

Rebel Groups as Predation Systems:
The Political Effects of the 2004 Tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka

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From 2000 until late 2004, the prospects of peace between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) worsened. Previous mediation efforts that led to short-lived cease fires had failed, and the level of fighting had risen. Then, on 26 December 2004, the Indian Ocean Tsunami devastated the Aceh province, as an estimated 164,000 people died there alone (Pandya 2007). By August of 2005, GAM and the Indonesian government finally came to terms and appear to have resolved a brutal conflict that persisted over three decades.

A common interpretation of these events is that the tsunami is the primary factor that drove the actors to peace. Sukma (2006: 213) argues that the Tsunami was an important “catalyst for the renewal of the peace process,” and Pandya (2006) notes that the tsunami’s devastation led directly to the Memorandum of Understanding that brought peace to the province. The International Crisis Group (2005:1) agrees and states that “Although efforts to restart the peace process began well before, the December 2004 tsunami brought Aceh into the international spotlight, made it politically desirable for both sides to work toward a settlement, offered ways of linking the reconstruction effort and peace process, and ensured the availability of major donor funding outside the government budget.” According to these views, the tsunami’s devastation hindered war-making for GAM, and the international aid flowing into the country provided a positive incentive for cooperation.

While there is no doubt that the tsunami altered the conflict dynamics in Aceh, this explanation is incomplete. Sri Lanka too was struck by the tsunami, and over 35,000 died there, primarily in Tamil regions. In late 2004, the Sri Lankan government and the

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam maintained an extremely fragile peace after decades of civil war. After the tsunami, Sri Lanka progressively digressed into full-scale war again. The tsunami thus cannot be the primary factor that drove the peace process in Indonesia because the exact opposite situation followed in Sri Lanka. The Tamils suffered a similar setback in their capacity to fight and also faced the promise of international aid, yet these consequences of the tsunami did not stabilize peace. On the contrary, they may have proven destabilizing.

What explains the divergence in the peace processes after the tsunami in these two cases? There are many similarities between these two conflicts that rule out a number of potential explanations. Both involved secessionist movements, both involve islands in the Indian Ocean, both had third-party mediation, both are in developing countries and both had been ongoing for at least 20 years. We propose a novel typology for insurgent groups that distinguishes between types of rebels and explains why the LTTE and GAM reacted differently following the tsunami aftereffects.

Drawing from systems theory, we illustrate how the behavior of rebel groups is shaped strongly by their environment and nature of how they have been organized to operate within it. We propose that both resource concentration of their primary source(s) of survival (i.e. remittances) and operational concentration of its forces alter the different incentives for rebels, and the former factor is especially strong in explaining the differences between the LTTE and GAM. In Sri Lanka, the funds available to the LTTE include remittances from the influential Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the developed world. This efficient source of funding has altered the relationship and degree of

dependence the LTTE has on the domestic Tamil population. Consequently, the LTTE leadership is little affected by the needs of the local population and may in fact be threatened by outside offers of resources that entail implicit or explicit conditions. Lacking such easily available funds – either from remittances or from lootable natural resources – GAM on the other hand is more constrained by its resource environment and is consequently more closely linked to the local population. The public costs more directly become GAM’s private costs.

Whereas most studies of civil war focus on factors related to the political environment of conflict, we consider the heterogeneity in rebel types. The theoretical framework is exportable beyond these two conflicts. So, the influx of post-tsunami aid is a crucial causal factor, but it is conditioned on the nature of the different type of rebel groups involved. To the more totalitarian LTTE, the aid was seen as a threat to their monopoly on authority. To GAM, the aid was a much appreciated free resource and one that if denied would have significantly altered its relationship with local communities. This paper will develop this argument in full and present supporting evidence.

Not only does this paper help explain the empirical puzzle – that these two similar conflicts headed in opposite directions after the tsunami – but it also contributes to a better understanding of civil war. We hope to accomplish this by introducing systems thinking and system dynamics theory into the study of violent conflict by proposing that rebel groups be conceptualized as predation systems. This model will illustrate that the predation profile of insurgent groups provides important insights into how violent conflicts evolve and conclude. Finally, we will test the explanatory power of a portion of

this new model by examining how it better explains the discrepancy between the impact of the tsunami on the Aceh and Sri Lankan peace processes.

