, the understanding of both parties that it is possible to overcome their differences—is a necessary condition for reaching an agreement. Despite having agreed to negotiations, GAM was very skeptical about the possibility of reaching an agreement with the GoI when they sat down at the table. Any change in optimism on the GoI's part that occurred in the prenegotiation stage was minimal, and it was clear to the government representatives that much effort would still be needed in order to persuade GAM to change its position. Other factors affecting motivation played a part in determining the timing of the GoI's agreement to negotiate. During the negotiations, GAM's optimism increased as a result of its realization that, in light of the changing reality and international pressure, negotiations could produce an agreement that would serve its interests better than the military option could. A similar change took place in GoI's level of optimism only during the negotiations.

It appears that the Aceh case—in which at least one of the parties came to the negotiating table with very little optimism about the possibility of reaching an agreement or about the ability of the other party's leader to implement an agreement—is not exceptional. A comparable example is the agreement between Israel, under the leadership of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and the Palestinians, led by Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, to embark on the Annapolis process in October 2007 (Schiff, 2013). Yet another example is the process that led to negotiations in the Cyprus conflict between the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in February 2004 (Schiff, 2008). In both cases, the parties came to the negotiating table with low optimism or no optimism at all. Yet, it should be noted that, in contrast to the Aceh case, in which optimism increased during the negotiations, in both these cases, one of the reasons negotiations failed was that the parties were unable to generate any sense of optimism during the negotiations. The dynamics of the Aceh negotiations illustrate that during negotiations an increase in the level of optimism and an understanding by both parties that differences can be overcome are necessary to achieve an agreement. One might propose a revision of readiness theory in the form of a research hypothesis deserving further study: Strong motivation during the prenegotiation stage can be a sufficient condition for the parties' readiness to enter into negotiations. Full readiness to sign an agreement, however, requires both variables—motivation and optimism—and an increase in at least one of these is a necessary condition.

Furthermore, regarding the interaction of motivation and optimism, during the prenegotiation stage, Kalla's strong motivation fueled wishful thinking. The theory holds that one of the mechanisms by which a strong motivation to end a conflict can foster optimism is the mechanism of wishful thinking. Since readiness theory focuses on the prenegotiation deescalatory phase, it does not offer details about the significance of this mechanism in terms of its influence or the role it plays in relation to other variables during negotiations. The present attempt to study the hypotheses of readiness theory in the concession-making process of the negotiation reveals that in the case of Aceh, strong motivation during the negotiations successfully led to a spiral of concessions by the parties, which ultimately also resulted in increased government optimism regarding the success of the process, beyond the mechanism of wishful thinking that originally motivated the GoI to enter into negotiations. In light of this finding, the following might be an interesting hypothesis for further research: When one or more of the parties are motivated to conduct negotiations because of optimism that derives from wishful thinking, then this mechanism is not a sufficient source of increased readiness. In this case, in order to increase the parties' readiness to reach an agreement, the mechanism of wishful thinking must be replaced during negotiations with a solid understanding that a final agreement is expected to meet the objectives and that the other side can commit and adhere to the agreement.

The attempt to study the hypotheses of readiness theory in the negotiation phase of this case study also draws attention to the influence of the asymmetry of the parties' readiness to reach an agreement. The dynamics revealed in the analysis raise questions such as "Does the status of the parties to negotiation need to be perceived as equal?" "How does inequality influence their level of readiness throughout the peace process?" And, "what is the role of a third party in a process characterized by asymmetric levels of readiness?" As seen in the case of the Aceh negotiations, where asymmetry between the parties was clear to all, to minimize the significance of the blatant asymmetry, the third party adopted certain tactics (such as the establishment of AMM) that influenced the weaker party's level of optimism regarding the potential of the proposed formulation for addressing its interests.

An additional point regarding the asymmetry issues that arises from the analysis of the Aceh case relates to Pruitt's proposition that when the parties' level of readiness is unequal, the side whose readiness level is higher needs to make more concessions and is therefore in a less desirable position when crafting the final agreement (Pruitt, 2005). Indeed, the case of Aceh demonstrates that GAM's strong motivation at the start of negotiations, the opportunity to realize its interests in light of the difficult military situation, Indonesia's threat of continued military operations, and international pressure to end the conflict all combined to bring about GAM's first meaningful concession as well as the turning point that

allowed the talks to continue. Although the parties' level of readiness increased during the process, and both were required to make concessions, as Aspinall states, "GAM was in some crucial respects a relatively weak actor even in the Helsinki peace process, which was largely concluded according to the Indonesian government's agenda" (Aspinall, 2008, p. 11).

In conclusion, Pruitt holds that readiness theory is more heuristic "in part because it allows use of a compensatory model and in part because it can be extended to make predictions about more outcomes, including concession making, agreement, compliance and third-party intervention" (Pruitt, 2005, p. 30). The analysis of the Helsinki process in the Aceh conflict demonstrates that readiness theory enables scholars to identify and map many factors that influence the process that brings parties to negotiate, including the important role of third parties. By demonstrating that the hypotheses of readiness theory did indeed apply to the negotiations in Aceh, the analysis of the peace process in Aceh has laid the ground for extending the reach of readiness theory to explain the dynamics of concession making and agreement by the parties on a formula for resolving the conflict. However, the analysis also highlights the shortcomings of readiness theory, which in fact derive from its comprehensiveness and complexity. Additional research is required to further study readiness theory in other cases as well as to test the theory's ability to explain negotiation failures and not only cases of success in negotiation.

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