UNARMED FORCES:
Civilian Strategy & Separatist Conflict in Southeast Asia

by

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Abstract

Civilians are primarily characterized as the victims of war. While they are indeed victims, focusing solely on their victimization obscures the ways in which civilians navigate bloody conflicts. What options are available to civilians in times of war? I propose that civilians possess three broad options: they may flee, support armed groups, or speak out. While each of these phenomena has been studied extensively, they are not always approached as choices and have yet to be seen as parts of a broad menu of civilian choice.

The flight, support, voice schema allows for new insights into the decisions made by those who choose not to fight. My project is based on multi-site ethnographic research in three Southeast Asian conflicts, including interviews with over three hundred persons. Utilizing these and other data, my study speaks to several questions: What types of civilians are more likely to choose flight, support, or voice? Why do some civilians flee, while others stay behind? Why do some civilians provide various forms of support to armed groups, while others do not? Why do some civilians raise their voices, despite the obvious risks, while others remain silent? How might civilian decisions influence armed groups and shape a given conflict?

In all three cases, flight was especially common among young men and regional ethnic minorities. They fled primarily to gain security and economic opportunities. Village chiefs and Islamic leaders tended not to flee, which I explain in terms of socio-cultural expectations. Support for armed groups was most evident among women and Islamic leaders. Support must be explained by a range of factors, including security, economic incentives, socio-cultural expectations, and personal conviction. Distinct forms of voice were taken up by women, activists, farmers, and village chiefs, motivated in large part by conviction against armed conflict (grievances). Societal roles and expectations survive even in times of war, shaping civilian decisions in surprising ways. Civilian decisions can even shape conflict dynamics, as ethnic patterns of support shape zones of combatant control and, through a combined strategy of support and voice, civilian groups can use armed groups to achieve their own goals.
Preface

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**Glossary**

Abu Sayyaf Group  
Sulu-based terrorist organization (est. 1995)

Adat  
Malay: traditional rules / expectations

AFP  
Armed Forces of the Philippines

ARMM  
Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao

Barangay  
Lowest level of administration in the Philippines

Barangay Chairman  
Head of the Barangay (also known as Captain)

Bupati  
Indonesian district (Kabupaten) head

Camat  
Indonesian sub-district (Kecamatan) head

Dayah  
Traditional Acehnese Islamic boarding schools

GAM  
Gerakan Aceh Merdeka: Free Aceh Movement (est. 1976)

Imum Mukim  
Head of traditional Acehnese sub-districts (Kemukiman)

Kabupaten  
Indonesian district

Kampung  
Acehnese village

Kecamatan  
Indonesian sub-district

Kemukiman  
Acehnese sub-district

Kurik  
Acehnese village chief

KPA  
Komite Peralihan Aceh: Aceh Transitional Committee (est. 2005)

Maguindanao  
Ethnic group / region in centre-west Mindanao

MILF  
Moro Islamic Liberation Front (est. 1983)

MNLF  
Moro National Liberation Front (est. 1972)

NAD  
Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, the official name of Aceh

Partai Aceh  
A local political party representing Aceh’s former rebels

Pesantren  
Islamic boarding school

Phuyaiban  
Village chief in Thailand

Pondok  
Traditional Islamic school in southern Thailand

PULO  
Patani United Liberation Organization (est. 1968)

Sekdes  
Sekretaris Desa: Indonesian village secretary

SIRA  
Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh: Aceh Referendum Information Centre

Tuhapeut  
Tua Empat: Acehnese council of (four) elders

TNI  
Tentara Nasional Indonesia: Indonesian National Army

Ulama  
Islamic teacher / official

Uleebalang  
Acehnese merchant class, largely co-opted by the Dutch

Ustaz  
Islamic scholar

Wadah  
Ethnic Malay political faction in Thai politics (1986-2005)
Acknowledgements

This project has been an inductive one. While generating new data from difficult research sites and proposing novel explanations, it was a long process. The primary reason that things came together is the hard work and time of my supervisor, Diane Mauzy, who turned me from an activist to something resembling an academic. Diane oversaw the evolution of this project, and without her it may have never finished.

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Introduction

In 2003, the Indonesian Military (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, TNI) was combing through the village of Pantan Lues, South Aceh, in search of an Islamic teacher (ulama) who was rumoured to be supporting GAM (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, Free Aceh Movement). They came to the house of Pitri, a former student of his. Pitri was not at home, he had left for North Sumatra. Suspicious of this, the TNI questioned his sister Parwati. After hours of interrogation, Parwati muttered that TNI soldiers are not smart enough to catch her bother and are killing her people. At this, she was arrested and taken to the provincial capital, Tapak Tuan. The next day, help arrived. It was not GAM, nor was it the Islamic teacher, but instead the village chief, Murdalis, along with a former village chief, each dressed in government uniforms. Chief Murdalis proceeded to act as Parwati’s advocate, although he was hardly flattering, calling her stupid, “thinking she was Cut Nyak Dien” (Aceh’s revered female warrior). He explained to the Commander that Pitri left Aceh not because he was GAM, but instead to find work. It was decided that Parwati would be released into the custody of the chief, and when Pitri returned to South Aceh, the chief would bring him to the Commander for questioning.¹

For some, this story might be uninteresting, the minutia of a larger conflict. Nobody was killed, nobody was beaten, and nobody was betrayed. Not surprisingly, the army possessed little information, questioning and arresting villagers in an arbitrary fashion. But the story also contains a number of unexpected elements. The young man had fled to a peaceful province largely to find work. The army was not aware of which side he was on, nor did they know if the rebellious ulama’s students stood with him. The young woman spoke out against the army and, although taken into custody, escaped unscathed. The village chief approached a feared military outpost and was able to negotiate, and the Commander apparently welcomed his presence. This simple story is actually quite complex, illustrating some of the ways that Aceh’s civilians responded to the conflict.

I am interested in understanding the options available to those facing violent conflicts who have chosen not to fight. Numerous scholars have studied attacks on civilians and the decisions made by combatants, and we know a great deal about those who fight. But the world of civilian strategy remains largely opaque. What options are available to

¹ Interviews with Murdalis, Parwati, and farmers, Pantan Lues, South Aceh (16-20 April 2009).
civilians in times of war? I propose a simple, intuitive schema: Civilians can flee from hostilities, support one or more armed groups, raise their voice to or against combatants, or some combination of the three. Each of these options has been studied before, but they are not always approached as choices and have yet to be studied as part of a broader menu of potential civilian strategies. Through the schema of flight, support, and voice, the civilian world can be understood. Clearly, the position of civilians can be a perilous one. While they are largely powerless and tend to be victims of armed conflict, civilians also possess significant options which, too often, can mean the difference between life and death.

Most of the literature on civil war refers to civilians as broad, undifferentiated groups such as peasants or campesinos. In contrast, my study differentiates among various societal forces. Facing the same armed conflict, different types of civilians make distinct choices. Within a single village, religious figures, chiefs, women, elders, minorities, and shop owners may respond in very different ways. Which types of civilians are more likely to flee, which support combatants, and which raise their voice? The presence of varied responses to a given conflict demands explanation. Why do civilians utilize different options? Why do some civilians flee, while others stay behind? Why do some civilians support armed groups, while others remain neutral? Why do some civilians speak up, while others remain silent? To help explain these decisions, I assess four ideal-type motivations: insecurity, economic incentives, socio-cultural factors, and conviction (ideology and grievance). The first two explanations reflect material incentives and economic approaches, although they differ in terms of degrees of agency involved. The latter two explanations reflect more sociological, ideational factors. These are not necessarily competing hypotheses, although some may at times be more convincing than others. I hope to show that civilian choices are not unidimensional—civilians are not necessarily easily frightened herds or principled heroes.

Answering these questions demanded considerable field research in conflict environments. Over two years, I conducted interviews with and spoke to over three hundred people in three Southeast Asian secessionist conflicts. Multi-site ethnographic research enabled me to get at fine-grained distinctions across villages and provided me with highly original data. This has enabled me to identify key patterns of civilian behaviour which challenge or expand upon conventional understandings of civilians in war. In the following chapters, I will show that some civilians fled, while others remained in their home villages. Even among those who fled, I will note distinct forms of flight, ranging from short-term
evacuation, to working abroad, to residing in large camps. I expect to find that flight is typically motivated by insecurity, but also seek to show how economic and socio-cultural factors influence the decision to flee, the forms of flight, and the destinations chosen. I also hope to show that support for armed groups varies in large part by types of civilians—by ethnic identity as well as societal rank. Different civilian groups provide different types of support to armed groups, and many refuse to provide support to them. Studies of support and collaboration differ on key explanations, as it seems that insecurity, profit, socio-cultural norms, and conviction may all motivate support for armed groups, a debate I hope to contribute to. Finally, I will delineate three forms of voice, noting how each is primarily suited to different types of civilians. Some civilians do not speak out though, and for many, the presence of form of voice changes over time in response to the conflict. Based on previous studies, I expect to find that voice is primarily motivated by socio-cultural norms.

While working towards such fine-grained distinctions, I will also respond to several related questions. How does geography shape flight? How does territorial control influence civilian support for armed groups? When does voice blur into support? Given that armed groups tend to view criticisms as support for the other side, who makes the distinction between support and voice? Why would armed groups tolerate voice? How does the nature of armed groups influence civilian choices? How does the capacity of armed groups shape these decisions? How do the three options change over time or combine with one another? How does the closing of one option affect the salience of the other two? What options does my schema leave out? Under what conditions can civilian decisions actually influence an armed group and shape the course of a given conflict?

Chapter One provides a theoretical and methodological foundation, sketching out preliminary answers to my three research questions. Chapter Two provides an empirical background for my primary case, the recent separatist conflict in Aceh, Indonesia. This chapter introduces the various societal forces which constitute the types of civilians in my analysis. Chapter Three explains how the decisions made by various civilian groups varied in response to the Aceh conflict. It shows which civilians chose which options, how the forms of each strategy varied, and how civilian decisions varied over time. Chapter Four shifts to explain why different types of civilians did or did not utilize each option in Aceh. The argument put forth here is that while security conditions are clearly important determinants of civilian choices, socio-cultural factors and conviction play interesting, under-appreciated
roles. In an effort to achieve greater generalizability, I then turn to two comparative cases. Chapter Five explores civilian decisions in Patani, southern Thailand, and Chapter Six explores civilian decisions in Maguindanao, southern Philippines. These cases introduce considerable variation in terms of state capacity, ethnic identity, and the cohesion of rebel movements. Chapter Seven concludes by tying together my findings and looking ahead to future research.

Throughout these chapters, I will emphasize that socio-cultural factors play important roles in shaping civilian decisions. Social expectations produce unique security dilemmas for different civilian groups, social constraints shape responses to war, and cultural understandings inform the means through which decisions play out. It is not that socio-cultural factors are more important than survival and profit. More important is how these explanations interact. Like other forms of political contestation, war is deeply influenced by complex social landscapes. One cannot properly understand a given conflict without also understanding the society within which it unfolds.
1 Civilian Options and Intellectual Equipment

This chapter provides definitional, conceptual, theoretical, and methodological foundations of my dissertation, what Charles Tilly calls the “intellectual equipment” for the job at hand.\(^1\) It has five parts. Firstly, I define some key concepts. Secondly, I ask: Do non-combatants have any options open to them in times of war? I review writers concerned with civilians, but who do not view them to be decision-makers, despite making implicit assumptions regarding civilian choices. Thirdly, I begin to make the case that civilians do in fact possess a handful of options, and that these are not necessarily panicked, forced responses to coercion. What options are available to non-combatants caught up in violent conflicts? I propose a three-fold schema consisting of flight, voice, and support. Part four introduces potential explanations for each civilian decision. I conclude by providing a methodological discussion of my case selection and data.

Definitions

My dissertation is concerned with civilians making decisions in the context of secessionist conflict. Who is a civilian? Most people have a rough idea of what a civilian is, but upon closer inspection, it is a deceivingly complex term. The Geneva Convention defines a civilian as a person “taking no active part in hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms.” Here, unarmed soldiers are civilians and anyone taking part in hostilities, not just state militaries, are combatants.\(^2\) In civil wars, distinctions are especially foggy. Non-state armed groups are less likely to possess training, common goals, or a cohesive identity.\(^3\) Individuals may be farmers by day, but guerrillas by night, moving in and out of active service. As I will show, armed groups frequently rely on close civilian support, which may be a source of information or funding. Even state forces, which we might expect to possess clear civilian-combatant distinctions, may feature limited capacity, be burdened with divisions, and employ irregular paramilitary forces.

While no definition is entirely satisfactory, distinctions between civilians and combatants remain important. Otherwise, individuals who pose no direct mortal threat to

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combatants are more likely to be killed. Civilians are defined by what they are not—members of armed groups—rather than by what they are. The term delineates who does not pose a direct mortal threat, and by extension, who is a legitimate target of violence. Individuals lose their civilian status when they take up arms and directly threaten the lives of other civilians or soldiers. A civilian is someone who chooses not to fight. I use the terms ‘civilian’ and ‘non-combatant’ interchangeably, even though some members of armed forces are not combatants, such as technicians and spokespersons, and there may be civilian combatants, such as community defence groups. Because a civilian is defined by not being a combatant, the terms ‘civilian’ and ‘non-combatant’ are roughly equivalent.

My study is about options, choices, and decisions. In using terms such as choice, I do not wish to evoke images of rational choice theory. The choices made by rank-and-file non-combatants in times of war are constrained, emotive, and often misinformed. I do not believe that the choices made by civilians are made as detached individuals—as I hope to show, they are structured by material and social contexts. Another term I use is ‘strategy’, which for some may seem too purposeful, evoking images of conscious planning and control. The term would be misleading when referring to civilians facing imminent attack, who may lack the time, information, or resources to consciously strategize. Terms such as ‘choice’ or ‘strategy’ may also generate objections from a different perspective, seen as exaggerating agency or making light of horrible situations. Clearly, non-combatants operate within severely constrained circumstances, and in extreme cases, have no choice whatsoever, which I will later treat as a potential explanation. Even in violent conflicts, it is not true that civilians are entirely choiceless. Anthropological studies look to “situated rationalities”, what Begoña Aretxaga refers to as “choiceless decisions.” Just because the context is constricted does not mean that there are no choices to be made.

While I draw on examples from interstate conflict, ethnic violence, and revolutions, and my conceptual lens may help explain non-combatant choices in general, my empirical

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4 Civilians are defined by “who they are, what they do or what they cannot do.” Hugo Slim, Killing Civilians: Method, Madness, and Morality in War (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 1.
5 I do not deny that a villager is rational, possessing “a sense of both his own interests and of the need to bargain with others to achieve mutually acceptable outcomes.” Samuel, L. Popkin, The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), ix.
content is limited to secessionist conflicts. At the end of this chapter, I provide a discussion of my case selection. A secessionist conflict is one in which localized insurgents “demand a formal withdrawal from a central political authority... on the basis of a claim to independent sovereign status.” I use the terms ‘secessionist’ and ‘separatist’ interchangeably, although I acknowledge that separatism is a broader category which includes resistance to integration as well as calls for new sub-national units or autonomy.

**Do Civilians Possess Significant Options in Times of War?**

My dissertation suggests that civilians possess options, even when faced with violent conflicts. Not all experts would agree with this proposition. Instead of listing those not concerned with civilians and criticizing them for what they do not do, I review three groups of scholars which are concerned above all with civilians and war. Humanitarian, civil war, and peace studies scholars seek to understand the plight of civilians in the hope of improving their well-being, but have provided little insight into the war-time decisions made by civilians. This is no simple omission. I hope to show that all three approaches rest upon implicit assumptions regarding civilian decisions.

**Humanitarian Perspectives**

Humanitarian practitioners and scholars are primarily concerned with civilian well-being, but they have paid little attention to the decisions made by those they seek to help. Writers may even oppose the concept of non-combatant decisions, viewing it as naïve or even threatening. But the idea of civilian choice does not oppose humanitarian work. One can be both a victim and an agent. In fact, a better understanding of civilian decisions may help lead to more effective assistance.

Humanitarian scholarship is close to the policy world and often aims to compel action. This requires framing, in which events are not simply reported, but simplified in ways which make certain outcomes more likely. This requires frames with short causal stories, familiar roles, identifiable antagonists, and a sense of urgency. While this may help compel action, there are also costs. Victim frames can also be used by armed groups to

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support violence.\textsuperscript{11} Charli Carpenter shows how human rights frames emphasize protecting women and children, even though young male non-combatants are most likely to become victims.\textsuperscript{12} Helping only women and children may expose men to greater violence—a pernicious effect of a well-meaning frame.\textsuperscript{13} Humanitarian work relies largely on innocent civilians, making the study of the choices available to non-combatants problematic, especially when some civilian decisions help perpetuate violence. Showing that civilians are victims, but that they can also make decisions which improve their chances of survival and may contribute to violence against others, will probably not compel humanitarian action.

Just because civilians possess a handful of constrained options does not mean that they do not require assistance. An improved understanding of the options available to civilians can complement humanitarian work, predicting where and when civilians will flee or identifying forms of combatant support among civilians. By ignoring the choices made by civilians, humanitarian research may threaten to further marginalize them. Humanitarian scholars are aware of this problem. Buzan notes that “Individuals can do many things to enhance their security both against threats from the state and against threats which the state has failed to alleviate”, and “much can be done by way of self-help in terms of individual security strategies.”\textsuperscript{14} The 1994 UNDP Report clarifies that “human security does not mean taking away from people the responsibility and opportunity for mastering their own lives... The concept of human security stresses that people should be able to take care of themselves.”\textsuperscript{15} But one rarely finds empirical footwork to illustrate or support these claims, let alone theorize why and when such actions might occur. This is a gap I hope to bridge.

\textbf{Civil War Perspectives}

While humanitarian approaches seek to detail human rights abuses and endeavour to overcome them, studies of civil war are often concerned with what causes violent abuses to

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{13} Reports of armed conflict tend to describe “a world inhabited by women, children, and the elderly.” Yvon Grenier, \textit{The Emergence of Insurgency in El Salvador: Ideology and Political Will} (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 2.
\end{flushleft}
occur. By asking why armed groups abuse civilians, scholars are led away from what we can do to help and are led towards academic analysis regarding the sources of insecurity. But like humanitarian approaches, few scholars of civil war have considered the various potential options available to civilians, who tend to be seen as passive recipients of violence.

Many scholars see civilian abuse as a strategic resource for armed groups. Armed groups may target civilians to drain the sea, making it difficult for rivals to hide or gain civilian support. Violence can function as a deterrent, compelling civilians not to support the other side. Of course, attacks on civilians frequently backfire, emboldening opposition instead of deterring it. If violence is selective, targeting only those who support a rebel group, there is a clear benefit for civilians to avoid the rebels. But if violence is indiscriminate, this logic fails, and one should support a side which might offer protection.

Why would armed forces utilize indiscriminate violence against civilians at all? This leads to a second group of explanations for civilian abuse: weak armed groups. Terror may be a purposeful strategy for armed groups seeking to control civilians, but which lack the capacity to carry out discriminate violence. Leaders may be unable to control soldiers who incorrectly utilize terror as a strategy or who put private interests ahead of group goals. Others explain abuse by the presence or absence of natural resources and the effects on combatant organization. Weinstein’s Inside Rebellion is the dominant study here, arguing that when an armed group is formed, its initial wealth— from natural resources or foreign assistance— determines its recruits. Rebel groups lacking economic resources rely on social endowments, attracting quality recruits because there is little profit in rebellion and rebels can screen new members through social networks. Resource-rich rebels tend to attract greedy soldiers with short time horizons and little interest in organizational goals, making them more likely to abuse civilians. Weinstein’s argument is an application of the ‘resource curse’ literature to armed groups, with wealth causing decay which is difficult to eliminate and deepens over time.

17 “Massacres can be understood as part of a rational strategy aiming to punish and deter civilian defection.” Stathis Kalyvas, “Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria,” Rationality and Society 11:3 (1999), 245.
In the above perspectives, abused civilians feature as dependent variables. They are acted upon, but they are not actors. But these writers also implicitly assume that civilians make choices. In studies that explain violence against civilians in terms of deterrence, it is assumed that civilians support armed groups unless they are deterred from doing so. In terms of draining the sea, it is assumed that civilians do something for or against insurgents that makes them important enough to warrant attacking despite the costs involved. For Weinstein, popular support is the key ingredient for insurgencies relying on social endowments; “Civilian populations – their interests, their resources, and their support – figure centrally in the political and military struggles that plague many developing countries.”20 From here, civilian agency drops out of his analysis. Why civilians support activist rebels is left totally unexplored, prompting critics to ask “are local residents no more than inert objects, faced by the more or less selective violence that results from Weinstein’s two types of organizations?”21 Kalyvas agrees; “Bracketing off the interaction between rebels and civilians implies that civilians are completely useless to the rebels and helpless in the face of their abuse. This is not, however, the case.”22 It is not that the actions of civilians represent a mere blind spot— their decisions are integral to explanations for abuse.

Peace Studies Perspectives

The shortcoming shared by humanitarian and civil war scholarship, that non-combatants are a central concern but do not actually act, is not shared by the next group of writers. Peace Studies theorists tend to assign civilians a causal role in overcoming the many lingering effects of war. It is increasingly accepted that civilians can help reintegrate former combatants, reconcile warring parties, and provide venues to resolve local disputes which, if left unchecked, may trigger renewed violence. Peace Studies scholars also tend to disaggregate the broad category of ‘civilians’ into various societal forces. Civil society organizations can provide counselling, links to international and state actors, various forms of leadership, training, and humanitarian assistance.23 Religious leaders are especially crucial

23 Jonathan Goodhand, Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).
in terms of reconciliation, which is often buttressed by religious concepts of forgiveness.\textsuperscript{24} Scholars also look at the roles of traditional community leaders in sustaining peace.\textsuperscript{25} Whether it is civil society activists, religious leaders, or traditional village leaders, peace scholars emphasize the contributions of various non-combatants to sustaining peace.

Despite these considerable advances towards understanding how civilians can build peace, writers have had little to say regarding civilian actions during armed conflict. This is unfortunate, as the potential for civilians to help build peace will be in large part determined by the choices they made during the conflict. Civilians who supported an armed group may be unable to encourage reconciliation in the same ways as those who remained neutral. By ignoring what civil society groups, religious leaders, and traditional authorities do during times of war, scholars are not in a position to assess their potential contributions to peace.

**Minding the Gap**

For humanitarian, civil war, and peace studies scholars, civilians are central objects of concern. Yet none of the three look at the possibility of civilian decisions in times of war, and all of them rely upon implicit assumptions regarding civilian decisions. Why have the decisions at their disposal largely escaped study? One reason relates to the practical difficulties in conducting fieldwork. Fieldwork in the developing world can be an arduous task, demanding funding, linguistic skills, networks, and risk acceptance. Conducting field research in conflict areas is even more dangerous. Another reason is that the subject falls between academic disciplines. This research generally requires rural fieldwork and interviews with farmers, village chiefs, and other groups. Confusing the site of research with its content, some might feel that such methods are reserved for anthropologists.

Another reason why civilian decisions have not been studied relates to dominant perceptions of war, in which power equals military strength, and because civilians are weak, they either do not make decisions or their decisions are unimportant. But studies have shown that even disadvantaged actors retain preferences independent of armed groups.\textsuperscript{26} By


definition, wars involve contestation, and control may shift over time, so we should not expect either side to entirely control civilian communities. Independent preferences still find room for expression, even in highly unfavourable environments. It is unlikely that the decisions made by villagers will influence the outcome of wars. But even if they can only lead to small improvements in security, civilian choices demand investigation. If shared by many individuals, civilian strategies may influence the course of a given conflict. This logic is spelled out by James C. Scott:

> Just as millions of anthozoan polyps create, willy-nilly, a coral reef, so do the multiple acts of peasant insubordination and evasion create political and economic barrier reefs of their own. It is largely in this fashion that the peasantry makes its political presence felt.27

Stating that civilians possess options even in war is not to make light of their situation or romanticize their responses. Though the room for agency is limited, I propose that civilians do in fact make decisions in the middle of violent conflicts—sometimes the most important ones they will ever make.

What Options are Available to Civilians in Times of War?

If non-combatants are capable of making decisions even in the chaos of war, what options are available to them? I suggest that civilians possess three broad options: they can flee, they can support one or more armed groups, or they can raise their voice. These categories are borrowed from Albert O. Hirschman’s classic study, Exit, Voice, and Loyalty.28 Below, I define each option and locate it in the academic literature. Scholars have studied each of these three phenomena, but they do not always view them as choices and they tend to study them in isolation, not as parts of a broader menu.

My understandings of exit, voice, and loyalty do not mirror Hirschman’s exactly. Firstly, Hirschman orders the decisions according to their market utility: exit, voice, and loyalty. I prefer the sequence of exit, loyalty, and voice—what I call flight, support, and voice. Flight seems the most concrete and costly of the three options, perhaps a last resort, while voice seems the least clear, but also the most common, perhaps a first resort, with support being somewhere in between. A second difference is that, while my understanding...

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28 Hirschman suggests that his schema is not limited to market systems, and only with some modifications can it explain political events. Albert O. Hirschman, Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 61.
of voice mirrors Hirschman’s almost exactly, I approach exit and loyalty differently. In Hirschman’s text, loyalty plays a limited role—it is not a stand-alone option, but instead amplifies voice and slows exit. I give loyalty equal weight with exit and voice, understood as providing support to an armed group. Meanwhile, Hirschman’s understanding of exit is quite broad, including leaving an organization or switching from one product to another.\textsuperscript{29} For politics, exit entails physical flight—Hirschman uses the examples of going west in the United States or to the highlands of Burma.\textsuperscript{30}

Hirschman’s three types are not only familiar, they get to the heart of the options facing civilians in times of war. I am not the first to see this. Others have suggested a similar typology, testifying to its intuitive nature.\textsuperscript{31} Some even cite Hirschman, although only in passing.\textsuperscript{32} To my knowledge, this typology has yet to be applied consciously to civilians faced with armed conflict.

**Option One: Flight**

The first of the three civilian options has been subject to extensive academic and policy work, even if it is not always framed as a choice and is not considered alongside other options. Faced with war, civilians can leave. Those fleeing who do so are known by a variety of names. A refugee is “anyone who flees a country of origin or residence for fear of politically motivated harm.”\textsuperscript{33} This can be a descriptive category or refer specifically to those recognized by law (statutory refugees). An asylum seeker is a refugee who has applied for statutory status, but whose case has yet to be resolved. An IDP is a displaced person who does not cross state borders. I refer to the broader category of conflict migrants, those who flee from war, whether or not they cross borders or gain legal recognition. Leaving one’s home is a difficult choice. Flight poses substantial risks, and there is no guarantee that the

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\textsuperscript{29} Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, 4.


\textsuperscript{33} Idean Salehyan and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Refugees and the Spread of Civil War,” *International Organization* 60 (Spring 2006), 341.
person fleeing will find safety. Many who wind up in crowded refugee camps may regret their decision. But flight is frequently a decision, more accurately a series of them. Below, I explain what flight is, the decisions it entails, and who may be more likely to flee.

Migration is an age-old response to unfavourable conditions at home and/or the search for better conditions elsewhere. In recent decades, there has been a growing interest in conflict migration. Reflecting policy concerns, studies commonly focus on mass, sudden exoduses. But flight comes in many forms, often involving small groups staying with family members or seeking employment, thus lacking the visibility of large refugee camps. The extensive focus on waves and crises overshadows the fact that flight is not always so dramatic, and except for extreme cases, involves choices. Many studies explore the effects of conflict migration, discussing how to construct better camps, provide more effective aid and security, or improve the global refugee regime. Such concern “is an ambiguous mixture of compassion for the plight of the unfortunates who have been cast adrift and of fear that they will come pouring in.” Refugee camps may be used to hide combatants or provide recruits. Idean Salehyan shows how refugee populations can sustain violent conflicts by providing bases for rebels beyond the reach of their states. Robert Muggah provides a useful distinction between the external militarization of refugee camps (used as rebel bases to attack their countries of origin) and their internal militarization (leading to violence in the country of refuge). While these studies seem to focus on refugees, they are more concerned with militants using them as cover, maintaining a sense of genuine refugees.

Although often not viewed as a choice, evident in the term ‘forced displacement, flight is increasingly seen as a choice in the conflict displacement literature, “a deeply human and highly effective survival strategy.” Moore and Shellman put it nicely:

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36 Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo, Escape from Violence, v.
40 Slim, Killing Civilians, 73.
The literature on the decision to abandon one's home in the face of violence is dominated by scholarship that emphasizes a lack of choice: People flee because they have to. Yet we know this is not the case. For all those who flee, others stay behind, some choosing to take up weapons, others simply believing that they can 'ride out the storm.' When faced with extraordinary circumstances, people still make choices.\textsuperscript{41}

In nearly every conflict, some leave, while others stay behind, suggesting elements of choice. Engel and Ibanez find that "a substantial proportion of the population in areas with high occurrence of violence stays there despite the risk."\textsuperscript{42} David Turton challenges the idea of forced migration; "even in the most constrained of circumstances, human beings struggle to maintain some area of individual decision making— and those who succeed are those who survive best."\textsuperscript{43} Flight is frequently a choice made by civilians hoping to escape from war.

It is useful to approach flight not as a single decision, but instead as a series of smaller ones. The first choice is to leave or stay. This depends on individual attributes (risk aversion, mobility), perceptions of violence (push factors), and perceptions of potential destinations (pull factors). Secondly, civilians must choose when to leave. Some may leave early, while others wait. Egon Kuntz refers to "anticipatory refugee movements", typically those with access to information or for whom leaving is less costly.\textsuperscript{44} A third decision is how to leave. Civilians often flee on foot, or might arrange transport. A fourth decision involves what to bring.\textsuperscript{45} In emergencies, belongings must be left behind, while others may be able to sell or transport their possessions. A related choice is who to bring. Families may have to leave the disabled or elderly behind or wait for others to come home.

Fifth, there is the question of where to go— a decision that has received the lion's share of scholarly attention. Geography is clearly important, as displaced persons may go where it is easiest. But this is not always the case, as some civilians flee to areas because they

\textsuperscript{42} Engels and Ibanez, "Displacement Due to Violence in Colombia," 338.
\textsuperscript{45} In wartime Europe, "Having decided to flee, refugees questioned what belongings to take with them. The instinct was to carry as much as possible, yet it was those who traveled light, often by bicycle, who proved most mobile." Nicholas Atkin, "The Civilian Experience of World War Two: Displacement, Government, Adjustment, Comportment," in \textit{Daily Lives of Civilians in Wartime Twentieth-Century Europe}, edited by Nicholas Atkin (Westport CT, Greenwood Press, 2008), 108.
are difficult to access, hoping to lose pursuers.  

In *The Art of Not Being Governed*, James Scott emphasizes how various ethnic minorities in Mainland Southeast Asia and China have fled to forests and hills to escape oppressive states. This is precisely the strategy taken up by countless rebel groups, whose mountain bases enable them to elude state armies. Flight to urban areas can follow a similar logic, as large numbers of persons and greater anonymity can be effective cover for those fleeing from armed groups. The destination chosen by civilians also depends on political conditions. Davenport, Moore, and Poe suggest that, all things being equal, refugees are more likely to flee to liberal states than to authoritarian ones. Fleeing from northern Vietnam, Chinese boat people passed nearby Hainan Island and made the more difficult trek to Hong Kong, just as Cubans look to Florida, never Haiti. Refugees are also likely to flee to co-ethnic states or to states housing co-ethnic communities. Chain migration links conflict migrants to diaspora groups, offering support upon arrival and lowering the costs associated with flight.

A sixth decision involves how to behave once one has resettled. Refugees might integrate into their host community or remain exclusive, send remittances, help others flee, or continue to support armed groups—a choice I discuss later, in terms of combined strategies. A related decision is how long to leave for. Many displaced persons hide from violence and return shortly afterwards. Others have no idea if they will even return. Years later, refugees might decide to return, depending on “the politics of going home.”

What types of civilians are likely to flee from war? Studies tend to view displaced persons as a singular group. Some distinctions are found in humanitarian studies, which tend to focus on women and children. The number of young men fleeing may be under-

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46 Popular examples of this tendency are numerous, from the Chinese epic *Outlaws of the Marsh*, to Western fables such as Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest or Br’er rabbit in the briar patch.


49 Slim describes how in Mozambique, civilians fled to relief camps, but would “commute” home in order to tend to their fields. Slim, *Killing Civilians*, 74.


51 Cohen and Deng suggest that most displaced persons are women and children, in part because, puzzlingly, many men have already “gone to the cities or left the country.” Cohen and Deng, *Masses in Flight*, 42.
reported because they might flee as individuals and avoid camps.\textsuperscript{52} Asylum seekers are especially likely to be composed of single young men.\textsuperscript{53} Young men may be more mobile, in search of work, and disproportionately targeted.\textsuperscript{54} We should also expect the flight of entire ethnic communities which are targeted for violence.\textsuperscript{55} I will return to this question in subsequent chapters.

Many civilians flee in times of war. They move from rural to urban areas, urban to rural areas, within states, between them, en masse, individually, temporarily, and permanently. These decisions are made neither freely nor lightly. Flight is an important option, more accurately a series of options, although not the only ones available to civilians facing war.

**Option Two: Support**

In the face of violent conflict, civilians usually possess the unenviable option of flight. What of the “forgotten majorities” who stay behind?\textsuperscript{56} What options are available to those who are unable to or choose not to flee? The second major civilian strategy is to lend various forms of support to armed groups.

Many scholars have sought to understand the causes of rebellion. They found a range of potential determinants: macro-economic factors,\textsuperscript{57} state capacity,\textsuperscript{58} ethnic nationalism,\textsuperscript{59} leaders,\textsuperscript{60} control of resources (greed),\textsuperscript{61} grievances, and various combinations.\textsuperscript{62} In this substantial literature, those who take up arms and those who support

\textsuperscript{52} The UNHCR found that in 2008 just under 50\% of refugees and IDPs were women. United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons (2009), 6, 14.

\textsuperscript{53} Older persons may be the least capable of flight—only 5\% of refugees are over the age of sixty. UNHCR, 2009 Global Trends, 15.

\textsuperscript{54} During the Spanish Civil War, there was a flood of seventeen year old men fleeing to the United States and Europe, as the draft age was eighteen. Michael M. Seidman, Republic of Egos: A Social History of the Spanish Civil War (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 120.


\textsuperscript{58} Samuel Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).


\textsuperscript{60} Paul Brass, The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003).

\textsuperscript{61} Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, Understanding Civil War (Washington: The World Bank, 2005).

them tend to be conflated. Petersen notes that “in much of the rebellion literature, individuals are portrayed as deciding among just two choices, two roles – either to ‘rebel’ or ‘not rebel’.”63 This obscures options which lay somewhere in between, such as providing support. This blind-spot is not owed to the subject being unimportant, as civilian support is considered to be “a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the victory of rural guerrilla movements.”64 Failing to differentiate between supporting rebellion and rebelling may actually endanger civilians who support armed groups, but are viewed as rebels.

Support for armed groups includes the provision of information, supplies, services, and labour to armed groups short of taking up arms.65 Kalyvas refers to ‘collaboration’, emphasizing that civilians are frequently opportunistic, however this term seems odious.66 Another popular term is ‘loyalty’, suggested a moral commitment towards one side.67 I prefer ‘support’, a broader term which is neutral regarding whether goods are given freely or provided under duress.68 Support blurs the line between civilian and combatant. It shows that civilians are not solely victims, nor are they necessarily passive actors. Non-combatants participate in, and even perpetuate, armed conflicts. Still, the distinction between civilians and combatants remains important; “simply associating with combatants, providing food or other nonlethal military supplies to them, or participating in non-violent political activities in support of armed forces does not convert a non-combatant to a combatant.”69 Support can be understood through an economic lens, as one of the few goods possessed by civilians which is valued by armed groups. Unlike rebellion, the phenomenon of civilian support is agnostic regarding whether one helps rebels or states. This said, the forms of support provided to states and rebels may differ, as state forces may be less reliant on civilians for food or weapons, but still require information.

Unlike flight, which tends to be an all or nothing decision (you either go or you do not), civilian support comes in degrees. Petersen views support on a spectrum, with

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64 Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America, 52-61.
65 Wood’s definition includes the clause “beyond the minimum required” by armed groups, suggesting an emphasis on voluntary support. Wood, Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador, 17.
66 Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 104.
68 Petersen uses the terms “participation” and “direct support.” Petersen, Resistance and Rebellion, 8-9.
neutrality being zero, -1 and 1 representing unorganized individual opposition, -2 and 2 representing conscious, organized support, and -3 and 3 leading into membership. Slim divides forms of civilian help into economic, military, social, and political. Wickham-Crowley lays out forms of support from minor to major: not reporting information, offering food, serving as guides or lookouts, offering shelter, making weapons, and joining militias. Table 1 lists various forms of support, arranged loosely by level of involvement and risk.

### Table 1- Potential Forms of Civilian Support for Armed Groups

Symbolic support  
- Attending rallies / meetings  
- Providing goods  
- Providing information  
- Providing labour  
- Recruiting  
- Joining organizations  
- Spying  
- Ferrying weapons

The simplest forms of support involve refusing to provide information to the other side and turning a blind eye to the activities of a particular side. Next are symbolic acts of support such as wearing colours or flying flags which represent a particular side. In Northern Ireland, rebel music glorifies rebel violence while recounting abuses carried out by the other side. On the other side, pipe and drum music conjure up a sense of British identity, and the Belfast punk scene features pro-militia, anti-IRA performers. Symbolic support bestows legitimacy upon a given side, communicating to others that it is popular. In addition to providing symbolic support, civilians may attend rallies or meetings organized by (or for) a particular side. They may also carry newspapers or books which support a particular side, as well as distribute such materials.

Providing various goods, such as food, money, shelter, and vehicles are more concrete, direct forms of support. This can help to sustain rebel groups, which are

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70 Petersen, Resistance and Rebellion, 9.  
71 Slim, Killing Civilians, pp. 181-211.  
72 Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America, 54-55.  
74 Georges Denis Zimmerman, Songs of Irish Rebellion: Irish Political Street Ballads and Rebel Songs, 1780-1900 (London: Four Courts Press, 2002).  
75 Examples in the United States include pro-army musicians such as Porter Wagoner, R. Kelly, and Toby Keith, while their anti-army counterparts include Phil Ochs and the Dixie Chicks
sometimes dependent on civilians. Harry West narrates the experiences of young girls in Mozambique who brought food to rebels groups hiding in the jungles. He shows not only how this helped to sustain rebel soldiers, it also led to deeper involvement over time. Armed groups may take such goods by force, a possibility I discuss below. Voluntary support is less costly and more reliable, so is clearly preferable for armed groups. Rebel groups are not unique in their demands for provisions. State forces may garrison in civilian houses or commandeering civilian vehicles. On the home front, civilians may buy war bonds, ration their goods, or work longer hours. Providing information is extremely important for state and rebel forces. Access to information may help armed groups to avoid ambushes and launch successful attacks, while providing misinformation can lead the other side to squander precious resources or fall into traps. Related forms of support include providing labour as an engineer, medic, lookout, guide, nurse, cook, courier, or recruiter. Such roles may be filled by civilians which are not normally expected to take up arms. Youth participation in armed conflicts often involves ferrying information or serving as lookouts. State and rebels armies often organize youths through ‘scout’ organizations or gangs, providing future recruits and motivating present ones. Women’s support roles during conventional wars are well-known. While some women take up combat roles, their primary contributions to armed conflicts tend to be providing information, smuggling, acting as nurses, and supplying food. Wood’s study of peasant support for the rebels in El Salvador pays close attention to the roles of women; while some took up arms, “most

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76 Han Suyin paints a vivid picture of such support for Malaysian communists. Han Suyin, *And the Rain my Drink* (London: Monsoon Books Reprints, 2010).


78 International legal texts recognize the right of requisition of “all commodities necessary for the maintenance of the occupying army”, although compensation must be provided for such goods. International Committee of the Red Cross, *Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume II: Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1049.


81 Examples of familiar individuals include Laura Secord, Rosie the Riveter, and Florence Nightingale.

82 In World War Two, the belief that women were “unlikely to behave in a political manner” made them ideal for “the ferrying of information and the smuggling of armaments.” Atkin, “The Civilian Experience of World War Two,” 133.

83 In Imperial Japan, women nurses were political assets, “a demonstration of national unity and of modernity.” Stewart Lone, “The Wars of Meiji Japan: China (1894-1895) and Russia (1904-1905),” in *Daily Lives of Civilians in Wartime Asia: From the Taiping Rebellion to the Vietnam War*, edited by Stewart Lone (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 73.
women who joined the FMLN as full-time members served as cooks, as radio operators, or in other supporting roles.⁸⁴

A further form of support entails joining civilian organizations affiliated with armed groups, especially for state forces or communist insurgencies. For instance, the Indonesian Communist Party created dozens of women’s organizations, youth groups, writer’s guilds, and farmer’s cooperatives which were to serve in overthrowing the state. One may join or support a political organization linked to violent groups, such as Sinn Fein, as a way to support militants. Through such groups, civilians may lead rallies or organize funding for armed groups. Civilians such as academics and religious figures may also join armed groups as advisors. At the edges of civilian status are spies and those who provide weapons. Famous spies include the Rosenbergs, Mata Hari, and the Confederate spy Belle Boyd. The information provided by such agents helps to improve the fighting capacity of armed groups. Spies led to the creation of atomic weapons, such as defecting German scientists working on the Manhattan Project or spies providing nuclear blueprints to the Soviet Union. Civilians may also hide or transport weapons, as many women did during the Battle of Algiers.⁸⁵

Support is not always voluntary, and some civilians provide support to more than one armed group. Without it, war would not be possible. Support shows that civilians are not necessarily innocent, even if they do not pose a direct mortal threat to others. Support comes in a variety of forms, some of which are present to some degree in every armed conflict. Smaller forms of support tend to involve mass participation, whereas some of the advising roles and spying discussed later in this section are provided by a more selected group. There is a growing interest in civilian support, making for particularly enlightening debates. One shortcoming in the literature is that civilians tend to be viewed as an undifferentiated group. I have suggested that support may be most common among those not expected to enlist, a proposition discussed in the coming chapters.

**Option Three: Voice**

While both flight and support are important civilian options, they remain reactions to contexts defined by combatants— (support the) fight or flight. The final major option

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differs from the previous two. It lacks an established academic literature and may be less
effective in terms of helping civilians survive than flight or support, although it is also
uniquely proactive. The third civilian strategy is voice: forms of active neutrality through
which civilians exert independent views. Because this is the most opaque of the three
options, much of this section focuses on concept formation—what voice entails, its
potential forms, and who might be able to utilize it.

While voice lacks the dedicated literatures of flight and support, it is not without a
pedigree, rooted in studies of social movements, agrarian studies, and political anthropology.
It resembles Scott’s weapons of the weak, however it is not necessarily confined to acts of
resistance. My concept of voice mirrors Hirschman’s:

Voice is here defined as any attempt at all to change, rather than escape from, an
objectionable state of affairs, whether through individual or collective petition to
the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with the
intention of forcing change in a management, or through various types of actions
and protests, including those that are meant to mobilize public opinion.86

This approach brings in elements lacking in the weapons of the weak literature, namely
feedback and persuasion, which can be in the interest of all parties.

For Hirschman, voice is the currency of politics, so it is surprising that we tend to
assume it is lacking in violent political struggles. Unarmed opposition can sometimes be
more successful than armed resistance. Although by no means a rule (as protestors in
Burma continue to learn), armed groups sometimes have more difficulty putting down
unarmed protesters than they do armed groups.87 Attempts to influence armed groups often
fall short. In Liberia, farmers heard that Charles Taylor’s armed forces were approaching, so
“the town’s elders met quickly and agreed to meet the soldiers in a spirit of peace with an
offering of two cows and some money as a token of their hospitality.” Tragically, “the
minds of the soldiers were made up”, and the villagers were slaughtered.88 One of the first
acts of many armed groups is to make an example out of those voicing independent views.
In Guatemala, Stoll found that “Neutrality was no more acceptable to the guerrillas than to
the army... [each claimed] to represent ‘the people’ and constitute legitimate authority.

86 Hirschman, Exit, Voice, and Loyalty, 30.
87 See Adam Roberts, “Civilian Defense and the Inhibition of Violence,” Philosophy East and West 19:2
(April 1969), 188.
88 Slim, Killing Civilians, 9.
When dissenters threaten that claim, guerrillas tend to respond the same way as the governments they challenge.\(^{89}\)

I divide civilian voice into three types: defiance, everyday resistance, and persuasion. Defiance involves the most open, confrontational forms of voice, such as protests and other acts intended to mobilize public opinion. While such public acts are easier to research, they are also easier to attack, making them extremely dangerous. One form of defiance is criticizing armed groups, listing their faults directly or indirectly. I do not expect to find that direct criticism is an effective tactic for most civilians. There are exceptions, as older persons might criticize soldiers without reprisal, but this option is perilous for most citizens. Sometimes, defiance can be carried out by individuals, even in severely repressive environments, as in the dramatic self-immolations of Thích Quảng Đức in Saigon or Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia, as well as the individual who faced down tanks in Tiananmen Square. Typically, direct criticism is limited to media and non-governmental organizations. Such groups may amplify the voice of ordinary civilians, whose criticisms inform newspaper and human rights reports. Many NGOs perceive their job as providing a critical voice: collecting instances of abuse, naming and shaming, working with international partners, and bringing international pressure to bear on armed groups. While criticisms may not always alter the behaviour of state forces, let alone rebels, local and global human rights criticisms can lead to changes in their conduct.\(^{90}\) Criticism can influence the reputations of armed groups and affect their popularity. This said, armed groups do not take kindly to this sort of publicity, and frequently come down hard on those who voice it.

Organized protests are typically the realm of civil society and social movements, although mass protests allow and depend upon the participation of ordinary folks. Protest can be difficult in war-time environments, especially since those criticized tend to claim that protestors are fronts for their enemies. But protests persist, even in highly unfavourable situations. In Argentina, the Mothers of the Plazo de Mayo have confronted military leaders, as have mothers in Russia, China, and Chechnya. In Burma, Buddhist monks defied the junta by turning their alms bowls upside down and refusing to allow soldiers to earn merit.

\(^{89}\) Stoll, *Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala*, 120.

sparking widespread protest and ending with the military attacking monks and other protestors.\textsuperscript{91} Other forms of protest include boycotts and strikes. In the Spanish Civil War, Seidman documents several strikes and other acts of defiance aimed at one or both sides, acts which sometimes led to concessions.\textsuperscript{92} An example of defiance against rebel groups comes from the failed Rwenzururu secessionist movement in Uganda. Here, civilians protested against rebel leaders, and pro-rebel government officials even went on strike to demand regular wages.\textsuperscript{93} These examples show that non-combatants do sometimes protest, even in violent contexts.

Another form of defiance is territorial inviolability— territory recognized to be protected from conflict.\textsuperscript{94} Examples include refuge in religious buildings, hospitals, embassies, and United Nations offices. Sanctuary in religious buildings is well known, and religious personnel may take great risks to defend suspects against armed forces. Humanitarian organizations may establish safe zones, such as refugee camps or aid corridors.\textsuperscript{95} Less known forms of territorial inviolability are Zones of Peace, regions in which local civilians declare to be off-limits to combat by both sides, found in Colombia, the Philippines, and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{96} They differ from demilitarized and ceasefire zones in that, instead of being negotiated by leaders, they are proclaimed by local elites and civilians. Zones are not easy to maintain, and many fail. Both state and rebel forces tend to view them as "a challenge to their authority or as an opportunity to extend their power."\textsuperscript{97} But they defy the territorial claims of armed groups, which is no small feat, a valuable example of how civilians can defy armed groups.

A very different form of voice is found in everyday resistance. Whereas open defiance can be extremely dangerous and often requires significant organization, smaller, more covert forms of defiance do not require coordination and are less risky. Frequently,

\begin{itemize}
  \item Catalina Rojas, “Islands in the Stream: A Comparative Analysis of Zones of Peace within Colombia’s Civil War,” in \textit{Zones of Peace}, 86.
\end{itemize}
acts of everyday resistance have no immediate goals or gains, but because they pass unnoticed and many participate in them, they can have important political consequences. Such weapons of the weak include “foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth” — the everyday tools used to resist powerful actors.  

Many forms of everyday resistance are symbolic. Graffiti in war zones may taunt armed groups or demand peace. In Belfast, murals tend to be militant, however some feature images of Gandhi, doves, or a ceasefire. Gossip is probably the most common way to resist, which, if it is shared across villages and continues over time, can become a common frame, undermining the reputation or claims of a given armed group. State and rebel forces frequently invest considerable resources in creating historical, ethnic, and ideological frames, which locals might challenge or transform. In Uganda, socialist rebels had to drop calls for tribal and sexual equality to gain the support of conservative villagers. Everyday resistance to rebel narratives can occur when combatants target ethnic minorities. Germans who protected Jews during World War Two were significant threats to Nazi worldviews. Many Russian peasants frequently rejected lenses of class warfare and many civilians in the former Yugoslavia did not support the primordial visions of their leaders. By questioning, transforming, or ignoring the myths and motivations of armed groups, civilians can sometimes undermine them. Conversely, silence can also be a form of resistance, such as feigning ignorance when questioned. This also includes the blank stares which became nothing short of psychological warfare against Americans in Vietnam.

Civilians frequently hide their wealth and hoard their food so that armed groups cannot extract it. They may shift crops in times of war in order to resist the demands of armed groups, choosing to grow potatoes, sago, taro, or beets which grow below ground and are difficult to expropriate. Jacqueline Siapno tells a story from Indonesia, in which state soldiers continually demanded that local women prepare them coffee, so the women began

98 Scott, Weapons of the Weak, 29.
100 Johnson, “Civilian Loyalties and Guerrilla Conflict,” 64.
102 Seidman, Republic of Egos, 131.
to cut the sugar with salt so that the soldiers would not return.\textsuperscript{104} Weapons of the weak are ideal tools with which to sour the fruits of forced support. Low-quality support does not occur by accident; civilians can “work with disinterest” by dragging their feet, serving low-quality food, and providing vague information.\textsuperscript{105} Civilians may also align themselves with pacifist religious groups. In El Salvador, Wood found that Churches proclaimed their neutrality and their popularity “called into doubt the claim of each [armed group] to local political loyalties.”\textsuperscript{106}

The third and final form of civilian voice is engagement. Whereas defiance and weapons of the weak are oppositional, asserting one’s preferences need not be against the interests of combatants. Defiance tends to be blunt, weapons of the weak require stealth, but engagement must be diplomatic. For Hirschman, voice entails efforts to bring change through petition to those in charge. Some armed groups seek feedback, or at least tolerate it. Rebels want effective, disciplined soldiers, and establishing channels for communication from the local public can help them achieve this goal. Commanders or reformist politicians may seek information on abuses by their own side as ammunition against conservative or corrupt rivals. Maoist insurgencies often feature self-criticism and solicit criticisms from civilians which, while unlikely to function very effectively, nonetheless provide some opportunities for voice. Moments of reform tend to feature leaders soliciting limited criticism and apologizing for past excesses, even if the resulting changes tend to be half-hearted. Kriger found that rebel forces in Zimbabwe committed serious abuses, but on occasion, local commanders visited villages and solicited feedback.\textsuperscript{107} Wood found similar efforts in El Salvador, where both sides sought to improve their respective images by listening to village complaints.\textsuperscript{108}

Another avenue of engagement is through local administration. On rare occasion, this can occur within rebel territory. Nelson Kasfir documents how rebels in Uganda established village governments and held reasonably fair elections.\textsuperscript{109} Rebel governments


\textsuperscript{105} Seidman, \textit{Republic of Egos}, 137.


\textsuperscript{107} Kriger, \textit{Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War}.


\textsuperscript{109} He notes that this was a “rare, though not unique” event. Kasfir attributes this to a combination of rebel ideology, hatred for the authoritarian rule of Idi Amin, and most of all territorial control. Kasfir, “Guerrillas and Civilian Participation,” 291.
allowed local grievances to be aired—village courts were even able to try rebel soldiers for criminal charges—providing a venue through which civilians could engage armed groups. In wartime China, communist base areas evolved local governments with Commissars who were responsible for soliciting feedback.\textsuperscript{110} Armed groups often appoint advisors, usually religious leaders or academics. Religious advisors often do not simply listen and admonish, but might also try to persuade armed groups that certain codes of action are wrong and may enable ordinary civilians to speak out.\textsuperscript{111} Most venues for feedback are controlled by combatants, and they are not always effective. But they can provide limited forums, resulting in greater civilian security.

Unlike feedback, negotiations are more likely to take place in neutral venues. High level peace talks are the most obvious form of negotiation, and may provide opportunities for civilians to speak out. Combatants and third parties may ask civilians to relate their perspectives, and increasingly, civil society organizations are afforded a seat at the table.\textsuperscript{112} Not all inter-combatant negotiations are high-level affairs. Owing to the disunity of armed groups and the localized nature of many conflicts, local negotiations may also take place. They may be between armed groups or between one side and civilian leaders. For example, in the final days of Rhodesia, rebels were heavily fragmented. Many European priests established ties with them, allowing their missions to remain open. Rebels frequently demanded support, but priests managed to refuse by articulating pro-independence positions. Over time, a few priests found themselves “representing the complaints of local people” to both sides, a powerful example of micro-level negotiation in an extreme conflict environment.\textsuperscript{113} This affirms anthropological findings that religious leaders may be able to cross between enemy camps and host negotiations in the midst of war.\textsuperscript{114}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{110} Johnson, “Civilian Loyalties and Guerrilla Conflict,” 655.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Stuart A. Schlegel, \textit{Tiruray Justice: Traditional Tiruray Law and Morality} (Berkley: University of California Press, 1970).
\item \textsuperscript{112} Goodhand, \textit{Aiding Peace}?
\end{itemize}
Low-level negotiations often occur when soldiers arrive in villages in search of their enemy or support. There is a popular perception that armed groups arrive and begin looting at will. Things are often more orderly. Upon arrival, commanders may sit down with village leaders. The ensuing exchange is often one-sided, with commanders listing their demands with the expectation that the chief will fulfill them. But these meetings also provide opportunities for diplomacy. Chiefs may note that local support is conditional, so long as troops leave immediately, do not take everything, are well-behaved, or do not return. Village leaders might explain to a commander that if they help his troops, the other side will punish them, and remind the commander that his group is fighting for the people. The interests and methods of armed groups are not fixed, and can change through interaction. An excellent example comes from Zimbabwe, where a local property owner was denounced by his neighbours to rebel forces. When the guerrillas arrived, he “managed to persuade the rebels that it would be irrational to kill him, telling them that the only reason there were bananas growing to feed them was because he could guard the crops with his gun.”

He managed to save his life by persuading the rebels that their food supply depended on small owners such as him. This example shows how skilled diplomacy can persuade rebels and save lives, even in a war as bloody as Zimbabwe’s.

In outlining my concept of voice, and specifying its three forms—defiance, everyday resistance, and engagement—I have hinted at which types of civilians might utilize each form of voice. It seems that acts of defiance will be largely the domain of civil society, everyday resistance taken up by ordinary civilians, and persuasion by village and religious leaders. These are tentative hypotheses, to be tested and refined in later discussions.

Flight, Support, Voice

For Hirschman, exit, voice, and loyalty are inter-related: A lack of exit makes voice important, exit is more valuable where voice is impossible, and loyalty exists only in tandem with exit and voice, slowing the exit option and enabling voice to play out. In my empirical chapters, I will emphasize how these choices combine, simultaneously or sequentially. Flight and voice may combine in a number of ways. Voice may lead to flight when critical civilians are singled out, targeted, and flee to survive. Flight may also lead to voice, as diaspora communities, refugees, and civil society groups may be able to criticize the conflict in ways

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that were impossible back home. Finally, flight may be an act of voice, voting with one’s feet by leaving an area controlled by a particular armed group. Flight and support combine in equally important ways. Similar to voice, support may lead to flight because civilians are targeted for supporting a particular side. Flight may also lead to support, as diaspora communities may become radical from afar and support a particular side. Finally, flight and support may be used simultaneously. When armed groups are forced out, civilians may choose to follow them, either for security or out of conviction.116 The third combination is support and voice. Voice may lead to support, as defiant civilians that are attacked by one side may turn to support the other. They may also combine simultaneously as civilians ally with an armed group and slowly transform it. Hirschman is concerned with just this, as loyalty can amplify voice, working from within an organization.

While these categories have much to offer in terms of understanding civilian decisions, like any effort to bring order to a complex reality, they contain grey areas. The schema does not capture civilians independently taking up arms and forming local defense forces, which might be considered the extremes of voice.117 Another concern is that it may be difficult to distinguish between some forms of support and voice. For instance, resistance against an abusive rebel group may be viewed as an independent protest, but it may also be seen as a form of state support. This is certainly the way armed groups will interpret it. It is difficult to know the intent of acts of voice or how it will be perceived. Distinguishing voice from support will require investigating its framing and goals, and even then, the interpretation of some acts will be debatable. This said, the difference between them is neutrality. If a civilian criticizes one side, it should be viewed as voice unless there is evidence of support for the other side.

I expect that the primary challenge to the schema may come from civilians who try to mind their own business and carry on as usual. Scott suggests that those fleeing from

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116 In Uganda, civilians fled with the rebels, who “insisted civilians had to leave the conflict zone and go to Red Cross camps or to towns under government control.” Kasfir, “Guerrillas and Civilian Participation,” 289. For a parallel in East Timor, see Geoffrey Robinson, “People Power: A Comparative History of Forced Displacement in East Timor,” in Conflict, Violence, and Displacement in Indonesia, 93.

117 In Sierra Leone, traditional hunters—solitary individuals who tend to live on the outskirts of society—began hunting rebel soldiers who harassed villagers, “stalking them as [they] would animals…on a more or less freelance basis.” The effectiveness of the hunters led the state to try and organize them into militias, which had mixed results. Caspar Fithen and Paul Richards, “Militia Solidarities & Demobilization in Sierra Leone,” in No Peace, No War, 127.
state have “three choices: assimilation and absorption, rebellion, and flight.”\textsuperscript{118} Moore and Shellman note that while some non-combatants flee, others join armed groups, with “others simply believing that they can ride out the storm.”\textsuperscript{119} Mason and Krane model the options available to peasants displaced by market forces as “(1) accept the status quo… (2) attempt through collective action to force an increase in wages or land, or (3) migrate to other regions,” and if these fail, “join the insurgent opposition.”\textsuperscript{120} The most direct statement comes from Kalevi Holsti, who makes brief note of four responses to political upheaval: “endurance, exit, voice, and rebellion”, with endurance defined as “quietistic acceptance.”\textsuperscript{121} Inaction might represent a fourth civilian option. This said, it may also be absorbed by other categories. I view passive resistance as a form of voice, and even silence can be a weapon of the weak. How one interprets ‘quietism’ depends a great deal on the context in which it plays out. For instance, if a civilian is instructed by an armed group to flee or provide support, what would inaction mean? Doing nothing in such a situation would be an act of defiance, while doing what one is told would be an act of flight or support, albeit involuntary. I will return to this potential fourth option in my concluding chapter.

What options are available to non-combatants caught up in violent conflicts? My answers are flight, support, and voice. Each of the three options are rooted in academic literatures, even if they are not always seen as choices and are studied in isolation from one another, not as parts of a broader menu. For each option, I have looked at respective literatures, provided definitions, and considered the types of civilians most likely to utilize each of the three strategies. But I have yet to consider explanations for each option: Why do some civilians choose flight, while others provide support, and others speak out?

**Why Do Civilians Choose Different Options?**

At this point, I introduce four potential explanations for civilian decisions, to be assessed in Chapter Four. When seeking to survive violent wars, why do different types of non-combatants opt for flight, support, or voice? In Table 2, I lay out potential explanations along two axes, creating four ideal-type explanations. The ‘Y’ axis refers to the nature of the

\textsuperscript{119} Moore and Shellman, “Fear of Persecution,” 599.
\textsuperscript{120} Mason and Krane, “The Political Economy of Death Squads,” 182.
\textsuperscript{121} Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War*, 118.
decision—the degree of agency—between having no choice whatsoever and the unlikely extreme of free will. This responds to concerns that civilians are not always in a position to choose freely. The ‘X’ axis refers to the ends of the decision, motivations ranging from individual, pragmatic factors such as survival and profit to social, ideational factors such as cultural expectations and personal conviction. This reflects a core debate between Kalyvas and Wood regarding support being rooted in self-interest or other-regard, one which echoes divisions across the social sciences: economic approaches versus sociological ones, greed versus grievance, risk avoidance versus risk acceptance, and Realism versus Constructivism. This diagram is not intended to be exhaustive, but is instead a heuristic tool to help explain civilian action. Most civilian decisions will fit somewhere between the ideal types. Accordingly, instead of proving how one factor explains a given choice while others are false, I will discuss how each does or does not help illuminate each decision, emphasizing that multiple factors are often at play.

Table 2- Potential Explanations for Civilian Decisions

Reflecting the fact that civilians often have little or no room for manoeuvre and their choices may be very much pragmatic, the first potential explanation for civilian decisions is survival and, slightly less urgent and informed by perceptions, security. Survival and security are probably the most intuitive, dominant explanations for civilian decisions, and are the only explanations which I expect to stand alone, as civilian decisions may be based entirely on these concerns. The second explanation is economic incentives, which are also rooted in pragmatic self-interest, but involve greater agency. Opportunities for personal gain may include material wealth, resources, power, and perhaps societal prestige, although this overlaps with the next explanation. Socio-cultural expectations inform individual decisions, although they will probably not determine behaviour on their own. This is why I have not
placed socio-cultural expectations in the top right corner, with no room for agency, the realm of primordialism. I do not expect socio-cultural expectations to be based entirely on deep personal beliefs; one may act according to socio-cultural expectations out of pragmatic self-interest, especially if the rules of the game are defined so that it is rational to follow accepted norms, what March and Olsen call “a logic of appropriateness.”

The fourth major explanation is conviction, either for an armed group (ideological / ethnic affinity) or against another (grievance). Together, these four options help to explain civilian behaviour, although I will also take note of where they act in combination. Instead of simply explaining civilian decisions post-hoc, I hope to move towards some basic predictions based on which types of non-combatants are more likely to follow which strategy. The following pages explore how all four ideal type explanations might motivate the decision to leave, support an armed group, or raise one’s voice. I also note some important contextual factors which will mediate respective decisions.

Why do Civilians Choose Flight?

For most non-combatants, the primary cause of flight will be security, the dominant push factor in conflict migration. The more immediate the perceived threats to security are, the greater the chances are that civilians will flee to wherever they can. In some cases, civilians have no choice, fleeing solely to survive. In less extreme situations, flight may still be driven by insecurity, but will involve some agency. Davenport, Moore, and Shellman note that “while we certainly do not want to dispute that forced migrants have experienced trauma, we think it is a mistake to allow the image of victimization to color our theories in such a way that people would be viewed as having ‘no choice but to leave.’” All told, I expect that security concerns will be the primary, but not the only determinants of flight.

Civilians may also flee to improve their economic situation. Once pull factors such as economic incentives come into play, elements of choice become more apparent.

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According to Lischer, violence is "only one of many causes of displacement", as "economic incentives" in host regions also play important roles. Regions with extended periods of war tend to have weak economies and high unemployment, and flight may be a way to escape danger as well as poverty. It seems that, in many cases, security concerns and profit motives are complimentary explanations for conflict migration.

I do not expect to find that sociological explanations—socio-cultural expectations and conviction—will play as prominent roles in the decision to flee. But they may be important nonetheless. Flight may be facilitated by cultural propensities, historical experiences, and social pressures. In term of culture, Southeast Asian communities have created housing and agricultural patterns which facilitate flight. In terms of social factors, as some civilians successfully migrate, others tend to follow, and early migrants will probably help bring family and friends. In chain migration, news about prior migration may make flight seem safe, especially if there is a co-ethnic community to help them upon arrival, thus lowering the costs associated with exit. The cultural factors involved in flight are under-researched, and I hope to make some contributions in this regard. In terms of conviction, it is possible that some civilians leave due to principle disagreements, going into exile. But I do not expect that this will be a major factor in conflict migration.

**Why do Civilians Support Armed Groups?**

Whereas I expect that flight can be explained largely in terms of security and economic incentives, potential explanations for support are less clear. The question of why civilians support armed groups has been subject to considerable academic scrutiny, leading to divergent conclusions. Kalyvas emphasizes self-interest, namely security and profit, while Wood favours other-regard, namely conviction. Motivations for support appear to be mixed. Sometimes, support "will be given happily, sometimes it will be given under duress. More often than not, it will be given ambivalently." Kalyvas suggests that support is rooted in self-interest. He uses the term 'collaboration' purposefully, as 'loyalty' suggests personal preferences, which are trumped or

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generated by control of territory through military power. For Kalyvas, support is rooted in a
desire for security. This is supported through a staggering range of illustrations, as well as a
study of the Greek Civil War, where even though the Germans were losing by the summer
of 1944, “the power of local reality” led entire villages to support them.\textsuperscript{129} That the threat of
coercion frequently compels civilian support is supported by David Stoll in Guatemala and
Norma Kriger in Zimbabwe.\textsuperscript{130} Many civilians are risk-averse and side with power,
exchanging support for security. Sometimes support is quite literally forced. This said,
fleeing may not guarantee security and staying behind may not lead to attacks.

Support may also be motivated by economic factors. Popkin suggests that, in the
early stages of the Vietnam War, individuals joined religious groups or the communists to
gain land and education.\textsuperscript{131} Michael Seidman’s study of the Spanish Civil War found that
loyalty followed economic incentives—there was extremely little principled, ideological
support for any side.\textsuperscript{132} Kalyvas devotes considerable attention to the opportunistic nature
of support. Civilians may use armed groups, perhaps providing false denunciations for
personal gain.\textsuperscript{133} There is an important distinction between supporting armed groups for
security and doing so for personal gain. Helping an armed group in return for security
ideally ends with civilians simply not being harmed, suggesting that the armed group
dominates the transaction. Helping an armed group in exchange for money, access to
resources, or the elimination of one’s rivals suggests that civilians have some degree of
security, and wish to improve their standing.

Kalyvas downplays the importance of socio-cultural factors and conviction in
motivating support. Firstly, preferences are frequently a product of combatant control. It is
not that social preferences are totally unimportant, but instead that they form around
combatant control and deepen over time. As an armed group comes to rule, civilians with
weak prior preferences will support them. Dominant armed groups may provide governance,
become less violent, evolve the capacity to monitor and reward, and as more civilians

\textsuperscript{129} Kalyvas, \textit{The Logic of Violence in Civil War}, 262.
\textsuperscript{130} Stoll, \textit{Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala}, 95; Kriger, \textit{Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War}.
\textsuperscript{131} Popkin, \textit{The Rational Peasant}, 219.
\textsuperscript{133} Kalyvas, \textit{The Logic of Violence in Civil War}, 339.
support with them, more are likely to follow.\textsuperscript{134} This leads Kalyvas to propose that “the higher level of control exercised by an actor, the higher rate of collaboration with this actor.”\textsuperscript{135} Control not only trumps preferences, it generates them. Secondly, Kalyvas provides methodological justifications for ignoring cultural and personal preferences. Too often “the observation that some people collaborate with a political actor is taken as evidence of loyalty.”\textsuperscript{136} It is difficult to measure preferences independent of action. Many civilians are either forced to support armed groups or jump on the bandwagon, making it difficult to infer preferences beyond post hoc explanations. Kalyvas may give up too easily though: one might look at the quality or amount of support in regions where control changes over time. If civilians provide more or better support for one armed group, then preferences do matter and can be inferred. Another element missing from Kalyvas’ analysis is ethnic identity, which may delineate patterns of support independently of control which I discuss in the coming chapters. One may also focus on deviant cases, occupied areas where control by one side has not led to its gaining support. Wood finds that many civilians supported the FMLN despite its inability to protect them from state forces.\textsuperscript{137}

Support may also be rooted in socio-cultural factors. Authors have found that, over time, the regions which tend to support rebellions remain the same. Wickham-Crowley shows that in many Latin American conflicts, the regions which offered the strongest support for guerrillas were the same regions which supported earlier uprisings, suggesting the presence of local “cultures of conflict.”\textsuperscript{138} Families with legacies of rebellion may support contemporary rebel groups, and once one’s families and friends offer support to an armed group, there may be a cascade effect. More importantly, when an armed group is perceived to be defending a particular ethnic group, members of that group may have strong preferences and be led to support it. Further, cultural norms may make some forms of support more likely in some regions than others if they are part of local repertoires. In these ways, social and cultural factors play important roles in motivating support for armed groups.

This leads to the final potential explanation for civilian support: conviction. This may involve conviction for one side (ideological or ethnic affinity) or conviction against

\textsuperscript{134} Kalyvas, \textit{The Logic of Violence in Civil War}, 124-132.
\textsuperscript{135} Kalyvas, \textit{The Logic of Violence in Civil War}, 132.
\textsuperscript{136} Kalyvas, \textit{The Logic of Violence in Civil War}, 93.
\textsuperscript{137} Wood, \textit{Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador}.
\textsuperscript{138} Wickham Crowley, \textit{Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America}, 131.
another side (grievances against one actor motivating support for the other side). Wood suggests that genuine support and “other-regard” led many civilians to support the FMLN in El Salvador.\textsuperscript{139} Even in state strongholds, up to one third of peasants supported the rebels, even though “the FMLN offered little protection from government forces.”\textsuperscript{140} Wood suggests that conviction—pleasure (the excitement of rebellion), positive support (ideological support for the rebels), and negative support (resisting state injustice)—all explain civilian support. Armed groups make ideological claims and use ethnic symbols for a good reason—they work. If they did not matter, one would not expect armed groups to emphasize their envisioned future or ethnic identity. Conviction may be ideological. Rebels frequently promise land reform, earning them significant support among the landless. An armed group promoting democracy fighting an authoritarian regime will probably gain more support than one demanding a new authoritarian leader.

Civilians commonly explain support for one side in terms of the abuses of the other side, not the strengths of their preferred combatant. Jeff Goodwin provides a state-centric explanation for revolutionary movements which combines political opportunities and popular grievances against abusive, exclusionary states. While his suggestion that people become revolutionaries when they have No Other Way Out is fundamentally at odds with my study of civilian decisions—ignoring flight from regimes which make voice impossible and conflating supporters with combatants—Goodwin’s explanation for popular mobilization in large part looks to principled resistance against “violent and exclusionary authoritarian states.”\textsuperscript{141} Similarly, Wood finds that campesinos (farmers) in El Salvador supported the rebels primarily because they had been exploited by local landlords for centuries, and the rebels provided them an opportunity to fight back.\textsuperscript{142} Grievances may involve human rights violations, historical wrongs, exploitation, and/ or indignities. A sense of injustice can mobilize civilian support despite great risk. For Wickham-Crowley, “peasants have specific local grievances, especially against landlords and tax collectors, and are willing to join any

\textsuperscript{139} Wood, Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador, 240.
\textsuperscript{140} Wood, Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador, 13.
group that will further the redress of such grievances.” Kerkvliet finds that Filipino Huks fought the Japanese due to nationalism, but also due to anger at human rights abuses. Petersen refers to various forms of “resentment formation” which push ordinary people to support or join rebel groups. Popkin makes a similar point, that many Vietnamese villagers supported religious cults and communists against oppressive village hierarchies. Kalyvas also suggests that indiscriminate violence breeds “emotional reactions” and violates “norms of fairness.” Support can be a product of conviction against grievances.

All four potential explanations provide persuasive arguments for why civilians might support a particular armed group. The first two explanations involve pragmatic self-interest, supported by authors such as Kalyvas, Seidman, Popkin, Kriger, and Stoll. The latter two explanations involve idealistic other-regard, are supported by Wood, Scott, McKenna, Kerkvliet, Petersen, and Wickham-Crowley. I will assess these explanations in Chapter Four, and hope to move the debate forward by providing some finer distinctions.

Why do Civilians Choose to Speak Out?

How might security concerns explain voice? It is possible that armed groups might demand that civilians criticize the other side, but this seems to be involuntary support as much as voice. Insecurity may help to explain voice because it provides a reason to speak up, as violence represents a grievance. Security may also explain the absence of voice, as voice is less likely to be expressed when doing so is dangerous. Much depends on the nature of armed groups and whether they tolerate voice. The role of security as a permissive condition is subject to debate. Kalyvas believes that civilians can best influence armed groups in contested zones, where each side needs civilian support and neither has the capacity to punish. Meanwhile, Kasfir expects the opposite, that only where rebels have firm control can they afford the luxury of hearing civilians out. The relationship between security and voice is unclear. Voice may also be explained in terms of economic self-interest. Everyday

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143 Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America, 138.
145 Petersen, Resistance and Rebellion, 34.
146 Popkin, The Rational Peasant, 185.
147 Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 153.
148 Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War.
149 Kasfir, “Guerrillas and Civilian Participation.”
resistance is often carried out to secure food or diminish losses. For human rights NGOs, international funding may provide them with an incentive to speak out against abuse. In general though, I doubt that pragmatic self-interest will explain the presence of voice.

Socio-cultural expectations offer convincing explanations for voice. The socio-cultural roots of defiance, everyday resistance, and persuasion are well-established. Noting that defiance varies by locality, social movement theorists refer to local repertoires. The everyday resistance discussed by Scott involves peasants who feel that the powerful have abrogated their obligations to the poor, violating local moral economies. Shared worldviews between armed groups and civilians might facilitate engagement, while cultural divisions might undermine it. There may be cultures which are more egalitarian than others, so that voice is easier to express. Cultural institutions such as town meetings and councils of elders will probably facilitate voice.

In many ways, voice is about conviction. Abusive armed groups will usually cause deep resentment against the attackers. Where one side is abusive, this may lead to protest, or this may lead to support for the other side. Where both sides are abusive, this is more likely to translate into voice. One implication is that contested areas may be likely candidates for voice. A different form of voice might also be more likely in zones of combatant control. Everyday resistance is a response to perceived injustices, but takes place when individuals are too weak to directly oppose the oppressor. A sense of injustice appears to be a primary reason for civilians to raise their voice.

**Methodology**

Many studies begin with an empirical puzzle and seek to explain it. Because the choices available to civilians in conflict situations had yet to be established, I first needed to build the empirical foundation of what I wanted to explain. To do so, I conducted ethnographic field research in recent and active secessionist conflicts. This was a slow process, but I believe it has resulted in findings that are highly original and make a contribution to the study of civilian actions and reactions. For each of my cases, I begin with descriptive inference—detailing what civilians did—and then shift to causal inference—why they choose a particular option in light of potential alternatives.

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My dissertation is largely a case study of the recent conflict in Aceh, Indonesia, complimented by two secondary studies: Patani, southern Thailand, and Maguindanao, southern Philippines. Similarities among these cases allow me to hold many factors constant: they are all Southeast Asian secessionist conflicts fought from Islamic peripheries. On the other hand, these cases also vary in important ways, differences which became increasingly apparent as I carried out my research and which allow for generalizability beyond what a single case study could offer. The cases differ in terms of geography. While Aceh and Maguindanao are located on the edges of large islands, Patani features a porous border with neighbouring Malaysia. In terms of ethnic identity, both sides in the Aceh conflict were predominantly Muslim, while the other conflicts feature Muslim minorities resisting non-Muslim host states, one Buddhist, the other Christian. Aceh and Patani each have relatively homogenous ethnic minority identities, while Maguindanao is home to one of thirteen regional Muslim ethnic groups, and is itself divided along clan lines. These cases also differ in terms of rebel cohesion, with Aceh’s rebels remaining relatively united, while rebels in Patani and Maguindanao are fragmented.

Of course, these are large regions, so I had to select cases within my cases. Whereas Wood’s study of civilian responses to conflict in El Salvador was based entirely on contested areas, I have sought to include the entire range of conflict regions in selecting my research sites. Kalyvas outlines five zones of conflict: rebel control, contested rebel control, contested, contested state control, and state control. In Aceh, my research sites were selected accordingly. In terms of a rebel stronghold, Bireuen is an ethnically Acehnese district located on the north coast. I visited Bireuen two times: once briefly in the fall of 2007 and for ten days in the spring of 2008, assisted by activist networks and former rebels. For an area which shifted from state control to modest levels of rebel control during the conflict, I spent two weeks in Tapak Tuan, on the isolated southwest coast. Tapak Tuan is also interesting because it features mixed Malay and Acehnese settlements. My research here was supplemented by previous fieldwork in nearby Nagan Raya and Teunom. My primary

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152 This is consistent with the growing trend towards pairing within-case and cross case analyses, a combination which allows for precision regarding events within a certain case, but also seeks generalizations across a limited range of cases. Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 151.
research site was the mountainous, contested region of Saree, located between zones of rebel
and state control and home to significant Javanese minorities. I had stayed in Saree several
times previously, and during my dissertation research, stayed for an additional two months.
For a rural pro-state region, I spent two weeks in Kutacane, an ethnic minority region
located in the centre-south of the province near the North Sumatra border. Finally, I spent a
total of three weeks in the major state stronghold, Banda Aceh and its environs.

Several engaging projects utilize multi-site village fieldwork, although I should note
some shortcomings of this method. Anthropologists tend to be highly critical of multi-site
ethnography, as the researcher lacks the depth required for delving into local life. But I
am not seeking to explore local understandings of violence or village life. I am instead
interested with patterned civilian responses to war. While I did not wish to stay in a single
village for several months, I also chose not to visit hundreds of villages for only a few hours,
which would have limited my interviews to village elites. Brief stays presented a barrier in
terms of interviewing ordinary villagers, as I did not have time to build the trust necessary to
conduct many interviews with the poorest members of the community. As a result, my data
for ordinary villagers are not as strong as they are for local leaders. I found a few ways
around this. As I will explain in the next chapter, Acehnese villages are home to dozens of
official titles, from assistant village heads, to head fisherman, youth leader, and many more.
Such titles seemed to authorize villagers to speak to me, and, as I discovered this, I weighted
my interviews towards such semi-elites. Secondly, my formal interviews with village elites
were supplemented by informal discussions with farmers, fishers, and older women in rice
fields, at the side of the road, and in coffee shops.

The data utilized in my dissertation are primarily from interviews, but also include
local newspapers, government documents, rebel press releases, NGO reports, and secondary
studies. It is difficult to count my interviews, as some were informal, and some were with
large groups, with respondents coming and going. I conducted approximately 130 formal
interviews: 95 in Indonesia, 15 in Thailand, and 20 in the Philippines. I have provided a full
list of interviews in an Appendix. Many were group interviews, so that the number of
participants was about 320. This excludes countless informal discussions used to reach

156 Siapno, Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh, xii.
Annual Review of Anthropology 24 (1995); pp. 95-117.
ordinary villagers and to corroborate information gleaned from formal interviews. In informal discussions, I took rough notes and kept the conversation open-ended, so that while discussions were not always on-topic, they also provided independent information and shed light on new topics I had not yet considered. Political conversations in local coffee shops are common in Southeast Asian Muslim communities, a cultural tenet I embraced in my fieldwork. Going into interviews, I was worried that people might not want to talk about the conflict, and that discussing it might reopen old wounds. Surprisingly, respondents were eager to tell me how locals responded to the conflict, and many were bitter that nobody had asked them their experiences before. That locals enjoyed the opportunity to discuss their responses to the conflict is evidenced in the length of my interviews. After brief responses to general questions, most respondents became enthusiastic and called their friends. Typical interviews lasted between one and three hours.

