The Politics of Ceasefires: a Comparison of the Relationship between Ceasefire Agreements and Peace Processes in Aceh and Sri Lanka

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Abstract: Some of the most protracted armed conflicts since the end of the cold war have taken place in the Asian region. Many of these have been intrastate conflicts that have involved a demand for self-determination and territorial partition. The armed conflicts in Aceh between the government of Indonesia and the GAM movement, and in Sri Lanka between the government and the LTTE, represent two such cases. During these two long-lasting conflicts, the warring parties made several efforts to engage in peace processes in order to find negotiated settlements to the conflicts. Establishing a ceasefire is often one of the initial initiatives in peace processes that aim for cessation of hostilities and for establishing momentum for further talks. However, peace processes are fragile; many ceasefire agreements are abandoned within the first few months; others formally last longer while hostilities continue to rage. Some conflicts thus seem to 'freeze' into what sometimes is described as a 'no war, no peace' situation. How then do the attributes and provisions of ceasefires vary between different peace processes, and does it matter for how the relationship between ceasefire agreements and peace processes can be understood and characterised? To address these overarching questions, this paper focuses on ceasefire agreements in peace processes in Aceh and Sri Lanka and analyses and compares these agreements by looking at their (i) initiation and by whom; (ii) form and content; and (iii) implementation. The paper ends with some comparisons and discussions on the relationship between ceasefire agreements and peace processes in Aceh and Sri Lanka.

INTRODUCTION

Some of the most protracted armed conflicts since the end of the cold war have taken place in the Asian region. Many of these have been intrastate conflicts that have involved a demand for self-determination and territorial partition. Such internal conflicts often proceed over a long period of time and are difficult to resolve (Wallensteen, 2007; Mack, 2006). Two conflicts that illustrate this problem is the armed conflicts in Aceh between the government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka; GAM), and in Sri Lanka between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The former armed conflict continued for nearly 30 years before a peace agreement was reached in 2005; the latter experienced 26 years of war before ending with a military victory in 2009. During these two long-lasting conflicts, several efforts were nevertheless made in order to end the
armed conflicts through peace processes; that is, where warring parties engage in repeated
initiatives with the purpose to solve issues through negotiations (Darby and Mac Ginty 2003,
2008). In peace processes, establishing a ceasefire agreement is often one of the initial
initiatives that aim for cessation of hostilities and for establishing momentum for further talks.
These agreements can vary in terms of form and procedure, actors involved, scope and
content, as well as how and to what extent the ceasefire agreements are being implemented.
However, while there has been a global increase of peace processes in intrastate armed
conflicts, empirical evidence has nevertheless shown that such processes are fragile and that
many ceasefire agreements are abandoned within the first few months while other formally
last longer while hostilities continue to rage. Some conflicts thus seem to ‘freeze’ into what
sometimes is described as a ‘no war, no peace’ situation. How then do the attributes and
provisions of ceasefires vary between different peace processes, and does it matter for how
the relationship between ceasefire agreements and peace processes can be understood and
characterised?

To address these overarching questions, this paper analyses and compares ceasefire
agreements in the intrastate armed conflicts in Aceh and Sri Lanka by looking at their (i)
initiation by identifying the most important actors; their (ii) form and content; and their (iii)
implementation. The two conflicts will eventually be part of a comparative framework for my
dissertation on the relationship between ceasefire agreements and peace processes, and this
paper is an attempt to make some initial comparisons. Due to the limited space, it should be
stressed from the onset that the empirical analysis will accordingly not be comprehensive but
rather aims to highlight some central similarities and differences between the cases in order to
make some preliminary comparative insights. The outline will be as follows: First, it begins
with a brief presentation of an analytical framework and tools to be used for the analysis.
Second, an overview and analysis of ceasefire agreements and peace processes in the
intrastate armed conflicts in Aceh and Sri Lanka will be presented. In the last section, some
comparisons and discussions on the relationship between ceasefire agreements and peace
processes in the two conflicts will finally be made.

