

## **Making Sense of War and Peace**

From extreme distrust to institutional trust in Aceh, Indonesia

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## **Making Sense of War and Peace:**

*From extreme distrust to institutional trust in Aceh, Indonesia*

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### **Abstract**

At the end of every violent conflict, leaders must help citizens make sense of the human suffering endured and thereby help create a foundation for reconciliation. In Aceh, Indonesia, representatives of the two conflicting groups chose to tell stories in which life was perceived as better after the war than it had been before, because new institutions would secure the dignity of people. This explorative study contributes to research in trust as a process with analyses of seven episodes. They demonstrate that — in retrospect — trust and risk assessment has been an ongoing intersubjective process in which trust repertoires were continually adapted, first throughout decades of war and later during peace negotiations and decommission. Analyses of their stories also give us indications of what bases of trust people rely on in high-risk situations. For example, there are indications that perceptions of the divine can provide an alternative framework

for sensemaking during times when institutions cannot support trust.

Keywords: Narratives, sensemaking, spiritual trust, reconciliation, political communication, Aceh.

## Introduction

At the end of every violent conflict, leaders must help citizens make sense of the human suffering and economic hardship that they have endured and thereby help create a foundation for trust between former enemies so that they can live peacefully together. That was also the challenge leaders faced when the civil war in Aceh, Indonesia, came to an end in 2005.

Representatives of the two conflicting groups chose to tell stories in which life was perceived as better after the war than it had been before, because new institutions would secure the dignity of people. That way they not only made sense of the suffering, but also saved the dignity of fighters, which previous research has found important for trust after a war.

This explorative study contributes to research in trust as a process with analyses of seven episodes extracted from an interview with a government representative and a speech by a rebel spokesman. In these episodes, actors made sense of how they found different bases for trust production throughout decades of war and, later, during peace

negotiations and the decommissioning process. In retrospect, it seems like trust and risk assessment have been an ongoing intersubjective process in which trust repertoires were continually adapted.

Analyses of their stories also allow us to discover bases of trust that make sense to people who have experienced high-risk situations. For example, there are indications that religion, faith and spiritual trust may help powerless people deal with the horrors and insecurity caused by civil war. That way, religion can provide an alternative framework for sensemaking during times when institutions cannot support trust.

### **Creating meaning**

People who have lived through war often feel a need to discuss and reflect on their experiences (Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Neal, 1998; Schok, Kleber and Lensvelt-Mulders, 2010), and every day people around the world try to make sense of war and reconciliation in interpersonal discussions, academic writing and public speeches. This reasoning is affected by factors such as personal knowledge (Stapel and Marx, 2007); self-esteem, optimism and perceived control (Schok, Kleber and Lensvelt-Mulders, 2010) and nightmares (Grayman, Good and Good, 2009), and by literature such as Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869). Schok, Kleber and Lensvelt-Mulders (2010) found in a study of 1561 Dutch veterans that they tried to incorporate their military experiences into a meaningful, coherent life narrative, and that social approval after homecoming made that process easier. When threatening events are interpreted as meaningful,

veterans tend to experience more trust and less distrust.

Frankl ([1946] 2004, p. 105) wrote that ‘Man’s search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life,’ and ‘meanings materialize’ when we communicate, according to Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005). In retrospect, people strive to create convincing narratives of what has happened based on a selection of previously bracketed observations. The narrative is not an objective account: it is adapted to the communication context and it is constantly redrafted ‘so that it becomes more comprehensive, incorporates more of the observed data, and is more resilient in the face of criticism’ (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). Swidler (1986, p. 284) writes that ‘culture provides a repertoire of capacities from which varying strategies of action may be constructed.’ The retention from sensemaking is ‘used as a source of guidance for further action and interpretation’ (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005), including perception of relevant trust repertoires (Fuglsang and Jagd, 2015).

### **Bases of trust**

In this article, trust is understood as ‘confidence in one’s own expectations’ (Luhmann, 1979, p. 4) that the trustee will behave in accordance with positive expectations (Lewicki, McAllister and Bies, 1998). The term ‘trust form’ is used to denote different bases of trust. Referring to Schultz (1962) and Garfinkel (1963), Zucker (1986) writes that trust has two major components: 1) background expectations, including shared symbols and shared interpretive frames; and 2) constitutive expectations, including

intersubjective meaning and independence from self-interest; and she suggests that trust be measured in terms of indicators, for example indicators associated with characteristic, process and institutional based modes of trust production.