Interviews were usually carried out in local dialects with the help of a translator, although I could usually keep up with much of the discussion. Sometimes I worked with different translators to avoid bias introduced by their identity or beliefs. In Aceh, I worked with an old activist friend, a young local activist, and a young professional from North Sumatra. In Patani, I was limited to student translators, while in Maguindanao, rural translation was provided by my guide. Initially, I used an audio recorder, but found this was a source of discomfort for respondents, so I switched to written notes in rural areas. As a result, quotes and accounts from my fieldwork are compiled from my interview notes. Every evening, my translators and I went over our respective notes to help avoid errors, and when I returned to Canada, I did so with both my notes and my translator's. I also conducted repeat interviews in some regions, which allowed those interviews to verify their own statements, and for some elite civilians, I was able to verify their statements via email.

I utilized a variety of networks in arranging interviews, helping to avoid selection bias and other common pitfalls. In Saree, I stayed at a rural school operated by locals whom I have worked for several years. In the other four sites, I utilized a mixture of contacts from Acehnese civil society, Indonesian / North Sumatran civil society, Western NGOs, Acehnese academics, the rebel movement, the Indonesian military, clan associations from North Sumatra in Kutacane, and Javanese transmigrants. On a few occasions, I entered

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158 Many researchers rely on snowballing, requesting contacts after each interview. While this can be extremely useful, it is riddled with selection bias.
villages without previous contacts to see if this changed my findings, and while responses were slower in coming, they were not different. Previous work in Aceh has also informed my research. In 2003, I conducted interviews with displaced persons in North Sumatra and Malaysia while working for a Thai human rights organization. In 2004, 2005, and 2009, I visited Aceh to observe elections, and in 2006 I spent a month on the west coast of Aceh carrying out research on illegal logging. Village field research was supplemented by library research as well as interviews with experts and Acehnese communities in Jakarta, Singapore, New York, and Vancouver.

In Patani and Maguindanao, my fieldwork was not as in-depth, and I was unable to select such a wide range of research sites due to ongoing hostilities. In southern Thailand, my time divided between the state-dominated regions around the town of Pattani and brief overnight excursions into contested areas in Songkhla and Yala. My networks included Thai NGOs, local academics, Malay activists, and Islamic modernists. My field interviews are supplemented by a range of interviews in Bangkok and further afield. I also spent three weeks in the Maguindanao region of Mindanao, staying in the state stronghold of Cotabato City and in rebel camps around Lake Buluan. My contacts were largely through academics who had conducted previous research there, a reliable network supplemented by my contacts within the Philippine army and powerful clan leaders. Field research in the Philippines also included interviews in Manila, Davao City, General Santos City, and a brief stay in Kidapawan, the northern edge of the conflict where the Moro struggle overlaps with the communist insurgency taking place in northern Mindanao. Spending several weeks in the field can by no means lead to firm conclusions about Patani or Maguindanao, nor is this my intent. Instead, research in these conflicts is intended to shed some comparative light on how my findings in Aceh might travel to different regions.

In describing what different types of civilians did during the respective conflicts, my data consist mostly of interviews, supplemented by newspapers and NGO reports. In terms of explaining why different types of civilians chose distinct strategies, the data are more varied. Evidence here includes genealogies of village leaders, interviews, and comparisons

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159 In Patani, Duncan McCargo’s research was also limited by the “worsening security situation”, restricting his field research to the local university in Pattani town. Duncan McCargo, *Tearing the Land Apart: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), xiv. In the Maguindanao region, Thomas McKenna’s study did not principally focus on the separatist movement due to the danger this would bring to both himself and his network. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 2.
across time (previous conflicts and throughout the conflict in question), across groups (comparing with other types of civilians, ethnic groups, up and down hierarchies), and across place (comparing different conflict zones, the conflict region with neighbouring regions, and the three Southeast Asian secessionist conflicts).

Do non-combatants possess significant options in times of war? They do, in fact, possess some options. I reviewed writers who, while concerned with civilians, do not consider their war-time decisions. Far from a mere blind spot, these approaches rely on implicit assumptions of the choices made by civilians. What options are available to non-combatants caught up in violent separatist conflicts? This chapter has provided a familiar schema which covers the broad choices available to non-combatants: flight, support, and voice. I have offered early thoughts on how these strategies might work in combination with one another and have noted some of the potential challenges to this three-fold categorization. Why do civilians opt for specific strategies? I have provided four potential explanations: security, economic incentives, socio-cultural expectations, and conviction. I have discussed how I intend to answer these questions and evaluate my propositions. At this point, I turn to provide some historical political, and social context for my primary case, the secessionist conflict in Aceh, Indonesia.
2 Empirical Foundations, Aceh

This chapter provides the empirical foundations for later discussions of how flight, support, and voice played out in Aceh’s secessionist war. I introduce Aceh’s geographical and human landscapes, Acehnese and regional histories, the secessionist conflict, and Aceh’s social groups—the types of civilians discussed in coming chapters. Probably the most overlooked factor in studies of the secessionist conflict, this chapter emphasizes how the war was experienced differently in various regions and by different ethnic groups. Anthony’s Reid’s edited volume overlooks ethnic minorities,1 as does Edward Aspinall’s study of Acehnese nationalism, despite noting their importance in the first few pages.2 The few accounts of Aceh’s minorities tend to be anthropological, studying individual groups, but not their interaction with the Acehnese or responses to the conflict.3 As I will show in Chapters Three and Four, different regional and ethnic groups made very different choices during the conflict. Understanding flight among ethnic Javanese and support for state forces among ethnic Gayo communities requires seeing the conflict from their perspectives. This is a study of Aceh, not simply the Acehnese.

‘Aceh’ is the Indonesian standard and by far the most common spelling. The (now former) separatists refer to their home as ‘Acheh’, probably because it is the most intuitive spelling for English speakers unaccustomed to the Indonesian ‘c’ pronounced as ‘ch’ and it was favoured by English language studies prior to the standardization of Indonesian in 1972. In Acehnese language sources, GAM referred to their state as ‘Atjeh’, a tonal variant on the Dutch ‘Atjeh’. After the Darul Islam Rebellion, Aceh was officially called Daerah Istimewa (Special Territory) Aceh, or DI Aceh. More recently, autonomy laws have renamed the province Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (the Heavenly Abode of Aceh), or NAD. For the sake of consistency and simplicity, I use ‘Aceh’ throughout my dissertation.

1 Anthony Reid, editor, Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2006). Elsewhere though, Reid notes that Aceh comprised only “the northern coastal strip and the scattered ports of the West Coast.” Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra: Atjeh, the Netherlands, and Britain, 1858-1898 (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969).
Landscape

Aceh is located on the northwest tip of Sumatra, reaching into the Indian Ocean at the mouth of the Straits of Malacca. Regional commerce resulted in the development of a diverse society, reflected in the common joke that ‘ACEH’ stands for Arab, Chinese, European, and Hindu. Figure 1 shows a provincial landscape dominated by a mountainous interior— the Bukit Barisan (Row of Hills)— running the length of Sumatra. Aceh’s rulers have forever been frustrated by geographical barriers. Coastal settlements are separated by numerous rivers and hills, and are cut off from the interior by mountains. As a consequence, “Aceh was never a united Kingdom.”

Figure 1- Topographical Map of Aceh and Region

Aceh tends to be divided into four regions: Aceh Besar, North Aceh / Pidie, East Aceh, and the west coast. At the very tip of Sumatra, Aceh Besar is separated from western Aceh by the end of the Bukit Barisan and from northern Aceh by the Gunung Seulawah range. Also known as Aceh Proper, Aceh Besar is the valley of the Aceh River which empties at the capital city, Banda Aceh (Kutaraja). Pidie is the only region home to extensive rice cultivation and dense populations. This is the heart of Acehnese culture and, as I will show, each of Aceh’s wars. The west coast is sparsely populated and isolated, exposed to the ocean on one side and steep mountains on the other. It represents a frontier, a ‘Wild West’

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ruled by local strongmen, historically and today. East Aceh consists of plains and marshes, separated from North Aceh by a series of rivers. In the nineteenth century, efforts to drain the swamplands and improve irrigation brought a pepper boom and substantial Acehnese migration, leading East Aceh to be largely absorbed into Pidie. In addition to these four Acehnese regions, the mountainous interior is home to indigenous Gayo and Alas communities. Finally, the southwest and southeast coasts are home to Malay communities, historical buffers between Acehnese and Sumatran Kingdoms.

Aceh lacks the religious diversity of neighbouring North Sumatra or conflict areas such as Ambon or Poso. 98% of Aceh’s inhabitants are Muslim and 75% speak Acehnese at home. Table 3 lists Aceh’s population by ethnic group. Of course, precise numbers are highly contested. Some authors place the percentage of ethnic Acehnese at 50%, a number based on the 2000 Indonesian census, which could only access about 1.7 million of Aceh’s residents, excluding those living in GAM strongholds, who are almost entirely Acehnese.6 At the other end of the spectrum, some writers exclude ethnic Javanese residents and suggest that 90% of the population is Acehnese.7

### Table 3 - Population of Aceh by Ethnic Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Approximate Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acehnese</td>
<td>3,210,000</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gayo</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alas</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batak</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,100,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My estimates are based on the troubled 2000 census. Although inaccurate in terms of the Acehnese population, its estimates for non-Acehnese populations seem reasonable. To estimate the Acehnese population, I subtracted ethnic minority populations from the 2008

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6 Others place Acehnese at 50%, but their percentages of non-Acehnese only add up to 35%. Aris Ananta and Lee Poh Onn, editors, *Aceh: A New Dawn* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007), 24. See also Leo Suryadinata, Evi Nurvidya Arifin, and Aris Ananta, *Indonesia’s Population: Ethnicity and Religion in a Changing Political Landscape* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), 158.

estimate of the total provincial population, a number arrived at with considerable international assistance. The results place the ethnic Acehnese population at 78% of the provincial total, which accords with estimates found elsewhere.8

The largest and most important of Aceh’s ethnic groups are the Acehnese, who inhabit the province’s extensive coastline. Acehnese take immense pride in their culture: their spicy food, legendary history, pious population, and complex dances (including the famous Dance of 1000 Hands, Tari Seribu Tangan). The Acehnese language presents a great mystery. It was long thought to be a dialect of Malay, but it contains tonal elements and many Thai-Cambodian words, leading linguists to label Acehnese as proto-Chamic.9 For centuries, the Champa Empire, centred on the coast of what is now central Vietnam, was a maritime trading hub. By the fifteenth century, many Chams had converted to Islam. In 1471, a Vietnamese attack destroyed the Cham capital and the population fled to Cambodia, Thailand, and Aceh. Reid asks: “how can a small group of a few hundred Cham-speaking migrants have infiltrated their language along more than 1,000 km of coast?”10 He suggests that the area around Banda Aceh already housed a considerable Cham community and was the major destination of the Cham exodus. This small kingdom expanded rather suddenly from this point, and so did its Cham-infused language.11

Aceh’s ethnic minorities are often referred to as Galaksi (Gayo, Alas, Kluet, and Singkil). I divide them into three groups: interior, Malay, and migrant communities. The Gayo inhabit the province’s mountainous centre, numbering about 200,000, over 5% of the provincial population.12 John Bowen suggests that Gayo groups once inhabited the north coast, as their language contains several Chamic words which are not found in Acehnese, suggesting maritime trade.13 The name ‘Gayo’ means ‘to flee’ in Acehnese, as early Gayo tribes fled the armies of Iskandar Muda in the seventeenth century, which “may have saved Gayo linguistic and cultural identity from being absorbed into that of the Acehnese during

11 Today, Acehnese contains ten dialects, with Bueng, Banda, and Daya the most distinctive.
12 Gayo are divided into two groups in the 2000 census: Gayo Lut (117,509) and Gayo Luwes (81,172). BPS Census 2000; Suryadinata, Arifin, and Ananta, Indonesia’s Population, 8.
the expansion of the Sultanate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”

Numbering about 80,000, the Alas are found just south of the Gayo, in a lowland valley which empties into North Sumatra. The name ‘Alas’ is probably derived from ‘heat’ in the Karo language, as the Alas Valley is much warmer than surrounding highlands. Whereas the Gayo represent pre-Acehnese Aceh, the Alas are related to the Karo Batak of North Sumatra. Alas language is basically Batak with “an Acehnese accent,” although it also contains Malay and Arabic influences. Until recently, the Alas organized by clans, not territorial units, and even today, many Alas identify through a clan system (marga) resembling North Sumatra’s. The Gayo and Alas have not necessarily been in conflict with Acehnese, but there are tensions, especially at perceptions of their being “Aceh’s hicks”. Gayo and Alas are predominantly Muslim, however this does not necessarily bind them to Aceh. The Gayo resisted Acehnese raids, converting a century later through mystics and traders, while the conversion of the Alas took place through West Sumatran traders. In the last century, Islam in the interior has witnessed a marked turn towards West Sumatran modernism. Few Gayo and Alas have joined Acehnese religious organizations, which are seen as “an ethnic Acehnese affair, and thus not in their own interest.”

A second group of ethnic minorities are the Malays in Aceh’s southernmost coastal districts. In the sixth century, indigenous groups along Sumatra’s coast became ‘Malay’ through trade with Sri Vijaya. Malay communities served as buffers between Aceh and Sumatran Malay Kingdoms further south. Acehnese migration has changed the coasts, but Malays remain a majority in the southwest. Even more than hill groups, Malays are absent from studies of Aceh. In the southeast, Tamiang Malays (Hitam Mieng Indonesian: Hitam Pipi, black cheeks) are found in the city of Langsa and the district of Aceh Tamiang, numbering about 30,000. Tamiang Malays are closely related to Malays in coastal North and East Sumatra. The Tamiang language resembles closely Malay spoken in Riau. Struktur Sastra Lisan Tamiang [Structure of Tamiang Oral Stories] (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1998).

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Aneuk Jamee, Singkil, and Kluet, who together number about 90,000. Malay culture here includes Batak, Acehnese, Malay, and other elements; “all of these people have mixed together (sudah bercampur) as have their customs and clothing.” Malays have lived along Aceh’s west coast for centuries, but they tend to be seen by Acehnese as outsiders: ‘Aneuk Jamee; translates as ‘visitor’s children’ (Indonesian: Anak Tamu) and ‘Kluet means ‘wild’ (Indonesian: liar). Aneuk Jamee are more recent arrivals, evidenced by their West Sumatran culture. Unlike the Aneuk Jamee, who are scattered along the west coast, the Singkil people are concentrated in a single region of the same name, made up of Minang, Batak, and Acehnese who adopted Malay language and customs. Located near Tapak Tuan, the Kluet are closely related to the Alas, but have adopted Malay culture. Malay identity in Aceh is summed up by James Siegel: “everyone is an immigrant or the descendent of one, a guest (jame), even if born here... But though everyone is a guest, there is no host.”

The third and final group of minorities are the more recent arrivals, including 2,000 Chinese and 40,000 Batak. The most important (and politically contentious) migrant community is Aceh’s 300,000 ethnic Javanese. Javanese migrants began arriving in 1905 through Dutch transmigration schemes, which were continued by the Republic. Transmigration was intended to slow rebellion in both sending and receiving areas, relieve population pressure in Java, and provide plantations with labour. Despite being the largest of Aceh’s ethnic minorities, the Javanese are frequently absent from accounts of Aceh’s ethnic groups. Studies tend to treat Javanese as transient— not really part of Aceh— whether they were born there or not. Michelle Miller discusses Aceh’s Javanese in considerable depth,

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20 The 2000 census did not include Malay as category, but did list 44,153 ‘Singkil’. BPS 2000; Suryadinata, Arifin, and Ananta, Indonesia’s Population, 15.
21 Jane Drakard, A Malay Frontier: Unity & Duality in a Sumatran Kingdom (Cornell: Studies on Southeast Asia, 1990), 147.
22 Snouck Hurgronje lists several “contemptuous appellations” heard from Acehnese, who state that Malays have animal-like tails and the Nias people are products of the marriage between a princess and her dog whose child married his mother. Snoucke Hurgronje, The Acehnese, translated by A.W.S. O’Sullivan (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1906), 19-20.
24 Drakard, A Malay Frontier, 8.
but always with the qualifier of “migrants” or “settlers”. In her study of ethnic minorities in the Aceh conflict, Lesley McCulloch does not even mention the Javanese. It is not that observers are unaware of the Javanese in Aceh, but instead that they do not consider them to be part of Aceh, sustaining their outsider status. In the following account of the conflict, and in my research on various civilian responses to war, Aceh’s ethnic minorities—including the Javanese—will feature prominently.

**Aceh: A Short History**

Aceh emerged as a sort of Confederate Sultanate of river principalities—a “Southeast Asian Islamic alliance.” From west to east, early principalities included Daya, Lambri / Lamurai (near Banda), Pedir / Pidie, Pole (an ancient Buddhist Kingdom), Sumadra, and Pasai / Pasee (see Figure 2.2 below). Derived from the Sanskrit word for ‘sea’, Sumadra was the dominant port, “sufficiently important to give its name to the whole island.” Sumadra was a Hindu Malay port, linked to Sri Vijaya, but was soon overshadowed by nearby Pidie, which became an early centre of Islamic study. Meanwhile, a small port known as Lamurai was witnessing rapid economic growth, perhaps owing to a sudden Cham influx. Around 1510, a Lamurai prince married a neighbouring princess, merging their realms into a new Sultanate. The new Kingdom was called Aceh and was ruled by Ali Mughayat Shah (r. 1514-1530). The Sultanate expanded into the Daya Kingdom to the southwest and soon looked east, where expansion was somewhere between militaristic and diplomatic. Pidie and Pasai had fallen under Portuguese control, and local officials apparently welcomed Acehnese assistance. In defeating a common enemy, the regions merged; “the rich plain of the north coast was henceforth united with the valley of the Atjeh River (Aceh Besar), from which it was separated by low hills.” Today, Aceh Besar remains the political centre of Aceh, while the northern coast is its rice bowl and cultural heartland.

29 The sole reference to Javanese is to employees at high-tech industries—not farming, by far their most common occupation. McCulloch, “Aceh: Then and Now.”
Figure 2- Map of Northern Aceh and Early Ports

Aceh developed into a powerful trading centre, overtaking once-dominant Malacca. To what extent can the rise of Aceh be attributed to the invasion of Malacca? When Portugal invaded in 1511, Malacca had recently eclipsed Sumatra/Pasai as the dominant entrepôt. Portuguese attacks prompted an exodus of Muslim traders and officials, so that “Islamic merchants—Arabs, Persians, Turks, Abyssinians, and Gujeratis—moved to Aceh.”

Aceh proved ideal for Malacca’s refugees: It was already Muslim, active in regional trade, provided several protected harbours, and was located before Malacca at the mouth of the Straits. The presence of Portugal in Sumatra prompted Aceh’s eastward sweep and allowed smaller kingdoms to unify. But the creation of Aceh cannot be attributed solely to the Portuguese. Aceh was already expanding prior to this. Further, local leaders (Orang Kaya, rich men) must be given credit for cooperating against a common threat. While Portugal stimulated these changes, the success of Aceh’s response rested with local leadership.

Acehnese expansion stalled in 1570 owing to a succession dispute, overcome twenty years later when a naval commander seized power. His grandson would succeed him to become Aceh’s most infamous ruler, Iskandar Muda (the Young Alexander, r.1607-1636), whose reign is regarded as Aceh’s Golden Age, “the true peak of royal power and centralization in the Malay world.” The new political order began with killing off the Orang Kaya and their extended families, then sending commanders (uluwah, Malay: hulabalang war

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36 Loeb asserts that the Portuguese invasion of Malacca “was the main reason for the rise of Aceh.” Loeb, Sumatra: Its History & People, 218. See also Richard Barber, Aceh: The Untold Story (Bangkok: Forum-Asia, 1999), 11; Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 2; Peter G. Riddell, “Aceh in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: ‘Serambi Mekkah’ and Identity,” in Verandah of Violence, 39.
leader) to rule in their stead. Iskandar Muda also formed new administrative units, the Mukim to supervise village chiefs and recruit soldiers. Acehnese forces pushed back or converted Batak chiefs, and soon reached the Malay Peninsula, where Johor, Pahang, and Kedah became tributaries. Acehnese look upon this era with pride, a time in which their kingdom dominated the Malay world. But Iskandar Muda’s reign was also “an exceptional period of megalomania” more reminiscent of a Middle-Eastern state than the more patriarchal style of Indonesian sultanates. He launched continuous attacks on the Portuguese, eschewing alliances and exhausting his state. The paranoid Sultan killed off potential rivals and heirs. At his death in 1636, the kingdom passed to Iskandar Thani, a slave taken from Pahang.

Aceh was then ruled by four consecutive Sultanas, who are often blamed for the decline of Acehnese power. Under female rule, Aceh’s borders contracted and the kingdom became ruled by the very uleebalang that Iskandar Muda had sent to centralize Acehnese power. But Aceh’s decline actually began under Iskandar Muda, whose final years witnessed “the relaxation of authority over the west coast.” For Siegel, “the destruction of most of the Atjehnese fleet during the final raid on Malacca must have been a major cause of the political decline that began after the death of Iskandar Muda.” Aceh was exhausted and without allies; Iskandar Muda had “stirred up a deep hatred of the Achinese yoke” in the region, especially in Aceh’s interior. The Sultanas were put in power largely to avoid the “autocratic extremes” of male rule. Although Aceh’s military power waned, these years saw the “prosperity of capital” and the rise of renowned scholars such as al-Singkili.

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39 Hadi, Islam and State in Sumatra, 69.
41 Anthony Reid, “The Turkish Connection,” in An Indonesian Frontier, 88-89.
45 Siegel, The Rope of God, 4.
47 Reid, “Introduction,” An Indonesian Frontier, 7.
49 M. Hasbri Amiruddin, The Response of the Ulama Dayah to the Modernization of Islamic Law in Aceh (Selangor, Malaysia: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2005), 38.
reign of the Sultanas came to an end in 1699 when local elites secured an edict from the Sharif of Mecca against female rule.\textsuperscript{50} It was after the Sultanas, starting with the 1699 succession crisis after the forced removal of the last Sultana, that Aceh reached its "lowest ebb."\textsuperscript{51} From here, Aceh would see 239 years of "inconsequential Sultans."\textsuperscript{52} Power shifted to \textit{uleebalang} merchants, principally those in Aceh Besar.

In 1810, Thomas Stamford Raffles became involved in an Acehnese succession dispute, siding with the young, pro-British Jauhar al-Alam against a rival supported by the \textit{uleebalang} Penang merchants, and Straits officials.\textsuperscript{53} The ensuing war lasted from 1815 until 1821. In 1819, Raffles signed a treaty with Jauhar in which Britain swore to protect Aceh, a promise which would cause considerable headache in the years to come. In 1824, the Dutch and British signed the Treaty of London, dividing their spheres in Southeast Asia. Owing to Raffles’ Treaty, Aceh remained an independent state.\textsuperscript{54} Aceh enjoyed a brief resurgence under Mansur Shah (r. 1838-1870). With his death, Aceh once again descended into chaos, just as Aceh was facing new Dutch incursions. The Dutch attacked in 1873, but to the surprise of many, they were repelled. Fresh attacks broke Aceh’s defences, and the capital fell months later. After a long pause, Dutch attacks resumed in 1879, and Pidie fell shortly thereafter. A new Sultan fled to Central Aceh for several years before being captured in 1903, the “accepted end” of the war.\textsuperscript{55} Like the Sultans before them, direct Dutch rule was limited, as they were forced to govern indirectly, through the \textit{uleebalang}. The Dutch sought to control trade, leaving little room for these merchants. They needed administrators, so the \textit{uleebalang} were shoehorned into this role.\textsuperscript{56} By the 1920s, most \textit{uleebalang} were state officials, enjoying administrative power and controlling tax revenue.\textsuperscript{57}

\begin{flushright}
\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{50} Azyumardi Azra, \textit{The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle-Eastern Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries} (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 79.

\textsuperscript{51} Reid, \textit{The Contest for North Sumatra}, 6.

\textsuperscript{52} Riddell, “Aceh in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” 42.

\textsuperscript{53} Anthony Webster, \textit{Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in South East Asia, 1770-1890} (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), 73.

\textsuperscript{54} Reid, \textit{The Contest for North Sumatra}, 8.

\textsuperscript{55} Hiorth, “A Sketch of Aceh’s History,” 5.

\textsuperscript{56} Muhammad Gade Ismail, “The Economic Position of the uleebalang in the Late Colonial State in Aceh (1900-1942),” in \textit{The Socio-Economic Foundations of the Late Colonial State in Indonesia, 1880-1930: Towards an Explanation} (Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study: 1989).

\end{footnotesize}
\end{flushright}
Even before the Sultan was captured, the mantle of resistance was taken up by Islamic teachers (ulama). The ulama penned the Hikayat Prang Sabi (Epic of the Holy War), which emphasized the glory of martyrdom and declared resistance to be mandatory. Although many individual ulama continued to resist the Dutch, they were poorly organized and did not constitute a significant threat. This changed as Aceh’s ulama learned about new forms of organization from nascent Indonesian nationalist organizations. Led by Daud Beureueh, a new group of modernist ulama sought to reform Acehnese society, starting by opening new schools which challenged not only the Dutch, but also traditional Islamic instructors. Rejecting pan-Indonesian organizations, the modernists established their own in 1939, the PUSA (Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh, All-Aceh Ulama Association). The PUSA had widespread societal support, although it did not represent the entire province: it was exclusively Acehnese and was resisted by many uleebalang and traditional ulama. The PUSA sought to revitalize the anti-colonial struggle, reaching out to the Japanese for assistance. With their help, the PUSA attacked the Dutch prior to the Japanese landing in 1943. After the war, the Dutch made no effort to recapture Aceh—they knew it was lost to them—and Aceh became a pillar of the Indonesian independence movement, donating considerable wealth, including two planes which would become the national airline.

Anti-Dutch resistance is looked upon fondly by Acehnese secessionists and the Indonesian state, although they differ regarding whether it was motivated by Acehnese or Indonesian nationalism. Aceh’s ulama were in fact fighting for the Republic of Indonesia, although they imagined an Indonesia which was more decentralized and Islamic than the one they would get. As Indonesia became independent, the country’s far-flung regions enjoyed de facto autonomy. In Aceh, the ulama sought to remake Acehnese society and take revenge against Dutch collaborators. The Cumbok War began when ulama mobilized their students.

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59 Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979), 24. Beureueh should be considered a modernist, as he sought to reform education and interpret holy texts directly, however he also clashed with the primary modernist Islamic organization in the Indies, Muhammadiyah.

against the ulaire moving from town to town wiping out suspected collaborators. This was more than just punishing Dutch collaborators, as occurred across Indonesia. Aceh’s ulama redistributed land and led a bloody social revolution. There was little that Indonesian leaders could do about the killings. Indonesian leaders were in need of experienced officials such as the ulaelelang and feared similar bloodletting across the country. But the PUSA also continued to support the Republic with revenue from seized ulaelelang property.

Aceh’s ulama expected a decentralized, Islamic Indonesia, as did Islamic leaders across the country. Islamic groups were important elements in the independence struggle, and were disappointed when their demands were rebuffed. The increasingly centralized Republic alienated regional leaders, often the same groups demanding an Islamic state. In 1948, an Islamic leader in West Java initiated an Islamic uprising, the Darul Islam (House of Islam) Rebellion, which was soon joined by South Sulawesi, and Kalimantan. In 1953, Aceh joined for overlapping political and religious reasons. In an effort to simplify administration, the Republic had organized the country into large provinces. In January 1951, Aceh was incorporated into North Sumatra, a severe affront to Acehnese leaders who had sacrificed much for the Republic only to be ruled by their traditional foes, the largely Christian Batak.

In terms of religion, the PUSA wanted Sharia Law for the entire country, minimally for Aceh, and were concerned with the rise of communism under Sukarno. Sjamsuddin divides Aceh’s rebels in two groups: the reformist PUSA ulama fighting for Sharia Law and the zaama, a rising class of pious administrators from the ranks of PUSA Youth fighting for provincial status. Supporting Indonesia were remnants of the ulaelelang ethnic minorities, traditionalist ulama who believed it was wrong to challenge the government, and some modernist ulama who resented Beureueh’s personal authority.

Beureueh met the Indonesian army with frontal assaults, resulting in spectacular losses and a shift towards guerrilla tactics. The Indonesian military carried out aggressive

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64 Sjamsuddin, The Republican Revolt, 186.
65 Hiorth, “A Sketch of Aceh’s History,” 7; Sulaiman, “From Autonomy to Periphery,” 130.
assaults, prompting pan-Indonesian protests. By 1955, the struggle took on ethnic elements. The Indonesian army contained large contingents of Minangkabau, Javanese, and Christian Batak soldiers, referred to as kafir (non-believer), Hindu Communists, and cannibals. Like the Dutch War and the Social Revolution, Darul Islam leaders controlled North and East Aceh, while Banda Aceh and the highlands remained under government control, and the West Coast was left to its own devices. In 1956, Indonesia granted Aceh provincial status and appointed a respected PUSA youth leader, Ali Hasjmy, as Governor. By 1959, the zuama negotiated Special Autonomy Status in defiance of Beureueh, who surrendered in 1962. Six years later, a new President would rescind these gains.

Aceh enjoyed de facto autonomy during the chaos of Sukarno’s final years. General Suharto emerged as the country’s strongman, leading the massacre of tens of thousands of suspected leftists, as well as other political enemies. Acehnese Islamic groups were eager participants in massacring intellectuals, leftists, personal rivals, and minorities. This era is rarely discussed in Aceh, a moment when Acehnese leaders and students worked with the state to massacre civilians, helping to usher in the New Order.

Histories of Aceh

The historical events described above help show Aceh up to the dawn of the New Order in 1965-66. But in large part, the above account is not a history of Aceh, it is a history of the Acehnese. These events were largely limited to Aceh Besar and Pidie. Only through understanding Aceh’s regional and ethnic histories can various civilian decisions during the recent conflict be understood. I begin with western and eastern Aceh, and then discuss historical events in the Malay south, interior, and migrant communities.

When the Sultanate was first created, its western border was the Daya region southwest of Banda. The thin, isolated strips of land along the west coast originally featured mixed Acehnese, Malay, and Batak (non-Muslim) settlements. James W. Gould describes early west coast settlements:

Only Barus... had a tradition of being more than 300 years old, as it was settled by Toba Batak. Sinkel is supposed to have been founded between

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68 Sjamsuddin, The Republican Revolt, 85.
69 Sjamsuddin, The Republican Revolt, 178.
71 Amiruddin, The Response of the Ulama Dayah to the Modernization of Islamic Law in Aceh, 28.
1514-54 by an Arab from Mecca who had converted the Bataks to Islam... Meulaboh had been settled by Datu Janghut of Minangkabau about 1664. Kluat and Susu were fairly recently settled by “Malays” (Alassers?) and Bataks from the interior. About 1760, the settlements of Muki and Labuan Hadji were made from Kluat, and Sama Dua was settled by Meulaboh men. Although the whole coast was under Atjehnese dominion, the only old Atjehnese town was Tapus. Thus, in 1790, there were only five towns within the 75-mile Pepper Coast proper. From north to south these were: Susu, Labuan Hadji, Muki, Tempat Tuan, and Kluat.  

The remote west coast became important to Aceh’s Sultans with the growth of the gold and pepper trades in West Sumatra. The Sultan sent generals (Pangjim) to displace Malay river principalities along the coast. The Pangjim did not govern these territories and did not establish colonies— their only goal was to capture trade. The Sultan of Aceh came to control the northern periphery (Alam Minangkabau) of West Sumatra from the 1530s until the 1650s. The taxes demanded by the Acehnese Pangjim were hefty and Acehnese rule was largely resented. Aceh was a “seemingly oppressive factor”, “regarded as an alien power.” After Iskandar Muda, Aceh’s borders contracted, and the officials sent to eliminate local rulers became local princes. The Pangjim faced resistance from Malay rulers, who “wished to secede from Achen and for that purpose sought the aid of the Dutch.” Malay princes provided the Dutch with a monopoly over the pepper trade in exchange for protection from Acehnese rulers, leading to the 1663 Painan Treaty. Within five years, Dutch ships eliminated Acehnese influence south of Susoh.

With Acehnese rulers eliminated, coastal kingdoms expanded. The west coast changed forever with the introduction of pepper plantations. They were pioneered by Leube Dapa (1760-1820), the “Rajah of Susoh.” Dapa was the first to court foreign investment and develop fixed plantations. “Before 1787 there was no pepper produced in this area”, but by 1800, West Aceh produced almost all of the world’s pepper— “let those who still think all Indonesians are lazy... see what this now-forgotten entrepreneur Libbe Duppoh did

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73 Kathiram-Wells, “Acehnese Control over West Sumatra up to the Treaty of Painan, 1663.”
74 Drakard, A Malay Frontier, 7.
75 Kathiram-Wells, “Acehnese Control over West Sumatra up to the Treaty of Painan, 1663,” 454.
77 Drakard, A Malay Frontier, 7.
79 Siegel, The Rope of God, 12.
The trade was dominated by merchants from Salem and Boston. The economic boom attracted considerable migration, largely from northern Aceh. The economic growth gained the attention of the Acehnese Sultan. A traditional Acehnese tale, the Hikajat Padjat Mohamat, describes what came to pass and sheds light on the west coast in the Acehnese imagination. It describes a man returning to Pidie “from Meulaboh, far off, a land of jungle” who explains that the west coast is filled with riches. But its leader, Leube Dapa, refused to pay tribute sending the Sultan “a chest filled with rubbish.” The Sultan attacked, but Dapa had the advantage in his remote realm; “Atjeh and Pidie were worried; it was a war with guns in a land of jungle.” The Sultan took Meulaboh, but Dapa fled further south and the Sultan was forced to withdraw.

Figure 3- Map of Western Aceh and Pepper Ports

By 1830, the pepper trade had slowed due to a global recession, exhausted soils, and conflicts among Dapa’s heirs. Lower prices frustrated Acehnese and Malay growers, who responded by attacking European traders, scaring away future commerce. Meanwhile, Dutch influence was growing. Following the Padri War (1821-1837), the Dutch expanded to
Barus, Singkil, and Trumon, the southern extremities of the former Pepper Coast, which they viewed as West Sumatran vassals. As in 1668, the Dutch landed in 1839 and wrested control from Acehnese rulers. By claiming Singkil and Barus as part of West Sumatra, the Dutch challenged the Sultan as well as Penang investors. The Dutch established the town of Singkil Baru and propped up Malay rulers in Trumon, and thus controlled the Malay southwest long before the 1873 invasion.

As a result of migration during the pepper boom, the west coast down to Tapak Tuan became predominantly ethnically Acehnese. In the Acehnese imagination, it is not entirely a part of Aceh. Today, it remains a Wild West dominated by local warlords. The southwest remains Malay, especially Singkil, which is isolated by vast swamplands. Under Dutch rule, Malays strengthened their ties to West Sumatra. Unlike in ethnic Acehnese areas, national Indonesian organizations enjoyed success here. In 1903, the Dutch placed Singkil in the province of Aceh, providing them a stable southern outpost. Singkil was spared Aceh's later upheavals, while Tapak Tuan has been influenced only marginally.

Unlike the west coast, Aceh's east coast is located along Straits trading routes and is accessible from northern Aceh. Covered by swamps and mangroves, the east coast was "virtually uncultivated before 1840." But a growing global demand for pepper, the decline of west coast crops, and nearby Straits investors transformed the east almost overnight. In the 1850s, the pepper boom brought considerable Acehnese migration. During the Dutch invasion, Penang merchants helped keep the east coast apart from the fighting. The Dutch were supported by the uleebalang of Idi, which was exempted from the Dutch blockade and became a thriving port. The Dutch made East Aceh their primary investment site, establishing a petroleum industry, rubber plantations, and infrastructure. Due to ethnic Acehnese migration, East Aceh became a PUSA stronghold and has been a part of all major socio-political upheavals in the rest of Aceh. Instead of being the Wild East, East Aceh has been absorbed into Aceh.

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87 Mudhahar Ahmad, *Ketika Pala Mulai Berbunga*, 86.
88 Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 79. Others note that the region “accounted for little in earlier times from either a political or an economic point of view.” Ismail, “The Economic Position of the Uleebalang in the Late Colonial State in Aceh,” 1.
91 Ismail, “The Economic Position of the Uleebalang in the Late Colonial State in Aceh,” 5.
Further south, Tamiang has fluctuated between Acehnese and Malay rule. Tamiang evolved from a Sri Vijayan river outpost. It became a minor regional power in the seventeenth century, a buffer between Aceh and Malay ports. The nineteenth century saw the rise of Siak in present-day Riau as well as a resurgence of Acehnese power. With an eye to North Sumatra’s coastal pepper estates and Siak’s rising influence, the Sultan of Aceh sought “to re-assert Atjeh’s authority on the east coast.” In 1854, an Acehnese force landed in Serdang, prompting the Sultan of Siak to seek Dutch assistance. The 1858 Siak Treaty traded security for monopoly, and placed Tamiang with Langkat, Deli, and Asahan in East Sumatra. Like Singkil in the southwest, the Dutch ruled Tamiang prior to invading Aceh. Under Dutch rule, Tamiang became home to numerous plantations, as well as petroleum extraction centres linked to North Sumatra. In 1908, the Dutch incorporated Tamiang and Langsa into Aceh. Although home to substantial Acehnese minorities, Langsa and Tamiang have been insulated from Aceh’s struggles. At independence, while local Malays took part in violence against the local aristocracy, it was no Social Revolution. Tamiang Malays were not part of the Darul Islam Rebellion, as many local leaders were accustomed to North Sumatran rule, their economy linked to Medan.

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94 Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 16.
95 Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 3.
The histories of the Gayo and Alas people are largely unknown prior to the colonial era. The Gayo once inhabited coastal areas, but were beaten back by the Acehnese in the sixteenth century. A Gayo narrative illustrates the relationship between Gayo and Aceh. After failing to send tribute, a Gayo chief passed a test created by the Sultan, who dubbed him “the Clever Chief.” The chief returned home with the Sultan’s recognition and chose to resume sending tribute. Gayo communities were involved in tributary relationships with Acehnese rulers, but saw themselves as voluntary partners. Overall, Gayoland was not an area of concern for Acehnese Sultans, who were focused on maritime trade.

Gayo history becomes clearer after the Dutch invasion. When the Sultan sent envoys asking for help against the Dutch, many Gayo chiefs remained neutral. But as the conflict arrived in the hills in 1900, several Gayo chiefs and ulama supported the Acehnese. Years later, the Dutch began to govern the region. In 1913, they built a road from Lake Tawar to the north coast, providing them access to a region with a cool mountain climate, rich soil, and sparse populations. This was a site of early Javanese transmigration, mostly to

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tobacco plantations. Many Javanese migrants took local wives and integrated into Gayo communities, encouraging Gayo links to the entire colony. In 1928, local ulama opened a branch of Muhammadiyah, through which locals discovered a “wider, Indonesian world.” In 1934, they opened a Takengon Muhammadiyah school to rival the Dutch School. Gayoland was spared Aceh’s bloody social revolution, likely because the Dutch ruled directly, so that Gayo elites were not seen as co-opted in the same ways as Aceh’s ulzbek. The Gayo had mixed responses to the Darul Islam Rebellion. On one hand, they had little sympathy with the PUSA or an Acehnese province. But many Gayo agreed that the Republic should be Islamic. Gayo who joined the rebellion were generally connected to Acehnese guerrillas by personal ties, such as the Takengon ulama Ilyas Leube, one of Daud Beureueh’s students, who commanded a Gayo unit. Initially, few Gayo participated in the 1965 leftist purges, prompting an army official to criticize their lack of effort and encourage inter-village fighting. Once the violence began, it took on elements of neighbour versus neighbour, with few ideological elements.

Unlike the Gayo, the Alas are not mentioned in Acehnese chronicles. They are essentially Muslim Karo Batak, converting through Malay traders along the river connecting Alasland to Singkil. While some Gayo joined the fight against the Dutch, this was less the case among the Alas. The Dutch ruled the Alas directly, seeking to displace clan chiefs in favour of territorial rule. In 1934, the Dutch declared the region an environmental reserve. However, with considerable Alas population growth and migration, the park’s borders have sparked debates over land rights. The Alas have not participated in Acehnese conflicts beyond driving Chinese merchants from Kutacane in 1965.

Acehnese history is largely a story of the migration of foreign traders as well as Acehnese migrants in the coastal regions. Such openness has changed in the last century. Although Chinese investment has been welcomed, Chinese migrants have been persecuted.

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100 The population of the Takengon region grew from 13,000 in 1917, to 32,000 in 1940. Bowen, Sumatran Politics and Poetics, 79.
103 Bowen, Sumatran Politics and Poetics, 115; Sjamsuddin, The Republican Revolt, 178.
104 Bowen, Sumatran Politics and Poetics, 120.
105 Iwabuchi, The People of the Alas Valley, 19, 21.
The Javanese have had the most difficult time of any migrant group, likely owing to the political motives behind their arrival. Those who arrived under the Dutch prospered in the Gayo area, bringing with them pan-Indonesian organizations such as Serikat Islam and the Nationalist Party and inspiring Aceh-specific organizations such as the PUSA. Aceh’s Javanese have been perpetual scapegoats, bearing the brunt of the confused massacres of 1965. Despite cordial everyday relations, when political upheaval occurs in Aceh, the Javanese tend to become victims. This was especially true during the secessionist conflict.

**The Secessionist Conflict**

This section assesses the origins of the secessionist conflict. It is presented through chronological debates regarding the nature of the New Order in Aceh, GAM ideology and organization, GAM activities during the 1980s, the expansion of the conflict in 1998, the failure of early peace talks, the role of the tsunami, the causes of the conflict, and how it was experienced different across the province. Below, I have provided a timeline of the Aceh conflict to assist the reader in navigating these debates.

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**Figure 6- Timeline of the Aceh Conflict**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945-49</td>
<td>Ulama-led Social revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953-62</td>
<td>Darul Islam Rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Company owned by Hasan di Tiro fails to secure LNG service contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1976</td>
<td>Di Tiro and colleagues proclaim Acehnese independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>GAM initially defeated, leaders killed or forced abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Dozens of GAM recruits trained in Libya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-98</td>
<td>Indonesia launches major military operations, approximately 2000 civilians killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-98</td>
<td>Military control of Aceh, continued abuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Suharto falls, East Timor granted referendum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Civil society-led referendum movement, GAM expands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Indonesian military regroups, large-scale conflict throughout Aceh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2000</td>
<td>Humanitarian Pause brokered by the Henri Dunante Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2000</td>
<td>Growing violations of Humanitarian Pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2001</td>
<td>Humanitarian Pause officially ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2001</td>
<td>President Megawati ratifies NAD Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2002</td>
<td>Stavanger Declaration: GAM announces commitment to democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2002</td>
<td>Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2003</td>
<td>CoHA expires, major Indonesian assaults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2004</td>
<td>Boxing Day Tsunami, nearly 200,000 dead or missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2005</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding (Helsinki Agreement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2006</td>
<td>Provincial and district Executive Elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>National, provincial, and district Legislative Elections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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At the root of the Aceh conflict are disagreements over the nature of Suharto’s rule. Did the province and people of Aceh benefit from development under the New Order? Some writers argue that the New Order actually undermined Acehnese development. Damien Kingsbury asserts that “the people of Aceh were poor by the standards of Sumatra.” NGO publications routinely state that the New Order brought a “gradual impoverishment of Acehnese society” or that “there is irrefutable evidence that the Acehnese... did not benefit.” Others accept that development occurred, but add that it brought grievances which fuelled the secessionist conflict. Few studies acknowledge any positive legacies of Suharto’s rule. Rodd McGibbon notes that Aceh’s technocrats brought development to Aceh, but their power was usurped by the military in 1993. Aspinall recognizes that under the New Order, Aceh benefited from “the full range of development programs,” reaching a “barrage of development milestones.” Working with an army of technocrats (and the actual army), the New Order improved rural health, introduced family planning, brought electricity, built roads and bridges, and opened schools. In the rice fields surrounding Pidie, “the area under cultivation almost doubled between 1971 and 1982.” Aceh’s annual rice surplus tripled due to “numerous small irrigation projects”, not the sort of mega-projects the New Order is known for. Along with rice production, livestock, fruit, coffee, and rubber production also rose. Starting from an extremely low level of development after nearly a century of war, Aceh did benefit from development, especially in the first decade of the New Order.

109 Barber, Aceh: The Untold Story, 26.
110 The same author argues that despite being rich in natural resources, Aceh is “one of Indonesia’s less-developed provinces.” Priyambudi Sulistiyan, “Whither Aceh?” Third World Quarterly 22:3 (2001), 439.
111 David Brown, The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia (London: Routledge, 1994), 146; Miller, Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia, 4-5. However, the areas with the most economic development were the north coast, the heart of the secessionism, and the highlands, the most anti-GAM region in the province.
113 Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 54.
Even if development is admitted, some might respond that Acehnese were discriminated against— that “all things Acehnese were mocked.” Rare among separatist conflicts, Indonesians tend to respect the Acehnese. In ethno-secessionist conflicts, “time and again, it is the civil service issue that highlights grievances,” as the public sector is the primary source of economic and political power. Kell suggests that Aceh’s provincial power rested with the military, and in this, “Aceh has been no different from any other province.” In fact, Aceh’s provincial government remained in Acehnese hands and some Acehnese became administrative leaders in other provinces. Writers criticize Aceh’s technocrats, but they rarely consider that these were ethnic Acehnese from the PUSA Youth and Darul Islam Rebellion. McGibbon suggests that Acehnese held “key posts in the central government, the military and business in disproportionate numbers to the province’s small population” and that Acehnese in Suharto’s inner circle helped prevent “the military from dominating the local bureaucracy – as they had in other regions.” Critics acknowledge that “several prominent indigenous Acehnese” even succeeded in national politics, but cast this off as “venal opportunism.” This might be true, but it undermines claims of discrimination. Exclusion was evident in high-tech positions, especially in the petroleum sector. But few Acehnese were qualified— critics should be angry that Acehnese Engineering Departments did not open sooner.

The exclusion argument is often extended into military ranks. Many writers deny the existence or significance of ethnic Acehnese soldiers in the Indonesian military. Schlegel...
states that the military tended to be staffed by non-Acehnese and Davies notes that "Jakarta's forces in Aceh overwhelmingly comprised non-local" units. Miller criticizes the army in Aceh for only being 20% ethnic Acehnese, reflecting "deep mutual mistrust between the TNI and the local population." The 20% estimate seems high compared to other provinces and other separatist conflicts. Soldiers are rarely stationed in their home district in any country. Given that troop levels in Aceh were between 10,000 and 30,000, this suggests that thousands of Acehnese soldiers were stationed in Aceh, not to mention in other provinces. Aceh actually had high levels of recruitment. A better criticism is that the military featured few Acehnese officers, as leaders tended to be ethnic Javanese.

Critics are trapped between arguing that "rapid economic change" disrupted Acehnese society on one hand, and that Aceh did not witness "the rapid structural changes that have occurred elsewhere in Indonesia" on the other. It is important to criticize the New Order for the right things. Aceh did witness economic development and Acehnese were not excluded, although petroleum-related jobs were out of reach for most Acehnese. While Aceh benefited from and often implemented New Order economic policies, it was not Acehnese who made them, and opposition to these policies was not tolerated. Despite some accomplishments, the New Order was also a centralized, violent, and corrupt regime, traits which deepened with age. Severe corruption was especially evident in the petroleum sector. The petroleum industry had been a fixture in East Aceh and Tamiang for almost a century. In the early 1970s, a large liquid natural gas (LNG) deposit was discovered in the heart of Aceh, outside of Lhokseumawe. The contract was awarded to a consortium of Mobil Oil, Pertamina, and the Indonesian military. One of the losing bids for a service contract was Doral International, owned by an Acehnese businessman named Hasan di Tiro. After this, di Tiro and a group of Acehnese elites created what would become the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM).

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127 Schlegel, "Technocrats in a Muslim Society," 236.
128 Davies, Indonesia's War Over Aceh, 68. At the height of the conflict, Emmerson advised that only native soldiers should be stationed in Aceh. Davies responded that Acehnese do not join the army, and soldiers from Aceh had "distinctive Batak clan names." He seems unaware that Aceh's Kluet, Alas, and some Gayo, who feature heavily in recruitment, have the same clan system as the Batak. Don Emmerson, "Indonesia's Eleventh Hour in Aceh," PACNET 49 (17 December 1999); Davies, Indonesia's War Over Aceh, 63.
129 Miller, Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia, 114.
130 Ethnic Acehnese also provided many recruits during the Darul Islam Rebellion. Sjamsuddin, The Republican Revolt, 13.
132 Kell, The Roots of the Acehnese Rebellion, 13, 22.
The grandson of a leading anti-Dutch guerrilla, Hasan di Tiro was born near Pidie in a sub-district bearing his family's name. In his youth, di Tiro studied under Daud Beureueh. As Indonesia gained independence, di Tiro was studying in Central Java, where he authored leaflets emphasizing the inseparability of Aceh and Indonesia. Di Tiro then studied at Columbia University and worked at the Indonesian Consulate. When the Darul Islam Rebellion broke out, di Tiro was shocked at Indonesian abuses and appointed himself the Darul Islam Ambassador to the United Nations. Edward Aspinall has undertaken considerable detective work on di Tiro's career from here. Di Tiro established ties with leading American Cold Warriors, framing Darul Islam as anti-Communist. After working in Saigon, di Tiro returned to Aceh to further his business interests. After losing the Arun contract, he formed Aceh Merdeka, which originally consisted of about seventy men, including educated elites, young men from his home region, and Darul Islam veterans.

What was the GAM's ideology? Di Tiro's early writings feature anti-capitalist and anti-colonialist language, writing that Aceh was "at the feet of multinationals to be raped," and that oil companies "buy and sell us in international market." Pages earlier, di Tiro also state that he is a successful businessman, moving in the highest circles and working with the "top 50 US corporations in the fields of petrochemicals, shipping, construction, aviation, manufacturing and food processing industries." Anti-capitalism featured primarily as a source of grievance, while anti-colonialism mixed historical grievance with legal arguments for independence. GAM leaders made creative use of United Nations documents to frame Aceh's independence as a legal right. Di Tiro's *Achh under International Law* bombards the reader with statements in several languages and various UN statutes. Claiming that Indonesia is a "fraudulent country" which should be liquidated, it is unlikely that di Tiro expected the UN would dismantle the Indonesian state. Just as important is that he expected that such claims would provide a sense of authority in the eyes of Acehnese and foreign observers. To claim a right to self-determination, di Tiro had to show that Aceh was not simply Indonesia's periphery, but was instead a nation in its own right. Ethnic

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133 Anthony Reid, “Conflicting Histories: Aceh and Indonesia,” in *An Indonesian Frontier*.
nationalism is one of the few consistent themes in GAM statements from 1976 through to 2005, as well as today. Aspinall’s rich study of Acehnese nationalism shows how “GAM leaders provide a textbook case—indeed, almost a parody—of ethnohistory.” Di Tiro writes that in 1873, Aceh carried out “the first major European military defeat in world history,” and in 1942, Aceh provided “the only non-European and non-American, native resistance, faced by Japan Imperial Army in the whole East Asia.” Since Aceh had diplomatic ties with the British, di Tiro mused that Aceh should join the Commonwealth or the United Kingdom. The most grandiose statement is di Tiro’s opera of Acehnese history, with the 1812 Overture leading us through the Dutch invasion and Vivaldi signalling independence in 1978.

An element of GAM nationalism which has found some traction is di Tiro’s claim to be Sultan, or more formally, “the 8th Teungku Syik di Tiro Dr. Hassan Muhammad, the 41st head of state of Aceh.” His claim is based on his story that, before his capture, the last Sultan of Aceh had passed the title to Cik di Tiro, made official by the Sultan’s seal (chap sikiunj). Reid shows that the Sultan actually recognized Cik di Tiro as Aceh’s chief religious official. Cik di Tiro died in Pidie in 1891, a dozen years before the Sultan was captured in Central Aceh. With his death, the mantle of Aceh’s chief religious leader was passed to Teungku Samalanga, not Cik di Tiro’s “swaggering son, Mat Amin.” Cik di Tiro’s sons would become “a scourge on the populace”, amassing the wealth which helped young Hasan attain his education. Di Tiro also claims the status of a religious figure, often referred to as Tenjku. His grandfather was an ulama, but the rank is not hereditary, giving

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138 Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 69.
143 Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 251.
144 Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 253. Mat Amin used his father’s name for power, and became “a great burden on the people.” He was later disowned by his father. Hurgronje, The Acehnese, 185.
145 Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 273.
the GAM leader no claim to the title ‘Teungku.’ Di Tiro was no Sultan and no ulama, although his wealth qualified him as an uleebalang, a title which requires only power and followers. This is the title that Cik di Tiro’s sons took for themselves after the death of their father. Interestingly, ‘Teuku’ was the only title not claimed by the GAM founder.¹⁴⁷

Such criticisms should not suggest that GAM or Acehnese nationalism should be taken lightly. For many Acehnese, GAM resistance is a source of pride, an inheritance connecting Aceh to earlier historical eras. GAM framed previous conflicts as a single unrelenting fight for Acehnese independence, “a 122 years struggle without let up,” though ignoring the Social Revolution and massacre of leftists.¹⁴⁸ The continuity argument is not totally without merit. Aceh’s many historical conflicts all emanated from the north coast. Miller makes a convincing case that the Darul Islam Rebellion and the secessionist conflict were fought for local autonomy, with secessionism growing from the failure of the autonomy promised by Sukarno.¹⁴⁹ In his early years, di Tiro studied at Daud Beureueh’s school, and many early GAM leaders were Darul Islam veterans. But the secessionist conflict should not be seen as an extension of earlier struggles. For Robinson, “so legendary is Aceh’s reputation for rebelliousness and Islamic militancy, that it is tempting to view the recent Aceh Merdeka uprisings as new manifestations of an Acehnese tradition.”¹⁵⁰ He argues that the links between the Darul Islam Rebellion and Acehnese secessionism are minimal. For one, they were temporally separate, with fifteen years between the rebellion and creation of GAM and forty years between their respective peaks. They were also fought by different groups. The Darul Islam Rebellion was led by highly respected ulama, whereas GAM leaders were businessmen who were initially unable to mobilize support. Many former Darul Islam figures became fixtures in provincial politics, the GAM’s enemies. The goals of the Darul Islam Movement and secessionist leaders were distinct, one concerned with Islamic brotherhood and changing Indonesia, the other with local ethnic nationalism and independence.

The initial GAM uprising in 1978 was a failure, lacking weapons, training, and public support. The remnants of the movement fled to Malaysia, Singapore, Libya, and Sweden.

¹⁴⁷ According to Robinson, di Tiro “is far closer, sociologically and politically, to the Acehnese aristocratic Uleebalang class.” Robinson, “Rawan is as Rawan Does,” 133.
¹⁴⁹ Miller, Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia.
¹⁵⁰ Robinson, “Rawan is as Rawan Does,” 132-133.
The 1980s was a turbulent decade in Aceh, but it is not clear whether violence was the work of separatists, criminal networks, intra-military clashes, or all three. Those who emphasize criminal elements risk being criticized for depoliticizing the rebel struggle, while those who ignore them disregard firsthand reports and exaggerate GAM continuity. Both GAM and the Indonesian military support the interpretation that GAM was behind the disturbances of the 1980s. For the rebels, it made their movement appear strong, and this allowed the Indonesian army to justify its heavy-handed approach. The question is not whether or not GAM existed— their leaders lived abroad, new recruits trained in Libya, and some Acehnese remained members during this time. Did GAM expand its operations and was it responsible for the violence of the 1980s?

Elizabeth Drexler suggests that violence in the 1980s was not carried out by a coherent secessionist movement. She argues that writers have projected a powerful post-1998 rebel group over a murky history. Much of the unrest of the 1980s was not secessionist in nature. In the early 1980s, the Indonesian military acknowledged that members in its ranks were cultivating marijuana and involved in organized crime. Internal army purges resulted in a number of jobless soldiers turning to crime, referred to as the “security disrupter movement” (gerakan pengacau keamanan, GPK). Many of those arrested or killed during the 1980s were former soldiers, and were not connected to Aceh Merdeka.

Further, early violence was located in the west coast and the highlands, away from the GAM heartland. GAM leaders were typically bellicose, issuing volumes of books and press releases, but were silent during this era, leading many experts to believe that secessionism was a dead issue. It seems that the violence of the 1980s was criminal, not secessionist in nature.

Others have challenged this view. Marcus Mietzner is highly critical, charging that Drexler denies that GAM existed, calling her project “a bizarre scholarly blunder.” To show that GAM was a “well-organized separatist organization that operated throughout the

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152 This reflected a national struggle within the army. Crouch, The Army and Politics in Indonesia, 293.
1980s and 1990s,” Mietzner cites Aspinall, who argues that the violence of the late 1980s was viewed as criminal, but “it soon became clear that this violence was a new incarnation of Aceh Merdeka.” Aspinall is persuasive that GAM networks remained during the 1980s, but does not demonstrate that GAM was responsible for much of the violence. While much of the violence of the 1980s was not caused by the rebels, GAM did carry out some attacks, especially along the northern coast, and over time, criminal and secessionist groups seemed to have converged. Criminal unrest allowed GAM to grow, as security forces were disorganized, guns and money were freely available, and GAM recruits returned from Libya to take advantage of the chaos. GAM recruited many soldiers and criminals; “Whoever was brave, even if he had a criminal background, we let them join; we needed people who were brave.” These recruits hurt GAM’s image, but allowed the rebels to expand beyond Pidie and gain sorely needed coercive power. Many villagers and activists were unsure of the identities of GAM, army, and criminals, as the groups tended to blur together. In 1989, the army declared Aceh a military area, attacking criminals and terrorizing villages. GAM became a rallying point for a variety of Acehnese who were disillusioned or abused during this era. The violence of the 1980s allowed GAM to expand into a powerful organization.

The rise of criminal groups and a growing rebel threat caused great concern among Indonesian authorities. At this point, a military response was not unreasonable— the same would happen in any country. But for the next decade, especially between 1989 and 1993, the response was simply brutal. Miller reminds us that there was never an official doctrine defining Aceh as a ‘military operations area’ (daerah operasi militer, or DOM). But in popular memory, the ‘DOM-era’ was a decade of Martial Law. The army controlled local politics at the expense of Aceh’s technocrats, which were now a “spent force.” The army also came to control the economy, running protection rackets, the drug trade, and government contracts. Most importantly, the army tortured and killed thousands of persons. It is difficult to exaggerate their brutality. Estimates from 1989-1993 include 3000 dead and 1400

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156 Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 84.
157 Cited in Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 165.
159 Critics allege that references to the violence as criminal were intended to discredit the GAM’s political aims. It is unclear why the military would want to deny the existence of a political enemy—it is usually accused of making them up threats to justify its presence.
Military policy was based on the concept of ‘Shock Therapy’—scaring rebels, criminals, and neutrals away from rebellion. Many units came to Aceh after years of service in East Timor, replicating brutal policies such as the “fence of legs” (pagar betis), wherein lines of civilians were made to walk through the jungle to flush out rebels, often to be caught in the crossfire. Scores of human rights reports document individual cases and, after the fall of Suharto, state organizations and military leaders apologized for the worst abuses.

At the end of the New Order in 1998, Aceh was in chaos. After a decade of military control and flagrant human rights abuses, Aceh witnessed mass mobilization against the Indonesian state. But GAM was not the only force demanding change in Aceh. Student organizations led mass demonstrations and even provincial elites criticized the central government. After East Timor was granted a referendum by President Habibie, student groups demanded the same in Aceh, leading to referendum rallies which were at first opposed by GAM. Rebel leaders managed this groundswell with considerable skill, and with the army weakened, managed to co-opt the movement. The rebels soon controlled many administrative posts along the north coast, where their flag flew openly. For the first time, the conflict expanded beyond the northern districts, fought on the west coast, Aceh Besar, and the Gayo Highlands.

What was the nature of GAM’s organizational structure? During the first uprising in 1976, di Tiro’s secessionist forces were more of a propaganda movement than an armed group, consisting of a dozen educated elites, Darul Islam veterans, and youths from di Tiro’s home district. In the 1980s, it seems that GAM had three parts: its leadership abroad, which eventually settled in Sweden as well as Malaysia; a small group of Commanders who were being trained in Libya or who had defected from the Indonesian army; and a skeletal structure of GAM agents on the ground in Aceh. GAM’s capacity at last matched its rhetoric in the late 1990s. GAM forces bought weapons from Indonesian soldiers and even purchased arms directly from government contractors in Java, while also importing arms through southern Thailand. On paper, GAM possessed military and civilian wings, and were supervised by its exiled leaders. The rebels even created district and sub-district units and

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administrations,\textsuperscript{163} and in their strongholds near Pidie, implemented elements of Islamic Law.\textsuperscript{164} In practice, GAM’s leadership was somewhat fragmented and its capacity varied considerably. Decisions were made on the ground by regional commanders (\textit{Panglima}). Recruits varied as well, with many on the northern coast driven by ideology or a desire for revenge, while in other areas, GAM recruits were more likely to be opportunistic. As I show below, GAM was a very different entity in the west coast and interior than it was along the northern coast, where it was more cohesive and less predatory. Such organizational features will become apparent in the coming chapters, as civilian options depended largely on the nature of local GAM units.

By 2000, the Indonesian military (now called \textit{Tentara Nasional Indonesia}, TNI) had regrouped and was set to collide with the powerful rebel movement. Though the army underwent reforms and committed fewer abuses, killings continued and were increasingly publicized, leading the army to attack civil society groups, which were assumed to be pro-GAM. The greatest impact of the new military operations was that they sent a message to Aceh that \textit{Reformasi} was little different from the New Order. But there were also steps towards peace. The Henri Dunante Centre (HDC) helped broker a series of ceasefires known as the Humanitarian Pause in May 2000. This was not a peace agreement, but was instead a break in fighting to allow assistance and initiate dialogue. Each side used the Pause to consolidate its forces. The Pause probably strengthened GAM, which eliminated rival factions, and civil society was sidelined.\textsuperscript{165} On the Indonesian side, the “manifest disunity” of the state was laid bare, with the President, legislature, and TNI at odds with one another.\textsuperscript{166} Through various extensions, the Pause limped on until April 2001, but on the ground, it ended long before this. Alongside the sticks of military strikes, President Megawati offered the carrot of Special Autonomy (\textit{Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam}, NAD) Law. NAD Law was rejected by the rebels, as well as by many Acehnese, because without a change in Aceh’s government, autonomy would simply empower corrupt provincial elites. NAD Law was further undermined because it was coupled with continued assaults. The HDC did not give up, continuing to go between both sides with help from respected

\textsuperscript{164} Shane Barter, “Ulama, the State, and War: Community Islamic Leaders in the Aceh Conflict,” \textit{Contemporary Islam} 5:1 (January 2011); pp. 19-36.
\textsuperscript{165} Drexler, \textit{Aceh, Indonesia}, 41.
international diplomats, leading to the December 2002 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA). This time, there were international monitors, a Joint Security Council (JSC), and international donors. Like the Pause, the CoHA did not have a clear goal and failed to address the fundamental issue of independence or autonomy. The HDC’s peace zones are representative of its failings. The HDC first tried to create weapons-free areas during the Humanitarian Pause, but the project began three days before the Pause collapsed. The HDC responded not by rethinking the strategy or reinforcing the zones, but by creating new ones, which were simply announced, with little implementation on the ground. It was unclear how these zones were expected to contribute to province-wide peace.

The CoHA ended in May 2003. Indonesia arrested GAM negotiators, rebuffed international supporters, and launched new attacks. The following two years of military assaults weakened the rebels. Several GAM Commanders were killed, weapons shipments were slowed, and many recruits who joined GAM at its peak returned to their villages as the movement lost momentum. Another change was that Indonesia had become a democracy, one not easily vilified, and had regained coherence after the 1998 crisis. After 9/11, international factors shifted in Indonesia's favour, as Western governments were in search of Muslim allies and supportive of military strikes against violent non-state actors. Despite these shifts and GAM’s weakened position, the conflict still had no end in sight. GAM leaders remained safe in northern Europe, knowing that fresh human rights abuses had the potential to create a new generation of willing recruits.

On December 26, 2004 an earthquake caused a massive tidal wave which flattened Banda Aceh and the west coast, killing almost 200,000 people. After initial reluctance and some shameful military assaults, Indonesian authorities opened the doors to international

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170 The Indonesian government worked with the Swedish police seeking the arrest of GAM leaders for organizing the attacks from abroad. The effort failed due to lack of evidence, but showed a more nuanced approach from the Indonesian state. This also showed the bias of many human rights groups, who were critical of the effort, even though it was non-violent.
assistance. Within a year, the conflict was over. The Helsinki Agreement, also known as the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), was signed in August 2005. The tsunami did not end the conflict, but instead accelerated events already in motion. GAM had been weakened, a new Presidential team wanted peace, and new talks were already scheduled. The tsunami accelerated the talks and brought global support. Observers credit Finland’s Maarti Ahtisaari, who led the talks with a forceful style, as well as efforts by President Yudhoyono and Vice President Kalla to push aside hard-liners. GAM deserves substantial credit for dropping its demand for independence on the condition that it could form a political party. The peace has since held, and it appears that Acehnese secessionism is over.

What caused the Aceh conflict? Potential causes include Aceh itself (cultural explanations), the Indonesian state (political centralization, economic control, human rights abuses), and the Free Aceh Movement (popularity and ethnonationalism). Primordial explanations were favoured by the Dutch, who saw the Acehnese as “by nature more warlike and from old more devoted to war than any race in the neighbouring islands” (even though it was they who attacked Aceh). Aspinall points out that, after centuries of war, it is reasonable to expect violence to seep into the social realm. Reid makes a similar point: “The view fostered by Snouck Hurgronje and his contemporaries [is] that the Atjehnese were a fanatical, anarchic, and treacherous people... What truth there was to this view was the result of two decades of warfare.” Past conflicts can reach into the present by providing tales of heroism, historical symbols to help legitimize new struggles, a reserve of trained veterans and arms, and ready-made networks. Clearly, historical conditioning plays some role. In Chapter Four, I will show how civilian support for GAM was partly a sociocultural phenomenon.

Most authors blame the Indonesian state. The military created “the very conditions that justif[ied] its rule” and “far from being the last bastion against national disunity and instability all these years, the New Order itself was largely responsible for the

171 Hurgronje, The Acehnese, xxiv.
172 Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 102.
173 Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 288.
174 This may seem sympathetic to the rebels, but upon closer inspection, suggests that their popularity was a reaction and “denies legitimacy to the Free Aceh Movement and its goal of Acehnese political sovereignty.” Nessen, “Sentiments Made Visible,” 177-178.
serious and protracted violence in Aceh.” Many authors attribute the conflict to New Order centralization. Miller argues that a lack of autonomy motivated the Darul Islam Rebellion and the secessionist conflict. Part of the centralization argument is economic, namely control of the petroleum sector. Accounts are replete with statements about the province’s fantastic wealth: Aceh provides 25% of Mobil Oil’s profits, generates US$1 billion annually, and that “Western interests [were] making astronomical profits from the enormously rich oil, gas, resources and gold of Acheh-Sumatra.” Michael Ross defines the Aceh conflict as a resource war, suggesting that the oil boom “may have caused social disruptions that eventually contributed to the 1989 return of G.A.M.” This said, resource explanations are not satisfying. What accounts for the lag between the peak of LNG extraction in the 1980s and the war in 1998? Another complicating factor is spatial. Resource grievances explain rebel support in Lhokseumawe, but it cannot explain why rebel popularity was highest in Pidie, why the rebels were weak near the Langsa oil fields, or why the conflict spread to other regions in 1998. A partial explanation is that resource exploitation “violated what might be called an Acehnese moral economy” and became a symbol of Indonesian misrule. It is important to differentiate between mass and elite grievances. As a mass grievance, the resource argument is not convincing beyond the immediate Lhokseumawe region. However, there can be no doubt that petroleum represented a grievance among elites—di Tiro owned a petrochemical business, and the loss of a contract seems to have triggered the formation of the secessionist movement.

The control of Aceh’s petroleum resources triggered the creation of a secessionist movement and contributed to mass dissatisfaction, but writers need to explain why ordinary civilians would join or support the conflict. Mass mobilization lies in another form of blaming Indonesia: human rights abuses. By most accounts, “human rights abuses by the

176 Robinson, “Rawan is as Rawan Does,” 128.
177 Miller, Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia. It is important to note that the administrators who were most affected by these changes were not the ones who rebelled. Many of Aceh’s former Darul Islam rebels became administrators, and fared well under the New Order.
179 Thaib, The Roots of the Achehnese Struggle, 29.
military have played a— if not the— major role in deepening Acehnese alienation.” Human rights abuses feature heavily in interviews with combatants and civilians, fuelling the civil society movement, bringing international attention, and creating willing recruits. The threat of death and loss of loved ones helped convince thousands of people to take part in armed rebellion and brought widespread support for separatism.

The final group of possible causes relate to the rebels themselves. Sulaiman notes that most writers “think the root causes of the separatist movement are the New Order regime,” but the New Order was abusive across the country without having the same effect, demanding attention to rebel forces. Attributing the conflict to GAM represents a point of agreement between GAM and the military. Nessen agrees with the army that the Dom era was “less an overreaction than a necessary response” to a powerful rebel movement. But there is little evidence that GAM’s message actually resonated among Acehnese. As I shall discuss in Chapter Four, rebel supporters do not cite the appeal of GAM, but instead their anger towards the army. The most important way that the rebels brought about the conflict relates to their skill in framing events and constructing a unified movement. Aspinall notes that the conflict required leaders to “reinterpret” resource exploitation for mass consumption. Without the frames and organization provided by GAM leaders, Acehnese anger towards human rights abuses would have lacked direction, resulting in general unrest, but not a sustained conflict.

Regardless of what caused the secessionist conflict, it appears to be over. If large-scale violence does return, it will probably be in the form of organized crime and turf wars. After the Helsinki Agreement, the former rebels transformed into the KPA (Komite Peralihan Aceh, Aceh Transition Committee), maintaining substantial political and economic influence across the province. In the December 2006 district and provincial executive elections, many former rebels came to power, including Irwandi Yusuf, Aceh’s first directly-elected Governor, with Muhammad Nazar, the former leader of the referendum movement, as his

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183 Aspinall, “Violence and Identity Formation in Aceh under Indonesian Rule,” 149-150. Aspinall calls human rights abuses “the most important” factor in the conflict, but also suggests a need to “move beyond” grievance-based explanations. Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 250, 82.
184 Sulaiman, “From Autonomy to Periphery,” 121.
Vice Governor. The elections revealed a split between GAM leaders in Sweden and soldiers on the ground. Supported by the latter, Irwandi Yusuf was victorious, and has worked to manage international assistance and reconstruction, cooperate with Indonesian authorities, maintain rebel unity, and scale back Sharia laws. The success of the former rebels continued in the 2009 Indonesian legislative elections, in which GAM ran as Partai Aceh (Aceh Party, PA). PA fared well, securing 45% of the vote against 44 other parties, good for one third of the seats. The 2006 and 2009 elections are clear testaments to the popularity of the former rebels, especially in the Pidie region.188 This said, President Yudhoyono’s Partai Demokrat (PD) won as much support in national legislative elections as PA won at the provincial level. Most of Aceh’s voters supported the former rebels and the Indonesian President, showing support for the newfound peace.

Regional and Minority Perspectives

The above account of the conflict is largely from the north coast, and for many years, the war was a north coast phenomenon.189 In Bireuen, GAM protected locals from the TNI and provided governance. But in other regions, GAM was more likely to conduct raids, kidnap, or extort. Without looking to regional dynamics, the basic question of rebel popularity cannot be addressed.

To affirm that regional conflict dynamics were as distinctive as I suggest, I conducted a simple content analysis of major human rights reports between 1990 and 2004, searching for district and town names. By far the most common locations cited were the north coast: North Aceh (225 references), Lhokseumawe (173), Pidie (154), and Aceh Timur (154). Places such as Langsa (37 references), Aceh Besar (58), Takengon (36), West Aceh (32), and South Aceh (102) come next, with almost all references beginning in 2000. Some regions are barely mentioned at all: Tamiang (6), Southeast Aceh (2), Kutacane (1), and Singkil (0). Estimates from 2003 suggest that GAM had over two thousand members in Pidie and over 1300 in North Aceh, with hundreds in East Aceh, West Aceh, and Aceh Besar, and fewer than one hundred in southern districts.190 The conflict differed across the province—the following pages discuss how.

189 Robinson, “Rawan is as Rawan Does,” 132; Sulistiyanto, “Whither Aceh?” 441.
190 GAM weapon counts range from 889 in North Aceh to four in Southeast Aceh. Schulze, The Free Aceh Movement, 18, 32.
As in previous conflicts, Aceh’s west coast—Aceh Jaya to Aceh Barat Daya—was initially aloof from the recent conflict. The region is largely ethnically Acehnese, but geographically isolated and sparsely populated. Unlike other parts of the province, the west gained little investment under the New Order. The coast remained Aceh’s Wild West, the realm of big men—historically, *uleebalang* now bosses (*preman*) with military connections through the drug trade. The conflict reached the west coast around 2000. At this point, many local big men became local GAM leaders, whether recognized by GAM or not, with their personal gangs passing as GAM units. A GAM Commander in Teunom illustrates the politics of the west coast. Referring to himself as the “Jungle Tiger”, the Commander is a rich man, selling swallow's nests, sharks fins, and jungle products to Hong Kong via Medan. As the conflict spread to the west coast, the Jungle Tiger styled himself as a GAM Commander.\(^{191}\) When I asked GAM officials in Bireuen about him, I was told that he was not really GAM, but was well connected and helped their cause from time to time.\(^{192}\) The Jungle Tiger exemplifies the conflict along the west coast, where the conflict was an

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\(^{191}\) Interview with “Jungle Tiger”, *Panglima* GAM Teunom, West Aceh (30 April 2006).

\(^{192}\) Interview with “Kowboy” Effendi, *Panglima* GAM Bireuen, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
extremely ambiguous affair. The army arrived to this uncertain environment and committed some of the worst abuses in the province at this time, nurturing local support for secessionism. Perhaps recognizing that local elites were loosely aligned with the rebels, the Indonesian government created several new district governments here, offering power to local elites. In 2002, Aceh Jaya and Nagan Raya districts were created from West Aceh, and just south, Aceh Barat Daya was carved from South Aceh. Local elites also demanded a new province, Aceh Barat Selatan (Aceh West South, ABAS), but this has not gained much support. The 2004 Tsunami levelled the west coast, and Meulaboh became a centre of foreign involvement, with local bosses changing to become NGO leaders. The Jungle Tiger changed his stripes again, working with environmental NGOs and working with Japanese aid agencies in road construction contracts.

Moving south to Aceh’s Malay districts, there was no conflict in Singkil, which is separated from Aceh by a sizable swamp reserve. There is a strong sense that the conflict is Aceh’s problem, not theirs. In 1999, Singkil was among the first of Aceh’s new districts, with the city of Subulussalam gaining separate Kota status in 2007. Singkil has been part of another movement to establish a new province Aceh Leuser Antara (Aceh Leuser Interior, ALA), which, unlike ABAS, has some local support, reflecting frustration with GAM and the provincial government as well as distinct ethnic identities. Just north of Singkil, Kluet and Aneuk Jamee regions witnessed intense fighting starting in 2000. Military assaults became particularly intense in 2003, when unknown assailants attacked local villages, displacing thousands of persons. GAM did not seem to trust Malays, seeking support from local Acehnese, while the army did not trust Acehnese. This exposed previously peaceful communities to significant ethnic tensions and violence. It seems that GAM’s strategy was to displace Malays into towns. In 2006, the IDPs returned, but Acehnese and displaced Malays have remained divided. So while Singkil was outside of the conflict, South Aceh witnessed ethnic violence and mass displacement.

Moving east, the Tamiang region was part of conflict-ridden East Aceh. Here, GAM took part in bombings and kidnappings, including the kidnapping of Indonesian journalists.

193 Discussions in coffee shop, Subulussalam (21 April 2009).
In 2001, the city of Langsa was detached from Aceh Timur, while in 2002, Aceh Tamiang district was formed. These changes were part of a national trend towards creating new districts and cities (pemekaran, blossoming), but were also politically motivated, detaching governable Malay regions from rebellious East Aceh.

Like western Aceh, the highlands were largely detached from the conflict before 1998, and when it did arrive, it took on a radically different character than the war around Pidie. GAM was built primarily around Acehnese ethnic identity, helping it gain support among Acehnese, but making it difficult to find support among minorities. In Gayo areas, the conflict became widespread after 1999. Some Gayo joined GAM, as did many local Acehnese. But for the most part, the Gayo region was a bastion of state power. Not only did GAM fail to find support, it encountered widespread opposition, as the conflict here was largely a war between GAM and local militias. GAM’s failure in the highlands was not a foregone conclusion. Many of the factors which are said to have caused the Aceh conflict were present in the Gayo region. Under the New Order, Gayoland was home to rapid economic development and Javanese migration. But many factors hurt their chances for expansion here, including historical ethnic tensions, a fear of Acehnese domination, and powerful pro-Indonesia Gayo elites. Most importantly, GAM did not arrive in defense of the community against TNI attacks—they arrived attacking local Javanese residents and demanding money. GAM targeted Javanese transmigrants, but after a century of living in Central Aceh, many Javanese and Gayo had intermarried. Ethnic chauvinism was another major barrier to GAM power here. Many Acehnese tend to assume that the Gayo are “integrated with the Acehnese through Islam and through long-term subordination to the Sultanate of Aceh.” But many Gayo define themselves in terms of local and pan-Indonesian identities. At the elite level, this is exemplified by Iwan Gayo, a coffee exporter and leading proponent of Gayo cultural renewal. As much as he is a local

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196 A former Gayo leader from the Darul Islam Rebellion, Ilyas Leube, joined the first Aceh Merdeka uprising, but was killed in North Aceh in 1982. KOMPAS, “Three Free Aceh Figures Killed” (20 April 1982).
197 Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 20, 169.
198 Bowen, Sumatran Politics and Poetics, 122.
199 Sulaiman, “From Autonomy to Periphery,” 123.
200 “Gayo support for Golkar is also due to an underlying shift in Gayo political, economic, and cultural orientation from Aceh to the nation as a whole.” Bowen, Sumatran Politics and Poetics, 124.
201 Iwan Gayo co-chaired the ALA advocacy committee (Komite Persiapan Pembentukan Provinsi Aceh Leuser Antara, KP3ALA). Another leader of the ALA campaign is Iwan Gayo’s brother, Tagore Abubakar, a militia leader, Golkar figure, and Bupati of Bener Meriah. Tagore has provided land for Javanese IDPs, largely for to alter his district’s demographic balance, but also to help displaced families.
nationalist, Iwan Gayo is also an Indonesian nationalist. His father founded the Gayo chapter of Sukarno’s Nationalist Party in the 1960s.\footnote{Omar Prihandono, “Iwan’s Info Lifeline for Students Lives On,” Jakarta Post (09 May 2004).} Iwan Gayo has authored several textbooks, including the 800-page “Indonesian State Almanac: Master Encyclopaedia” (Almanak Negara Indonesia—Buku Pintar Master), now in its 35\textsuperscript{th} edition, as well as biographies of Sukarno, Megawati, and Amien Rais.\footnote{Soeryo Winoto, “Iwan Gayo: An Ambitious Encyclopaedia Author,” Jakarta Post (18 March 2006).} He ran for Aceh’s legislature in 2004 and in 2009 he ran for the Indonesian Senate (Deve\textsuperscript{n} Perw\textsuperscript{e}lik\textsuperscript{i}an Daerah), donning distinct highland cowboy dress. Iwan Gayo is a flamboyant academic and local nationalist, not unlike di Tiro. He illustrates the shift to local and national identities, and away from Aceh.