**Peace Processes and Ceasefire Agreements – an Analytical Framework**

A peace process aims to describe a transition from war to peace where conflicting parties
engage in a process aimed at ending a violent conflict through peaceful means. Darby and
Mac Ginty (2003, 2008) define a peace process as ‘persistent peace initiatives’ that involve
the main parties in an armed conflict. These initiatives tend to be more substantial and
frequent than sporadic peace initiatives and to ‘develop beyond initial statements of intent’. Furthermore, Darby and Mac Ginty argue that a peace process has certain ‘robust and systematic qualities’, which enables the process to resist some of the pressure and challenges that can be put up against it (Darby and Mac Ginty, 2003: 2). The transition from war to peace is not to be perceived as a linear process. Rather, peace processes often involve a complex web of peace initiatives that can be introduced at different points of time, shift in significance during the process, and some initiatives can abruptly end or fade out while others continue. In contemporary peace processes, a ceasefire agreement is often one of the central components among such peace initiatives aimed at managing peace processes and facilitate a transition from war to peace.

Ceasefires are hence part of nearly all peace processes and have been described as the most visible signpost on the winding road from war to peace (Smith, 1995: 3). Nevertheless, ceasefires can differ in form and scope. They can precede talks that deal with core issues or they can be declared afterwards; they can be formal written accords or they can be verbal understandings; they can be a part of a comprehensive peace treaty or constitute an agreement in its own right. Due to the multifaceted characters of conflicts, of peace processes and of ceasefires themselves, there is no commonly recognized definition of the concept. As this paper is concerned with the qualitative aspects of ceasefire agreements – of how we can understand their relationship to peace processes and of the problems related to conflicts that continue in destructive ways despite a ceasefire – a comprehensive and flexible definition is found most appropriate in order to explore what constitutes and characterises a ceasefire in different settings. There are however two aspects of the concept that I find particularly important to emphasize. First, that the concept holds a declaration of intent to change the warring parties’ patterns of interactions by turning from violence. Second, that a ceasefire is undertaken as a mutual agreement between two or more actors to end violent behaviour. Hence, without necessarily being a written accord such definition holds a relational dimension as the ceasefire represents a deal or a pact between warring parties. While the ending of violent acts and other security related issues is a fundamental aspect to these agreements, even those not part of a comprehensive peace agreement can also hold non-military features by addressing political issues, the restoration of normalcy in the war affected society, and by

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1 Following this definition, a peace process is hence seen as constituted by many peace initiatives aimed at managing peace processes.

2 While the emphasis put on agreement consequently means that unilaterally declared ceasefires will not be at focus of analysis such ceasefires will nevertheless also be considered as part of the conflict dynamics. Furthermore, it is also necessary to point out that all ceasefire agreements that fit into the broad definition chosen are considered in the study regardless of the specific label the parties choose to attach to the agreement, hence whether or not they use the term ceasefire. The label chosen should foremost be understood in terms of politics and meanings ascribed by different actors, often mirroring the political sensitivity of ceasefires that in itself is an interesting dimension of the inquiry.
including various mechanisms to ensure implementation (Nakagawa et al., 2005). This also indicates the often-pronounced narrower purpose with ceasefires; to end violence in order to avoid casualties, and the broader purpose; to pave way for a peaceful solution. However, how the relationship between ceasefire agreements and peace processes actually can be characterized will be an empirical question.

**War to peace transitions**

A peace process, and the peace initiatives taken to manage such process, hence aims to generate a transition from war to peace. In essence, this is a concern with processes of change (Shapiro, 2006). By recognizing that conflicts exist everywhere as an integral part of human life, and understanding it as something that has potential to bring about constructive changes, the transition from war to peace can be seen as less about eliminating conflicts than finding venues for them to be channeled through peaceful means and procedures (Dayton and Kriesberg, 2007: 2). The focus on constructive changes in a temporal and long-term perspective hence invites for a process-oriented approach and a contextualized analysis in which developments are perceived to be shaped by the dynamic interactions between actors, events and the structural conditions in which these interactions take place. Instead of visualizing peace as an end point and focus on explaining a particular outcome *per se*, the management of a process and the how’s and why’s of its’ unfolding becomes essential. This perspective thus supports a closer look at the relationship between ceasefire agreements and peace processes as it encourages focus on short-term activities based on a vision of long-term goals.