Toward a Better Understanding of Insurgencies

The burgeoning literature on intrastate conflict has yet to fully capture the heterogeneity of insurgent groups. Presumably rebel movements have different characteristics that make them more or less conducive to inciting a civil war, but scholars have yet to take those factors into account empirically. For example, in the widely cited empirical assessment of civil wars by Fearon and Laitin (2003), none of their variables actually describe the rebel groups. They all describe the characteristics of the state. Similarly, in other seminal empirical work on the economic causes of civil war, Collier and Hoeffler (1998, 2004) only look at state-level variables. As a result, they are testing their greed/opportunity and grievance models using no variables that actually describe the nature of the rebel group. This is a flawed approach to assessing the motivations of an actor. Of course, lack of data is the primary reason for the absence of insurgent-level analyses. Yet this further strengthens the need for case studies that trace how different rebel groups have different structures and motivations. We might also then incorporate much more of a political component than whether insurgents are simply driven by greed or grievances. Horowitz (2000) has provided a thorough qualitative analysis of the different motivations that distinguish ethnic groups in conflict. Yet he too does not explore many of the political dimensions of the rebel groups and instead focuses on the economic and psychological motivations such as worth and legitimacy.

While the existing literature lacks sufficient consideration of rebel group heterogeneity, efforts have been made in respect to the role of natural resources in shaping the incentives of insurgent groups to fight. The evidence on the connection between natural resources and conflict is mixed, however, as evidenced in many statistical studies that differ in which types of natural resources matter (de Soysa and Neumeyer 2007; Lujala et al. 2005; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Sambanis 2002; Addison et al. 2002; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2002; Fearon 2004; Collier, Hoeffler and Soderbom 2004; de Soysa 2002; Buhaug and Gates 2002).

Ross (2004) notes that most of these previous studies do not specify the causal link between natural resources and civil armed conflict. He then identifies nine plausible mechanisms and tests them using a small-n qualitative research design. One of the stronger findings from this study, in corroboration of Sherman (2000), is that lootable resources lengthened the duration of civil wars in 10 of the 13 cases. The rebel groups use the lootable natural resources to diminish their net costs of war and to have less need to back down.

While the Ross (2004) study does well to better specify the mechanisms by which resources and conflict are linked, two ingredients are still missing. First, insurgent groups have access to other types of resources beyond natural resources, such as extraction from local populations or remittances. These sources of funding might also shape the way the rebel groups operate, with remittances acting like a lootable good and local taxes a good that comes at a higher price. Second, resource extraction mechanisms should do more than impact the costs of conflict. They should alter the entire way in

which the insurgent group operates and functions. That is, when resources are easy to secure, as with lootable goods or remittances, the rebel group is impacted less by local communities. They may, for example, encourage renewed violence (instead of a long-term ceasefire) to promote the extraction of resources and justify the influx of remittances. When resources are primarily derived from the local population, then the insurgents are beholden to the population's compliance and have incentives to supply (or not deny) public goods, including peace and stability in many situations.

A Theory of Rebel Behavior

We propose that rebel groups will be better understood if they are seen as predation systems. Much of the current scholarship tries to explain the actions of insurgencies by solely examining the motivation of its leaders. The emerging fields of systems theory and system dynamics radically challenge this model as having too narrow a unit of analysis by proposing instead that organizations be understood as living systems (see for example Capra 1996). The implication is that leaders' choices and behaviors are usually better explained by the structure of an organization and its environment than isolated individual choices. This perspective suggests that if the key underlying dynamics of a complex system are understood, regular and predictable patterns of behavior will emerge.

Conceiving of rebel groups as predation systems is the first step in incorporating the ideas of systems theory into the study of violence. An ecological analogy and the study of predators serve as a good example to make this link more intuitive. While an individual predator makes choices every day that are unpredictable, their pattern of

predation – the pattern that arises from these seemingly unpredictable choices – reveals key characteristics of a particular species. Similarly, we are suggesting that if rebel groups are properly classified the random behaviors of insurgents will begin to produce patterns of behavior of certain types of groups. Furthermore, if these categories have explanatory value then the underlying factors used to create the typology must represent key insights into the nature of the actors.

It is important to emphasize that we are not proposing a typology that will better predict a single decision by a rebel leader, but rather, like our predator analogy, it will predict patterns of behavior. Moreover, while leaders still have the power of choice, as each predator does, over time these seemingly unpredictable choices will begin to conform to regular and predictable patterns. As a draught would predictably impact the feeding habits of a predator, similar externalities will alter patterns of behavior for rebel groups (the prospect of peace being but one example).