The first two are based on reciprocity (Douglas Creed and Miles, 1996; Zucker, 1986).

Trust based on characteristic involves a sense of belonging to a social group with shared characteristics, for example ethnicity, and an expectation that others within the group will behave in accordance with certain familiar norms. This form of trust is indicated in the narratives when informants distinguish between social groups. Process based trust develops best in smaller, homogeneous communities where people interact repeatedly over a long time and in that process develop mutual expectations. It was widespread in preindustrial societies and it is indicated when, for example, informants mention once taken for granted social exchange processes in villages, or how a limited number of individuals were successfully involved in negotiations over a shorter period of time. In families and small villages where people have lived together all their lives, expectations are based on familiarity (Luhmann, 1979). Violation of positive expectations produces a 'sense of disruption of trust, of profound confusion' (Zucker, 1986). However, breach of trust will only lead to distrust if the trustor expects such violations to be intentional and to continue (Luhmann, 1979; Zucker, 1986). Interpersonal trust (or distrust) is indicated in the narratives when informants describe personal relationships.

In industrial societies where people interact outside their own social community, institutional trust substitutes or supplements process based trust (Zucker, 1986). It is tied

to formal social structures such as bureaucracy, regulations and professional accreditation. Institutional based trust is indicated in the narratives when formal structures are a pre-condition for trusting behaviour. Research indicates that where the institutional framework is weak, actors tend to rely on personal power in inter-organizational relationships, while in a strong institutional environment they might choose trust (Bachmann, 2001).

Islam plays a very important role in Aceh and also in the analyzed narratives. The term religion refers here to the institutions and dogmas related to faith. Surveys indicate that where political and governmental institutions are not considered trustworthy, actors look to religious leaders for trustworthy advice (Gilani, 2013; Ferrett, 2005), and recent research suggest that especially poor, powerless people, who have experienced extreme hardship, tend to use a religious framework in their meaning-making (Hyndman, 2009; Oishi and Diener, 2014; Stephens et al., 2012). Faith is, according to Kvanvig (2016), ‘a disposition to act in service of an ideal.’ To practise a religion and be faithful does not necessarily require trust, but faithful people will try to follow commands, and if a command is to trust or distrust other people, including strangers and enemies, the faithful do so. Spiritual trust is willingness to trust supernatural advice and it is based on an inner knowing, which mystics refer to as intuition (Bailey, 1951; Helminski, 1999). Kvanvig (2016) writes that some spiritual practices may be linked to trust, e.g. Stoic apatheia: ‘Such an attitude toward the universe as a whole can display one’s trust in the created order and in whomever or whatever is responsible for that order.’ Peters (2003) compares apatheia with the Sufi tradition tawakkul. Sufism emphasises the importance

of trust in God and His plan, including ‘trust in greater guidance’ (Helminski, 1999). The term ‘spiritual trust’ is borrowed from Bailey (2013), who writes that in ancient Africa it included peoples’ ‘trust in their capability to arrive at the truth.’ Spiritual trust is indicated in the narratives when informants specifically refer to the perception of supernatural advice in a vulnerable situation where trusting is linked to serious risk.

When faced with risky situations, actors can choose between different trust repertoires, according to Mizrachi, Drori and Anspach (2007, p. 144). They suggest that the practice of trusting is shaped by three interrelated dimensions: 1) social actors’ ability to ‘choose and apply strategies of trust in different social contexts’; 2) a cultural ‘repertoire of symbols and practices from which forms of trust are selected, composed, and applied’; and 3) ‘power and the political context, which shapes both the choice and the meaning attached to a particular form of trust.’

During a national crisis, people often do not know whom to trust and what to believe (Neal, 1998). Such lack of confidence in expectations can be paralyzing (Luhmann, 1979). Bachmann and Inkpen (2011) write that when the breakdown in trust has been at macro-level, the repair work must take place at macro-level in order to capture the core problem. From this perspective, organizations can build or repair trust relations by using institutional structures that reduce ‘the risk of misplaced trust’ (p. 285). Examples of such structures are legal regulations and community norms, structures and procedures. Bachmann and Inkpen (2011, p. 285) write:



[I]nstitutions help to establish...shared explicit and tacit knowledge between the trustor and the trustee. In these circumstances, an individual or collective actor finds good reasons to trust another actor, individual or collective, because institutional arrangements are...capable of *reducing* – which is not the same as eliminating! – the risk that a trustee will behave untrustworthily, allowing the trustor to actually make a leap of faith and invest trust in the relationship.