Unlike Gayo districts, there was little fighting in Alas areas. Many Alas youths, especially those at Babussalam University, were caught up in the events of 1999-2002, sympathetic to Acehnese civil society, but unwilling to join a separatist group with ethnic Acehnese overtones. Like Gayoland, many Aceh Tenggara elites have rallied in defense of the Republic, such as timber baron Armen Desky, one of the leaders of the ALA movement.

Aceh’s Javanese communities experienced the conflict like no other group. Javanese farmers first arrived to Aceh under the Dutch and continued to arrive during the New Order, now joined by technicians, administrators, and military officials. Many writers refer to “large-scale transmigration” under the New Order.\footnote{Miller, Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia, 190 fn.} For some, transmigration revealed “sinister objectives”, namely the “Javanisation” of the Acehnese.\footnote{Barber, Aceh: The Untold Story, 25.} But compared to other provinces, Aceh “has never been a major transmigration recipient.”\footnote{Dawood and Sjafrizal, “Aceh: The LNG Boom and Enclave Development,” 110.} Reid notes that Aceh has “remained remarkably homogenous.”\footnote{Anthony Reid, Imperial Alchemy: Nationalism and Political Identity in Southeast Asia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 136.} Javanese make up seven percent of Aceh’s population, compared to thirty three percent in North Sumatra, twenty five percent in Riau, and twelve percent in Papua.\footnote{Suryadinata, Arifin, and Ananta, Indonesia’s Population, 34.} The most virulent anti-Javanese reactions developed in the densely populated north coast, which was not a primary transmigration site, while areas with higher numbers of transmigrants such as Central Aceh witnessed few tensions.

From its inception GAM has struggled against ‘Javanese colonialism’, attacking government forces and Javanese in Aceh. GAM leaders worked to equate ‘Indonesian’ with
'Javanese', who were seen as “effeminate”, descended from cavemen and monkeys. But many Acehnese take great pride in their multiethnic identity and openness to outsiders, and Javanese communities had lived harmoniously alongside the Acehnese for years, with high rates of intermarriage. According to Javanese IDPs in North Sumatra, “there was no tension leading up to the conflict.” Violence against the Javanese exploded in 1999, as GAM came to control many districts and cleanse them of Javanese. GAM posted notices in villages, warning all Javanese to leave Aceh. GAM Commander Sofyan Daud issued demanded that “non-Acehnese residents” must “leave the country of our forebears as soon as possible.” An estimated 10,000 Javanese IDPs fled to Central Aceh alone, while other camps formed in North Sumatra. Many writers ignore or apologize for GAM attacks on Javanese communities, perhaps stating that their deaths were inevitable in “a war of survival.” Nessen states that GAM ethnic violence “rings hollow”, but continues that “Of the many ethnic groups in Aceh, GAM has had conflict with one only, the Javanese”, carried out because the Javanese are “not indigenous to the region.” Miller suggests that “migrants were not simply victims of racism, having long been associated by the local population with Suharto’s widely unpopular transmigration programme and TNI-backed civilian militias. Even so, there was an element of ethnic cleansing in the non-Acehnese exodus.” Ethnic Javanese are a part of Aceh. Some migrated to Aceh over a century ago and many have integrated with Gayo and Acehnese. They are as much part of Aceh as Europeans are of Australia and North America or Acehnese are of southern Aceh. Only Javanese were targeted as an ethnic group during the conflict, a fact which would have important implications for their response to the conflict, discussed in Chapter Three.

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209 Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 70.
213 Schulze, The Free Aceh Movement, 40. While these camps were a media tool for Jakarta, the fact remained that the GAM caused their displacement. Anonymous interviews with Javanese IDPs in Sei Lapan, North Sumatra (September 2003).
214 Martinkus, Indonesia’s Secret War in Aceh, 262. For one Acehnese scholar, attacks were “caused more by political-economic factors than racial/ethnic ones because national politics was dominated by the Javanese and the Javanese settlers of Gayo Highland were employed as militias’ (sic). Sulaiman, “From Autonomy to Periphery,” 136.
216 Miller, Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia, 73.
Society in Aceh

This project is not simply concerned with what ‘civilians’ do, or do not choose to do, in response to war. ‘Civilian’ is too broad to be of much use, masking significant variation. At this point, I introduce the different types of civilians analyzed in Chapters Three and Four. James Siegel suggests that, traditionally, Acehnese society comprised “four encapsulated groups existing side by side... the sultanate, the village, the uleebalang, and the pesantren.”217 Ibrahim Alfian views Acehnese society as a vertical hierarchy comprising four layers (lapisan): the royalty (lapisan Raja), uleebalang, ulama, and common people (rakyat biasa).218 He suggests that similar groups (kelompok) constitute Acehnese society today: the government, big men (orang besar), the ulama, and common people.219 My discussion also focuses on four groups, but differ from those employed by Siegel and Alfian: Village leaders, common folk (orang biasa), Islamic officials, and new notables. I treat village leaders and common folk separately, even though I acknowledge some overlap. Reflecting the major social changes which have accompanied development in Aceh, I also include new notables, non-state political actors such as businessmen, student groups, and civil society activists. The reason for each addition is that, in the course of my fieldwork, I found that village leaders, common folk, and new notables responded to the conflict in different ways.

Table 4- Social Groups and Leaders in Aceh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Common Folk</th>
<th>Islamic Officials</th>
<th>New Notables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karik</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>State / Elites</td>
<td>Businessmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Ulama</td>
<td>Professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Elders</td>
<td>Imam</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Officials</td>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>Village Officials</td>
<td>Activists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While parsing village leaders and common folk, and adding new notables, I do not generally focus on political and administrative elites, as such groups were part of the state during the conflict, thus parties to it. But administrative elites do play a small role in the coming chapters, as they were non-combatants, so I begin this section with a short summary of political authorities in Aceh, laid out in Table 5.220

217 Siegel, The Rope of God, 68.
219 Alfian, Adat Istatad Daerah Propinsi Daerah Istimewa Aceh, 151. Schlegel proposes a similar grouping, but is only concerned with leaders: The Sultan, uleebalang, and ulama. Schlegel, “Technocrats in a Muslim Society,” in What is Modern Indonesian Culture? 232.
220 The terms, as well as parallels between past and present, are only rough guides, as ‘uleebalang’ was only one of many terms for powerful district big men, and the Kemukiman is smaller than the Kecamatan.
At the peak of traditional authority was the Sultan, ranging from the powerful Iskandar Muda, to the Sultanas, down to the powerless Sultans of the eighteenth century. Unlike other Southeast Asian kings, Aceh’s Sultans were never considered holy—there was no sense of “divine kingship with the palace at the center of the world.” Consistent with Islamic conceptions of power, the Sultan upheld god’s law. The Sultan did not govern, but was concerned with trade. The Sultan was, and remains, a symbol of Acehnese identity and authority. The importance of the Sultan continues, as evidenced by di Tiro’s claims.

With the Dutch invasion, the pinnacle of Acehnese power changed from symbolic to administrative authority, from the Sultan to the Governor. Aceh’s most prominent Governor was Ali Hasjmy (r.1957-1964), a former PUSA youth leader and a leading zama during the Darul Islam Rebellion. Governor Hasjmy brought many PUSA Youth into the provincial government, helped establish Syiah Kuala University, and became head of Aceh’s State Islamic Council. Hasjmy was an Acehnese nationalist who was critical of military abuses and political centralization, but was also intimately linked to state institutions and abuses. Decades later, Governor Ibrahim Hasan (r. 1986-1993) was “arguably the most dynamic advocate of the New Order’s modernising policies.” Intent on overcoming Aceh’s political and economic isolation, he helped Golkar to defeat the PPP in 1987. His successor, Syamsuddin Mahmud (r. 1993-2000) was also an academic, but had close military ties, reflecting the power of the army and the decline of the technocrats. The end of the

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223 Siegel refers to a fascinating provincial educational poster from the 1960s listing the administrative heads of Aceh. It begins in 1874 with the Dutch Resident, lacking any reference to Sultans, followed by a Japanese Commander, Daud Beureueh, and ends with an Indonesian army colonel. Although it is strange to see such actors on the same list, it makes sense in terms of the form of power they wielded. Each ruler was expected to govern, and was subject to higher government authority. Siegel, *Shadow and Sound*, 2-3.
227 The appointment of Governor Mahmud was hotly contested. The army and provincial Golkar officials supported him against a candidate favoured by B.J. Habibie and national Golkar officials. Kell, *The Roots*
“Darussalam Generation” was punctuated with the rise of the impressively corrupt businessman, Abdullah Puteh, in 2000. The era of Jakarta appointees ended in 2006, when former rebel Irwandi Yusuf was elected as Aceh’s top official.

The next tier provides some of the most colourful, and disreputable, characters in Acehnese society. Aceh has always featured a range of princes ruling over autonomous local fiefdoms, largely an artefact of geographical fragmentation. Local rulers became known as Orang Kaya, or rich men. When Iskandar Muda killed them off, he then sent generals to rule in their place, who in turn became the new local rulers, referred to as uleblang. The uleblang “did very little governing and had almost no concern with the day-to-day affairs of the villagers in their districts. Their main interest... was trade.”229 When the Dutch arrived, they viewed the uleblang as potential allies, as many cooperated with western traders, resisted the Sultan, and had feudal-sounding titles such as Teuku (Malay: Tun, your lord). The Dutch secured uleblang support through the carrots of future investment and protected trade, and the sticks of naval blockades. In the early years of Dutch rule, uleblang power expanded considerably, as there was no Sultan to demand tribute or undermine their investments.230 But as the Dutch deepened their rule and dominated trade, the uleblang became administrators and tax collectors. As the faces of Dutch rule, they were despised, leading to their bloody purge at the hands of the ulama in 1947.231

The massacre of the uleblang created a void, as Indonesian rulers sorely needed district and sub-district administrators. District heads (bupati) and sub-district officials (camat) were chosen from the PUSA Youth and zuama, mid-level technocrats who were later replaced by military officials. Bupati and camat were government appointees and members of Golkar, and maintained close links to security forces during the conflict.

The historical equivalent of the sub-district leader was the mukim which refers to both the unit and the leader. To avoid confusion, I refer to the unit as the Kemukiman and its head as the imeum mukim. The Kemukiman is an administrative unit defined around a Mosque, similar to a Parish. Iskandar Muda created the Kemukiman to deepen Islam and secure

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228 A different arrangement existed just inland of the capital, where the three corners of Aceh Besar had hereditary rulers (Panglima Sagis). M. Hasbri Amiruddin, The Response of the Ulama Dayah to the Modernization of Islamic Law in Aceh, 45.
229 Schlegel, “Technocrats in a Muslim Society,” 233. See also Siegel, Shadow and Sound, 9, 43.
230 Sulaiman, Sejarah Aceh, 21.
recruits. As Acehnese power declined, the imeum mukim became a hereditary figure whose responsibilities involved intervillage diplomacy and advising village chiefs. In the 1960s, the Indonesian government introduced the Keamatan, an administrative unit just above the Kemukiman. A 1979 reform standardized national administration, conveniently based on Javanese terms, and Aceh’s imeum mukimo officially ceased being part of the state. But in most villages, the Mukim remained as a territorial identity and a traditional official. In 2006, Acehnese NGOs successfully campaigned for the reintroduction of the Mukim. However, implementation has been rocky, with some imeum mukim staffed by the descendents of previous ones, some appointed through patronage networks, and some elected.

Village Leaders
Siegel views the village as a distinct sphere, where the village chief (keurik) is not part of the ruling apparatus. Known as the village father (Bapak Gampong), the keurik lies between state and society. The position was not a state creation, unlike the imeum kimum and camat, and chiefly power is not based on trade, unlike the Sultan and uleebalang. In much of Aceh, chiefs originated as keepers of community gardens, the putra santrik (garden chiefs). Today, they are typically chosen through simple village elections. Their primary responsibility is to maintain village order. When houses within the village quarrel, the chief must sit each side down in his house and make peace. The chief is expected to host important guests, usually offering his house. The chief must also coordinate public works, such as repairing roads and irrigation, as well as communicate village needs to the camat. Chiefs do not command, but instead instruct what the correct action is according to tradition (adat). By holding authority over yesterday, the keurik is able to influence villagers today.

Much like the 1974 Law reorganized high-level administration to a single national model, Law No.5 1979 sought to standardize village authority, redefining the chief as a Kepala Desa (village head), a bureaucrat responsible to the camat. It is sometimes assumed

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235 Alfian, *Adat Istiadat Daerah Propinsi Daerah Istimewa Aceh*, 144. In practice, village elections vary considerably, from a show of hands, to selection by (largely male) village elders, to appointment by the incumbent chief, to hereditary rule.
that this change was successful. Some villages, most notably in the interior and Malay areas of the province, adopted the changes. But throughout much of the province, the keurik did not change. The Indonesian state lacked the capacity to implement this law, and it was eventually ignored. This does not mean that the new Law had no effect on village authority. The Law increased the relative power of the chief by no longer recognizing authorities that ruled alongside him, such as the ImumMukim and the council of elders (Tuhaput, Malay: Tua Empat, Four Wise Elders, or Tuhapan/Tua Lapan, Eight Wise Elders). The 1979 Law replaced the elders with village administrators, including a village secretary (Sekretaris Desa or Sekdes) and hamlet/sub-village heads (Kepala Dusun, Kepdis). McCarthy is highly critical of the reforms, which “took away the power of important local adat headmen and marginalized village adat councils.” But the result was a patchwork of authority. Many imumMukim and Tuhaput continued as informal leaders, and some chiefs appointed them as the Sekdes and Kepdis. Typical of low-capacity states, the 1979 reforms changed the Acehnese village, but not in the way central authorities intended. Reforms were more successful in urban areas. In the bottom right corner of Table 2.3, the Gampong is joined by the Kelurahan, the keurik by the lurah. A Kelurahan is the lowest level of urban administration, the equivalent of the village, headed by a lurah. Behaving like a smaller camat, lurah represent the ideal bureaucratic chiefs in the eyes of the Indonesian state.

Common Folk

Keurik are the bottom rungs of a formal administrative hierarchy, but they are not alone in village governance, which in its widest sense blurs into ordinary villagers. Along with the Tuhaput, chiefs rule alongside a range of minor officials: the Panglima Laut (General of the Seas, consulted for fishing), Panglima Muda (Youth General, consulted for troubled

238 Even in Java, these reforms largely failed to change traditional practice. According to Antlöv, the 1979 Law was intended to absorb chiefs into the civil service, but local traditions proved stronger, and the reforms failed. Hans Antlöv, Exemplary Centre, Administrative Periphery: Rural Leadership and the New Order in Java (London: Curzon Press, 1995), 182-183.
239 Drs. H. Sayed Mudhahar Ahmad, Ketika Pala Mulai Berbunga, 137.
240 McCarthy, The Fourth Circle, 205.
241 Ahmad, Ketika Pala Mulai Berbunga, 138.
242 The Kepdis never really worked in Aceh, where villages are much smaller than the rest of the country, making sub-village heads superfluous. McCarthy, The Fourth Circle, 206.
youths and education), **Kepala Lingkungan** (Head of the Environment, consulted for forest matters), **Kepala Lorong** (Head of roads and jungle paths), **Ketua Karangtaruna** (rock of the unmarried), and the **Kejurun Blang** (Farming Expert, consulted for agriculture). Not every village is home to all of these minor officials, but all villages have at least some of them. Such minor titles are a source of pride for their holders, granted when a villager shows particular skill in a given area. As a result, many ordinary villagers possess some sort of title, and expect the **keurik** to consult them.

Common folk in Aceh ply a range of trades, acting as merchants, coffee stall and small restaurant owners, fishers, farmers, craftspeople, harvest labourers, and small-producers. Fifty percent of Aceh’s workforce is involved in agriculture, concentrated on rice on the north coast and export crops in the interior, and twenty percent is involved in fishing. Acehnese society is by no means without inequality, but leaders are expected to listen to villagers from time to time. Village meetings tend to last through the night, as everyone who wants to speak can, with everyone sitting in a circle. Those who speak first and command the most attention are usually powerful men, but women who have demonstrated superior speaking abilities at previous meetings are afforded prime spots and have the ear of village officials. These meetings give youths and women have a chance to shine, and are a source of status. Given the tendency of Acehnese men to travel to other villages or abroad to seek their fortune, village meetings tend to include a large proportion of women. This sense of women’s voice should not be exaggerated, as women are never considered to become chiefs or Mukim, although they may be a **Sekdes** or **Kejurun Blang**

**Religious Officials**

Islam is entwined with Acehnese ethnic identity. Aceh’s cosmopolitan history has created a faith mixed with Gujarati, Arab, Turkish, Persian, and regional influences. Although not as strong in Aceh as it is in Java or Kalimantan, Sufi philosophies have played important historical roles. The ruthless Iskandar Muda was an avid promoter of Sufi Monism, as were two of Aceh’s four great writers, Hamzah Fansuri and Shams al-Din al-

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In the seventeenth century, Nur al-Din al-Raniri declared Monist teachings to be heretical, marking a shift to Syafei Sunni jurisprudence. Today, Aceh remains home to several mystical Sufi Orders (Tarekat).

Seventy five percent of Aceh’s population are Sunni Muslims following the Syafei School of jurisprudence. Even here there are some divisions between traditionalists and modernists, although this gap should not be exaggerated. While traditionalists study the texts of great scholars, modernists are more likely to study the Koran and Hadiths directly. Traditional ulama teach at Dayah boarding schools, while modernist ulama tend to teach at Madrasah, which include non-religious curriculum. Aceh’s modernists are rather unique in their sustained political dominance. By the 1920s, modernist ulama began to demand social reforms and soon established the PUSA, through which Daud Beureueh captured political power and led Aceh into the Darul Islam Rebellion. But by the 1970s, their influence had waned. Modernist ulama were divided and partly discredited by the Darul Islam Rebellion, their Madrasah had been neglected after years of war and faced competition from state schools, and traditionalist ulama were increasingly organized. During the New Order, modernist ulama were largely co-opted by the Suharto regime, with traditionalists largely avoiding co-optation by focusing on teaching, and many haven even supported secessionism, discussed in the coming chapters.

Strictly speaking, an ulama is the headmaster of a high-school to college level Islamic institution, although many Islamic officials do not teach, and instead work for the state. Whereas the keucik is the village father, the ulama is known as Ibu Gampong, the village mother. Yusny Saby divides the ulama into four groups: traditional Dayah ulama, modernist Madrasah ulama, scholarly Ustadz, and administrative zuama. Various types of ulama, divided into administrators and teachers, are laid out in Table 6.

250 ‘Ulama’ is actually a pluralization of the Arabic alim, knowledge. Technically, an individual ulama should be referred to as alim, but in Aceh, ulama is both singular and plural.
Table 6- Acehnese Religious Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qadi</td>
<td>Madrasah Ulama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shayk / Mufti</td>
<td>Dayah Ulama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuama</td>
<td>Imam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bilal / Muezzin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first column lists Islamic officials making their living through the state, usually ulama who have moved from teaching to political, legal, or administrative offices. Qadi have a long history in Aceh, as Sultan and uleebalang typically employed an array of judges, although they rarely reached beyond towns and were at the command of local rulers. The past century has seen competition between state and Islamic judges, with an uneasy separation limiting Qadi to family law and other minor roles. This changed in 2003, when Aceh was granted Sharia Law which empowered local Qadi. Also at the side of Aceh’s rulers are a range of Islamic advisors— Shayk (Arabic: elder) or Mufti (Arabic: interpreter). Such advisors included great scholars such as Hamzah Fansuri under Sultan Alauddin Ryat Shah, Shams al-Din al Sumatrani under Sultan Iskandar Muda, and Nur al-Din al-Raniri under Sultan Iskandar Thani. The last of Aceh’s great scholar / advisors was al-Rauf al-Singkili, a Malay from Aceh’s southwest corner who served the Sultanas. Some Islamic advisors arose from the ranks of Arab migrants, especially those claiming to be Sayid descendents of the Prophet. Under advisors are various administrators and bureaucrats, known as zuama. I have already discussed the PUSA zuama in the Darul Islam Rebellion and New Order technocrats. The heart of Islamic bureaucratic power is the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Ulama Council of Indonesia, MUI), whose Aceh branch is the Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama (Ulama Consultative Assembly, MPU). The MPU/ MUI was created at the dawn of the New Order, assisting in the massacre of communists. It is a source of considerable patronage and tends to provide conservative political views.

Teaching ulama feature prominently in the coming chapters. For much of Aceh’s history, religious instruction was limited to the Meunasah, a sort of community hall. Derived from the Arabic term for school, Meunasah likely evolved from pre-Islamic longhouses.

252 Sulaiman, Sejarah Aceh, 24.
255 Amiruddin, The Response of the Ulama Dayah to the Modernization of Islamic Law in Aceh, 10.
hosting unmarried men.\textsuperscript{256} With the coming of Islam, the \textit{Masarah} became an ideal place to deliver prayers and sermons, and probably evolved into boarding schools fairly easily. The keeper of the \textit{Masarah} the imam \textit{masarah} should probably be regarded as Aceh’s first religious official. Today, the \textit{Masarah} remains a sort of meeting hall, concert hall, and hostel. In the seventeenth century, Islamic instruction shifted from the \textit{Masarah} to the mosque, led by \textit{imam}. Unlike the \textit{imam mukim}, most \textit{imam} could recite the Koran and were more focused on teaching. Today, \textit{imam} are elementary Islamic teachers and carry out functions such as reciting prayers at weddings and funerals. In the nineteenth century, Islamic boarding schools expanded and the \textit{ulama} became the dominant religious officials. There is no standard certification which makes one an \textit{ulama}, as Islam lacks a central authority. \textit{Ulama} are usually granted the title by their peers as their studies are deemed complete. The title also depends on social recognition—an \textit{ulama} must have students and be respected by villagers. Even though an Islamic official may be referred to as \textit{Teungku} in government circles, to be an \textit{ulama}, he must be respected by his peers and perform as a teacher.

Siegel notes that \textit{ulama} have traditionally been much like the Sultan and \textit{uleebalang}, detached from society in distinct spheres of life. Islamic schools tend to be isolated and self-sufficient—the entire point of a boarding school is to be cut off from society. In Acehnese tradition, students do not study at schools near their home village, but are instead expected to study under various \textit{ulama} at different schools, coming and going at will.\textsuperscript{257} Far from being integrated into Acehnese society, many \textit{ulama} are critical of village life.\textsuperscript{258} The detachment of the \textit{ulama} began to change with the introduction of modernist Islam, as \textit{ulama} began to criticize traditional society, reform education, and enter politics. The Dutch invasion accelerated this newfound activism, as the \textit{ulama} came to lead guerrilla resistance, using prayers, promises of martyrdom, and mosque networks to mobilize support. In the 1940s, modernists demanded rapid social change, hoping not just to gain power, but also change what power was.\textsuperscript{259} The \textit{ulama}-led violence in 1946, 1953-1962, and 1965 showed the power of the \textit{ulama}, but also undermined their reputation for piety and learning. Many \textit{ulama} joined the New Order, becoming politicians and bureaucrats instead of teachers. By

\textsuperscript{256} Government of Indonesia, \textit{Aceh: Manusia, Masyarakat, Adat, dan Budaya}, 21.
\textsuperscript{257} Amiruddin, \textit{The Response of the Ulama Dayah to the Modernization of Islamic Law in Aceh}, 36; Siegel, \textit{Shadow and Sound}, 11.
\textsuperscript{258} “We must see them as living in a world apart from the village and expressing beliefs very much in conflict with the practices of village life.” Siegel, \textit{The Rope of God}, 59.
\textsuperscript{259} Siegel, \textit{Shadow and Sound}, 253.
becoming involved in politics, either rebelling against or working for the Indonesian state, much of the traditional respect owed to ulama was eroded, as they were no longer a group of humble, learned teachers. During the New Order, it was predominantly the previously rebellious modernist ulama, especially the zuama, who worked within state institutions. For the most part, traditional ulama remained outside of political matters.

There are a number of minor religious figures in Acehnese society. The Muezzin, or Bilal, leads daily prayers, while the Khatib delivers Friday sermons. Mosque officials are sometimes wise old men, but are often senior students, who are also expected to tutor younger students. Dayah and Madrasah students tend to be respected by their community, and are increasingly expected to perform community service. Earlier, I explained that the conflict as a whole lacked Islamic elements. This does not mean that ulama played no role in it. The decisions made by the ulama in the Aceh conflict have yet to be studied in detail, a gap which I hope to fulfill in the next chapter.

New Notables

New notables consist of non-state actors such as businessmen, professionals, university students, and non-governmental organization (NGO) activists. Aceh’s economy has little autonomy from politics, and as a result, successful businessmen must be involved politically to maintain access. The little space which does exist for an independent economic activity resides in small-scale businesses. Owners of restaurants or coffee shops sometimes figure as informal rural leaders. Professionals include teachers, professors, doctors, and lawyers. They tend to form a grey area between state and civil society, as teachers are largely connected to the state, while lawyers have provided some of the most vocal activism in the province. My study pays particular attention to teachers and professors, groups who played complex roles in the conflict. Aceh is home to two major universities, Unsyiah and IAIN (Institut Agama Islam Negri, State Islamic Institute) ar-Raniry, as well as a number of smaller colleges. These were the homes of Aceh’s technocrats, producing officials to manage Acehnese development. In 1965, the campuses were used as training centres for militias seeking to hunt down communists.260

As the technocrats were displaced by the army, students became a new political force. Following pan-Indonesian trends, Aceh’s student groups formed several organizations and

260 McGibbon, “Local Leadership and the Aceh Conflict.”
raised their voices against the New Order. In March 1998, a leftist student organization, SMUR (Solidaritas Mahasiswa untuk Rakyat, Student Solidarity for the People), organized Aceh’s first major protests. As the regime collapsed, students became the backbone of Aceh’s numerous, powerful NGOs, working with international partners to help bring global attention to abuses in Aceh. Anti-corruption groups targeted the provincial government, media organizations battled censorship, legal aid groups represented aggrieved victims, environmental groups took aim at logging syndicates, women’s groups led campaigns against sexual abuse by soldiers, and human rights groups went to villages to investigate reports of mass graves. In 1999, SIRA (Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh, Aceh Referendum Information Center) emerged as the leader of a massive referendum movement; their November 1999 rally in Banda Aceh was attended by hundreds of thousands of people. The strength of Acehnese civil society diminished somewhat after 2000, as the conflict worsened and activists were attacked by the army. NGOs continued their work, reacting to attacks in distinct ways, discussed in subsequent chapters.

Non-Acehnese Societies

The above discussion glosses over a more complex reality, but does provide a basic understanding of Acehnese state and society. As in my discussion of history and the conflict, it is important to take a brief look at some ways that these various types of civilians vary among regional and ethnic minorities.

The Sultan was never very strong on the west coast, where uleebalang ruled. Today, Bupatis, army commanders, and businessmen feature as warlords. Religious leaders on the west coast are known for their autonomy, charisma, and polyglot teachings, a stronghold of traditional Dayah schools and Sufi mysticism. For example, Teungku Bantaqiah operated a Dayah boarding school in the 1980s and was a leading force in the puritanical Jubah Putih (White Robe) Movement. The government tried to co-opt him, and he eventually joined Golkar. By 1993, Bantaqiah was reportedly linked to marijuana syndicates and had amassed a large weapons cache, leading to his arrest, but he was later released as part of President

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261 Barter, Neither Wolf, nor Lamb.
263 The west coast provided a support base for PERTI (Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah, Union for Islamic Struggle) Sufis in the 1930s. Sulaiman, Sejarah Aceh, 187.
264 Bantaqiah was arrested in 1987 after he and his followers descended upon towns carrying green flags and daggers on a mission to eradicate sin. Drexler, Aceh, Indonesia, 138.
Habibie’s amnesties. Reports of weapons training led the military to descend on his Daerah in 1999, killing 65 students and the ulama. The military claimed that the students were GAM, and the soldiers responsible for the killings escaped during their tribunal. This story again illustrates the confused nature of the conflict in West Aceh, but also demonstrates the nature of the region’s autonomous Islamic leaders.

Malay social systems differ from their Acehnese neighbours. Local chiefs were somewhere between uleebalang and keucik, ruling small coastal trading settlements with an emphasis on trade revenue. Malay chiefs were less constrained than their Acehnese counterparts by or other local notables such as the inumkim, so tend to rule with a stronger hand. Today South Aceh features mixed Acehnese and Malay communities, with parallel or integrated village leadership systems. With the 1979 Indonesian administrative reforms, Aceh’s Malays were more willing to use the term Kepala Desa and employ village secretaries. In terms of Islam, Malays follow West Sumatran modernist teachings, supporting Muhammadiyah, Masyumi, and more now, the National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional, PAN). Malay activists evolved from local colleges as well as schools in Banda Aceh, Padang, and Jakarta, and were important parts of anti-New Order protests, loosely affiliated with Acehnese activists.

Political authority among the Gayo and Alas tends towards powerful, shady local rulers. Historically, the interior was ruled by clan heads (Pengulu Suku), and above them, Kejurun or regional lords. Inhabiting sparse settlements with little trade, the Kejurun were never very strong, leading the Dutch to implement direct rule. This has made for lasting differences with the rest of Aceh, as local rulers were not collaborators and were not killed off. They survive as powerful businessmen and political entrepreneurs, ruling the highlands through clan networks. In terms of religion, the Gayo and Alas largely follow West Sumatran Islamic modernist teachings, but also feature powerful traditionalist ulama. Islam in the Gayo features notable divisions between modernist (kaum mude, young group) and traditionalist (kaum tue, old group) ulama, the latter defending Gayo customs such as praying to the dead and ceremonial feasting against the former.

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265 *Jakarta Post*, “Aceh Trial Opens under Tight Security” (20 April 2000).
Finally, Aceh’s Javanese are a varied group. Individual rural migrants have tended to assimilate, whereas the large groups which arrived under Suharto created largely Javanese villages and kept Javanese traditions—including more hierarchical village authority. In terms of religion, many Javanese are either not practising or are traditionalists, providing electoral support to parties affiliated with Nahdatul Ulama. Javanese have tended to be active members of civil society, providing some of Aceh’s leading activists.

This chapter has provided the contextual information necessary to get a sense of how and why civilians reacted to the conflict in distinct ways. The next chapter describes how these different civilian groups responded to the conflict, decisions which largely varied across ethno-geographical zones.
3 Aceh’s Civilians in War

What options are available to non-combatants caught up in civil war? In Chapter One, I suggested that individuals who choose not to fight possess three broad options—flight, support, and voice. Drawing on the historical, political, and sociological background provided in Chapter Two, this chapter describes how these options were utilized by various non-combatants during the secessionist conflict in Aceh. It also seeks to show the Aceh conflict in a new light. While scholars have approached the conflict in terms of the rebels, the state, and civilian victims, they have yet to consider how the conflict influenced and was influenced by civilians. The approach offered here is a novel one, disaggregating the broad category of civilians and showing how these groups responded to conflict in distinct ways. This chapter is arranged according to each of the three options—flight, support, and voice—closing by discussing combined strategies as well as some findings which do not fit the schema. It leads into Chapter Four, which explains why civilians chose particular options over others.

Flight

How was flight utilized by various civilians during the conflict in Aceh? Which types of non-combatants were most likely to flee? It is important to point out that Aceh did not witness the sort of mass displacement found in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, or Sudan. Many reports do not discuss displacement at all, as it was not considered as pressing as other issues.1 The exact number of persons displaced by the conflict is extremely difficult to pin down. Foreign observers were generally barred from the province and most displaced persons did not live in camps, but instead fled as individuals or families to stay with friends for a few weeks. Estimates vary widely, between 7,000 and 100,000, the lower numbers being snapshots of IDP camps during peace talks2 and the higher estimates taken during

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2 There were an estimated 23,000 IDPs as of early 2003. Months later, in response to the declaration of Martial Law, this reached 32,000, later peaking at 48,000, and dropping to around 7,000 by mid-2004. Nani Farida, “Aceh Refugees Still Can’t Leave Camps,” Jakarta Post (7 January 2003); Nani Farida and A’an Suryana, “Illnesses Swamp Refugees in Aceh,” Jakarta Post (26 June 2003); Media Indonesia, “Pengungsi Aceh Kini Berjumlah Sekitar 41,000 Orang” [Displaced in Aceh Now Totals Around 41,000 People] (17 June 2003); Tempo Interaktif, “Jumlah Pengungsi Aceh Mencapai 40,919 Jiwa” [Total Displaced in Aceh Hits 40,919 Souls] (18 June 2003); Antara, “48,247 Acehnese Have Fled Villages to Escape Armed Conflict- Official” (01 July 2003).
violent periods and counting those staying in camps as well as with friends. In 2002, the World Food Programme put the total number of displaced within Aceh at 15,000, with 65,000 fleeing into neighbouring North Sumatra, a total of 80,000 displaced persons at one time. Elsewhere in Indonesia, violence in Maluku generated 335,000 IDPs, North Maluku 200,000, West Kalimantan 60,000, and East Timor 100,000. Most studies sort displaced persons into two groups: Those fleeing within Aceh and those who fled to North Sumatra. Another group of displaced persons are the thousands of Acehnese who fled to Malaysia. Each form of displacement corresponded to different types of non-combatants. Those fleeing within Aceh were typically ordinary Acehnese civilians, those fleeing to Malaysia were mostly young Acehnese men, and those fleeing to North Sumatra were overwhelmingly ethnic Javanese.

**Orang Biasa**

The primary form of flight among ordinary Acehnese civilians was small-scale and short-term. Some displacement lasted under 24 hours, as when villagers fled into the jungle until armed groups passed by. Others were displaced for a few days or a few weeks, typically in response to nearby fighting, which prompted families to stay with friends or relatives until the danger had passed. In Banda Aceh, IDPs arrived slowly and remained for a short time, so did not overwhelm the city. Although less dramatic than large refugee camps, short-term flight brought considerable hardship, as the travel between villages was dangerous and empty homes were often perceived as being pro-rebel and were destroyed.

There were some Acehnese IDP camps. Both the TNI and GAM destroyed houses and villages suspected to be accommodating their enemy. Those who lost their homes often

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fled to mosques and schools, usually staying for several months. In 1999, there was a 200-person camp in Lhokseumawe, a result of the army torching a village.\(^8\) In 2003, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) provided an assessment of IDP camps.\(^9\) There were several camps in Banda Aceh with fewer than one hundred persons. In Central Aceh, 450 IDPs were housed in army barracks after violent ethnic clashes. On the border of North Aceh and East Aceh, some 263 persons, mostly fisherman, lived in temporary camps after their village was levelled by state troops. In East Aceh, another camp housed 385 people, mostly vendors, after their market was attacked by the army. These camps typically lacked clean water or food, as international groups were restricted and aid was captured by corrupt officials.\(^10\) There was only one large, semi-permanent IDP camp in Aceh, located near Bireuen on the north coast in 2003. After the collapse of peace talks and the declaration of Martial Law in 2003, army assaults on rebel strongholds produced camps housing several thousand persons.\(^11\) Another form of mass displacement was the evacuation of villages by the Indonesian army in 2003 during *Operasi Terpadu* (Integrated Operations), when the army relocated entire villages to temporary camps in an effort to ‘drain the sea’ and isolate the rebels. Thousands were forcibly displaced, returning “after a comparatively short period of time.”\(^12\)

With the important exceptions of some IDP camps and temporary relocation by state forces, most flight among Acehnese orang biasa was small-scale. Who were these people? Some suggest that they were “mostly women and children.”\(^13\) The large camp near Bireuen housed mainly women, children, and older men.\(^14\) But this does not mean that women and

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\(^12\) Hedman, “A State of Emergency, A Strategy of War,” 7; Human Rights Watch, *Aceh under Martial Law: Inside the Secret War* 15:10 (December 2003), 43; *International Crisis Group*, “Aceh: How not to Win Hearts and Minds,” ICG Briefing Paper (23 July 2003), 4. Those who remained in their villages were “considered members of GAM” because they were absent when state forces arrived. Because those who fled would be considered GAM, those left outside of the relocation camps had little choice often joined the rebels for protection. *Amnesty International*, “New Military Operations, New Patterns of Human Rights Abuses in Aceh (NAD)” (7 October 2004), 11.


\(^14\) Nani Farida, “Residents Seek Refuge from Violence in Aceh as War Looms.”
children were more likely to flee. The reason that women were disproportionately found in camps was because most men had already fled, as they tended to be “singled out by Indonesian security forces on suspicion that they are separatist rebels or supporters.”

Many young men fled to urban areas or other provinces to find work:

I was harassed every day, and there was no work. I went south to Singkil, where I was lucky to get work fishing. This was a good place to go, close to home.

The most prominent form of flight for young Acehnese men involved fleeing across the Straits of Malacca to Malaysia. Acehnese have long traveled to Malaysia in search of work as Malaysia is home to a considerable Acehnese diaspora. When military operations began in 1990, their numbers surged. Aspinall suggests that flight to Malaysia was the primary form of displacement in the early years of the conflict. This was because GAM was too weak to protect its supporters, the conflict was confined to the districts closest to Malaysia, and Malaysia was enjoying an economic boom. With the declaration of Martial Law in 2003, the Acehnese population in Malaysia reached new heights. Almost all of these migrants were young ethnic Acehnese males, “who made up 93 percent of the newly registered asylum seekers between June and October 2003.” Human Rights Watch interviewed hundreds of Acehnese in Malaysia, but could only find eleven women. Of the hundred Acehnese migrants selected by the Canadian government from Kuala Lumpur for refugee status in 2004, there were only four women.

Because they were more accessible than those who remained in Aceh, we know a great deal about the Acehnese who fled to Malaysia. Their stories typically began with military violence. After fleeing to Malaysia, migrants joined Acehnese communities through village networks. GAM was well organized, providing funds and protection to migrants to gain supporters, but also to help their fellow Acehnese. Young men would often find work

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15 “The majority of those killed appear to be men, particularly young men who are more likely to be suspected of being members of GAM and have therefore been disproportionately targeted.” Amnesty International, New Military Operations, 17.
18 Aspinall, “Place and Displacement in the Aceh Conflict,” 126.
21 Interview with Hamdani Hamid, Vancouver (08 May 2010).
in construction, sending money back to their families and returning after a year or so.\textsuperscript{22}
When the Malaysian government cracked down on migrants in 2003, many sought refuge with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Kuala Lumpur, where some were extended protection and resettled around the world. Some stories help to illustrate the flight to Malaysia. At the age of twenty two, Mardi worked at a local store. While transporting the weekly rice delivery, he was stopped by the army and accused of bringing food to the rebels. After being beaten and his rice commandeered, Mardi fled. He paid a local businessman to send him to Malaysia for two years, where he made a living in construction.\textsuperscript{23} Others did not return to Aceh. Henri operated a small snack booth in East Aceh. After months of enduring Indonesian soldiers taking his food and cigarettes, one day Henry objected. For this he was beaten and his booth was trashed. He fled to Malaysia, finding work in construction. Henri managed to make his way illegally to the United States, but as immigration tightened after 9-11, he fled to Vancouver. After a long legal battle, Henri was deported back to Aceh in 2008.\textsuperscript{24} In another case, a friend of Henri’s, Hamdani, left for Malaysia with an education visa. For reasons unknown, after three months in Malaysia Hamdani was ordered to return home. But his family had told him that the army was after him, suspicious of his absence. So Hamdani registered at the UNHCR in Kuala Lumpur and ten months later, found himself in Vancouver with dozens of other Acehnese.\textsuperscript{25}

There was little mass displacement among ordinary ethnic Acehnese. The same cannot be said of ethnic minorities, who represented half of Aceh’s total population of displaced persons. By 2002, five times more persons displaced by the conflict resided in North Sumatra than in Aceh, mostly ethnic Javanese.\textsuperscript{26} All sorts of civilians resorted to flight, but ethnic minorities did so in greater numbers and stayed for longer periods. Gayo communities occupied an uncertain position during the conflict. They were not usually targeted by GAM, but faced significant extortion. Far from fleeing, many Gayo organized effective anti-GAM resistance. This was not the case for Gayo living in mixed Acehnese communities near the border between North and Central Aceh, where ethnic clashes led to

\textsuperscript{22} TEMPO Interaktif, “Malaysia Punya Hak Terima Pengungsi Aceh” [Malaysia receives Acehnese refugees] (22 August 2003).
\textsuperscript{23} Interview with Mardi, Panton Luas, South Aceh (18 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{24} Interview with Henri Kurnia, refugee, Vancouver BC (12 January 2006).
\textsuperscript{25} Interview with Hamdani Hamid, refugee, Vancouver (08 May 2010).
\textsuperscript{26} World Food Programme, “IDP Source and Recipient Regions” (25 February 2002).
flight. Bandar sub-district alone produced 6,000 IDPs in 2001. Meanwhile, Alas communities further south did not witness much fighting and, as a result, were not displaced. Alasland did, however, play host to Javanese IDPs.

While Singkil Malays were outside of the conflict, Malays living in South Aceh suffered high levels of displacement. The conflict arrived late to these districts, which became the province’s most violent by 2003. Even though the rebels did not generally target Malays, “the main reason for all of these displacements was intimidation from GAM.” The JRS report lists two IDP camps in South Aceh, each with two hundred persons from mixed Malay / Javanese communities. Entire Malay villages were displaced for extended periods of time, staying in camps near Tapak Tuan for up to two years. Just south of Tapak Tuan, the ethnic Kluet village of Paya Teuk was evacuated. GAM units demanded taxes and provisions from Malays, while the Indonesian military demanded help against GAM. After major clashes began, the entire village left for Tapak Tuan. One of my field research sites was Sama Dua in South Aceh. Just north of Tapak Tuan, Sama Dua (“Two Together”) featured parallel Acehnese and Aneuk Jamee communities and dual chiefs. Indonesian forces tended not to trust ethnic Acehnese, while GAM did not trust Malays. Within a few months, violence separated the two communities, with Acehnese fleeing inland and Malays fleeing to Tapak Tuan. Residents from both groups were surprised that ethnic tension could develop in their community:

> When Acehnese houses helped GAM, it brought problems for the whole village... they made trouble. We did not know why they did this.

> We were always harassed, and had to turn to GAM.

Today, although most villagers have returned, many remain divided along ethnic lines.

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27 Kristen Schulze, “Gerakan Aceh Merdeka: Freedom Fighters or Terrorists” in Aceh under Martial Law, 34.
31 Buiza and Risser, Anywhere but War, 7.
32 Interview with M. Amin, former Keucik of Paya Teuk and rice farmers, Paya Teuk, South Aceh (15 April 2009).
34 Discussion with Malay fishermen, Panton Luas, South Aceh (18 April 2009).
35 Discussion with Acehnese farmer, Panton Luas, South Aceh (17 April 2009).
The most drastic displacement was endured by Javanese communities. Some remained within Aceh, living in mid-sized IDP camps in Central Aceh. The largest IDP camps produced by the conflict were located in North Sumatra and were almost entirely ethnic Javanese. Only the Javanese were targeted as an ethnic group, as GAM sought to cleanse their province of 'colonizers'. One study found that, of a large range of indicators, the presence of Javanese had the highest correlation with displacement. In 1999, GAM posted notices demanding that all Javanese must leave. This was not the first time that GAM demanded the expulsion of the Javanese. In 1976, early separatists held village meetings promising to expel the Javanese. At that time, GAM was weak and villagers expressed support for Javanese residents. But by 1999, GAM was much stronger and its warnings could not be challenged. The Javanese turned to village chiefs and neighbours for help, but nothing could be done. Villagers donated funds and promised to watch over their homes, but Javanese men, women, and children were forced to flee. By September 2002, an estimated 178,000 Javanese had left Aceh, most destined for North Sumatra.

As with young Acehnese in Malaysia, we know a great deal about Javanese camps in North Sumatra. There were five major camps as well as numerous smaller ones near Langkat, housing approximately 50,000 persons, with thousands remaining through 2010. According to one plantation worker:

We tried to stay in Aceh, but GAM killed people, so we ran to Tamiang, then Langkat.

Their destinations were not always hospitable. Forty one refugee families resettled with NGO assistance in South Tapanuli, North Sumatra were turned away and eventually joined the large camps in Langkat. These camps were generally very poor, as government aid rarely made it past provincial authorities, and international NGOs seemed uninterested in

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36 Others fled to camps in West Aceh, which were later evacuated to North Sumatra following GAM attacks. Buiza and Risser, *Anywhere but War*, 7-12.
37 Czaika and Kis-Katos, “Civil Conflict and Displacement,” 410.
38 Interview with Hussin Amin, former Keucik of Saree, Aceh Besar (29 January 2008). See also Aspinall, “Place and Displacement in the Aceh Conflict,” 125-126.
39 Interview with Abdul Wahab, Ineum Mukim of Gunung Seulawah, Aceh Besar (01 November 2007).
41 Anonymous interviews with Javanese IDPs in Sei Lapan, North Sumatra (September 2003).
Javanese victims. It is important to note that Indonesian officials were aware of the visibility of these camps and used them to showcase GAM cruelty. While critical of GAM, many Javanese IDPs were also critical of state officials.

Leaving us makes good TV, people can see how GAM is. Some Javanese chose not to leave their homes. In Saree, one Javanese couple stayed behind. The husband explained that, as an assistant village chief and the only coroner in the sub-district, he had significant responsibilities. He treated the dead from both sides, working through his village chief to maintain communication with the rebels. And in East Aceh, there was reportedly a half-Javanese GAM leader who protected some Javanese residents. Some GAM leaders allowed Javanese to stay if “they had ethnic Acehnese family members to act as guarantors.” Sometimes, staying behind turned out to be a mistake. A couple in Saree described a friend who remained, but was killed along with his Acehnese wife. Flight was the rule for Aceh’s Javanese.

**Village Leaders**

While human rights reports have documented how ordinary civilians fled from the conflict, such studies rarely distinguish among different types of non-combatants. Civilians are treated as a singular group, useful for understanding general patterns, but less useful for establishing micro-level variations. How did civilians such as village leaders, ulama, and new notables utilize the flight option?

For the most part, village leaders did not flee, except in cases where entire villages were evacuated. I heard of only nine cases where kecak fled. I met one such kecak in South Aceh. In 2003, the mobile police brigade suspected the chief was pro-GAM because his brother had joined the rebels. He did in fact sympathize with GAM, but “would not help them so long as I was chief.” Upon hearing that he was a suspect, he made the imeum mukim the acting chief and fled to Pidie. Chiefs did not generally flee. In one village, the

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44 Anonymous interviews with Javanese IDPs, Bakti Suci, North Sumatra (October 2003).
45 Interview with Alamsyah (coroner) and Duli (wife), Suka Damai, Aceh Besar (28 January 2008).
46 Interview with Budi Arianto, Secretary General, *Jaringan Komunitas Masyarakat Adat* (JKMA) [Community Tradition Network], Banda Aceh (24 January 2008).
48 Interview with Darmi Junid, *Kecak* of Air Dingin, South Aceh (17 April 2009)
Council of Elders and imam mukim fled after a series of attacks, however the chief did not. Schulze notes the story of an imam mukim and a chief who were both shot and wounded for refusing to support the rebels. The imam mukim fled, but after receiving medical attention, the chief remained. Village leaders only fled when entire villages were evacuated. In these cases, it was usually the chief who decided to evacuate and supervised the process. Even in the face of hostilities, chiefs did not typically flee from their villages.

While village leaders did not flee, the same cannot be said of their superiors. Because they were so clearly identified with the state, district and sub-district leaders in GAM strongholds frequently fled. "Officials who could flee did so. Non-Acehnese and senior officials tried to leave Aceh altogether." One former camat recalled that:

The rebels tore down the flag and set fire to my office. What could I do? I fled and, because of my experience, found a smaller job in a safer place.

In 2003-2004, thirteen camat fled their posts in North Aceh and were replaced with soldiers. That state officials in rebel strongholds fled, while chiefs did not, speaks to the different roles of officials who are, on paper, part of the same hierarchy.

Islamic Leaders

Islamic leaders provide a similar story. Among the Acehnese who fled, there were few ulama. The exception was the evacuation of entire communities. Like chiefs, when an entire village fled, ulama went as well. Other exceptions were Javanese ulama.

When GAM said to leave, I was surprised they would talk like this to an ulama. But the title Teungku did not matter; only race [suku] did. They would have killed me, so I had to leave my school and students.

49 Interview with M. Daud, Keucik of Subarang, South Aceh (19 April 2009).
50 Schulze, “Gerakan Aceh Merdeka,” 41.
51 Chiefly authority here frustrated security forces, who felt that “It shouldn’t be the keuchik who instructs the inhabitants to flee.” Cited in Aspinall, “Place and Displacement in the Aceh Conflict,” 140.
52 Some reports disagree with my assessment. Ramly states that 57 keucik in North Aceh and 124 in West Aceh fled to district towns because “neutrality no longer seemed possible.” I was unable to confirm this account. In June 2003, 76 chiefs in North Aceh protested the declaration of Martial Law in May 2003 by resigning their posts, but they did not flee. Ramly, “Modes of Displacement during Martial Law;” 16-17; Interview with Teungku Zakaria, Keucik of Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (03 February 2008); Bernie K. Moestafa and Tiarma Siboro, “Village Heads Quit En Masse,” Jakarta Post (09 June 2003).
53 Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 158.
54 Interview with Lurah of Laksana, Banda Aceh (25 January 2008).
56 Interview with Teungku Abdullah, Saree, Aceh Besar (28 January 2008).
GAM soldiers who told me to go were my former students. It was very confusing for me, why they would do this.\textsuperscript{57}

Non-Acehnese \textit{ulama} responded to the conflict just as other non-Acehnese civilians did, fleeing when threatened. Ethnic identity trumped societal rank. Most ethnic Acehnese \textit{ulama} remained in their boarding schools. Important exceptions were \textit{ulama} who openly supported GAM. After attacks on their villages and schools, many \textit{ulama} in North and West Aceh fled to join the insurgents. For Teungku Yahya Abdullah, “After my school was torched, I ran to the jungle, to GAM.”\textsuperscript{58} Cases such as this, discussed below, show a combined strategy of flight and support among \textit{ulama}.

\textbf{New Notables}

While it was not the primary strategy of village or Islamic leaders, exit was frequently utilized by new notables, specifically civil society activists. Along with young Acehnese men and ethnic minorities, civil society activists were a third group for whom flight was a primary choice during the conflict. First though, some businesspeople took part in anticipatory flight. A number of merchants relocated to Banda Aceh and South Aceh. One man, who trades in jungle products, moved to Kutacane in 2000:

\begin{center}
It was better to do business where it is safe. Why would I stay behind when I can leave?\textsuperscript{59}
\end{center}

Others report similar findings: “if you had a business, you wouldn’t want to live in this area... [business owners] had to move, taking all their children with them to Medan.”\textsuperscript{60} Following a long tradition, many Acehnese businessmen, especially those sympathetic to the rebels, fled to Malaysia. During the war, they opted for the safer place, as they could afford to move and had much to lose from violence. Many businesspeople, as well as other professionals, resided in urban centres far from the conflict. Those residing in rural areas, such as teachers at state schools, fled in large numbers. GAM saw teachers as a source of state control, and torched several schools, causing hundreds of teachers to leave the countryside. State doctors and nurses, though, were permitted to remain, provided they tended to GAM soldiers.

\textsuperscript{57} Interview with Teungku Syamsuddin, Suka Damai, Aceh Besar (28 January 2008).
\textsuperscript{58} Interview with Teungku Yahya Abdullah, KPA Official, Bireuen (04 February 2009).
\textsuperscript{59} Interview with Samsul, businessman, Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
After several years of advocacy and protest from local NGOs, the space available to civil society narrowed in 2001. The army conducted sweeps of NGO offices, prompting the exodus of students and activists, a trend which accelerated as more activists were killed. Many destinations varied considerably. Many fled to the hills, remaining in Aceh. Juanda’s story is illustrative. The head of the People’s Crisis Centre (PCC), Juanda heard that his colleagues were being arrested. He fled to his mother’s house in Aceh Besar, where a family friend offered him refuge in Saree, which became his adoptive village. Isolated from most of his civil society friends, Juanda served as a high school teacher. When I asked him why he remained in Aceh, he responded that he had to flee, but he also felt compelled to remain in Aceh. He made the occasional trip to North Sumatra and abroad, but for the most part, chose to lay low. Others activists fled further afield, to North Sumatra, Java, Malaysia, Thailand, and Australia. Several SIRA activists fled to Bangkok, where they sought refugee status at the UNHCR office. Another example is Arif Rusli, who joined Forum-Asia, a regional human rights group. Arif moved between Bangkok and Medan, serving as a conduit for information from Aceh. This introduces another combined strategy, fleeing to express their voice in relative safety. The most famous Acehnese activist abroad was Jafar Siddig Hamzah. Jafar first fled to Medan to work for the Legal Aid Foundation, where his criticism led to army reprisals, so he fled to New York, where he founded the International Forum for Aceh. In 2000, he made a fateful decision to return, and was executed near Medan, his body badly disfigured. His murder demonstrated the real threats faced by activists, showing why many opted to flee.

Which types of civilians chose to flee from the conflict? Three types of civilians primarily utilized flight: young men, ethnic minorities, and new notables. Other forms of flight included Acehnese women and children staying with their families and entire villages.
relocated to government camps. Few village chiefs or Islamic teachers fled, except for those accompanying their communities or ethnic Javanese. Why did young men, ethnic minorities, and activists primarily choose to flee, while others did not? I will explain the motivations of the exit option in the next chapter. At this point, I turn to another option, describing how civilians supported armed groups.

Support

The flight option has been studied in the Acehnese context by several scholars, humanitarian organizations, and journalists. The support option is somewhat different. Support is more difficult to identify, lacking concrete outcomes such as refugee camps, and is often hidden from the public view. While providing inventories of displaced persons, international NGOs are unlikely to document acts of civilian support, as this might bring into question the innocence of victims. Support is further obscured because those sympathetic to armed groups, who tend to project an image of unified support for their side, while viewing those supporting the other side as traitors. Not only do such accounts lack evidence of widespread support for their preferred side, they fail to explain how civilians provide support. Because the support option has not been studied in depth in Aceh, this section is based mostly on field interviews.

While the decision to flee varied by sex and age, the decision to support an armed group varied primarily by zones of combatant control. Civilians in rebel strongholds along the northern and west coasts supported GAM, civilians in state strongholds supported the state, and those in contested areas such as Aceh Besar remained largely neutral. This is precisely what Kalyvas expects—collaboration among non-combatants followed zones of combatant control.67 But this is not the entire story. In Aceh, these zones of combatant control were marked by distinct ethnic dynamics. Ethnic minority regions were state strongholds and almost all GAM supporters were Acehnese. Ethnic dynamics clearly existed prior to combatant control. Despite some degree of ethnic sorting in which individuals returned to their ethnic strongholds due to conflict dynamics and mixed communities on the west coast bifurcated into separate villages, conflict dynamics did not cause regional ethnic patterns. Ethnic identity was prior to combatant control, as particular ethnic regions were

predisposed towards supporting a particular side. This challenges the general rule that control shapes collaboration.

**Figure 8- Regional Support in the 2009 DPR-A Elections**

![WikiMedia Commons Map of Aceh, modified by Shane J. Barter, 2010](image)

Elections provide concrete data with which to identify zones of support, affirmed by my interview data. Although hardly democratic, New Order elections saw the north and west coasts support the United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, PPP), while Banda Aceh, the Highlands, and the south overwhelming voted for Golkar.\(^68\) Ethnic Acehnese support for the PPP can be interpreted as an anti-Jakarta statement, while votes for Golkar in the south and interior can be seen as support for the state. The 1999 Elections were held while Aceh was at war and the rest of the country was undergoing a democratic transition. GAM called for a boycott, leading to a drop in total votes cast, but only along the northern coast.\(^69\) Turnout was 1.4% in North Aceh, 11% in Pidie, and 50% in East Aceh.\(^70\) It remained above 80% in other districts, including the conflict-ridden interior. The same


\(^{69}\) Karim D. Crow, “Aceh: The ‘Special Territory’ in North Sumatra: a Self-Fulfilling Promise?” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 20:1 (April 2000); 94. The total number of votes cast in the 1999 elections was under 100,000, compared to the two million in 2004 and 2.3 million in 2009.

\(^{70}\) Cited in Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 148. The boycott strategy reappeared in 2009, where voters supported PA in local races, but many spoiled their ballots for the national elections. This was only apparent along the north coast though. Shane Joshua Barter, “The Free Aceh Elections? The 2009 Legislative Contests in Aceh,” *Indonesia* 91 (2011).
regional patterns of allegiance have continued after the conflict. In the 2006 Executive Elections, 66% of voters along the northern coast supported either of the two GAM-affiliated Gubernatorial candidates, while fewer than 33% did so in the interior or the south. The 2009 Legislative Elections showed similar patterns, illustrated above. Partai Aceh (PA) secured 45% of the provincial vote. This was anchored in Pidie, Pidie Jaya, Bireuen, North Aceh, and Aceh Timur, where PA won over 70% of the vote. On the west coast and Aceh Besar, national parties garnered over two thirds of the popular vote, but a highly fragmented electorate allowed PA to win pluralities. Other districts returned pluralities for national parties: Banda Aceh, the Gayo highlands, the Alas interior, and the southeast. Not coincidentally, these are the most ethnically heterogeneous districts. These distinct political zones, found across elections, correspond roughly to zones of control during the conflict.

**Orang Biasa**

I begin with support among ordinary civilians in state strongholds. Both sides relied upon networks of informants (cuak). Indonesian security forces maintained extensive networks of informants and spies in GAM strongholds. While the information was not always reliable, it was a key component of civilian support for state forces. GAM also maintained networks within state strongholds. A large number of villagers and bureaucrats sympathized with GAM, and many provided information to the rebels. Informants were unique, defying general trends of regional support.

Support for the state was evident in urban areas, in part because the state dominates the local economy and has nurtured a loyal political class. Bureaucrats, their families, and businesses which depend on the state for revenue were more likely to support the state and oppose the rebels. They supported the state in small ways: paying taxes, being friendly to soldiers and state officials, attending schools, and speaking Indonesian. Many urban dwellers displayed Indonesian flags as a sign of loyalty. While in some parts of the province, loyalty rallies and mass oath-taking were mandatory, ceremonies in urban areas were more likely to be voluntary. Because there was little conflict in urban areas and state forces do not rely on the civilian populations as much as rebel forces in general, there were few forms of active support for state forces from city-dwellers.

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71 According to one activist, “the TNI and the Kopassus are assisted by a considerable number of locals who act as (occasional) intelligence agents, called by another pejorative term cuak.” Aboeprijadi Santoso, “Of Pain and Humiliation: The Velvet Protests in Aceh,” Radio Netherlands (13 December 1999).
The clearest non-combatant support for state forces, and rejection of rebel forces, was found among ethnic minorities. In the Gayo highlands, there was significant support for the state.\textsuperscript{72} There were many reasons for this: pro-Indonesian Gayo elites, discord with Acehnese nationalism, GAM attacks on Javanese farmers, opposition to GAM taxes, weak and undisciplined local rebels, and genuine support for the Republic. Historically, Gay identity has rested upon fleeing from the Acehnese. Under the New Order, highland communities voted for Golkar and benefited from agricultural development schemes. Observers have noted that the “minority groups of Aceh’s central highlands have long been alienated by the Acehnese majority, and during the years of conflict these groups have been known for their loyalty to the government.”\textsuperscript{73} Such groups provided significant symbolic support for the state, flying flags and posting pro-Indonesia written in the Gayo language.

Many Gayo residents supported the army by providing information. According to one Gayo farmer who resided in a village with significant conflict:

\begin{quote}
People would tell the army when their neighbour went out at night and helped \textit{Aceh Merdeka}. Everyone was watching.\textsuperscript{74}
\end{quote}

Another form of state support took place during various peace processes, when locals protested in support of the Indonesian government. While some protests were organized by shady groups such as private militias organized by Gayo businessmen, they still provide a limited example of civilian support for the state.\textsuperscript{75}

Militias in Central Aceh have been the subject of intense debate. Early efforts to create state militias in GAM strongholds in northern Aceh failed, as locals would accept guns and training, and then return home or sell the weapons to the rebels. The same was true for night watch groups (\textit{jaga malam}), which reached tacit agreements with GAM not to fight.\textsuperscript{76}

Participation in such programmes relies in large part on local political will. This is why the Gayo militias should not be seen as simple thugs. One must explain why the militias grew in the highlands but failed further north. Many night watch groups were “formed at the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{72} Aspinall, \textit{Islam and Nation}, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{74} Interview with Gayo farmers, Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara (09 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{75} Protests should not be confused with attacks on peace monitors, conducted by “pro-Jakarta militias controlled by the TNI.” Anthony Reid, “War, Peace, and the Burden of History in Aceh,” \textit{Asian Ethnicity} 5:3 (2004), 30.
\textsuperscript{76} Human Rights Watch, \textit{Indonesia: The War in Aceh} 13:4 (August 2001), 41.
\end{footnotesize}
initiative of the local population,” later recognized and supported by the army through Operation Cinta Meunasah (Love the Community) in 2000.\textsuperscript{77} For one Alas man:

The village was all part of self-defense... we already had a lookout system for troublemakers before the conflict. We were ready to defend our home from GAM too.\textsuperscript{78}

My study is not concerned with those who take up arms, however support for such groups is a different matter. Civilian support for militias was much like support given to rebels forces, as each relied on the community for food, information, and errands:

When the army told us we can form a guard, many of us helped build the guard post. We made it big and close to the paddy so that farmers could take their lunch there.\textsuperscript{79}

We knew when GAM attacks were coming because the people told us. Local people helped us become strong. The Acehnese see this as their home... they call it Linge, not Tanah Alas, so people want to resist.\textsuperscript{80}

Some of Central Aceh’s militias were created by security forces and some were more spontaneous, but all were supported by villagers.

Malays in Aceh traditionally lived in a world apart from the Acehnese, taking an active role in pan-Indonesia modernist organizations, and after 1999, voting for modernist-linked parties. The Malay regions of Singkil and Subulussalam were largely outside of the conflict, tied to North Sumatra more than to Aceh. But South Aceh became home to intense conflict, shifting from being lightly contested to becoming partially controlled by GAM. It seems that many Malays tried to remain neutral at first. But as the conflict deepened by 2003, this was no longer possible and many Malays chose to support the state. For one GAM figure:

\textit{Aneuk Jame} people created problems for us, tricked by the army... so we could not take South Aceh.\textsuperscript{81}

In one coffee house, locals explained that they would get together to erase GAM graffiti, and that many restaurants willingly provided free food to soldiers.\textsuperscript{82} Even in 2009, coffee shops featured large Indonesian flags and posters supporting the creation of a new province.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{78} Discussion in coffee shop, Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
\bibitem{79} Discussion in coffee shop, Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
\bibitem{80} Anonymous interview with former militia member, Jangar, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
\bibitem{81} Interview with “Jungle Tiger”, Panglima GAM Teunom, West Aceh (30 April 2006).
\bibitem{82} Discussion in coffee shop, Subulussalam (21 April 2009).
\end{thebibliography}
Javanese communities were dedicated state supporters. Unlike highland groups and Malays, Javanese communities were spread throughout the province, although they were concentrated in the interior. GAM frequently accused Javanese in Aceh of supporting the state. In doing so, GAM accorded too much popularity to Indonesia. There is little evidence that ordinary Javanese in Aceh initially supported state forces. As GAM attacks increased, Javanese opposition followed. It was the distinct security dilemma faced by ethnic Javanese which led them to support state forces. Javanese in North Sumatra were especially willing to discuss how they supported the Indonesian military:

Our village was Acehnese and Javanese. Most Acehnese neighbours were good, and helped us. We had one neighbour who was always in trouble, always seen going out to the jungle at night. We did not trust him. So we told the army, but made sure they did not hurt him.\footnote{Anonymous interviews with Javanese IDPs, Bakti Suci, North Sumatra (October 2003).}

GAM had informants, but by 2000, many people watched them, informing on informants.\footnote{Anonymous interviews with Javanese IDPs, Sei Lapan, North Sumatra (September 2003).}

There was an old Javanese man in my village, a former security man and martial arts instructor. He always supported the TNI, and had them over to his house for meals.\footnote{Anonymous interviews with Javanese IDPs, Sei Lapan, North Sumatra (September 2003).}

Many Javanese joined militias alongside Gayo communities. Being targeted as an ethnic group by the rebels led to strong support for the state among Javanese civilians.

Contested zones such as Aceh Besar and parts of South Aceh provide a more complicated picture of civilian support. Here, support was more dangerous, but also more helpful for both sides. Contested areas presented a significant challenge in collecting data on non-combatant support among ordinary villagers. I did not find much evidence of support in such zones, perhaps because locals were too scared to proffer support during the conflict or those who did were unwilling to discuss it with me. Second-hand stories suggest that some civilians did indeed support either side, or both.\footnote{Along the Banda-Medan highway, both sides demanded refreshments from local merchants and tolls from passing motorists. Some store merchants contributed willingly, delivering goods to military checkpoints and rebel bases.} I had more success interviewing village leaders and ulama regarding support in contested zones. Their stories, provided below, help paint a better picture of civilian support in these areas. Minimally, it is safe to
say that, unlike state and rebel strongholds, there was little open support for either side among non-combatants in contested areas.

Documenting non-combatant support in rebel strongholds was far easier than in state strongholds or contested zones. The rebels were popular, relied on civilian support more than state forces did, and the rebels later came to power, making it easier to describe support for them and difficult to speak against them. Ethnic Acehnese in GAM strongholds provided many forms of support to the rebels. For Aspinall, “a huge number of village people became GAM tax collectors, lookouts, couriers, or paramedics. Many more provided shelter, food, or money to fighters; others gave passive support by not reporting them to the authorities.” Among rank-and-file villagers, except perhaps young men who fled, this appeared to be a dominant strategy for civilians in GAM-controlled districts.

Just as GAM maintained a network of informants in Indonesian strongholds, a network of informants within GAM strongholds supported the state. This network was extremely large early in the conflict. Rebel groups are highly vulnerable to informants, as it only takes one disgruntled farmer to undermine a rebel base. At the peak in GAM power in 1999-2000, the rebels killed off suspected informants, decimating the army’s civilian intelligence network. While some Acehnese believed that the army was killing off its own informants, others show that the rebels carried out the purge. This was part of the sorting process which helped create distinct zones of control, as those loyal to the other side were killed, displaced, or silenced. As state informants were eliminated in 1999, the army turned to less reliable sources, including youths. As the quality of state informers waned, GAM developed a superior intelligence network. GAM overcame military weaknesses “through its extensive network of informers... [which] provided intelligence and early warning of the movements of the TNI and the police.”

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87 Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 158.
88 Types of informants include full-time state agents (*panah*), civilian military assistants (*TPO: tenaga pembantu operasi*), or state spies (*mata-mata militer*).
89 Many early GAM leaders were wiped out due to local informants. Elizabeth F. Drexler, *Aceh, Indonesia: Securing the Insecure State* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 92-93
90 In 1999, a man’s mutilated body was found in North Aceh with a sign reading “you are a killer of this nation...cuak.” Tempo, cited in Michelle Ann Miller, *Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia: Jakarta’s Security and Autonomy Policies in Aceh* (London: Routledge, 2008), 27.
In the previous section, I noted that many young men fled to Malaysia after being accused of supporting GAM. Such accusations were often accurate, a testament both to army informant networks and civilian support for the rebels. Civilians supported the rebels in a variety of ways. For one, they refused to take part in state militias and community defense organizations, either shirking their duties or passing on materials to the rebels. GAM spread its views through word of mouth and underground leaflets, each requiring civilian involvement. Rumours exaggerating GAM capabilities helped to reinforce its support and intimidate soldiers, such as rumours that they had tens of thousands of reserves in Libya and Malaysia. Many portrayed the rebels not as an ideological movement, but instead as a magical one “whose powers of ilmu kebal can transcend any amount of torture... or achieve divine retribution.” One story portrayed GAM Commander Iljas Leube, whose face was on wanted posters all over the province. As the story goes, he arranged to meet Indonesian officials at a coffee shop to discuss his surrender. After waiting for hours and chatting with a local farmer, the official left, only to discover later that the farmer was the GAM leader. “The story, which may be apocryphal, is told in Aceh to illustrate Iljas Leube’s ability to disguise himself.” Such stories of the rebels’ powers and cunning reflected and reinforced their popularity.

Symbolic support, such as raising the GAM flag, was common along the north and west coasts. It was common to find ‘GAM’ carved into trees and bridges or written on signs. By 1999, banners and graffiti supporting GAM dominated the Acehnese landscape, providing visible evidence of GAM popularity. According to one villager:

“I was proud to raise the Merdeka [freedom] flag every morning. Whenever the army was coming, word would arrive and I would take it down.”

Acehnese villagers took part in GAM rallies, long parades of youths with GAM flags traveled from village to village.

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95 Drexler, *Aceh, Indonesia*, 98.
96 Jacqueline Siapno, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh: The Paradox of Power, Co-Optation, and Resistance* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002), 36. A prominent example relates to di Tiro, who was reported dead several times in the Indonesian media, only to reappear months later.
99 Discussion with farmers, Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (03 February 2008).
Many civilians provided temporary barracks for GAM soldiers. In the previous section, I noted that the army torched many houses, often punishment for those providing lodging for rebel troops. Although some were forced, many villagers were happy to house the rebels. One villager near Bireuen explained that he housed GAM willingly, but after the conflict, he is angry that they have forgotten about his loyal support. When the army arrived in search of GAM leaders, often based on information provided by villagers, other villagers would often try to protect the rebels by providing false information or hiding them. One GAM Commander explained that:

Some of the best help we got from the people was when they told the army we went one way, when we really were close. This allowed us to escape or to ambush the army. One time, an old woman ran to the TNI crying, saying that GAM killed her son, and they have to hurry to catch them, leading the army into our ambush.

Aspinall describes a high school student who served as a courier for the rebels, moving up and down the coast with information and money until he was old enough to join the rebels. The student also stole information from his uncle, a police official, to help GAM carry out ambushes. Some civilians came to identify as GAM civilians (GAM sipil), a phenomenon which was limited largely to the northern coast. Civilians served as GAM’s local representative (Ulee Sagoe), a sort of ombudsperson who villagers could approach to communicate with the rebels. Civilians also provided financial contributions, taxes which came to be managed by GAM civilians. As with any tax or levy, one should expect that it was neither given freely nor coerced. What is clear is that many Acehnese civilians did not resist paying, and through these payments, provided GAM with significant funding.

Which ordinary civilians provided support to the Free Aceh Movement? Some men of combat age served as GAM civilians, although they often had to prove themselves through high-level support such as smuggling weapons. But generally, ordinary young men were not trusted, as supporters were those who were not expected to fight. Older men frequently provided misinformation to the military and encouraged youths to join. For one old man, a veteran of the Darul Islam Rebellion: “I am still a soldier... but now I serve as a

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102 Discussion with farmers, Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (03 February 2008).
103 Interview with “Kowboy” Effendi, Panglima GAM Bireuen, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
104 Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 88.
GAM civilian." Children also helped by bringing food, relaying messages, and running errands. This was true of both sides. The army demanded that children serve as “messengers, spies, and cooks for adult soldiers”\(^\text{106}\), while GAM did the same: “when they were aged about 14-17, they were pressured by [rebel army] to run errands, look out for police and purchase supplies”\(^\text{107}\).

The role of female GAM supporters deserves particular attention. Female GAM supporters were referred to as Inong Balee (widow’s brigade). The term Inong Balee originates with Malahayati, a revered sixteenth century female Acehnese Admiral who organized a widow’s unit.\(^\text{108}\) In the secessionist conflict, GAM called its female supporters the Inong Balee framing them as soldiers to demonstrate their regard for women as well as the breadth of their support among Acehnese. Photographs of women wearing headscarves armed with AK-47s became extremely popular in the global media—displayed equally by rebel supporters and critics of radical Islam. However the images were theatre, staged for public relations. Women did not typically play combat roles. Suraiya Kamaruzzaman notes that, despite being “used in media campaigns to show women’s role in GAM’s struggle”, no women appeared on the list of combatants provided by GAM to international observers for post-conflict assistance.\(^\text{109}\) Instead of being fighters, the Inong Balee was a network of female supporters.\(^\text{110}\) For Aspinall, “women were assigned support roles, such as provision of logistics, medical assistance, or hiding and smuggling male fighters. They did not assume leadership roles, and rarely participated in combat.”\(^\text{111}\) The International Organization for Migration suggests that women provided “spies, logistics, cooks or gave other assistance.”\(^\text{112}\) Many served as nurses:

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\(^\text{105}\) Discussion in coffee shop, Saree, Aceh Besar (30 October 2007).
\(^\text{108}\) Iskandar Muda appointed women in key positions of power within the military, as he did not expect them to challenge him for power.
\(^\text{111}\) Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 93.
We only had basic training. When a soldier was wounded, they could not bring him here, so we had to go to him. It was very dangerous.\textsuperscript{113}

Others encouraged new GAM recruits:

I told my sons and nephews to do their job and join the Acehnese army.\textsuperscript{114}

Not only did many women support GAM as Inong Balee, they were also the glue of many GAM families, as the relatives of older commanders often married young rebel soldiers.

\textbf{Village Leaders}

Many ordinary civilians in Aceh chose to support an armed group, usually siding with the dominant regional actor. Interestingly, village leaders did not do the same. This is one of my most surprising and relevant findings. In nearly every interview with chiefs or about them, I was told the same thing:

In times of war, the most important thing for a chief is to be neutral. If they are not neutral, they cannot be a chief.\textsuperscript{115}

Others have also found that chiefs were neutral.\textsuperscript{116} Some point in a different direction, suggesting that chiefs were partial. Aspinall notes that, in 2003, many chiefs in North Aceh resigned to protest the imposition of Martial Law. Above, I noted how this event was interpreted as flight. Aspinall suggests it was an act of support: “In the villages, most karik who resigned their government commissions simply switched their allegiance to GAM.”\textsuperscript{117} He continues to state that “Even more common, they simply served two masters, taking their meagre salaries and giving the appearance of obedience when government troops appeared, but at other times obeying local GAM commanders.” This second passage, which seems to me to be more accurate, suggests neutrality, not siding with the rebels. Conversely, Rodd McGibbon suggests that many “village chiefs” were replaced by army officials.\textsuperscript{118} But this statement is based on an Indonesian newspaper article about army officers replacing

\textsuperscript{113} Interview with Iwan, former Keucik of Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (05 November 2007).
\textsuperscript{114} Discussion in coffee shop, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (15 April 2009). A veteran of the Darul Islam Rebellion explained to Siapno that his mother encouraged him to enlist, but years later when he sought to join the TNI, she refused. Siapno, \textit{Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh}, 120.
\textsuperscript{115} Interviews with M. Hashim Usman, Keucik of Lembah Seulawah (24 January 2008 and 30 January 2008).
\textsuperscript{116} Ramly explains that chiefs protested when “neutrality no longer seemed possible.” Ramly, “Modes of Displacement during Martial Law,” 16-17.
\textsuperscript{117} Aspinall, \textit{Islam and Nation}, 159.
\textsuperscript{118} McGibbon, “Local Leadership and the Aceh Conflict,” 50.
A chief in a GAM stronghold explained that:

The life of a chief is to play both sides... [exceptions] were rare, but there were some GAM chiefs in Pidie.\(^\text{120}\)

In Tamiang, I heard of a chief who joined GAM and eventually became a commander.\(^\text{121}\)

One particularly hardened GAM Commander explained:

Were there GAM chiefs? Every chief is GAM in their hearts. They are Acehnese. Were they members? I know of four chiefs who joined GAM. They are all GAM in their hearts.\(^\text{122}\)

Pro-GAM chiefs usually resigned their posts before openly supporting GAM.\(^\text{123}\) I also found some pro-state chiefs. A camat told me about a chief who supported the TNI, and was beaten by his villagers when they found out.\(^\text{124}\) As one activist explained:

If a chief is not neutral, he cannot help villagers. This is what is happening in some villages where Armen Desky [a local timber baron] is creating dynasties, and chiefs do what he says.\(^\text{125}\)

I also found a number of anti-GAM chiefs in Singkil, in the far southwest corner of the province. Of the nine pro-state chiefs I met, none were ethnically Acehnese, and all were located far from the conflict, working under local strongmen.

Chiefs did not by and large opt to support armed groups. The fact that experts perceived chiefs as supporting both the rebels and the state should not be surprising. This is precisely the image chiefs wanted to build, appearing to each armed group to work for it while actually paying lip service to both sides and remaining neutral. Chiefly neutrality echoed throughout my interviews:

[A chief must be]... orang tengah [a man in the middle], this is how he survives and protects his village.\(^\text{126}\)

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\(^\text{120}\) Interview with Teungku Zakaria, Keucik of Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (03 February 2008).

\(^\text{121}\) Interview with Budi Arianto, JKMA (24 January 2008).

\(^\text{122}\) Interview with Ismuda, Panglima GAM North Aceh (04 February 2008).

\(^\text{123}\) During the Darul Islam Rebellion, chiefs who supported the rebels often quit their posts and were appointed as Camat in the shadow administration. Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt*, 164.

\(^\text{124}\) Interview with Yusriman, former Camat of Terangon, Aceh Tenggara (07 April 2009).

\(^\text{125}\) Interview with Faisal, activist and Partai Rakyat Aceh (PRA) Candidate, Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara (07 April 2009).

\(^\text{126}\) Group interview with Teungku Syafei, Keucik; Ibu Konsatum, Sekdes; Bantardi, Partai Aceh; Ibu Ayani, activist, in Pasi Lembang, South Aceh (14 April 2009).
Chiefs cannot side with the government because they are exposed to GAM.  

The keucik has to balance both sides. If he goes too far to GAM, he is in trouble. If he goes too far to the TNI, there is more trouble.

Pak keucik had a tough time. Sometimes he would help GAM, but he had to help both sides. We admired this, he did it to defend the people.

A chief in Aceh has three responsibilities. Are you listening? One, he must provide stability. Two, he brings development. Three, he offers and mediation. Do you think he can do this if he makes trouble?

[A pro-GAM chief] would not be able to do his job with the government.

I told [the army] I work with GAM, and I told GAM I work with TNI.

Most chiefs are confident and outspoken, but to my surprise, few openly supported a particular side. And as I show below, when they were pressured to support a side, they found ways to remain neutral. Despite regional conflict dynamics and the allegiances of villagers, the village chief eschewed support for armed groups in favour of neutrality.

Among other village leaders, imeum mukim were somewhat more likely to support either side. Surprisingly, their position did not seem to be determined by conflict dynamics.

In Aceh Besar, I met six imeum mukim and discovered significant variation; two were neutral and led programmes for local victims, two played passive roles, and two supported the Indonesian state. Many imeum mukim stuck out as exceptionally pro-state. Some supported either or both sides, some remained neutral, but I found no pattern. Other traditional leaders, namely elders and a variety of minor officials, were more consistent.

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127 Interview with Teungku Abu Ismail Yacoob, Vice President of the Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama (MPU, Ulama Consultative Assembly), Banda Aceh (26 January 2008).
128 Interview with Nurdin Abdul Rahman, Bupati of Bireuen and former GAM negotiator (05 November 2007).
129 Interview with “Kowboy” Effendi, Panglima GAM Bireuen, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
130 Interview with Darmi Junid, Keucik of Air Dingin, South Aceh (17 April 2009).
131 Interview with Ismuha, activist, Bireuen (02 February 2008).
132 Interview with Syarbini, Keucik of Sarce, Aceh Besar (01 November 2007).
133 Interview with Abdul Wahab, Imeum Mukim of Gunung Seulawah, Aceh Besar (01 November 2007).
134 This was the case in South Aceh. This imeum mukim explained that “the reason why many villagers support the GAM is because “they are stupid, and not educated.” Interview with Marwaen, Imeum Mukim of Sama Dua, South Aceh (19 April 2009). Locals were extremely critical of this official: “He provided information to the army for profit...he would never show his face in this village.” Interview with Murdalis, Keucik of Panton Luas, South Aceh (18 April 2009).
135 This variation may due to the fact that the Kemukiman was not an official administrative unit when I started my fieldwork, so local roles for imeum mukim varied a great deal, and many regions had no such position. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I met new imeum mukim who were pro-state, namely because they were appointed y the government was their position was made official.
They apparently tried to remain neutral more than most villagers, especially when conducting business alongside the keucik, but were also more likely than chiefs to support the regionally dominant armed group. For one elder:

> The chief is Orang Tengah and we should be too. This allows us to give him better advice. But sometimes we get wrapped up in things.  