Rebel Predation Profiles

We propose that the structure of a rebel group and its relationship with the external environment is determined and organized around two principles – the **resource concentration** of the primary source of survival and the **operational concentration** of its forces. The resulting matrix (see Table 1 below) maps these two variables along the x- and y-axis, creating four distinct predation profiles: Mercenary Armies, War Entrepreneurs, Revolutionaries, and Separatists.

While both resource concentration and operational concentration are important in understanding rebel behavior, we primarily focus in this paper on the former. As elaborated below, it is on the resource concentration dimension that the LTTE and GAM primarily differ. After a brief overview of these systemic factors that shape rebel group behavior, we thus narrow our focus of these four profiles to the two broad predation strategies: Resource-Based Predation (Mercenary Armies and War Entrepreneurs) and Community-Based Predation (Revolutionaries and Separatists).

Table 1: Predation Matrix

		Community-Based Predation	Resource-Based Predation
National	Operational Concentration	Revolutionaries	Mercenary Army
Break-away		Separatists	War Entrepreneurs
		Low	High
		High-Return Resource Concentration	

Resource-Concentration

We are defining *resource concentration* as the return-on-investment of a group’s primary source of support. It is important to note that the term does not reference the type of resource involved (i.e. lumber, diamonds, or remittances) but rather the investment payoff in extracting it. If we could assign values to this variable, we would divide the value of the net resources extracted from high-return, lootable resources (if applicable) by the total net resources extracted from low return strategies (i.e. taxes and donations from

the local population).¹ More concretely, rebel groups that are financed by traditional lootable goods such as diamonds, narcotics or remittances from outside the domestic population would have high values of outside resource concentration. One of the key implications of this theory is that low-return strategies, usually associated with the initial phase of a movement's history, are slowly replaced, if available, by higher return resources. The implication is that the longer a conflict continues, the more likely groups will move from low-return predation (Community-based) to high-return predation (Resource-based). The result is a predictable progression for groups, if high-return resources are available, to begin to be structured and respond to conflict more similarly.

A few examples will illustrate the definition. The diamond extraction operations by the R.U.F. during the civil war in Sierra Leone represent an example of high resource-concentration. The low-level of investment necessary to mine surface diamonds combined with the diamond's geographic concentration results in a high resource-concentration coefficient. In contrast, the 'taxes' extorted by CPN-Maoists from the impoverished communities and businesses in Nepal represent a low resource-concentration value based on the high investment required to extract the funds (i.e. time, labor, and organizational sophistication) and its dispersion across Nepalese society. In what follows, we argue that the high return-on-investment (RoI) of LTTE's capacity to extract significant resources from Tamil communities outside of Sri Lanka places it in the category War Entrepreneur. GAM, on the other hand, like the CPN-Maoists, primarily relies on local taxation for its funding and as such are categorized as separatists.

¹ The net values include the value of resources extracted minus the resources invested in extraction.

Operational Concentration

The second organizing principle of a group's predation profile is its *Operational Concentration*. This coefficient serves as an empirical proxy for territorial claims (i.e. separatist groups will have a higher concentration than groups bent on national supremacy). Realizing that groups will fall along the entire spectrum, we have characterized the two halves of the spectrum as follows: separatists and revolutionaries. It is important to note that the calculation takes into account groups that explicitly claim only part of a country yet operate nationally. Each action and its corresponding geographical location should be aggregated, resulting in a weighted geographic average. Future research might generate actual values of this measure for quantitative statistical tests. Raleigh and Hegre (2005), for example, have begun coding precise locations of battles in many intrastate conflicts, which could be used to generate indicators of the operational concentration of the rebel groups.

By way of example, in Sri Lanka, the LTTE conducts military or terrorist activity throughout the country yet the majority of its operations are within the north east region. One should weight incidents like the highly publicized bombing of the Colombo airport in the context of the hundreds of military operations by the LTTE in areas more aligned with their geographic claims. The result is a higher operational concentration value. GAM would have an even higher value on this dimension, as its operations are confined to the Aceh province. Since we would categorize both rebel groups as being highly

operationally concentrated, the analysis of the Sri Lanka and Aceh peace processes focuses on the implications of the other dimension – resource concentration.