Govier and Verwoerd (2002) suggest that post-conflict reconciliation ‘may be understood as involving centrally the building or rebuilding of trust.’ Maintaining a working relationship is per definition an ongoing process.

## Methodology

Life stories are constantly evolving products. Each time people tell their stories, the elements and interpretations may change to match new circumstances. In this study, two people — who used to speak on behalf of conflicting parties in the 30 year war in Aceh — have tried to make sense of the peace process for an international audience. In doing so, they used their own life experiences to create narratives which indicate changing forms of trust and trust repertoire. Circumstances have required that the informants exercise a larger span of trust repertoire in their lives than most people do and their stories are therefore especially useful for an explorative study of trust and sensemaking in a war and reconciliation context. The two informants are:

1. GAM Representative Irwandi Yusuf, born in Aceh in 1960 and with a Master's degree in veterinary science from Oregon State University, USA. In the analyses, I use quotes from his speech at the final decommissioning ceremony in Banda Aceh in December, 2005. The speech was written with both the Acehnese and the international audience in mind.

2. Senior Representative for the Government of Indonesia to Aceh, Minister Sofyan Djalil. Djalil was born in Aceh in 1953 and has a Ph.D. from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, USA. He was interviewed in his office in Jakarta, Indonesia, 1 February 2006. The interview was recorded and transcribed by me. Interviewing with me was Professor Emeritus Scott Thompson, Tufts University, who knew Djalil from his time in the USA. We drafted a news story that was never published, but our manuscript is used as a foundation for the case descriptions in this article because it is the best possible evidence of how we perceived Djalil to have made sense of the war and peace process at the beginning of 2006. The transcribed interview has been consulted in order to qualify the interpretations.

During the implementation of the peace process in the autumn of 2005, I was chief press officer for the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), an organization created at the request of the conflicting parties in order to monitor and facilitate the peace process. I participated on a regular basis in meetings with both parties and drafted some of the official documents. In the analyses I will draw on my observations.

Process studies are usually longitudinal and can be ‘approached as situated sequences of activities’ (Langeley and Tsoukas, 2010). This case study is divided into three temporal sections: 1953–1975, 1976–2004 and 2005. Each section starts with a short description of the situation seen from a macro-perspective, followed by one or more micro-level descriptions and my interpretation of which trust forms are indicated. Inspired by the methodology used by Fuglsang and Jagd (2015), the trust repertoires are interpreted on the basis of the described enactment and selection in each case description.

### **Faithful village life: 1953–1976**

Aceh is an old sultanate that for centuries has fought for its autonomy, first in struggles with colonial powers and then with various Indonesian governments. Islamic religious leaders traditionally play important roles in the Acehnese society, and they primarily want autonomy in the fields of religion, customary law and education. In the 1950s and 1960s, different groups were involved in guerrilla wars against the Indonesian government, including the Islamic Armed Forces of Indonesia, Darum Islam, which was supported by Aceh’s political and religious elites (Hillman, 2012). It is assumed that the rebels at one time were in control of most of the countryside in Aceh, while cities were controlled by the Indonesian government. Looking back to this period of time, Minister Sofyan Djalil had fond memories of a childhood in a small Acehnese village, where he grew up as the youngest of five siblings.

## Episode 1:

The family lived in a wooden house built on poles so animals from the jungle could not enter the living room. Poultry lived under the house, and on the outskirts of the village were the rice fields, of which a small part belonged to the family.

His father was the imam in the meunasah — a house where men in the villages in Aceh traditionally meet to recite the Quran — and every night the village kids would gather in his home where his mother would teach them to read the Quran. ‘I was very close with my mom. She is very smart, wise, and I never experienced my mother scolded me.’ He went to school with his three years older brother, and both were later trained as religious teachers.

Some of the Darum Islam rebels lived in Djalil’s village, but they moved out when the military came, and Djalil says that the conflict did not torment him during his childhood because the parties did not fight directly in the village. What was the most frightening for him as a child was when a tiger from the jungle killed the family dog.