A similar story holds for village secretaries who, although formally administrative officials, are often chosen from among the chief’s friends. Such officials typically strove for neutrality, but in practice were more likely than chiefs to support one side. One explained that he had to maintain public neutrality, but sometimes supported the rebels, “which was not secret, and not totally public.” While chiefs were overwhelmingly neutral, minor officials and village councils were more likely to be partial, lending support to armed groups.

Perhaps the most enlightening contrasts with village chiefs are higher-level state administrators, who clearly supported the state, even in rebel strongholds. While many tried to avoid taking strong positions, neutrality was impossible. Provincial and district leaders lived in urban areas and were protected, but sub-district leaders lived a more precarious existence, the front lines of the Indonesian state. As a result of attacks on their offices, many camat resigned, their posts left vacant or filled by soldiers. GAM perceptions of administrators are shown by its efforts to create a shadow administration. GAM administration consisted of a Sultan (Hasan di Tirô), SesaMukim and Gampong. This changed in 2002, when civilian administration was divided among seventeen Wilayah each with a governor, commander (Panglima), and police. While GAM established its own district and sub-district leaders, no effort was made to replace the keucik. Compared to villagers, but also administrators above and below them, chiefs were remarkably neutral.

### Islamic Leaders

While Aceh’s chiefs were usually neutral, regardless of zones of combatant control, this was not the case for Islamic leaders. Much like ordinary civilians, ulama supported the Indonesian government in state strongholds, remained neutral in contested areas, and

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136 Interview with Iwan, elder in Bireuen (05 November 2007).
137 Interview with Anwar, former Sekdes of Teupin Ridup, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
139 Schulze, “Gerakan Aceh Merdeka,” 11. On the ground, these systems were less clear. In interviews around Bireuen, I was told that the rebels have their own Camat, which surprised me, as I expected that the GAM would favour the traditional Acehnese imeum mukim.
supported GAM in rebel strongholds. A handful of ulama did not side with power; some remained quiet, some changed their views over time, and a few fled, especially Javanese ulama. In general, control predicted ulama support. Unlike ordinary civilians, one could not have predicted regional ulama support based on previous conflicts. Quite generally, GAM drew considerable support from previously pro-state traditionalist ulama and the state drew support from previously rebellious modernist ulama.

As outlined in Chapter Two, pro-state ulama can be separated into career ulama and teaching ulama. Career ulama were those not making a living through traditional Islamic instruction, but instead through political parties, bureaucracies, or state post-secondary institutions. Such ulama were largely urban and usually modernists. State ulama originated in the Darul Islam Rebellion and were squarely part of the New Order. Many originally supported the PPP, but were slowly co-opted by Golkar. Siapno describes an ulama in South Aceh who joined Golkar: “after he joined the government party, his students left. Rumours had spread that he had become a ‘kafir.’” Through the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Council of Indonesian Ulama), ulama provided rulings (fatwa) supporting state policies and criticizing the rebels. They delivered sermons in large mosques, stating that GAM is illegitimate, Indonesia is a proper Muslim state, and killing rebels is acceptable. Such ulama publicly questioned the rebels’ Islamic credentials, part of the state’s strategy to infuse Islam into the conflict. The Majelis became “not only an import vehicle for the government to co-opt senior Ulama, but also a key channel for mobilizing support for official development programmes.” The MUI was “used as a government tool to subjugate any sense of Acehnese separateness.” During peace talks in 2003, such ulama pressured GAM to submit to the state’s demands. The Vice President of the Majelis explained that

All ulama and civil society must work to bring progress and stability, and this means opposing rebellion.

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141 Siapno, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh*, 120.
146 Interview with Teungku Abu Ismail Yacoob, MPU (26 January 2008).
Pro-state ulama worked through the provincial MUI as well as its branches in district capitals. In South Aceh, Teungku Haji Burhanuddin Ahmad joined the district legislature as a member of Golkar in the late 1980s. He explained that “if the government is Muslim, rebellion is a sin.” Burhanuddin endorsed state policies, and according to local villagers, listed GAM sympathizers to the army. GAM attacked him in 2002, and he fled to the Indonesian military. One should not conclude that all state ulama were simply pawns. While critical of urban, state ulama, some rural ulama understood their perspective:

They are conservative because they live in comfort and do not see what is going on in our villages. If they were here, they would be different.

While some were corrupt opportunists, career ulama also helped bring development and provided reasoned criticisms of the rebels. For instance, the Vice President of the provincial Majelis, a member of a mission organized by the Indonesian government to pressure GAM during peace talks, voiced concerns against the abuse of Javanese minorities.

Many teaching ulama, particularly those in state strongholds, supported the state against GAM. Gayo and Alas ulama were especially likely to be pro-state, tied to pan-Indonesian organizations such as Muhammadiyah. Some ethnic minority ulama supported the state for economic or political reasons. Pro-Golkar ulama in Central Aceh “received generous assistance in starting their own schools.” Among Alas, local ulama were at the forefront of organizing anti-GAM militias. Ethnic Acehnese ulama in pro-state regions also tended to support the state. The headmasters of modernist madrasah schools tended to be involved in development programmes. This can be partly explained by the decline of the madrasah, as competition from state schools led to a significant reduction in their student base and dependency on state support. Such ulama supported Indonesia by issuing fatwa stating that the Indonesian government is legitimate and rebellion is a sin. Aspinall notes one pro-state ulama who flew to Malaysia to convince Acehnese migrants to avoid GAM

147 Interview with Teungku Haji Burhanuddin Ahmad, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (19 April 2009).
148 Interview with Teungku Kamaruddin, Saree, Acer Besar (30 January 2008). This was echoed by the leader of the HUDA; “cities are a different place, and the ulama there see different things.” Interview with Teungku Faisal, Secretary General of the HUDA, Banda Aceh (26 January 2008).
149 Interview with Teungku Abu Ismail Yacoob, MPU (26 January 2008).
150 For one ulama working in a Muhammadiyah school, “the GAM wanted our support, but we are not Acehnese.” Interview with Teungku Bukhari Husni, Lawe Sumur, Southeast Aceh (08 April 2009).
152 Interview with Faisal, activist and Partai Rakyat Aceh (PRA) Candidate, Kutacane, Southwest Aceh (07 April 2009).
recruitment and return home.\textsuperscript{154} Traditional dayah teachers were less outspoken, but also tended to support the state. Dayah ulama have a long history of shunning rebellion and supporting the status quo, and many continued to do so in the separatist conflict.\textsuperscript{155} While some dayah ulama laid low, others led campaigns against ‘sin’ and ‘rebellion’. Aspinall notes that the overall trend “among traditionalist ulama during the New Order years was thus political neutralization and co-optation by the state rather than rebellion.”\textsuperscript{156} Reinforcing their position, ulama in state strongholds tended to participate in state programmes, lend support to the government, and criticize the rebels. As a consequence of ulama support for the state, GAM intimidated and even killed several ulama.

In areas contested by state and separatist forces, ulama tended to remain neutral, either avoiding politics or criticizing both sides. Many ulama in Aceh Besar and West Aceh tried to avoid the conflict, a response which challenges the categories of flight, support, and voice. This entailed focusing on teaching duties and prayer.

With all the trouble around, the most important thing I could do was focus on creating a more peaceful, more Islamic society.\textsuperscript{157}

Many neutral ulama believed that the conflict had little to do with Islam, so there was no point in supporting either side. A number of local leaders I spoke to had never considered ulama taking sides, agreeing they should focus on spiritual education.\textsuperscript{158} The most prominent group of neutral ulama was the Himpunan Ulama Dayah Aceh (HUDA, Association of Traditional Acehnese Scholars). Formed in 1999, the HUDA organized traditional rural ulama to help act as a counterweight to the urban MUI.\textsuperscript{159} The HUDA initially supported a referendum, but quickly stepped back and adopted a moderate stance.

HUDA is for neutral ulama, those not in GAM or the government.\textsuperscript{160}

The MPU is the government [while the HUDA are] small teachers with no political agenda.\textsuperscript{161}

Some HUDA members opposed the conflict, shifting to what I classify as voice.

\textsuperscript{154} Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 206.
\textsuperscript{155} Sjamsuddin, The Republican Revolt, 47.
\textsuperscript{156} Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 205.
\textsuperscript{157} Anonymous interview with Ulama, Nagan Raya (08 December 2006).
\textsuperscript{158} Group interview with Harmaini, Keucik of Lam Kabu; Isha, former Keucik of Lam Tamot; M. Hashim Usman, Keucik of Pancah; Pukan Darawan, Sekdes of Pancah; Muzakhir, Imeum Mukim of Lembah Seulawah (30 January 2008).
\textsuperscript{159} Interview with Teungku Abu Ismail Yacoob, MPU (26 January 2008).
\textsuperscript{160} Interview with Teungku Lukman Ramlili, MPU member, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (17 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{161} Interview with Teungku Haji Burhanuddin Ahmad, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (19 April 2009).
All ulama have to remain neutral here, so we kept teaching. But how can we do nothing when we see injustice? We have a responsibility to stand up.\textsuperscript{162}

We are neutral in the conflict. We tried to push peace talks, criticizing violence with religious consciousness...sometimes, we got into trouble with both sides.\textsuperscript{163}

Many ulama in contested areas rejected both sides and their war. Dayah ulama were more likely to remain quiet, while Madrasah ulama were more likely to mobilize against the conflict, leading to the voice strategy.

In South Aceh, ulama shifted from passive neutrality to partiality as GAM came to control many sub-districts. When the conflict reached South Aceh in 2001, many previously quiet ulama came to support GAM:

The TNI attack made many ulama go to GAM. Ulama hid weapons and GAM in their schools, but they had to be careful, because there were also many government ulama. GAM soldiers would often to go their ulama for help, like a son returning to a father, which made GAM more popular among ulama.\textsuperscript{164}

As control shifted towards GAM, ulama support followed suit, strengthening Kalyvas’ observation that control predicts collaboration. Neutrality among ulama seemed to require that neither side had control of the local community. When contested areas shifted to rebel strongholds, previously silent ulama came to support the rebel movement.\textsuperscript{165}

Although many GAM members were personally devout, the organization lacked Islamic elements. GAM was founded by businessmen and involved criminal elements, so few ulama endorsed it. But as time passed and Indonesian military abuses mounted, many ulama were pushed towards the rebels. While pro-state ulama supported their side by issuing statements in support of state policies, criticizing GAM, and providing information, pro-GAM ulama were even more active. Surprisingly, their base was traditionalist, rural ulama.\textsuperscript{166} Dayah ulama are traditionally conservative, while modernist madrasah ulama have taken up the flags of reform and rebellion. Under Suharto, many modernist ulama allied with the state. By remaining aloof from politics, rural ulama remained influential. Partly in competition with

\textsuperscript{162} Interview with Teungku Kamaruddin, Saree, Acer Besar (30 January 2008).
\textsuperscript{163} Interview with Faisal, activist and Partai Rakyat Aceh (PRA) Candidate, Kutacane, Southwest Aceh (07 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{164} Interview with Sarbunis and Agus, activists, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (14 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{165} Ideally, this study would include rebel territory that shifted to neutrality or state support. But I am not aware of significant parts of Aceh which underwent such a shift during the conflict.
\textsuperscript{166} Aspinall notes that “GAM’s adherents did, however, become closer to the rural world of traditionalist Islam.” Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 203.
modernist rivals, they came to support the rebellion as they came into contact with GAM units.\footnote{167}

The primary form of ulama support was using mosque networks and sermons to publicize GAM views.\footnote{168} As early as 1999, ulama helped organize massive GAM Dakwah (proselytizing) meetings, although it was unclear if the proselytizing was for god or GAM. Ulama used these sermons to criticize Indonesia, support GAM, and reinforce GAM parochialism against Javanese, labelled “Jews who had killed Islamic people” by one ulama.\footnote{169} These events drew huge crowds which, when the army arrived, resulted in the largest massacres in the post-Suharto period. Their religious credentials allowed ulama access to Aceh and Indonesia, making them a valuable source of GAM intelligence. As GAM expanded, many ulama “joined its civilian structure, often as kadi, religious judges... or as imumtunara, men who gave religious training to other fighters.”\footnote{170} GAM ulama performed religious duties in the jungles for GAM soldiers, such as religious education and prayer.

By 1999, we had ulama come to us for prayer, which was important for our morale and image.\footnote{171}

Another way that rural ulama helped GAM was by sounding the call to prayer when Indonesian soldiers were nearby, allowing GAM time to flee.\footnote{172} Islamic boarding schools were also used to hide weapons and soldiers:

I helped hide GAM, and with time, they attended my classes by day, becoming normal students, hidden from the army.\footnote{173}

Some boarding schools flew GAM flags and offered special classes for GAM soldiers. Ulama also supported GAM fundraising efforts, using roadside donations, common across the country to fund mosque construction, to help GAM. Many ulama encouraged students to support or join the rebels. Ulama framed Indonesian soldiers as ‘non-believers’, echoing historical themes by reading the Hikayat Prang Sabil, the anti-Dutch Holy War epic. At the
height of the conflict, GAM Ulama announced a Holy War against the government if Aceh was not granted a referendum.\textsuperscript{174}

As the conflict continued, ulama support for the rebels deepened, especially in the Pidie area. One GAM ulama explained that after the army torched his Madrasah and killed two of his students, he enlisted:

I had to do more than just teach; Islam is a religion of living justice.\textsuperscript{175}

Prominent ulama such as Teungku Abdullah Saleh led public campaigns in support of GAM, until he was killed in 2003. Teungku H. Muhammad Wali al-Khalidy openly supported GAM and his dayah became a centre for GAM recruitment.\textsuperscript{176} GAM worked to create a local judicial system, especially since state courts had ceased to function, and turned to Islamic leaders. Teungku al-Khalidy was one of the early judges serving in GAM courts, which began in 2000 to discipline soldiers, but expanded to include a variety of societal offences. In time, GAM ulama developed low-level Sharia courts, although resisting Indonesia's brand of Sharia:

Our Sharia is very basic, and not concerned with backwards punishments.\textsuperscript{177}

Writers have described that “GAM-appointed kadi, selected from among local religious teachers, officiated at ceremonies and issued marriage licences.”\textsuperscript{178} While GAM gained various forms of support, the ulama gained the ability to enforce Sharia, closing businesses during prayer times and forcing women to cover their heads. Since the conflict, many ulama have not returned to teaching, remaining active in GAM campaigns and village courts:

Our job now is to bring development and education to Aceh, and to do that, KPA and Aceh Party must function well.\textsuperscript{179}

In 2008, GAM strengthened its ulama base by forming the Ulama Council of Nanggroe Aceh (MUNA: Majelis Ulama Nanggroe Aceh), its members being “mostly men who had been imans for GAM forces during the conflict.”\textsuperscript{180} GAM developed its own career ulama, taking up political positions in place of instruction.

\textsuperscript{175} Interview with Teungku Yahya Abdullah, KPA Official, Bireuen (04 February 2009).
\textsuperscript{176} Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 203.
\textsuperscript{177} Interview with Teungku H. Muhammad al-Khalidy, GAM Wali and advisor to Governor Irwandi, Teunah Merah, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
\textsuperscript{178} Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 159.
\textsuperscript{179} Interview with Teungku Yahya Abdullah, KPA Official, Bireuen (04 February 2009).
\textsuperscript{180} International Crisis Group, Indonesia: Pre-Election Anxieties in Aceh (9 September 2008), 5.
Ulama in state strongholds supported the state, ulama in contested areas remained neutral, and ulama in GAM strongholds supported the rebels. There were exceptions, and to some extent, this was a product of sorting. But in general, the behaviour of Aceh's ulama during the conflict conform to expected patterns of collaboration anticipated by Kalyvas. While regional civilian support was based on ethno-regional identities and similar patterns existed during previous conflicts, support from ulama was messier and came from different types of ulama than in previous conflicts, and was seemingly more a product of control. This was especially true in terms of timing, as ulama came to support GAM after they had established control in several areas. In follow-up communication regarding my project, one GAM ulama disagreed with my geographical assessment. Others agreed though, noting a similar pattern of ulama support:

There are three types of ulama: government ones in cities, quiet ones, and rebels, especially around Pidie.

There are two types of ulama: Indonesian state ulama and rural ulama, some of whom are GAM.

That ulama support was predicted by who was in control does not mean that they were simply opportunistic. I discuss why most ulama chose support in Chapter Four.

New Notables

The non-combatant elites I call new notables supported armed groups in complex ways. It appears that, like ordinary civilians and ulama, businessmen opted for support according to zones of control. On the west coast, many businessmen were de facto warlords, transforming their personal militias into GAM platoons when the rebels became powerful. In Aceh Besar, one businessman initially worked closely with state forces, then shifted to the rebels, and then returned again to the state side in 2004 when it was clear that GAM was losing. Other businesspersons supported both sides. Siapno tells the story of a businessperson who was sentenced to prison for giving funds to GAM, but who had also openly assisted Indonesian Special Forces. Another example, Cut Nur Asyikin,

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181 Communication with Teungku Yahya Abdullah (June 2009).
182 Interview with Teungku H. Muhammad al-Khalidy, GAM Wali and advisor to Governor Irwandi, Teunah Merah, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
183 Interview with Ismuha, activist, Bireuen (02 February 2008).
184 "If all sides like me and I pay my taxes, I can prosper.” Interview with Amir, businessman, Saree, Aceh Besar (02 November 2007).
185 Siapno, Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh, 34.
exemplifies how businesspeople tried to maintain connections with Indonesian elites while also supporting GAM. Known as the Lion of Pidie due to her fiery pro-independence speeches, Cut Nur frequently donated money to displaced persons and raised support for the rebels. Though once rumoured to be the head of the Inong Balee, Cut Nur was not a GAM member, as the rebels were suspicious because of her business contacts with Indonesian officials. Working with Indonesian elites may have allowed her space to survive as a GAM sympathizer—“her business connections with high-level provincial and government officials allowed her to tread the perilous currents between the separatist rebels and Jakarta.” But in the end, her strategy failed, and she was arrested for treason in 2003, and then died in the tsunami. Her example shows how businesspeople could support GAM while still maintaining relations with Indonesian elites, but also that such a strategy was immensely dangerous. Businesspersons worked with both sides during the conflict, and many continue to do so after it.

Pro-Indonesia academics dominated the two major university campuses in Banda Aceh. Syiah Kuala and IAIN al-Raniry were in many ways the backbone of Aceh’s technocrats, largely (but not entirely) supporting the state. The same cannot be said for the smaller colleges closer to GAM strongholds, such as al-Muslim in Bireuen and Jabal Ghafur University in Pidie. Lecturers here often supported the rebels, and many joined them, becoming a new wave of leaders in post-conflict politics. Like other types of civilians, academics in Aceh largely varied according to conflict region. Teachers at state high schools, however, were less likely to support the rebels. Like mid-level government officials, they were closely identified with the state, and most were unwilling or unable to work with the rebels. Other professionals—essential service providers such as doctors and coroners—were in high demand from the rebels, despite being affiliated with the state. They tended to serve both sides in an effort to remain neutral, such as refusing state demands to record patients with battle wounds. Local coroners were also able to work with GAM, even though many coroners in Aceh are ethnic Javanese. It seems that support for the dominant

189 This said, many professors in Banda with family ties to rebels were arrested. See Asia Watch, “Indonesia: Human Rights Abuses in Aceh,” (27 December 1990), 7-8.
190 Interview with Doctor Julkarnian, Saree Medical Clinic, Aceh Besar (31 October 2007).
armed group was a widely used option, however supporting the rebels was not available to professionals who were linked too closely with the state.

The support of civil society activists was unique, as it did not follow regional conflict dynamics and was not offered to the state, a major exception to the general rule that support follows control. In the previous section, I noted that many activists fled after crackdowns by the Indonesian military. The army began to view any criticism as opposition, ending a brief window of liberalization in Aceh. But not all activists fled. Some reacted to military violence with support for the rebels. Indonesian military and GAM perspectives tended to agree that civil society groups were with GAM from the start.\textsuperscript{191} This is inaccurate. Initially, Acehnese activists protested the New Order in ways which were no different than other Indonesian groups. It was only after continued assaults and a lack of reform that activists spoke in terms of independence, and even then, they wanted to achieve it through a referendum, which GAM did not initially agree with. But many activists gravitated to GAM. For Aspinall, “some of the student activists became closer to GAM politically. SIRA especially took on the appearance of being a sort of civilian wing of GAM.”\textsuperscript{192}

In 1999, NGOs were particularly vocal, although their leaders were met with arrest and violence from Indonesian authorities. Those who fled tended to be from a slightly older generation of activists. Those who supported GAM tended to be younger student activists who were less established, not to mention more vulnerable. By 2002, there was a clear division between those supporting the rebels, such as SIRA, and those who tried to maintain neutrality and deliver aid, such as the People’s Crisis Centre (PCC).\textsuperscript{193} SIRA came to work with GAM, turned towards ethnic Acehnese identity, and their accounts came to influence Western reports.\textsuperscript{194} The division among NGOs is demonstrated by the career trajectories within the two organizations since the end of the conflict. While PCC leaders have worked to propose legislation and implement government reforms, former SIRA leaders have largely joined the former rebels. The founder of SIRA, Mohammad Nazar, was arrested and tortured by Indonesian authorities in 2003-04. In 2006, he became the Vice Governor through the former rebel movement. Another SIRA leader who supported the rebels was

\textsuperscript{192} Aspinall, \textit{Islam and Nation}, 141.
\textsuperscript{193} Interview with Sarbunis and Agus, activists, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (14 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{194} Drexler, \textit{Aceh, Indonesia}, 185.
Shadia Marhaban. Funded by international NGOs such as Amnesty International, Marhaban went on speaking tours around the world to criticize the army and support independence. By serving as a translator, sometimes with her future husband William Nessen, Marhaban was able to pass on valuable information to GAM. In 2006, she helped organize the Acehnese Women’s League (Liga Inong Aceh, LIGA) to help raise the concerns of Inong Bale in post-conflict politics. Some NGOs in Western countries also maintained close ties to GAM, such as the Aceh Information Office in Pittsburgh, whose leaders joined Partai Aceh in 2005. That these groups supported GAM by criticizing the TNI and later joining former rebels must be understood in light of military abuses at the time. The forms of support NGOs offered to GAM did not make activists legitimate military targets. But many NGOs did support GAM while proclaiming their neutrality, calling into question the roles and responsibilities of civil society.

Support was largely determined by zones of combatant control. Ordinary civilians, Islamic leaders, and many new notables sided with power. Kalyvas suggests that control leads to collaboration, as support is a strategy of “survival maximization.” The causal relationship between control and support was more complex in Aceh, a conflict which defies some geographical assumptions of combatant control. It is not that collaboration did not flow from control, but instead that control and support were predicted by ethnic identity. It appears that while Kalyvas’ view that control causes patterns of support explains temporal variation (when civilians come to support one side over time, such as many ulama), it cannot account for geographical variation, as ethno-geographical loyalties were established long before the conflict began. Some civilians did not support the dominant armed group. The support of NGO activists was not influenced by geography and activists did not support the state. Village chiefs largely retained a position of neutrality, an outcome which cannot be explained by existing theories. For this, I turn to ‘voice’, the third of the three options available to non-combatants in times of war.

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Voice

Voice is the most opaque of the three civilian options. It is not that seeking to influence affairs by voicing preferences is difficult to understand—this is the stuff of politics. But how this can occur in the midst of violent conflict needs to be established, illustrated, and explained. My discussion of voice for Aceh’s civilians is arranged according to defiance, everyday resistance, and engagement. It is important to start by asking: voice in reference to whom? A villager in a zone of rebel control will no doubt raise her voice differently to rebel soldiers than to state soldiers. Thus, the targets of voice and respective zones of control are crucial. Secondly, acts of support and voice are sometimes blurred. Is providing misinformation to the army an act of support for the rebels or an independent voice defying the state? One cannot know for sure if a given act was carried out with the intent of helping one side, undermining the other side, expressing oneself, or resisting the conflict in general. Acts of voice are often claimed as acts of support by armed groups. Criticism towards state forces may be claimed by a rebel group as an act of support, and the targets of criticism will likely agree. Neutral ground in conflict areas is difficult to cultivate, especially since armed groups tend to see things in black and white.

Orang Biasa

For ordinary civilians, voice is a difficult tool to wield. But Aceh’s villagers did manage to raise their voices. They even managed to openly defy armed groups on some occasions. Such acts were more common early in the conflict. Villagers explained to me that they were able to criticize GAM in the late 1970s. It was also easier to resist demands from the Indonesian military for food and supplies at this point, something which was nearly impossible by the 1990s. Tales of defiance became rare as the conflict progressed. Older women were better able to defy the army more than most civilians, even during the DOM era, refusing searches and directly criticizing soldiers. For Siapno, “whenever there seemed to be a problem... it was usually older women who began arguing or negotiating with the military men.” In Bireuen, villagers told me about one old woman who used to hiss at soldiers whenever they passed through.

She would run after them with a broom, and the soldiers would try to laugh it off. What could they do?

198 Interview with Hussin Amin, former Keucik of Saree, Aceh Besar (29 January 2008).
200 Interview with Zainal Abidin, Sekdes of Jeumpa, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
In the introduction, I noted one young woman who directly criticized TNI soldiers, which led to her arrest, but shows that women believed that they could express themselves. Such stories are rare, but significant. They are important not only because they show some room for defiance, but also because they become favoured tales by villagers, sometimes in exaggerated forms—a component of everyday resistance. Other forms of open defiance by ordinary civilians occurred in 1998-99, when tens of thousands of ordinary people took part in strikes and protests against military abuse. Many villagers protested by waving United Nations flags, not GAM or Indonesian ones. Sometimes, villagers went further:

Yes, there were GAM flags, United Nations flags, even Indonesian flags. Some of us just waved white flags, hoping that the conflict would just end.

While raising a flag or creating signs to support either side were acts of support, common acts of voice included taking down flags and erasing signs supporting either side or creating neutral symbols.

Ordinary Acehnese also managed to defy GAM. In their strongholds the rebels were surprisingly tolerant of criticism, provided they did not question their core goals. Villagers in Bireuen explained that criticizing GAM soldiers was much easier than TNI soldiers—“they don’t always like it, but they will not shoot you.” After the conflict, criticisms of the former rebels were easier to come by. I met many villagers who were frustrated that the rebels are rewarding their own, but not the civilians who supported them.

GAM said they were with the people. We sheltered them and helped, and now they race through our village in their new cars. They don’t care!

Villagers were able to defy both sides, but in limited ways and only when it seemed safe.

Ordinary civilians seeking to express themselves were more likely to employ forms of everyday resistance. Stories of defiance often evolved into folk tales, myths whose expression staked out a small, but symbolically important position against one or both

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201 Siapno, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh*, 20-22. In one of many formulaic stories told by Acehnese civilians, a woman forced to bring coffee to a soldier switches sugar for salt, and when the soldier spits out his coffee, tells him not to return. While probably stylized, also contain elements of truth.


203 Discussion in coffee shop, Saree, Aceh Besar (30 October 2007).

204 Aspinall found that GAM tolerated criticism, and over time sought to channel it, what I call engagement or feedback, provided that “they did not question independence.” Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 169.

205 Discussion with farmers, Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (06 November 2007).

206 Anonymous interview with Keucik, Teupin Ridup, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
combatants. Rumours are important weapons of the weak, providing evidence of dissatisfaction and shaping public perceptions. The frequent recital and even exaggeration of human rights abuses was an important form of resistance, intended to express outrage and undermine the legitimacy of one side. Such stories became the raw materials for local and international human rights reports, as tales of abuse percolated upwards to become tools of defiance for civil society actors. Sometimes, stories would take the form of jokes, often referring to army corruption. One joke was that Indonesian troops come to Aceh with M16s, but leave with 16M (million rupiah... another variant involves AK47s and 47K). Other jokes featured misunderstandings caused by Acehnese responding to Indonesian questions in Acehnese and stories in which Acehnese farmers outwit the army. Against GAM, rumours of Western or Indonesian military collusion were not uncommon. Rumours criticized both sides, viewing the army and rebels as one and the same, working together in criminal ventures. One should not assume that such acts of spreading gossip were safe. Villagers were under the scrutiny of security officials and spies from both sides, and a careless joke or story against one side could bring severe retribution.

The fruits of forced support were often soured by foot-dragging. When Indonesian officials forced villagers to establish village guards, many shirked their duties, some communicating their inactivity to GAM by placing their weapons outside of their booth. Villagers who were forced to serve as night guards (jaga malam) turned their posts into nighttime hangouts, sipping coffee and playing chess with their friends. Villagers would formally comply, but not do any real work; “They don’t say what we are supposed to be guarding—just jaga malam! They don’t say guard this or that.” Acehnese villagers were forced by both sides to attend loyalty and flag ceremonies. Attendees made the best of things, scoring a free meal and enjoying the festivities, but not taking anything seriously. Villagers in Sabang described attending loyalty ceremonies because “we heard there would be T-shirts and a band.” They slept during the speeches and left once they got their shirts. When Acehnese farmers and fishermen were forced to donate or sell their products below cost, instead of refusing, they hid their best produce and provided soldiers lesser quality items. Voice through everyday resistance was also found when combatants demanded information. Many

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209 Discussion in coffee shop, Sabang (09 November 2007).
210 Discussion in coffee shop, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (15 April 2009).
villagers played dumb or responded in Acehnese. The “refusal of Indonesian language,”
especially by older Acehnese who could reasonably insist that they do not speak Indonesian,
had the effect of slowing, confusing, and frustrating the army and evolved into popular
jokes.\textsuperscript{211} Siapno describes one exchange in which the army asked how many villagers were
serving as night watchmen. A villager responded in Acehnese “I didn’t count” (\textit{tidak
kubilang}), which in Indonesian means “I won’t tell”, frustrating the soldiers.\textsuperscript{212}

Another way to stake an independent position and undermine demands for
information was to use armed groups for personal ends. This was especially common along
the west coast, where GAM had “a tough time knowing when the people were being
honest.”\textsuperscript{213} One villager explained that, after a fight over inheritance, his brother-in-law
reported him as a GAM spy.\textsuperscript{214} GAM Commanders in the northeast explained that false
denouncements were common in the late 1990s, so they formed teams to investigate charges
against villagers to avoid punishing innocents.

Sometimes the people said this person is an informant, that person is an
informant, but they were actually the informant.\textsuperscript{215}

Just outside of Banda Aceh, rival coffee shop owners accused each other of being GAM.
State soldiers did not trust either man, so decided not to get involved.\textsuperscript{216} In another case,
GAM units attacked a village in Aceh Besar, seemingly out of nowhere:

The other village told them we were the ones who helped the army in an
earlier ambush. It was not true. But our villages are old enemies, they just
wanted to cause trouble.\textsuperscript{217}

Other studies show that “people accused their personal enemies of being associated with
GAM in order to provoke the military to take action against them.”\textsuperscript{218} By using armed
groups for their own ends, civilians staked an independent, though perhaps ignoble position.

Although not as common as everyday resistance, ordinary Acehnese villagers
sometimes sought to influence the army through feedback and dialogue. Early in the

\textsuperscript{211} Siapno, \textit{Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh}, 192. See also Aspinall, \textit{Islam and Nation}, 177.
\textsuperscript{212} Siapno, \textit{Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh}, 193.
\textsuperscript{213} Interview with “Kowboy” Effendi, Panglima GAM Bireuen, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
\textsuperscript{214} Discussion in coffee shop, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (15 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{215} Interview with Udin, \textit{Panglima} GAM Aceh Besar (03 November 2007).
\textsuperscript{216} Discussion in coffee shop, Banda Aceh (25 January 2008).
\textsuperscript{217} Group interview with Harmaini, \textit{Keucik} of Lam Kabu; Isha, former \textit{Keucik} of Lam Tamot; M. Hashim
Usman, \textit{Keucik} of Pancah; Pukan Darawan, \textit{Sekdes} of Pancah; Muzakhir, \textit{Imeum Mukim} of Lembah
Seulawah (30 January 2008).
\textsuperscript{218} Drexler, \textit{Aceh, Indonesia}, 40.
conflict, there were few opportunities for feedback through state channels. In the reformasi era, villagers were asked to share their stories of abuse with state organizations, such as the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), President Habibie’s fact-finding missions, various legislative committees, and the media.\footnote{219} Engaging with the Indonesian military was difficult, however some civilians maintained ties to individual soldiers, enabling them to make inquiries and discuss events. This was more likely to occur with ethnic Acehnese members of the army. The most common occasion for Acehnese villagers to influence soldiers was when the families of arrestees were called upon by security forces.\footnote{220} Typically, families would not be informed of arrests until several days after the fact, and then they might be brought in to provide information, pay bail / ransom, or negotiate for release. For example, after missing for four days, the parents of sixteen year old Darmi were summoned to the local army base and were told that their son was a GAM informer. The parents explained that their son was on his way back from his friend’s house, which accorded with the boy’s story. The family arranged for the boy’s release; the soldiers wanted to keep the boy in jail to scare him away from GAM, but the family negotiated to have him come home that day.\footnote{221} Siapno notes that it was common to hear stories of female family members negotiating “with different levels of military authority, in order to seek the release of the husbands, fathers, or brothers.”\footnote{222} In 1996, two women wanted “to negotiate with [the army] for the release of their brother and husband”, so they went together to the military base.\footnote{223} The women decided to dress up and wear make-up, a successful tactic which gained them access to the prisoners. Siapno puts her finger on why engagement can be more successful than defiance; authorities tended to make concessions to civilians which satisfied their expectations.\footnote{224} This limited forum of enquiring after prisoners was the primary way Acehnese villagers were able to persuade the Indonesian army to be lenient.

\footnote{219} This echoes Wood’s finding in El Salvador, where the state sought to address past wrongs and reach out to victims in moments of reform. \textit{Wood, Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador}. \footnote{220} In 2001, a fisherman was arrested, and his friend approached the TNI to help free him. Interview with Alamsyah (coroner) and Duli (wife), Suka Damai, Aceh Besar (28 January 2008). \footnote{221} The boy was later asked to serve as an army spy. He responded with a weapon of the weak, providing basic, vague information at first, and slowly ceasing to do so as troops rotated and his trouble was forgotten. Discussion with family in Teupin Ridup, Bireuen (04 February 2008). \footnote{222} Siapno, \textit{Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh}, 40. \footnote{223} Siapno, \textit{Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh}, 17. \footnote{224} Siapno, \textit{Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh}, 18.
Acehnese families had an easier time engaging with the rebels than the army. GAM units were relatively open to feedback from Acehnese villagers, at least in the northeast. I did not find evidence of similar systems in other parts of the province. This suggests that considerable control is necessary before an armed group will allow, let alone solicit, feedback from villagers. When GAM arrived in villages, its soldiers were generally disciplined, especially in its strongholds along the northern coast.

When GAM asked us for money, we could explain that we were broke. We could not refuse the TNI. GAM typically had a civilian representative (ulesoe) in its strongholds who could arrange meetings between GAM and ordinary civilians, an institution established in part to facilitate feedback. When Indonesian authorities demanded that locals take part in night patrols, villagers approached the ulesoeto explain their position and avoid clashes. Another interesting form of feedback is noted by Aspinall. As GAM became concerned with extortion by fake rebels, Commanders published their mobile phone numbers in local papers, establishing a hotline through which villagers could report problems. Above, I noted that Acehnese villagers were able to criticize GAM soldiers, provided they did not question their core aims. Commander Kowboy in Bireuen detailed an event in which a local woman criticized his men and said they were just like the TNI. When he heard of this, the popular Commander went to the woman’s house and discovered that she was upset that her son had been arrested by GAM.

She was very angry, so we calmed her down and provided assistance. He was guilty, but we have to convince people that our punishments are just.

Such stories suggest that, at least along the northeast coast, GAM was sensitive to local opinion and sought feedback. These were small, yet significant windows for interaction between villagers and armed groups, moments of contact that Till Förster refers to as “dialogue directe.” However for Acehnese civilians, such small opportunities for interaction and influence were far more likely with the rebels than with the army.

Voice was used by ethnic minorities in similar ways. Just as Acehnese communities protested Indonesian forces, ethnic minorities tended to oppose GAM. And just as

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225 Discussion with farmer, Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (06 November 2007).
227 Interview with “Kowboy” Effendi, Panglima GAM Bireuen, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
Indonesian officials attribute anti-Indonesian sentiment to GAM manipulation, the rebels interpreted criticisms from minorities as Indonesian manipulation. During the conflict and today, many buildings in state strongholds feature anti-GAM graffiti. Ethnic minorities also took part in anti-GAM protests. For instance, Javanese communities which fled to North Sumatra organized several anti-GAM protests and criticized NGOs for overlooking GAM abuse.\textsuperscript{229} The major form of defiance among ethnic minorities was refusing to pay GAM taxes. Around the agricultural heart of Central Aceh, GAM established toll roads and taxed local produce. Plantation workers and truckers responded by arming themselves, organizing caravans, and protesting. Minorities also opposed the TNI. Many non-Acehnese attended the huge anti-government protests in 1999. Javanese in North Sumatra remain critical of Indonesian authorities for not helping them, and many protests in Southwest Aceh criticized both sides.\textsuperscript{230}

As with ethnic Acehnese, minorities were not typically in a position to defy armed groups, resisting through more covert methods. Local gossip criticized GAM as being corrupt, abusive, unIslamic, and CIA agents. Stories of GAM leader Hasan di Tiro were especially popular, focusing on his ties to the American government and his Jewish wife. One Malay coffee shop owner in Tapak Tuan noted that his customers often joked about “Sultan di Tiro”.\textsuperscript{231} Local gossip emphasized GAM-TNI collusion and criminality, rumours which were accurate in some districts. Conspiracy theories were rampant, illustrating resistance to both sides, seen by many as a single force. In terms of other everyday resistance, some non-Acehnese who were pressed into night watch duty by state authorities behaved just as Acehnese did—by shirking. All told, such ‘weapons of the weak’ were common tools across ethnic groups. While Acehnese had an easier time engaging with GAM, minorities had an easier time approaching state forces and a more difficult time communicating with GAM.

Turning to engagement, when armed groups arrested villagers, their families would frequently be summoned to defend them and negotiate their release. However, in ethnic minority regions GAM was not strong enough to conduct investigations, ignoring or killing

\textsuperscript{229} Anonymous interviews with Javanese IDPs, Bakti Suci, North Sumatra (October 2003).
\textsuperscript{230} Discussion with university students, Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{231} Interview with Mahdi, coffee shop owner, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (16 April 2009).
suspected spies. Javanese minorities were unable to engage the insurgents. When a Javanese person was arrested, attacked, or told to leave, there was no recourse.

The voice strategy was important for all ordinary civilians. As expected, everyday resistance was the primary form of voice for most villagers, although I also found surprising forms of defiance and engagement. Interestingly, persons from all ethnic groups utilized voice in similar ways. Orang Rasaa in respective strongholds had similar aspirations and ways to express them. The voice option illuminates a shared civilian world across groups and regions. But ordinary civilians still had a difficult time engaging violent armed groups, and often needed help from local leaders.

**Village Leaders**

The concept of voice first occurred to me in 2003, when I was interviewing Acehnese migrants in Malaysia. They painted a seemingly anarchic picture of Aceh under Martial Law. But they also noted that village chiefs have clear duties, helping villagers by dealing with both sides. I asked if I could interview a chief, and was told that there were few or none in Malaysia, as they stay with the village. It is not that Aceh’s chiefs are altruistic or saintly; some are corrupt, macho, and sexist. But during the conflict, they largely remained neutral and utilized voice.

Sometimes, chiefs took part in acts of defiance. Earlier, I mentioned the example of 76 chiefs who resigned in northeastern Aceh. Some writers viewed this as flight, some as support for either side. It is through voice that their actions make sense— their resignations were acts of protest. A newspaper article carried a short interview with one of these chiefs; “It is senseless for us to remain as keucik (village heads) if we cannot perform our public duties.” The article explains that “village chiefs have faced pressure from both sides in the conflict, even when trying to protect their own citizens.”

A chief interviewed in an Indonesian newspaper explained that the TNI demanded they raise the flag and organize night watches, while GAM punished them for it and demanded taxes. After the chiefs protested, many returned to their posts. The resignations of chiefs in North Aceh were not flight, not support, but instead were acts of voice.

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234 Interview with Teungku Zakaria, Keucik of Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (03 February 2008).
Aceh’s keurik rarely utilized open defiance. Nor did they primarily utilize weapons of the weak. An exception is when chiefs hoarded food or lied about funds when negotiating with armed groups. While knowing that villagers had hidden rice reserves, many chiefs would feign ignorance and convince the soldiers to leave. Or, when serving as an advocate for villagers accused of supporting GAM, the chief might be aware that the villagers had ties to GAM, but fail to mention this. But the standout form of voice among chiefs was engagement, seeking to influence combatants without necessarily opposing them. This demanded diplomacy and tact. The neutrality I noted in discussing support was necessary for chiefs to engage with both sides. Two forms of engagement stood out throughout my interviews: keurik served as diplomats when combatants arrived in a village and served as advocates for detained villagers. These two roles were enacted frequently, exemplifying how voice can survive even in difficult times.

When combatants arrived in search of information or goods, the chief served as a diplomat. For one official, “the chief welcomes both sides in, and then helps them leave.” Chiefs had to keep combatants moving—the longer they remained, the greater the chances of disputes with villagers or retaliation from the other side.

[Chiefs] told the TNI they cannot feed them, or told GAM they cannot stay in the village. This requires skill. The chief must be a diplomat.

Combatants generally sought out the chief upon arrival, and when they did not, the chief would approach them. On some occasions, soldiers would simply take what they want, especially when the TNI pursued GAM rebels but lost them near a village. For the most part though, things were more orderly.

Both sides demanded money from village funds and villagers, ‘protection fees’ for the army and ‘Nanggroe Tax’ for the rebels. Either way, villagers were robbed of scarce resources. The chief helped negotiate such payments. The importance and complexity of local negotiations should not be underestimated. Chiefs had to satisfy rival armed groups and state officials above them and villagers below them. Giving too little would be viewed as a sign of disloyalty by the armed group making the demands, while giving too much

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235 Interview with Yusriman, Camat of Terangon, Aceh Tenggara (07 April 2009).
236 Interview with Nurdin Abdul Rahman, Bupati of Bireuen and former GAM negotiator (05 November 2007).
237 When the TNI arrived in villages to rally support for anti-GAM demonstrations and loyalty ceremonies, they approached the village chief first. Human Rights Watch, Aceh under Martial Law: Problems Faced by Acehnese Refugees in Malaysia, 5.
would bankrupt the village and might be seen as an act of support by the other side if they found out. Several chiefs took pleasure in describing how they bargained with both sides, employing a range of diplomatic tactics. A chief would invite ranking soldiers to sit down for coffee, his wife serving snacks. After some small talk, he might relate stories of brutality by the other side. When dealing with GAM, keurik emphasized their Acehnese ethnicity and village roots—wearing Acehnese dress, performing Acehnese ceremonies, speaking local dialects, and framing their perspectives in terms of adat (tradition). When dealing with the Indonesian army, keurik wore state uniforms, flew the red and white flag, and spoke Indonesian, becoming the loyal bureaucrat. Such cues helped soldiers feel more relaxed, expanding the space for dialogue. Indonesian officials were able to see keurik as state officials, while GAM leaders were able to see them as traditional Acehnese authorities. Not only were chiefs content occupying this ambiguous middle ground, they cultivated it.

Residents in one Aceh Besar village were subject to frequent military extortion. One day, state soldiers demanded that a local teacher give them his television and carried it off to their barracks. Days later, the unit was passing nearby and the chief arranged a meeting with the Commander, whom he had met several times. The chief’s wife served snacks and coffee to them in a private sitting room adorned with a prominent picture of then President Wahid and a glowing electric picture of Mecca. The chief complained of GAM abuse, namely extortion, which the Commander agreed was a problem. They stopped to pray, and after a conversation about local agriculture, the chief brought up the television set and other examples of theft by his soldiers to the Commander.

I told him that I understand how hard his soldiers work to protect us, and showed I have concern for them. But they have to show a good example and be better than GAM.238

The television was not returned—chiefly influence was not that strong. But the criticism was raised, there was a noticeable drop in extortion, and the Commander provided the teacher with some compensation. The story is interesting not because the injustice was corrected—it was not—but instead that there was an opportunity for the chief to voice criticism, framed not as defiance, but instead mutual concern. It was criticism given in sorrow more than in anger, appealing to the listener instead of confronting him. In Bireuen, GAM was close to many villagers and GAM soldiers frequently stayed in local houses. As

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238 Interview with Nurdin, woodworker and Keucik of Suka Damai, Aceh Besar (29 January 2008).
conflict dynamics shifted in 2003, this became a liability. The chief approached the GAM Commander and, after considerable small-talk, explained his concerns to the rebel leader. They agreed that the villagers could still help the rebels, but that GAM soldiers must not reside in the village or display rebel symbols. 239

Diplomacy often failed though, as many examples can attest. Outside of Bireuen in 2001, TNI soldiers lost track of GAM attackers near a village. The soldiers blamed the villagers for assisting the rebels and killed several residents. The keucik engaged the frustrated Commander, citing the horrible things the rebels had done and how glad they were that the army was there. He brought out a scarred villager, his proof of GAM brutality. But the soldiers continued to abuse the villagers, and the keucik was powerless to intervene. 240 The most dramatic failures to engage armed groups involved Javanese villagers. In 1999, GAM demanded that all Javanese leave Aceh. In Saree, the Javanese appealed to the chief, who approached the GAM Commander, but GAM refused to talk. The chief could do nothing more than help the Javanese to prepare for their journey. 241 Once combatants made up their mind to attack, there was no room for diplomacy.

The other principal role played by the keucik was serving as an advocate for villagers accused of crimes. Whereas I heard many stories of chiefs serving as village diplomats, the examples of chiefs serving as advocates were simply overwhelming. Every village I visited provided numerous examples. 242 This lawyer role entailed helping villagers by interacting with armed groups, 243 representing villagers under investigation, and negotiating for the release of arrested villagers. Armed groups usually sought out the chief when they investigated a suspected informant. In their strongholds, GAM maintained a complex system of investigations. To avoid false arrests and executions, the rebels created special teams to investigate allegations among local residents. When an investigation began, GAM would notify the chief, who would serve as a lawyer for the accused. In one case, a young

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239 Anonymous interview with Keucik, Teupin Ridup, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
240 Discussion with family in Teupin Ridup, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
242 In Bireuen, I asked a keucik and residents if they could share some examples. They went on to list eighteen cases over the next five hours, providing names and outcomes. This exhausting interview, which cost me a scheduled interview with former GAM commanders, was not typical, but most chiefs were able to detail five or six cases. Anonymous interview with Keucik, Teupin Ridup, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
243 In 2003, the Indonesian Government issued new identification cards to help isolate rebel soldiers. Due to poor logistics and migration, many villagers did not receive theirs, and not carrying one when searched carried stiff penalties. To obtain a card, the village chiefs accompanied villagers to meet with the camat and the police. Human Rights Watch, Aceh under Martial Law: Inside the Secret War, 35.
villager who passed sensitive information to the police was subsequently captured by GAM and brought to trial. The chief defended the villager, noting that he spoke only after being tortured, and the youth had the scars to prove it. GAM agreed that the TNI was brutal in the interrogations, and forgave the youth.\footnote{Discussion with farmers, Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (06 November 2007).} In another example, the chief of Saree defended a villager accused of being a spy. It soon became clear that the villager was guilty, so the chief plea-bargained. Instead of being killed or exiled, the man was released into the custody of the chief and swore on the Koran that he would not betray GAM.\footnote{Interview with Syarbini, \textit{Keucik} of Saree, Aceh Besar (01 November 2007).} GAM officials found that chiefs sometimes defended guilty suspects.

\textit{Kanik} might lie, but would also lie to the army. They defend their people.\footnote{Interview with Udin, \textit{Panglima} GAM Aceh Besar (03 November 2007).}

Of course, many \textit{kanik} would not tell the truth, because they did not want us to hurt his villager. This is Pak \textit{kanik}'s job.\footnote{Discussion with family in Teupin Ridup, Bireuen (04 February 2008).}

At times, chiefs would help suspects flee. Aware of this possibility, the rebels would sometimes allow it, especially when they planned to exile him anyway.

Once villagers were arrested, it was the chief’s job to negotiate for their release. Firstly, the chief would be summoned by the army or police, the arrestee’s family, or by other villagers. Second, the chief might arrange a team, perhaps notifying the village secretary, someone from the \textit{Tuhapeut} (council of elders) or someone with ties to the accusers or accused.\footnote{Group interview with Harmaini, \textit{Keucik} of Lam Kabu; Isha, former \textit{Keucik} of Lam Tamot; M. Hashim Usman, \textit{Keucik} of Pancah; Pukan Darawan, \textit{Sekdes} of Pancah; Muzakhir, \textit{Imeum Mukim} of Lembah Seulawah (30 January 2008).} For instance, a particularly pious GAM Commander captured ‘Javanese spies’ in West Aceh. The \textit{kanik} brought several \textit{ulama} with him, prayed with the Commander, and then negotiated.\footnote{Anonymous interview with \textit{Ulama}, Nagan Raya (08 December 2006).} When dealing with state forces, chiefs were more likely to call upon bureaucratic figures, such as the village secretary. \textit{Kanik} employed a large tactical repertoire to help suspects: defending them, providing an alibi, paying bail, vouching for them, taking responsibility for conditional releases, plea bargaining, finding witnesses, ensuring the cause was documented (to avoid extrajudicial execution), and helping suspects to escape. These were most evident when Indonesian security units arrested villagers. Especially since the justice system had collapsed and prisons were full, the army and police
were forced to rely on chiefs to process suspected rebels, when they did not simply kill them. The introduction of this dissertation noted one such case, where a woman was arrested and the chief secured her release. In another case, a villager in North Aceh was beaten and arrested for ‘staring down’ a soldier. The keucik took it up with the Commander, successfully securing the release of the villager, although the Commander demanded that the villager should stay in jail another day so that the soldier could save face. The youth was then released into the custody of the chief and was informed that if there was any further trouble, the chief would be punished. Sometimes, cases were minor and could be resolved easily. Among many similar cases, one chief told me the story of a fourteen year old boy who told people he was GAM. The police arrested him, and the chief secured his release:

I explained he is a kid and is very poor. He is not GAM, I guaranteed it.

Another case was in South Aceh, where Mr. Shakar, a taxi driver, was arrested by the police, so his chief went to the police. The police demanded an oath on the Koran to Indonesia, but the chief convinced the police to allow an oath against GAM.

Traditional leaders and elders would frequently accompany the chief to meetings with GAM. The imeum mukim often served as a sort of back-up when the chief was arrested or otherwise unable to perform his usual roles. In one case, mobile police units arrested and beat an Acehnese villager accused of being a rebel informant. The next day, help arrived in the form of the village chief, Mr. Syarbini. The chief asked why the soldiers did not come to him first, and proceeded to vouch for and negotiate the release of the villager. The Commander, who had just arrived in Aceh, was surprised when the chief demanded to talk. After an argument, the Commander beat and imprisoned the chief:

Who did he think he is? Hitting me for doing my job... he does not know adat [cultural tradition].

The next day, help arrived. It was not the rebels, but instead the imeum mukim the chief’s family, an ulama, and two ethnic Acehnese soldiers from the Indonesian army. After hours of debate and a telephone call from an army official, the chief and villager were released.

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250 Anonymous interview with Keucik, Teupin Ridup, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
252 Interview with Murdalis, Keucik of Panton Luas, South Aceh (18 April 2009).
253 Another role of the imeum mukim was to console the family of victims, serving as a counsellor. Interview with Abdul Wahab, Imeum Mukim of Gunung Seulawah, Aceh Besar (01 November 2007).
254 “Tidak tahu adat”, “does not know culture”, is used to refer to someone who acts outside of social expectations. Interviews in Saree, Aceh Besar (November 2007, February 2008).
Indonesian security forces were not always reasonable, and often refused to talk. Just as chiefs often failed as diplomats to protect their villages, they also failed as advocates on many occasions. One activist described a case in 2003, in Indrapuri, Aceh Besar. The local chief was summoned by the TNI because one of his villagers was suspected of being a GAM member. The chief was beaten and told to pay for the villager's release, so the chief sold his goats to pay the ransom. Many cases were not handled through investigations, but through executions. Both sides carried out executions, especially in areas where they were too weak to undertake costly investigations. My point is that investigations and trials were not uncommon, and villagers as well as combatants went to the keucik in such cases.

Chiefs were able to serve as diplomats and advocates in large part because they remained neutral. According to one chief interviewed by an Indonesian journalist, “both sides claim they own us.” For one chief in South Aceh:

Both sides understood what I have to do for my village and why I am neutral.

For the most part, combatants understood that chiefs were neutral. While chiefs were often skilled, dressing themselves in the language and symbols of either side, combatants were usually aware of the game being played. The keucik had to make each party aware of how playing the game was in their interest. The chief was not seen as a threat to either side. In fact, his mediation was often helpful to both sides, as neither wanted to be seen as abusive and both wanted accurate information about suspects.

Keucik served as diplomats and lawyers during the conflict, defending the interests of their villages. These roles were repeated throughout my field interviews:

Chiefs have two roles: they represent the village and they represent the villagers when there is trouble.

The chief had two special duties in the conflict. One, if someone is arrested, they have to help. Two, soldiers go to the chief for information.

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256 In Central Aceh and the west coast, where the rebels were more of a criminal organization, the chief would negotiate for the release of kidnapped villagers. In Aceh Tenggara, the GAM kidnapped the son of a *camat*. The GAM insisted that the chief negotiate the ransom, and the chief successfully freed the youth. Interview with Faisal, *Partai Rakyat Aceh* Candidate, Aceh Tenggara (07 April 2009).
258 Group interview with *Teungku Syafi`, Keucik* of Pasi Lembang; Ibu Konsatum, Sekdes of Pasi Lembang; Bantardi, *Partai Aceh*; Ibu Ayani, activist in Pasi Lembang, South Aceh (14 April 2009).
259 Interview with Budi Arianto, JKMA (24 January 2008).
260 Interview with Sarbunis and Agus, activists, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (14 April 2009). I asked local activists what chiefs did during the conflict. They responded with authority: “there are two things which
In post-conflict Aceh, keucik continue to play similar roles. Chiefs have helped Javanese families to return and have worked with NGOs to distribute aid. One particularly important role has been traditional mediation, as disputes over funding, assistance to former soldiers, and resettlement have proven fertile grounds for legal battles. These are the responsibilities of the keucik—maintaining village order.

**Islamic Leaders**

Islamic leaders generally opted to support armed groups. However, early in the conflict and in contested areas, ulama were more likely to maintain an independent voice. Some ulama engaged in acts of defiance. In Chapter Two, I noted that ulama along the west coast have a reputation for autonomy. Teungku Bantaqiah led various independent uprisings against moral indecency, cultivating an ambiguous position between the TNI and GAM. The indecencies of both sides was a common theme of independent ulama throughout the conflict. Ahmad Dewi provides a similar case in northern Aceh, a maverick ulama who openly opposed both sides for religious reasons. He tried to bring both sides together in local peace talks, but was killed in 1991.

As the conflict spread to new districts, such voices were muted. Ulama came into conflict with combatants when their students were related to rebel soldiers and were used by security forces to find or pressure their families. In such cases, most ulama refused to help the soldiers, an act of defiance. A second issue concerned burials, duties generally reserved for the imam. After battles, fallen soldiers would be left to rot. Many imam felt obligated to give all soldiers a proper burial, often defying the killers to do so. After a firefight in Aceh Besar, five rebels were killed and their bodies dumped. Despite warnings, the local imam found the bodies, cleaned them, and provided a proper burial. The TNI discovered this and confined the imam to his village for the remainder of the conflict. Another way that local Islamic leaders defied combatants was when civilians, especially

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263 Interview with Teungku Faisal, Secretary General of the HUDA, Banda Aceh (26 January 2008).
women harassed by soldiers, claimed sanctuary within mosques or schools. Sometimes soldiers ignored religious leaders and extracted them anyways.\textsuperscript{265} As the conflict worsened, ulama were punished for their defiance, pushing those in GAM areas towards the rebels and those in state strongholds to the state.

In contested areas, ulama tended to remain neutral. Many were neutral in a passive sense, hoping to ride out the storm, although one also finds acts of direct defiance. After the fall of Suharto, many ulama joined the civil society movement and criticized the military for a decade of abuses.\textsuperscript{266} Though they tended to be more critical of the TNI than of GAM, they saw themselves as neutral figures.\textsuperscript{267} In 1999, rural ulama formed the HUDA as a rival to the statist MPU, on the basis that “Aceh’s Islamic identity had been contaminated by government policies.”\textsuperscript{268} The HUDA criticized both sides, however as the conflict intensified, this was scaled back. The HUDA remained independent though.\textsuperscript{269} HUDA ulama sought to “oppose the conflict through Islamic teachings.”\textsuperscript{270} Many resided in contested areas such as Aceh Besar, parts of South Aceh, and Bener Meriah. Some HUDA ulama were openly critical of both sides. Above, I noted that in Saree, the younger, more conservative ulama referred to both sides as rotten and not ‘real’ Muslims. Another ulama explained that joining GAM or the TNI was against the Koran.

If they read Holy Books, they would know. But they do not know the Koran, they are Jews.\textsuperscript{271}

By being openly critical of the conflict, many ulama defied both sides.

Several ulama residing in contested areas utilized forms of everyday resistance. Some taught the children of both sides, sometimes beside one another. The most common form of subtle resistance for such ulama was focusing on peace in their sermons. Ulama opinions tended to be highly valued, and by promoting peace, ulama were able to influence their communities a great deal. Another method was assisting victims. Some ulama served as counsellors for widows, orphans, and veterans, seeing their job as healing the community.

\textsuperscript{265} Interview with Teungku Yahya Abdullah, KPA Official, Bireuen (04 February 2009).
\textsuperscript{266} Crow, “Aceh: the ‘Special Territory’ in North Sumatra”; Miller, Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia, 111.
\textsuperscript{267} Yusny Saby, Islam and Social Change: The Role of the Ulama in Acehnese Society (Selangor, Malaysia: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2005), 125.
\textsuperscript{268} Arskal Salim, Challenging the Secular State: The Islamicization of Law in Modern Indonesia (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 151.
\textsuperscript{269} Interview with Teungku Lukman Ramli, MPU member, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (17 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{270} Interview with Teungku Faisal, Secretary General of the HUDA, Banda Aceh (26 January 2008).
\textsuperscript{271} Interview with Teungku Jainal, former Keucik of Jangar, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
While ulama did not typically engage armed groups in an independent capacity during the conflict, this has not been the case after it, when they have helped former combatants and victims. For former rebels returning to their villages, the ulama have brought together the TNI and GAM for a traditional ceremony called the Pasijuk (‘cooling off’). The Pasijuk is intended to make major changes more gradual to avoid disturbing the social balance. One might have a Pasijuk for a new house, a birth, or a return home. It features traditional ulama reciting prayers and sprinkling the subject with water, an action which disturbs more modernist leaders. Without central coordination, ulama across the province have modified the ceremony for returning IDPs and combatants. Noted Acehnese Sociologist Otto Syamsuddin Ishak describes the Pasijuk as

... a special ritual in Aceh. When someone returns, we allow everyone to speak and eat yellow rice together. This affirms village unity.

Commander Kowboy described his Pasijuk, which included a large feast and a handshake between him and his former enemies— “we were trying to build a family. Who doesn’t like parties?” In this way, ulama have engaged both parties, bringing them together through traditional Islamic ceremonies.

New Notables

Here, the disparate stories of civil society utilizing both flight and support begin to make sense. Activists are about voice, specifically defiance. They protest, criticize, and publicize the misdeeds of those in power, especially armed groups. Acehnese activists, either students or former students working in NGOs, evolved from new post-secondary institutions established during the New Order. They inhabited urban areas, Banda Aceh as well as district towns. Others have shown noted that Aceh’s emergent activist community was, in 1999, more Indonesian than Acehnese in their tastes, mannerisms, and “their very status as ‘students’.” Months after the fall of Suharto, Acehnese activism emerged. Civil society soon expanded and became more daring, documenting scores of abuses and leading

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272 The Pasijuk is a traditional ceremony that involves sprinkling holy water and other practices which modernist Islamic leaders perceive as pagan, thus forbidden by Islam. Similar debates are found over the Selamatan in Java. See James Siegel, Naming the Witch: Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 140.

273 Interview with Professor Otto Syamsuddin Ishak, Professor of Sociology at Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh (28 October 2007).

274 Interview with “Kowboy” Effendi, Panglima GAM Bireuen, Bireuen (04 February 2008).

sizable demonstrations. They organized hunger strikes, rallies, strikes, marches, spoke openly to the media about army abuses, and created billboards demanding investigations. This was a time of open, non-violent defiance.

The activist ascendancy came with a wash of criticisms towards Indonesian security forces. GAM and the TNI agreed that this was rebel support. But the reason for focusing on TNI attacks was partly related to scale—the army simply had a greater capacity to maim and should be expected to be more professional. Another reason for focusing on the army’s abuses was because Aceh’s NGOs were embedded within national networks which were focused on the abuses of the Suharto regime. It was the very Indonesian identity of Aceh’s activists which motivated anti-army protests, not support for secession. Thirdly, as civil society openly defied the TNI, the army began to jail and kill activists. NGOs and student groups were not initially pro-independence or pro-GAM, but this changed as the army cracked down. While Indonesia was undergoing reformasi, their province saw more of the same. The language of democracy and language of human rights did not sit well with GAM, but to their credit, the rebels understood how these calls resonated at home and internationally, and largely adopted these themes. While many NGOs were pushed by the TNI towards GAM by violence, GAM welcomed activists despite their differences, resulting in some convergence between the two forces.

This was not true for all activists, as some remained neutral. Aceh’s women’s caucus opted not to support the referendum or anything which resembled independence, as its goals were limited to human rights, women’s equality, and non-violence. Others sought to retain neutrality by criticizing both sides:

A few NGOs even publicly criticized GAM for human rights abuses, and some of their members were suspicious of and hostile to the movement. This could be a risky stance to take, and some of the NGOs received threatening telephone calls or worse, intimidation.

In this way, GAM was not very different from the TNI, responding to direct criticism with violence. Neutral NGOs tended to be more established than the younger pro-GAM activists, had access to international funding, and maintained close ties to national networks.

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276 Drexler, Aceh, Indonesia, 171, 186.  
277 Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 141.  
278 This was not only true for Acehnese NGOs. I authored a book for a Thai NGO, Forum-Asia, in 2003. While clear that the army had committed the lion’s share of abuses, I also suggested that we must take the GAM to task as well. I received many threats and was called a military agent by pro-GAM NGOs.
Years of working with Javanese and other Indonesian colleagues against the New Order made it difficult for older Acehnese activists to accept GAM parochialism. The story of Aceh’s civil society movement was voice first, namely defiance, and as this became impossible, different generations split between flight and support for GAM.

NGOs and student activists were defiant voices, rarely employing weapons of the weak. There were exceptions though, such as using Islamic holidays as opportunities to coordinate with colleagues. Celebrations for the Birth of the Prophet (Maulid Nabi) and Idul Fitri (Eid) allowed activists to maintain contact— they still chuckle about their Halal Bihal meetings, a ceremony in which people atone for their sins, used then as a forum to document the abuses by armed groups and draft press releases.²⁷⁹ Another form of resistance was teaching about human rights in villages. This is the non-religious equivalent of neutral ulama focusing on passages of the Koran relating to peace, a slow, subtle way to build a new constituency. Engagement with armed groups was difficult for civil society, as Indonesian forces in particular closed its doors to activists. An exception was the Indonesian Red Cross, which served as mediators with the army on some occasions and secured financial compensation for villagers.²⁸⁰ For most activists, GAM was easier to engage, which helps explain why many came to side with the rebels. Engagement requires recognizing the legitimacy of the other party, and the Indonesian military clearly did not recognize civil society actors. Because it was impossible to speak to the army, almost all activists spoke against it.

Other new notables also utilized voice. Professionals such as lawyers played crucial roles as advocates. Some local coffee shop owners were able to sit down with soldiers:

I knew many TNI here. Sometimes I could ask them what happened to village people, get information. Sometimes I wanted to ask them about attacks, but I had to be careful.²⁸¹

I make the best coffee, so the TNI liked coming here. I took it to them so customers would keep coming here too. I knew some of them, and was asked by local people to help when people were arrested.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ Interview with Juanda, Secretary General of People’s Crisis Center (PCC), Saree, Aceh Besar (04 November 2007).
²⁸⁰ Drexler, Aceh, Indonesia, 123.
²⁸¹ Interview with Agus, coffee shop owner, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (14 April 2009).
²⁸² Interview with Yunis, coffee shop owner, Saree, Aceh Besar (03 November 2007).
As early as the 1980s, the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum, LBH) provided support for Acehnese who were arrested by Indonesian security forces. Some academics sought to bring combatants together for peace talks, a high-level form of engagement. The rector of Syiah Kuala University, Dayan Dawood, proposed peace talks and was killed. The rector of Aceh’s campus of the national Islamic University (IAIN: Institusi Agama Indonesia Negara), Safwan Idris, was killed in a similar fashion after pushing for peace talks. Their deaths were powerful statements against high-profile neutrality and engagement. Businessmen were more successful in terms of engagement, especially those doing business with either side. I met some who helped arrange for defections or who, for a price, helped free those arrested by both sides. In 2001, a man named Thaib was arrested in South Aceh by the army. His chief tried to get him freed, but failed. Thaib’s wife went to Haji Ramli, who owns a local mining firm. Ramli freed Thaib for a price, for which Thaib had to go to Malaysia to find work and pay off. Due to shady elements in both the TNI and GAM, businessmen were sometimes able to play surprising roles as neutral parties. Such neutrality was opportunistic, unlike the neutrality exercised by other social forces in Aceh, which were more likely to be principled. I address such motivations in Chapter Four.

Which types of civilians are likely to utilize the voice option? All non-combatants utilized voice in some way. The tremendous danger that the war brought for civilians did not always serve to silence them, sometimes quite the opposite, as abuses provided reasons to speak out. Many ordinary civilians, Acehnese and others, utilized everyday resistance, and at times were able to defy and engage armed groups. Village chiefs were exemplars of engagement, staking an independent position when dealing with both sides in an effort to moderate violence. Civil society primarily opted for defiance, a dangerous course of action which necessitated a shift in strategy as time wore on. As a group, Islamic leaders did not primarily utilize voice, except for early in the conflict and in contested areas. One final note about voice is that it seemed to be the first resort for all groups, but became either covert or impossible as the

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285 I was unable to establish whether Ramli kept the money for himself or needed it to pay off the army. Interview with Haji Ramli, businessman, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (20 April 2009).
conflict intensified. Chiefs were an exception, as their voice was maintained throughout the conflict. Hirschman suggests that voice is the currency of politics, and indeed, it appears to be the instinctual response to unfavourable conditions. This makes it all the more puzzling that it has been subject to the least scrutiny of the three options.

**Combined Options**

In Chapter One, I noted that Hirschman’s exit, voice, and loyalty combine in various ways, especially loyalty, which exists to amplify voice and slow exit. I conclude this chapter by emphasizing how civilians wielded combined options. Flight and support combined in a number of ways. Sometimes, perceived support necessitated flight. This was true of Javanese, considered by GAM to be Indonesian agents, and NGOs, considered by the army to be GAM agents, both assumptions becoming self-fulfilling prophecies. For some civilians, flight led to support, or at least provided fertile grounds for it. Many young men who fled to Malaysia did so in part because they did not join the rebels, but once in Malaysia, many came to support them, especially against Malaysian raids and the difficulties of returning home given suspicious state forces.

Flight and voice were also found in tandem with one another. Like support, voice often caused, or necessitated, flight. Those openly defiant of either side faced severe reprisals, so had to flee. This was clearly the case for NGOs, whose criticisms brought military punishment. Flight also facilitated voice. This was principally the case for activists who did not choose support, fleeing to Jakarta, Bangkok, and elsewhere to continue their advocacy work. Aspinall suggests that, for some, exit was a form of voice; “flight was not merely a means of self-preservation but also a means of protest... flight was more than a weapon of the weak... the mid-1999 exodus was in some ways overtly political.” I am skeptical of flight as a form of voice for civilians, although insurgents often utilized displacement to make a statement against the other side. Siapno shows how GAM

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286 Barrington Moore suggests that when a political crisis ensues, the first resort is to fix it, then protest. It is only after this fails that revolution becomes a possibility. Barrington Moore, *Injustice: The Social Basis of Obedience and Revolt* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1978), 476.
288 Aspinall, “Place and Displacement in the Aceh Conflict,” 132.
encouraged displacement to gain international attention. While displacement was a tool wielded by both sides, it is unlikely that civilians fled as an act of voice.

Voice and support were an effective combination, namely because support can amplify voice. By supporting combatants, some non-combatants were able to express themselves in ways that independent civilian groups could not. Although ulama were aligned with armed groups, they maintained a distinct voice and influenced their policies, pushing for Sharia law and Islamic education from within both sides. Younger NGO activists did not simply flee to GAM, they also worked through the rebels to criticize Indonesian forces and work with international donors. While ulama and NGOs influenced armed groups, they were also transformed by them. State / society theorists find that “the most subtle and fascinating patterns of political change” occur through the interactions of societal actors and governing forces. Many GAM ulama did not return to teaching, remaining active in GAM politics, a new form of rebel ‘state ulama’. Activists who were loyal to GAM turned a blind eye to Javanese abuses, became hostile towards those who did not, and discovered a sense of ethnic Acehnese identity. The intersection of support and voice features societal forces allying with either side, and pursuing their own agendas from within, resulting in a degree of convergence among those involved.

Sometimes all three strategies combined at once. Javanese communities fled to North Sumatra, supported the state, and criticized both sides. Acehnese diaspora communities fled from the conflict, and once abroad, many criticized the army some maintained or forged ties with the rebel movement. For Javanese and Acehnese abroad, one finds a combination of flight, support, and voice.

Flight, support, and voice cover a lot of ground in terms of explaining non-combatant decisions and actions in war. But they do not explain everything. A potential fourth civilian strategy may involve inaction. Many ordinary civilians tried to lay low:

We tried to avoid the army and GAM. It is better to avoid trouble and wait for the conflict to end.

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291 The GAM created organizations to “tell them what GAM is doing for Aceh…and remind them of their responsibility.” Karla Smith Fallon, Making Noise: The Transnational Politics of Aceh and East Timor in the Diaspora (University of British Columbia: PhD Dissertation, 2009), 137-138.
292 Discussion in coffee shop, Banda Aceh (25 January 2008).
Many ulam in contested areas also tried to avoid trouble and focus on their teaching duties. As one explained, “our duty is to teach, not to be political.” Laying low did not generally tend to work though, especially in respective strongholds, where the path of least resistance often meant de facto support, such as paying taxes or joining protests, while those who refused would be seen as defiant. But in contested areas, non-combatants were more successful in avoiding both sides and the conflict. I will return to this issue in my final chapter, when I assess my categories.

**Conclusions**

Chapter One suggested that non-combatants possess three major options even in the midst of war: flight, support, and voice. In utilizing these options, civilians are victims as well as agents. Chapter Two introduced Aceh’s history, conflict, and society. This chapter has brought together the conceptual lens of civilian decisions and the empirical focus on Aceh, emphasizing variation in terms of civilian responses to the conflict, as societal groups utilized distinct forms of flight, support, and voice. My primary goal was to show the value of this schema and how it works in practice. Another goal was to show the Aceh conflict in a new light, putting the spotlight on non-combatants instead of on combatants. Focusing on civilians has helped show how the conflict was experienced across ethnic groups, in different regions, and over time—variations not always clear in macro-level accounts. It has also demonstrated that civilians faced common problems, and that sometimes, the TNI and GAM were rather similar.

Flight was the primary choice for young Acehnese men, ethnic Javanese civilians, and to a lesser extent all ordinary Acehnese civilians and activists. Meanwhile, support was the primary strategy of Islamic leaders, ordinary civilians, businesspeople, and younger activists. In terms of voice, activists exemplified defiance, ordinary civilians chose weapons of the weak, and chiefs chose to engage armed groups. Many civilians tried to utilize voice, such as ordinary civilians, academics, and activists, but were punished for it. Facing the same conflict, various civilians behaved very differently. What accounts for such variations? Why did non-combatants choose the options that they did?

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Footnote:

293 Interview with Teungku Abdul Malik, Suka Mulia, Aceh Besar (28 January 20008).
Explaining Civilian Choices in Aceh

The previous chapter described what Aceh’s non-combatants did in response to war. The present chapter seeks to explain these choices. Why did some non-combatants flee, while others stayed behind? Why did some non-combatants support a particular armed group, while others remained neutral? Why did some non-combatants speak up while others did not, and what accounts for different forms of voice? The fact that different types of civilians respond to war in distinct ways demands explanation.

In Chapter One, I laid out four broad potential explanations for civilian choices: Insecurity, profit, socio-cultural factors, and conviction. The first two explanations are pragmatic, while the latter are driven in large part by normative concerns. In this chapter, I show how exit, loyalty, and voice are or are not explained by each of these factors. I do not seek a singular explanation for each option. Individuals make choices for different reasons and may have multiple motivations. Instead of being competing explanations, they may be complimentary, even if some are more convincing than others.

Why Do Civilians Choose Flight?

Jacqueline Siapno asks: “Why do people abandon their homes and move to a perceived ‘safer place’?” Insecurity is generally considered to be the primary cause of displacement in the conflict migration literature. Siapno criticizes this presumption for “reducing displaced persons to easily frightened masses.” In her view, the conflict migration literature fails to consider “the agency... and strategies of the displaced person. Several answers to the question of why people become forcibly displaced are possible.”

I have also found that there are multiple explanations for flight and that these are not necessarily competing hypotheses.

Security

Security concerns were the primary motivators of flight for ordinary Acehnese civilians. In the previous chapter, I noted a variety of forms of flight utilized by ordinary Acehnese civilians: Some stayed with family for short periods of time, some stayed in

2 For Edward Aspinall, “fear of violence was... the common motivating factor behind most displacement.” Edward Aspinall, “Place and Displacement in the Aceh Conflict,” in Conflict, Violence, and Displacement in Indonesia, edited by Eva-Lotta E. Hedman (Cornell: Southeast Asia Program, 2008), 128.
medium-sized camps after their homes were destroyed, some were forcibly relocated to
government camps, and many young men fled to Malaysia. For those who fled for short
periods of time, insecurity clearly explains flight. Families heard gunshots, rumours of
pending attacks, or had other reasons to believe that trouble was coming, so left to stay with
friends and family in more secure areas. Scores of testimonies focus on immediate threats
“There was constant gunfire near our house between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. We are afraid of
being hit by stray bullets, so we abandoned our village.” Such small-scale flight was not
always a product of direct coercion, but was often anticipatory, based on perceived danger.
Such perceptions were generally well-founded. For those who fled to small camps, usually in
mosque or school grounds, flight was even more urgent. Such displacement was usually a
product of homes being destroyed by the Indonesian military. There was little choice
involved—flight was primarily about survival. This was also true in 2003, when the army
evacuated entire villages. Refusing to leave would have invited violent reprisals.

Insecurity is also the primary explanation for the flight of young Acehnese men. Of
all Acehnese civilians, young men faced the most intense harassment and violence. The
army either assumed that young men were rebels or that they could be used to combat the
rebels, while GAM eyed those who did not support their movement with suspicion. Those
who fled to Malaysia listed insecurity as the dominant reason for exiting. In Chapter Three,
I discussed the case of Mardi, who was attacked by the military for transporting rice in rural
areas and fled to Malaysia:

If I stayed, maybe I would be killed. I would definitely have problems.
Why take a chance?

Once a civilian left Aceh, returning was difficult. The army kept lists of all persons absent
from their villages and viewed all absent civilians as GAM members. For Human Rights
Watch, “those who leave Aceh are more likely to be suspected as members of GAM by the

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4 Villagers “explicitly stated that they were fleeing from the security forces.” Aspinall, “Place and
Displacement in the Aceh Conflict,” 130.
5 The major reasons people fled to camps were the destruction of their homes or threats from GAM or the
army. Cynthia Buiza and Gary Risser, *Anywhere but War: Internal Displacement and Armed Conflict in Aceh*
(Bangkok: Jesuit Refugee Service, 2003), 32.
October 2004), 11.
7 Interview with Mardi, Panton Luas, South Aceh (18 April 2009).
8 “A common tactic of Indonesian security forces is house-to-house searches for... young men who have left
the village.” Human Rights Watch, *Aceh under Martial Law: Inside the Secret War* 15:10 (December
2003), 16.
military upon their return.”9 Such persons are known as *refugees sur place*, those who are not necessarily in danger when they leave, but become endangered by leaving. In 2003, the Indonesian military issued new identification cards to all residents of Aceh. Those who did not have one were assumed to be rebels, making it difficult for those not living in Aceh when the cards were distributed to return safely.10 For young Acehnese men, insecurity not only motivated the decision to leave, it also limited their ability to return.

Flight was an important survival strategy for ethnic minorities. Many Gayo fled their homes, especially those living in mixed communities. Those in homogenous communities were less likely to flee because they were able to defend themselves. Malay residents fled in large numbers. The conflict arrived here late, and almost immediately, civilians fled to large camps around Tapak Tuan. This was a direct outcome of intense local clashes. The exodus of Javanese from Aceh to North Sumatra caused by GAM efforts to cleanse their province:

> They expelled us because we are Javanese. GAM said Javanese are not allowed to live here.11

According to JRS surveys, 45% of Javanese IDPs cited GAM attackers and 34% cited unidentified attackers as their reason for leaving.12 Javanese fled Aceh because if they did not, they would have probably been killed. The disproportionate level of flight among ethnic minorities was a product of insecurity.

Insecurity was also the primary explanation for the flight of new notables. Teachers fled GAM strongholds because they were targeted by the rebels, but remained in state strongholds, where they were safe. Civil society activists also fled due to insecurity. After a brief window of open activism, the space for advocacy narrowed by 2001. The military began viewing activists as belonging to GAM: “GAM and SIRA are like Xanana Gusmao and Jose Ramos Horta.”13 Indonesian soldiers frequently targeted human rights defenders.14

> The office was ripped apart, all of our files were burnt, and there was a sign threatening everyone who did not support the army.15

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15 Interview with Juanda, People’s Crisis Center (PCC), Saree, Aceh Besar (04 November 2007).
In a highly controversial article, Rohan Gunaratna opined that GAM operates through NGOs, a blanket statement that masked great variation among the activist community.\(^\text{16}\) This report was cited by Indonesian Commanders in their sweeps of NGO offices.\(^\text{17}\) That many activists fled between 2001 and 2004 should not come as a surprise, as they were directly threatened by Indonesian security forces.