Observable Implications of the Predation Profiles

How do resource concentration and operational concentration influence rebel group patterns of behavior? The proposed typology should provide meaningful expectations of rebel group activity. We examine four key elements of a group's character: command structure, organizational sophistication, level of militarization, and responsiveness to community. In our analysis of the LTTE and GAM, we assess the extent to which these groups conform to the expected patterns based on their predation profiles.

Command structure: The more concentrated the primary resource, the more focused can resources be deployed in its extraction. This significantly simplifies and centralizes the command structure necessary to manage the resource and protection process. The opposite is true for primary resources diffused across the local population, requiring significantly more organization and resources to extract. The broader deployment inherently requires a more decentralized command structure because of the hostile environment in which rebel groups operate. Similarly, the communication and command control are simpler the more geographically concentrated the operational theatre.

Organizational Sophistication: Directly linked to the command structure is the level of sophistication required to manage and lead a group. More decentralized structures, as

outlined in the national-wide operation of the Maoist in Nepal, require greater discipline and organizational sophistication in order to remain a coherent organization. Moreover, the decentralization also creates stronger local commanders because they are required to play a more autonomous role. Highly concentrated resources and deployment require much less sophistication and can be run less like a military or party operation and more like a gang because there is greater oversight and less autonomous action.

Militarization: While a highly concentrated primary resource reduces command and control requirements, it requires a greater militarization of the operation. Since the resource is easily poached by other rebels or state entities, it requires greater protection and territorial integrity, including access to markets. The locations of these resources are also usually well known, requiring more potent and deadly protective forces. This inherently demands a more militarized organization (yet as seen above, one that is less disciplined and less controlled). Less concentrated resources are harder to poach so require less protection. Furthermore, what military expenditure that is available is diluted by the broader and larger number of forces, again reducing the militarization of the conflict.

Responsiveness to Community: A group's relationship with the surrounding communities and civil population is largely determined by the resource and operational concentration dynamics. Given that the higher the resource concentration results in a more militarized and undisciplined force, it becomes a menace for all surrounding communities. This

means that the group can terrorize and control the impacted communities. The greater concentration of resource wealth also means the group does not need community support to the same degree as more dispersed organizations. The need for community support by low resource organization requires more relationship and so these groups will be structurally more responsive to the embedding communities. For example, the FARC in Colombia originally provided numerous public goods such as education, but as it became more dependent on cocaine sales became more of a menace to the local populations.

By focusing on these four characteristics of a group's behavior, we believe that this dynamic of predation systems explains much of the rebel groups' pattern of behavior. This theory predicts that as a group's predation sources change, the organization and its relationships (internally and externally) will restructure. Rebel groups operating in environments with highly concentrated resources will evolve along similar paths, and given sufficient time, will begin to look and operate similarly. We specifically expect that the LTTE, as a group with high RoI will tend to have a centralized command structure, modest organizational sophistication, high militarization and relatively little provision of public goods. Most concretely, the LTTE will have strong totalitarian tendencies and will exploit the people and the opportunities in conflict. GAM, on the other hand, in deriving most of its resources from local taxes, will have a less centralized command structure, better organizational sophistication, less militarization and be more responsive to the Acehnese people. This is not to say that GAM does not exploit the local population or use terror tactics to impose its will, just not nearly to the extent exhibited by the LTTE. The

remaining sections present evidence supporting these arguments. Finally, we show how the 2004 Tsunami and the international aid that followed provided GAM with key incentives to seek peace but threatened the ability of the LTTE to survive as long as peace persisted.

The LTTE

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), led by Velupillai Prabhakaran, is an insurgent group that has struggled to create a separate state for the Tamil people since 1983. Around 70,000 people have died in the struggle. Tensions grew in 1956 after a Sinhalese government came to power and made Sinhala the national language. In 1972, a new constitution that advantaged the Buddhist population further enflamed tensions. Armed struggle between Tamil militants and the Sinhalese government led to the rise of the LTTE. Two major peace initiatives have tried to secure peace on the island. The first began in 1987, as India tried to use its leverage and an observer force to prevent violence. The intervention failed, as the observer force was resented by both sides even though its original motivation was to protect the Sri Lankan Tamils, kin to one of India's influential ethnic groups (ICG 2006). Norway then mediated a ceasefire agreement (CFA) in 2002 that, while still is technically in place, preserved relative peace until 2005. Under that agreement, considerable autonomy was given to the LTTE, but the sides returned to full-scale war in 2006 as violations to the ceasefire mounted and a more hard line Sinhalese regime, led by President Rajapakse took power.