‘I had a very happy childhood,’ he recalls.

The description implies that faith was important for the peasants in the village and that life was structured around religious practices. The Darum Islam fighters that claimed to

be in control of the countryside wanted obedience to the Sharia, and at micro-level Djalil's parents played important roles in teaching the religious dogma. Village life was also regulated by mutual expectations based on established processes: for example, the rebels routinely left the village when the military arrived to avoid fighting within the village. The villagers were vulnerable in the conflict, and it was risky to trust the rebels. The withdrawal can be interpreted as a 'gift' to the villagers in exchange for inclusion in the community. Characteristics were important in deciding who to trust. Rebels belonged to the community, while the soldiers came from outside. The surrounding jungle — home to wild animals as well as fighters — was not a safe place for children to wander. Trustworthy, then, was everything familiar within the village border, and the evil came from outside. On an interpersonal level, Djalil was especially close to his mother and the brother who was closest to him in age. These two people play important roles as (dis)trustees throughout Djalil's war and peace narrative. Whenever there is reference to a brother below, it is this brother.

### **Eruption of trust: 1976–2004**

Dispute over the distribution of oil revenues triggered GAM's violent uprising in 1976, and in order to crush the movement, the Indonesian government used very heavy-handed military reprisals against villagers suspected to be supporters of GAM. Generations of Acehnese children grew up in fear of going to work in the rice fields, and of kidnapping, rape and extortion by either GAM or the Indonesian National Armed Forces (Jeffery, 2012; Hillman, 2012; Sindre, 2013). The number of deaths caused by

the conflict is not known, but sources estimate 10,000–33,000 lives (Amnesty International, 2013; Jeffery, 2012). Attempted peace talks failed, partly due to mutual mistrust (Schiff, 2014). For long periods families were separated, and foreigners were advised not to travel to Aceh because it was too dangerous. Almost every family in Djalil's childhood district became affected by the military crackdown on the rebels, and the popular support for GAM grew. Djalil's brother joined the rebels and later fled with his family because he was wanted by the Indonesian counterinsurgency. At this time, Djalil was a graduate student in the USA, and he did not know that his brother had joined GAM until he received a phone call from Malaysia in 1990.

Djalil:

#### Episode 2:

I heard his voice — he talked to me in such a different way — at that time he was very radical and believed in what he fought for. He would only speak to me in the Acehnese language, and I would only speak to him in Indonesian. That showed our political differences.

I do not support the idea of tribal or national attachment. Before I went to school, I knew I was part of a village. Then I learned that my village was part of Aceh and in school I learned that Aceh is part of Indonesia. Later I learned that Indonesia is part of the world, and I see myself as part of the world community.

This is an example of how a phone conversation can transform interpersonal trust into distrust. Because trust is linked to perception, Djalil continued to trust his brother until he learned about his links to GAM and realized that they belonged to conflicting groups in the civil war, so that it could be life threatening to trust.

Years later, trust in his childhood village was also disrupted. It was 2003 and Djalil was back in Indonesia. One day he attended an anniversary at a factory three hours from the village, and on the way back he decided to visit his mother whom he had not visited for five years. He was accompanied by the driver and one guard.

### Episode 3:

When they were only one kilometre from his village, the driver refused to turn down the village road. He said that he did not feel good about it. Shortly after, the driver stopped and asked if he should continue to the village despite his feelings.

Djalil:

‘I said: No! If you do not feel good about it, then we will not visit my village and my mom. The guy who accompanied me was so angry with the driver, because we passed the road. I said no, it is okay.’

They drove on, and when they shortly afterwards came to a larger town on the road, Djalil received information that his mother had tried to warn him

not to go to his village because somebody had been kidnapped in the area the night before. A few days later, a journalist and a cameraman were kidnapped and kept for one year. At this time, GAM was a well organized movement and GAM activists were moved from one area to another, so in Djalil's childhood village now lived many who did not know him.

Djalil:

'If I had turned, I would most certainly have been kidnapped. I believe it was an intervention of supernatural power that prevented us from driving to the village. If I had turned right, they would have taken me, and then I would not have been minister.'

As a student in Boston in the 1990s, Djalil had adopted a Sufi perspective on the world.

Djalil:

'Sufi wisdom says that what you achieve is because of God's will alone. We are like people thrown into the river. Our job is to make us flow. If you are suddenly thrown into one place, then do your best.'