It should come as no surprise that flight from the Aceh conflict was largely motivated by insecurity. Insecurity may also help explain the relative lack of flight among other villagers. I do not wish to suggest that women, children, chiefs, and ulama were not targeted at all—there are many examples of both sides, but especially the Indonesian military, killing all types of civilians. But such civilians were not routinely attacked, and when they were, it was likely to be discussed among villagers and make it into NGO reports. Unlike young men, women, chiefs, and ulama were rarely seen as rebel fighters. Because they were typically highly regarded by villagers, killing kerik or ulama would cost either side societal support. Chiefs appealed to the rebels as traditional leaders and to state forces as government employees, while ulama appealed to the shared faiths of both sides. As a result, village and Islamic authorities, while by no means immune, benefited from some additional security, which may have lessened the need to flee. Only Javanese chiefs and ulama faced constant, direct threats, and such figures routinely fled. Security is clearly the primary cause of flight, and variations in security among different civilians help explain variations in flight.

**Economic Incentives**

The close link between exit and insecurity is not surprising. But insecurity was not the only explanation for flight, as other factors played complimentary roles. Studies have found that “security considerations play a significant role in determining displacement [but are] not the only determinants... economic incentives play a role for households' displacement decisions even in a context of violence.”\(^\text{18}\) Czaika and Kis-Katos support this finding in Aceh, noting that while violence served as the major push factor, displacement


was also influenced by economic migration.\textsuperscript{19} In an economy shattered by years of war, economic factors were important motivations for flight.

For Acehnese civilians who fled to stay with relatives, camps, or were forcibly relocated by the army, economic factors were not important. The same is true of the flight of ethnic minorities, whose flight was a direct result of violence. Far from leaving for profit, exit involved severe economic costs for such civilians. Many left jobs and possessions behind, failed to find employment at their destinations, and lived in significant poverty.

Economic incentives do, however, help explain the flight of young men to Malaysia. This is well established in the literature and other interviews: "Many Acehnese men have gone to Malaysia seeking work and promising to send remittances."\textsuperscript{20} "There was no work there so we came here."\textsuperscript{21} In interviews, stories of flight often began with economic needs. For example, in South Aceh, Mr. Shakar operated a bicycle taxi. One day, he took a young passenger down a remote road and had trouble finding his way back. Returning at nightfall, the army arrested him and destroyed his bike, which he had yet to pay off:

My job was gone and I was scared, so I fled to Malaysia where I could save money to buy another \textit{becak}. I did not want to leave, but I was poor.\textsuperscript{22}

In another example, Hamdani Hamid was educated at state Islamic schools. In early 2003, he went to Malaysia with a temporary visa, preparing to enrol in post-secondary studies. Shortly after arriving, he had a difficult time renewing his visa and faced deportation, which he feared because he might be seen as a GAM member. Friends from his home village advised Hamdani to approach the UNHCR. After one year, he arrived in Canada as a refugee. I asked him to provide some reasons for leaving:

First was security. I did not like how GAM did things, but they were better than the army. Second was education in Malaysia. Their education is very modern, and I could get trained for a good job.\textsuperscript{23}

Economic incentives were major pull factors in flight from Aceh, especially to Malaysia, which offered opportunities for education and work, namely in the construction sector. The Malaysian government viewed Acehnese as economic migrants, no different

\textsuperscript{21} Human Rights Watch, \textit{Aceh under Martial Law: Problems Faced by Acehnese Refugees in Malaysia}, 7.
\textsuperscript{22} Interview with Shakar, Panton Luas, South Aceh (18 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{23} Interview with Hamdani Hamid, Vancouver (08 May 2010).
than the tens of thousands of other Indonesians working in Malaysia. The Malaysian government refused to consider the Acehnese as asylum seekers, going so far as to arrest them outside of UN offices and forcibly repatriate them. While the Malaysian government denied the importance of insecurity in favour of economic explanations, NGOs tended to do the reverse, assuming that Acehnese lived in Malaysia solely due to physical threats. In reality, the Acehnese who fled to Malaysia were both conflict and economic migrants. Aspinall suggests that Acehnese workers in Malaysia “were mixed with a large number of conflict migrants.” While partly accurate, instead of being two groups, most individuals were both, pushed by insecurity at home and pulled by economic opportunities abroad.

Economic factors do not appear to be very important in explaining the lack of exit among village and religious leaders. It is true that if a chief or ulama fled, they would leave their job behind, but their wages were minimal, certainly not worth risking one’s life for. Among new notables, businesspersons clearly fled due to economic considerations. Their wealth made them targets, they had more to lose, and possessed the means to relocate. Businesses small and large were subject to extortion from both sides, and those who fled to safer areas often did so to maintain their wealth:

I saw trouble coming, and after failing to sell my shops, I closed them, taking over a friend’s restaurant in Banda until the conflict was over.

Finally, the flight of activists had no significant profit motive. While some activists continued their work abroad and were on the payroll of regional NGOs, they were hardly in it for the money. Activists fled Aceh due to insecurity.

Socio-Cultural Factors

Socio-cultural explanations hold little sway in the conflict migration literature, which is dominated by quantitative studies, economic rationality, and policy-minded reports.

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24 While refusing to recognize that Acehnese were conflict migrants, Malaysian officials sometimes showed a very different reason for rejecting refugee claims: “If we provide them political asylum, it will be like the Vietnamese boat people before. Tens of thousands will come.” Instead of suggesting that the Acehnese are not conflict migrants, this suggests that it is tactical not to recognize them. *Agence France Presse, “Malaysia Firm in Deporting Illegals, Including Aceh Indonesians”* (31 March 1998).
27 Interview with Amir, businessman, Saree, Aceh Besar (02 November 2007).
Some studies, however, have found that cultural factors matter even given great violence. Cultural norms need not come at the expense of more pragmatic, security-related factors. Even in a conflict as severe as Afghanistan’s, some authors explain the sheer volume of flight in terms of cultural traditions such as Islamic traditions of flight (Hijara) or nomadic culture. In highland Southeast Asia, James Scott shows that local societies are built around maintaining mobility, allowing for quick flight from oppressive states. How did socio-cultural factors influence the decisions involved in flight for Aceh’s non-combatants? They did so by influencing the decision to leave and by informing the destination.

Regarding the decision to leave, socio-cultural factors influenced civilian’s perceptions of the conflict and the costs associated with flight. Hirschman suggests that political and economic exit is sometimes “unthinkable” due to deep commitments. Many Acehnese civilians fled in small groups and returned home within a few weeks. Their prompt return was owed to an improved security situation, the poor conditions of camps, and also a strong sense of place among many Acehnese. In her study of displacement in Central Sulawesi, Lorraine Aragon found that locals explained the tendency for Christians to stay behind and Muslims to flee in terms of culture. Christians are largely indigenous in this region, and their home villages are “guarded by their ancestor’s spirits.”

29 For Samuel Popkin, “By using the concepts of individual choice and decision making, we can discuss how and why some groups of individuals decide to adopt some sets of norms while rejecting others.” Samuel, L. Popkin, The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 18.
33 One could also make the case that cultural factors helped determine Indonesian military behaviour. As the military formed against the Japanese and Dutch, the public was urged to participate in “Total People’s Defense” (sishankamrata), a doctrine which rejects civilian / combatant distinctions to assist a weak military. The resulting ‘strategic culture’ helps to explain the army’s propensity to mobilize militias and use civilians to combat separatist groups. See Desmond Ball, “Strategic Culture in the Asia-Pacific Region,” Security Studies 3:1 (March 1993); pp. 44-74; Harold Crouch, The Army and Politics in Indonesia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 25.
35 Lorraine V. Aragon, “Reconsidering Displacement and Internally Displaced Persons from Poso,” in Conflict, Violence, and Displacement in Indonesia, 204.
home villages provides a partial explanation for why, despite significant violence, exit was not utilized by large numbers of Acehnese civilians:

I could not stay in some camp... it was not my home village.36

It was not that such attachments trumped security considerations, but instead increased the perceived costs of flight.

Cultural factors help explain why Acehnese women were less likely to flee as far or for as long as men. Acehnese women have particularly strong cultural ties to their home villages. Residence in Aceh is uxorilocal, meaning that married couples reside in the wife's mother's home village.37 Women also own the rice plots and the house— the Acehnese term for 'wife' is njangpoumuh, "the one who owns the house."38 Culture may have influenced women's decisions not to leave, as they maintain a strong sense of place and property.39 Meanwhile, males are less attached to their home villages. Once they hit puberty, young men typically leave their mother's house and reside in the Mansah, a communal sleeping area and meeting hall.40 Once married, men leave to reside in their wife's home village. But even then, residence is not secure. Women not only own the house, they typically consider men to be somewhat transient: "Their understanding of the marriage contract is that men have a place in the home only if they pay for it each day... but when the money is gone, they should go too."41 The expectation that young men travel for work, education, and faith is known as merantau, defined as "going on a long journey in search of work or knowledge" in which men leave home to look for experiences “which will define their manhood.”42 For centuries, young men in Aceh have traveled to the Middle East for study, as well as for work in Aceh's

36 Discussion with family in Teupin Ridup, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
38 James T. Siegel, The Rope of God (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 51. Upon marriage, the wife is given a house by her parents, but does not own it until she bears children. Siegel cites Hugronje: "The woman is, so far as lodging and maintenance are concerned, practically independent of her husband, since she continues to form an integral part of the family wherein she was born."
39 This said, cultural expectations are not static. There is also a growing trend of young Acehnese women traveling abroad for work as maids. Siapno, Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh, 113.
42 Siapno, Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh, 148. One account shows that West Sumatran migration cannot be explained by economic factors alone, but must also take into consideration “the merantau flow.” Mochtar Naim, Merantau, Minangkabau Voluntary Migration (PhD Dissertation: National University of Singapore, 1973).
southern pepper plantations, North Sumatra's tobacco farms, and Malaysian mining and trade. Cultural factors both tie women to their home villages and detach men from their homes, shaping the gendered patterns of flight I discovered among Acehnese.

Cultural factors also influenced the flight of ethnic minorities. Aragon's account of conflict migration in Poso suggests that indigenous Christians had a strong sense of place, while recently arrived Muslims from South Sulawesi lacked this, so were more likely to flee. This helps explain some part of the flight of ethnic minorities from the Aceh conflict. Gayo communities were founded upon flight from Acehnese Kingdoms and many Malay communities are somewhat recent arrivals from West Sumatra, which may have played some role in their greater propensity to flee compared to Acehnese civilians. This is more convincing for the Javanese, who arrived between 1920 and 1990. Javanese communities may have less attachment to place and may have recent memories of displacement. Robinson notes that the flight of Timorese in the 1990s was conditioned by collective memories of previous violence. Although they generally lived peacefully alongside their Acehnese neighbours, in times of political upheaval, Aceh’s Javanese have been attacked. This was the case in 1946, 1965, and 1976. It is possible that collective memories of violence influenced perceptions of pending violence, thus making flight more likely.

Socio-cultural factors also informed the destinations of conflict migrants. When women and families were displaced, they usually stayed with families or went to the mosque. For young men, Malaysia is a primary destination not only due to proximity and economy, but also because of ethnic affinities with Malays. The importance of Malaysia as a historical destination was noted by human rights groups: “Building on a history of travel and trade in the straits, many Acehnese fled to Malaysia.” Acehnese have migrated to the Malay Peninsula for centuries. When the initial GAM uprising was defeated in the late 1970s, many leaders fled to Malaysia. Migration from Aceh to Malaysia during the conflict was facilitated by social factors such as chain migration, in which the presence of an existing Acehnese community encouraged new arrivals. The destination of Javanese was also somewhat

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43 Aragon, “Reconsidering Displacement and Internally Displaced Persons from Poso,” 203.
46 Human Rights Watch, Aceh under Martial Law, 8.
primordial, fleeing to join other Javanese communities in North Sumatra instead of more accessible state strongholds within Aceh.

Earlier, I explained that the relative lack of exit among village and religious leaders may be linked to slightly lower levels of insecurity. The relative security of women, keucik, and ulama is rooted in socio-cultural factors. It was more difficult for a soldier, especially a Muslim one, to such figures than it was for them to attack a young man. When they were attacked, chiefs and ulama were still less likely to leave, as they felt obligated to remain. Part of this was social standing—a chief or ulama separated from his home no longer commanded the same levels of prestige. There were also deeper factors at play. The chief is the village ‘father’ and the ulama is the village ‘mother’, and many chiefs, ulama, and villagers take these roles very seriously.47

This is my family and I am their leader. They need a chief to lead them out of war.48

While paternalistic, this describes the feelings of many community leaders. Village chiefs tended to protect their village and its inhabitants, often in the face of violence, demonstrating a cultural commitment to their responsibilities.

I did not find much support for socio-cultural factors explaining the flight of new notables such as businessmen, professionals, and activists. These are, after all, new notables, so lack clear cultural responsibilities within Acehnese society.

Conviction

How does conviction help explain exit from the Aceh conflict? For Hirschman, exit is like casting a vote. One deserts a firm to show displeasure.49 In times of war, exit can be an act of principle, as in cases of exile. This said, with the possible exceptions of exiled GAM elite, flight from Aceh was not undertaken due to conviction. Ethnic minorities certainly did not leave on principle, even if their flight doubled as a statement against GAM abuse. While the results of flight were often “overtly political”,50 it is unlikely that civilians left their homes for political reasons. The relative absence of flight for ordinary Acehnese civilians, village chiefs, and Islamic leaders may, however, be partially explained by

47 Hurgronje, The Acehnese, 61.
48 Interview with Syarbini, Keucik of Saree, Aceh Besar (01 November 2007).
49 Hirschman, Exit, Voice, and Loyalty.
50 Aspinall, “Place and Displacement in the Aceh Conflict,” 132
conviction. Many chiefs and ulama, as well as other respective leaders, continued with their duties because they believed in their cultural responsibilities and wanted to stay.

**Why Do Civilians Choose To Support Armed Groups?**

Why did civilians choose to support an armed group or remain neutral? In Chapter Three, I found that non-combatant support varied by zones of combatant control, zones based on ethnic regions, not on physical landscapes or raw military might. The fact that ethnic dynamics predict zones of control suggests that civilian support was especially important in the Aceh conflict. Explaining why many civilians supported the dominant local armed group, while some did not, presents a difficult task. Happily, there are other studies to help guide the way. Stathis Kalyvas emphasizes pragmatic, rationalist motivations for collaboration, which he sees as rooted in security and economic factors.\(^{51}\) His claims are based in large part on the fact that control and collaboration are closely correlated, and collaboration tends to follow control temporally. As a result, control is said to lead to collaboration. While he does not dismiss societal factors in shaping collaboration, Kalyvas sees military control of a given region as paramount. Elizabeth Wood offers a different perspective. Taking a sociological approach, she finds that peasants in El Salvador supported the rebels out of conviction, opposing an unjust system and gaining pleasure in rebellion.\(^{52}\) Civilians did not support the rebels for security, as the rebels were unable to extend protection to their supporters. Below, I show that all four explanations for non-combatant support— insecurity, economic incentives, socio-cultural factors, and conviction— each offer important insights. These are not necessarily competing explanations, although for different types of civilians and different forms of support, some explanations carry more weight than others.

**Security**

There are several ways in which security concerns might explain civilian support for armed groups. The most obvious and extreme is direct coercion, where civilians are forced to provide support against their will.\(^{53}\) The relationship between security threats and support

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\(^{53}\) It may be easier to view non-combatant support for armed groups in this way. If civilians are forced to provide support, instead of choosing to do so, their innocence is maintained and there is no legitimate
is often less direct. One may support an armed group to gain security from the other side.\textsuperscript{54} Another relationship is deterrence, where coercion does not explain the presence of support, but instead its absence. Some attacks on civilians are intended as signals, communicating that supporting the other side will bring reprisals. It is important to remember that collaborating brings costs as well as benefits.\textsuperscript{55} Support for armed groups is often provided despite insecurity, as armed groups seek to punish their enemy’s supporters.

I begin with ordinary civilians in GAM strongholds. Indonesian authorities maintained a range of informants within GAM territory. One recruitment mechanism consisted of arresting villagers and releasing them on the condition that they cooperate with the army. In such cases, individuals were forced to provide information on a regular basis to avoid punishment. But such informants also risked punishment from the rebels, and the Indonesian military had a poor track record of protecting their agents. Insecurity is clearly central to understanding support for state forces in rebel strongholds. It also explains the limited number of state supporters. There were some individuals in GAM strongholds who preferred the Indonesian state, but did not support them because of the obvious consequences. There were probably many more who were indifferent, but sided with the rebels because this was easier in rebel strongholds.

Support from ordinary civilians for GAM in rebel strongholds was less likely to be a product of force. This makes sense, as part of what defines a given region as a zone of control is loyalty from the population. But it would be a mistake to believe that the threat of violence did not factor into decisions to support the rebels. Refusing to provide material goods such as taxes, food, and housing might result in confrontation. If one had to provide support, it was often strategic to appear to provide support willingly:

GAM demanded donations. I had little choice. So I smiled and welcomed them.\textsuperscript{56}

For many, material support was offered freely, as GAM was genuinely popular. Those providing labour, serving as guides, nurses, smugglers, and messengers were rarely forced.


\textsuperscript{55} The benefits of supporting rebels do “not necessarily outweigh the likely costs.” Wood, \textit{Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador}, 119.

\textsuperscript{56} Interview with Iwan, former Keucik, in Bireuen (05 November 2007).
Smaller forms of support such as attending meetings and providing information cannot be explained in terms of security, nor can the smallest, most common forms of support, such as displaying symbols and spreading pro-rebel gossip. Not providing such support would not be punished, and providing them would probably not bring protection against state soldiers. Many women were active GAM supporters, serving as nurses and teachers, providing food, speaking at GAM rallies, and helping the rebels recruit. Security does not provide a convincing explanation for such support. Women risked punishment from the Indonesian military for supporting the rebels, and not supporting GAM would probably not have resulted in punishment from the rebels.\(^57\) For older men and young boys, support for GAM was sometimes influenced by insecurity. One former youth messenger explained that he served mainly for the adventure, although he acknowledged that once he started, refusing to continue would have been dangerous.\(^58\) Security provides only a partial explanation for why civilians in GAM strongholds supported the rebels. Although there are many exceptions and the threat of coercion loomed in the background, the Free Aceh Movement did not usually have to threaten villagers in order to gain compliance. Far from gaining security, Acehnese orang biasa often sacrificed it by supporting the rebels. Even though GAM controlled several districts, their domination was never complete, as state forces were able to make forays into rebel districts and threaten rebel supporters.

Insecurity helps explain the apparent absence of support in contested areas, as violence served as a deterrent against supporting either side. In Saree, villagers explained that many locals actually preferred GAM, but it was too dangerous to support them.\(^59\) While some civilians' preferences for supporting one side were deterred by the threat of violence, others were happy to remain neutral. In contested areas, one was less likely to be compelled to provide support by armed groups or their peers.

Civilian support in state strongholds was very different than in rebel strongholds, primarily because conventional state armies tend not to rely on the local population for shelter, food, supplies, and recruits as much as rebel groups. First, though, GAM benefited from various forms of support in state strongholds. It is extremely unlikely that rebel agents in state strongholds supported the rebels due to insecurity. Far from gaining security,

\(^{57}\) It is possible that women faced private forms of coercion, serving the GAM to avoid domestic violence at the hands of fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons.

\(^{58}\) Discussion with farmers, Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (03 February 2008).

\(^{59}\) Discussion in coffee shop, Saree, Aceh Besar (30 October 2007).
serving as a rebel agent in state areas was risky, but many served anyways. Some forms of
support for the rebels were, however, products of insecurity. In the Banda Aceh, businesses
and government officials were forced to pay ‘taxes’ to the rebels. In the agriculturally rich
highlands, rebel units demanded tolls from trucks loaded with produce. Paying the rebels, a
form of support, was clearly involuntary, carried out due to the threat of immediate violence,
even within state zones of control.

Support for the state in its strongholds is difficult to study. Paying taxes and
working with state institutions were forms of support, but tend to be taken for granted until
they are denied. Daily acceptance of state rules was not a product of direct coercion, but as
in any state, the threat of punishment looms for those who refused. While soldiers
sometimes paid for goods and services, they usually demanded them for free, and civilians
had to accept this. But not all support for Indonesian forces was provided under the threat
of violence. GAM attacks in state strongholds were characterized by criminal violence and
ethnic pogroms, not by protecting locals from state forces. As a consequence, many civilians
in state strongholds disliked the rebels and supported the state. Some civilians joined or
supported state paramilitary groups. Sometimes they did so in response to threats from the
Indonesian military, as those who refused to join night watch groups or militias might be
beaten. Others joined village guards to protect their communities from GAM. This was
especially true of ethnic minorities in the highlands. Authors often portray Aceh’s militias as
similar to East Timor’s. But East Timor’s militias “had no legitimate defense reasons.”
In contrast, Aceh’s militias were often defensive, organized by locals protecting their families
from rebel attacks. Locals who supported militias by providing food or information were
not likely forced to do so, but did so to help resist GAM attacks.

Village leaders, namely chiefs, were notable for not supporting either side. As with
their lack of exit, it is possible that the absence of support for either side may be explained in
part by a somewhat lower degree of insecurity faced by village chiefs. Interestingly, chiefs
who did support one or the other side often faced punishment from their own villagers. In
Aceh Tenggara, one chief provided information to the army until villagers beat him and ran

60 Matthew Davies, Indonesia’s War Over Aceh: Last Stand on Mecca’s Porch (London: Routledge 2006), 11;
61 Kristen Schulze, The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization (Honolulu: East-
West Center Policy Studies 2, 2004), 43.
Center Policy Studies 3, 2004), 17; Schulze, The Free Aceh Movement, 43.
him out of town. It does not appear that the villagers who did this were necessarily pro-GAM, but instead resented the frequent visits by the military, were fearful of GAM reprisals, and resented the chief’s growing wealth. For one villager:

If a chief is not neutral, he puts the village at risk, and locals will not accept his power anymore.\footnote{Interview with Yusriman, former Camat of Terangon, Aceh Tenggara (07 April 2009).}

Another chief started to give village funds to GAM after the army killed his son. Villagers protested and forced the chief to resign, and he later joined GAM.\footnote{Interview with Teungku Jainal, former Keucik of Jangar, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).} Aceh’s villagers do not hold their chiefs to be sacred, and when chiefs show partiality, they may be punished. In this way, the neutrality of Aceh’s chiefs can be explained in part by insecurity.

Neither chiefs nor ulama tended to flee, perhaps because they were not routinely targeted, which might also explain the neutrality of chiefs. But it cannot explain why ulama by and large supported the regionally dominant armed group. Like ordinary civilians, ulama sided with whomever held local power, and when power dynamics changed, ulama support followed. That ulama support for armed groups was predicted by control seems to support security-related explanations. In western Aceh, ulama were typically neutral when the region was a contested area, but as GAM expanded here, shifted to support the insurgents.

Many pro-state ulama supported the state and depended on it for funding prior to the conflict. While security concerns did not cause their loyalty, the threat of violence ensured that those siding with the state did not cease to do so, as state ulama were targeted by the rebels and state forces did not look kindly upon criticisms from their supporters. Sometimes, security played an indirect role in causing ulama support for the state:

I did not join Golkar like other ulama. But when I saw GAM killing, I chose to move towards Indonesia. I did not like what they were doing.\footnote{Interview with Teungku Bukhari Husni, Lawe Sumur, Southeast Aceh (08 April 2009).}

In contested areas, many ulama remained neutral, a stance largely explained in terms of security. Threats to security were part of the decision of organizations such as the HUDA to tone down their criticisms of armed groups, shifting to passive neutrality. But security factors do not explain why some ulama in contested areas continued to criticize both sides.

Pro-GAM ulama were typically neutral at first, but with time, became closer to the rebels. I found no evidence that ulama support for GAM was a product of rebel coercion. Most ulama came to support GAM as they witnessed human rights abuses and/or were
themselves attacked by state forces. Violence led to support for the other side, sometimes to gain security, but more as a matter of principle, discussed below. Many ulama who supported the rebels did not speak favourably of GAM, but instead criticized an abusive Indonesian military. Ulama supported state and rebel forces due to security concerns, but did not gain protection in doing so.

Among new notables, businessmen and professionals often supported the dominant armed group due to insecurity. However the support of student and NGO activists did not follow zones of control, and those who did choose to support an armed group supported GAM, never the army. This was not because GAM threatened them, but instead because the Indonesian military did. As with some ulama, support for GAM was provided to gain protection from the army and due to anger towards Indonesian soldiers, an indirect, grievance-based mobilization.

Insecurity influenced the decisions made by civilians to provide support in several ways. Some support was involuntary, as armed groups often took what they wanted. Some support may have been provided in order to gain insurance from the other side. However it is not clear how support for one side brings protection from the other. It would be difficult for an armed group to identify acts of support and extend protection to such individuals. Insecurity provides a compelling explanation for the absence of some civilian support, as many non-combatants were unable to support their favoured group. But this explains why non-combatants did not offer support, not why they provided it. All told, I was surprised with how little security concerns explain non-combatant support. While important, insecurity is not the dominant explanation for support in the same way it is for exit. Many civilians who support armed groups are motivated by something beyond their security, and sometimes knowingly sacrifice their security to provide support to armed groups.

Economic Incentives

In the civil war literature, profit tends to feature alongside security as a dominant factor motivating civilian support. Kalyvas suggests that civilians often collaborate out of economic opportunism, especially in zones of control where dominant armed groups are able to reward their supporters. But, as with security-driven explanations, one must also subtract. While some forms of support bring economic gain, others, such as providing food

66 Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 103, 116.
or paying taxes, are costly. There is an under-acknowledged tension between economic and security explanations, even though the two are often portrayed as complimentary. Often, providing support for economic rewards comes at the cost of security, and vice versa.

Personal reward helps to explain the actions of informants supporting the weaker side in a given zone of control. While the army coerced villagers in GAM areas to provide information, they also offered rewards, combining sticks and carrots. Considerable sums were available to full-time informants as well as persons with information on the location of GAM Commanders. It only took one poor villager hoping to gain a reward to pass vital information to state forces. But those who provided such information took considerable risks. State informants in GAM strongholds were often denounced by their neighbours. Economic rewards for supporting the state had to be considerable given such dangers. Informants sacrificed security for profit, accepting risks in hopes of wealth.

Rebel supporters were not typically motivated by economic incentives. GAM was not a wealthy organization and often did not pay its troops, let alone its supporters. Far from being paid, rebel supporters typically sacrificed wealth, providing taxes, food, and other material goods. Such support entailed economic costs, not benefits. Similarly, other forms of support, such as displaying signs or spreading rumours, did not bring economic reward. But there were some limited economic rewards for some rebel supporters providing regular labour, such as nurses, guides, drivers, messengers, and other regular supporters. Two GAM nurses explained that they were provided with food and a small stipend for their services.67 Another form of support for the rebels which led to economic gain for ordinary civilians was renting out housing, vehicles, or other equipment. Although houses, cars, and boats were often commandeered or provided voluntarily, the rebels sometimes paid for the use of such items. Other services, such as running weapons or providing information, were also compensated. However it does not appear that economic rewards were very common or significant. Economic gain at best provides a partial factor in explaining the support of ordinary civilians for the Free Aceh Movement.

Not all forms of profit were economic. Some were social, although such motivations for support blur with socio-cultural explanations.68 While the benefits of turning in one's neighbours were sometimes financial, there were also non-economic benefits such as gaining

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67 Anonymous interview with women's cooperative members, Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (04 November 2007).
68 Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 346.
pleasure, social standing, or settling scores. For example, one labourer reported his former boss to GAM for supporting the police. This act brought no economic benefits, but gave the young man considerable satisfaction and helped the rebels identify an informer.\(^{69}\) Denunciation could be seen as a form of voice, an independent expression which does not conform to the goals of either side.\(^{70}\) When denunciations are accurate and not motivated solely by revenge, they may also feature as forms of support, and can be mutually beneficial for the denouncer and armed group.

In contested areas, the apparent absence of collaboration cannot be explained by economic factors. Neutrality brought no economic gains. Support here might have especially lucrative, as demand for information was high and its supply was low. I found some evidence of denunciations, as Kalyvas expects in contested areas where neither side controls information. But the cases I heard of were false denunciations, so that the information provided did not benefit the armed group it was provided to.\(^{71}\)

Economic explanations for support are only persuasive in state strongholds. Whether they were Acehnese or ethnic minorities, those who provided support to state forces were more likely to receive financial rewards than did those who supported the rebels. The primary way that non-combatants supported Indonesian operations was providing information regarding the location of the rebels and identifying their supporters.

It was good, because we did not want GAM people around, and the army gave us money.\(^{72}\)

Indonesian authorities advertised rewards for information on the location of GAM Commanders. Many denunciations had profit motives, as turning your neighbour into the authorities might bring both economic and personal rewards.\(^{73}\) Many anti-GAM protests were greased with gratuities, and those serving in village guards and militias were typically compensated. Many Gayo elites paid private armies to attack GAM and protect their plantations. However other militia members were not only unpaid, but serving cost them

\(^{69}\) Interview with Teungku Zakaria, Keucik of Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (03 February 2008).
\(^{70}\) “One could never know who was the resented spy, or cuak, who often reported his neighbour of being a GAM member only because of a personal grudge.” Jakarta Post, “Aceh Leaders face High Expectations, Little Patience” (02 November 2008).
\(^{71}\) Group interview with Harmaini, Keucik of Lam Kabu; Isha, former Keucik of Lam Tamot; M. Hashim Usman, Keucik of Pancah; Pukan Darawan, Sekdes of Pancah; Muzakhir, Imeum Mukim of Lembah Seulawah (30 January 2008).
\(^{72}\) Anonymous interview with villagers, Paya Teuk, South Aceh (15 April 2009).
\(^{73}\) Near Banda Aceh, rival restaurant owners denounced each other to the army. Discussion in coffee shop, Banda Aceh (25 January 2008).
time in their fields. Those supporting local militias by bringing them food lost money, as did several restaurant owners in South Aceh.  

Village leaders did not by and large support either side, even though it may have been profitable to do so. Chiefs did not refuse to support GAM to preserve their government wages, as chiefs are paid a pittance, especially after their wages pass through sub-district officials. At the peak of the conflict, the Indonesian state was often unable to provide wages or distribute village funds. It is possible that, in some cases, neutrality may have lessened economic losses. If chiefs were partial, demands from both sides may have increased. All told, economic factors do little to illuminate the behaviour of chiefs.

The differences between supporting state and rebel forces in terms of economic gain are laid bare for ulama. GAM ulama did not mobilize for personal economic gain. Siding with the rebels sometimes sacrificed state funding for their schools, although the most skilled ulama supported GAM while their schools were funded by the state. GAM ulama were not paid, save those at the highest levels of authority serving as advisors (Wali, or Guardians). Similarly, ulama serving as judges (Qadi) were not paid:

Our help was entirely voluntary... we only gained the opportunity to see justice.

Not only were Islamic leaders not paid by GAM, they often helped raise funds for the rebels. State ulama, on the other hand, were often motivated by economic rewards. Many earned their living through the government long before the conflict. Patronage was distributed through Aceh’s Islamic Council, political parties, and a range of schools. The New Order openly bought off many ulama with motorcycles, cash, and political office. As the conflict expanded, ulama who bought into the New Order were widely criticized:

Acehnese do not respect urban ulama because they are opportunists, they follow money.

As I will discuss, there were also principled ulama in state strongholds who opposed GAM and supported the state for religious or ethnic reasons. But many pro-state ulama were motivated by profit. This shows how those supporting the state often had very different motivations than those supporting the Free Aceh Movement.

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74 Discussion with Gayo farmers, Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara (09 April 2009).
75 Interview with Teungku Yahya Abdullah, KPA Official, Bireuen (04 February 2009).
76 Interview with Asiah and Mustawalad, Kontras Aceh, Banda Aceh (25 January 2008).
Many of Aceh’s professionals were similar to state ulama, supporting state forces because they were financially dependent on the government. As may be obvious, businesspersons tended to collaborate for profit. For some, the conflict was a boon. Some worked with both sides, selling arms, and gaining access to natural resources. Business elites could also rent supplies to GAM such as boats, as the rebels were always in need of transport through Aceh’s swamps and across the Straits of Malacca to Malaysia. Activists were less likely to be motivated by profit. Those who did not support either side, the neutral organizations which tended to flee, may have done so in small part due to financial reasons, not wanting to lose foreign funding. Most young activists at smaller, newer organizations had few ties and were more radical, and supported GAM. Overall, personal gain does not explain why civil society groups risked so much in criticizing both sides.

Socio-Cultural Factors

Socio-cultural explanations for non-combatant support are not as well theorized of as the other explanations discussed in this chapter. One guide is Timothy Wickham-Crowley’s discussion of “rebellious cultures”, in which communities consistently support different rebellions over time. In Cuba’s Oriente Province, where locals had previously supported the war for independence in the 1890s, the communists found immediate support upon arrival in 1953. Instead of an armed group arriving and gaining supporters, some populations may be predisposed towards supporting armed groups. This suggests that local ethnic, cultural, and social elements can help explain support for armed groups.

Socio-cultural factors influenced support in a variety of ways: Ethnicity defined zones of control, culture shaped various forms of support, and social norms reinforced the control of one side or the other. Firstly, the very zones of combatant control and civilian support were delineated by ethnic identity. While not entirely determined by ethnicity, GAM strongholds were ethnic Acehnese districts, contested areas were mixed, and state strongholds were home to ethnic minorities. While Kalyvas suggests that control predicts collaboration, control followed ethnicity in Aceh. These ethno-regional dynamics were also present in previous conflicts. The northeast was not simply a GAM stronghold—it was the

78 This may be because Kalyvas’ work is based on ideological conflicts. In ethno-secessionist conflicts, one should expect that strongholds will be shaped by identity.
heart of anti-Dutch resistance and the Darul Islam Rebellion. Meanwhile, the hills of Aceh Besar marked the end-point of early Dutch incursions. Banda Aceh and its environs were held by the Dutch and by Sukarno’s Republic, while the Malay regions were held by the Dutch long before the invasion and resisted the Darul Islam Rebellion.  

Socio-cultural factors also shaped the forms of support provided by civilians, as local norms and social expectations informed what were appropriate forms and levels of support. As noted, some ordinary civilians supported the state in GAM areas and GAM in state strongholds, serving as informants. Serving as a double agent and shifting one’s loyalties has considerable cultural precedence in Aceh. Writers have documented the Acehnese concept of *muslihat*, or guile, a quality in which one keeps their loyalties vague and changes them as circumstances warrant. Siapno cites one GAM official whose shifting affiliations would, in Western minds, be “a good example of one who is a collaborator”, but is considered by Acehnese to be “a highly principled and respected political actor.” The most (in)famous example is Teuku Umar, who shifted from the Acehnese resistance to the Dutch and back on several occasions, growing extremely powerful in the process. It is not necessarily seen as wrong to support unpopular groups or change sides, but instead shows cunning. Combatants, though, did not see things this way and punished informants for such guile.

GAM support had deep cultural roots. Early secessionist forces were organized around personal loyalties to the di Tiro clan in the Pidie area, and early GAM soldiers were veterans of the Darul Islam Rebellion. To win local support, di Tiro initially stressed his ties to Daud Beureueh and sought his approval for the 1976 rebellion. Recruitment often took place through families with histories of participating in previous conflicts. Many GAM supporters described their “affiliation to Acehnese nationalism as deeply held and even inherited.” GAM used ethnic nationalism to deepen its support among the Acehnese. The rebels produced history texts, symbols, costumes, and spoke Acehnese. The reason they did so was simple: it worked. GAM ethnic symbols helped encourage support for their organization among ethnic Acehnese civilians. In post-conflict elections, candidates wearing ethnic clothing and communicating in Acehnese dominated the polls.

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79 Not all zones have been static over time. Interior regions were mixed in their response to the Dutch invasion and the Darul Islam Rebellion, but were pro-state during the recent conflict.
80 Siapno, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh*, 16.
83 This is the core of much of Aspinall’s exceptional study, *Islam and Nation*. 
Acehnese traditions served to encourage GAM support. Aspinall notes that cultural traits such as boarding at the *Meunasah* helped form “networks of young men for whom loyalty, honour, physical prowess, and risk taking were part of everyday cultural behavior.”

Siapno notes that Acehnese lullabies and stories are heavily militaristic, reflecting and reinforcing rebellious culture. Rumours and verbal support took on cultural forms. The stories of GAM Commanders tricking Indonesian forces resembled traditional *Karid* stories, in which the mouse-deer outwits stronger opponents. Civilians often supported the rebels by speaking Acehnese to TNI soldiers and many jokes featured linguistic misunderstandings which are common in Acehnese humour. Women’s support roles during the conflict were also cultural, as they frequently assisted the rebels through male family members and played support roles similar to the *Inong Balee* of previous conflicts.

Once respective combatants became dominant in a given region, societal pressures reinforced control to create strongholds. Once a group is dominant, it no longer has to rely upon coercion, can gain better recruits and police its own ranks, and may come to provide governance. In other words, control was path-dependent, partly due to social factors. Wickham-Crowley describes a cascade effect, in which “social-network attachments” pull civilians towards supporting already powerful armed groups. Over time, social expectations and peer pressure helped police local supporters. If a villager in Bireuen was pro-state, he could not say so openly, as his neighbours might inform GAM if they found out. But if he supported GAM, expressing this might have led to increased social prestige. GAM recruits were often pressured by friends and families, and those providing support were often the relatives or friends of GAM soldiers. GAM widows often remarried GAM soldiers, a system of aid which created large rebel families. As more civilians in GAM strongholds provided support to the rebels, it became a norm:

When we were asked to give taxes, we were angry at first, but then we got used to it.

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84 Aspinall *Islam and Nation*, 92. He goes on to note how the GAM promoted Acehnese values such as toughness, contrasting them with effeminate Javanese traits. Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 101.

85 Siapno, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh*, 144-146.

86 Elsa Clavé-Çelik, “Images of the Past and Realities of the Present: Aceh’s Inong Balee,” *IIAS Newsletter* 48 (Summer 2008). It is possible that the creation of the *Inong Balee* and its carefully crafted image was a consequence of social learning, borrowed from other secessionist groups, perhaps learned while training alongside them in Libya, where Gaddafi famously maintained an all-female guard.

87 Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America*, 139.


89 Discussion with farmers, Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (03 February 2008).
The norm of supporting GAM was most evident in the euphoria of 1999 and 2000, when massive protests took place and support for GAM was public.

Socio-cultural expectations also shaped the lack of support evident in contested areas. These areas tended to be ethnically diverse, home to Acehnese and Malays on the west coast and Acehnese and Javanese in Aceh Besar. GAM’s ethnic nationalism had very different effects here. In Aceh Besar, Javanese and Acehnese intermarried on a regular basis, consistent with Acehnese traditions of exogamy. Not only did calls to exterminate the Javanese make less headway here, mixed families resisted both sides:

My brother-in-law is Javanese, and he is a very good man, very religious. So what does GAM mean about Javanese colonialism?90

As is often the case with ethnic tensions, parochialism was loudest in ethnically homogenous regions, but was less apparent in mixed communities.91 The norm in contested areas, which were largely ethnically heterogeneous, was not collaborating, and those who did were often regarded as troublemakers.

The same emphasis on identity which helped mobilize ethnic Acehnese communities and caused unease in mixed communities also repelled non-Acehnese communities. Gayo and Alas regions featured high levels of Indonesian army recruitment, underwent cultural revivals, and featured considerable anti-GAM resistance. Each group features tightly-knit clans, and support for the state was often a family affair. One Alas soldier explained that not only were his father and uncles soldiers, his brothers and clan cousins joined as well, and his extended family provided food and information to his unit on several occasions.92

The absence of support among village chiefs was rooted in social and cultural expectations of chiefly neutrality. Historically, chiefs have been neutral figures, even in times of war. The position of the chief was not created by the state, but instead evolved locally. Sultans could not count on chiefly loyalty, which is why Iskandar Muda created the Mukim. During the Darul Islam Rebellion, Daud Beureueh created an effective shadow government, but he “preserved the village structure” because the chief was not partial.93 That chiefs are

90 Discussion with farmers, Mesjid Raya, Aceh Besar (26 January 2008).
91 This is at the heart of the contact hypothesis, in which interaction between ethnic groups leads to a decline of tensions.
92 Anonymous interview with former militia member, Jangar, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
expected to remain neutral is also shown by their consistency throughout the secessionist conflict and across zones of combatant control. Throughout my interviews, it was clear that locals expected that chiefs remain neutral:

The chief is always neutral. He cannot be just work for the TNI or GAM. He welcomes both sides to the village and then welcomes them out.94

The chief is neutral because he is stuck between two sides and because this is what he is supposed to do.95

The chief must be neutral. If he is not, he must be replaced.96

Like all norms, there were exceptions to such neutrality. Where chiefs were not neutral, siding with the state or rebels, they were often punished by residents. It was not necessary for chiefs to believe in neutrality, but as long as those around them expected it, diverging from this norm was costly. Social norms defined the rules of the game, and it was in the interest of keucik to follow them.

Aceh’s ulama were more partial and fragmented, with some supporting the state, some remaining neutral, and some supporting the rebels. This may be explained in part by the decentralization of the Islamic faith, as there is no central authority to put forth a single position and no agreed upon standards for ulama. In my interviews, villagers were clear that chiefs had to remain neutral, but were unclear as to what ulama should do in response to war. Respondents agreed that ulama should strive for social justice (keadilan), but how to do so was an open question. All positions found support in religious teachings. Islam was portrayed as demanding fights against injustice,97 inherently peaceful,98 rejecting attacks on minorities, and forbidding rebellion against the state.99 In each zone, ulama found religious justification for their positions, and preaching their messages helped reinforce respective zones of control and support.

Historically, ulama support for state and rebel forces have followed similar zones of control. Ulama in northeastern Aceh have traditionally mobilized against outside forces.

94 Interview with Yusriman, former Camat of Terangon, Aceh Tenggara (07 April 2009).
95 Interview with “Cowboy” Effendi, Panglima GAM Bireuen, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
96 Group interview with Teungku Syafei, Keucik of Pasi Lembang; Ibu Konsatum, Sekdes of Pasi Lembang; Bantardi, Partai Aceh; Ibu Ayani, activist in Pasi Lembang, South Aceh (14 April 2009).
97 Interview with Teungku Yahya Abdullah, KPA Official, Bireuen (04 February 2009).
98 Interview with Teungku Lukman Ramli, MPU member, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (17 April 2009).
99 Interview with Teungku Abu Ismail Yacoob, Vice President of the Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama (MPU, Ulama Consultative Assembly), Banda Aceh (26 January 2008). This is the core of a great deal of classical Islamic jurisprudence. See Anne Lambton, State and Government in Medieval Islam: An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: The Jurists (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
GAM ulama harkened back to the Dutch and Darul Islam struggles, reciting the Epic of the Holy War (Hikayat Prang Sabil) and referring to the Javanese as non-Muslim. Ulama in Banda Aceh have been historically supportive of the state. Meanwhile, the west coast has traditionally been home to heterodox practices and rogue teachers. But historical continuity only goes so far. Ulama in Gayo regions often supported Acehnese ulama in previous conflicts, which were motivated by religious bonds. But in the recent conflict, Gayo Islamic leaders largely supported state forces, as the primary divide was ethnic. A second discrepancy relates to modern and traditional schools of Islam. During the Darul Islam Rebellion, traditional ulama were more likely to support the state while many modernists rebelled or supported Beureueh’s forces. In the recent secessionist conflict, these sides switched, as modernists embraced the New Order, while traditionalists remained independent and many supported the rebels. Historical patterns of ulama support, while firm, were not set in stone, and some loyalties shifted over time.

Moving to new notables, businesspersons were the quintessential opportunists, exemplifying the cultural trait of guile (muslihat). Siapno’s discusses “supporters of the independence movement, silently working within government structures and multinational businesses.” Cut Nur Asyikin worked with Indonesian officials while supporting GAM, navigating an ambiguous position. In doing so, she followed a long line of Acehnese businesspeople who tried to play both sides, siding with power, but never too closely.

NGO activists have few historical antecedents from which they can draw from, and are not subject to deep cultural expectations among Acehnese or combatants. This may explain, in part, why the army cracked down on activists, as their criticisms were direct and they were not afforded cultural protection. The difference between those who opted to exit and those who supported GAM was social, as the former were more established while the latter were younger and more radical.

Socio-cultural explanations for support are indeed illuminating. Their effects were not small, as ethnic / historical divisions shaped the very zones of control upon which the conflict was based. Cultural factors shaped the form of support and social factors reinforced

100 Salim, “Sharia from Below in Aceh,” 97.
102 Siapno, Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh, 11. She continues: “Acehnese businessmen in the PT Arun Gas Industry profiting from government contracts have also been able to double as political activists leading the struggle for referendum.”
respective zones of control. Ethnicity, culture, and social norms by no means determined
civilian support, but when taken alongside other explanations, they illuminate a great deal.

Conviction

In asking why a group takes any particular action, an obvious explanation is often
overlooked. In Aceh, non-combatants may have supported armed groups because they felt
it was the right thing to do. Stating that civilians simply wanted to support an armed group
begs the question of what causes this will to act. It is difficult to prove that those who say
they acted on principle are providing accurate statements. Interviews are likely to over-
predict conviction, as post-hoc recollections are likely to make noble what were originally
base intentions.103 What at first seems like an obvious explanation is extremely complex.

Conviction can play out in two ways. Firstly, conviction may lead to support for a
particular armed group, perhaps because an individual identifies with its ideology, goals, or
identity. Some civilians supported Indonesian forces or the Free Aceh Movement because
they genuinely approved of them. Secondly, conviction may lead to support against a
particular armed group, siding with one side due to grievances against the other. Several
writers suggest that ordinary people join or support armed groups in response to severe
violence or exploitation. Jeff Goodwin offers a theoretically grounded account which
utilizes regional comparisons to show that the presence of insurgent movements is predicted
by repressive, closed regimes, which leave civilians no other way out than turning towards
rebellion in order to achieve their goals.104 But there is an alternative explanation to the
correlation between abusive regimes and civilian opposition. Indiscriminate violence by one
side may motivate principled resistance and support for the other side, even when it is
dangerous. In Aceh, support for GAM was often motivated by anger towards Indonesian
abuses and exploitation, neutrality was often rooted in anger towards both sides, and support
for the state was often defined against GAM nationalism and abuses.

Zones of combatant support are crucial factors in explaining support as responses to
grievances. As Kalyvas notes, abuses tend to be carried out not by the dominant regional
armed group, which does not have to use force, but instead by the weaker regional group,
whose weakness and lack of support necessitates the use of force to accomplish its goals. If
the weaker side abuses, then individuals motivated by pragmatic self-interest and those

103 Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War.
104 Goodwin, No Other Way Out.
motivated by a desire to resist abuses will behave in similar ways. In Aceh, Aspinall finds that both sides were abusive in districts where they lacked local ties and support. A village chief struck a similar chord about one side:

The army killed people because it had no friends and GAM was strong.

Conviction against a particular side includes elements of the previous three explanations, as insecurity and economic exploitation may fuel grievances and lead to support for the other side. Social and cultural factors are crucial in defining the moral economy which such acts violate. The difference though, is that action is taken against unjust authority— to avenge the loss of a loved one or correct other injustices— not necessarily to gain security or turn a profit. Supporting a particular side may entail sacrificing security or wealth.

Elizabeth Wood offers the most convincing account of this position. She asks why peasants in El Salvador risked their lives to support a rebel movement. Wood rejects dominant theories of personal gain because rebel supporters faced severe punishments and gains won by the rebels such as land reform were non-excludable, benefiting civilians whether they supported the rebels or not. Many civilians supported the rebels anyway. Wood finds that they did so because they took “pleasure” in rebelling against an unjust and abusive state. For Wood, “the government’s arbitrary and brutal repression reinforced and deepened the insurgents’ framing of the government as a profoundly unjust authority.”

Of particular note is that civilians did not necessarily support the ideology of El Salvador’s rebel movement, except insofar as it opposed various injustices. This is the same conclusion reached in Barrington Moore’s inquiry into the causes of individual support for revolution. Sometimes civilian supporters are motivated by conviction against grievances generated by the other side.

State supporters in GAM strongholds may have been motivated by conviction, but are more reasonably seen as concerned with profit, as they went against widespread local opinion and turned a blind eye to state atrocities. Non-combatants who supported GAM

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105 Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 168.
106 Interview with M. Daud, Keucik of Subarang, South Aceh (19 April 2009).
units in rebel strongholds were sometimes die-hard GAM supporters. Some people identified with ethnic Acehnese symbols and the goal of secession, restoring a ‘Golden Age’ of Acehnese statehood. GAM designs for Acehnese self-determination and an ethnic renaissance were not mere window-dressing, as they touched on beliefs shared by many villagers. For many supporters, GAM was genuinely popular on its own accord.

But considerable rebel support was also a consequence of anti-Indonesia sentiment. In my interviews, it was rare to find villagers who stated what they liked about GAM. Instead, they provided lists of grievances against Indonesian soldiers and leaders, sometimes adding that GAM was different. Many villagers spoke of economic exploitation and poverty being rooted in Indonesian misrule, and more went to great lengths to document Indonesian human rights abuses, showing scars and pictures of lost loved ones. Crucially, GAM did not gain widespread open support upon its initial formation, but instead grew after the DOM-era of military abuses and after GAM incorporated human rights frames.112 Some GAM partisans suggest that the “GAM’s ethnonationalist project” was responsible for rebel popularity, not “a victimization narrative that sought to usurp from outside.”113 This said, GAM Commanders understood that Indonesian abuses were their key to success, so would attack Indonesian troops and hide in or near civilian populations to help invite atrocities. Rebel leaders published reports on Indonesian abuses and issued daily press releases on attacks. The abuses of the other side were important assets for GAM, and Commanders make no bones about it:

When the people saw how bad the army was, it became much clearer who the good guys were.114

The people support us because we protect them and avenge the killers.115

The people love GAM because they have faced great injustices.116

Of course we were extremely popular... the TNI made it easy.117

113 Davies, *Indonesia’s War Over Aceh*, 41. Nessen notes that blaming Indonesia undermines the rebel message, but then goes on to prove only that the Acehnese were abused by Indonesia before the secessionist conflict. This may make reform more difficult, suggesting the problem was deeper than Suharto alone, but it is not a pro-rebel argument. William Nessen, “Sentiments Made Visible: Identity Formation in Aceh under Indonesian Rule,” in *Verandah of Violence*, 191.
114 Interview with Udin, *Panglima* GAM Aceh Besar (03 November 2007).
116 Interview with “Jungle Tiger”, *Panglima* GAM Teunom, West Aceh (30 April 2006).
117 Interview with “Cowboy” Effendi, *Panglima* GAM Bireuen, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
Although some GAM supporters were dedicated to GAM’s message, many were motivated more by the considerable abuses carried out by the Indonesian military, and GAM Commanders were very much aware of this.

Contested areas provide important evidence of support being owed to grievances against armed groups. The lack of support may be due to civilians being cowed into silence, but it may also be rooted in indifference. In contested areas, civilians saw both sides at their worst and had good reason not to support either side. This explains why many civilians in contested area criticized both sides, discussed below in terms of the voice strategy. Statements that both sides were abusive cannot be criticized for being post-hoc, as there is no reward for this stance or popular narrative to follow. Where one side is abusive, it becomes hated and the other side may grow popular. When both sides are abusive, civilians remain neutral and sometimes oppose the conflict. The timing of the shift from passive to active neutrality is important, as non-combatants only began criticizing both sides as the conflict wore on and abuses mounted. West Aceh is a key zone here because it shifted from being contested to being pro-rebel. Early in the conflict, violence here was largely criminal, as the army and GAM often worked together. As the Indonesian military arrived here in 1999, they quickly became abusive, and GAM, which was rather weak at the time, became popular in response.

In Indonesian strongholds, GAM agents were committed rebel supporters. They risked life and limb with little reward, and were not in zones where the army was especially abusive. GAM Commanders saw such agents as “the bravest Acehnese patriots.” As in GAM strongholds, many civilians in state strongholds were committed to Indonesia, proud of shared anti-Dutch resistance, moderate Islam, and multiculturalism. The Indonesian state brought significant development to many regions. Sometimes, support for the state took the form of love for one’s own ethnic group. Gayo ethnic politics were especially virulent, as Gayo communities underwent a cultural revival in response to Acehnese nationalism.

Like GAM supporters, few state supporters spoke of the strengths of Indonesia, but instead focused on the faults of the rebels. When I asked locals in Banda Aceh, the interior, and the south why they supported the government, they cited rebel kidnappings, extortion, attacks on minorities, ethnic nationalism, involvement in the drug trade, Western leanings, and an absence of Islamic credentials. Those who joined or supported militias would

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118 Interview with “Kowboy” Effendi, Panglima GAM Bireuen, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
invariably cite GAM attacks on their families and friends as motivating the need to mobilize. Many militia supporters were not unlike civilians in other districts who supported GAM, subject to the same insecurities and driven by a desire for justice. This is shown in the timing of support for militias. Indonesian soldiers attempted to form militias as early as 1995, but they only became popular among ethnic minorities after GAM attacked their homes. The first regular GAM encroachments into state strongholds began in 2000, and it took another year before significant levels of state support and local patrols were formed.

The fact that village leaders did not, by and large, support either side, and instead remained neutral, may be rooted in conviction. Many sincerely believed in their responsibilities and the cultural norms invested in their position. While I noted that cultural norms may function indirectly, structuring the rules of the game and the expectations of other actors, they may also have a direct effect, shaping the worldviews of the chiefs:

As a chief, I must remain neutral... it is important to fulfill this duty.  

This said, in respective strongholds, village chiefs would have witnessed human rights abuses committed by one side. They nonetheless remained impartial, perhaps putting their responsibilities ahead of personal conviction.

Once again, ulama seemed to collaborate for reasons similar to those of ordinary civilians. They provide rich cases for understanding the nature of non-combatant support for armed groups. Ulama were pragmatic, their positions reflecting conflict reality. Some ulama supported the state because they genuinely believed in it. Influenced by classical Sunni jurisprudence, many ulama felt that rebellion and killing were sinful. Many ulama initially supported the state due to its pro-development and anti-communist policies. Other ulama, especially those teaching in rural areas, supported the state in opposition to GAM. When asked why they supported Indonesia, interviewees detailed GAM abuses. As noted in Chapter Three, pro-state ulama saw the rebels as non-believers, driven by narrow ethnic concerns forbidden in the Koran. Some ulama supported the state because they were genuine state supporters, but more did so because they were rebel opponents.

Contested areas once again provide important evidence for conviction evolving from grievance. Many ulama in such regions spoke of the army and the rebels as un-Islamic and abusive. In Saree, two rival ulama agreed here. The retired ulama described the combatants

119 Interview with Darmi Junid, Keucik of Air Dingin, South Aceh (17 April 2009).
as “rotten fruit.”\textsuperscript{120} The new teacher, whom locals label \textit{fanatik}, echoed these thoughts but was more authoritative, arguing that the conflict should not interest “real Muslims.”\textsuperscript{121} Each cited numerous abuses by both sides, displaying a sense of conviction against military abuses in general. I asked a neutral ulama why he thought other ulama took sides:

They respond to what they see in front of them. If they saw the true nature of both sides, they would oppose them both.\textsuperscript{122}

Ulama tended to oppose abuse, and in contested areas both sides were abusive, leading to localized neutrality and even resistance.

Unlike the Indonesian state, the Free Aceh Movement did not enjoy the support of many ulama early in the conflict. GAM’s goals were secular, its leaders lacked religious credentials, it spoke to Western governments, and it featured narrow ethnic nationalism. Ulama who came to support or join the rebels did not do so for profit or because they initially identified with GAM goals, but instead out of conviction against Indonesian forces (and to some extent, against non-religious, state education). Almost all of the pro-GAM ulama I met spoke in terms of Indonesian human rights abuses. The temporal element is key here, as it was only after major human rights abuses that ulama started to ally with GAM. As ulama started to support GAM, Indonesian soldiers attacked their schools and even killed some ulama, a moral outrage which deepened GAM support among Islamic leaders. Teungku Yahya Abdullah explained that he did not support GAM early on. During the DOM-era, he saw significant abuse, and came to sympathize with the rebels. As violence continued even after the fall of Suharto, he came to support the rebels, and when his school was attacked by the army, he joined them.

I saw injustice and had to do something. Islam is a religion of justice.\textsuperscript{123}

By supporting GAM against state forces in rebel strongholds, many ulama were able to satisfy local expectations of proper religious behaviour. In this way, ulama were shaped by local opinion to some extent. Over time, many ulama came to identify with the rebel movement, shifting from opposing the Indonesian military by supporting GAM to being committed rebel supporters. This is a valuable finding regarding civilian support for armed groups, as motivations can change over time.

\textsuperscript{120} Interview with Amir, businessman, Saree, Aceh Besar (02 November 2007).
\textsuperscript{121} Interview with Teungku Kamaruddin, Saree, Acer Besar (30 January 2008).
\textsuperscript{122} Interview with Teungku Faisal, Secretary General of the HUDA, Banda Aceh (26 January 2008).
\textsuperscript{123} Interview with Teungku Yahya Abdullah, KPA Official, Bireuen (04 February 2009).
Among new notables, businessmen did not seem to offer their support out of conviction— their behaviour can safely be explained in terms of economic incentives. Support for the state among doctors and teachers was often positive, as many identified with the goals and symbols of the state, especially with New Order development goals. Most activists spoke out against state abuses early on, but did not at first support GAM.

Continued Indonesian assaults, on civilians and activists, led many activists to support GAM, not because they identified with the rebels’ vision, but instead because they were outraged at state atrocities. Human rights activists were unlikely allies for rebels who spoke in terms of a sultanate and ethnic nationalism. Student and NGO leaders largely identified as Indonesian, were urban dwellers, and spoke in terms of human rights and democracy. Over time though, many activists were socialized into the rebel movement as the rebels accommodated their concerns and goals, leading to a degree of convergence. While initial partnerships were due to anti-Indonesia sentiment, with time, many activists came to support GAM and became convinced of its agenda.

Some civilians supported the state or the rebels because they genuinely believed in their ideology or goals. More often, they supported an armed group due to grievances against the other side. Earlier, I noted that ethnic dynamics largely defined zones of support, challenging Kalyvas’ claims that control causes support. While Kalyvas’ control theory cannot explain ethno-geographical patterns, it can explain temporal patterns, namely, the deepening of support as one side gains control. But even here, the logic of this process is not clear, as support flowing from control is not necessarily related to self-interest. If the weaker armed group is more abusive than a regionally armed group, self-interested civilians will behave in the same way as principled civilians, supporting the dominant armed group and opposing the weaker side. In Aceh, as abuses mounted, civilians came to resist the abusive side by supporting the dominant local armed group, as support derived from conviction was reflexive. But for many ulama and activists, initial support for the rebels based on anti-Indonesian conviction slowly transformed into dedicated rebel support.

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124 Aspinall argues that these students were more Indonesian than Acehnese, speaking Indonesian at home with little interest in Acehnese tradition. Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 130. According to Siegel, “Acehnese university students, in their tastes, their manner of expression, their very status as ‘students’ (mahasiswa), are nearly indistinguishable from Indonesian students outside the province.” Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 365.
Why did some non-combatants in Aceh support armed groups, while others did not? What explains various forms of support? Why did it vary so dramatically across zones of combatant control? While flight is explained best by insecurity, support lacks a dominant explanation. In his study of national and religious identity in the Aceh conflict, Aspinall briefly asks why civilians joined or supported the rebels, responding that ideology, revenge, profit, and hereditary struggles each explain some part.\textsuperscript{125} Aspinall’s ideology and revenge correspond to my concepts of conviction for and against. Although he does not consider insecurity, his categories resemble mine, explaining civilian support in terms of multiple factors. Civilian support for armed groups is partially explaining by factors related to security, as support was sometimes coerced, sometimes provided as insurance against attacks from the other side, and often was not provided when it otherwise would have been due to the threat of punishment. Some support was motivated by personal gains, especially support for the state. Socio-cultural factors are particularly interesting, delineating zones of control and shaping forms of support. Conviction led to support, sometimes for one side, but more often against the other side, as grievances motivated resistance through armed groups.\textsuperscript{126}

Civilian support for armed groups in Aceh is best explained by a range of factors, depending on the type of civilian and form of support.

\textbf{Why Do Civilians Choose Voice?}  

Why do civilians choose to voice their concerns to armed groups and seek to mitigate armed conflict? It seems reasonable that the desire to express oneself, especially in the face of violence, is a natural human condition.\textsuperscript{127} A better question may be: When is it possible for civilians to express voice? Below, I assess how security, profit, culture, and conviction do or do not explain how and when voice is expressed.

\textbf{Security}  

How do security concerns help to explain the presence or absence of voice? It is difficult to imagine violence being used to force voice in the same way as one may forcibly

\textsuperscript{125} Aspinall, \textit{Islam and Nation}, 164.  
\textsuperscript{126} Aspinall, \textit{Islam and Nation}, 168.  
\textsuperscript{127} The desire to protest is “a constant feature of the peasant condition… Peasants always have grounds for rebellion against landlords, state agents, and merchants.” Theda Skocpol, \textit{States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 115.
extract support. But insecurity helps to explain the absence of voice, as civilians are forced to tone down their expressions and remain quiet when they risk punishment.

Early in the conflict, orang biasa were more likely to express voice. Villagers disagreed with GAM regarding attacks on Javanese and were able to reason with the army. One chief discussed early how interactions with the army changed over time:

The soldiers were reasonable. I could talk to them and they understood. But in 1998 the army would never let us talk to them. It was the same with GAM. They arrived, took our money, and expelled the Javanese. Some villagers disagreed, but they were forced to be quiet.\(^{128}\)

The Indonesian military was especially brutal by 1999, responding to protests with force.\(^{129}\) As a consequence of such violence, voice became difficult for ordinary civilians. But it did not disappear, and civilians continued to express themselves through various forms of everyday resistance. By gossiping, hoarding, foot-dragging, and criticizing both sides in private, civilians were able to continue resisting, although in a muted form.

Anyone who would join GAM or TNI probably has psychological problems. They actually like violence. This is how people in this village think about both sides. This is what we talked about in coffee shops.\(^{130}\)

Insecurity pushed Acehnese villagers to shift to quieter forms of voice. This was similar for ethnic minorities. Gayo agricultural workers could not refuse to pay taxes to GAM, but could hide their wealth or bribe soldiers to avoid paying the full amount. I have noted that some Acehnese women were able to negotiate with both sides when their sons and husbands were arrested. They did so despite security risks.

The women are brave when they do this, and many get hurt. They make great sacrifices.\(^{131}\)

In our village, women had success in getting people released. It was safer for them than for men, going to the army. But it was still very brave.\(^{132}\)

\(^{128}\) Interview with Hussin Amin, former Keucik of Saree, Aceh Besar (29 January 2008).


\(^{130}\) He continued: “it is like that in every country, right? People who have problems in the head like violence and become soldiers. Is it like that in Canada?” Interview with Nurdin, woodworker in Suka Damai, Aceh Besar (29 January 2008).

\(^{131}\) Interview with Juanda, Secretary General of People’s Crisis Center (PCC), Saree, Aceh Besar (04 November 2007).

\(^{132}\) Group interview with Teungku Syafei, Keucik of Pasi Lembang; Ibu Konsatum, Sekdes of Pasi Lembang; Bantardi, Partai Aceh; Ibu Ayani, activist in Pasi Lembang, South Aceh (14 April 2009).
Engagement was necessary because resistance would have invited violence. Insecurity limited the forms of voice which could be utilized by ordinary civilians.

Village chiefs were masters of engagement. They did not speak out against combatants, but instead spoke with them as representatives of their village and its inhabitants. When Chief Syarbini in Saree approached a Brimob Commander and demanded the release of a villager, he was beaten and imprisoned. This said, it could also be dangerous not to speak up. As noted, villagers expected chiefs to remain neutral and mediate, and those who failed in these roles were often criticized or attacked. This was also expected by some combatants, who would seek out the keucik when they had a problem or wanted information. A chief who refused to live up to his cultural role might face punishment. In this way, insecurity helps explain engagement among chiefs.

Security considerations probably limited the voice of ulama who had sided with the state or the rebels. Once they sided with an armed group, criticizing it would have been difficult. Other ulama maintained an independent position and even criticized both sides, although violent reprisals cowed many into silence. The most prominent example was the HUDA, which joined the civil society movement and criticized both sides in 1999. As the army regrouped, the HUDA was forced to tone down its demands. Many ulama in contested areas remained silent, focusing on teaching duties and avoiding trouble. For some, this was a product of insecurity:

No, I did not like what was happening. But if I said something, I might be killed. It was better to focus on teaching and long-term change.134

It is tough to do anything, it is best to remain apolitical.135

For many ulama who wanted to speak out, the threat of violence forced them to remain silent. But a number of ulama in contested areas continued to speak out, a fact which cannot be explained by security concerns.

Student and NGO activists were the dominant sources of defiance against violent actors, especially the Indonesian military. Not only did activists raise their voice, they also enabled rank-and-file civilians to speak up by organizing protests. Again, as the army

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133 Interview with Syarbini, Keucik of Saree, Aceh Besar (01 November 2007).
134 Interview with Teungku Abdullah, Saree, Aceh Besar (28 January 2008).
135 Interview with Teungku Abdul Malik, Suka Mulia, Aceh Besar (28 January 2008).
cracked down on critics, voice was transformed. Activists were pushed to flee or support GAM, although some continued to defy the army.

The primary way that security concerns influenced voice was by muzzling it. While some were silenced, violence also led voice to transform from defiance into subtler forms such as everyday resistance or engagement. Chiefly engagement, as well as some ulama and activist defiance, continued despite security threats, suggesting a need for other explanations.

**Economic Incentives**

Economic factors do little to explain the presence of voice during the Aceh conflict. They may have functioned indirectly, as grievances. Many civilians were angry at Indonesian corruption, military control of the economy, and resource exploitation. Resource exploitation is more clearly an elite grievance than a mass one. This said, John McCarthy suggests that resource wealth siphoned off to Jakarta violated Acehnese conceptions of resource entitlements, a symbolic loss which led to protest. Civilians also grew tired of constant economic demands from combatants. Gayo communities faced GAM efforts to tax local agriculture and ransom local elites, leading to sizable protests. In Aceh Besar, locals were highly critical of GAM Commander Udin for his ownership of Pancah Hill, sitting quite literally on a gold mine, but not giving back to the community. A second way that economic factors influenced voice was that many forms of everyday resistance were intended to slow economic losses. Hoarding food, under-reporting wealth, and providing inferior goods helped civilians to retain wealth.

Economic factors did not motivate chiefly diplomacy. While in some parts of Indonesia and Southeast Asia, village leaders are paid in cash or kind for helping villagers, in Aceh, such acts are generally provided free of charge, although the chief gains status and perhaps services for playing his role. Many chiefs are resentful that, despite their mediation work, only former soldiers have been compensated after the conflict:

I pledged my life for villagers and answered questions for GAM and TNI maybe fifty times. One time, I was beaten by the police. And what do I get?

139 International Development Law Organization, “The Role of a Mediator in Dispute Resolution under Adat in Aceh.”
GAM sold out, driving up and down so fast in their nice cars. They are assholes. When do I get a motorcycle?!\textsuperscript{140}

Not only were Aceh’s chiefs not paid for their work, they often lost money. Many chiefs did not receive their government salaries for two years. And when chiefs mediated, they were expected to provide for small expenses.

The chief and his wife have to provide tea and cake, sometimes dinner. This adds up... some chiefs had to step down.\textsuperscript{141}

One chief near Bireuen noted that the army demanded he pay for the release of villagers, money he never recovered.\textsuperscript{142} Economic factors cannot explain chiefly voice. Chiefs engaged armed groups despite monetary losses.

Above, I noted that many ulama supported the state for economic reasons. It is difficult to know if their statements against GAM should be viewed as voice or support. Certainly, their lack of voice against the state is explained by economic factors, as defiance would have cost them their salaries or stipends. Some ulama in contested areas may have remained quiet to avoid threatening state funding for their schools. But other local ulama protested anyways, and some lost state support in the process. When ulama spoke out, they rarely spoke in terms of economic grievances, making them different than ordinary civilians. The presence of voice among ulama did not seem to be motivated by economic factors, however the absence of voice among state ulama probably did.

Turning to new notables, the absence of voice among businesspeople can be understood in terms of economic factors. Many entrepreneurs worked with both sides, ensuring they did not side too closely to either side. Those profiting from the conflict had little reason to speak up, and would lose money if they did. There are exceptions though, such as Teuku Amir, who used his contacts with both sides to help several GAM recruits return safely to village life, with no clear economic gain.\textsuperscript{143} Teachers were similar to ulama, largely remaining quiet, in part because their jobs depended on it. Activists present a more complex picture. They did not protest to gain wealth, however foreign donors helped sustain their organizations. Economic linkages with Western donors may have tied local

\textsuperscript{140} Anonymous interview with Keucik, Teupin Ridup, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
\textsuperscript{141} Interview with Sarbunis and Agus, activists, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (14 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{142} Interview with Teungku Zakaria, Keucik of Abeuk Usong, Bireuen (03 February 2008).
\textsuperscript{143} Interview with Amir, businessman, Saree, Aceh Besar (02 November 2007).
activists to the voice strategy, but given the dangers inherent in defying armed groups, this is at best a partial explanation.

Socio-Cultural Factors

In the disparate literature on voice, social and cultural factors are the dominant explanatory variables. Sidney Tarrow shows that defiance requires common "repertoires of contention" which are "part of a society's public culture." James Scott locates everyday resistance in a shared moral economy, violations of which lead to social resistance. Theoretical studies of persuasion suggest that actors must share a cultural and moral worldview in order to engage in meaningful dialogue. Anthropological studies of village mediation are based on highly localized cultural practices and are decisions enforced through social pressure in closely-knit communities. For all forms of voice, writers agree on the centrality of social and cultural contexts. Much like insecurity motivates flight, socio-cultural factors drive voice.

Orang Biasa rarely defied armed groups openly. Some may have done so early, but most feared speaking out. Their primary form of voice was everyday resistance, small, barely visible acts which relied on shared understandings and subtle codes. Popular stories criticizing armed groups often took the form of traditional tales and characters. While such stories often supported the rebels, they also criticized both sides, and as the conflict wore on, stories which previously supported GAM came to portray them as a spent force. Sometimes, ordinary civilians utilized voice to persuade armed groups. Siapno notes that when women approached security forces to help an imprisoned family member, they would appear as the devoted family woman or would use sex appeal to get their way. Either way, "social expectations of women" were used to persuade soldiers and help women achieve their goals. Women and elders were afforded some space to speak out and influence armed groups, as social norms helped to create some space for engagement.

148 Siapno, Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh, 34.
149 Siapno, Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh, 18.
The self-perceptions of these village ‘diplomats’ and ‘lawyers’ were cultural. Many keurik saw themselves as the Karil (mouse-deer), the protagonist in traditional Malay stories which outwits powerful opponents. Explaining their diplomatic tricks, chiefs described their strategies in terms of Silat Lidah, or verbal martial arts.

Sometimes, it is important to attack. But against a stronger opponent, a silat master must be an expert in reacting, keeping them off balance.

Chiefs would also describe their strategies in terms of musilah, or guile, which Siapno describes as “ambiguous or impure opposition” in which actors play the “dual performative role of loyal/ disloyal citizen.” This is evident in chiefs appearing as traditional Acehnese leaders to GAM, but loyal bureaucrats to the army. One chief used an ecological analogy to describe the ideal position of the chief:

Fishermen see mangroves as part of the sea, this is where fish are born, but farmers see mangroves as a source of wood and animals. The chief is this mangrove forest, seen by the state as theirs, seen by the society as theirs, but is really in the middle.

The ways that chiefs served as mediators and their self-understandings while doing so were thoroughly cultural. But culture tends to be regarded as a variable of last resort and is difficult to operationalize. Especially in a context of ongoing violence, cultural explanations may be met with scepticism, and thus require firm evidence. To make clear the cultural foundations of chiefly voice, I offer a brief genealogy of the authority of Aceh’s chiefs, several forms of comparison through methods of agreement and difference, and interviews.

Aceh’s keurik are supposed to maintain village order, internally and externally. As noted in Chapter Two, the chief originated as the tender of the village garden, not as part of the state, surviving efforts by Sultans, the Dutch, the Darul Islam Rebels, the New Order, and GAM to recast village authority. Even a hostile witness such as Hurgronje wrote highly of Aceh’s keurik:

Aceh is certainly to an exceptional degree a land of polyarchy and misrule; in vain do we seek for discipline, whilst we meet with a quarrelsome and capricious spirit at every step. Taking this into

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150 The Kancil occupies a similar role as foxes in Western stories, Br’er Rabbit in the American south, and cartoon characters such as Bugs Bunny, where weaker parties trick more dangerous, but unintelligent foes, never confronting them.
151 Interview with Hussin Amin, former Keucik of Saree, Aceh Besar (29 January 2008).
152 Siapno, Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh, 2, 12.
153 Interview with Teungku Jainal, former Keucik of Jangar, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
While the chief is a village ruler, he does not rule. The chief is more of a caretaker or ombudsperson than a village executive.

The Acehnese village is home to several checks and balances which promote a deliberation and limit chiefly power. The Council of Elders (Tuḥāpuṭ), various agricultural and social title-holders, and religious officials join chiefs in making important decisions. This lies at the core of the chief’s capacity to please both combatants and serve the community. The ability of a chief to mediate rests on his ability to show that dictates are not his personal orders, but instead are necessary according to local tradition (adat). This style of rule is also evident in Malay tradition. In the Malaysian village of Sungai Raya, Marvin Rogers notes that chiefs “exercised influence only if they retained the villagers’ basic values and interests.” Here, the traditional chief had two duties—“communicating with higher authorities and mediating within kampong”—although “the preservation of social harmony in the villages was his primary responsibility.” The two duties of Acehnese chiefs, mediating internal problems and representing the village to external authorities, transferred during the conflict to the roles of advocate and diplomat in dealings with combatants.

Several forms of comparison help demonstrate that chiefly roles were products of cultural expectations. The first three comparisons approximate Mill’s Method of Agreement, showing consistent chiefly behaviour in diverse contexts. Comparing across time, one finds similar mediation roles in Aceh’s previous conflicts. During the Darul Islam Rebellion, chiefs were considered to be neutral by both sides of the conflict. Sjamsuddin notes that the

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157 Some writers suggest that eliminating such authorities removed traditional checks and balances and made for a more authoritative chief. McCarthy suggests that the 1979 laws created “a model of village government set out on a national scale according to a uniform format...Because the village head became a government official accountable to an appointed official (the sub-district head, or camat), village government became increasingly responsive to instructions from above.” McCarthy, *The Fourth Circle*, 205. While partly true, these institutions survived in many villages, and were recently reintroduced. Interview with Budi Arianto, Secretary General, *Jaringan Komunitas Masyarakat Adat* (JKMA) [Community Tradition Network], Banda Aceh (24 January 2008).
159 Rogers, *Local Politics in Rural Malaysia*, 59
chief remained “independent in representing his village’s interests” to combatants. Chiefs have also played comparable roles throughout the recent conflict. I heard similar stories from the beginning of the conflict, through its peak, to its end, and even afterwards:

There was nothing our neighbours or the chief could do when GAM attacked us. But the chief assisted us when we left and watched over our houses when we were gone. In 2005, he contacted us, saying it is safe to return. When we returned, most of our possessions were there.

They are part of the village, and it is my job to help villagers.

Chiefs served as mediators and diplomats both in previous conflicts and throughout the recent one. Another form of comparison is across space. Aceh’s chiefs performed similar duties across zones of combatant control. While ethno-regional zones of combatant control largely determined the decision to support an armed group, the voice option seemed less affected by control, and chiefly voice did not vary. That Aceh’s chiefs were consistent over time and place suggests a robust cultural norm.

Cultural norms of chiefly mediation are best shown through the Method of Difference, comparing cases which vary in terms of key causal variables. The responsibilities of village chiefs were not expected of other authorities. District and sub-district leaders were bureaucrats, thoroughly tied to the state. Even traditional authorities such as the imeum mukim did not behave as chiefs did. Some served as counsellors and backup chiefs:

When somebody was killed, the Mukim went to the family’s house and consoled them. This is the job of the Mukim.

Unlike chiefs, imeum mukim did not perform their roles in a consistent fashion. In South Aceh, one imeum mukim was an army loyalist and informed soldiers of GAM activity.

I have to help my people. So I tell them never to lie to the army and to always remain loyal to Pancasila.

Below the chief, the village secretary played few roles during the conflict beyond minor administrative duties, although many accompanied the chief in mediation. The Council of

161 Sjamsuddin, The Republican Revolt, 173.
162 Anonymous interview with Javanese women rice farmers, Saree, Aceh Besar (29 October 2007).
163 Interview with Syarbini, Keucik of Saree, Aceh Besar (01 November 2007).
164 Interview with Abdul Wahab, Imeum Mukim of Gunung Seulawah, Aceh Besar (01 November 2007).
165 The variation among imeum mukim is probably due to the quasi-official nature of the position, which was formally abolished between 1974 and 2005.
166 Interview with Marwaeni, Imeum Mukim of Sama Dua, South Aceh (19 April 2009).
Elders did not generally perform mediation roles or engage with armed groups. The most enlightening comparisons are horizontal, comparing keurik with equivalent authorities. I have shown that ulama generally chose to support dominant armed groups, varying with the chiefs despite experiencing the conflict at similar levels. Another comparison is with the lurah, the head of an urban ward (Kelurahan). During the conflict, the lurah was a purely bureaucratic figure, and did little to help local people:

Village leaders have adat, cultural roles, but urban chiefs are administrators.

Keurik and lurah are actually very different. We do paperwork and distribute identification, while chiefs handle local disputes. City work is so different from the countryside, two different worlds. During the conflict, we did not help victims. That was not our job.

[The keurik and lurah] are not comparable. We are like camat, a modern leader, not village people.

Across a range of bureaucratic and traditional authorities at various levels, only village chiefs were expected to engage armed groups and mediate.

Variation across Indonesian ethnic groups also shows that Acehnese chiefs are unique. West Sumatran chiefs are appointed by adat councils, North Sumatran chiefs are appointed by the camat, while chiefs in Aceh are elected. Non-Acehnese residents in Aceh explained in great detail that Acehnese chiefs are extremely different than Malay, Batak, or Javanese chiefs. A Javanese man living in Aceh Tenggara noted that “the keurik is far better than our kepala desa”.

A Malay family which had resided in West Sumatra, North Sumatra, and South Aceh provided exceptional insight:

In Aceh, chiefs work every hour and do not feel better than other people. Chiefs in other provinces are hard to find.

Hans Antlöv portrays the Javanese chief as a bureaucratic figure. Interestingly, he finds that locals reminisce that during the war for independence and Darul Islam Rebellion, the chief

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167 Interview with Anwar, former Sekdes of Teupin Ridup, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
168 Interview with Andi, activist, Banda Aceh (24 January 2008).
169 Interview with Ardiyansyah, Lurah of Kuta Alam, Banda Aceh (24 January 2008).
170 Interview with Lurah of Laksana, Banda Aceh (25 January 2008).
171 Discussion in coffee shop, Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
172 Interview with Muslim Jaram and family, Kota Fajar, South Aceh (16 April 2009). The family cautioned that the terms may not be equivalent, as villages in other provinces is much larger than in Aceh, so that the elected Kepala Lingkungan (neighbourhood head) in North Sumatra and appointed Kepala Dusun (hamlet head) might be better comparisons with Aceh’s chiefs.
was one of them, sleeping under the stars and defending locals.\textsuperscript{173} Looking at ethnic variation within Aceh, chiefly mediation was less prevalent among ethnic minorities. There were many exceptions though. I met one ethnic Malay village chief who mediated frequently, and one villager suggested that he ruled like the Acehnese keurik.\textsuperscript{174} Engaging armed groups was not expected of all authorities, but was particular to Acehnese chiefs. In the next chapter, I will introduce another form of comparison, with other Southeast Asian secessionist conflicts, where I find different roles were played by village leaders.