The LTTE exhibit the war-entrepreneur qualities of a rebel group that has access to abundant high-return resources and a geographically concentrated population. With regard to the latter, the Tamils are clearly in the minority, representing around 18% of the population. The north and east parts of the island are dominated by Tamil communities, but there is also a number of Tamils in the capital, Columbo, in the west. While the Sri Lankan Tamils are fairly geographically concentrated, it is interesting to note that the LTTE is not nearly as strong in the eastern part of the island, where there is actually a greater mixture of ethnic groups, including a substantial Muslim population. Since they are a relatively concentrated minority group, the LTTE's demands are not to control the entire state but to create a Tamil state from the North and East provinces. So it fits the limited demands expectation from the theory. The remaining elements of this section will focus on the other dimension, which expects the LTTE to be highly centralized and militarized, with little responsiveness to the local population.

The LTTE relies on remittances from Tamils in wealthy foreign countries and thus does not actually depend on the Tamil population in poverty-stricken Sri Lanka for resources. While external funding is not a typical lootable good like diamonds, it has the same properties of coming relatively free and easily fungible into weapons and influence. The reliance on international transfers of money has characterized the LTTE since its inception. Early in the LTTE's existence, the Tamil population in India was instrumental in funding the Tigers' efforts and lobbying the Indian government to pressure the Sinhalese government. Presently, the LTTE depends on huge flows of remittances from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the developed world. The Human Rights Watch (2006)

estimates that about a quarter of the entire Sri Lankan Tamil population, some 600,000-800,000 people, are part of the diaspora. The diaspora in Canada is the largest, followed by India, various EU countries and Australia. With the relative wealth that these Sri Lankan Tamils have in their newfound homes, they fund a substantial amount of the LTTE war effort. Byman et al. (2001) estimate that a staggering 90-95% of the LTTE war budget comes from either remittances or international investments and businesses. From Sri Lankan Tamils in Canada alone, about CDN\$12 million flows to the LTTE (Human Right Watch 2006), and about USD\$50 million total each year comes from international sources. This means that the LTTE relies very little on domestic support for carrying out its goals. The LTTE is able to sustain the international flow of money, beyond what would be given unsolicited, through a coercive network that imposes a “tax” on members of the diaspora (Byman et al. 2001). It has also created non-profit organizations that are fronts for its war budget (Human Rights Watch 2006).

According to the theoretical framework, we should expect the Tigers to make decisions that benefit the leadership much more than they benefit the general population. They do not depend on local compliance for the resources needed to remain as a viable insurgent group. For the same reasons, the LTTE can rely on coercion and fear to implement their goals and to deny rival factions the ability to speak for the Tamils.

The LTTE indeed has a long history of using coercion and fear to keep rivals at bay. The Human Rights Watch (2006) estimates that there were around 200 targeted killings from 2002 to 2006, during the so-called ceasefire, in which the LTTE killed other Tamils from rival groups. The threat to the LTTE by other groups is very real, as demonstrated in

March 2004 when Colonel Karuna (Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan), one of the key LTTE leaders, formed a splinter group in the east called Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Perani (TMVP). The LTTE responded with force, leading to intra-Tamil clashes. Other Tamil groups include the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE).

Besides using force against these rival groups, the LTTE has used its political savvy to gain international recognition as the only group to represent the Sri Lankan Tamils. The LTTE has always insisted on bilateral talks with the Sinhalese government, excluding other Tamil groups from representation. Moreover, as part of the CFA conditions, the LTTE was not only able to secure protection for its own operations but also guarantees from the Sinhalese government to disband rival organizations (ICG 2006). The efforts that the LTTE has taken to secure its dominance are not unlike that of a totalitarian government. The University Teachers for Human Rights in Jaffna (#39) write, "Uninhibited killing by the LTTE is founded on their total insistence that they are the sole representatives of the Tamil people with a monopoly over violence, which they feel free to inflict on all whom they regard as traitors." Such totalitarian tendencies mean that the LTTE has shown little willingness to democratize and give the greater Tamil population more of a voice (UTHR 2002a, 2002b; ICG 2006).

The Tigers, with little control from the general Tamil population, also frequently take actions that are not in the general population's interests. This is perhaps best seen in the reliance on the conscription of child soldiers. The Human Rights Watch (2006) notes that

UNICEF documented 4347 cases of child recruitment from 2002-2006, with over a third of the cases involving children under the age of 15. Child recruitment is a way for the LTTE to secure manpower by exploiting a vulnerable population.