Fighters from other areas had settled in the village, and these immigrants disrupted the old process based trust in the village. This interpretation is in line with Zucker's (1986) observation that immigration of people with diverse cultures had a disrupting effect on



process based trust in rural America in the 1800s. Djalil's mother — who used to play an important role in the village — no longer trusted her fellow citizens enough to risk her son's visit, which implies a decline in her status. Such sensemaking at micro-level reinforced the perception of internal armed conflict (ICRC, 2012) at macro-level.

It was a high-risk situation: they were vulnerable. Djalil received advice from two co-travellers with different opinions, and was faced with the dilemma of whom to rely on. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) describe three factors influencing the perception of trustworthiness: ability, benevolence and integrity. However, the narrative provides no clues to Djalil's perception of his co-travellers on these three parameters, which indicates that they were not important in the retrospective sensemaking. He chose to listen to the driver, and the determining argument — as recalled by Djalil three years later — was the driver's expression of his intuitive negative feeling. The guard was frustrated with the driver's lack of obedience, but if Djalil had chosen to rely on the guard instead of the driver, their lives would have been in danger.

The driver may have had any number of reasons — some of which had nothing to do with spirituality — for saying that he did not feel good about driving to the village. The important information here is that Djalil interpreted it as a sign of supernatural interference, because such an interpretation requires trust in the ability and willingness of supernatural powers to engage in human lives. This example shows that just as in other vulnerable situations where trusting is risky, spiritual trust is based on an instant cognitive evaluation of a complex situation. It is neither a question of faithfully

following commands, nor of referring to religious leaders and scriptures.

This case is different from one discussed by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) about a farmer and the weather. In their opinion, a farmer cannot trust the weather ‘because there is no relationship with an identifiable “other party” to which the farmer would make himself or herself vulnerable.’ The difference between the supernatural and the weather as described in these cases is that the supernatural is perceived as intending to interfere in the lives of individual humans, while the weather is not. That also means that the supernatural in this case can be perceived as trustworthy or not using Mayer, Davis and Schoorman’s criteria of ability, benevolence and integrity, while the weather cannot. We know from studies of religions that people have different perceptions of the ontology of divine and supernatural phenomena. Trust is always based on the perception of the trustor, and in this case Djalil perceived the supernatural as an entity with the ability to guide and a willingness to help him. A hint of determinism was added because he mentioned that he could not have taken part in the peace process as a minister had he been kidnapped.

The rebels felt that they had good reason to fight with heavy tools. Looking at a collection of automatic rifles, GAM representative Irwandi Yusuf said in 2005:

Episode 4:

When we in GAM started the fight for the better life and dignity for Acehnese, we needed heavy tools such as the weapons here. Those were

years of hardship, and our weapons have served their purposes of bringing up Acehnese to this position, a dignified one.

People who are perceived as threatening one's dignity are not considered trustworthy (British Council, 2012), and GAM did not trust institutions to secure their dignity, so they chose to rely on hard power. This sensemaking reflects Bachmann's (2001) findings that if there are no strong institutions to support trust in transorganizational relations, then people tend to rely more on their own power. From a reconciliation perspective, it seems important that Yusuf recognized the value of GAM's fight. If Acehnese veterans reacted similarly to Dutch veterans, such recognition may have made them less distrustful towards the peace process (Schok, Kleber and Lensvelt-Mulders, 2010).

### **Reconciliation: 2005**

Peace talks started in the autumn of 2004. At that time Yusuf was a political prisoner in Banda Aceh, but when the Indian Ocean tsunami claimed an estimated 168,000 Acehnese lives in December 2004, he managed to escape (Hillman, 2012). At that time, international humanitarian help was badly needed, and the government feared that if any of the foreign aid workers were kidnapped all the foreign aid workers would leave the region, so peace talks were intensified. Former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Crisis Management Initiative, was asked to facilitate the negotiations. Djalil was part of the five-man Indonesian delegation, and he

recounts how trust gradually developed during the months of negotiations in Helsinki.

Episode 5:

‘The first meeting was actually nothing but expressions of anger. That was to be predicted when you meet for the first time after 30 years of conflict. All dirty words were used. We were prepared for that and had agreed to keep quiet.’

As negotiations progressed, social manners improved, according to Djalil.