A number of factors can be found in the literature that can be assumed to influence changes in conflict parties’ attitudes, behaviours and relationships, and hence help us understand the relationship between ceasefire agreements and peace processes. With regard to the complexity of intrastate conflicts, analyses are usually favored by considering different levels of analysis for identifying relevant factors of influence; the interactions between the main warring parties; internal political dynamics; as well as the external context (Ramsbotham et al., 2011: 175-176). Informed by such holistic approach, five sets of factors have here been identified that can be assumed to influence changes in the attitudes, behaviours and relationships of parties in protracted intrastate conflicts. The first set of factors concern the issues of (i) recognition, dignity and power-relations. Intrastate conflicts, where a government and one or more non-state groups constitute the main conflicting parties, are characterized by asymmetric power-relations that are closely connected to questions of
recognition, status and legitimacy. Hence, gaining recognition can alter positions and change the power asymmetry between the antagonists (Aggestam and Björkdahl, 2009). The second factor regards the issues of (ii) trust and confidence. In protracted armed conflicts – with experience of years of hostilities and memories of earlier broken negotiations – deep rooted distrust, suspicion and fear of the other’s intentions are often central parts of the conflict characteristics. Darby and Mac Ginty (2008) highlight these issues as posing major difficulties both for initiating and for managing peace processes. Whether promises are kept will signal to what degree there is willingness and capacity to commit. A third factor of influence regard the question of whether (iii) claims are met. The interest, values and needs held by the parties to a conflict – which constitute the incompatibilities or conflicting issues – are essentially articulated as political claims. It can be debated to what degree addressing a conflict’s root causes or power politics will have influence on the parties engaged in a peace process. However, as Guelke (2008: 67) concludes, while they both are most likely to be vital the normative claims held cannot be neglected in the long term. The fourth set of factors proposed regards (iv) resources and external incentives that can be described as found external to the parties. An external actor, such as a mediator, can be of great influence on the conflicting parties by exerting pressure in terms of both carrots and sticks. Here, I also refer to material and structural aspects such as economic resources. Economic resources can address important root causes to conflicts such as underdevelopment and uneven development and create conditions for future economic development (Mac Ginty and Williams, 2009). Resources can hence be closely connected to the earlier mentioned interests, values and needs held by the conflicting parties and hence if claims are being met. The fifth and last factor of influence concerns (v) contextual changes. Various factors can be identified in the regional and international context in which a conflict is embedded that holds potential to change the parties’ attitudes, behaviours and relationships. Contextual changes can alter the stakes and interests held by actors, and furthermore increase or restrain the possibilities to manoeuvre. One factor that Darby and Mac Ginty (2008) point out as the most significant contextual change in recent days is the post-9/11 ‘war on terror’ and the changes in many governments’ foreign policies towards insurgency groups.

Hence, earlier research proposes that the five sets of factors presented above can influence changes in the parties’ attitudes, behaviors and relationships in either constructive or destructive ways. If we consider the conflict in its context, they will accordingly both shape