As war entrepreneurs, the LTTE has an incentive to avoid peace, even if it would make the Tamil people better off. The LTTE has justified its existence through the presence of struggle, and peace would threaten its utility as a viable organization. Indeed, remittances declined during the ceasefire because interest in the conflict waned (Human Rights Watch 2006). The International Crisis Group (2006) has called this a “peace trap”, in which the only way for the Tigers to get the concessions that they demand is to enter into a period of peace in which their own influence would attenuate. Peace could lead to greater importance of business, the diaspora and Jaffna elites, which would marginalize LTTE control (ICG 2006).

The 2005 national elections is also a case-in-point of the LTTE taking actions that benefits it as an organization at the expense of the rest of the Tamil community. The LTTE boycotted the election, with reports that they forcibly prevented Tamil people from participating. Most accounts expect that without the boycott, the more dovish Wickremesinghe would have won (ICG 2006). Instead, the more hardliner Rajapakse won and resumed attacks against the LTTE in earnest. To make sense of why the LTTE would take an action that gave victory to a stauncher opponent, some have speculated that the LTTE wanted a resolved enemy to further justify its control over the Tamil society (Economist 2007). That is, the LTTE purposefully withheld votes for a more lenient administration so that it could keep its legitimacy in the midst of armed struggle.

While the Tamil people as a whole might have been able to get more concessions out of Wickremesinghe, the LTTE realized that this might diminish its own importance.

In light of the scant regard for general Tamil wellbeing, one of the reasons that the CFA was so frustrating to many critics is that it actually aided the LTTE in its totalitarian tendencies. As previously mentioned, the CFA helped weaken the potential for more of the Tamil population to be represented. It also turned a blind eye to the conscription of child soldiers and the imposition of illegal taxes on businesses (ICG 2006). Finally, it allowed aid to flow primarily through LTTE-controlled structures, further enabling the Tigers to tap into unearned resources.

GAM

The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) also has been in armed struggle for many years. It started in 1976, when Teungku Hasan di Tiro challenged Jakarta's rule of the far western section of Sumatra. About 9000 combatants died in the roughly 30 years of conflict. The resistance escalated periodically over the next two decades. When Suharto's authoritarian government left office in 1998, this allowed more room for protest (Aspinall and Crouch 2003). While Suharto's successor, Habibie, was more amenable to GAM demands, the semi-autonomous military (TNI) and other political elites were less willing to concede autonomy, especially after the 1999 debacle in East Timor (Aspinall and Crouch 2003). Nevertheless, negotiations commenced in 2000, under the mediation of the Henry Durant Center (HDC).

The peace talks led to a humanitarian pause in 2000 and the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) in December 2002. The CoHA, however, sputtered and ultimately failed to stabilize peace as the TNI was able to make gains against GAM starting in May 2003. Negotiations resumed, this time under the auspices of Finland, while GAM suffered heavy losses. GAM and Indonesian negotiators reached agreement on nine points on 31 October 2004, but this did not receive support outside of the negotiating room (ICG 2005). A gap had widened between the GAM elites in exile in Sweden and the commanders on the ground in Aceh. In addition, the TNI wished to continue to pursue military gains instead of negotiating with the separatists. After the 2004 tsunami, five more rounds of talks were held in Helsinki, which produced a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 17 July 2005. Unlike previous attempts, this one did receive widespread support and was actually implemented. Per the MoU, local elections were held in Aceh on 11 December 2006 for a new governor and a local parliament with increased autonomy. Despite the division between leaders in Sweden and Aceh, a GAM ticket of Irwandi and Nazar took the executive positions, and GAM also achieved a majority of the local parliament seats.

That GAM was able to achieve gains via democratic processes is a testament to their ability to act for the interests of the Acehnese. Our theoretical framework similarly expects GAM to be a typical separatist group that depends on the compliance and support of the local population. They thus maintain limited demands and provide public goods.