‘After negotiations we often had coffee together; during prayer and lunchtime we kept talking to them. Being an Acehnese had some plusses and some minuses in the negotiation talks. On one hand, it was much easier for me to talk with GAM representatives because we were attached to the area, talked the same dialect and had similar cultural background. On the other hand, people would think that I was partial.’

Djalil summarized the lessons learned from the negotiations:

‘First, the approach in negotiations must be dignity to all. We never said: “surrender or we beat you.” Dignity is very important to Acehnese; we must respect the person. Second, there must be a professional facilitator. Third, it is very important to be eye-to-eye in one room so that you learn how the other party feels and what is important to them. And you must be patient — continue to communicate.’

This text implies that key actors in the peace process consciously co-created bases for trusting, including institutional, process, characteristic and interpersonal. The institutional framework for the peace process was backed by international hard power such as security around the negotiations, disaster relief, technical skills and expertise in many fields, as well as international soft power. This institutional framework was an umbrella for the other bases of trust production that were equally important for the success, but which could not have evolved without the pressure and guarantees provided by a powerful international community. The process contributed to a trusting environment. The chairman allowed, for example, GAM representatives to express their anger over and over again; the Indonesian government representatives had decided not to retaliate, and Finland provided security. To allow people to express themselves verbally without fear can be perceived as respect for their dignity, and both informants stress that dignity is very important for the Acehnese.

Djalil was Acehnese and therefore belonged to the same ethnicity as GAM representatives. He spoke Acehnese, understood the body language, had grown up within the same religion and was familiar with the cultural frames of interpretation. Furthermore, a number of key people involved in the peace process, including Djalil and the GAM leadership, were well educated and had spent years in Western countries, so they shared many characteristics. The actors were eye to eye in the room, so they could get to know each other, and the breaks also provided an opportunity for development of interpersonal trust.

The peace process strategy was to gradually build confidence and trust between GAM and the Indonesian government (Schiff, 2014). In August 2005, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed. In the following months, GAM handed over 840 weapons for decommissioning, while the government withdrew non-organic police and troops from the province. Djalil's brother was among the exiled GAM activists who returned home. The following is my eyewitness account from one of several weapon collections that took place throughout Aceh in the fall of 2005.

Episode 6:

The young men came voluntarily from the jungle to hand in their weapons and see them destroyed.

The scene was the football field in a small village in Aceh surrounded by cacao trees and coconut palms, jungle and streams. Here were women with colourful scarves and men wearing Acehnese hats with beautiful embroidery.

The jungle drums had carried the message to the nearby villages, and hundreds of onlookers lined up to witness the former guerrilla fighters hand their weapons over to the international staff of the Aceh Monitoring Mission, who then checked, registered and cut the weapons into pieces.

Djalil was in the field talking with the national media, the former guerrilla

fighters, and the monitors from ASEAN and the EU. Afterwards, when the helicopter with VIPs left the scene, he instinctively helped the monitors hold onto the decommissioning tent, so it did not blow away. He was not going with the helicopter; he would sleep in a small wooden house in his childhood village.

That day, the rice field was transformed into a meeting place for people who used to fear each other and, by showing up, they all demonstrated trust. The rebels who handed in their weapons dared to do so — even though that made them vulnerable — because they trusted the institutional framework. A key element in that was transparency; that is to say, the weapons were cut by international monitors in public to avoid rumours about what happened to them, and Djalil demonstrated respect for the monitors by helping with practical tasks like holding on to a tent pole. In the crowd were many villagers who had for years not dared to leave their homes but who now found it safe to face the rebels and the soldiers from a short distance. The presence of high-level representatives for the different parties at each weapon collection not only signalled the overall power behind the institution, but their behaviour towards each other — that they cooperated and talked casually — also signalled cooperation. The image of reconciliation was broadcast around Aceh and the rest of the world, because there were generally dozens of journalists present at decommissioning sites.

Djalil also demonstrated recovered trust in the villagers by sleeping there. Djalil later said that when he returned to his village after the peace agreement, he was heartily

received. Numerous well-wishers came to see him. He is not sure if it was because of the peace agreement or simply because he was a village boy returning to the village as a minister.