In dozens of interviews, respondents explained that chiefs must fulfill these two roles during times of war. When I asked why, I was often met with incredulity:

\begin{quote}
I help arrested villagers because villagers and soldiers ask me to. Simple.\textsuperscript{175}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
It is their responsibility. They have to. What do you mean why?\textsuperscript{176}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
The chief helps villagers. If he takes sides, cannot do this anymore and has failed. We want good leaders who are good to the people. This is what we are fighting for. This should be easy to understand.\textsuperscript{177}
\end{quote}

When asked, locals of all stripes explained that this is just what chiefs do. That many persons thought that this was obvious was extremely enlightening.

Like all social expectations, there are exceptions. Many chiefs misread the situation or faced Commanders who did not acknowledge their roles, and as a consequence, many chiefs were beaten or killed.\textsuperscript{178} I have already noted several examples. In one South Aceh village, the army believed that many villagers were supporting GAM. Instead of talking to the chief, soldiers forced him on the ground and stepped on his head, a symbolic act of humiliation.\textsuperscript{179} Norms of protection and mediation often fall short.

Why would combatants allow chiefs to retain their independence? The norm that chiefs should mediate may also have guided the behaviour of soldiers. Even if it did not, it would be costly to violate this norm:

\textsuperscript{174} Javanese chiefs were typically targeted by the GAM, so had no opportunity to mediate, and many Gayo and Alas chiefs operate under the control of local timber barons. Group interview with M. Amin, former Keurik of Paya Teuk and rice farmers, Paya Teuk, South Aceh (15 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{175} Interview with Darmi Junid, Keurik of Air Dingin, South Aceh (17 April 2009).
\textsuperscript{176} Interview with Udin, Panglima GAM Aceh Besar (03 November 2007).
\textsuperscript{177} Interview with “Kowboy” Effendi, Panglima GAM Bireuen, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
\textsuperscript{178} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, “Thousands Flee Surge in Violence” (10 September 2000).
\textsuperscript{179} Interview with Murdalis, Keurik of Panton Luas, South Aceh (18 April 2009).
GAM does not want to look bad. It is okay to ask the village for money, our soldiers were poor. But if the chief refuses, you cannot just take it. This was not allowed.  

As long as chiefs did not support the other side or provide public criticism, their voice was allowed, even encouraged. Chiefly mediation could be advantageous for both sides, assisting with investigations and negotiations. This is the difference between engagement and resistance, and is why voice was allowed to continue for village chiefs.

Can the presence and absence of voice among ulama be attributed to socio-cultural factors? The absence of neutral voice among many ulama may be cultural. The strongest cultural norm guiding Islamic behaviour in Aceh is to seek social justice (keadilan). But this is a vague principle, and was interpreted in numerous ways depending on local conditions. In state strongholds, social justice meant opposing GAM and in rebel strongholds it meant opposing the Indonesian army. It was only in contested areas that seeking social justice entailed neutrality and an independent voice for the ulama. The absence of neutral voice among ulama in rebel and state strongholds and the presence of voice among ulama in contested areas was partly a product of opportunism, but also reflected a concern for social justice, however vague a cultural principle this is. This interpretation is supported in their post-conflict activities. While ulama were fragmented during the conflict, they have been more unified after it. While some ulama continue to work as state ulama, and a new class of rebel state ulama has emerged, the general trend has been towards healing their communities and deepening the faith. Several ulama have established special Koran reading classes for the victims of the conflict, sometimes bringing together Javanese and Acehnese villagers. One ulama explained that:

Islam is common to all of us. My job is to teach Islam, and if doing it helps people come together, I am successful.

Many ulama have adapted a traditional ceremony known as the Peusijuk (literally: to cool off) to help reintegrate former combatants and displaced persons into the community. Frowned upon by modernist ulama, the Peusijuk involves eating yellow rice and sprinkling holy water

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180 Interview with Nurdin Abdul Rahman, Bupati of Bireuen and GAM negotiator (05 November 2007).
181 Siapno, Gender, Islam, Nationalism, and the State in Aceh, 54.
182 This was partly due to the organizational nature of Islam, which lacks a central authority, resulting in a great range of ulama positions.
183 Anonymous interview with Javanese women rice farmers, Saree, Aceh Besar (29 October 2007).
184 Interview with Teungku Kamaruddin, Saree, Acer Besar (30 January 2008).
over those returning from long voyages such as the Haj or work overseas to symbolize their return to the community.\textsuperscript{185} Without formal organization, traditionalist ulama have adapted this to suit the needs of post-war Aceh. While an encouraging post-conflict development, many ulama understood the ceremony differently:

The \textit{Peusijuek} is open to all Muslims, a tradition which started with the return of the Prophet from the \textit{Hijara}.\textsuperscript{186}

Yes, it is Acehnese, but all cultures have ceremonies to bring people together. The ulama who say it is not for Javanese are carrying on the problems started by GAM.\textsuperscript{187}

The \textit{Peusijuek} is Acehnese tradition. It should never be performed for Javanese and other groups.\textsuperscript{188}

The general trend among ulama of healing their communities suggests that they are concerned with social justice, which led to support in respective zones of control and voice in contested regions, where both sides committed injustices.

How do socio-cultural norms explain voice among new notables? While socio-cultural factors did not guide new notables in the same way as they did traditional leaders, the ways that activists utilized voice were influenced by local and global norms. The \textit{Muslihat} described by Siapno in reference to businesspersons is an important Acehnese trait. Although they did not speak out against the conflict, many businesspersons played both sides, maintaining an independent position. But for the most part, businesspersons and professionals did not utilize voice and were not guided by socio-cultural norms. Activists, however, did raise their voices. They are a new, largely urban group, and do not appear to be subject to traditional social expectations. This said, the styles of protest utilized by activists were part of the social repertoires of global civil society. Local cultural norms also informed the tactics of local activists. Activists used Islamic holidays, namely Idul Fitri and \textit{Maulid Nabi} (the birth of the Prophet) to arrange meetings and public seminars.\textsuperscript{189} Activists also framed their campaigns in terms of social justice (\textit{keadilan}), situating global human rights norms in Islamic concepts of fairness.

\textsuperscript{185} Interview with Professor Otto Syamsuddin Ishak, Banda Aceh (28 October 2007). See also Hurgronje, \textit{The Acehnese}, 43.

\textsuperscript{186} Interview with \textit{Teungku} Faisal, Secretary General of the HUDA, Banda Aceh (26 January 2008).

\textsuperscript{187} Interview with \textit{Teungku} Abdullah, Saree, Aceh Besar (28 January 2008).

\textsuperscript{188} Interview with \textit{Teungku} Kamaruddin, Saree, Aceh Besar (30 January 2008).

\textsuperscript{189} Interview with Juanda, Secretary General of People’s Crisis Center (PCC), Saree, Aceh Besar (04 November 2007).
Conviction

In many ways, voice is an expression of conviction. Most civilians do not like war, and will voice opposition to it unless they are persuaded otherwise or forced not to do so. In war, expressions of voice are almost always dangerous. Yet many non-combatants continued to speak out, despite great risks. The depth of conviction against either or both combatants helps explains why voice perseveres despite such dangers. While support may be rooted in conviction for one side or against another, voice is explained by conviction against one or both sides, not for either armed group. This is most straightforward when civilians possess grievances against both sides. In Aceh, some ulama and many activists simply viewed the conflict as wrong, as both sides killed innocent people and both were corrupt, often working alongside one another. These views were aired despite great risks due to the conviction of injustice held by many civilians.

Distinguishing whether civilians resisting one armed group should be viewed as supporting the other side or retaining a sense of independent voice is difficult. One could measure this in terms of the outcome— if acts of resistance against one side benefit the other—or in terms of intent, whether the individual wanted to help the other side. For instance, providing misinformation to one side may be motivated by conviction and result in de facto support for the other side. There were more acts of voice early in the Aceh conflict, but over time, efforts to undermine one side shifted towards support for the other side as zones of control and social support hardened. Despite potentially severe costs, conviction against armed groups and against armed conflict motivates many civilians to express themselves in one way or another.

While exit is largely rooted in factors related to insecurity, and loyalty is best understood through a great range of factors, voice is best explained by socio-cultural factors and conviction—although security threats do explain the absence of voice. Socio-cultural factors help explain the forms of voice and conviction explains why it is expressed despite great risk. It is natural for civilians to express concern and opposition, not despite great violence, but because of it.

Combined Options

Flight, support, and voice also combine in important ways, either sequentially or simultaneously. Why did some civilians choose to flee and support a particular group?
Many ethnic minorities, younger activists, young Acehnese men, and diaspora communities chose this combination in stages. Although some civilians fled because they were targeted for supporting a particular side, flight largely preceded support. This causal sequence is important, as flight was motivated by insecurity and subsequent support was motivated by grievances against the armed group which pushed them out. Once abroad, many civilians chose to support a particular side, often GAM, demonstrating a simultaneous strategy based on conviction. Regarding flight and voice, older, more established civil society activists spoke out, were attacked, and fled. They spoke out due to conviction and fled due to insecurity. Once abroad, many activists continued to speak out, mixing flight and voice due to a sense of conviction. It seems that conviction is a crucial motivating factor for the decisions made by civilians once abroad, as they are less likely to face security threats, profit from their choices, or be influenced by socio-cultural factors. Voice and support is a particularly interesting combination, as utilized by many ulama and younger activists. Each came to ally with GAM, supporting the rebels while also using them as a platform to achieve their own goals, namely Islamization and political reform. While joining GAM allowed these groups to amplify their voice, the rebels also transformed it. GAM ulama and activists discovered a sense of Acehnese identity, apologized for rebel abuses, and sought Acehnese independence. The decision to support the rebels was founded in conviction against the Indonesian state, while voice was motivated by socio-cultural norms and conviction. Finally, some civilians chose all three strategies. Javanese in North Sumatra fled, criticized their attackers, and, while at times critical, largely supported the state. Some young activists utilized voice, fled Banda Aceh when they were attacked, and then supported GAM.

Conclusions

This chapter has assessed four potential explanations for how and why Aceh’s civilians responded to conflict in the ways they did. Sometimes, civilians had few or no choices, as their actions were determined or heavily conditioned by survival and insecurity. Insecurity motivated a great deal of flight from Aceh, explains some forms of support as well as its absence, and explains the absence of voice. Some civilian decisions were motivated by economic incentives. Economic factors explain why some young Acehnese men fled and why many civilians supported the state. Not all civilian decisions were motivated by pragmatism. Many did what they did due to ethnic cues, cultural norms, and social pressure,
often despite costs in terms of security and wealth. Socio-cultural factors were not directly causal, but instead informed the styles and propensities of all three decisions: the timing, duration, and destination of flight, the zones and forms of support, and the forms of voice. Finally, while conviction played little role in decisions to flee, it did inform the decision to support armed groups or speak out, especially when grievances motivated principled resistance against one or both sides.

While my case study of Aceh has included a large number of observations, as well as comparisons over time, across regions, and between social groups, it is possible that my findings reflect particularities within Aceh. The following chapters assess how flight, support, and voice operated in two other Southeast Asian secessionist conflicts: southern Thailand and the southern Philippines. This will permit more thorough assessments of my three-fold schema for civilian decisions in my concluding chapter.
Comparisons, Patani

I will now apply the flight, support, voice schema to two other secessionist conflicts: southern Thailand (Patani) and, in the next chapter, the southern Philippines (Mindanao). Together with Aceh, all three cases involve Southeast Asian Muslim communities with histories of statehood which are involved in ethno-secessionist rebellions against centralized, at times abusive states. Though similar, and thus comparable, the three cases also vary in several respects. While Aceh and Indonesia share the same faith, Patani and Mindanao feature Muslim minorities resisting non-Muslim majority states. And while GAM was relatively cohesive, rebels in the other cases have been fragmented along ideological and ethnic lines. Also, the Aceh conflict has been resolved, while conflicts in southern Thailand and the southern Philippines are ongoing. Southern Thailand is unique in several respects. It features a porous land border with Malaysia, a neighbouring state dominated by co-ethnics of the aggrieved minority. Mindanao stands out for having larger transmigrant populations, making the conflict about indigenous land claims as much as secessionism.

I visited Patani and Mindanao for three weeks each, conducting field interviews which I have supplemented with media reports, expert interviews, and secondary sources. The purpose of these limited comparisons is not to explain the Patani or Mindanao conflicts, but instead to help further my findings from Aceh regarding civilian decisions. For both cases, I introduce the geography, history, conflicts, and societies before assessing how civilians utilized flight, support, and voice to help survive and mitigate violent conflict.

'Patani', with a single 't', refers to the historical and cultural borders of the former Patani Kingdom. Some suggest that Patani was named after Pak (Mr.) Tani, others believe that the root is 'petani' (peasant), and others still suggest that the name means 'pantai ini'—'this beach'. Referring to 'Patani' in place of 'southern Thailand' might be interpreted as reflecting a bias against the Thai state. But 'Southern Thailand' would not be entirely accurate, suggesting provinces south of the Kra Isthmus. Even the 'Deep' or 'Lower South', distinguished from the 'Upper South' is inaccurate, as the conflict is not found in Satun on the southwest coast. The conflict is limited to the borders of the former Patani Kingdom: Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, as well as four districts in Songkhla, illustrated below.
Much of Patani is low-lying and coastal, cradling the southern reaches of the Gulf of Thailand. Pattani province features a fishing economy, with Malays totalling 81% of its 596,000 residents. The interior features rolling hills, the steppes of Malaysia’s Titiwanga range. Malays make up 69% of the 415,000 residents in Yala (Malay: Jala, seine), a landlocked, hilly, rubber-producing province bordering Malaysia.\(^1\) Formerly known as Menara, Ra-ngae, and Bangnara, Narathiwat (Thai: ‘residence of the wise’) features a porous border with Kelantan and 82% of its 662,000 residents are Malay. Patani stretches into Songkhla, which is only 25% Malay, but its four easternmost districts—Thepha, Channa, Saba Yoi, and Na Thawi— are predominantly Malay. These three provinces and four districts make up the region known as Patani.

\(^1\) Estimates are based on the 2000 Thai census, available at [www.unescap.org](http://www.unescap.org). Of Thailand’s 64 million residents, 3 million (under five percent) are Muslim, and less than half of Thai Muslims are Malays. There are 1.5 million Malay Muslims in Thailand, accounting for just over two percent of the national population.
I refer to the Muslim population of Patani as ‘Malay’. Others prefer ‘Thai Muslim’, but this would suggest that the conflict is primarily religious, even though it is unrelated to other Muslims in Thailand. ‘Thai Muslim’ seems a better fit for the Sam-Sam (‘Siam Islam’), ethnic Thai Muslims found in Satun and Perlis. By referring to local Muslims as ‘Malay’, I do not wish to suggest that they belong to Malaysia, but I do wish to emphasize ethnic differences from the Thai population. Ethnic Thais form 15% of Patani’s population, divided among long-time residents and recently arrived transmigrants, and ethnic Chinese represent about 5%. We should treat such numbers with caution, though. As Anthony Reid notes, this “Plural Peninsula” has always been home to diverse settlements, which have only recently bifurcated into distinct ethnic and religious groups.3

History

Patani was the late capital of the Hindu Langkasuka Kingdom, with conversion to Islam taking place in the fifteenth century. The Patani Kingdom grew in the sixteenth century, partially because of warfare in the Straits of Malacca, which made Patani attractive as an alternative trading route. Patani reached its apogee between 1584 and 1640, and from this point began a slow decline. After becoming involved in their succession dispute, Patani was attacked by Kelantan in 1649, leading to a Kelantan prince being placed on the Patani throne. Patani’s decline was also caused by changes in trade, as the Straits stabilized and Patani’s shallow harbour and portage route were impractical for larger ships. Another factor was the expansion of Siam. Patani was a Siamese tributary from its earliest years, sending triennial ornamental flowers (bunga mas) and providing soldiers in times of war. Paying tribute did not mean that Patani was part of the Thai state. After all, “Siam herself used to make the same offering to China”, but it was hardly a part of the Middle Kingdom.4 While a Siamese tributary, “whenever the opportunity to rebel against the power of Ayudhya arose, Patani did so.”5 As Patani declined, Siam demanded the resumption of tribute, killing off much of Patani’s nobility in 1673. Under the Bangkok-based Chakri Dynasty in 1782, Patani and other kingdoms were pulled closer into Siam’s orbit. In 1808, Patani was divided into

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seven sultanates, and in 1902, Siam implemented direct rule. The 1909 Anglo-Siamese Treaty placed Patani in Siam and Kelantan in what would become Malaysia.

In 1932, reformers in Bangkok overthrew the absolute monarchy and organized elections. The most prominent local figure in Patani at this time was Haji Sulong, an Islamic modernist who had spent much of his life teaching in Mecca. Returning to Patani, Sulong saw his homeland as backwards, which he attributed to “a parochial and stagnant *pondok* education system... and excessive government interference in Islamic affairs.” It was in this context that the 1937 elections were held, a three-way race between a Thai landowner, a Malay aristocrat, and a Thai reformer for the governor’s seat. Haji Sulong put his weight behind the latter, but was criticized by his opponents for not supporting a fellow Malay Muslim. The tense election ended in victory for the Malay candidate, who had allied with conservative leaders in Bangkok. The electoral era was cut short by a coup in 1938, leading to the dictatorship of Field Marshall Phibun Songkhram. Phibun was an ethnic nationalist, renaming Siam to Thailand “on the grounds that it would signify that the country belonged to the Thais.” His ‘Thaification’ policies demanded a single national language, administration, cutlery, hairstyles, and dress. Thaification policies aimed to assimilate ethnic Chinese, but hit Muslims particularly hard, recognizing only Buddhist holidays and symbols, and eliminating Islamic family law. In World War Two, Phibun allied with Japan and claimed Kelantan, Kedah, Perlis, and Terengganu, an act which facilitated pan-Malay resistance led by the son of the last Sultan of Pattani, Teungku Mahyideen.

Thailand’s post-war liberal period was not well-received in Patani. For instance, few Islamic leaders in Patani supported the 1945 Islamic Patronage Act, which recognized Islam within the Thai state but in fact expanded Thai control over their faith. In November 1947, a coup ended the liberal period. Haji Sulong issued seven demands, a classic statement of political autonomy demanding a single regional governor, quotas for Malays in the bureaucracy, and recognition of the Malay language. Thai authorities cracked down on dissenters and arrested Sulong, who was killed by the police years later. Haji Sulong was targeted, not due to his rejection of the Thai state, but instead due to his allegiance to liberal

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forces. The 1960s brought the reign of Sarit, an authoritarian military leader who, like Phibun, openly favoured assimilation. Patani witnessed state-sponsored transmigration from Central Thailand, as Sarit demanded “loyal Thai blood” in the region.

No single event marks the beginning of the conflict. Patani has long been marked by rebellions against Thai rule. What changed in the 1960s was the creation of various organizations with clear secessionist goals. Such groups relied upon communist insurgents along the Malaysian border and in Thailand’s interior for weapons and training. The conflict was also facilitated by cross-border support in Malaysia, especially in Kelantan, where local officials sheltered Patani’s rebels. Another factor in the expansion of the rebellion was national political instability. Thailand regained stability in the 1980s under the caretaker government of Prem Tinsulanonda, who had previously helped overcome the communist insurgency through amnesties and development. Prem sought to do the same in Patani, aided by Chavalit Yongchachiyudh, among others in implementing Tai Rom Yen, or ‘South under the Cool Shade’ policies. Thai leaders worked closely with Malaysian officials to help monitor the border for militants and arms shipments. The Prem era brought two decades of stability and development to Patani, encouraging Malay elites to enter national politics. In 1986 Den Tohmeena, a son of Haji Sulong, organized Wadah, a Malay faction which would later join Chavalit’s New Aspiration Party.

The secessionist project failed in large part due to rebel fragmentation, with groups led by aristocrats, ethnic-nationalists, socialists, modernist Islamists, and traditional Muslim leaders. After the arrest of Haji Sulong, Patani leaders established Gampar (Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya, Association of Greater Patani Malays), which sought to bring Patani into Malaya through non-violent means, although its leaders were arrested by Thai security forces. The first armed group, the National Liberation Front of Patani (BNPP: Barisan Nasional Perjuangan Patani), was formed in 1959 in Kelantan, supported by Malaysia’s Islamic Party.

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10 Thanet, Rebellion in Southern Thailand, 57.
13 In 1977, the PAS was defeated in Kelantan’s state elections, severing support for the BNPP, which fragmented into several factions. Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 230.
The National Revolutionary Front (BRN: Barisan Revolusi Nasional) was created by Islamic teachers in 1960, but was immediately beset by divisions among supporters of Indonesia and Malaya during the Konfrontasi era. Formed in 1968, the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO) emerged as the dominant group. Like GAM in Aceh, PULO was an ethno-nationalist movement which made little reference to religion. Its leaders created a flag, a coat of arms, and national history texts, and even came to reside in Sweden. Unlike GAM, the PULO was unable to forge a cohesive movement. By 1978, there were as many as 66 secessionist groups in Patani. The BRN split into three factions (congress, coordinate, and ulama) and in the 1990s, the PULO split into the New PULO, four star PULO, and five star PULO. In 1989, several groups tried to form a united front, but with little effect. The large number of armed groups in Patani is often portrayed by security experts as especially threatening. In reality, it is a sign of weakness and poor organization. Armed groups were unable to organize large-scale attacks, control territory, or gain widespread support, often fighting each other instead of the Thai state.

By the late 1990s, while nobody suggested that the conflict was over, it seemed to be on life support. This changed in 2001, when insurgents raided a police outpost. In 2004, attacks expanded dramatically. In January, insurgents raided a military outpost. In April, youths armed with machetes carried out twelve simultaneous suicide attacks which left 105 dead. Some attackers held up inside the historic Kru-Ze Mosque, seeking to provoke the Thai army, which obliged by storming the mosque and killing thirty two insurgents inside. That October, nearly one hundred protestors died of suffocation when they were stacked on top of one another awaiting transport to prison. From this point, Patani has seen daily violence, which has continued through 2011. In the last six years, over 4,100 persons have been killed, with over 6,500 injured. Over two-thirds of casualties have been civilians, divided equally among Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims.

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16 From 1993-2000, there were 467 attacks causing casualties, about five per month. This grew to 283 from 2001-2003, about eight per month. In 2004, there were 1,843 attacks, or 150 per month. John Funston, *Southern Thailand: The Dynamics of Conflict* (Washington: East-West Center Policy Studies 35, 2007), 16.
17 59 percent of those killed have been Muslims, while 59 percent of those injured have been Buddhists, reflecting the fact that Malays are targeted for assassinations while Buddhists are attacked with bombs. Srisompob Jitpiromsri, “Sixth Year of the Southern Fire: Dynamics of Insurgency and Formation of the New Imagined Violence,” *Deep South Watch* (2010).
small-scale terrorist attacks against soft targets, with bombs thrown into cafes and civilians shot on the sides of roads, attacks which often blur with criminal violence. Analysts have been quick to suggest that this is entirely novel. M. Ladd-Thomas noted that most violence in the 1960s consisted of “endemic common banditry.”\(^\text{18}\) Instead of recent attacks being something new, it was the 1970s, when resistance featured standing guerrilla armies, which was the outlier. What makes post-2004 attacks distinct are their frequency, indiscriminate targeting of both Thai and Malay civilians, and anonymous nature.

Violence in Patani is often attributed to organized crime, a view favoured by former Prime Minister Thaksin and police officials.\(^\text{19}\) As in Aceh, suggesting that violence is criminal may serve to depoliticize the conflict, but it also contains elements of truth. Criminal groups are likely involved in many attacks, and certainly help to create an environment which facilitates them. Some reports suggest that ethnic Malay politicians are behind the attacks.\(^\text{20}\) Others suggest that attacks are coordinated by older secessionist groups.\(^\text{21}\) In the late 1990s, the BRN-Coordinate established a network of Islamic primary schools, evolving into a loose organization known as Pejuang Kemudiak Patani (Patani Freedom Fighters), which may be the core of today’s terrorist cells.\(^\text{22}\) It does not appear that older secessionist groups are behind the violence, and some have spoken out against the terrorist attacks.\(^\text{23}\) Terrorism experts suggest that the conflict is owing to international Jihadists. While noting that there is no concrete evidence, they share “a tremendous concern that the insurgent groups... might have links to international terrorist organizations”\(^\text{24}\) and

\(^{21}\) Amnesty International suggests that “the group spearheading the current insurgency is the Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Coordinate (BRN-C).” *Amnesty International*, “Thailand: Torture in the Southern Counter-Insurgency” (London: 2009), 8.
\(^{23}\) One PULO official criticized the insurgents for targeting all Thais; “Most of them are good people who live with us in the same village.” *Human Rights Watch*, “No One is Safe,” 27-28. Leaders admit that the attacks are “beyond their capacity.” Liow, “The Security Situation in Southern Thailand,” 542.
that the conflict might “escalate into an international Islamic jihad.” Such reports are riddled with errors and feature inconclusive data. They tend to portray Wahhabi Islamic modernists as the enemy, singling out Yala’s Islamic College, but they also note that insurgents are funded by lotteries, sell and use drugs, are rooted in traditional education, and use black magic. Others look to traditional Islamic figures. Authorities have found magic amulets on the bodies of attackers, suggesting the involvement of Sufi groups. There appears to be no single perpetrator of violent attacks, but rather a mixture of criminal, state, secessionist, and traditionalist Islamic forces.

The causes of the conflict are similarly unclear. Some writers point towards economic grievances. But Patani is not poor by Thai standards or even in comparison to Kelantan. Patani features good irrigation, rice surpluses, paved roads, reliable electricity, clean water, and good schools. Patani is not exploited, and it benefits from transfer payments. Some frame transmigration as a source of conflict. But Thai Buddhist populations do not threaten to make Malays a local minority and reports consistently find that inter-ethnic relations have deteriorated only recently. Thirdly, the conflict is not primarily about human rights grievances. Unlike New Order Indonesia, the Thai military is not guilty of widespread abuse, even though moments of military violence such as incidents in Kru-Ze, Tak Bai, and Saba Yoi are well-remembered. All told, grievance-based

25 Gunaratna, Acharya, and Chua, Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand, xii.
27 Abuza, Conspiracy of Silence, 50, 135.
28 In the April 2004 attacks, a traditional Islamic leader named Ustadz Soh provided students with holy water, magic sand, and amulets. Funston, Southern Thailand, 11, 37; Nidhi Aeusrivongse, “Understanding the Situation in the South as a ‘Millenarian Revolt’,” Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia 6 (2005).
29 In the 1970s, Suhrke suggested that unrest had multiple causes: “(1) ordinary bandits, (2) Thai terrorists [communists], (3) the Malayan People’s Liberation Army…and (4) Muslim separatists.” Suhrke, “The Thai Muslims,” 539.
30 Some are led to strange comparisons, noting that “average monthly household income per capita was 28,239 baht (US$375) for Bangkok in contrast to 2,224 baht (US$58) in the [sic] Narathiwat.” The authors note that unemployment has risen “drastically” to 2.3%. Gunaratna, Acharya, and Chua, Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand, 14. Abuza makes the same comparison; “Muslim-majority areas are by every measure less developed than greater Bangkok.” Abuza, Conspiracy of Silence, 24.
31 Gunaratna et al refer to “a massive transmigration of Thai-Buddhists”. Gunaratna, Acharya, and Chua, Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand, 5-6.
33 A 2009 report condemns Thai security forces for instances of torture, although it also admits that the Thai state officially condemns torture and that most detainees are well-treated. Amnesty International, “Thailand: Torture in the Southern Counter-Insurgency,” 5.
explanations for the conflict are not helpful, as they presume widespread support for the conflict, and there is no evidence of this. The terrorist, cell-based insurgency is designed to work without civilian support. The insurgents do not feature standing armies and do not control territory. By organizing into small cells with minimal communication between groups, insurgents cannot conduct major attacks, but Thai authorities cannot identify them, an innovative solution against a powerful opponent. Nobody knows who is responsible for the attacks, an obscurity which is no accident, but instead a product of strategy.

Duncan McCargo asks: “why did violence flare up in Thailand’s deep South early in 2004? Though not a complete explanation, one important answer is that Thaksin Shinawatra sought to wrest control of Patani from the Privy Council and the network monarchy.”

Southern Thailand is a stronghold of royal power, embedded in extra-constitutional arrangements and insulated from regular politics. Thaksin aspired to control this region, dismantling local institutions and removing Prem’s army commanders in favour of loyal police units. The situation was worsened by Thaksin’s rotation of personnel, disregard for local expertise, and refusal to address political problems. There is no doubt that Thaksin triggered renewed unrest. But the causes of the conflict run much deeper. Askew is skeptical of ‘Blame Thaksin’ approaches, looking to the Democrat Party and the network monarchy. In defense of Thaksin, there was nothing democratic about the elite pact between the Privy Council, the Fourth Army Command, and Malay politicians. The army tolerated significant corruption and cross-border trade for the sake of stability (and profit). Institutions such as the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) were not as strong as many authors claim, weakening after Prem stepped down. Democrats and the army have not been above fanning violence for political gain. Also, Thaksin’s Deputy Prime Minister ordered troops not to storm the Kru-Ze Mosque, but instead demanded the army provide food and water to the insurgents and begin negotiations. The Fourth Army Command attacked anyway.

Although Thaksin deserves a great deal of blame for the timing and severity of the conflict, he is by no means the only figure responsible.

34 Duncan McCargo, “Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South,” in Rethinking Thailand’s Southern Violence, 67.
35 McCargo may neglect the extent to which Thaksin already controlled Patani. His party included the Wadah faction, which held most seats in the south. It was the Upper South where Thaksin failed to make inroads.
36 Some Democrats distributed videos of the Tak Bai massacre in order to undermine their Wadah opponents. Ukrist Pathmanand, “Thaksin’s Achilles’ Heel,” in Rethinking Thailand’s Southern Violence, 81.
One must also look to the considerable institutional presence of the Thai state in Patani. Unlike in much of the country, Patani is home to two established, popular political parties: the Democrats and Matubhumi ('Motherland', formerly Wadah, 'Unity'). Patani’s bureaucracy is dominated by the all-powerful Ministry of the Interior, which selects provincial and district leaders. Courts are independent, often ruling against security forces for lack of evidence. The Thai state has formed several institutions to respond to the southern unrest, including Civil Police Military (CPM), SBPAC, and various commissions, bodies which tend to be well staffed and well funded. Security forces, which are numerous, even excessive in Patani, are divided into an “alphabet soup of agencies.” Different intelligence agencies in Patani are responsible to the police, the army, and the Ministry of the Interior. Patani is also home to a “bewildering array of paramilitary organizations,” including the Chor Ror Bor (Village Defense Volunteers); the Or Ror Bor; created by the Queen in 2004; the Tor Ror Chor; a police force organized by sub-district governments; the RuamThai (United Thais), a police-backed militia; and the Thahan Phran (Army Rangers), a 10,000 strong paramilitary. There are an estimated 100,000 paramilitary soldiers working alongside the Thai state in Patani. And, as I will discuss below, the state has also come to dominate education, religious life, and village leadership.

Despite this institutional strength, studies show that the Thai state is not considered legitimate by most Malays. Institutional strength combined with illegitimacy has resulted in a visibly alien force controlling many aspects of Malay life, a reminder of subordination. This has helped sustain the conflict, as Malays are frustrated with Thai rule and will not risk their lives to defend the state. The strength of the state also shapes forms of violence, as anonymous terrorism is an effective useful against a much stronger opponent. The

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40 Created to help overcome the conflict, the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) “was too large and unwieldy to function effectively.” Duncan McCargo, “Thailand’s National Reconciliation Commission: A Flawed Response to the Southern Conflict,” *Global Change, Peace & Security* 22:1 (February 2010), 75.
41 Abuza, *Conspiracy of Silence*, 166.
42 McCargo, “Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South,” 52.
45 McCargo, *Tearing the Land Apart*. 

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institutional presence of the Thai state not only makes open rebellion impossible, it also makes for a society under surveillance and deprives Malays of independent leadership.

**Societal Forces**

In Chapter Two, I noted that authority in Aceh has slowly transformed from traditional to bureaucratic, although village chiefs have resisted. In Patani, this process has been more thorough, as the state has managed to penetrate all levels of Malay authority. For one leading scholar:

> Chiefs and Islamic leaders are part of the state, so Patani society is without its own leaders. This is a crisis for the community.\(^{46}\)

The considerable reach of the Thai state in Patani has deeply influenced the structure of Malay society, as Malay authorities are closely tied to the Thai state.

At the apex of traditional society, Patani’s sultans were rarely powerful, reigning but not governing. Under the sultans were various *dus*, some of whom were rich traders while others possessed royal blood. In 1902, King Chulalongkorn replaced sultans and *dus* with bureaucrats from the Ministry of the Interior. He created a system which remains essentially intact today. Under the national government are provinces (*Changwat*), ruled by Governors (*Phu-wah*) sent from Bangkok. Subordinate to Governors are district heads (*Nai Amphoe*, about 40 in Patani), who are also appointed by the Ministry of the Interior.\(^ {47}\) Provincial and district leaders are not intended to represent their constituents, but instead serve “as extensions of the central government.”\(^ {48}\) The centralized nature of the state changes at the sub-district (*Tambon*) level. Created through the 1897 and 1914 Local Administration Acts, sub-district administrations were originally tasked with maintaining lists for military drafts, reporting assemblies of persons, counting elephants, and monitoring strangers.\(^ {49}\) The sub-district head (*Kaman*) was originally a life-time appointee selected from among village chiefs.\(^ {50}\) Reforms in the 1990s established sub-district elections and *Tambon* level legislatures (*Tambon Administrative Organizations, TAOs*). Today, sub-district authority is divided

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\(^ {46}\) Interview with Srisompob Jitpiromsri, Pattani (06 June 2008).

\(^ {47}\) The Thai state selects and rotates executive authorities to limit corruption and to improve central control. In Patani, this principle runs up against ethnicity. Authorities lack the knowledge, sensitivities, and legitimacy to rule here. James Ockey, “Elections and Political Integration in the Lower South of Thailand,” in *Thai South and Malay North*, 147.


\(^ {50}\) Bowie, “Vote Buying and Village Outrage in an Election in Northern Thailand,” 480.
between the Kamnan who is responsible for security, and the TAO President, who is responsible for development.

Traditionally, Patani lacked the sort of village chiefs found in Aceh.\textsuperscript{51} Instead of a single chief, Patani villages were traditionally led by a deliberative body of elders, the Orang Baik (Good Men).\textsuperscript{52} Patani’s villages (Thai: Muiban, Malay: Kampung) were historically self-governing, with few connections to Sultans. This changed with direct Siamese control. In 1914, the Ministry of the Interior created village heads (Phuyaiban). Michael Moerman refers to Thai chiefs as “synaptic leaders”, mediators between state and society, a concept Askew applies to Patani.\textsuperscript{53} The duties of village chiefs really involve representing the state to the society. Siamese documents list major chiefly duties: maintaining peace, informing the Kamnan of danger, communicating state orders, watching strangers, catching criminals, confiscating stolen property, and extinguishing fires.\textsuperscript{54} Askew also notes that village headman typically serve as vote canvassers for local politicians, and are often active in election-related violence.\textsuperscript{55} Since World War Two, chiefs have been responsible for training villagers for warfare, a role which was expanded against communist insurgencies.\textsuperscript{56} Patani’s chiefs are responsible for mobilizing village militias (Char Ror Bo) and securing firearms, roles which forces chiefs to stand against the rebels.\textsuperscript{57} The Phuyaiban represents the state. As a consequence, many villages maintain a system of dual authority, with day-to-day affairs carried out by the Orang Baik.\textsuperscript{58}

The theme of state control over local authority extends to religious affairs. One expert divides Islamic authority in Patani into three types: the state Majdis, mosque councils, and religious teachers.\textsuperscript{59} All three have been largely co-opted by the Thai state. Patani is home to hundreds of small prayer houses (Surau). In the last fifty years, Surau have taken on

\textsuperscript{51} While Aceh’s chiefs evolved from the community garden, a visible part of life in Aceh, Patani notably lacks this institution. Thomas M. Fraser Jr, Fishermen of South Thailand: The Malay Villagers (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc. 1966), 16.
\textsuperscript{52} Fraser, Fishermen of South Thailand, 40.
\textsuperscript{54} Bowie, “Vote Buying and Village Outrage in an Election in Northern Thailand,” 475.
\textsuperscript{55} Marc Askew, “Fighting with Ghosts: Querying Thailand’s ‘Southern Fire’,” Contemporary Southeast Asia 32:2 (August 2010), 122.
\textsuperscript{56} Bowie, “Vote Buying and Village Outrage in an Election in Northern Thailand,” 482.
\textsuperscript{57} McCargo, Tearing the Land Apart, 98, 122.
\textsuperscript{58} Fraser, Fishermen of South Thailand, 40. Surin notes that Malay villagers only deal with the Thai state through intermediaries. Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 23.
\textsuperscript{59} Hasan Madmarn, Pondok & Madrasah in Patani (Selangor: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2002), 56.
a new importance, as they are not required to register, resulting in many small mosques calling themselves Surau to avoid state control. Imams and Surau are attended to by imam, who tends to be the most respected person in the village. Fraser also emphasizes this respect, but adds that Imam remain outside of the ranks of OrangBaik, as their expertise relates to personal affairs, not village ones. Compared to Aceh, Patani is home to few rural ulama, who tend to reside in urban areas and serve in local government. The most important Islamic leaders in Patani, the equivalents of Aceh’s ulama, are Tok Guru, teachers at traditional Pondok schools. Tok Guru are revered not only as teachers, but also as symbols of local identity. Islamic reformers have worked to replace the Pondok with modern madrasah, clashing with many Tok Guru in the process.

The traditionalist / modernist division is more politically salient in Patani than it is in Aceh. Traditionalists (KaumTua, old group) are syncretic, influenced by pre-Islamic beliefs such as sea gods and magic amulets, ancestor worship, Buddhist concepts of merit-making, and Sufism. Politically, traditionalists have kept their distance from the Thai state and have been particularly rebellious, leading a number of small uprisings. Modernists (KaumMuda, young group) on the other hand have been more willing to work with the state, illustrated by Haji Sulong as well as the Wadah faction, which was “a direct outgrowth of Islamic reformism in Thailand.” While sometimes viewed as insurgent ringleaders, modernists have focused on creating a more Islamic society, not overtly political struggles.

All forms of Islamic authority have been subjected to Thai state control. Since 1945, the state’s approach to Islam has been modelled on the Buddhist Sangha. From 1902, Siamese rulers have constructed “a systematic and unified national Sangha hierarchy” through which leading pro-state monks can “control the decisions of the lower ranks.” The close relationships between the state and Buddhist authority is at once a model for state-

60 McCargo, Tearing the Land Apart, 28-30. Imam feel that “the Thai state would not attempt to close or destroy existing unregistered mosques.” Wan Kedir Che Man, “The Thai Government and Islamic Institutions in the Four Southern Muslim Provinces of Thailand,” Sojourn 5:2 (August 1990), 262.
61 Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 25.
62 Fraser, Fishermen of South Thailand, 82.
64 Some authors use the Thai terms Kana Mai (new group) and Kana Khao (old group). McCargo, Tearing the Land Apart, 20.
66 Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 13; McCargo, Tearing the Land Apart, 32.
67 Somboon Sukamran, Buddhism and Politics in Thailand (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982), 38.
Islam relations and a reason why they have not fared well. The post-war Patronage of Islam Act recognized the Chulalongkorn, the King’s Islamic advisor, and created provincial Majelis (Provincial Councils of Islamic Affairs, PCIA) in all provinces with at least three mosques. A state Islamic bureaucracy, the Majelis is tasked with selecting (and dismissing) imam managing zakat (alms), organizing the Haj (Pilgrimage), regulating mosques, advising governments, and appointing local judges (Qadi, or Datu Yuitihan). Provincial Majelis members were originally chosen by constituent imam but have been elected since 1999, inserting more patronage and party politics into religious life.68

Thai leaders tend to view state involvement in Islamic affairs as a sign of their willingness to recognize Islam, while many Malays view it as unwarranted intervention. Nowhere is this more apparent than in religious education:

The history of Islam in the deep South since the 1960s, and especially since the 1980s, is largely a tale of Thai success in undermining the traditional system of Islamic education.69

Control over education led to several conflicts in the 1920s, and the Thai state closed many Islamic schools in the 1930s. In 1961, Thai leaders demanded that all Pondok schools register and feature a Thai curriculum, transforming Pondok into private Islamic schools.70 In the face of renewed hostilities, Thaksin initiated a new drive to register underground Pondok schools.71 As of 2006, there were 319 registered Pondok (private Islamic schools) in Patani, with several dozen remaining unregistered.72 Efforts to register Pondok have been carried out in the name of improving the quality of education, and those which have registered have been well-funded. However, for many Malays, this represents foreign interference, motivated by a desire to control Islamic education.

Islam is not Patani’s only faith, as 20% of the population are Buddhists. There are three groups of Buddhists in the south: ethnic Chinese, recent Thai migrants, and native Thais. Thai Buddhism is organized around temples (wats) which are governed by a national Sangha, ruled by a Supreme Patriarch. The Sangha controls provincial and district councils,

68 Party / money politics quickly seeped into Majelis elections. McCargo, Tearing the Land Apart, 33.
69 McCargo, Tearing the Land Apart, 19.
70 Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 188, 201.
71 Funston, Southern Thailand, 13.
which in turn oversee individual temples, which were required to register in 1902. Michael Jerryson shows that wats were once sites of interethnic relations in Patani, but in the past decade, Buddhist and Muslim communities have turned towards separation. Where Patani was once home to folk versions of Islam and Buddhism which shared many beliefs, each has been subject to a purification process which has deepened lines between local groups.

The clearest division among ordinary civilians is between Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims. Ethnic Thais tend to own shops and reside in towns, where they dominate the bureaucratic, educational, and professional classes. Numerous Thais also reside in rural areas, working as seasonal rice labourers throughout southern Thailand. Malay communities are largely rural, working as fishers, rice farmers, or rubber tappers. Malay fishing villagers are marked by hierarchies among fishing teams, ranging from the crews of larger, deep-sea boats, to smaller boats plying the coast, down to those who fish from the shore and make shrimp paste. Boat teams are semi-permanent, and the owners and steerers of large boats command significant societal clout, similar to Aceh’s Kepala Laut. The owner of the local coffee shop also tends to be an important informal leader, the centre of village politics. Fraser has noted that women play particularly important roles, preparing and marketing the day’s catch, and thus interacting with other villages and Chinese wholesalers.

Patani has little in the way of an independent civil society. Its student groups are fewer and weaker than Aceh’s, and thus produce fewer NGOs. Patani’s Western diaspora is small compared Aceh’s, as Patani Malays living abroad tend to study in the Middle East or work in Malaysia, and are not, for the most part, politically active. This was not always true. Patani Malays residing in the Middle East were vocal supporters of secessionism in previous decades. But there is no evidence of support from Patani Malays abroad for the new militants, whose base seems to be local. For the most part, civil society in Patani is

76 Fraser, *Fishermen of South Thailand*, 8.
77 Fraser, *Fishermen of South Thailand*, 21.
78 Fraser, *Fishermen of South Thailand*, 8.
79 Croissant shows that Patani has less than half the civil society actors than the national average. See also Aurel Croissant, “Unrest in South Thailand: Contours, Causes, and Consequences Since 2001,” *Strategic Insights* 4:2 (February 2005); pp. 1-17.
dominated by organizations from Bangkok, which tend to hire the best and brightest Malays as local representatives. Established in 2006 in affiliation with the Prince of Songkhla University in Pattani, Deep South Watch is an exception, conducting polls, drafting reports, and leading advocacy campaigns.\(^1\) Other important local organizations are legal aid groups. Patani’s Muslim Lawyers Association is a tireless advocate for local Malays, working through Thai courts to defend those arrested by security forces. Such advocacy is not without dangers. On 12 March 2004, its leader Somchai Neelaphajit, who had been defending Muslim youths accused of raiding an army base, was pulled from his car in Bangkok and disappeared.\(^2\) The Muslim Lawyers Association has carried on, leading a prominent campaign to find Somchai’s killers and continuing to defend Malays accused of crimes in the south. The Thai media tend to be rather sensationalist and are viewed as anti-Muslim by many Malays.\(^3\) One bright spot is Isra (freedom), a Pattani-based agency created by the Thai Press Development Foundation, which partners journalists from Bangkok with local Malay journalists to help share knowledge and provide more accurate reporting.

**Flight**

Having provided some context, I now turn to how civilians have reacted to the war in terms of flight, support, and voice. The flight option is the most important of the three strategies in the Patani conflict. Experts observe that there has been “a regular refugee flow into northern Malaya (and more recently northern Malaysia) in times of conflict with the Thai state”\(^4\), and that “the border between the two countries has... never been a barrier to movement.”\(^5\) The significant level of flight from Patani is largely a product of geography, as Patani shares a long, porous border with Malaysia. Not only can Malay civilians flee south, Thais can flee north with relative ease as well. However, like the Aceh conflict, the Patani conflict has not produced large IDP camps or waves of refugees. Violence has been steady, but low-intensity, creating small but steady numbers of conflict migrants. Instead of living in camps, most Malay migrants stay with family, friends, or at mosques in other parts of Patani

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\(^1\) See [www.deepsouthwatch.org](http://www.deepsouthwatch.org). The Patani Malay Human Rights Organisation (PMHRO) is another Patani-specific NGO, but maintains the perspective of former secessionist leaders. See [www.pmhr.org](http://www.pmhr.org).


\(^3\) Interview with Najeeby, professor at Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani (04 June 2008).

\(^4\) Ockey, “Elections and Political Integration in the Lower South of Thailand,” 126.

\(^5\) John Funston, “Malaysia and Thailand’s Southern Conflict: Reconciling Security and Ethnicity,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 32:2 (August 2010), 236.
or in Malaysia, specifically Kelantan. Those in Malaysia find work as seasonal labourers or at
the many Tom Yum restaurants which dot the country’s northeast.

Conflict migration from Patani to Kelantan has a long history. As Siamese control
dep deepened, the royal court often fled to Kelantan. When Siam abolished the sultans in 1901,
the Sultans of Ra-ngae (Narathiwat) and Pattani fled to Kelantan, the latter to foment
rebellion. After spending two years in a Siamese jail, Sultan Abdul Kadir and his family
moved to Kelantan, where they supported uprisings in Patani. Years later, his youngest
son, Tengku Mahmud Mahyideen, continued to use the border to his advantage. Among
ordinary civilians, we know that thousands fled to Kelantan when Patani was incorporated
into Siam, and thousands more fled in response to Phibun’s Thaification policies. In the
uprisings following Haji Sulong’s arrest, migration to Malaysia again expanded. When
violence grew in the 1970s, flight to Kelantan again increased, assisted by Kelantan’s state
government. One villager recalls that:

In 1974, I fled with my family to Malaysia. The Islamic Party provided
migrants with food and shelter. They did this because we are all Muslims.

Flight to Malaysia decreased somewhat in the late 1980s, but resumed with the renewed
violence. Funston suggests that as many as 300,000 Thai Muslims (one fifth of Patani’s
Malay population) currently reside in Malaysia. Many migrants are young men, although
the low proportion of women is not as striking as it is in Aceh. Many women also flee from
Patani to Malaysia, finding work in restaurants or as housekeepers. This is facilitated by the
presence cross-border families, a feature lacking for Acehnese migrating to Malaysia.

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86 After a rebellion in 1692, Patani’s Sultan and her people fled southward, “where their familiarity with the
terrain allowed them to effectively evade any further attacks.” Bradley, “Moral Order in a Time of
Damnation,” 280.
87 Nantawan Haemindra, “The Problem of the Thai-Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand (Part
One),” Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 7:2 (September 1976), 205.
88 Funston, Southern Thailand, 9. When state education was first introduced to Muslim communities further
north in Krabi, many families fled, refusing to attend Buddhist schools and fearful of being punished by
state authorities. Wanni W. Anderson, Mapping Thai Muslims: Community Dynamics and Change on the
Andaman Coast (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2010), 54.
89 Thanet, Rebellion in Southern Thailand, 53, Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 160. Reports note that
“about 6,000 villagers had fled Pattani to seek refuge in Malaya on account of the Thai police action.”
90 Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 262.
91 Discussion in coffee shop, Yala (08 June 2008).
92 Funston, “Malaysia and Thailand’s Southern Conflict,” 236.
93 In a group of 131 migrants who arrived in 2005, 21 were women and 49 were persons under the age of
Recent conflict migration has garnered considerable attention in the Malaysian media. Since 2004, many conflict migrants have been offered asylum by the Malaysian government, angering Thai officials. In 2005, a group of 131 persons arrived in Malaysia claiming refugee status.\textsuperscript{94} This was suspicious, as Patani Malays rarely arrive in large groups, leading many to suspect insurgent involvement. Malaysian authorities housed them in Terengganu, later returning one man who had a history of rebel activity.\textsuperscript{95} Thaksin lashed out at Malaysian leaders, claiming that the rebels were supported across the border and were being financed by Tom Yum restaurants in eastern Malaysia. The arrivals put the Malaysian government in a difficult position, pressured by Thai officials to return them and by opposition parties and Malay voters to help them. While Acehnese are often seen as illegal migrants and are not always welcome in Malaysia, Patani Malays tend to receive warm receptions in Kelantan, where they are viewed as brethren under attack. Malaysian authorities even work with the UNHCR and other organizations to provide assistance for Patani's conflict migrants.

Ordinary Thai civilians have also utilized flight. The insurgents have been trying to cleanse Patani of Thai communities, and have posted notices demanding that all Thais must leave. Human Rights Watch notes that “the most visible impact of deadly attacks is mass migration of Buddhist Thai villagers.”\textsuperscript{96} The Patani provinces have negative growth rates among Buddhists, between -0.29 and -2.65, while Malay populations are growing at 2.24 percent.\textsuperscript{97} Those remaining in Patani have transformed \textbf{wats} into semi-permanent refugee camps, such as Wat Nirotsangkatham in Yala, home to over 200 villagers since November 2006.\textsuperscript{98} Wats are ideal destinations not only for symbolic reasons, but also because they offer large, often walled compounds with basic housing facilities. The flight of Thai residents has alarmed Thai authorities, who are encouraging them to remain in Patani.\textsuperscript{99} Conservative monks have spoken out against Islamic plots to drive Buddhists not just out of Patani, but

\textsuperscript{94} This includes 131 persons who fled after a series of bombings in August 2005. Human Rights Watch, “No One is Safe,” 50; Kline 283; Reuters, “Southern Resentment Erupts into Violence” (15 January 2009).
\textsuperscript{95} Funston, “Malaysia and Thailand’s Southern Conflict,” 240-246.
\textsuperscript{96} One interviewee specified that “In this village there used to be about 30 to 40 Buddhist families from the north and northeast…but they all move out.” Human Rights Watch, “No One is Safe,” 50, 56.
\textsuperscript{97} Duncan McCargo, “Thai Buddhism, Thai Buddhists, and the Southern Conflict,” Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 40:1 (February 2009); pp. 1-10.
\textsuperscript{98} Jerryson, “Appropriating a Space for Violence,” 33.
\textsuperscript{99} In his studies of agricultural expansion, population redistribution, and state-building, De Koninck notes that “By ‘planting’ or ‘sowing’ peasants, and then ‘protecting’ the, many States have secured their territory.” Rodolphe de Koninck, “The Peasantry as the Territorial Spearhead of the State in Southeast Asia: The Case of Vietnam,” Sojourn 11:2 (1996); pp. 231-258.
from the entire country. In response, the Queen has funded a dozen heavily fortified “safe havens” for displaced Thais.\textsuperscript{100}

In contrast to Aceh, village leaders in Patani also flee from violence. As noted, village chiefs are widely seen as part of the state, especially given their security roles. About half of village chiefs are not ethnic Malays, meaning that Thais are overrepresented in village governments. This is especially true as Malay chiefs continue to resign.\textsuperscript{101} It seems that chiefs, Thai and Malay, tend to flee to Thai strongholds. In Narathiwat, locals counted several Malay chiefs who fled to Pattani town. They detailed an interesting case in which a chief who was suspected of aiding the insurgents was harassed by the police, so fled to Pattani town. This is revealing because it shows that even Malay chiefs at odds with security forces flee to Thai strongholds, not to Malaysia. Villagers explained that the chief had ties to the Democrat Party, and was harassed by security forces for political reasons.\textsuperscript{102} In contrast, informal village leaders seem less likely to flee. One man in Pattani, who has long served as the head steerer on a prominent fishing vessel, was described to me as the community’s de facto leader. When the insurgents sent him threatening letters for being too friendly with the army, he refused to leave:

\begin{quote}
He is too important to the village, he settles many disputes. It would be difficult for him to leave. We have asked him to stay here, even though he could work with his brother in Malaysia.\textsuperscript{103}
\end{quote}

However in other villages, similar figures have fled, almost always to Kelantan. It seems that village officials flee to state areas, further evidence that they are viewed as part of the state, while informal leaders are less likely to flee, and when they do, they flee to Malaysia.

Islamic leaders are somewhat predisposed to leave, especially compared to Aceh where ulama rarely abandon their community. The destination of Patani’s Islamic leaders appears to vary considerably. Modernist Islamic officials and students have tended to turn to the Middle East for study and work in response to the conflict. The number of Patani

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{101} In one village, the Kamnan was unable to find a replacement chief, so appointed a soldier to the post. Discussion with villagers in Bacho, Narathiwat (31 May 2008).
\footnote{102} I asked locals why Malay village chiefs targeted by state forces would flee to state strongholds, and was told that many chiefs would not be welcome among Malay communities in Kelantan, and that many continue to collect their pay so long as they remain in Patani.
\footnote{103} Discussion with fishers, Rusembilan, Pattani (07 June 2008).
\end{footnotes}
Malays studying and teaching in the Middle East expanded in the 1950s, and many early secessionist groups were created by exiles in the Arab world.\textsuperscript{104} In 2004, an estimated 2500 students left Patani for the Arab world, mostly to Egypt.\textsuperscript{105} In contrast, traditional and low-level Islamic teachers seem to prefer Malaysia.\textsuperscript{106} This is due to its accessibility, but also because their teachings are more at home in Kelantan:

Our Tdk Guru was harassed by soldiers, so he went to Kelantan, where he has been for a few years now. He opened a school there, and has students from Patani and Kelantan.\textsuperscript{107}

Funston emphasizes the ethnic dimensions of flight among traditionalist Islamic figures, who feel at home in Kelantan and tend to be supported by Kelantanese Islamic groups.\textsuperscript{108} Srisompob notes that Imarn are among the most frequently targeted groups in Patani, killed both by the insurgents and Thai security forces, and that many flee to Malaysia as a result.\textsuperscript{109} This said, many Islamic leaders associated with the state tend to flee to state strongholds. One former Majelis member, currently a member of the Democrat Party, was attacked at his school, and now resides in the safety of Pattani town.\textsuperscript{110} Many Buddhist monks have also fled from Patani between 2004 and 2006, but as their compounds have been fortified, remaining monks refuse to leave, and have become increasingly militant.

Among new notables, Thai businesspersons, landowners, and professionals are especially likely to flee north to Thailand. Of all professions, teachers have been the most likely to flee. Teachers tend to identify with the state, and many are brought in from other Thai provinces on short-term contracts. Teachers are primary targets for insurgents in Patani. The Thai government has tried to stem the outflow of teachers by providing them with military escorts, flak jackets, and guns.\textsuperscript{111} The small number of Malay new notables, such as lawyers, academics, businesspersons, and activists, seem less likely to flee. Many Malay activists flee to Bangkok with the assistance of Thai NGOs, but return fairly quickly.

\textsuperscript{104} Syed Serajul Islam, “The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines,” \textit{Asian Survey} 38:5 (May 1998), 446.
\textsuperscript{106} Ockey, “Elections and Political Integration in the Lower South of Thailand,” 126.
\textsuperscript{107} Discussion with fishers, Rusembilan, Pattani (01 June 2008).
\textsuperscript{108} Funston, “Malaysia and Thailand’s Southern Conflict,” 236.
\textsuperscript{109} Srisompob Jitpiromsri, “Sixth Year of the Southern Fire,” 17.
\textsuperscript{110} Anonymous interview with Phuyaiban, Pattani (01 June 2008).
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Bangkok Post}, “Staff Flees Songkhla School” (15 July 2008); \textit{Gulf Times}, “Thousands of Buddhists Flee Thailand’s South” (7 July 2005).
Why Do Some Civilians Flee While Others Do Not?

Flight is an important strategy for various civilians in Patani. Malay civilians who are critical of the Thai state tend to flee from the army to Malaysia, while Thai civilians and Malays affiliated with the state flee from the insurgents to towns or other provinces. Activists are the lone group of civilians who flee to state strongholds but are not affiliated with the state. Geography and infrastructure clearly help explain the volume of flight, but do not explain the motivation to flee. Explanations for flight from the Patani conflict mirror those in Aceh. Security is paramount. The number of Patani Malays fleeing to Malaysia spikes after armed clashes, the number of Thais fleeing north rises in response to rebel attacks, each group cites security concerns in explaining their exit. Village officials, Islamic leaders, and teachers flee to towns because they are targeted by the insurgents. Insecurity is the principle reason why Patani residents have fled to various destinations.

Danger alone cannot explain the decision to flee. A great deal of flight is motivated by economic factors. Patani and Kelantan share a long history of commerce. Funston estimates that 200,000-300,000 Patani Malays migrate to Malaysia every year for seasonal labour. As in Aceh, labour migrants should not necessarily be distinguished from conflict migrants. Many Patani Malays working in Malaysia or studying in the Arab World seek both security and economic well-being. Even among Thai migrants, many cite the decline of the rubber industry since 2004 as their reason for leaving. The push of war and the pull of a better livelihood should be viewed as complimentary, not competing explanations.

Socio-cultural factors also shape flight from Patani. Ethnicity clearly informs the destination, as many ethnic Malays flee to Malaysia and ethnic Thais flee to other parts of Thailand. Kelantan is especially appealing for Patani Malays, not just due to its proximity, but also because Kelantan and Patani share a common history, dialect, script, and kinship ties. This said, ethnic affinity has limitations, since many Malay village and Islamic officials in the service of the Thai state flee to state strongholds. That more women flee from Patani than do from Aceh is partially cultural, as residency among Patani Malays is not uxorilocal as in Aceh, but is instead ambilocal, split between males and females. Because they do not

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112 Fraser notes that Patani’s fishing boats are made in Kelantan, making for considerable cross-border traffic. Fraser, Fishermen of South Thailand, 39.
113 Funston, Southern Thailand, 22.
114 Human Rights Watch, “No One is Safe,” 50.
115 Fraser, Fishermen of South Thailand, 29.
necessarily own the house and villages are not ancestral homes, Malay women are freer than Acehnese women to flee. Among Thais, those fleeing have largely been recent arrivals to Patani, while those remaining are more likely have been born in Patani, although this is also explained by the fact that insurgents are more likely to target recent migrants. While the scale of flight among non-combatants is noticeably greater than in Aceh, explanations for it seem rather similar, with insecurity being the most important factor, complimented by economic and socio-cultural explanations.

Support

The option of supporting an armed group is somewhat limited for many civilians in Patani. While many ethnic Thais are solid state supporters, ethnic Malays are divided and lack a clear support option. Some ethnic Malays support the state, especially village and Islamic officials, but this is often an unpopular move in the eyes of ordinary folk, who rarely trust the state in the first place and are also deterred from supporting it by insurgent violence. But supporting the insurgents is not an easy option, as they regularly kill civilians, lack clear goals, do not rely upon civilian support, and their identities are not always known. The insurgents are anonymous in part to avoid detection by a stronger opponent, an anonymity that would be undermined with widespread civilian support. It does not seem that insurgents in Patani receive significant levels of civilian support. This said, some authors disagree with this assessment. Askew cites captured rebel documents provided by his confidential army sources which place insurgent civilian supporters at 37,000.\footnote{Askew, “Fighting with Ghosts,” 130. While Askew notes that these figures are aspirational for the rebels, and is suspicious of army intelligence, he does not relate whether he feels these estimates are accurate.} But he fails to explain what qualifies one as a supporter, does not provide examples, and seems to accept rebel estimates of their own power, and army intelligence, at face value. The presence of an unpopular, foreign state and terrorist insurgents without a clear platform or identity has resulted in the support options narrowing for Malay civilians in Patani.

In Aceh, patterns of support largely followed ethnic identity and zones of combatant control. In Patani, ethnic identity remains an important factor in determining civilian support for armed groups. However zones of combatant control play a lesser role in dictating support, as the insurgents do not control territory, nor does this seem to be their goal. Patani features only state-controlled and contested areas, and lacks rebel strongholds. Some accounts paint a different picture. A Human Rights Watch interviewee notes that
insurgents “control everything in this area. Sometimes you can even see their patrol unit—armed with AK47s—going around the village in broad daylight.” McCargo notes that some areas are “under the effective control of criminal or militant groups.” While insurgents are no doubt visible in some areas and influence the population through coercion, they do not control territory or administer their areas to the degree found in my other cases. In the villages where rebels are most powerful, Thai security forces are not met by ambushes when conducting sweeps, as the insurgents lack the power to meet the army head-on. There are no zones of rebel control, however there are areas of greater insurgent activity and contestation, areas where the rebels possess the capacity to monitor and punish civilians. It is more accurate to suggest that some villages are more or less infiltrated by insurgents, which has important effects on patterns of civilian support.

What are these zones of state control and militant infiltration / contested areas? Thai authorities utilize a colour-coding system to organize various villages: Green signifies little insurgent activity, yellow signifies moderate levels, and red signifies significant rebel activity. This system “has been the dominant official means by which the intensity and distribution of violence has been summarised.” This coding system contains major flaws. Zones are defined not only by violent attacks, but also by more mundane activities such as printing pro-rebel (or just anti-state) pamphlets. These zones, supplemented by independent figures from local NGOs, provide only a rough guide to understanding support. It appears that the areas with the highest levels of rebel activity are neither rural districts nor towns, but instead are between the two, just outside of towns and along highways. The rebels are highly mobile, residing in either hills or towns (or both) and attack areas in between. This mobility and the rapid changes in conflict hotspots further suggest that the rebels do not rely upon committed local supporters in particular villages.

118 McCargo, Tearing the Land Apart, 158.
120 Askew, “Landscapes of Fear, Horizons of Trust,” 63.
121 Deep South Watch finds that each province has been home to a roughly equal volume of violent attacks: 3449 in Narathiwat, 2993 in Yala, and 2935 in Pattani. Srisompob, “Sixth Year of the Southern Fire,” 7.
122 Askew, “Landscapes of Fear, Horizons of Trust,” 63.
Ethnic identity and societal rank seem to be as important in determining patterns of support as are zones of combatant control. I begin with support among Patani elites. The Thai state has worked to co-opt a range of Malay leaders, and many identify with the state as a result. This said, such figures try not to identify with the state too closely, maintaining an ambiguous position through which they often win symbolic and substantive concessions for the Malay community. Led by Den Tohmeena, Wadah formed in 1986, initially as a part of the Democrat Party, which deemed them insufficiently loyal to the Thai state, so Wadah joined the New Aspiration Party. Den and other Malay MPs are often accused by Thai authorities of being disloyal, even of supporting the insurgents, but they also work within the state. For the most part, Malay leaders support the state, although they are not trusted by Thai officials and seek to maintain some ambiguity in order to protect their local standing.

Ordinary Malays in Patani do not typically support either side, refusing to assist the state or the rebels. It is not that they totally reject the Thai state. For many Malays, the state is not trusted, but it is not despised. Elections have a high turnout in Patani, as “the Malay Muslim community has sought to work within the system to meet its goals” Electoral turnout is clearly driven by patronage, but even this suggests participation in Thai political networks. But the tendency among Malays is to avoid the state, which is generally viewed as a foreign presence. Malays often refuse to join village patrols, pay taxes, approach state authorities, attend state schools, or work with state Islamic officials Decades earlier, M. Ladd-Thomas observed that:

The vast majority of Thai Muslims... have not shown much interest in separatism. They prefer to be left alone, both because they tend to be apolitical and because of a fear of getting into trouble with Thai authorities. Nonetheless, many fail to report separatist activities in their areas, in part because they relate better to the separatists as fellow Muslims than they do the essentially Thai Buddhist police, and in part because police informants are dealt with harshly by separatists.

This description still rings true today. Most ordinary Malay civilians withhold support from both sides, refusing to take part in a war between unpopular forces. I will return to this refusal to work with combatants, which is effectively a societal boycott, below, as such subtle acts of resistance against both sides are best viewed as forms of voice. For now, the result

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124 They are much like local godfathers (Chao Pho) throughout Thailand.
125 Fraser, *Fishermen of South Thailand*, 52.
of this form of voice is that ordinary Malays tend not to support the state, which means that they tend not to provide information to state security forces, denying the army with the means to overcome the conflict.

While refusing to support the state, Malays also tend not to support the insurgents. Support for insurgents was evident during the 1970s, when the insurgents were organized into guerrilla armies and sought food, shelter, and intelligence from civilians. In Narathiwat, villagers explained that BRN and PULO once controlled local villages and were popular. They insisted that today’s insurgents are not fighting for the community and do not rely upon their support. One village chief in Thepha, Songkhla expressed this change:

> It was different then. PULO was fighting for us and giving them food was good. Today, there are no more rebels, only thugs.

There is little evidence of popular support for the insurgents. An exception may be distributing insurgent propaganda. Malay youths have been caught distributing leaflets and DVDs documenting army abuses, and many attend protest rallies organized by insurgents. However it is not clear whether these are acts of support for the insurgents or acts of voice against the state. After all, Tak Bai massacres DVDs were also distributed by the Democrat Party. The primary ways that civilians support the insurgents is by not reporting their activities and identities to Thai authorities. But in general, the terrorist insurgents do not rely on civilians for support, but instead target civilians to deter support for the state.

Some ordinary Malays support the Thai state, serving as informants or simply displaying state symbols in their homes, such as pictures of the King. This said, most Malays do not seem to support either side, seeking to avoid involvement in the conflict. Ordinary Thai villagers, however, largely support the state and oppose the insurgents. Throughout Patani, ethnic Thais typically wave the Thai flag and display symbols such as yellow flags in support of the monarchy. Askew shows how many local Thais have mobilized to defend the country against what they say is an Islamic threat, cultivating a conservative sense of “Thai-ness” and speaking in terms of saving their country. State intelligence agencies receive a great deal of support from ethnic Thais—sometimes too much, as they are inundated with a high volume of low-quality reports. In Songkhla, I spoke

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128 Discussion with villagers, Bacho, Narathiwat (31 May 2008).
130 Askew, “Fighting with Ghosts,” 130, 145.
131 Askew, “Landscapes of Fear, Horizons of Trust.”
to an imam who criticized police brutality, and was reported by Thai villagers for being an insurgent. A similar story in Narathiwat concerns a family which protested after paramilitary soldiers killed their son, leading local informers to report them as pro-rebel, leading to their arrest. The volume of information provided by Thais has been considerable. While ordinary Malays tend to support neither side, ethnic Thais are prominent state supporters.

Whereas Aceh’s village leaders tended to remain neutral and refrain from support, the same cannot be said of Patani’s Phuyaiban. For ethnic Thai chiefs, but also many Malay chiefs, the norm is to support the state. Askew notes that some Muslim village heads have “openly opposed the insurgents.” In the example from Songkhla mentioned above is illustrative. The local imam who witnessed the police beating a villager was not just reported by Thai villagers. He originally went to the village chief, who also reported him to security officials. According to leading local academics:

> The Phuyaiban is a member of national parties, connected to party networks, and wears a government uniform. They are with the state.

> The Phuyaiban is part of the state... he has been spoiled by money politics. He reports suspicious activity to the Kamnan and leads the village militia.

Chiefs are part of the state security apparatus, tasked with supporting the state by raising village militias. As a consequence, insurgents routinely target chiefs. In areas where insurgents are strong, chiefs are more likely to resign and flee to towns or lay low and provide the minimum levels of support demanded by both sides. Askew describes a Malay chief who is suspected of having allowed insurgents to raid the village militia’s weapons; “in an effort to survive, Mae-ae is ‘wearing a shirt of two colours’; that is, working with the state but also allowing insurgents a free hand in his village.” In state strongholds, chiefs support the state, but in infiltrated areas, they are more likely to lay low or flee.

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132 Discussions in Bukit Timang, Thepha, Songkhla (30 May 2008).
133 Discussions with villagers, Bacho, Narathiwat (31 May 2008).
134 Askew, “Fighting with Ghosts,” 147.
135 Discussions in Bukit Timang, Thepha, Songkhla (30 May 2008).
136 Interview with Najeeby, professor at Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani (04 June 2008).
137 Interview with Srisompob Jitpiromsri, Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani (06 June 2008).
138 In one celebrated case, a Malay chief helped to capture insurgents who were planning on sabotaging the electrical grid. Askew, “Landscapes of Fear, Horizons of Trust,” 77-78.
Patani’s Islamic leaders utilize support in complex ways. This is the lone societal sector where one finds significant support for the insurgents. Historically, Islamic teachers led sporadic uprisings against Siamese officials. Many secessionist groups were created by Islamic leaders, and more recently, the 2004 coordinated attacks were led by a traditionalist Islamic teacher. Traditionalist teachers and their students have been disproportionately involved in insurgent activity. I had little luck interviewing such figures. Meeting with some students of a modernist teacher, I was told that a local traditionalist teacher recruits for the insurgents and hides weapons in his Surau. One student in Yala explained that:

The Tdk Guru here is from the old group [kaum tua] and teaches about going to heaven as a martyr. He confuses his followers with superstition.

While many supporters of the insurgents are traditional Islamic leaders, many Islamic leaders are neutral. Joseph Liow’s study of Islamic education in Patani shows that most Islamic teachers are educators, and do not become involved in politics.

The most prominent Islamic figures in Patani tend to support the state, especially modernist figures. The state Majdis works to regulate Islam in Patani, employing an array of Islamic bureaucrats, scholars, and judges. State ulama have monitored dissident teachers, speak out in favour of state policies, and promote statist Islamic teachings. McCargo suggests that Majdis can also be sites of resistance, as some officials refuse to take a strong stance against the insurgents despite state pressure. But he also notes that such figures are allied to local politicians and were opposed from within the Majdis by well-funded pro-Thai ulama. Majdis serve as sites for struggles between those favouring soft and hard-line approaches, but should not be viewed as sites of resistance against the state. Support for the state is not limited to religious bureaucrats. Most teachers accept state funding and regulation, and are active in local elections for religious and political offices. I visited an Islamic school in Narathiwat where the headmaster speaks highly of the Thai state and is protected by soldiers. While many Islamic officials support state forces, many also work for the good of their communities:

140 Most early resistance “took the form of religious uprisings”, such as a 1910 rebellion led by a traditional Islamic leader “who claimed he had a mystical power to protect his followers from injuries at the hand of non-believers.” Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 64-65.
141 Discussion with PSU students, Pattani (31 May 2008).
142 Anonymous interview with Islamic school student, Yala (08 June 2008).
143 Liow, Islam, Education, and Reform in Southern Thailand, 173.
144 McCargo, Tearing the Land Apart, 32.
There is no reason that Islam cannot prosper in Thailand. This is a good country where Muslims are free to practice their faith and the government works to help us do this.\footnote{Interview with Abdullah Abru, head of Majelis Pattani (01 June 2008).}

Islamic leaders represent some of the few sources of civilian support for the insurgents. However many are neutral, and many support the state. They are a complex societal force for whom support for either side is an important strategy.

Buddhist religious officials are effectively pro-state, although some seek to remain neutral. The support provided by Buddhist religious officials to the state is so apparent that monks are sometimes viewed as government officials.\footnote{Nidhi, cited in McCargo, “Co-Optation and Resistance in Thailand’s Muslim South,” 95.} Michael Jerryson provides several examples of Buddhist support for the state and army, detailing how \textit{wats} have come to house soldiers and support security operations.\footnote{Jerryson, “Appropriating a Space for Violence,” 37.} Police and army soldiers are not only stationed in temples, security forces actually use them as bases. The army has also created “soldier monks”, on-duty soldiers ordained as monks who carry weapons under their robes.\footnote{Jerryson was skeptical; “If not for interviewing military monks themselves, I might have taken their depictions to be a communal fabrication.” Jerryson, “Appropriating a Space for Violence,” 47-51.}

Monks have come to speak out for the need to defend the nation, support the state, and resist the threat of Islam, part of a new wave of “Buddhist chauvinism.”\footnote{McCargo, “Thai Buddhism, Thai Buddhists, and the Southern Conflict,”11. I should note, though, that many Buddhist leaders are critical of the securitization of the \textit{wats}. Jerryson describes how the securitization of temples has caused internal tensions, with many monks critical of or uncomfortable with the presence of soldiers. Jerryson, “Appropriating a Space for Violence,” 50.}

Patani’s small community of new notables has also provided support in a number of ways. The lone new notable support for the insurgents comes from student organizations, groups used by the rebel movement to help mobilize protests against Thai injustices, real and / or perceived. Insurgents have used student allies to fan rumours that Thai soldiers routinely rape Muslim women, leading to sizable protests against security forces. As a result, many students have been arrested by Thai security forces. In anonymous discussions, some students explained that they are not rebels and do not support violence, but also that they agree with the insurgents on many points and must resist Thai rulers.\footnote{Discussion with PSU students, Pattani (10 June 2008).}

Some new notables seek to maintain an ambiguous position. Working with both sides, many business leaders provide protection fees to rebels and state soldiers. Many academics at Prince of Songkhla University work to remain neutral, sometimes getting into
trouble with security forces for their research on the conflict. Many new notables are strong supporters of the Thai state. This is especially true of Thai journalists, whose portrayal of the conflict during the Thaksin years tended to be biased and sensationalist.\textsuperscript{152} Journalists have also been criticized for being relaying statements from army press conferences and lacking a critical tone, although some media outlets, namely Issara, have managed to achieve greater balance.\textsuperscript{153} Teachers are viewed as especially pro-state. Brought in from other parts of the country and provided with private security details, they teach a Thai curriculum and often have little knowledge of local culture or traditional education. They are imported, housed, paid, and protected by the state, and are thus support Thai policies.

Why Do Some Civilians Support Armed Groups, While Others Do Not?

The Thai state has found support among most ethnic Thais, but also among Malay village chiefs, modernist religious leaders, and new notables. The only civilians in Patani known to support the insurgents are traditional Islamic leaders and student groups. Why do so many civilians in Patani support the state or remain neutral and so few support the insurgents? Part of the explanation relates to security. Thai security forces are able to punish those who support the insurgents as well as protect their allies in state strongholds. For Thais, their security partly depends on supporting state forces. The insurgents, on the other hand, are only able to punish those who support the state or attack random civilians, leading many civilians to lay low out of fear.\textsuperscript{154} Village and religious leaders in state strongholds tend to support the state, while those residing in areas with a significant rebel presence usually remain neutral, a difference which is clearly rooted in survival. Security is no doubt a primary factor in explaining support for armed groups, enabling some civilians to support the state and leading others to refuse support.

Economic explanations for civilian support in Patani are less convincing, but not unimportant. Unlike the case for most insurgent supporters, civilians who support the state are often rewarded. For some Malay elites, informants, village chiefs, religious leaders, and new notables, the state is a crucial source of patronage. This is part of the state’s strategy for

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{152} Interview with Mohammad Ayub-Pathan, Deep South Watch, Pattani (06 June 2008).
\textsuperscript{154} In some cases, random violence may contribute towards mobilization against the abusive armed group—if one may be killed no matter what they do, why not fight? In Patani, civilians are not totally sure whether the violence is random or not, as the rebels spread rumours that hits are carefully planned.
\end{footnotesize}
co-opting local leaders. Once again, economic motivations are an important distinction between state and rebel supporters.

As in Aceh, ethnic identity largely defines patterns of support. Ethnic Thai civilians overwhelmingly support the state and almost never support the insurgents, while Malays tend to remain neutral as much as possible. This said, some Malays support the state, as ethnicity is not invariably an indicator of support. Those who support the insurgents do so through social networks, namely Islamic schools and student organizations. There may also be deeper cultural factors at play. When interacting with the state, Malays have historically worked through intermediaries, demonstrating a lack of trust towards state authorities. As a consequence, the refusal of many Malays to support the state may be rooted in a cultural propensity to avoid state authorities, noted below in terms of voice.

Finally, conviction—the belief that one side deserves support on its own merits, or at least because it is better than the other side—is the most straightforward factor in explaining support in Patani. The Thai state benefits from support among many civilians because it is not generally perceived as abusive. As a result, few Malays actively resist the state or risk their lives for the insurgents. Most Thais hold their country and its symbols in high regard, supporting state forces out of a deep sense of nationalism. For Thais, love of their country is an important factor in supporting state forces, a factor which compliments security, economic, and cultural elements. The insurgents, on the other hand, lack significant support largely due to their abusive tactics, and are generally disliked by Malays and hated by Thais. For the insurgents, targeting civilians is largely a consequence of lacking popular support, but it also extinguishes the possibility of future support. The principal reason why Malays do not support the state or the insurgents is rooted in a lack of conviction for either side. If this is the case, and Malays generally dislike both sides of the conflict, should we expect significant civilian voice in Patani?

**Voice**

One of the most striking findings from my fieldwork in Patani, even more than the frequency of exit and complexity of support, was the paucity of voice. Being familiar with Aceh’s defiant activists, vocal villagers, and active chiefs, I was surprised to find that Patani’s civilians mostly remain silent. It is not as if villagers in Patani have nothing to say, as they tend to make their views against both sides known in private. Again, voice entails civilians
protesting, indirectly resisting, or petitioning armed groups in order to moderate violence. Neither the Thai state nor the insurgents are inclined to listen to civilian voice, co-opting, arresting, or killing off those who might supply it. Civilians hoping to express themselves must “eat their anger”. The only forms of voice are expressed through whispers.

The absence of voice in Patani is particularly surprising because in previous eras, the region was home to many protests. Prior to being absorbed into Thailand, Malay leaders protested by sending missions to the British Government and by relating their views to the international media. In 1923, Patani’s ulama led large non-violent protests, including strikes and tax boycotts, against state encroachment. In the 1940s, Haji Sulong led a protest movement, issuing his Seven Demands, leading rallies, and boycotting elections. Patani was home to a sizable resistance movement during World War Two, which later evolved a non-violent irredentist organization whose tactical repertoire included writing letters, engaging British officials, petitioning the United Nations, and holding rallies. Early acts of defiance were largely met with repression, but some non-violent defiance continued. As the state demanded that all Pondok schools register, many Tk Guru protested. In the 1970s, Malys became involved in protests, similar to those found throughout the country at this time. In 1975, the army threw a grenade into a crowd of student protestors, triggering larger rallies, which Thai authorities attributed to PULO. No doubt PULO helped organize the protests, but it was the actions of security forces which made the protests popular. The success of the Prem era was partly rooted in how Thai authorities encouraged voice and tolerated protest. In 1986, a teacher in Yala was fired for wearing a headscarf to work, and shortly after, a government official in Pattani was sent home for donning a jilbab. This sparked considerable protest. Many Malay girls abandoned state uniforms and donned hijab for several weeks, and “the Ministry of Education was forced to amend its policies.” This is only one example of major protests in the late 1980s, defiance tolerated by authorities and not coincidentally a time when violence dropped considerably. Contrary to the views of many Thai leaders, expressions of voice brought a decline in violence.