Like the LTTE, GAM is geographically concentrated and makes no claims against the greater Indonesian state. The ethnic Achenese comprise about 75% of the province's

population but are scarce outside of Aceh (Aspinall & Crouch 2003). So, they are geographically contained. But unlike the Tigers, GAM does not have the ability to extract substantial resources from high-return resources such as remittances or other lootable goods. As a result, it depends critically on the willingness of those Acehnese to support their efforts. While Aceh is an important source of oil and natural gas to Indonesia, these resources have not easily been tapped by insurgent groups. Moreover, the Acehnese diaspora is not nearly as numerous and prosperous as the Sri Lankan Tamils. As a result, GAM has primarily relied on taxation of the Acehnese people to fund their efforts (ICG 2006).

Since GAM is forced to predate from its own domestic population, it has an incentive to encourage their compliance and wholehearted support. They have thus established a tendency to act in the Acehnese's best interest and to provide public goods in exchange for resources and allegiance. Throughout the 30-year conflict, GAM used grassroots efforts and student movements to sustain membership. It thus did not have to rely on coerced conscription and had plenty of voluntary recruits (Aspinall & Crouch 2003). GAM also provided many of the local government functions as the Indonesian state became incapable of action in the province (Aspinall & Crouch 2003).

The tendency away from totalitarian practices is further seen in the eagerness with which GAM pursued local democratic elections as a condition of the MoU. Kingsbury (2007) argues that democratization has persistently been a goal of GAM, with little tendency toward implementing some form of Islamic authoritarianism. The International Crisis Group (2005) notes that the elections were an "important forum for reconciliation

and affirmation of public support for the peace process,” so they were actually quite risky for GAM. If the people did not elect GAM members into public office, then GAM would have lost considerable momentum in claiming to legitimately speak for the Acehese people in during the negotiations. Moreover, democratizing gives the people a voice at the expense of the voices of GAM’s elite. Opening up the market for political expression is in itself providing a public good.

An interesting dynamic in the case of GAM involves the division between the “old guard” elites in Sweden and the leaders on the ground. The 2004 CoHA failed in part because the field commanders and elites in Aceh were not involved in the discussions (ICG 2005). The lack of support for the gubernatorial candidates favored by the elites in Sweden almost doomed the 2006 elections (ICG 2006). So, we can see that when GAM actions have been out of touch with the needs on the ground, it has struggled as an organization. As the grassroots effort to support the Irwandi and Nazar ticket demonstrates, however, when GAM leadership is in line with the preferences of the Acehese, it thrives. This further indicates the importance of local support to GAM’s viability, in contrast to the ability for the LTTE to exploit the Sri Lankan Tamil population without much recourse.

The Tsunami as Catalyst

The 2004 tsunami neither created peace in Aceh nor conflict in Sri Lanka. Instead, it created an impetus for the insurgent groups’ behavioral patterns to be distinguished. In particular, it gave GAM strong incentives to welcome the foreign assistance that could be

attained in the pursuit of peace and for the LTTE to fear it. This section first provides an overview of the tsunami's destruction and then an assessment of its political impacts. By comparing the LTTE to GAM, this exercise allows for comparison across most-similar cases in which clear variation in the outcome of peace can be attributed to one of the primary differences: insurgency type.

The Indian Ocean Tsunami killed over 164,000 in Aceh (Pandya 2007) and around 37,000 in Sri Lanka (Huxley 2005). In both places, the primary devastation occurred in regions controlled by the insurgent groups. About \$13 billion in international aid was raised to assist the affected areas (Hyndman 2007). In Aceh alone, it was estimated that the toll was \$5 billion, and at least 500 NGOs began efforts to restore Aceh shortly after the disaster (Pandya 2007). This puts a perspective on the amount of international aid that was made available to the devastated regions and the potential for international actors to be instrumental in distributing the much needed aid.

GAM's response to the devastation was to almost immediately seek peace and to welcome the aid providers. The International Crisis Group notes that the tsunami drastically changed the political landscape, and Schulze (2007: 95) writes that "a resumption of talks thus became 'linked' to financial resources." Tjhin (2005) also notes that the influx of civil society was instrumental in the peace efforts. These views maintain that while GAM was not fully ready to accede to Indonesian terms of peace before December 2004, the promise of needed aid made peace much more desirable. In exchange for giving up its demands for independence, the Acehnese could gain essential resources as well as more autonomy offered from the Indonesian government. Besides

the basic material necessity of the aid, cooperating with the international responders also had a strategic element, in that GAM could further place the Acehnese on the radar of the international community as a group worthy of aiding in both economic and security matters.