To celebrate the completion of the decommissioning process, a ceremony was organized at Blang Padang Sports Field in Banda Aceh in December 2005. Former GAM fighters and international monitors were lined up, the rebels' last weapons were cut to pieces and, in Aceh, families had gathered around their radios to listen to the VIP speeches. Yusuf made an effort to explain why, on one hand, the suffering endured though 30 years of civil war was meaningful, and why, on the other hand, reconciliation now made more sense. He did so by referring to the process of crafting traditional Aceh furniture. He said:

Episode 7:

I know a craftsman who makes beautiful chairs for the sitting room. They are made of wood which is carved to fit the eyes and cushioned to provide comfort to the body. A number of different tools are used to make such a wonderful Acehnese chair.

First, the craftsman must cut the tree and it requires a strong saw, preferably a machine saw. It is hard work. But as the process continues and tree has become a chair, the big saw is no longer an appropriate tool. Using a strong machine saw on the fine woodcutting of the chair is not



advisable because it will destroy the beauty of the chair. In this phase, the craftsman needs lighter tools. In the end, the craftsman only needs fine sandpaper and oil to polish the chair.

We can compare the creation of such a chair with the creating of a good society here in Aceh.

In Yusuf's tale, the machine saw was later compared to the heavy weapons used by GAM fighters. They had been necessary, but they had done their work and it was time for these 'heroes' to retire. Now it was time for political tools and democracy to replace them. Yusuf was later elected governor of the Indonesian Province of Aceh (2007–2012), which indicates that the Acehnese trusted him.

It is worth noting that Yusuf introduced the crafting of Acehnese furniture as a metaphor in retrospective sensemaking. GAM's strategy seems to have emerged as events happened over the years (Sindre, 2013), but by the end of 2005 it was possible, with a 'retrospective attention', to describe the process as a logical line of events.

## **Conclusion and discussion**

Acehnese peasants of the 1950–60s could base trust on familiarity with the characteristics and norms of the group to which they belonged. The civil war between GAM and the Indonesian government disrupted these traditional forms of trust for a

number of reasons, such that members supported conflicting parties and that fighters moved around. It may be argued that process and characteristic based trust was recreated in new communities, such as among GAM fighters and among soldiers. However, for civil society, the creation of institutional structures backed by international hard power was paramount for recreation of trust.

In this study, trustors were constantly forced to make new evaluations, which shows that trust and risk assessment is an ongoing intersubjective process. The case studies support Fuglsang and Jagd's (2015) finding that trust is a dynamic phenomenon in the sense that trust repertoires change when the population faces dramatic events at macro-level. In Aceh, events at macro-level — such as the upstart of extraction of natural resources and the tsunami — impacted patterns of trusting at micro-level. Micro-level risk and trust assessments were what gradually changed the perception at macro-level. Analysis of seven episodes demonstrates how trust repertoires from one period were carried into the next, where they were often experienced as inadequate, which caused frustration. In the years 1976–2004, trust-related frustrations were caused by violations of positive expectations, while unfounded distrust had to be overcome in the peace process. However, trust repertoires from each situation were remembered and could be re-enacted when situations at macro-level again made them relevant, such as Djalil's trusting behaviour in dealing with villagers. This seems to indicate that an individual will store trust repertoires from situations experienced throughout life so that the treasure chest will contain a wide variety of trust repertoires reflecting a person's life experiences.

It appears from the case study that when strong institutions were missing and therefore could not support trusting, religion and trust in a divine order could provide an alternative base for sensemaking and trust among poor, powerless people, which seems to be in accordance with the previous findings (Ferrett, 2005; Gilani, 2013; Oishi and Diener, 2014; Stephens et al., 2013). While the inferences of spiritual trust vary for different cultures and individuals, in general, religion, faith and spiritual trust may reduce complexity and help people deal with the anxiety of chaotic circumstances at the macro-level. We will need more empirical studies that explore the role of spirituality in relation to trusting because a better understanding of the links between institutional trust, spiritual trust and hard power may be useful for international post-conflict work. The analyses of the peace process in 2005 show that it was possible to consciously build institutions that supported trust. However, the success depended on the ability of the leaders to persuade their followers to support the peace process, and in Aceh both parties were fortunate to have key people with communication skills. The successful narratives told citizens that life was better after than before the war. That way they made sense of the suffering and saved the dignity of fighters. Other empirical studies may help determine whether the creation of convincing narratives generally can be used as a tool in trust repair efforts.

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