155 Discussions in Bukit Timang, Thepha, Songkhla (30 May 2008).
156 Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 30.
157 Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 65.
158 Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, The Malays of Patani, 37. See also Fraser, Fishermen of South Thailand, 101.
159 Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 193.
160 Ockey, “Elections and Political Integration in the Lower South of Thailand,” 140.
The return of the conflict coincided with the erosion and then elimination of venues through which Malays could express themselves. Remaining acts of defiance have not been led by civil society groups, but have instead been led by rural Islamic leaders, perhaps instigated by insurgents. In October 2004, the small border town of Tak Bai, Narathiwat was home to a large protest after six men were arrested by the police. Protestors demanded their release. Security forces were hit with rocks by protestors, who were eventually arrested. To punish such defiance, Thai officials stacked protestors on top of one another for transport to prison, resulting in 85 deaths from suffocation. The inability of Thai security forces to handle protests led to violence and played into the hands of the insurgents. In March 2007, a Pondok in Yala was attacked by unknown assailants, killing several people. Following the incident, villagers, likely with insurgent support, organized month-long protests around the school based on the belief that Thai soldiers had attacked the school. As security forces were dispatched, they found that all roads into the village were blockaded, and when they finally broke through, they were met by hundreds of angry protestors. Protest organizers escaped, forming a cavalcade which ran through Thai villages in a failed effort to instigate a riot. These examples show how the insurgents have been able to take advantage of the propensity of Thai officials to crack down on defiance. The effects on civilian protest have been deleterious, as Thai officials fear that all protests are organized by insurgents and civilians fear speaking out.

Most acts of defiance in Patani involve ethnic Thais, whose protests are often encouraged by state forces. After the 2007 incident described above, local Thais organized a counter-protest in which two thousand persons rallied at local government offices to demand more security forces and weapons for Thai civilians. Patani Thais have organized several protests, not only against the insurgents, but against what they view as soft-line security responses. They have criticized the National Reconciliation Commission for being idealistic and demanded a greater use of force against insurgents.

It seems that Malays are unable or unwilling to openly defy soldiers. In such a situation, the proverbial ‘weapons of the weak’ seem like ideal forms of voice. Everyday resistance among Malay civilians is prominent, showing that, even in difficult circumstances,

162 Askew observes that the crowd was “harangued by speakers who claimed that a nearby Ranger unit had attacked the school.” Askew, “Landscapes of Fear, Horizons of Trust,” 81.
voice can persevere. Subtle acts of resistance show that civilians do not support either side of the conflict, even though they do not speak out against them. Under early Thai rule, passive resistance was the dominant response among local Malay leaders and Islamic leaders to an expanding state.\(^\text{164}\) Today, village leaders, while generally aligned with the state, often shirk their duties, particularly in contested areas, where they fail to mobilize militias and often turn a blind eye to insurgent raids. In state strongholds, on the other hand, voice is less evident among chiefs, who tend to serve government forces.

Everyday resistance is largely the realm of ordinary Malays, who both resist the state’s symbolic authority and refuse to work with state officials. For example, the Thai state has changed various place names in the south, replacing Malay names with Thai ones. Malays continue to use the Malay names, referring to Songkhla as Singgora, not to mention referring to the region as Patani.\(^\text{165}\) Some forms of resistance take aim at symbols of Thai sovereignty. In Narathiwat, I found that locals prefer to use Malaysian currency in their economic exchanges. It is common to find Patani Malays wearing Malaysian shirts or flying Malaysian flags.\(^\text{166}\) During the course of my fieldwork, I found that many of the Thai flags on fishing vessels were tattered. Locals explained that they have to fly Thai flags on their boats because they cross into international waters. I found that the Thai flags were not only tattered, most of them were torn in half, forming what struck me as a Dutch flag. I broached this subject with several old men at a local coffee shop:

Well, flags tear all of the time. The storms are bad, and we handle all sorts of hooks and knives. I think that maybe Thai flags are not made well. They always tear... Maybe if they were made better, they would not tear.\(^\text{167}\)

I made an informal survey at a beach near Kru-Ze mosque, and found that half of the fifty or so boats had flags modified in exactly the same way.\(^\text{168}\)

Many ordinary Malays refuse to work with the state and shun those who join its ranks.\(^\text{169}\) Discussing support, I noted that ordinary Malay civilians tend not to support either side because the insurgents do not rely on civilians and the state is not widely trusted. Due

\(^{164}\) Nantawan, “The Problem of the Thai-Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand,” 203.
\(^{165}\) Andrew Cornish, Whose Land is This? Malay Rubber Producers and Thai Government Officials in Yala (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1997), 6.
\(^{166}\) In one coffee shop, I wore a t-shirt with the term ‘keadilan’ (social justice) on it, a gift from an Indonesian NGO. Local Malays thought it was an endorsement of Anwar Ibrahim, providing me with free coffee.
\(^{167}\) Anonymous interview with village elder, Pattani (12 June 2008).
\(^{168}\) Field observations in Pattani (June 2008).
\(^{169}\) Suhrke, “The Thai Muslims,” 542.
to ongoing hostilities and the covert nature of the insurgents, I was unable to find much information regarding in what ways Malay civilians refuse to work with the insurgents. More information is available regarding the state. The refusal to work with the state among ordinary Malay civilians is so prominent that it resembles a social boycott, as Malays often refuse to attend state schools, mosques, and meetings. The Thai state has constructed grandiose mosques, but many remain empty.170 Chaiwat Satha-Anand notes that locals do not generally like mosques built by the state, while smaller, poorly-built local mosques are packed every Friday.171 Locals explained to me that they prefer their old mosque:

   Every Friday it is busy, and too small, but we do not want to go to the government mosque (mesjid pemerintahan).172

At one coffee shop in Yala, locals explained that their imam had recently joined the provincial Majdis. This upset them, as he was seen as a good person who worked for the community, but now they faced a tough choice. One woman explained that it would be difficult to continue to trust him, and the longer he worked for the state, the more “sour” relations would become.173 Religion also provides opportunities for ordinary Malays to quietly resist the Thai state. Men, and more noticeably women, often wear clothing which is as Islamic as possible, in contrast to local traditions. Several of my contacts wore full burqas— even if such garb is not accompanied by the conservative behaviour I had expected. One fully-clad young woman, a student, explained her dress to me over a cup of coffee:

   We want to show Thailand that we have our own civilization... and sometimes wearing this scares Thai people.174

Locals seem to view wearing Islamic clothing as a way of resisting the Thai state and society, and also of resisting local traditions.

   Another example of Malays quietly resisting the state relates to development programmes. Working from the Department of Agriculture in Yala, Andrew Cornish found that villagers typically refuse to interact with state officials or participate in state projects. He provides a detailed case study which shows that many villagers refused to work with the state

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170 Che Man, “The Thai Government and Islamic Institutions in the Four Southern Muslim Provinces of Thailand,” 262. Cornish finds that some Malays attend Yala’s Central Mosque, others “avoid it on the grounds that it was built with non-Muslim money and labor, and that the roof dome has the appearance of a lotus flower, a symbol of Buddhism.” Cornish, Whose Land is This? 11.
171 Chaiwat, Islam and Violence, 55.
172 Discussion with fishers, Rusembilan, Pattani (01 June 2008).
173 Interview with Ausmoh Maneehiya, women’s leader, Yala (09 June 2008).
174 Interview with Wahida, women’s leader, Yala (09 June 2008).
to improve the productivity of local rubber-tapping.\textsuperscript{175} Thai officials were frustrated as Malays failed to attend meetings or failed to carry out instructions.\textsuperscript{176} The refusal of Malays to work with Thai authorities is an important weapon of the weak, as passive resistance undermines the legitimacy of the Thai state, as well as hindering its efforts to govern and combat the insurgents. As James Scott expects, instead of confronting the state, villagers demonstrate “false compliance” and “feigned indifference” to express their views.\textsuperscript{177}

Acts of everyday resistance are not limited to Malays. Some Thais use gossip to slander both the insurgents and Malays more generally, who are still referred to as \textit{Khak} (Khaki: dark skinned guests). Thais increasingly refer to bearded men as \textit{Osama} or \textit{jihadi} and veiled women as ghosts or ninjas. Cornish found that government officials frequently call Malays lazy and dirty.\textsuperscript{178} In Pattani town, I witnessed three uniformed police officers in a Muslim neighbourhood eating pork and drinking beer, acts of symbolic defiance against and disregard of local culture.

Islamic leaders have also utilized weapons of the weak to resist the Thai state. In response to state drives to register and regulate \textit{Pondok} schools, protests were accompanied by subtler forms of resistance, what Surin refers to as “delaying tactics.”\textsuperscript{179} Islamic teachers would agree to register, then not bother to fill out the paper work or would be out of town when it is was due. Teachers and mosque leaders have also avoided state control by defining their mosques as \textit{surau} (a small chapel) and their \textit{Pondok} as primary schools (\textit{Tadika}). Others have agreed to state oversight, but just carry on as usual.\textsuperscript{180} Some state schools have come to tacit agreements with religious teachers, with morning classes focusing on traditional religious education, and afternoon sessions focusing on the national curriculum.\textsuperscript{181} Differences in script and language have been important tools for Islamic officials working to

\textsuperscript{175} Cornish, \textit{Whose Land is This?} 81-102.
\textsuperscript{176} Cornish, \textit{Whose Land is This?} 33.


\textsuperscript{179} Surin, \textit{Islam and Malay Nationalism}, 139.

\textsuperscript{180} Fraser describes a \textit{Pondok} in Pattani where a new teacher arrived who did not necessarily follow state orders, working with community leaders, teaching classes in Malay, focusing on Islam, and discussing local history. Fraser, \textit{Fishermen of South Thailand}, 82-83.

\textsuperscript{181} Fraser, \textit{Fishermen of South Thailand}, 85.
frustrate the Thai state. Islamic leaders have delayed Thai officials by insisting that they cannot read or write Thai, or by completing forms in Jawi.\footnote{During the heated elections of 1937, ulama refused to translate campaign posters written in Jawi (Malay written in Arabic script) so that Thai authorities could understand them. Ockey, “Elections and Political Integration in the Lower South of Thailand,” 129.}

The third form of voice is engagement, where civilians provide feedback to one side or the other in ways that do not necessarily confront the interests of armed groups. In Aceh, this was the realm of the village chief. In Patani, possibilities for engagement are limited. Several societal actors have tried to serve as mediators between Malay society and the Thai state, however the state has responded by repressing or co-opting such figures. Thai leaders created village chiefs and the Kamnan as links between state and society, however they soon became one-way conduits. Modernist Islamic figures initially served as state / society mediators, but this role was not tolerated by conservative Thai leaders, and such figures were eliminated, with later governments seeking to co-opt Islamic leaders. Beginning in the 1980s, Malay leaders entered Thai politics, although as such they were slowly co-opted within the Thai state, and with the rise of Thaksin, became viewed as state figures. Earlier, Prem’s reign improved the opportunities for feedback—this was one of his primary strategies to overcome the conflict. SBPAC was partly designed to solicit feedback, becoming “an invaluable channel for airing grievances.”\footnote{Matt Wheeler, “People’s Patron or Patronizing the People? The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre in Perspective,” \textit{Contemporary Southeast Asia} 32:2 (August 2010), 210.} But the institutions designed by Prem and his allies came to co-opt Malay leaders and serve as sources of patronage. In October 2008, the army established a peace centre to communicate with local youths and provide training, but this turned out to be a re-education camp for rebel sympathizers. There is a reoccurring theme in which figures or institutions capable of mediating between state and society are not tolerated by state officials. The only participation tolerated by government officials are on terms set out by the state. Despite this pattern, many experts have suggested that one way to overcome the conflict is to incorporate new elements of Malay society into the state through political autonomy or new government agencies.\footnote{Duncan McCargo, “Autonomy for Southern Thailand: Thinking the Unthinkable?” \textit{Pacific Affairs} 83:2 (June 2010), 262; Srisomphob Jitpiromsri and Duncan McCargo, “A Ministry for the South: New Governance Proposals for Thailand’s Southern Region,” \textit{Contemporary Southeast Asia} 39:3 (2008), 416.} Some have openly admitted that the best way to overcome hostilities is through “a scaled-up and more extensive version” of the co-
One of many shortcomings of the co-optation strategy is that it leaves little room for independent voice among Malay elites and their constituents. One cannot engage with the state if one is a part of it, especially given suspicion toward government officials among ordinary Malays. The problem remains that Malay leaders who are co-opted by the state generally lose their followers.

Throughout my interviews, a consistent theme was that village and Islamic leaders were unable to engage with armed groups. Sub-district heads and village chiefs are part of the state, responsible for policing and raising militias, which makes it impossible for them to engage with the insurgents and makes it difficult to serve as neutral venues for civilians. Nor are they trusted by state authorities, who fear that local leaders are in league with the insurgents. For Islamic leaders, those working with the Thai state are targeted by armed groups, while those not working for the state (and some who are) are frequently arrested by Thai authorities. A local scholar noted that Islamic leaders, including those in the provincial Majlis are unable to mediate or help arrested villagers:

Defending people is too often seen as opposing the police, who view this as a threat instead of an opportunity.

In interviews with villagers, I heard several stories about killings and arrests. After an arrest in Songkhla, one village official recalled that:

Villagers were angry and wanted to ask why the young man was arrested. Some came to me, but I said there is nothing we can do. If we ask, it will bring trouble. The army will call us rebels. So we have to endure.

In another village, the local Imam was arrested and disappeared, and the day before I arrived, two other villagers were arrested. I asked who locals could go to for help:

Village leaders cannot help. Our Imams already arrested. We cannot do anything, or else we will be arrested too. We have to eat our anger.

They detailed another case, emphasizing how Thai authorities do not recognize the right of village officials to speak on behalf of their villagers:

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185 Srisompob and McCargo, “A New Ministry for the South,” 422. Similarly, Gunaratna, Acharya, and Chua conclude that the government should “empower the Muslims by co-opting Muslim leaders to join the decision-making structures in the south.” Gunaratna, Acharya, and Chua, Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand, 106.
186 Interview with Joseph Liow, Singapore (22 May 2008).
187 Interview with Ibrahem, professor at Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani (04 June 2008).
188 Interview with villagers and Phuyaiban, Hutang Tua, Thepha, Songkhla (30 May 2008).
189 Discussions in Bukit Timang, Thepha, Songkhla (30 May 2008).
A village chief went to help a young man arrested for being a terrorist. The chief was arrested and replaced, and now does not speak up.\(^{190}\)

At a nearby Pondok, which had recently been raided by the military, with its dorms strafed by helicopter fire, locals explained that:

- There is nothing we can do. The Government is closed to us. All we can do is keep to ourselves.\(^{191}\)

- The government is everywhere, but it only has eyes... it has no ears in Patani.\(^{192}\)

Opportunities for engagement with state officials are largely closed in Patani. And of course, feedback through engagement is not tolerated by the anonymous, terrorist rebels. The insurgents simply target civilians, and make no effort to speak to them. As a consequence, engagement is simply not an option for civilians in Patani.

The only avenues for engagement with the Thai state are found among new notables such as Issara, the Muslim Lawyers Association, and some local academics. The Issara media outlet has worked to communicate the views of Malays to Thai audiences, providing alternative perspectives to the conflict. The most trusted source of assistance for Malays is the Muslim Lawyers Association. Although less effective in rural areas and itself targeted by both sides, this group has managed to defend suspects and engage with state officials. Among academics, professors sometimes serve as advocates for arrested students. For instance, Adjaa\(n\) Chidchanok Rahimmula, a local professor and the wife of a leading politician, has helped arrested students on several occasions:

- Students often come to me for help, but I have to be careful that I do not help someone who is actually guilty.\(^{193}\)

It is only among new notables that one finds forms of feedback and engagement among Patani civilians. It is important to note that all three venues—Issara, the Muslim Lawyers Association, and PSU Pattani are affiliated with Thai organizations, which gives them some legitimacy with the state.

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\(^{190}\) Discussions in Bukit Timang, Thepha, Songkhla (30 May 2008).

\(^{191}\) Anonymous interview with Tok Guru, Bukit Torun, Songkhla (30 May 2008).

\(^{192}\) Anonymous interview with elder, Bukit Torun, Songkhla (30 May 2008).

\(^{193}\) She added that “the problem is, after they are freed, they stay on a list of suspects, and when a new commander comes, they arrest them all over again.” Interview with Chidchanok Rahimmula, professor at Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani (06 June 2008).
Why Do Some Civilians Speak Up While Others Do Not?

Why is there so little voice in Patani? The primary reason is insecurity. Thai authorities tend to equate all resistance as rebellion. Security forces conduct frequent raids on the few activist organizations in Patani, refusing to allow them to gather or disseminate information. The silence of village chiefs can largely be explained by insecurity, as state officials are targeted by insurgents. By putting weapons and militias in the hands of the chiefs, and policing in the hands of the sub-district heads, the Thai state ensures that frontline officials are unable to remain neutral. The insurgents are far more violent, targeting critics and other civilians who support the state. As in Aceh, security concerns explain the absence, but not the presence, of voice in Patani.

Economic factors are not central to explaining the absence of voice in Patani. Those working from within the state as sub-district heads, village chiefs, and religious functionaries may refrain from raising their voice due to economic factors, not wishing to lose their jobs. But it is more likely that they refrain from speaking against or to either side for self-preservation. Economic factors may help to explain the absence of voice indirectly, as there is little in the way of a Malay middle class in Patani, so new notables are not very numerous.

Regarding socio-cultural explanations, the absence of voice is partly due to southern Thailand’s deep ethnic divisions. Different languages, scripts, faiths, diets, economies, and social systems provide few opportunities for interaction, a chasm which has deepened as each side has strived towards purification. These have had disastrous effects on engagement, which is facilitated when both sides have mutual respect for one another and a sense of common identity or at least a common future. At the village level, a potential Malay norm for elders to voice criticisms is less effective because Thai authorities, steeped in hierarchy, do not recognize the Orang Baik:

We want to ask questions when someone is arrested, but if we do, the army will say “who are you and why are you talking to me?”

This may be one reason why Aceh is home to considerable engagement, as Acehnese traditions are not too far removed from other Indonesian cultures, which share a tradition of village mediation as well as a common faith.

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How does conviction help explain the absence of voice? Anti-war sentiment exists, as shown by many covert acts of resistance, but is not heard due to security concerns. Speaking against the insurgents may result in being killed, and speaking against Thai authorities may result in beatings or arrests. While locals subtly resist both sides, principled opposition has largely remained private due to the nature of the combatants.

One factor that helps explain the absence of voice in Patani which does not fit my four explanations is the institutional reach of the Thai state. Many potential sources of voice have been co-opted by the Thai state: Malay elites, sub-district heads, village leaders, and Islamic leaders. The Thai state in Patani is much stronger than the Indonesian state in Aceh; it is a "bureaucratic polity" dominated by the Ministry of the Interior. The expansive state and its extensive patronage networks have incorporated many Malay elites, leaving few leaders capable of providing a sense of voice, which as I understand it, entails neutrality. On one hand, this institutional reach may be seen as a success, not just in terms of state strength, but also because insurgents are forced to remain anonymous and cannot form standing armies. But the institutional presence of a state which is widely regarded as foreign may undermine the legitimacy, or ideational strength of the Thai state in Patani. Several scholars have been critical of Thai efforts to dominate Malay society, noting that "the more it invests, the deeper the sense of alienation the Malay-Muslims feel from the state." Others note that state efforts to integrate Malay leaders tend to deepen cultural divisions. The strength of the state and the armed forces—specifically their institutional presence—can be an effective silencer of voice. The institutional reach of the state is an important variable in explaining voice which I overlooked in Aceh, and is as important a contextual factor for voice as geography is for exit. I will return to the issue of state capacity in my discussion of civilians in Mindanao and in my concluding chapter.

Conclusions

The schema of flight, support, and voice does much to illuminate the nature of the conflict and the challenges faced by civilians in Patani. Flight is the most visible, important strategy for civilians in Patani, largely due to geographic factors. Other options appear to be

197 Surin, Islam and Malay Nationalism, 13.
closed to many civilians, or at least severely narrowed. The insurgents are deeply disliked and thus denied support, but this is also true of the state for ethnic Malays. Patani Malays deny support to both sides where possible, a refusal which is also a form of everyday resistance, the sole form of voice in the conflict.

Because I found little in terms of support or voice, I was unable to find many combined strategies. In previous eras, flight and voice as well as flight and support were common. However this seems to be less the case today. Malaysia works closely with Thai authorities to manage their shared border. While many Malays exit to Kelantan, few speak out once there, and there is little evidence of external militant support. The support / flight combination remains salient in terms of sequence, as perceived support for a particular side necessitates flight. The combination of voice and support is found among many ordinary Thai civilians and Buddhist leaders who are aligned with the Thai state. While criticizing the state for being too soft in handling insurgents, Thai civilians continue to support the state as well, mixing voice and support.

Commentators suggest that, with ongoing violence, civilians in Patani “have one choice: That’s to move away.” This may be true. In previous chapters, I considered combined strategies as well as potential sequences. After all, these three options are parts of a broader menu of civilian choice. One way that flight, support, and voice intersect which I did not consider in earlier chapters is their interaction. In Aceh, all three options were utilized by civilians. However in Patani, supporting armed groups and providing voice are problematic strategies. As these options are essentially removed from the menu of civilian options, flight becomes more important. The closure of other options also makes the potential fourth option, laying low and riding out the storm, much more important as well. The three-fold schema discussed in this paper is only a heuristic device, and cannot explain everything. Above, I considered the social boycott of state and rebel forces by Malay civilians as part of the voice strategy, a form of passive resistance. This can also be seen as keeping one’s head down and doing nothing. It appears that the ability to do so largely depends on zones of combatant control and the expectations of dominant armed groups. In Aceh, I was only able to find examples of what Kalevi Holsti refers to as “quietistic acceptance” in contested areas, where civilians and Islamic leaders tried to lay low. In

199 Rungrawee C. Pinyorat, “Buddhists Fleeing South Thailand.”
Patani, there are no zones of rebel control, but there are contested areas. In these areas, it seems possible to do nothing, refusing both sides and trying to avoid the conflict. In areas dominated by one side—state strongholds in Patani—this possibility becomes more problematic. When Thai authorities demand active support from Malay civilians, doing nothing is a form of resistance, as it shows opposition to the conflict and confronts security forces. Meanwhile, taking the path of least resistance in an area controlled by an armed group often entails providing the minimum required levels of support, and behaviourally, the outcome is support for the dominant local armed group, even if this support is minimal and involuntary. But in areas where neither armed group is dominant, then it is possible that quietism can exist as an apolitical act, and thus not voice. In such areas, the path of least resistance could be viewed as a fourth civilian option, a possibility I return to in my conclusion in light of findings from my third case study.
6 Comparisons, Mindanao

This chapter presents findings from the southern Philippines. My discussion of civilian choices in Mindanao will take the same form as the previous chapter. After a brief historical overview, I will discuss different societal forces before moving on to discuss how civilians have utilized flight, support, voice, and combined strategies in response to armed conflict. Whereas in Aceh and Patani combatants drawn from single ethnic groups have fought to reinstate the borders of historical kingdoms, the conflict in Mindanao is not so straightforward. It is being waged by a handful of Muslim communities with distinct grievances and armed groups. The bulk of my analysis focuses on the Maguindanao region and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebellion.

Geographically, Aceh and Patani feature elevated interior spines flanked by coastal settlements. Mindanao is more complex, featuring several criss-crossing mountain ranges with scattered settlements found in valleys, plateaus, bays, and on islands. The upper centre of the island features the highest peaks, and from here flow several rivers, including the Pulangi River, which empties into the Celebes Sea at Cotabato City. To the immediate north is the Lanao Plateau, which leads into the Zamboanga Peninsula and the Sulu archipelago, which reaches to Sabah, Malaysia. These features are illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10- Map of Mindanao and Sulu

Collectively, Filipino Muslims are sometimes referred as Moros, an epithet derived from Spanish historical experiences. Secessionist have tried to unite Muslim groups as
Moros, however residents continue to self-identify by their ethnic group.\(^1\) Numbering approximately one million persons, the Tausug (‘people of the current’) reside in the Sulu archipelago, particularly Jolo. In the secessionist conflict, Tausug flocked to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). Muslim communities in Mindanao are “concentrated in the west, central, and southwestern portions of the island.”\(^2\) The most populous Moro group, and the focus of my study, are the Maguindanao people. Maguindanao means ‘people of the flood plain’, as their world is dominated by the hydrography of the Pulangi River and its tributaries. While Sulu’s economy was based on trade and piracy, Maguindanao’s remains largely agricultural. Maguindanao embraced Islam after Sulu, probably in the late fifteenth century, and formed significant polities in the sixteenth century. There are 1.1 million Maguindanao people, who are heavily represented in the ranks of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). To the north of Cotabato rises a plateau with a large crater lake, home of the Maranao (‘people of the lake’). Numbering over 1.1 million people, the Maranao were the last of the major Moro groups to convert to Islam and never evolved powerful states. Maranaos have not flocked to any particular secessionist group, but have instead featured autonomous commands within the MNLF and MILF.

Most of the island was traditionally inhabited by non-Muslim communities known collectively as Lumad (Visayan: original).\(^3\) While Muslims struggle for land taken by Christian settlers, it should not be forgotten that Lumad communities have lost their land to Christians as well as Muslims. Many Lumad are now Christians. They occupy an ambiguous position in the conflict. The vast majority of people in Mindanao are Christian migrants and their descendents. Not all are recent migrants, as Visayans have resided in northern Mindanao for centuries. Christians first arrived in Moro areas under the Spanish, and their numbers expanded under American and Filipino rule. Today, the northeast of Mindanao is thoroughly Filipino, a world removed from the secessionist conflict. Christians also form majorities in Moro regions, where ethno-religious settlements have informed administrative divisions: the largely Christian SOCCSKSARGEN (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan

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\(^3\) 78 or so communities agreed to the term, although for some, it remains contentious. Samuel Briones, “In Search for an Alternative Term of the Lumad (*Talainging*),” *The Bangsamoro Journal* (March 2008), 10.
Kudarat, Sarangani, and General Santos) and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM: Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao), shown in Figure 11.

**Figure 11- Administrative Regions of Mindanao and Sulu**

[Map showing administrative regions of Mindanao and Sulu]

**History**

The secessionist conflict began in 1972, although “for most Muslims... the war dates back to the sixteenth century.”

Islam arrived through traders in the early fifteenth century. In 1450, an Arab-Malay migrant named Syed Abu Bakar founded the Sulu Sultanate. The Maguindanao Sultanate formed with the arrival of Sarip Kabusuan from Johor in the 1520s, but soon divided into Cotabato on the coast and Buayan in the interior. Shortly thereafter, the Spanish arrived, although they withdrew for a short period in which Maguindanao deepened its ties to the Moluccas and Sulu expanded to Palawan and Sabah. In 1718, the Spanish returned and severed the Sultanates from regional trade. Spain forced the Sultan of Cotabato to sign a treaty in 1837 which effectively renounced sovereignty, but in the interior, the son of the Sultan of Buayan led a decade of anti-Spanish resistance. The Spanish attacked Sulu in 1876 and defeated the Sultan by the 1890s.

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7 Najeeb M. Saleeby, *The History of Sulu* (Manila: Bureau of Science, 1908), 80, 125.
In May 1898, American forces decimated the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay and in June, Philippine nationalists overthrew Spanish rulers. Months later, the United States negotiated with Spain to gain de jure control over the islands. American rule in Mindanao has been heavily criticized. While there is much to criticize the Americans for in Mindanao, the American era stands out as a time of peace and development. Gowing divides the America era into three parts: Military rule (1899-1903), the Moro Province (1903-1913), and the Department of Mindanao and Sulu (1914-1920). The first era of American rule was peaceful, characterized by efforts to keep Sulu out of the Filipino resistance movement. The second era began with the creation of the Moro Province (1903-1913), through which Mindanao and Sulu were governed separately from the Philippines on account of their backwardness and ethnic distinctiveness. In Sulu, the war on slavery and the Sultan’s loss of power led to a brief rebellion in 1906. Meanwhile, Mindanao was relatively peaceful, allowing the Americans to focus on development, the very success of which deprived the Americans of a reason to maintain direct control. The third era of American rule began in 1914 when the Moro Province was replaced by the Department of Mindanao and Sulu. The region’s civilian governor, Frank Carpenter, encouraged the Filipinization of Mindanao’s administration. In February 1920, direct American rule in Mindanao and Sulu ended and authority was transferred to Manila.

In 1935, the Philippines became a Commonwealth, increasing power in Manila and bringing electoral competition to Mindanao. Elections in Mindanao featured tense battles among powerful Muslim families. The Piang clan had dominated Cotabato from the end of Spanish rule through the 1930s, but was losing ground to the Sinsuat clan in the interior. New contenders arose through American education, namely Salipada Pendatun, who challenged the Sinsuats in a land case in the early 1940s, sparking an enduring rivalry. The most significant change during the Commonwealth era was the substantial increase in transmigration to Mindanao. From 1939, government grants were provided to help Christians open up “virgin regions” of Mindanao. Christians gained control of land

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9 Gowing, Mandate in Moroland, 16.
10 Gowing, Mandate in Moroland, 339.
11 Eulogia Rodriguez, “The Economic Development of Mindanao,” Department of Agriculture Secretary speech before the Philippine Council (Manila, 1938), 7.
through a variety of means: occupation, high interest loans to native farmers with land as collateral, and collusion with Muslim elites and government officials. With superior knowledge of property laws and access to Filipino administrators, settlers anticipated the construction of new roads and bought commercially valuable land. Filipino leaders were blunt in their goals of colonizing Mindanao. President Quezon explained that:

> While no nation has the right to violate the territorial integrity of another nation, people that lack the energy, ability or desire to make use of the resources which Divine Providence has placed in their hands, afford an excuse for a more energetic and wilful people to deprive them of their lawful heritage.

While also featuring as a grievance in Aceh and Patani, transmigration to Mindanao has been far more intense. Between 1918 and 1950, Cotabato’s percentage of Muslims dropped from two-thirds to one-third. Transmigration to Mindanao represents “a classical case of a concerted strategy of cultural dilution.”

World War Two brought an influx of arms to Mindanao and American aid helped local elites build local armies. In Luzon, communist-led anti-Japanese soldiers rose up in the Huk Rebellion, which the Philippine government later diffused by granting them land in Mindanao, which was viewed as “a resource-rich frontier region and hence a solution for the agrarian discontent.” On the Fourth of July 1946, the Philippines became an independent state. Muslim leaders petitioned the United States to make Mindanao a separate colony, but Mindanao and Sulu became part of the Republic of the Philippines.

The year 1968 marked the beginning of communal conflicts which would soon evolve into the secessionist conflict. These communal conflicts were rooted in a number of factors: the massacre of ethnic Tausug troops, escalating political rivalries, and growing tensions with Christian transmigrants. Within a few years, this communal violence was transformed into a secessionist conflict by Marcos’ declaration of Martial Law and the ascent of newly educated Muslim youths.

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13 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 117.
14 Department of Agriculture Secretary Eulogio Rodriguez stated that his Department’s Mindanao policy is to “populate it as rapidly as we can.” Rodriguez, “The Economic Development of Mindanao,” 4.
The Sulu Islands were the front lines of a battle between the Philippines and the new state of Malaysia in the 1960s. Based on a period in which the Sultan of Sulu controlled parts of Borneo, the Philippines claimed North Borneo (later Sabah). Philippine President Macapagal sought to destabilize Sabah by sending a covert team of Muslim troops with local kinship ties to destabilize the region, a plan known as Operation Merdeka (Freedom). But when President Marcos scrapped the plan, several soldiers protested for pay and orders were given to execute them in what came to be known as the Jabidah Massacre. One recruit survived, clutching a piece of driftwood until he was picked up by a fisherman and brought to Manila, where Senator Benigno Aquino publicized the massacre in an effort to undermine Marcos. This led to sizable protests, especially in Sulu and Sabah, as well as among Muslim students in Manila. This event was particularly significant for Sulu, which did not witness transmigration or the type of political rivalries found in Mindanao, and otherwise might not have become as involved in the brewing conflict in Mindanao.

In Mindanao, the changing demographic map and the rise of President Marcos intensified local political rivalries. By the mid-1960s, the growing Christian population led to the division of Cotabato Province and sparked intense ethnic political campaigns.\(^\text{19}\) In the 1967 provincial elections, President Marcos worked to place loyalists throughout the country. In Cotabato, Marcos supported a member of the Ampatuan clan, an ally of the Sinsuats and rival of the Pendatun family. After being involuntarily pushed out of power by Marcos allies and his own brother-in-law, former Governor Matalam announced the creation of the Muslim Independence Movement (MIM) in 1968. Marcos soon made peace with Matalam, but the idea of the MIM served as a lightning rod for resistance.

The Jabidah Massacre and the proclamation of the MIM ignited hostilities between Muslims and the growing Christian population. Between 1946 and 1960, the population of Mindanao grew from three to five million, with the percentage of Muslims dropping from 30% to 19%.\(^\text{20}\) Transmigration expanded and was increasingly chaotic, handled through a succession of five state organizations. Christian leaders organized a militia which became known as the Ilagas (Visayan: rats) which committed several massacres of Muslim villagers.

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Dubbed the "Illonggo Land Grabbers Association", the Ilagas drove Muslims out, occupied unregistered land, and registered it in their own names with the help of government officials. It is not that Christians were uniformly aggressors or that Muslims were solely victims. Muslim politicians also fielded powerful personal armies. In Lanao, Congressman Ali Dimaporo mobilized his Barracudas, in Zamboanga local elites organized the Green Guards, and in Cotabato figures close to Matalam organized the Black Shirts.²¹

In September 1972, Marcos declared Martial Law, extending his Presidency beyond its legal term. Muslim leaders, already threatened by Christian politicians and Marcos' rapid expansion of power, were further threatened by Martial Law, which transferred political power to the army, which allied with Christians and began confiscating weapons. This propelled Muslim leaders towards resistance, solidifying a movement which had been forming since the proclamation of the MIM. The driving force behind this movement was Rashid Lucman, a Maranao legislator and timber baron with ties to Tun Mustapha in Sabah, who helped arrange military training for Moro militias near Penang. One early recruit was an ethnic Tausug named Nur Misuari, who soon emerged as the group's leader. Misuari was educated in Manila on a government scholarship. He became a leading left-wing activist and a sessional Political Science instructor at the University of the Philippines until revelations of events in Corregidor propelled Misuari towards ethnic activism. Misuari's left-wing roots and poor background made him antagonistic towards Muslim political elites. While he accepted training and funding from Moro politicians, Misuari built an organization which was outside of their control, founding the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1971.

The influence of the MNLF was soon felt in Sulu, the home of many MNLF leaders and a region which is easily accessible from Sabah. Early MNLF control of Sulu prompted a major military assault in 1974, destroying much of Jolo. In Mindanao, the MNLF established bases along river ways and gained support from civilians whose lives were threatened by Christian gangs and who had recently lost their land. The MNLF soon enjoyed international support, working with Tun Mustapha in Sabah, receiving Libyan arms shipments, and gaining observer status in the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

After this initial success, the MNLF began to decline. This was primarily because the MNLF was, as its name suggested, a front for a variety of groups. While some authors claim

that the MNLF was cohesive,\textsuperscript{22} it was essentially a coalition made up of disgruntled elites (who often clashed with one another) and their personal armies, young left-leaning nationalists, young Islamic leaders, and outlaws, all from three major and ten minor ethic groups. Misuari tried to maintain cohesion by emphasizing a common Moro identity and controlling access to foreign funding and weapons. Recognizing tensions between Muslim politicians and the MNLF, Marcos co-opted Muslim politicians by ensuring access to political office. Marcos supplied them with guns, undermining one of Misuari’s only sources of oversight and encouraging them to combat the MNLF. Within a few years, several MNLF members came to terms with the government. While the volume of defections was exaggerated by the government, they nonetheless took a heavy toll on the secessionists.\textsuperscript{23}

The decline of the MNLF was also influenced by international factors. Tensions with Kuala Lumpur led to Tun Mustapha losing political office in 1976, limiting the MNLF’s flow of arms and access to bases. Meanwhile, the OIC pressured Marcos as well as the MNLF to make peace. In November 1976, Imelda Marcos ventured to Tripoli, agreed to MNLF demands, and secured a ceasefire. The agreement provided political autonomy for thirteen provinces, even majority Christian areas. But President Marcos inserted a clause stating that implementation would be subject to “constitutional processes”. In February 1977, Marcos held a unilateral referendum in the affected provinces, leading to a defeat of the autonomy programme. In 1979, Marcos created the Regional Autonomous Government in Western and Central Mindanao. The MNLF was outmanoeuvred by Marcos, who used peace talks to lessen international pressure, buy time to consolidate army positions and co-opt MNLF members, and accelerate internal MNLF divisions.

The conflict resumed late in 1977, leading to a decade-long stalemate in which a weakened, but not defeated MNLF battled the Philippine army as well as various militias. MNLF divisions deepened after the Tripoli peace process. Misuari was viewed by many MNLF leaders as autocratic, favouring ethnic Tausugs, and harbouring socialist views. Political elites who helped found the secessionist movement but had been pushed out, such as Rashid Lucman, Macapanton Abbas Jr., and Salipada Pendatun, formed the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO). Largely made up of ethnic Maranaos, the BMLO failed to

\textsuperscript{22} For Abhoud Syed Lingga, “The MNLF was once a monolithic organization”, before it became fragmented. Abhoud Syed M. Lingga, “Role of Third Parties in Mindanao Peace Process,” Institute of Bangsamoro Studies (July 2006).

\textsuperscript{23} Noble, “The Moro National Liberation Front in the Philippines,” 421.
draw supporters from Misuari and soon came to terms with the government. Other ethnic Maranao MNLF splinters included groups led by Abul Khayr Alonto and Dimas Pundato. The biggest breakaway occurred when Salamat Hashim formed the New MNLF, which later evolved into the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Misuari had been educated in Manila and his worldview was informed by Marxism, whereas Salamat graduated from al-Azhar in Egypt. While sometimes dubbed part of the “traditional conservative elite”, Salamat was a modernizing reformer. In the early 1960s, Salamat returned from Egypt and formed a modernist Islamic organization before being brought into the nascent MNLF. Salamat’s Islamic networks informed the structure of the MILF, which unlike the MNLF, formed a broad social movement.

In 1986, the Marcos era came to an end through the People Power Movement. President Cory Aquino entered into dialogue with the MNLF, but peace remained elusive. In 1989, Aquino established the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), giving power to some of the politicians who had originally supported the MNLF but had since defected. In 1992, Fidel Ramos was elected President. Ramos and Misuari came to a landmark agreement in 1996 in which MNLF leaders would take control of a revitalized ARMM. Under Governor Misuari, the ARMM and affiliated organizations served as patronage machines for the MNLF, rewarding former troops and buying out potential spoilers. Despite a series of scandals and growing ARMM corruption, Misuari ruled the ARMM until 2001, when he was removed by President Arroyo, who supported an Ampatuan scion as ARMM governor.

Meanwhile, the MILF was growing. The MILF benefited from the return of Afghanistan mujahedin veterans in the 1990s, who established large base camps to train new MILF recruits, including Camp Abubakar, which became the MILF’s headquarters. The presence of permanent camps has been a distinguishing feature of the MILF. Visiting MILF camps, which are partly intended to serve as showpieces for external audiences, one does not find significant fortifications, but instead families and businesses. Camps feature their own

24 In 1980, Pendatun “publicly pledged his services to President Marcos and the martial law government.” McKenna, *Muslim Riders and Rebels*, 162.
27 Ivan Molloy, *The Conflicts in Mindanao: Whilst the Revolution Rolls on, the Jihad Falters* (Queensland: Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, November 1983), 832.
police forces and have developed their own infrastructure, forming a state within the Philippine state. MILF expansion was encouraged by the 1996 MNLF peace agreement, which made the MILF the sole source of resistance and placed some sympathetic MNLF figures in power. Some authors insist that the MILF demands an independent Islamic state, but evidence of this is difficult to come by. While often portrayed as radical, the MILF has always been more pragmatic than Misuari’s MNLF regarding independence. Put simply, “secessionism is not part of the MILF’s vocabulary.” For one MILF leader:

We are not seeking independence. We want to win land back for Muslim people and change Muslim society.

The MILF has shifted its struggle to highlight indigenous land rights, which it claims were ignored by the MNLF, whose Tausug base was less affected by transmigration.

After coming to terms with the MNLF, President Ramos turned to negotiate with the MILF, recognizing MILF camps and creating a temporary cessation of hostilities in 1997. But in 2000, President Estrada declared all-out war against the MILF, attacking their prized camps and displacing tens of thousands of people. This was an extremely bloody period, equalled only by the violence of the mid-1970s. Estrada justified these assaults in part due to the terrorist and criminal groups associated with the MILF. The MILF allowed the Southeast Asian terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah to conduct training activities within its camps. In 1995, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) was founded by Janjalani, an ethnic Tausug from a mixed religious family in Basilan. In 1998, one of the cofounders of the ASG defected to the Philippine government and was elected to the first of three terms as Basilan’s Governor. Months later, Janjalani was killed by Filipino forces. Deprived of its leaders, the ASG turned into a purely criminal operation. The MNLF has worked with the Philippine army against the ASG, which represents a rival Tausug network. The MILF has been indecisive. For one MILF leader:

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30 Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon, 139.
31 Interview with Muhajir Iqbal, Chairman of MILF Committee of Information and Member of MILF / GRP peace talks, Camp Darapan, Sultan Kudarat (20 June 2008).
34 Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon, 200.
Janjalani and the ASG had a good vision at first, but ended up becoming a criminal group.\textsuperscript{35}

The MILF has also faced challenges from so-called "lost commands" such as the Pentagon Gang, which operated from the Liguasan Marsh—the heart of MILF territory—between 1999 and 2002. The reluctance, and perhaps inability, of the MILF to combat such groups has served to justify attacks by the Philippine and American armies. MILF leaders have only recently made significant efforts to root out terrorist and criminal elements.\textsuperscript{36}

The cohesion of the MILF was undermined even further by the death of Salamat Hashim in 2003. Hashim’s chosen successor was muscled out by the less religious and better connected al-Haj Murah Ebrahim.\textsuperscript{37} Major MILF decisions are supposedly made by a Jihad Executive Council. In practise, many field commanders are autonomous.\textsuperscript{38} The Philippine state is similarly wracked by incapacity and factionalism, as Muslim and Christian politicians control large personal armies which operate as quasi-state authorities. Many are recognized as Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU), numbering about 100,000 troops in Mindanao.\textsuperscript{39} Other pro-state armed groups include the militias of various politicians, Civil Volunteer Organizations (CVOs, six per Barangay), and police auxiliaries, which were created in 2007 when the Philippine police distributed 12,000 rifles to Christian civilians living near MILF strongholds.\textsuperscript{40} Private armies, CAFGU forces, and militias are responsible for significant crime, political violence, and human rights abuses. In 2008, the Ampatuan family and its army, which had expanded under President Arroyo and dominated the local police force, massacred their political rivals. President Arroyo was forced to arrest her allies and replace local security forces. Neither the Philippine state nor the MILF have the capacity to police their ranks, as groups aligned with both sides partake in severe violence and undermine peace initiatives.

Under President Arroyo, Mindanao fluctuated between peace talks and war. The major stumbling block has been the issue of ancestral domain—areas inhabited by Christians

\textsuperscript{35} Interview with Muhajir Iqbal, Camp Darapan, Sultan Kudarat (20 June 2008).
\textsuperscript{36} In 2010, the MILF publicly criticized and suspended two of its Commanders involved in criminal activities. Luwaran, “MILF to Suspend Commanders Adzmie and Abunwas” (08 August 2010).
\textsuperscript{37} International Crisis Group, “Southern Philippines Background,” 9.
\textsuperscript{38} International Crisis Group, “Southern Philippines Background,” 10.
\textsuperscript{40} GMA News, “PNP Justifies Arming Civilian Police Auxiliary Forces” (26 August 2008).
where natives maintain “spiritual and cultural bonds.” There is no doubt that Christians took considerable land in Mindanao, but it is unclear if or how the descendents of migrants should be evicted. In 2008, the two sides came close to an agreement which would essentially expand the ARMM into some Christian areas and provide greater autonomy, but it was rejected by the Philippine Supreme Court, leading to fresh fighting. As President Noynoy Aquino came to power, there is a notable lack of direction concerning the conflict.

**Societal Forces**

The ancestral domain issue reflects Mindanao’s complex societal landscape. Gowing suggests that traditional Moro society consisted of three major groups: Rulers (the Sultan, datus, and their kin); farmers, artisans and fishermen; and slaves. The slave class was eliminated by the Americans, although an urban underclass has formed in recent decades to create a new disenfranchised base of Moro society, and remote Lumad communities who were once the sources of slaves continue to live marginal existences.

American rule ended the power of the Sultans and encouraged the rise of powerful datus. Traditionally, Sultans ruled through their extended families, but as trade and wealth expanded, a new class of traders evolved. Sultans provided them with the title of datu derived from the Malay royal title ‘Dato’ to bring potential challengers into their orbit. Datus soon established their own lineages to semi-mythical ancestors or the Prophet. The Americans provided new forms of education, economic opportunities, and political offices for the datu class. As access to wealth and firearms grew, so did the number of self-styled datus. Growing clan rivalries in turn necessitated kinship alliances, leading to perennial clan feuds, such as the Dimaporos vs the Alonto / Lucman coalition in Lanao and the Sinsuat / Ampatuan alliance vs the Matalam / Pendentun / Mangilen triumvirate in Cotabato. Noble describes the evolution of datus after independence whose wealth expanded “through

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42 Peter G. Gowing, *Mosque and Moro: A Study of Muslims in the Philippines* (Manila: Philippine Federation of Christian Churches, 1964), 41. In Maguindanao, McKenna delineates four traditional groups: royalty (the Sultan and many datus), endatuun (the ruled), ulipun (slaves), and dumatu, the descendents of pre-Islamic kings who retained several privileges under the Sultan. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 50.
43 Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah*, 2. This practice continues today, with businessmen, Army Commanders, and Presidents granted titles of Datu or Sultan by Moro elites in an effort to cement alliances.
landholdings, timber concessions, legal or illegal trade, and political brokerage." In the 1960s, datus were threatened by Christian politicians, the rise of educated Muslim youths, and Manila’s efforts to strengthen the state.

During the conflict, some datus remained with the rebels, some defected to the state, some remained loyal to the state, and some sought to remain outside of the conflict. After Marcos, many datus framed themselves as pro-democracy activists and gained power through the ARMM. Despite this fragmentation, the style of datu rule remains similar—they function as local strongmen controlling access to patronage and claim aristocratic descent.

What enables one to become a datu is not clear—one may call oneself a datu due to one’s wealth, the existence of a relative using the title, or because it is bestowed upon one by another datu. Some are genuinely popular, sources of emergency assistance, employment, and protection for ordinary people. This said, there seems to be considerable anti-datu sentiment in Muslim Mindanao, as the title “might bring ridicule rather than respect.” Many villagers blame prominent datus for their poverty and landlessness. MILF leaders view the title as morally deficient, especially since some datus contend to trace their lineage to the Prophet. Datus who treat their aristocratic status too seriously tend to be the butt of jokes.

It is important to point out that Moro datus are little different than strongmen and powerful families throughout the Philippines, although they rely less on vast estates and more on brute force, and are sometimes able to mobilize support based on religious grievances and work alongside Muslim rebels. Several datus command large personal armies, which sometimes include state police and army officers. As I will show below, many violent episodes attributed to the conflict are actually rooted in datus taking part in bloody turf wars and clan rivalries (rido).

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46 Outside of General Santos City, villagers explained to me that, while many datus are corrupt, some are able to oversee long-term development projects and get to know local residents because they are unelected, permanent power holders. Discussion with plantation workers, Lapu, South Cotabato (25 June 2008).
48 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 229.
49 In a group interview, a series of friends referred to themselves as datu, eliciting laughter from others. Two MILF members in the group told me that everyone here thinks they are a datu, and later, a rice farmer introduced himself as Datu Sri Dr. Sultan Datu III, at which point the group erupted with laughter, except for the one man who had initially referred to himself as datu, the target of the joke. Anonymous interview with Barangay officials and MILF soldiers in Kabacan, Cotabato (26 June 2008).
Turning from rulers to the ruled, Muslim communities in the Philippines are largely impoverished. In Sulu, common folk are mostly fishers and traders, while in Mindanao, they tend to be farmers, increasingly working at banana, coconut, and pineapple plantations. The ARMM is the poorest region of the country. It is also one of youngest regions of the country, with half of the population under the age of 18.50 In recent decades, many Muslims have come to reside in urban slums, such as Campo Muslim in Cotabato.51 Women are active in the economy, but tend to find work only in the informal economy as street vendors, at sari-sari stores, or marketing agricultural goods.

The professional classes are dominated by Christians, who serve as government officials, bureaucrats, business leaders, and teachers.52 The percentage of persons employed in modern sectors such as manufacturing, finance, and services is several times greater in Christian areas compared to the Muslim ARMM.53 Many Christians are also farmers. Compared to Muslim farmers, Christians tend to have modern equipment and more productive land.54 But it should also be kept in mind that there are many landless Christian farmers working as plantation labourers. Lumad communities occupy distinct niches, ranking below Muslims and Christian migrants in socio-economic hierarchies. Many reside in remote areas and struggle to find employment, save on plantations.55

Muslim communities in the Philippines lack the sort of prominent village chiefs that one finds in Aceh and the Malay world. This may be surprising, as one might think that a historically weak state would enable strong village chiefs. But powerful datus and clans seem to have limited the development of states above them and chiefs below them. The weakness of village leadership is compounded by the national administration. In the Philippine state, the lowest level of administrative authority is the Barangay, led by a chairman (or captain), who is assisted by Barangay Councils. The Barangay is much larger than a Malay village, even larger than many Acehnese sub-districts. Barangay chairs and councils are often elected,

51 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 39.
52 Beckett, “Political Families and Family Politics Among the Muslim Maguindanaon of Cotabato,” 293.
54 McKenna cites a report which shows that before the 1970s, there were no government irrigation projects in Muslim-majority regions. McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 117.
55 For instance, in Polomolok, South Cotabato, the economy is dominated by Dole plantations, where Lumad make up a significant part of the workforce and have established distinct workplace organizations. Discussion with Lumad farmers, Lapu, South Cotabato (25 June 2008).
however this is not necessarily the case in Mindanao, where datus sometimes appoint
Barangay leaders.56 Datus dominate Barangay governments, as well as municipal and city
mayors and councils. As a consequence, Muslim communities do not feature strong village
leaders. It is telling that, despite the weakness of the Philippine state, locals refer to their
communities as Barangays and their leaders as chairmen, and do not typically use local terms
as villagers continue to do in Aceh and Patani. To get a glimpse of what Maguindanao
communities might have looked like in previous eras, it is useful to look at village leadership
among Lumads, specifically the Tiruray.57 Tiruray village chiefs are a legal authority
(kefeduwan), “a moral leader... one of a fraternity of legal representatives and experts.”58
Schlegel contrasts this with Moro leaders, noting that “The kefeduwan in Tiruray culture is not
a datu, he is a legal leader, a kind of judge, whose influence over his people is moral and
judicial, not one of power.”59 That Tiruray chiefs serve not as bosses, but as mediators, is
similar to Aceh, but contrasts with more coercive Moros chieftains.

Writers tend to emphasize the ‘arrival’ of Islam as meaning the conversion of rulers.
The question of when Islam became a significant social force is a different matter. Sulu had
the earliest and most widespread exposure to Islamic culture, but even here, Islam largely
remained a court religion in which the few ulama served datus.60 Muslim Filipino authors
typically provide a different interpretation. Citing European visitors to Cotabato, Majul
contends that Islam was “not necessarily confined to the nobility and religious leaders”, but
was instead rooted in society.61 But Majul’s source suggests that Cotabato residents were not
observant, and says nothing of rural areas, where the vast majority of Muslims resided.
While Islam made political inroads, there is little evidence that it penetrated far into the
social sphere, especially compared to Aceh or Patani. Gowing notes that, prior to World
War Two, Islam was “little more than a thin veneer spread over the social and cultural

56 Local officials explain that it is best not to hold elections, as local bosses will win anyways, and this way
there is less violence. Interview with Barangay Council, Semb, Sharif Kabungsuan (21 June 2008).
57 Maguindanao and Tiruray consider themselves to share common origins. Stuart A. Schlegel, “Tiruray-
Maguindanaon Ethnic Relations: An Ethnohistorical Puzzle,” in Understanding Islam and Muslims in the
58 Stuart A. Schlegel, Tiruray Justice: Traditional Tiruray Law and Morality (Berkley: University of
59 He continues to note that “Tirurays follow their kefeduwan because they believe him to give justice and not
because they have the sort of institutionalized power common to the ruling class in Maguindanaon culture.”
60 Arce, Before the Secessionist Storm, 38; Thomas M. Kiefer, The Tausug: Violence and Law in a Philippine
61 Cesar Adib Majul, Muslims in the Philippines (Manila: University of the Philippines Press, 1999), 104.
institutions which had existed before the coming of that religion to the islands." 62 The roles of Islamic leaders began to change in the 1950s. This shift was motivated by Christian migration, post-war economic support for mosque construction and the pilgrimage, the arrival of Arab missionaries, and scholarships from the Arab world. 63 In the 1960s, the first al-Azhar graduates returned from Egypt, taking the title of ulama. Ulama did not change Muslim societies overnight, as their condemnation of local traditions alienated many Moros. 64 Islamic leaders became powerful societal actors only in the 1980s, after they had grown more moderate and were assisted by graduates from their local Islamic schools. These internal factors, coupled with the global Islamic resurgence, combined to create a more pious society and more powerful Islamic leaders.

The Catholic Church is also an important societal force in the southern Philippines. While some Christians are prejudiced towards their Muslim neighbours, and the Church contains its share of anti-Muslim voices, Church leaders have been a source of humanitarian assistance for Muslim groups. The Church is a central part of local civil society, even if its pro-peace activities do not always resonate with their congregations. 65 Protestant churches are also important societal forces. About ten percent of Mindanao’s population belongs to a Protestant denomination, and its churches are major sources of education and funds for local charities. Foreign Protestants established the Danasalan School for Muslim youths, and with the support of the United Church of Christ, expanded into a considerable ecumenical and academic organization in the 1970s. As I will discuss below, the Danasalan School became an early center for interfaith dialogue as the conflict erupted. Christian organizations, wealth, and influence among state officials enable forms of activism which are closed to Muslim leaders. As I discuss below, this has allowed Christian leaders to play unique roles in the conflict.

Turning to new notables, I noted that Christian Filipinos tend to dominate the professional sector. The presence of professionals and activists depends largely on access to post-secondary education which, for Moros, is limited. Most high school and university education in Mindanao is nominally Christian. The first major state university was Marawi

62 Gowing adds that while most Moros “had only scant knowledge of their religion, they stuck fanatically to what little they knew.” Gowing, Mosque and Moro, 64-65.
63 Gowing, Mosque and Moro, 66.
64 Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon, 128.
State University (MSU) in the Lanao region, which became the bailiwick of Ali Dimaporo, who pillaged the school’s budget, arrested activists, and fortified the university with his army. This led many Moros to look for education elsewhere. Between 1955 and 1978, the Philippine government funded 1400 Muslims students to study at national universities, while several hundred students were funded by Arab governments to attend overseas Islamic universities. With limited educational opportunities, local civil society has been stunted. In the last 15 years, MSU has normalized and there has been an expansion of several smaller universities throughout the region, such as the University of Southern Mindanao. Graduates have been quick to form NGOs, and have been extremely active. The most important civil society network in Mindanao is the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society. As I will discuss, many local NGOs support the MILF, whose strategy has been to ally with the Muslim professional and tertiary-educated classes. Having provided some historical and societal context, I will now describe civilian decisions in the context of war in Mindanao.

Flight
Flight from and within the mountainous island of Mindanao is no easy task. While Patani features an accessible land border with Malaysia, Mindanao is more like Aceh, in that mountains and oceans limit, but by no means eliminate, the possibility of flight. Seas have allowed for the flight of civilians from Sulu, where many families have access to boats and/or have kinship ties in Sabah. Flight from Sulu and Zamboanga to Sabah, Malaysia peaked in the 1970s, when the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) attacked Jolo, and recently spiked again in response to attacks on the Abu Sayyaf Group. It is estimated that Sabah is home to over 50,000 Filipino refugees, almost all of whom identify as being from Sulu or Zamboanga. As these regions are outside of my area of study, I lack detailed evidence of flight among different types of civilians.

In Mindanao, the dominant form of flight has been land-based. Counting IDPs in any conflict is difficult because they tend to flee in small groups for short periods of time, and Mindanao is no different. Between 1972 and 1976, there were between 200,000 and

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66 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 140.
70 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 149.
one million IDPs in Mindanao.\textsuperscript{71} Displacement was largely a product of Ilagan and military assaults, and most displaced persons were Muslims.\textsuperscript{72} The peak of displacement in the MILF-led conflict came in 2000, when President Estrada’s ‘all-out war’ led to the displacement of over one million persons. Under President Arroyo, peace talks were punctuated by military assaults, leading to periods of significant displacement. By 2010, an estimated 150,000 persons remained displaced.\textsuperscript{73}

Flight among Mindanao’s displaced persons can be divided into three categories: Small-scale flight to stay with family, evacuations to nearby hills, and permanent relocation to towns or rebel camps. Approximately one third of IDPs have fled in small groups to stay with friends or relatives. Such migrants are not always visible and rarely gain humanitarian assistance. They may be better off than other types of migrants, although they still put a considerable strain on family resources.\textsuperscript{74} Flight to stay with family or friends tends to be anticipatory. Some, however, are those who have already fled in larger groups, but grew tired of crowded camps and decided to seek out family assistance. In recent years, rumours of foreign aid have served as disincentives to rely upon kinship networks.

The dominant form of flight among ordinary civilians in Mindanao, especially among Muslim communities, is short-term evacuation to hills or swamplands. Short-term evacuation is a common response to war in all societies. It was evident in Aceh, especially after the 2003 declaration of Martial Law. But in Mindanao, evacuation is particularly common and organized. Each Barangay tends to have prearranged evacuation centres stocked with emergency provisions. Local officials hold evacuation drills, and villagers seem to flee at the first sign of danger. Experts have long noted the tendency among Moros and Lumad to evacuate, but it only stands out as particularly unique in a comparative context, as nothing quite like this exists in Aceh or Patani.

In 1971, reporters noted that Muslims fled violence and reconvened in “make-shift evacuation centers.”\textsuperscript{75} Muslim civilians have “fled to various parts of the vast Liguasan

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\textsuperscript{72} McKenna, \textit{Muslim Rulers and Rebels}, 174-176.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre}, “Philippines: IDP Return Still Hampered by Insecurity and a Lack of Assistance” (28 June 2010), 2-3.

\textsuperscript{74} Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, \textit{Cycle of Conflict and Neglect: Mindanao’s Displacement and Protection Crisis} (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2009), 15.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Mindanao Cross} (31 January 1971).
Marsh” on several occasions. McKenna notes that “indigenous inhabitants of the region had long responded to perceived external threats by moving en masse out of harm’s way.”

In his study of displaced persons in Mindanao, Jose Jowel Canuday shows how bakwit (evacuees) are able to persevere in the face of violence. Evacuation is a survival strategy and an alternative to joining or opposing armed groups: “We could have chosen not to flee, we could have brought out our weapons... we chose peace, so we evacuated.” Families do not go far from their homes, fleeing to “riverbanks, forested areas, behind tall grasses or in dry portions of the swamps.” I found dozens of recent examples:

When there is fighting, we went to the school because it is located over the hill. In the community on the other side, they went one hour up the river. During the all-out war, we fled further, to the caves.

When there is trouble, we have to get to a safer place. In 2000, we were ready. Each member of the council was given a hamlet, making sure it was emptied, and had to store rice and water ahead of time. When trouble came, we went up the river into the hills.

In 2001, the army blanket ed the hills with bombs and mortars. But we had a plan. Every council member led a group of villages. Some residents, our Lumad friends, fled ahead of us, going deep into the forest. We met them at the peak.

I visited three evacuation centres, whose stores included a radio, blankets, water, rice, and medicine, kept safe in Barangay Halls and transported to evacuation centres as required.

Evacuation may help civilians survive, but it also brings many dangers. By evacuating, one leaves their homes behind. Consequences of the evacuation strategy are at the heart of the Mindanao conflict, casting light on how Christian migrants were able to capture so much Muslim land. A media report from 1952 explains how Muslims evacuated their villages when threatened by Christian gangs, who proceeded to occupy their lands and

77 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 119.
79 Canuday, *Bakwit*, 62. But Canuday suggests that IDPs are increasingly fleeing to larger camps, where aid agencies offer food and money. My research only partially supports this conclusion. I also found that many civilians continue to utilize traditional strategies, sometimes gaining aid from camps and returning to local centres.
80 Interview with former Barangay leaders, Buluan, Maguindanao (22 June 2008).
81 Interview with Barangay Chairman and Council, Semba, Sharif Kabungsawan (21 June 2008).
82 Anonymous interview with Barangay leaders, Lapu, South Cotabato (25 June 2008).
83 In Spanish assaults on Maranao communities, “Seeing that the inhabitants of the Lake had retired to the mountains of the interior, they set fire to all settlements and fields they could lay their hands on.” Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 157.
register the property with the local government. Writers note that Ilagas attacked Muslim villagers, “forced them to flee, then occupied the land and obtained titles to the property." In 2001, Christian militias attacked a hamlet near Kabacan in Cotabato, driving residents into the hills. Over the next year, militias continued to launch sporadic attacks. These were not deadly, but were intended to keep villagers away:

We lived in the hills, away from the village. Everything would seem peaceful, and we would think about going home, when they would open fire on the hill. After one year, we found that migrants had taken over our village. The local police said that they cannot do anything because our land was not registered and the local law says that occupied land reverts to public property after one year.

Suspicious of this claim, locals contacted Muslim lawyers, whose court case is ongoing. This incident suggests that the strategy of evacuation has been used against Muslim groups.

What do civilians do when they evacuate but cannot return home? The third major form of flight among ordinary Muslim civilians entails permanent relocation to urban areas. In the 1960s, many IDPs relocated to urban areas. In Cotabato City, large shantytowns were built on the edge of the river, in what came to be known as Campo Muslim. McKenna profiles several “urban refugees” who fled from the conflict to the Cotabato City. He cautions that Campo Muslim “has never been a community made up entirely—or even primarily—of war refugees,” as only about half of the residents he surveyed cited insecurity as the reason for moving to the city. Recently, IDPs have also resettled in MILF camps, which protect and support sizable civilian populations. The presence of landless populations may help explain the MILF strategy of creating permanent camps. For one villager:

I am not a fighter. In 1992, violence between a datu and the MILF resulted in much of my community being destroyed. The safest place to go was this camp, where we have been protected.

When Estrada attacked these camps, the scale of displacement was immense, with civilians fleeing to towns or following the MILF into the hills.

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84 Mindanao Cross (28 April 1956).
85 Guiamel Alim, Jose Bulao Jr., and Ismael G. Kulat, “Understanding Inter-Ethnic Conflicts in North Cotabato and Bukidnon,” in Rido, 171.
86 Anonymous interview with Barangay officials and MILF soldiers in Kabacan, Cotabato (26 June 2008).
87 A fourth form of flight parallels trends throughout the Philippines. Many Muslims have sought employment abroad to send remittances to Sulu and Mindanao. USAID, “Jobs for the 21st Century,” 30.
88 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 176.
89 Discussion with villagers, Camp Darapan, Sultan Kudarat (20 June 2008).
While Muslim communities seem predisposed towards flight, Christians seem more likely to defend their villages, often with army and police support. It is not that Christians have not utilized flight. When the conflict first erupted, there was an immediate exodus of Christians.\textsuperscript{90} Many Christians living in Muslim communities have fled to Christian villages.\textsuperscript{91} In the Lanao region, previously mixed communities separated, with Christians flocking to Iligan City and Muslims bound for Marawi. After the failure of peace talks in 2008, the MILF launched assaults which led to thousands of displaced Christians.\textsuperscript{92} Near General Santos City, villagers explained that their community used to be home to Christian migrants, but continued violence led to a slow exodus, leaving only Lumad and Muslim groups.\textsuperscript{93} Generally though, Christians have been less likely than Mindanao natives to flee.

Turning to local leaders, it seems that Barangay officials are as likely as ordinary villagers to flee. It is the responsibility of chairmen to order evacuations and the responsibility of council members to oversee the exodus.\textsuperscript{94} When returning home has been impossible and villagers have settled in new places, they have sometimes migrated as a village, with local leadership intact.\textsuperscript{95} I also found several cases where Barangay chairmen fled as individuals, often bound for cities. In one Barangay,

I was a council member before, but in 2001, the chairman fled from a local conflict [General Santos City], and I became the captain.\textsuperscript{96}

In this case, the chairman fled due to political violence, not due to the secessionist conflict. This seems to be an important reason for the flight among Barangay leaders, whose involvement in political networks involves them in local electoral struggles.

Many Islamic leaders have fled Mindanao altogether, bound for schools in Malaysia or the Middle East. This is not necessarily related to the conflict, as Islamic education in Mindanao is poor, and those wishing to further their education must go abroad. But it

\textsuperscript{91} For example, in 1972, Datu Mantil Gumawa, nephew of Undtog Matalam, forced Christian minorities out of his community with the explicit goal of ensuring Muslim dominance. \textit{Mindanao Cross} (17 June 1972).
\textsuperscript{93} Discussion with plantation workers, Lapu, South Cotabato (25 June 2008).
\textsuperscript{94} In one example from Maguindanao, the Barangay Captain of “ordered the evacuation of his constituents”, when he “had a hint of the tremors that would take place.” \textit{Mindanao People’s Peace Movement} et al, “Unravelling Stories of Human Rights Violations in Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato, and Maguindanao,” (October 2008), 4.
\textsuperscript{95} Interview with Abdulaziz G. Abdula, former Barangay captain of Kalingangan (29 June 2008).
\textsuperscript{96} Anonymous interview with Barangay leaders, Lapu, South Cotabato (25 June 2008).
would be a mistake to rule out the conflict, which serves as a push factor alongside the pull of education. Many ulama and ustadz cite considerable violence at the hands of security forces for their decision to study abroad, noting that Islamic leaders are targeted by Filipino soldiers. Whereas in Aceh, those traveling abroad for religious education were usually young men, Islamic scholars in the Philippines seem to study abroad regardless of age. Reflecting the modernist bent of Islamic education in Mindanao, schools seem not to revolve around individual teachers, who seem to be highly mobile.

Church officials have not generally been targeted by armed groups, so have been less likely to flee. They have, however, been active in assisting Muslim and Christian IDPs. The positive force of Church leaders among displaced Muslims is widely acknowledged:

- Priests help Muslims who have lost their home. They help us more than Islamic leaders because they have nothing to fear from either side.
- Priests have been good to displaced Muslims and are in a unique position to help. In 2001, my school and mosque was crowded with families. We were happy to have Christian leaders provide assistance.
- The conflict is not about Christians vs Muslims. Look at the nuns who work with MILF leaders to help IDPs. We work together.

When Muslim communities are displaced, they often flee to mosques. Even here, Christian leaders have been active in procuring aid. Religious leaders tend to work together to help displaced persons, however the resources and security enjoyed by Christian officials provides them with greater reach than their Muslim counterparts.

I did not found much in the way of flight among new notables. Professionals, students, and civil society activists have not been targeted in the same way as their counterparts have in Aceh or Patani. In rural areas, businessmen tend to employ personal militias to defend their interests, so do not flee. The MILF does not target educators—church or state—so unlike Aceh and Patani, rural teachers do not tend to flee.

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97 Interview with Hisham Nando, Ulama, Buluan (23 June 2008).
98 McKenna explains how nuns provided assistance to poor urban Muslims after the 1976 Cotabato earthquake. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 210.
99 Interview with Benjamin Dumato, President of Buluan Madrasah, Buluan (23 June 2008).
100 Interview with Hisham Nando, Ulama, Buluan (23 June 2008).
101 Interview with Muhajir Iqbal, MILF official, Camp Darapan, Sultan Kudarat (20 June 2008).
Why Do Some Civilians Flee While Others Do Not?

Explanations for flight in Mindanao mirror those in Aceh and Patani. The primary motivation for flight was insecurity— a fear of pending violence or to escape attacks. Ordinary civilians flee from violence and return when it is safe, and when it is not safe to return, many relocate. Christians have been less likely to flee, largely because their communities are often protected by security forces. Muslims tend to flee, as they are often targeted by security forces, while Christians are not targeted, and are less likely to flee. Mindanao’s new notables seem less likely to flee than in my other cases, largely because they are not routinely targeted. I asked one prominent activist why NGO leaders in Cotabato City, despite being close to the MILF, have not been targeted by security forces:

We are not combatants for one, and do not threaten soldiers. Maybe it is because NGOs are strong across the country. If they started arresting us here, there would be major protests across the Philippines.

In all of my cases, security concerns motivate flight. Civilians with greater relative levels of security tend not to flee, while those who are targeted are most likely to leave.

Economic factors play important roles in luring displaced persons to cities, as conflict dynamics have interacted with existing patterns of urban migration. As in my other cases, economic incentives compliment security concerns, serving as pull factors alongside push factors. If there was no conflict, there would still be urban migration, however the presence of the conflict accelerates urbanization. It does so indirectly, by undermining the rural economy, and directly, by pushing IDPs to safer areas.

Socio-cultural factors play important roles in shaping flight. Ethno-religious identities demarcate the respective sides in the conflict and inform the destinations of flight, with Muslims fleeing to mosques and evacuation centres while Christians are less likely to flee, and when they do, go to churches or Christian regions. Barangay and Islamic leaders appear to be more likely to flee than their Acehnese counterparts because they are less established in their communities and less tied to their schools, which are less likely to be boarding schools than their Acehnese or Malay counterparts. Evacuation should be regarded as a cultural norm among Mindanao natives, Moro or Lumad. This is demonstrated through comparisons over time and across groups. In the seventeenth century, “withdrawal was the populace’s response to Spanish attacks... retreating rather than

102 Interview with Guiamel Alim, Cotabato City (30 June 2010).
fighting... was a conscious choice displayed by the majority of Mindanao’s people.” One Lumad man explained that:

By the time of the assaults, we had already run deep into the hills. I think it is in our blood, fleeing from Sultans and Spanish and Christians. We are raised knowing how to live in the forest.

Historical accounts emphasize evacuation from Mindanao, something I did not find in Aceh, Patani, or even Sulu. While Tausug forces resisted Spanish attacks, “the Maguindanao refused to make contact by retreating to the interior.” Meanwhile, Christians have not tended to flee, and are more likely to defend their land. This is largely explained by their higher levels if security, but may also have cultural foundations. When their security is threatened, the propensity for and types of flight are both shaped by local culture.

Support

Sometimes civilians choose not to flee, and instead participate in the conflict by supporting armed groups. The popularity of the MNLF, and later the MILF, among Muslim villagers in Mindanao is considerable. The rebels have provided security, championed indigenous and religious rights, and in the case of the MILF, spawned a broad social movement. Among Lumad, the popularity of the rebels is limited, while the Christian majority largely oppose the rebels and support the state. In Aceh and Patani, ethnic identity shaped zones of combatant control and patterns of civilian support. Mindanao is no different. Ethnic identity largely determines patterns of support in the Moro conflict, challenging the belief that support is caused by the territorial control of armed groups.

Datus tend to support armed groups in rather opportunistic ways, often but not always supporting the state. McKenna states that some datus “supported the rebels clandestinely, a few did so openly; most, as we shall see, did not support them.”

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104 Discussion with plantation workers, Lapu, South Cotabato (25 June 2008).
106 Christians “refused to vacate [and promised to] fight for their rights.” *Mindanao Cross* (14 April 1956).
108 Historically, datus were textbook collaborators. Datu Piang was “a shrewd and independent-minded collaborator” while Datu Sinsuat’s “ascent to power was due almost entirely to his close cooperation with colonial authorities.” McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 95, 99.
divides datus into three groups: Those totally supportive of the state, and those who
defected early, and those who cooperated with the state while sympathizing with the rebels.
Many datus have been staunch state supporters, including the Ampatuans in Maguindanao
and Dimaporos in Lanao. Ali Dimaporo provided President Marcos with considerable
support, serving as his most faithful ally, and even naming his son Ferdinand Marcos
Dimaporo. When Marcos was overthrown, Dimaporo mobilized his private army against
local reformers and tried to overthrow President Aquino. Datus have provided safe
passage for the army, mobilized anti-rebel militias, and passed information to the army. But
other datus helped to create the rebel movement, although many came to terms with the
government once their positions were guaranteed. Many datus have crafted an ambiguous
position within the state. Abinales suggests that most datus are best understood as trying to
work both sides for personal gain. One Maranao datu explained to me that after clashes
between the army and the MNLF in 1979, he convinced both sides to recognize his militia:

The MNLF approved of the new militia, because I was really with them.
But I also have friends in the army. Both sides appreciated that I kept the
area stable and would not bow to their enemy.

Datus who defected to the state have been held with suspicion by Filipino officials, often for
good reason, as the MILF has benefited from high-level support. Most datus should be
considered as state supporters. Many Muslim civilians see their struggle as bring against “the
Philippine government and its datu collaborators.” But some datus resist the state and
help the rebels, and many work with both sides.

While Muslim datus tend to support the state, ordinary folk have taken a different
route. McKenna asserts that “Muslim civilians overwhelmingly supported the separatist
insurgents,” later adding that “nearly all [Muslim civilians] supported the rebels.” Writing
in 1976, Noble cites estimates that 55% of Muslims supported the rebels, 15% supported the
government, and 30% were neutral. Even Filipino military leaders concede that civilians
have “a wait-and-see attitude but [are] largely sympathetic to the rebel cause.”

111 Abinales, Making Mindanao, 45-55.
112 Interview with Datu Kalipapa Sarip, Lumbac, Lanao del Sur (29 June 2008).
113 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 177.
114 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 169.
115 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 3, 191.
117 Fortunato U. Abat, The Day We Nearly Lost Mindanao: The CEMCOM Story (Manila: FCA, 1999), 37.
1970s, many civilians supported the MNLF, and by the mid-1980s shifted support to the MILF, which remains a popular movement.

Some forms of support are relatively minor, such as playing rebel music.\textsuperscript{118} Other forms include telling tall tales of rebel outlaws and battles, which tend to feature supernatural support for the rebel cause.\textsuperscript{119} A further element of civilian support is the large number of pro-rebel posters, shirts, and graffiti. Some symbolic support for local rebels comes from prominent displays supporting rebel groups from other countries.\textsuperscript{120} Civilians have also provided direct assistance to rebel groups. McKenna shows that in the Martial Law era, civilians in Campo Muslim provided shelter to MNLF rebels, often leading to confrontations with the army.\textsuperscript{121} The wives of MILF rebels have served as supporters, encouraging recruits, providing food, taking part in rebel protests.\textsuperscript{122} Civilians have provided rebel groups with food, information on army positions, and funding.\textsuperscript{123} Sometimes, support is negotiated. In one case, the MILF demanded food and gasoline from Muslim villagers. The pro-rebel villagers provided the money, but refused to provide the gasoline, fearful that the MILF might torch a nearby Christian village.\textsuperscript{124} All told, civilians have provided the entire range of support to secessionist groups, often voluntarily.

A great deal of support has been facilitated by the broad social movement cultivated by the MILF. Tens of thousands have attended MILF protests and rallies. The decision to reside in MILF camps helps legitimize the MILF, which continues to look like a government in some areas. The MILF has established institutions through which ordinary people can become civilian members of the rebel group. MILF villages feature civilian-run businesses, such as fruit nurseries, bakeries, and cafes, as well as rebel schools, youth organizations, clinics, women’s associations, and farmer’s co-operatives.\textsuperscript{125} The degree of above-ground, organized support for the MILF among Moros is far greater than the levels of support enjoyed by GAM among Acehnese. While some ordinary Moros do not support the rebels—some have provided information to the army on the whereabouts of rebel bases and

\textsuperscript{118} McKenna, \textit{Muslim Rulers and Rebels}, 186.
\textsuperscript{119} McKenna, \textit{Muslim Rulers and Rebels}, 192, 193.
\textsuperscript{120} I found several posters featuring the Irish Republican Army, including one on a rural mosque, and saw a great deal of pro-Palestine graffiti.
\textsuperscript{121} McKenna, \textit{Muslim Rulers and Rebels}, 178.
\textsuperscript{122} Canuday, \textit{Bakwit}, 133.
\textsuperscript{123} McKenna, \textit{Muslim Rulers and Rebels}, 180.
\textsuperscript{125} Vitug and Gloria, \textit{Under the Crescent Moon}, 108.
the identity of rebel supporters—the support provided by ordinary people to the MNLF and MILF has been considerable.

Non-Muslim groups are a different story. Lumad communities occupy uncertain positions in the conflict. While some support the MILF, drawn to its defense of indigenous land claims, Lumad are more likely to support state forces. Lumad tend to resent the paternalistic attitudes held by MILF leaders and many Muslims. Many Lumad are Christian, so are weary of rebel religiosity and identify with many transmigrants. Tiruray tribes have tended “to shun joining rebel organizations, even if the monetary consideration is said to be attractive.”\textsuperscript{126} Not only do Lumad not usually support the rebels, some have mobilized against them. In the 1970s, tribal groups became core members of Ilagan militias and continue to provide recruits for state militias.\textsuperscript{127} This said, many Lumad communities remain neutral, seeing their interests as distinct from both sides. Some resent land grabbing at the hands of both Christian and Muslim migrants.

Christian villagers have been loyal state supporters. While some sympathize with Muslims, many Christians are highly critical of Moros, not to mention secessionist forces, and offer support to the state. Christian villagers tend to feature prominent Filipino flags, crosses, as well as billboards supporting state policies. Muslims note that Christians provide information to the army about MILF members and supporters.\textsuperscript{128} Christians have provided recruits and supporters to militias throughout Mindanao. For one woman:

\begin{quote}
We had to organize militias to protect ourselves from the MILF. My husband joined, he is a good fighter. I help by cooking meals for them when they are on patrol.\textsuperscript{129}
\end{quote}

Christian groups cannot always be relied upon to support state policies. Some pose as intractable opponents against concessions and peace agreements. But despite such ultranationalist positions, Christians represent a reliable source of state support.

I was unable to find much of a pattern among Barangay officials in terms of support. Many chairmen and councils are pro-state, some are pro-rebel, and some are neutral. Most choose sides rather opportunistically. Ethnic identity is only a partial indicator of support.

\textsuperscript{126} Mindanao Think Tank, “Strengthening the Peace Process bu Facilitating Dialogue with Stakeholders,” (2008), 17.
\textsuperscript{128} Interview with former Barangay leaders, Buluan, Maguindanao (22 June 2008).
\textsuperscript{129} Discussion with plantation workers, Lapu, South Cotabato (25 June 2008).
among local leaders. Christian Barangay officials are clearly pro-state, while the support of Muslim officials vary, depending largely on the dominant local combatants. Barangay officials support the state in many important ways. They organize Civilian Volunteer Organizations (CVOs) to fight the MILF. Many Barangay chairman are paid state informants. Others, though, are pro-rebel. In Buayan, however, I met one retired Barangay chairman who explained how he came to support rebel groups. In 1974, he witnessed several army abuses:

> I saw a boy shot in the back by the army. They put a gun in his hand and said he was MNLF, but the bullet went through his back! These things made me want to work with the MNLF...

He explained that most Barangay leaders support the state, as they are state officials and have to work with security forces. He expressed frustration at the majority of Barangay officials:

> They have no principles! Only some of us were brave. I would help the MNLF and we had local meetings about the justice for Muslims. Most officials are not like this, they side with whomever.

Discussions with a ranking MILF leader pointed in the same direction:

> It is not that local administrators always support the government. We have had many encounters with such traitors, but some Barangay leaders have given their lives for us—so many have done this.