Although the LTTE faced similar potential benefits from the international aid, it instead took efforts to thwart the provision of the aid and deny NGOs access to the affected regions in the North and East. The LTTE ordered all relief agencies to channel relief through its aid body, the TRO, instead of targeting the funds directly. To justify this, the LTTE falsely accused the Sri Lankan government of misdeeds in the Tsunami's aftermath (ICG 2006). The Tigers refused assistance from the government and military (ICG 2006), and even turned away drinking water from the army (UTHR 2005a). There is also evidence that the LTTE used the disruption of the Tsunami for gain by recruiting child soldiers from the refugee camps (UTHR 2005b). By not going down the path to peace, Sri Lanka resumed their war, with over 2,500 dying and 200,000 being displaced in 2006 alone (ICG 2006). So, while many attributed the tsunami with providing the impetus for peace in Aceh, Uyangoda (2005) notes that the tsunami actually prolonged the political crisis in Sri Lanka.

The difference in how GAM and the LTTE responded to the influx of international aid confirms that they are fundamentally different types of insurgencies. To GAM, the aid is similar to a free public good. It is something that can benefit the Achenese people. By extension, the aid could benefit GAM as an organization by allowing the Achenese people to credit them with securing the aid and by maintaining

income that can be taxed. Making progress in the peace process thus allowed GAM to ensure the aid arrived, and it also demonstrated GAM's leadership importance. Schulze (2007) notes that GAM risked becoming marginalized because it was so weak after the Tsunami and needed to return to the negotiation table to get back into the center of action. This demonstrates that GAM depends on unforced compliance for its support and has incentives to actually provide benefits to the Acehnese people. If it fails to provide public goods, it will be unable to extract resources and will face competition from other groups that can better provide the needed public goods.

The LTTE does not rely on consent from the Tamil people. The international source of resources means that the LTTE can take actions that do not necessarily benefit the Sri Lankan Tamil population. But the LTTE is beholden to the incentives of the diaspora to send money, as it cannot rely purely on coercion, especially so far from home. It must justify itself as the only legitimate leadership of the Tamil people. Otherwise, the remittances will flow to the other organizations. So, it is in their interest to subvert rival organizations. Moreover, ongoing conflict draws strong support from the diaspora, so peace initiatives might actually cost the LTTE the resources needed to remain viable. The Tigers are thus war entrepreneurs in that they have incentives to keep the conflict ongoing and the remittances flowing, not unlike the incentives of other rebel groups to use the cover of conflict to extract lootable resources like diamonds.

The international response to the tsunami thus presented a number of challenges to the LTTE war entrepreneurs. First, the potential for an influx of civil society organizations would potentially threaten their preeminence and legitimacy as the

guardians of the Tamil people. The ICG (2006: 9) notes, “A sudden influx of international organizations, journalists and government agencies to areas the LTTE controlled and providing independent aid would have threatened its power monopoly.” In response, the LTTE insisted that all aid be funneled through its own organs, even if this meant aid organizations walking away or being unable to deliver the resources in the most effective way.

Second, making progress toward peace by cooperating with the Sinhalese government and army would potentially jeopardize its ability to secure military resources from abroad. Members of the diaspora might insist on sending their funds to humanitarian groups and avoid funding military efforts if peace were imminent. To remain relevant, the LTTE had to keep the armed struggle burning, even if peace was in the long term interests of the Sri Lankan Tamils, especially when peace would entail substantial foreign independent influence.

Conclusion

The analysis has illustrated the merits of considering the heterogeneity among different rebel groups. We proposed a novel theoretical framework that traces how resource concentration and operational concentration crucially shape the behavioral patterns of rebel groups in observable ways. In focusing on the former, we demonstrated that the LTTE, as an insurgent group with abundant high RoI remittances is able to be more totalitarian and exploitive of the Tamil people. Outside aid and a continuation of the peace process, which would create competition for where the remittances flow and

decrease their necessity, would only weaken the ability for the LTTE to remain viable. GAM, on the other hand, depends more on local support, which requires more effort to extract, for its existence and thus saw the relief aid as worth seeking peace for because it is more responsive to the needs of the people.

The analysis here has focused on two rebel groups that are similar in many ways yet elicited remarkably different responses to the tsunami. While this natural experiment of sorts is one test of our theoretical framework, more analyses are prudent. A more extensive qualitative analysis that looks at other rebel groups would be useful, as would a statistical analysis that derives measures of resource concentration and operational concentration. We leave these to future research.

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