The fact that the MILF has established a complex shadow administration, creating its own Barangay chairmen, suggests that they did not find Barangay or municipal leaders to be reliable. An important factor here is patronage. Many Barangay officials are members of political parties, supporting the state in exchange the spoils of office. The MILF recognizes this and expressly forbids its members from participating in Barangay elections.

In contrast to Aceh and Patani, very few Islamic leaders support the state. It is often noted that Marcos worked to co-opt Islam. While in some ways true—Marcos recognized Islamic holidays, opened Islamic research centres, and co-opted some Muslim leaders—he failed to establish the sort of state Islamic bodies found in other countries. Typical of the Philippine state, Islam is not well-institutionalized, and is organized around several powerful datus. State organizations serve as vehicles for patronage, not faith. In 1955, datus Alonto

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131 Jose Jowel Canuday, Big Wars, Small Wars (USAID: June 2005), 4.
132 Interview with Samaon Uyag, former Barangay chairman, Buluan (22 June 2008).
133 Interview with Muhajir Iqbal, Camp Darapan, Sultan Kudarat (20 June 2008).
134 Luwaran, “MILF Bars Officials to Participate in Barangay Elections” (04 October 2010).
135 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 167.
and Pendatun became leaders of the Muslim Association of the Philippines (MAP), an
association organized upon “the eminence of its members and founders.” Alonto and
Pendatun also established a branch of the Pakistani Tabligh movement and created Ansar el
Islam a missionary movement they used as to mobilize youths to fight the rival Dimaporo
clan. In 1982, Marcos established the Ministry of Muslim Affairs, reorganized as the Office
on Islamic Affairs by Aquino in 1987, and then the National Commission on Muslim
Filipinos in 2008. The purpose of the Ministry was to “Ensure the Integration of Muslim
Filipinos into the Mainstream Filipino Society.” While the name of this body has changed
several times, its ineffectiveness has not. The Philippines has nothing in the way of a Majdis

On the ground, the state receives little support from Islamic leaders:

Ulama that support the government? That is rare. Major clans have some
ulama. Also the ulama in the Bishops-Ulama Forum lean to Manila. But
only maybe 1% of Islamic leaders support the state, while maybe 80%
support the MILF.138

The Philippines lacks the sort of state Islam found in my other cases, as attempts to build
Islamic organizations have been dominated by datus. As a consequence, the state receives
scant support from Islamic leaders, who instead support the MILF.

Young Islamic scholars joined the MNLF early on, providing education and opening
mosques in MNLF camps. After Hashim Salamat split from Nur Misuari, ulama became
leading forces in the MILF, which is partly organized through mosques and Islamic schools.
McKenna divides MILF ulama into underground, largely rural MILF members and above-
ground, largely urban MILF supporters. The former “inside” ulama have helped the MILF
establish complex forms of governance, presiding over rebel courts and staffing the rebel
shadow administration. MILF Islamic officials preside over marriages and funerals, open
schools, and use sermons to communicate MILF positions. The MILF features an Islamic
consultative body (Syura), as prominent ulama serve as advisors to MILF leaders.141

Meanwhile, above-ground MILF ulama have organized pro-MILF protests, led
massive MILF sermon / rallies, documented human rights abuses in partnership with local

136 Nasser A. Marohomsalic, Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines
(Self Published, 2001), 151-152.
137 Cited in Julkipli Wadi, “Mindanao Political Restructuring: Antecedents and Prospects,” Center for People
Empowerment in Governance (25 November 2008), 3.
138 Interview with Benjamin Dumato, President, Buluan Madrasah (23 June 2008).
139 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 184.
140 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 213.
141 Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon, 109.
NGOs, and distributed MILF literature. In 1985, such ulama organized a Dakwah Conference, in which several thousand persons rallied to protest Marcos and his local allies.\textsuperscript{142} This was followed by a 1986 ‘Prayer Rally’, intended to show the power of the MILF to President Aquino.\textsuperscript{143} The three-day rally included speeches by MILF ulama in Cotabato City and MILF camps. The MILF reportedly spent several thousand US dollars on transport, food, and staff.\textsuperscript{144} A similar rally was held in 1999, when MILF ulama staged a massive demonstration against President Estrada. Such rallies should not be seen as indicating voice, as they do try to hide their pro-MILF agendas or rebel funding. MILF ulama have also issued several fatwa against candidates they perceive as anti-Muslim and anti-MILF.\textsuperscript{145} The MILF is partly a movement of civilian Islamic teachers.

Church leaders provide an interesting contrast with ordinary Christians. While most Christians in Mindanao support the state, several priests and nuns have tried to remain neutral. This is not to say that there are no anti-Muslim, pro-state Church leaders in Mindanao. But many prominent church leaders have remained neutral. One MILF leader notes that the Church is not their enemy, and while “there are always cranks in every organization”, most priests and nuns have remained neutral.\textsuperscript{146} In one interview:

> While many Christian people are the enemies of the MILF, church leaders are not. We are not anti-Christian, and priests are not anti-MILF or anti-Muslim. 99% of them are not, anyways.\textsuperscript{147}

By remaining neutral and providing assistance to Muslims, some Christian leaders have actually supported the MILF. In Campo Muslim, nuns and priests not only provided aid to Muslim residents, they sometimes helped rebels escape capture.\textsuperscript{148} For the most part, Church leaders have chosen not to support armed groups, remaining neutral in the conflict.

Among new notables, support for armed groups varies by ethno-religious identity. Christians tend to dominate the professional classes of Mindanao and support the state. Some are organized through the Kusog Mindanaw (Strong Mindanao), a group of Christian politicians and businesspersons which encourages decentralization and criticizes the rebels.\textsuperscript{149}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{142} McKenna, \textit{Muslim Rulers and Rebels}, 215.
\item \textsuperscript{143} McKenna, \textit{Muslim Rulers and Rebels}, 242.
\item \textsuperscript{144} Vitug and Gloria, \textit{Under the Crescent Moon}, 137.
\item \textsuperscript{145} Luwaran, “Ulama Issue Fatwa in Mass Rally Versus Anti-Moro Candidates” (20 March 2010).
\item \textsuperscript{146} Salah Jubair, \textit{The Long Road to Peace}, 76.
\item \textsuperscript{147} Interview with Abdulaziz G. Abdula, former Barangay captain of Kalingangan (29 June 2008).
\item \textsuperscript{148} Interview with Imam Amah, Cotabato City (19 June 2008).
\item \textsuperscript{149} At the 2010 Kusog Mindanaw meeting, army officials described the as a terrorist organizations.
\end{itemize}
Groups such as the Muslim Legislators Association and Confederation of Mindanao Governors and Mayors have organized anti-rebel protests. One obstacle to Muslim-Christian dialogue is the sensationalist Philippine media. Inflammatory columnists have demanded that the President “unleash the dogs of war” against the Moros or have referred to Muslims as a cancer. Not all Christian notables are pro-state, and some “are not hostile” to the rebels. This may be because Christian professionals are not as threatened by the MILF as much as Muslim professionals are by the Philippine army.

The MILF has developed with support from a broad social movement, a “Professional Coalition” of ulama and professionals. The Bangsamoro Lawyers Network provides legal aid for rebel affiliates and works towards restoring land to Muslim communities. The MILF has also found support among many academics, such as Abhoud Syed Lingga, a MNLF spokesman and the Executive Director of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies (IBS). Syed Lingga is a public voice for the rebels, publishing sympathetic research. For example, “Understanding Bangsamoro Right to Self-Determination” frames self-determination as an inalienable human right, stating that “The Bangsamoro qualify as people who hold the right to self-determination” on the grounds that “they occupy contiguous territory” [sic] which is rich in resources. Other Muslim professionals have created rebel-linked businesses, especially in transport and construction. Muslim businessmen have also helped to fund rebel groups. Rebel-linked businesses not only provide funding, but also contribute towards functioning economies within MILF camps. Muslim journalists have also cultivated working relationships with the MILF. MILF leaders have worked hard to court the media, holding press conferences, granting interviews, and writing rebuttals to critics. The MILF has also created its own media outlets with the support of sympathetic journalists. The website Luwaran offers an MILF perspective, but also reports on a wider range of stories.

152 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 213.
155 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 184.
156 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 209. Some businesspersons supporting the MILF are less than reputable, such as cigarette smugglers. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 160.
Student activists and NGOs have also provided considerable support to the MILF, taking part in protests, providing information, and joining rebel affiliates. NGOs such as the Youth Alliance for Peace in Mindanao are major “MILF allies.” Some NGOs provide a mouthpiece for the MILF. In November 2010, the Mindanao Alliance for Peace warned the government that it would ask the MILF to withdraw from peace talks if leaders in Manila did not offer a new peace agreement. The MILF website carried this and other statements from friendly NGOs which asked the MILF to end peace talks because the President was not sincere.

Introduced above, the IBS is part research institute, part advocacy group. It speaks out in favour of self-determination and focuses its human rights criticisms on state forces. Its leaders have created affiliates such as the Bangsa Moro Peoples’ Consultative Assembly and the Mindanao Peoples’ Peace Movement. The 2008 Mindanao Alliance for Peace manifesto demands that both sides continue peace talks, but adds that they support “the legitimate struggle of the Bangsamoro people for freedom and the right to self-determination.” While some maintain that Muslim civil society is “generally autonomous... and militant”, many NGOs clearly support MILF positions. This said, MILF leaders tolerate criticisms from civil society leaders and work to maintain their support.

**Why Do Some Civilians Support Armed Groups, While Others Do Not?**

Various civilians in Mindanao have opted to support armed groups. The MILF benefits from the support of ordinary Muslims, Islamic leaders, and Muslim new notables, while state forces are supported by a range of Christian and Lumad civilians. Meanwhile, datus and village officials occupy ambiguous positions, usually siding with the state, but sometimes helping the rebels. And despite widespread state support among Christians, many church leaders have remained neutral. Why do some civilians support rebel groups, while others remain neutral, or support the state? Early in the conflict, Noble found that MNLF supporters were motivated by a range of factors, including access to funding, clan loyalty, and “conviction of a common cause.” McKenna notes that almost everyone he met “expressed enmity towards the martial law regime”, what I call conviction, but also

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158 *Mindanao Alliance for Peace*, “Press Statement” (05 November 2010).
159 Muhair Abdullah, “Stop Talking Peace – Moro Youth Groups Urge GRP, MILF,” *Luwaran* (Fall 2010).
160 *Mindanao Alliance for Peace*, “Manifesto of the Mindanao Alliance for Peace (MAP)” (29 June 2008).
sided with the rebels “to defend themselves and their families,” motivated by security concerns.  

Security concerns help explain civilian support for armed groups. Many ordinary Muslims and Islamic leaders sided with rebel groups to gain protection from Christian gangs and the armed forces. Insecurity also helps explain why village officials tend to maintain fluid loyalties, as their position is uncertain. But supporting armed groups is also dangerous. Many ordinary Muslim civilians and Islamic leaders have been targeted for being pro-MILF, suffering a net decrease in personal security by supporting an armed group.

Economic motivations are also important factors in the decision to support a particular side. Datus helped to establish the rebel movement when their wealth was threatened, and defected to the state when it was guaranteed. Village officials rely on the state for their pay as well as access to patronage. Many Christians support state actors, and many Muslims support the rebels, in hopes of gaining land. Much of the Mindanao conflict is about traditional land rights, and siding with a particular armed group is sometimes motivated by a desire to retain or regain property.

Turning to socio-cultural factors, the major predictor of civilian support is ethno-religious identity. Despite some exceptions, such as neutral church leaders and pro-state Muslim elites, ethno-religious identity represents the fault line in this conflict. Within Muslim communities, ethnicity has provided schisms dividing various rebel supporters— the largely Tausug MNLF, the largely Maguindanaon MILF, and small Maranao factions. Clan dynamics also shape the conflict, evident in the private datu armies, with kinship loyalties sometimes undermining armed groups. Another element of support is that the MILF has grown not through arms or access to funding, but instead through social networks. Specific forms of support are informed by cultural scripts. At protests, the MILF has donned signs written in the Maguindanao language. Civilians support the rebels by singing rebel songs, which are a curious blend of Moro themes, Filipino karaoke, and American pop hits.

Finally, conviction motivates support for and against armed groups. Many Christian civilians support the Philippine state because they identify with it, but they also mobilize out of conviction against the MILF. Support for the rebels among Muslims is largely rooted in

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163 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 183.
164 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 191.
165 These songs tend to focus on the conflict tearing apart young love. In contrast, Acehnese rebel music is more Islamic, focusing on social change and national greatness. I was unable to find rebel music in Patani.
conviction against local datus. In 1978, Joel de los Santos Jr. observed that “while not all of the Muslim masses support the MNLF, an overwhelming majority are against the old politicians who have been identified as major causes of Muslim ills.” Unlike in Aceh or Patani, I did not find much conviction among rebel supporters against the Philippine state. Support for the rebels is rooted in conviction against local politicians and Christian migrants.

More than in Aceh or Patani, I found considerable conviction for rebel movements. The MILF is genuinely popular among many Moros, and in some areas serves as the government, and many locals identify with the MILF’s fight for ancestral lands. That popular support for the MILF is due to its policies and goals is not in doubt:

The MILF is very popular here. It encourages healthy lifestyles and social change, but is not too conservative. They are the voice of the Maguindanaon people.

[The MILF] is not perfect, and has some rotten apples. But it is good, and many local Muslims deeply approve of its goals.

As in Aceh and Patani, and as expected by other studies, the decisions made by civilians to support one group or another were motivated by a combination of factors.

**Voice**

Visiting the war-ravaged town of Pikit, Canuday notes that after fleeing a dozen times, locals were growing tired. Some had initially supported rebel groups but had since ceased to do so because the war was not bringing change. When the conflict erupted again, the residents of Pikit chose not to flee and not to support an armed group, but instead raised their voices, declaring their community as a zone of peace, off limits to both sides.

Mindanao offers a stark contrast with Patani, where protests, petitions, and international diplomacy were evident early on, but as the Thai army cracked down and the state expanded, non-violent protest faded. In Mindanao, resistance was violent from the very start—I am aware of few early examples of voice—but as the conflict has endured, voice has become an increasingly important option and has played out in novel ways.

I begin with defiance among ordinary civilians. Canuday documents cases in which displaced persons protested against armed groups by occupying local highways, framing their

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167 Interview with village elders, Limbalod, Carmen, North Cotabato (24 June 2008).

168 Discussion with professors at University of Southern Mindanao, North Cotabato (24 June 2008).

169 Canuday, *Bakwit*, 78.
struggle in terms of Bakwit (Evacuee) Power.\footnote{Canuday, Bakwit, 38, 81.} Amnesty International reports that, in 2009, “thousands of people affected by the armed conflict... took to the streets of Central Mindanao demanding peace.”\footnote{Amnesty International, “Shattered Peace in Mindanao,” 11.} However, this particular protest was organized by MILF-affiliated NGOs. Protests are common in Mindanao, but are often organized by armed groups or affiliated organizations. Are protests organized by MILF-affiliated NGOs or Islamic leaders and attended by civilians legitimate acts of voice? This issue surfaced in Aceh, but is more acute in Mindanao given the MILF’s strategy of building a social movement. The ordinary people, Islamic leaders, and NGOs involved in protests are not mere MILF proxies. But these are acts of defiance against the government, not against the conflict and they are by no means neutral. They could be seen as acts of support or acts of voice, but are best seen as combined strategies in which civilians support the MILF by raising their voices.

In terms of neutral voice, the principal forms of defiance in Mindanao are peace zones—geographical areas declared by inhabitants to be off-limits to armed groups.\footnote{Christopher Mitchell, “The Theory and Practice of Sanctuary: From Asylia to Local Zones of Peace,” in Zones of Peace, edited by Landon E. Hancock and Christopher Mitchell (Bloomfield CT: Kumarian Press, 2007), 2.} Peace zones originated in the aftermath of People Power and the collapse of peace talks between President Aquino and communist forces. Between 1987 and 1992, several villages in Luzon declared themselves to be off limits to the army and communists. In response to Estrada’s all-out war, a second wave of peace zones took root in Muslim Mindanao. The new zones are “characterized by their diversity and the range of their goals.”\footnote{Kevin Avruch and Roberto S. Jose, “Peace Zones in the Philippines,” in Zones of Peace, 62; pp. 51-70. Catholic Relief Services, “Reflections on Creating and Sustaining Zones of Peace: Lessons from Mindanao, Philippines” (Davao City: 2003).} While some zones are limited in scope, asking only to have no armed conflict within their borders, others feature innovative forms of governance, written constitutions, joint monitoring forces, Lumad or Islamic traditions, and social regulations such as prohibition. Some zones originated in flight, as villagers declared their evacuation centres to be free from conflict and later extended this status to their village. The great variation in the names and forms of peace zones reflect their diverse origins, with some created by villagers, some by the government or local datus, and many by villagers working with religious or NGO leaders.

I visited two very different peace zones. The peace zone in Carmen, North Cotabato was created in 2002 by Christian and Muslim community leaders. The community has a long
history of interfaith cooperation and intermarriage. In 2001, army attacks led to repeated evacuation among Muslim residents. After an incident in which several villagers were killed, village leaders decided to form a peace zone. Religious and Barangay leaders inaugurated the zone by organizing a feast (Kanduli) with the police, army, and the MILF, and also invited many church leaders and journalists to watch over the proceedings. In front of reporters, the community pressured the armed groups to sign an agreement which outlined the rules of the new peace zone. After considerable debate, Carmen’s Peace Zone was formed on April 3rd 2002. Posted throughout the Barangay, its Constitution emphasizes that no weapons are allowed within the community because the army and rebels are both committed to peace. When there is a complaint, a Joint Task Force consisting of village elders, religious leaders, and representatives from armed groups investigates. The Task Force is currently led by Lanie Paggopl, who emphasizes the importance of having local ulama and priests on the same page. The stability provided by the zone has allowed villagers to develop local infrastructure and promote economic growth.

The other zone I visited was located several kilometres north in a Muslim village. After fighting destroyed several houses, village leaders were contacted by the Consortium for Bangsamoro Civil Society. Together, they created Manarapan Darussalam in 2004. The zone’s founders took a holistic approach, working to build what residents see as an ideal Islamic society. This zone exemplifies the role of NGO leadership in the creation of zones after 2003. While the village is Muslim and many of the zone’s rules are framed in terms of Islamic culture, organizers acknowledged that an Islamic zone would pose challenges with the army. Instead of reaching out to Islamic leaders, the oversight committee is made up entirely of Christian nuns and priests from a neighbouring community.

A few disclaimers are necessary in assessing zones of peace in terms of defiance and independent civilian voice. Firstly, while peace zones involve elements of engagement, with civilians negotiating with armed groups, they are best seen as forms of defiance. Armed groups are informed of village decisions, with negotiations focusing on implementation.

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174 Christian migrants arrived in the 1920s, and in response to cattle rusting in the 1930s, formed village security forces which later fended off Ilaga attacks.
175 Interview with Lanie Paggopl, Chairwoman of the Joint Task Force, Ugalingan Peace Zone, Carmen, North Cotabato (24 June 2008).
176 Interviews with Guinard Dalid, Barangay Chairman, Talahir Sulaiman, Coalition of Bangsamoro Civil Society, and Datuan S. Panolimba, MILF Coordinator, Manarapan Darussalam, Carmen, North Cotabato (24 June 2008). Interview with Guiamel Alim, Cotabato City (30 June 2010).
Peace zones go against the interests of armed groups because they challenge their claims to control territory and speak for local people.\textsuperscript{177} For one MILF leader:

\begin{quote}
Zones are not real peace. Real peace will come when we have an agreement to provide freedom for Muslim people. Zones are a temporary solution and make real change more difficult. Many are actually army plots to separate us from the people. But yes, we support them. We do everything we can to support the people.\textsuperscript{178}
\end{quote}

Neither the MILF nor the army approve of peace zones, but neither wants to challenge the zones because they are popular.\textsuperscript{179} Instead of opposing peace zones, armed groups usually seek to contain them.\textsuperscript{180} Secondly, peace zones may break down, and perhaps be resurrected. Canuday describes a zone which, after keeping armed groups away from the community for two years, collapsed in 2003.\textsuperscript{181} It is difficult to consider this a failed case, as a short window of peace was an accomplishment for villagers. The zone was reconstructed shortly afterwards, and endured for another five years before falling again in 2009.

Thirdly, some peace zones do not represent neutral civilian statements. Some have been created by the government. In an attempt to support the growth of peace zones, President Ramos recognized and funded several zones. This was a “mixed blessing”, leading to conflicts over funds and causing suspicion from the MILF.\textsuperscript{182} Under Estrada, the army created its own peace zones after they had pushed the rebels out of a given area, using zones to limit rebel-controlled territory.\textsuperscript{183} But the number of pro-state zones tends to be exaggerated. For example, one of the larger peace zones was created in Maladeg, Lanao del Sur, by Bob Anton, who is from a powerful mixed migrant / Muslim family. The zone has proven highly stable and has been championed in media reports.\textsuperscript{184} Anton is a former militia leader, and the MILF believes that he created the zone to gain funding, populate it with

\textsuperscript{177} Referring to communist regions, Peter Sales is highly critical of peace zones because they fail to address the “contradictions in Philippine society.” Peter M. Sales, \textit{Caught in the Crossfire: The Peace Zone Experiment in the Philippines as a Means of Conflict Resolution}, Peace Research Centre, Working Paper 133 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1993), 6.
\textsuperscript{178} Interview with Muhajir Iqbal, Camp Darapan, Sultan Kudarat (20 June 2008).
\textsuperscript{179} The MILF is “vague or diplomatic” in response to peace zones. Avruch and Jose, “Peace Zones in the Philippines,” 65.
\textsuperscript{180} Sales, \textit{Caught in the Crossfire}, 13.
\textsuperscript{181} Canuday, \textit{Bakwit}, 78-79.
\textsuperscript{182} Avruch and Jose, “Peace Zones in the Philippines,” 59.
\textsuperscript{183} This resulted in the term ‘peace zone’ falling out of favour among local activists, who now tend to use terms such as ‘sanctuary’.
\textsuperscript{184} This is not to suggest that there has been no violence within its borders. In 2003, the MILF led an attack on army units operating from within the zone. Violeta M. Gloria, “Gunfight in Maladeg Zone of Peace,” \textit{MindaNews} (15 March 2003).
Christians, and allow the army safe passage. Sure enough, since the zone was created, it has served as a safe haven for displaced Christians. Anton’s family was faced with attacks from a rival clan and the MILF, and by claiming his estate to be a peace zone, he has protected his property. As one activist put it:

Peace is more than the absence of war. The Maladeg Zone is the worst, created by Anton to gain funding and weaken his enemies.

While many MILF members and activists shared this opinion, others offered an alternative view. Guiamel Alim is a leading activist in Cotabato City and, as head of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, has helped to create several peace zones. He explained that there are many state zones, but defended Maladeg:

I did not trust Anton at first. But he had lost his children to clan wars. He wanted a fresh start. I understand why the MILF does not believe this, but things change. This is a genuine peace zone and is off-limits to the army.

The Maladeg Zone focuses on resolving domestic disputes, clan conflicts, and interfaith tensions. It has also expanded into the social realm, banning liquor and gambling at the request of local women. While some peace zones are not neutral, created by datus and state forces, some of this perception is owed to attitudes hardened by years of war. Peace zones stand out as a particularly Filipino form of defiance. They defy both sides, which are pressured to respect the zones by broad civilian pressure.

The close relationships between civilians and armed groups also make it difficult to identify acts of everyday resistance. McKenna’s study is invaluable, not only because it emphasizes how ordinary people support rebel groups, but also because it shows how support is negotiated and sometimes involves resistance. Ordinary people resisted many “key separatist symbols,” such as Moro identity and Islamic reforms. When Marcos held elections in 1980 and 1986, the MNLF and MILF organized boycotts, but Muslim communities defied the rebels and voted in large numbers. At MILF rallies, civilians sometimes part with the official narrative. Just as many Acehnese protestors at pro-GAM rallies flew UN or white flags, protestors at MILF rallies in 1986 and 2010 have been seen

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185 Interview with Datu Kalipapa Sarip, Lumbac, Lanao del Sur (29 June 2008).
186 Interview with Sammy, NGO activist, Cotabato City (30 June 2008).
187 Interview with Guiamel Alim, Cotabato City (30 June 2010).
189 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 191.
190 McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 230.
wearing bright yellow in support of the Aquinos. Rural Muslims often criticize MILF ulama as being out of touch with local culture. When MILF ulama demanded the end of traditional funeral rites and popular musical acts, they were met with popular resistance. This opened a window for datu to champion local traditions and led Islamic leaders to modify their positions. Muslim civilians have protested many elements of Islamic reform, including “open (but quietly expressed) resentment” towards MILF Zakat taxes. As the conflict wore on, McKenna found that narratives of divine support for the rebels changed, and locals spoke of how the bodies of both sides were now decomposing because the conflict was no longer a just cause. So while there is widespread support for secessionist groups among ordinary Muslims, there has also been considerable low-level resistance to many specific policies.

For Christians, everyday resistance against armed groups is again blurred by high levels of support for state forces. In mixed villages, locals note that many Christians attend Muslim holidays, just as many Muslims attend Christmas and Good Friday ceremonies, minor actions which challenge both sides. At the other extreme, many Christian civilians challenge the state by criticizing it for not taking a stronger position against the rebels, and frequently fail to comply with official ceasefires and state directives. Many church leaders have quietly resisted both sides. By working with Islamic officials, church leaders have challenged Filipino security forces as well as Christian civilians. Sermons focusing on peace and brotherhood are common among priests and pastors in Mindanao. Among new notables, I again found few examples of everyday resistance, although as noted, NGOs have been crucial in supporting peace zones, often challenging their MILF allies in the process.

The conflict in Mindanao is also home to some exceptional forms of engagement. Sometimes engagement takes place through rebel defectors. Many former rebels have gained government posts or have been integrated into state security forces. Such defectors have sometimes helped to protect Muslim communities and serve as bridges between the army and Muslim villagers. When the MILF organizes rallies, it does so with the tacit

191 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 216.
193 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 221.
194 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 229.
195 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 194.
196 Interview with village elders, Limbalod, Carmen, North Cotabato (24 June 2008).
197 McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 178-179.
support of former rebels who are now working within the state. Local NGOs make a point of recruiting former rebels and state soldiers into village-level programmes so that they can engage with armed groups more effectively. Because state forces contain many former rebels, there have been several opportunities for cooperation and persuasion.

In Aceh, engagement involved village chiefs serving as mediators. In Mindanao, Barangay Chairs are only sometimes expected to mediate. When there is an arrest, the Chairman usually goes to the municipal government to file a report. On some occasions, he might approach the army. For instance, in 2000, the army beat and arrested a young man, so Barangay officials went to a local Priest and then approached the army:

The army recognizes Council Members and the Chairman, but it is important to have church leaders on board. To go to the MILF, you should have Muslim leaders with you.

Mediation between Barangay officials and state forces is not widespread, and is even less common with the MILF. The MILF’s system of local courts provides no role for defense. While village leaders may defend accused persons during MILF investigations, suspects must defend themselves in MILF courts. A more prominent form of engagement between village leaders and armed groups relates to evacuation. Village leaders often communicate with armed groups when they evacuate their villages, sometimes negotiating to secure passage. In one example, the Barangay Chair approached the MILF before a pending battle and explained that if the MILF did not leave, the villagers would. The MILF refused to leave, but suspended its assaults until the village had been evacuated.

Religious leaders occasionally engage with armed groups on behalf of ordinary civilians. In Cotabato City, a prominent Imam explained that under Martial Law, he would negotiate with the army when they followed suspects into the slums. With the arrival of nuns in response to the 1976 earthquake, his mediation role changed, as the nuns were more effective in negotiation with the army. In general, Muslim leaders have faced difficulties in

198 Canuday, Bakwit, 137.
200 Interview with Barangay Chairman and Council, Semba, Sharif Kabungsuwan (21 June 2008).
201 Interview with Ismail Dalinan, MILF Provincial Chair of Damakaling (23 June 2008). Interview with Muhajir Iqbal, Camp Darapan, Sultan Kudarat (20 June 2008).
202 Canuday, Bakwit, 136.
204 Interview with Imam Amah, Cotabato City (19 June 2008). Nuns began “actively defending the young men in the community from military harassment.” McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, 181-182.
engaging with Philippine forces, but Church leaders have been active in encouraging
dialogue. The Danasalan School was founded by Protestant churches to provide education
for Muslims. Supported by the American Board of World Missions and under the leadership
of Peter Gowing and Lloyd van Vactor, the School came to hold summer seminars which
brought together Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim officials. It also published newsletters,
research papers, and expanded educational opportunities for local Muslim scholars. The
mediation of Church leaders has continued to feature in the MILF conflict. Bert Layson, the
priest of the Pikit Parish, has worked closely with various NGOs and has helped to organize
various local ceasefires. Father Layson heads the Oblates of Mary Immaculate's
Interreligious Dialogue Program, writes a weekly pro-peace column in local Mindanao
newspapers, and has helped push the government and the MILF to resume negotiations.
Layson has been especially active in helping evacuees to return home, negotiating with both
sides to guarantee their safety. Another influential Church leader is Father Eliseo Mercado,
who helped arrange several local ceasefires and went on to serve as a peace negotiator for
the government. Some Church officials lean towards the state, but remain important go-
betweens to the MILF. The Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC) is a state-sponsored
interfaith group launched in 2006 which engages and sometimes pressures both sides. While
the BUC includes state officials, it nonetheless helps bring together civilians of both faiths
and engages armed groups.

The MILF has created a range of institutions through which it seeks civilian
engagement, although on its own terms. Each province in the ARMM is home to an MILF
Reconciliation Commission which includes Barangay officials, Islamic teachers, and some
church leaders. Commissions are tasked with communicating MILF policies to, and
soliciting feedback from, civilians. This system appears to be largely aspirational, and few
civilians seemed aware of its existence. The MILF also features an advisory body, known as the Majelis, in which various Islamic leaders advise rebel forces. The MILF meets
frequently with various religious and non-governmental organizations. For example, in
September 2010, several major MILF leaders attended a meeting organized by NGOs to

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205 My deep thanks to Lela Garner Noble and Lloyd Van Vactor for their accounts of Dr. Gowing’s work.
206 Pushpa Iyer, “Peace Zones of Mindanao, Philippines: Civil Society Efforts to End Violence,” CDA
Collaborative Learning Projects Paper (October 2004), 15.
207 Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon, 146.
208 Interview with Benjamin Dumato, President of Buluan Madrasah, Buluan (23 June 2008).
present the MILF with citizens’ demands. The MILF did not take well to every demand, disagreeing with Lumad groups regarding land claims, but they did listen.\textsuperscript{209} Engagement a strategy through which the MILF seeks to improve its performance and legitimacy. Since carrying out my field research, I have received several invitations to MILF press conferences. A January 2011 email from Luwaran.com advertised that, after a series of consultations with NGOs, people’s organizations, and academics, the MILF would hold a press conference from Camp Darapan to report on the demands of civil society and the future of the peace process. The invitation specifies that press accreditation is being handled by the MILF’s media wing. When an incident occurs, the MILF sends English-language press statements through its email list-serv and usually responds to questions posed by recipients of these emails. The MILF frequently grants audiences with and communicates to civil society actors, tolerating voice in order to improve its standing.

Some engagement takes place at the initiative of local NGOs. Formed to help monitor the 2003 ceasefire, Bantay Ceasefire has emerged as an innovative force which monitors tensions and investigates armed clashes.\textsuperscript{210} The group distributes cellular phones to its members, who contact armed groups and the media when hostilities threaten to erupt. By helping each side monitor their troops as well as their enemy's, combatants acknowledge that Bantay Ceasefire has “helped in the common desire of both the government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front to preserve peace on the ground.”\textsuperscript{211} By agreeing to work with Bantay, armed groups effectively acknowledge their lack of capacity and that civilians can help them maintain cohesion. This is the definition of feedback, mitigating violence not by resisting armed groups, but by helping them.

Perhaps the most interesting, unique forms of engagement between armed groups and societal forces have been civil society-led \textit{rido} task forces, which monitor and control violent kin-based violence. \textit{Rido} or clan feuding, is an endemic problem in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao, where local clan rivalries have expanded in the shadow of a weak

\textsuperscript{209} Mindawan, “The Moro Islamic Liberation Front’s Response to the Mindanao People’s Peace Agenda” (21 September 2010).
state and easily available weapons. Common causes of rido include electoral competition, property disputes, perceived slights to one’s pride (maratabat), and illicit sexual relations. While often framed as a traditional cultural feature, many locals understand such feuds as products of money politics and elections. It is increasingly acknowledged that much of what has been viewed as secessionist violence has actually been rooted in rido as rivals draw in family members who are also army or MILF soldiers. After a series of destructive conflicts in the late 1990s, academics and civil society activists brought the rido issue to army and MILF commanders. They showed that many major battles start with trivial matters, costing lives and money. MILF leaders view rido as unIslamic and seek to reform society away from “macho maratabat and pride”:

We forbid rido but it continues. With the help of NGO friends, we have been able to manage this problem.

In partnership with Bantay Ceasefire and other NGOs, the army and the MILF have created a rido task force. Canuday shows how this has helped to limit violence. During a 2005 ceasefire, MILF units attacked an army camp, but MILF leaders denied involvement. A Bantay Ceasefire investigation found that the clash started with a nephew and his uncle clashing over local elections. The uncle was allied with the Ampatuan clan, so the nephew turned to MILF allies, who were killed in clan violence, prompting MILF soldiers to retaliate without the knowledge of MILF leaders. NGO, MILF, and army officials worked together to detail the case and arrest those involved, and the ceasefire was preserved. In this case, feedback was a more effective tool for peace than resistance.

Why Do Some Civilians Speak Up While Others Do Not?

While I have found little consistency in terms of which civilians raise their voice, I have also found some unique, dramatic forms of voice in Mindanao, namely peace zones and rido monitoring teams. What explains civilian voice in Mindanao?

Factors related to security explain why Islamic leaders are less likely to choose the voice strategy than are church leaders. Islamic leaders tend to be targeted by security forces and are thus pushed towards supporting the rebels, while church leaders enjoy higher relative

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212. *Rido* is common among Maranao communities, scattering Maranaos throughout the region. Locals joke that when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, a Maranao trader was waiting to sell him a woven basket.

213. Interview with Barangay Chairman and Council, Semba, Sharif Kabungsuwan (21 June 2008).

214. Interview with Muhajir Iqbal, Camp Darapan, Sultan Kudarat (20 June 2008).

levels of security, enabling them not only to raise their own voices, but also to help others raise their voices as well. The effectiveness of peace zones rises and falls depending on the severity of the conflict, as greater moments of insecurity such as Estrada’s all-out war have caused them to crumble. Security concerns help explain engagement between civilian leaders and armed groups. As the army and the MILF have signalled their willingness to tolerate feedback, it has become safer to provide this form of voice, leading to some innovative responses to war. Security explanations can explain the absence of voice, as civilians can be deterred from speaking, but security concerns cannot explain the presence of voice. Why would civilians speak up when doing so is dangerous?

Socio-cultural factors are indispensable elements of voice. Acts of defiance feature scores of cultural symbols, seen in the language, music, flags, and themes at rallies. Peace zones are part of the social repertoire of Philippine activists, and specific zones are built to suit local cultures. Acts of everyday resistance against armed groups are heavily cultural. Rumours that the bodies of dead rebels have begun to decompose suggest that the rebels have lost godly approval, showing that civilians have grown tired of the conflict. In terms of engagement, the relative security enjoyed by church officials is cultural, as the Philippine army is not likely to abuse Christian leaders for fear of spiritual retribution or sparking criticism from civilians. The cultural tradition of clan feuding cuts across both sides of the conflict, necessitating cooperation with NGOs and elders to resolve tensions.

Again, voice when raised is about conviction. Engagement appears to be partly motivated by conviction for one side, with feedback helped armed groups perform better. Other forms of voice are rooted in conviction against armed groups, reflecting grievances. Civilians using rumours to criticize rebels whom they recently supported are citing disapproval at continued conflict, growing tired of a war which is not getting them anywhere. Peace zones are created by civilians tired of displacement and violence. In almost every zone, one hears that locals had enough of the conflict, usually citing a particularly traumatic event as the impetus for creating the zone. Civilians speak out because war is a contemptible state of affairs and, unless it is too dangerous, people will express concerns and criticisms.

Conclusions

Analyzing how civilians in Mindanao responded to war helps show the utility of the flight, support, voice schema, as well as how these options play out in distinct contexts.
Although evacuation is by no means unique to the southern Philippines, its form and frequency stand out as a particularly important form of flight. I also found that particularly strong forms of support were provided to armed groups, especially to the MILF, which seems to command wider popular support than GAM did in Aceh. Forms of voice such as peace zones andrido monitoring teams are unique among my cases. I was unable to locate many examples from Mindanao of the potential fourth option of inaction, or quietism, perhaps due to the widespread use of the evacuation strategy. The categories of flight, support, and voice are indeed useful in analyzing civilian decisions, although the forms that these options take vary in interesting ways in every conflict.

Mindanao features interesting combined strategies. Regarding flight and support, many civilians who evacuate but have nowhere to go have fled to MILF camps. The presence of stable rebel camps is something I did not find in Aceh or Patani, and may be a consequence of flight mixed with support. Because flight from Mindanao to other countries was not apparent in Maguindanao region, I did not discover support or voice from abroad. Flight led often led to voice. Many civilians have protested or created peace zones instead of continuing cycles of displacement. The combination of voice and support stands out as the most complex tandem. Ordinary Muslims, Islamic leaders, and Muslim professionals tend to speak out against the state through the rebel movement, while Christians tend to support the state and criticize the rebels. Earlier, I noted that ordinary civilians attend protests organized by MILF ulama and NGOs. Claiming these rallies solely as forms of support would downplay the opinions of those choosing to attend the protests, and would suggest that the protesters necessarily toe the rebel line. Such protests are best seen as combinations of voice and support.

What is most striking about the southern Philippines is the lack of consistency with which these strategies were used by different types of civilians. While Islamic leaders and Muslim new notables usually chose to support the MILF, other civilians lacked clear patterns, especially datus and village officials. That it was more difficult to observe patterns among many civilians in Mindanao likely reflects the weak nature of the state. The Philippine state is unable to control various datus, Barangy officials, religious leaders, or new notables. Widespread support for the MILF reflects a failure of the state to institutionalize Islamic bodies or incorporate educated Moros. State capacity is an important variable in understanding civilian strategies, which I will explore in the concluding chapter.
7 Conclusions

Do civilians possess any significant options in times of war? Above all else, I hope to have shown that they do. Their decisions are rarely heroic, and sometimes fail to guarantee survival. But they are important nonetheless, helping civilians survive, perhaps even prosper, and sometimes allowing civilians to influence armed groups. Civilians are typically the victims of armed conflicts, but they are not completely powerless.

Suggesting that civilians make decisions which help them to navigate through war goes against considerable academic insight. Human rights and human security research tends to portray civilians solely as victims, partly to compel humanitarian aid. Civil war research concerned with why armed groups target civilians treat abused civilians as independent variables—they are simply acted upon, even though their perceived support for a particular side makes them targets in the first place. Peace studies scholars view civilians as agents, but only in post-war contexts, affirming the sentiment that civilians can do little in times of war. This overlooks the likely possibility that what civilians do in war will influence their behaviour in times of peace. The preceding chapters have sought to illuminate the opaque world of civilian choices.

What options are available to civilians? Building from Hirschman,¹ I have proposed that civilians may flee from war, support one or more armed groups, and / or raise their voices in hopes of influencing armed groups and mitigating violence. This schema provides a simple tool to further our understanding of civilian choices. Each of these three choices has been studied by a wide range of scholars, but it is only by viewing them as choices in relation to one another that civilian behaviour can be understood. Which types of civilians choose which options? Studies refer to ‘campesinos’ or ‘peasants’, studying civilians as undifferentiated masses. By disaggregating this broad category, I have discovered that, facing the same conflict, different types of civilians make distinct choices.

Why do different types of civilians make distinct choices? Why do some flee, while some support armed groups, and others speak out? Looking to the literature on civilian support, I constructed four ideal-type explanations. Authors such as Kalyvas emphasize

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survival and profit, prioritizing a logic of consequences. In the sociological tradition, Wood emphasizes social norms of fairness and ideological conviction, reflecting a logic of appropriateness. I have attempted to bridge these explanations while also extending them to explain flight and voice. Arranging these explanations on a two-by-two table, with one axis representing degree of agency (from forced to the unlikely extreme of free will) and the other axis representing individual and collective logics, I have assessed the explanations for civilian decisions in terms of security, profit, socio-cultural factors, and conviction. I found that security concerns largely motivate flight, support for armed groups entails a range of explanations, and voice is rooted in socio-cultural expectations and the depth of conviction held as a result of various grievances.

This final chapter seeks to tie my findings together and look ahead to future research. I will start by returning to the two major goals of this study: establishing the flight, support, and voice schema, and showing my three cases in a new light. I will then address two lingering questions. How does the capacity of combatants influence civilian decisions? Do the three options presented in my study adequately describe the full range of options faced by civilian groups? Finally, I will discuss future research and some policy implications.

**Concept & Reality: Tying Things Together**

**Concept**

Applying the flight, support, and voice schema to three Southeast Asian secessionist conflicts has helped uncover a world of civilian strategy. At this point, I seek to tie together the previous chapters by comparing my findings from Aceh, Patani, and Mindanao in order to draw some lessons for civilian choices more generally. For each of the three strategies, I will review important contextual factors—what Paul Collier and others refer to as feasibility factors, as opposed to motivations for conflict dynamics—as well as explain the forms that each option can take, which types of civilians choose them, and why they do so.

The decision to flee is intimately linked to geographical factors, although the relationship is not straightforward. Neither oceans nor rugged mountains eliminate the flight option. In Aceh, young men fled to Malaysia and ethnic minorities made the difficult

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trek to North Sumatra. In Mindanao, civilians fled to swamps and hills because they offered protection. But the Patani case shows that accessible geography influences the volume of flight. Ethnic Malays fled to Malaysia in large numbers, while ethnic Thais escaped to the Upper Southern Provinces, partly because of flat terrain and decent infrastructure. All things being equal, we should expect hospitable terrain to make the flight option more salient in a given conflict.

I uncovered diverse forms of flight, taken up by different types of civilians. I found few large, semi-permanent IDP camps in my three cases—the exceptions being some Acehnese camps in 2002-03, several Javanese camps in North Sumatra, and some Muslim camps in North Cotabato. Displacement was more commonly short-term, with civilians seeking shelter from friends, family, or religious officials. In Aceh, such forms of flight were utilized by women, elders, and children, but not as frequently as I expected. In contrast, young men fled early, often, and far, sometimes in search of work. Regional ethnic minorities, namely Javanese, fled in the greatest numbers, forming the largest IDP camps I found in my research. Several authors view flight as a choice rather than being forced, on the grounds that "For all those who flee, others stay behind." In Aceh, I was struck by the extent to which village chiefs and Islamic officials did not flee. This was not, however, the case in Patani, where such figures not only fled, but often fled to state strongholds, which says a great deal about their social standing. In Patani, I found that ordinary Muslim and Buddhist civilians utilized short-term flight to their respective houses of worship, and longer-term flight to Malaysia or other Thai provinces. In contrast to Aceh, Patani Malays fleeing to Malaysia tended to be women as well as men, and were generally welcomed by Malaysian authorities. In Mindanao, I found that for ordinary people, evacuation was a dominant local response to warfare. Unlike Aceh, Moro Islamic leaders fled often, a consequence of being targeted by non-Muslim armed forces, but also a function of very different cultural expectations. All told, I found that flight could take many forms, varying according to gender, age, ethnicity, cultural traditions, and social rank.

Why did civilians utilize different forms of flight? What motivated the decision to flee in light of other potential choices? The dominant motivation for flight was rooted in security concerns. Not surprisingly, civilians leaving their homes typically did so when they

had little or no choice. Insecurity also accounted for some variation among civilians. Not every civilian faces the same threat of violence, as different ethnic groups, societal actors, ages, and genders face distinct security dilemmas. In Aceh, young Acehnese men and ethnic minorities were targeted more than other groups, as were village and Islamic leaders in Patani and Muslim communities in Mindanao and, as a result, these groups fled more than others. While the most important explanation for flight, insecurity is not the sole one. Economic factors served as important pull factors for young Acehnese men and Patani Malays bound for Malaysia, as well as ethnic Thais fleeing north and Moros fleeing to cities. Social and cultural factors helped inform who fled, how they did so, and where they fled to. In all three conflicts, ethnic identity served as a major fault line, largely, though not entirely, informing the likelihood and destination of flight. Acehnese and Malays fled to Malaysia, Moros fled to MILF camps, Javanese fled to North Sumatra, and Thais fled to Thai-majority areas. When civilians decided to flee, many chose co-ethnic strongholds. Cultural factors were also at play. Acehnese men are expected to travel for work, usually far afield, while women possess deep village roots, kinship patterns which informed the gender imbalance which marked flight from Aceh. In terms of social factors, chain migration among Acehnese and Patani Malays in Malaysia, where vibrant co-ethnic communities provide assistance to fellow migrants, helped reinforce flight. So while the primary motivation for conflict migration is, not surprisingly, rooted in security concerns, economic factors pull migrants and socio-cultural factors inform who, how, and where.

Civilian support for armed groups is particularly interesting because it challenges the view that civilians are innocent in times of war. While not, by definition, taking up arms, and thus deserving protection, civilian supporters help sustain conflicts and contribute to the capacity of armed groups to wage war. This informs debates regarding why armed groups might target civilians; they do so because many civilians choose to support armed groups. I discovered many forms of support, ranging from symbolic (such as waving Indonesian flags, using Malay place names, or singing MILF songs) to attending pro-rebel rallies, providing food or funds, and joining affiliated civilian organizations. Many studies of civilian support focus solely on support for rebel groups, overlooking support for state forces. I found that support for state militaries and pro-state militias can take on very different forms compared

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6 Moro civilians also flee to Malaysia, however most are Tausug, Samal, or Iranun. I did not find that ethnic Maguindanaons typically flee to Sabah.
to support for rebel groups. State militaries are less dependent on civilians for provisions or funds, although they may be dependent upon civilians for information. States are more likely to offer financial incentives to their supporters, although this does not mean that pro-state supporters are necessarily opportunistic. In all of my cases, pro-state militias were recruited from regional ethnic minorities—Gayo and Javanese in Aceh, Thais in Patani, and Lumad in Mindanao. Efforts to recruit from ethnic groups linked to secessionist rebels met with limited success. Regional ethnic minorities tend to be pro-state. They often resent the ethnic nationalism of the secessionist group and may be targeted by rebels. That attacks from secessionist forces drive regional minorities to side with the state suggests that they are not very different from rebel supporters. Each group responded to security dilemmas by supporting the other side, whether for security, profit, or principle.

The dominant contextual factor shaping support relates to zones of combatant control. As Kalyvas expects, the dominant regional armed groups gained substantial support from local civilians, and this support deepened over time. This was especially true in western Aceh which, as it moved from being a contested area to a rebel stronghold, witnessed deepening levels of civilian support. While the perspective that support flows from control explains temporal variation, it cannot explain geographical or societal variation. Zones of combatant control were largely determined by ethno-geographic patterns. In Aceh, GAM controlled ethnic Acehnese strongholds (even though they were low-lying, densely-populated areas), the state controlled ethnic minority strongholds (even though they were more mountainous), and ethnically mixed areas were contested by both sides. This unexpected pattern was also somewhat true in Patani and Mindanao, where transmigrants and/or indigenous minorities residing in remote regions continue to resist rebel movements. Kalyvas views combatant control as an independent variable, which seems to make sense in ideological conflicts. In conflicts with deep ethnic cleavages, armed groups tend to control their own ethnic strongholds, suggesting that combatant control may be a consequence of civilian identity and support. This said, ethnic identity did not entirely determine patterns of support. Despite being populated mostly by ethnic Acehnese, Banda Aceh and its environs remained state strongholds. In Patani, Malay civilians largely tried to avoid the militants and remain neutral, while many Malay village and religious officials tended to support the Thai state. In Mindanao, many Muslim datus have opposed the rebels.

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7 Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. 
These are exceptions to a general rule among my cases that support is shaped by regional ethnic identities, characteristics which are prior to combatant control.

Nor can the control / support hypothesis explain variation in support across societal groups. Not all civilians support armed groups, and forms of support vary across societal groups. This is not a product of control, but is instead informed by local societal norms. What types of civilians are most likely to support armed groups? Support tends to be especially evident among youths, elders, and women— persons not expected or allowed to take up arms. Support seems to be more difficult for young men because armed groups do not trust those who are capable of enlisting, but do not. Village officials varied considerably in terms of support among my three cases, with Aceh’s chiefs standing out for their neutrality. Meanwhile, religious leaders tended to be quintessential supporters of either rebel or state forces. This is not true across the board, as church leaders in Mindanao often remained neutral, as did ulama residing in Aceh’s contested areas. But in general, religious leaders seem to be core supporters of combatants. This might be expected in ethno-religious conflicts such as Patani or Mindanao. But the support provided by religious leaders was not necessarily a product of religious conflict. In Aceh, religion was not a salient feature in the conflict, as both sides share the same faith. However Islamic leaders nonetheless mobilized to support state and rebel forces. New notables also provided considerable support to armed groups. Generally, professionals seem to support state forces, businesspersons tend support the dominant side or both sides, and activists side with rebel groups. There are many exceptions though. In Mindanao, Muslim professionals emerged as major rebel supporters. In all three cases, the most reliable support for rebel groups was found among Islamic officials, with new notables also supporting the rebels in Aceh and Mindanao. The support provided by Islamic leaders and many new notables was so strong that they were able to influence rebel forces, a combined strategy I return to below.

In Chapter One, I noted the divergent explanations offered for support. While Kalyvas leans towards economic explanations of pragmatic self-interest, Wood reflects sociological concerns and other-regard. I found that explanations for support were the most diffuse of all three options, finding evidence for both approaches. Civilians supporting state forces, as well as businesspersons supporting rebel groups, seemed to be motivated by economic factors, and many civilians provided support to gain security. But as Wood anticipates, providing support also brings increased levels of threat for many civilians, as well
as economic costs, but many provided support anyway. Support is informed by socio-cultural factors: ethnicity largely determined patterns of support, support was reinforced through social pressure, and forms of support tended to be heavily cultural. In terms of conviction, some civilians supported armed groups because they believed in their goals and identified with their symbols. But more often, they seemed to be motivated by a deep dislike for the other side. Civilians possessing grievances—those who lost loved ones, endured abuse, or believed their people were exploited—tend to mobilize against those responsible. Barrington Moore states that “injustice” is the primary explanation for rebellion, and this seems to be largely true for supporting rebellion (or counter-rebellion) as well.\(^8\)

In Aceh and Mindanao, state forces sought to silence voice while rebels sought to co-opt it. In Patani, we see the opposite, where militants target even Muslim civilians and the state continues its impressive effort to co-opt Malay leaders of all stripes. Neither states nor rebel groups approve of independent voices, viewing them as supporting the other side. This is not true across the board though, as engagement is a form of voice which is not necessarily oppositional. A major contextual factor for the voice strategy is the nature of armed groups. Where both sides of a given conflict are abusive, voice becomes particularly pronounced. In Aceh’s contested areas, the rebels and the army attacked civilians, a cause and consequence of the fact that neither could rely on civilian support in mixed ethnic communities. Because neither side established control, open support was minimal, and because both sides were abusive, civilians tended to speak out against the conflict. In Patani, militants lacked support among Malay civilians, leading militants away from relying on civilians and towards targeting them. As a result, Patani Malays resist the militants, but only in subtle ways given the obvious dangers. Where civilians feel abused by one armed group, we should expect support for the other side. However, where civilians feel abused by both sides, we should expect voice to be a major strategy.

Civilian voice can take on many forms. Acts of defiance included ordinary villagers criticizing armed groups and, in Mindanao, creating zones which are off-limits to combatants. Defiance is best voiced by new notables, namely students and NGO activists. For ordinary civilians, defiance is simply too dangerous, necessitating more covert forms of resistance. Ordinary villagers in all three conflicts found ways to resist symbolically, subtly undermine, or to deflect the demands made by armed groups. The third form of voice, engagement, is

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particularly interesting. Many studies of agrarian voice emphasize resistance, however ordinary civilians may also use persuasion and feedback in order to shape powerful actors. Some village leaders were able to provide feedback to armed groups or negotiate for prisoners, especially in Aceh, and some civil society groups, especially legal aid organizations, defended prisoners and held local negotiations. In Mindanao, church leaders and NGOs monitor ceasefires and clan violence, communicating with armed groups in an effort to mitigate violence and moderate combatants. Armed groups are more likely to tolerate engagement than they are resistance, making it a particularly reliable form of voice which demands further research.

Security concerns explain the absence of voice, but not its presence. In all three cases, voice was silenced by armed groups, or at least transformed into more covert forms. Socio-cultural factors inform which types of civilians are able speak out, as well as how they do so. In Aceh, village chiefs follow strong cultural expectations to mediate. In all three cases, elders and women were sometimes able to criticize combatants because they benefit from a limited degree of immunity. In Mindanao, peace zones relied on the social sanction provided by church leaders, figures respected by both sides of the conflict. Everyday resistance relies on shared social norms and symbols, ones visible to other villagers but hopefully less visible to armed groups. The degree of conviction against war is the dominant predictor of voice. Those who have endured abuse by both sides and are tired of displacement are especially likely to speak out.

Flight, support, and voice are not necessarily one-off, stand-alone options. They are part of a broad menu of civilian choices. They may be weighed against one another, one option may lead to another, or they may be used simultaneously. For flight and support, the sequential relationship is especially apparent. Perceptions that particular ethnic groups or individuals were supporting an armed group led the other side to attack, resulting in displacement. GAM attacks on ethnic Javanese communities were founded upon GAM nationalism, but were justified by the rebels in terms of perceived Javanese support for Indonesian forces. Support, real or perceived, can compel flight. Flight can also lead to support. Many young Acehnese men fled from army violence to Malaysia, where their precarious position as illegal migrants allowed GAM an opportunity to provide assistance.

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9 This is a major advantage of Hirschman’s definition of voice, which includes resistance, but also petitions and appeals. Hirschman, Exit, Voice, and Loyalty, 30.
leading many Acehnese in Malaysia to become GAM supporters. Finally, flight can be a form of support. In Mindanao, many displaced civilians fled to MILF camps, and when these camps were attacked, many civilians fled alongside the rebels. This demonstrated the rebels' popularity and legitimacy, featuring as a simultaneous, combined strategy.

Just as support can lead to attacks and necessitate flight, voice also led to punishment from armed groups and subsequent displacement. Acehnese activists were targeted for publishing critical reports, leading many to flee to rural areas or other countries. Because armed groups perceive voice as support for the other side, the two strategies led to similar crackdowns and flight. In other cases, flight led to voice. Evacuees in Mindanao had an opportunity to discuss the conflict and to organize, often returning to their homes with a plan to protest or to create peace zones. Distance can provide a measure of safety and allow for protest. Aceh also stands out as having a particularly vocal diaspora community in relation to Patani or Mindanao. Acehnese students and refugees are found around the world, combining flight and voice by protesting from Western countries.\(^{10}\)

Of all combined strategies, the support / voice combination was the most interesting and had the most significant effects. In terms of sequence, crackdowns on voice did not always lead to flight. In some cases, targeting those expressing independent criticisms leads the victims to support the other side, as evident with activists in Aceh as well as ordinary civilians in all three cases. The most important intersection between support and voice is using them as a combined strategy, in which civilians express themselves through armed groups that they are closely aligned with. This combination deserves its own discussion below, as it enabled civilians to actually alter conflict dynamics.

The three options presented in my dissertation are parts of a menu of civilian choice. Civilians may weigh one option against the others. As some options become restricted, others may become more important. In Patani, I noted that the support option is closed to many Malay civilians, as the rebels are abusive and the state is not trusted. And because of the violent nature of the rebels and the institutional presence of the Thai state—discussed in detail below—it is extremely difficult for Malay civilians to speak out. With two options diminished, the flight option became more important. The three civilian options described in my project are interactive. As one diminishes, others become more salient.

\(^{10}\) Much of the Acehnese diaspora utilized all three strategies, protesting against the conflict while remaining sympathetic towards the GAM.
The primary goal of my dissertation has been to present a schema through which one can understand civilian choices in times of war. I have also sought to shed new light on three Southeast Asian secessionist conflicts. Studies of civil war typically focus on states, rebel forces, and international actors. Civilians tend to be relegated to masses who are attacked or who automatically embrace rebel groups, if they are discussed at all. I hope that my study has made some contributions to the study of Southeast Asian conflicts by presenting new evidence that civilians can be more proactive.

At first glance, my three cases appear to be roughly similar. Each features Southeast Asian Muslim regions with distinct ethnic identities which were absorbed late into highly centralized states, spawning secessionist rebellions against sometimes abusive state forces. Due to their similarities, the three cases are often compared with one another. While comparable, the differences between these cases became more pronounced as my research progressed. They varied in terms of state capacity, rebel cohesion, rebel popularity, rebel strategy, the role of transmigrants, and how various civilians reacted to violence.

Studies of the Aceh conflict typically centre on the northern coast. I have tried to overcome this geographical bias by paying equal attention to highlands, west coast, and southern communities—areas home to distinct conflict dynamics. Samples restricted to the Pidie region are bound to feature accounts of rebel popularity and army brutality. State and rebel forces behaved and were received very differently in other regions, especially in the interior. Only by acknowledging this does support for state forces among ethnic minorities make sense. I have also paid attention to village chiefs, figures viewed as indispensable parts of Acehnese society by sociologists, but who have been absent from studies of the conflict. I found that chiefs were particularly active during the conflict and almost always remained neutral, defending their villages and villagers. I have also shown how Islamic leaders slowly became involved in the conflict and how their involvement varied across zones of control. This qualifies previous studies which suggest that the conflict lacked religious elements.


While by no means making it a religious conflict, Islamic leaders were important sources of support for both sides. Looking at Acehnese civil society in terms of support and voice contributes new insights to understandings. While Aspinall has shown how NGOs came to support GAM, I have noted that older, more established NGOs generally remained neutral.\(^{13}\)

My insights into Patani and Mindanao should be viewed as tentative, as my fieldwork in these active conflicts was limited. These cases provided important comparisons with Aceh, uncovering factors which would not have been apparent in the study of a single case. In Patani, I was also struck by the considerable institutional presence of the Thai state, discussed below. Another key finding was that Malay civilians typically support neither the Thai state nor the rebels. While Patani’s militants gained some civilian support, it was negligible compared to my other cases, a point which has not been emphasized in previous studies. I found flight to Malaysia to be the dominant civilian strategy among Malays. In the Maguindanao region of Mindanao, I found evacuation to be a dominant form of flight, something which seems to have been taken for granted in single-case research.\(^{14}\) This local norm may help to explain a core issue in the current conflict, as Maguindanao and Lumad evacuations in response to early attacks enabled Christian migrants to take control of prime land. Better understood in previous studies, and affirmed in my study, is the popularity of the MILF, which has become a state within a state in some regions. I have also brought together previous research on peace zones and NGO monitoring under the category of voice, a strategy which takes on unique forms in the southern Philippines.

**State Capacity**

An important contextual factor that shapes all three options is the capacity of the host state, as well as the rebel movement opposing it. This factor was not visible in my study of Aceh, but became readily apparent as I undertook research in Patani and Mindanao. It is only through comparison with other cases that state capacity stood out as an important factor. How do the institutional capacities of the state and rebel groups affect flight, support, and voice? Is a strong state desirable in terms of overcoming ethno-secessionist rebellions?

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Patani represents one extreme, as the Thai state maintains a considerable institutional presence in the Deep South. The Thai state has come to control education, language, village leadership, and village leadership in Patani. Thai security forces are numerous and well-equipped. The state has co-opted various elements of Malay society into its ranks, including elites, village leaders, and various Islamic leaders. It features rival political parties and institutions which are adaptable as well as complex. While it does not satisfy all measures of state strength, the Thai state maintains a considerable institutional presence in Patani, especially in comparison to states in my other cases.\textsuperscript{15} The effects of a ubiquitous, but largely illegitimate state on civilian decisions are numerous. Popular support for the state among ordinary Malays is limited by its perceived illegitimacy, made worse by constant searches, surveillance, and arrests. This institutional strength also deters civilian support for rebellion and forces militants underground, limiting them to terrorist strikes, which discourages civilian support even further. Consequently, the support strategy is closed to Malay civilians. The potential for voice is similarly constricted, as the state, which is highly centralized, does not tolerate defiance or allow engagement. Meanwhile, the militants are anonymous and seek to kill their critics. The result is that many Malay civilians in Patani seek to lay low and avoid involvement in the conflict, maintaining a precarious position.

The strength of the Indonesian state in Aceh is moderate. The New Order co-opted and replaced provincial, district, and sub-district leaders, as well as created several institutions through which it contained political Islam. This said, the state was unable to recast village leadership, despite considerable efforts to do so, and was unable to co-opt traditional Islamic figures or new notables, groups which emerged as rebel supporters. With the help of such supporters, GAM was able to control several districts and establish some semblance of governance, even though the Indonesian military was able to make occasional forays into GAM strongholds. But the state maintained control of urban areas and gained the support of indigenous groups in the interior. As a consequence of this moderate level of state and rebel capacity, I initially failed to consider capacity as an important variable at all.

Mindanao represents the other extreme. The Philippine state is notoriously weak, lacking cohesive political parties or institutions and dominated by local elites, especially in Mindanao, where Barangay leaders are only sometimes elected, despite state laws, and are

often appointed by datus. State security forces include elements loyal to datus or taken from MNLF ranks. The state has totally failed to institutionalize Islam, and even church leaders, who we might expect to support the state, expressed voice against the state. In the Maguindanao region, the state appears to be held together by personal alliances, not by laws or institutions. The effects on rebel groups and on civilian strategy have been mixed. The MNLF failed to establish viable forms of governance, even though they were given the ARMM government, an experiment which was disastrous even by Philippine standards of governance. The MILF is different. While its capacity in Sulu and Lanao is limited, featuring autonomous commands and divided clan loyalties, it has managed to establish considerable control in some areas—more so than any other rebel group in my study. One effect has been that some Muslim civilians have fled to MILF strongholds. The MILF benefits from considerable civilian support, not only because it offers protection from arbitrary state and datu power, but also because it provides order. A weak Philippine state has permitted significant rebel support and unique forms of voice. However in MILF strongholds, voice can be limited, unfolding only within rebel-sanctioned institutions.

It appears that state and rebel capacity are reflexive. Where the state is weak, rebel movements may become strong, although they also face the same fragmented societies and strongmen that thwart state capacity. The presence of strong states or rebel groups can restrict the options available to civilians. This does not mean that a strong state is not desirable in terms of fighting armed groups, far from it. While the Thai state has been unable to overcome its insurgency, it has managed to limit militants to terrorist strikes on soft targets and deprive them of support. But for civilians, a stronger state means fewer choices. The moderate strength of the Indonesian state in Aceh is in some ways ideal. Aceh’s village chiefs remained neutral, enabling them to negotiate between state and society. By representing the village to the state and adjudicating over the village more than ruling it, Aceh’s keurik resemble what Michael Moerman refers to as a “Synaptic Leaders”, negotiating between the “conflicting interests” of state and society.16 This synaptic role is only possible in a state which is present in local life, but does not dominate it. The capacity of state and rebel forces to govern does not totally determine civilian options, but stands out as a major contextual factor which shapes them.

Shaping Combatants and Conflict Dynamics

Early in this study, I asked: Under what conditions can civilian decisions actually influence armed groups and shape the course of a given conflict? My evidence suggests that each strategy influences combatants and may affect conflict dynamics. Flight can affect the legitimacy of one or more armed groups, or it may satisfy the tactical goals of a particular side. Support can mean the difference between success and failure for rebels, and perhaps even for state forces. Voice can deny legitimacy to armed groups, and when amplified by international actors, bring criticism, sanctions, or even intervention from abroad.

One of the most interesting ways that civilian decisions shaped armed groups in each of my cases was through the combined strategy of support and voice. This involves civilian groups aligning with and perhaps joining an armed group, but steering it towards new means and ends. Joel Migdal states that “the most subtle and fascinating patterns of political change [result] from the accommodation between states and other powerful organizations in society.”17 States may be captured, in whole or in part, by societal forces and used to pursue independent goals. Armed groups are not different in this respect, as sustained alliances with societal forces can lead to mutual accommodation and transformation. This is linked to the above discussion of armed group and state capacity, as low-capacity actors are more likely to seek out alliances and are more likely to be transformed by them.

State forces seem less susceptible to local interests, although they are not immune from them. The Thai state is exceptionally centralized and local leaders tend to be sent from Bangkok. Even though is has co-opted many Malay leaders, its identity and policies have not been noticeably transformed—this is part of the problem for many Malays in Patani. In Aceh, the was influenced by local technocrats, traditional Islamic leaders, and later by the army. The most clear-cut example of state capture in my cases is the Philippine state in Mindanao, where datu and their private armies act as autonomous forces. Such warlords have exacerbated the conflict and have directly opposed peace talks. Local elites have mixed support and voice, siding with Philippine forces and pursing independent goals.

In all three cases, Islamic leaders supported rebel groups and moved them towards religion over time. In Aceh, the rebel movement initially lacked Islamic elements, and met with hostility from many ulama. But over time, ulama in GAM strongholds witnessed TNI

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abuses and saw that GAM provided an opportunity to expand their influence over society. Ulama came to support GAM in key ways, providing judges, advisors, schools, recruits, and sanctioning rebel policies. But this also transformed the rebels, who came to include religious advisors, make religious statements, and allow limited local forms of Sharia Law. In Mindanao, the lack of Islamic elements in the MNLF led to the creation of the MILF. The MILF expanded through the active support of Islamic leaders, contributing towards the growing piety of Moro society. In Patani, the only appreciable civilian support for contemporary militants has come from traditional Islamic teachers. In previous iterations of the conflict, secular nationalist rebel groups were challenged by more Islamic leaders, contributing to fragmentation and making for a more religiously-based conflict. In all three cases, Islamic leaders supported rebel forces, and through supporting them, were able to express their voice and alter the content of rebellion. This was not only true of rebel forces. In Aceh, state officials turned towards a rival network of ulama supporters, and went so far as to grant their allies the right to implement Sharia Law. In Patani, the Thai state has found considerable support from Buddhist officials, leading to militarized Buddhism and the army becoming part of the wat. That religious leaders support and transform a particular side is not always the case though. As the Thai state has also incorporated Islamic leaders, it has not been influenced by them. Further, Christian officials in Mindanao have largely remained neutral, utilizing voice, but not necessarily support.

In two of my cases, the influence of new notables was also felt through a combination of voice and support. This was most apparent in Mindanao, where the MILF expanded by working with Muslim scholars, students, activists, and businesspersons in a successful effort to build an Islamic-professional alliance. For the MILF, new notables are not simply allies, but also take on leadership roles and implement MILF policies, shaping the content of MILF rule. In Aceh, many younger activists responded to Indonesian assaults by supporting GAM. Aspinall shows that activists were not initially pro-GAM, but moved towards the rebels in response to continued army abuse. Activists created GAM civilian wings, organized rallies, communicated with the Western media, collected taxes, criticized the TNI, and served as GAM village officials, especially in the Pidie area. Mixing support and voice allowed activists to transform the rebel movement. Despite initial opposition, GAM came to support a referendum, came to speak in terms of human rights (as evident in

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the 2002 Stavanger Declaration), and tone down its anti-Javanese rhetoric. The transformation was a process of mutual accommodation, as students who previously identified in terms of Indonesian nationalism now became committed Acehnese nationalists. Aspinall suggests that the changes in the rebel movement promoted by the activists may have actually allowed for the conflict to be resolved:

Activists radically reframed the struggle for national independence. They emphasized human rights, an inclusionary national identity, and relations with Indonesian that were at least theoretically arguable.¹⁹

That the changes to the rebel movement brought about by civilian activists helped to overcome the conflict suggests that civilian decisions can indeed alter the course of a given conflict. Armed groups in all three cases accommodated their allies, and their goals changed over time to reflect those of their most dedicated, organized supporters. The combined strategy of support and voice provides the clearest demonstration that civilian choices can influence combatants and conflict dynamics.

Assessment: Additional Civilian Options?

In presenting the simple typology of flight, support, and voice as a means to understand civilian decisions, I have been careful to emphasize these three options can take on many forms and can be used in combination with one another. But no categorization can provide a complete reflection of reality, and all schemas are bound to fall short in some way. Even if we accept that the flight, support, voice schema is valuable, it may overlook other ways in which civilians react to armed conflict. At this point, I will assess my schema in light of additional potential options.

When violent conflicts erupt, civilians may decide to cease being civilians and become combatants. Should taking up arms and leaving the civilian realm be considered alongside flight, support, and voice? While important to keep in mind, becoming a combatant does not stand out as a civilian option. I am interested in those who choose not to fight. The literature on armed rebellion is substantial, while the literature on how non-combatants navigate such rebellions is limited. Enlisting is not open to all civilians, and only a tiny fraction of a given society chooses to do so. While taking up arms does not fit into my schema alongside the other options, it should not be totally ignored, either. At the edges of support, civilian contribute to the combat capabilities of armed groups. At the edge of

¹⁹ Aspinall, Islam and Nation, 123.
voice, civilians may temporarily take up arms in defense of their homes. Another grey area concerns regaining civilian status. For an individual who has joined an armed group and then demobilizes, how long must pass before he is once again a civilian? Many elders supporting armed groups were self-described soldiers, veterans from previous conflicts:

I am still a soldier. I served in the Darul Islam Rebellion, with Daud Beureueh. But now I serve as a GAM civilian.  

There are admittedly some grey areas in terms of civilian / combatant distinctions, and the decision to take up arms is no doubt an important one for some persons in the midst of war. But my concern is with those who do not fight, and those who enlist cease to be civilians.

Another potential strategy is what Kalevi Holsti refers to as “quietistic acceptance,” what might be called passive neutrality. This can take two forms: the path of least resistance or doing nothing. When armed groups demand that civilians flee or support them, taking the path of least resistance equates to flight or support. My study recognizes that not all civilian decisions are entirely voluntary. Revisiting an interview from Aceh:

GAM demanded donations. I had little choice. So I smiled and welcomed them.  

Here, the path of least resistance entailed support and did not constitute an additional strategy. That support was not offered freely speaks to motivations, which would point to security factors. But my typology is markedly consequentialist, focused on action. If this man chose to do nothing in respond to GAM demands, he would be resisting using the voice strategy. In Patani, many Malay civilians refuse to work with either side. When state officials demand that civilians comply with their orders, they tend to be met with blank stares and non-implementation. I classified this as a form of voice, forms of everyday resistance which resembled a boycott. Because civilians are subject to the demands of armed groups, the potential for quietism as a stand-alone option is limited.

There are times, though, when quietism may be considered as a fourth civilian option. Inaction is problematic because combatants expect compliance. In regions in which the presence of armed groups is limited, such demands may be ambiguous or not enforced. Here, going about one's business may not entail flight, support, or voice, but instead entail

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20 Discussion in coffee shop, Saree, Aceh Besar (30 October 2007).
22 Interview with Iwan, elder in Bireuen (05 November 2007).
actually doing nothing. In Aceh, many civilians in contested areas tried to carry on as usual. Some were ordered to provide support for armed groups, but many such demands were at first ignored, as neither had a solid presence in the area. Ulama, for instance, avoided the conflict and focused on their teaching duties:

With all the trouble around, the most important thing I could do was focus on creating a more peaceful, more Islamic society.24

In West Aceh, civilians did not initially possess strong sentiments for or against either side:

There was a conflict for Jakarta, Banda, and Pidie. But on the west coast, there was no war, and we just went on with our lives.25

This did not last though, as the west coast became a GAM stronghold over time. As the conflict intensified, many ulama in contested areas shifted from passive to active neutrality. Inaction is not typically a stable strategy in heated conflicts. It may work in areas detached from the conflict, perhaps in urban areas or extremely remote regions, where going about one’s daily life and ignoring the war may be possible. This said, paying taxes and not questioning the state may be considered as implicitly supporting the state—this is certainly the perspective of rebel groups. More importantly, non-participation involves civilians who are not confronted with the demands of armed groups. Once face to face with armed groups, passive neutrality ceases to be a valid option for most civilians, although civilians who only occasionally come into contact may be able to choose path of non-participation.

Another factor which influences the saliency of passive neutrality relates to the outlook of armed groups. In Aceh and Patani, armed groups and state forces expected civilians to mobilize on their behalf. However in Mindanao, the MILF, and to some extent the state, are more likely to allow civilians to not become involved. This may be a consequence of acknowledging their limited capacity, it may be a function of MILF security, or it may be a tactic to gain further support. In Mindanao, I met several civilians who have largely avoided the conflict, although such civilians still spoke favourably of the MILF, treading a fine line between quietism and support. Where civilians are not subject to the demands of armed groups or when armed groups permit it, passive neutrality may be considered as a fourth civilian option.

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24 Anonymous interview with Ulama, Nagan Raya (08 December 2006).
25 Interview with Teungku Lukman Ramli, MPU member, Tapak Tuan, South Aceh (17 April 2009).
Looking Ahead

I have established and illustrated a schema of civilian decisions which helps uncover new information on a variety of pressing issues which lay at the heart of civil war. Through extensive field research, this lens has enabled me to help explain civilian decisions, show how those decisions can influence the course of warfare, show that social norms continue to shape individual behaviour in war, as well as other novel insights. There are a number of potential avenues for further research. One potential project would consider how combatants react to civilian strategies. What do armed groups make of their civilians fleeing to other places? Why would armed groups tolerate voice, and what would convince combatants that voice does not constitute support for the other side? I would also like to conduct further research on civilians who support the state as well as pro-state paramilitary forces. I am struck by the extent to which observers view rebel supporters as unique (and righteous) while vilifying state supporters. By examining the motivations of pro-state civilians, especially regional ethnic minorities, a new research project might help to reframe this disconnect, highlighting how distinct ethnic security dilemmas produce understandable behaviour and sustain violent conflicts.

Further research is warranted on the combined strategy of support and voice. As noted, dominant studies of support fail to differentiate among different types of civilians. Noting that some civilians support armed groups, while others do not, opens up new avenues of research. How does the consistent support from particular types of civilians affect the composition and goals of armed groups? This line of research would focus largely on civilians who join armed groups in non-combat roles and come to shape their behaviour. Not only does research in this area promise to contribute towards understanding civilians, it also promises to help explain the behaviour of armed groups. Writers typically explain the behaviour of armed groups in terms of resource wealth, ideology, or organization. But the behaviour, goals, and constitution of armed groups are also shaped by societal support and civilian membership. Armed groups are the site of political struggles. In future research, I hope to provide deeper analysis on the support / voice combination to explain the organization and behaviour of armed groups.

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Another avenue to extend this study concerns generalizability. While my three cases feature significant variation, it is possible that my findings may only reflect Southeast Asian secessionist conflicts. This may be especially true of the voice option, which may provoke scepticism from experts on sub-Saharan African or Latin American conflicts. I do not believe that Southeast Asian cases are totally unique. Based on early research on secondary cases, flight, support, and voice appear to remain fundamental civilian options, a framework which if applied elsewhere could lead to significant theoretical and empirical contributions. The methodological ideal would entail conducting new field research in a range of conflicts, a possibility which is limited by expertise, networks, funding, and risk-acceptance. The best way forward is to consult secondary studies, which I began to do in Chapter One when I first introduced each option and provided illustrations from other regions and types of conflicts. I would like to complete a manuscript focusing on more secondary studies in order to improve the generalizability of my findings, as well as locate additional forms of each strategy. If I can locate a least-likely case for civilian decisions, I may undertake some additional field research or work alongside an expert who is familiar with this particular case.

My findings have some potential to inform the policy world. In Chapter One, I noted that humanitarian work could become more effective if aid agencies were more aware of civilian decisions. I have found that civilians do not necessarily flee to large camps, but are as likely to stay with family or evacuate to nearby hills. While presenting obvious logistical barriers to aid workers, greater attention to smaller forms of flight may improve the delivery of assistance. Delivering aid only to large camps may have unintended consequences, as rumours of food and money may compel conflict migrants to leave safer, more sustainable areas, or they may lead to conflicts over control of foreign aid. Looking to the various explanations for flight can also help to produce more efficient humanitarian assistance, as states and NGOs may be able to predict the destination and form of migration by studying socio-cultural factors. I have found that many young men flee both to escape armed conflict and to gain employment. Instead of labelling them as refugees or economic migrants, a new term which reflects both elements—such as refugee worker—may more accurately describe many conflict migrants.

Studying civilian support challenges the presumption that civilians are necessarily innocent. States and aid workers providing assistance to civilians should probably expect that many civilians, even women and elders, have in some way supported an armed group.
Scholars who are interested in how civilians can help build and sustain peace tend to focus on post-conflict environments, overlooking how similar processes might play out in war.\textsuperscript{28} But if civilians supported one side during the conflict, they may be unable to serve as neutral arbiters in peace-time environments. Identifying which civilians support armed groups, as well as the degree and forms of support, is a pressing issue for peacebuilding.

At the same time, if civilians raised their voices for peace during the war, they may be especially reliable peace advocates later on. By identifying which groups of civilians express voice and how they do so, aid workers and officials may be able to design programmes which include local, especially civilians who engage with armed groups. Encouraging civilians abused by both sides to speak out may win over some civilians who support one side due to the other side being abusive. In Mindanao, I showed how various local NGOs—some of which sympathize with the MILF—participated in the development of peace zones. But I also noted that state recognition and funding undermined some peace zones. For policy-makers to recognize specific forms of local voice, identify stakeholders, and provide limited assistance may be of greater long-term assistance than creating new programmes and trying to implement them during small breaks in hostilities.

In my introduction, I noted a case from South Aceh in which the Indonesian army was searching for an ulama who was known to be supporting the Free Aceh Movement. Unable to find him, they searched for his students, arriving at the home of Pitri. But Pitri had already chosen to leave Aceh in search of work. When confronted by soldiers, his sister Parwati defied them with direct criticism. She was arrested, but her village chief arrived and negotiated on her behalf, perhaps saving her from violence. What may have seemed like a mundane story involved significant civilian decisions—flight, support, and two forms of voice. The schema of flight, support, and voice is a tool with which we can expose civilian decisions. It shows how various societal groups react to armed forces, as well as how armed groups respond to unarmed forces.

\textsuperscript{28} Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, editor, \textit{From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 35.
Southeast Asia is home to several distinct naming practices. For many Muslims, their second name is not a surname, although some individuals prefer to treat it as such. In Thai and East Asian naming, the family name often comes first, however this also varies. My bibliographical listing tries to remain true to local naming practices while also responding to the demands of particular authors.


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## Appendix: List of Interviews

This appendix collects all field interviews and discussions cited in my dissertation, organized by date.

All interviews were conducted with the consent of those involved. Entries labelled ‘discussions’ tended to be in large groups, often at coffee shops, as is local custom. Persons involved in discussions were made aware of my affiliation and project, but I did not ask specific questions and made no effort to record names, largely because doing so would be impolite in such an environment, and also because ordinary villagers may be unable to provide informed consent in front of other, perhaps more powerful or partisan villagers. Interviews were more structured. They were fully transcribed, often by the author as well as a translator, and took place in private venues. Some interviewees requested anonymity. Surprisingly, many interviewees assented, and even asked, for their names to appear. Where I felt that there could be safety concerns, I went against their wishes and labelled the interview as anonymous. But for the most part, the names appearing in this project are real names, with the assent of those interviewed.

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## Appendix: List of Interviews, CTD

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