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1 Here, power is not only limited to traditional understandings as coercion and control and with focus on the military dimension, but rather in broader terms as capacity to influence the course of events (see also Saunders, 2009: 380).
and be shaped by the components involved in managing peace processes. A ceasefire agreement is as mentioned often a central component among these various initiatives involved in managing peace processes, and has been described as one of the most visible ‘signposts’ in a peace process that indicates a change in the conflict context and an opportunity to open up a space for political negotiations. As Smith puts it, ‘whether or not it was the original intention of the belligerents or concerned third parties, the ceasefire will create an atmosphere relatively – if not completely – free of violence, an atmosphere in which, given time, a more permanent peace can be concluded’ (Smith, 1995: 8). Thus, the ceasefire is often described by its ability to ‘pave way’ for negotiations (Smith, 2003). Still, as empirical evidences from halting processes and renewed fighting shows it is by no means obvious how such process will develop. Uyangoda (2007) argues that ceasefire agreements and peace accords especially in ethnic secessionist conflicts are better treated as ‘instruments that reconstitute and even remake the conflict itself’. Hence, there is an evident risk that the conflict continues. He continues to propose that the way to address such conflicts is to ‘reinvent the peace process in the new context that emerges after ceasefires, negotiations, and even peace treaties’. If a conflict is to be brought to another arena it should hence be valid to explore whether and how a ceasefire can facilitate such transition and how it operates in different settings.

**Analytical tools**

How then can ceasefires be understood in the context of peace processes in contemporary intrastate armed conflicts? In this paper, I make a first attempt to compare ceasefire agreements and their relationship to peace processes in the internal armed conflicts in Aceh and Sri Lanka. For analytical purposes, periods of peace processes have been identified in each of the protracted conflicts, following the earlier described understanding of a peace process. In Aceh, after decades of armed conflict the first serious peace attempts were initiated in the early 2000s – approximately five years before the Helsinki peace agreement was settled later on in 2005. This five years period has been narrowed down into three periods of peace processes, where the warring parties have engaged in repeated initiatives with a declared intent to solve issues through negotiations. Accordingly, the analysis of ceasefire agreements in Aceh has been structured by addressing the 2000, the 2002 and the 2005 peace processes respectively. In Sri Lanka, the engagements in such processes by the government and the LTTE have been narrowed down into two similar periods: the 1994 and the 2002
Based on the literature on peace processes, the empirical analysis has been structured around the following three aspects: (i) initiation and by whom, (ii) form and content, and (iii) implementation. Hence, theoretical insights have focused our attention towards the (i) initiation of a process for explaining its’ unfolding. In this case, the questions of when a ceasefire was initiated, how and by whom, are hence all important parts of exploring the why’s of such an agreement. The (ii) form and content of a ceasefire agreement will be influenced by the purposes and the timing for initiating a ceasefire, by the actors involved, and by potential earlier accords. By creating a framework within which the parties interact, the form and content of the agreement can in its own turn have influence on the subsequent process. Furthermore, while reaching a ceasefire agreement is a challenging task in protracted conflicts, the number of conflicts that resume soon after an agreement also point to the many challenges that remain when the agreement is about to be (iii) implemented. The issue of implementation is important not only in order to avoid an imminent relapse to war but also for finding constructive ways to manage conflicts in the long-term and change the patterns of interactions.

These three aspects - i.e. the initiation, form and content, and implementation – have hence been used to structure the empirical analysis. In order to identify changes in the conflicting parties’ attitudes, behaviours and relationships, this has furthermore been done through the lenses of the previously presented five sets of factors that the literature proposes can influences such changes; that is, (i) recognition, dignity and power-relations; (ii) trust and confidence; (iii) whether claims are met; (iv) resources and external incentives; and (v) contextual changes. Accordingly, the factors of influence are understood as to contribute in shaping the how’s, who’s, when’s, what’s and why’s of ceasefire agreements and changes in the parties’ attitudes, behaviours and relationships. Hence, the ceasefire attributes and characteristics will be influenced by the conflict context, while these attributes at the same time becomes part of the context in which interaction between conflicting parties takes place and hence in which attitudes, behaviours and relationships are shaped and re-shaped.

In the following parts of the paper I will make a first attempt to compare ceasefire agreements in Aceh and Sri Lanka in order to discern similarities and differences that can help us understand the relationship between ceasefire agreements and peace processes in the two

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4 Since it is difficult to define clear starting points and ending points of peace processes, the years referred to primarily aims to indicate the intended period of peace initiatives by the year of official commence of a peace process. Nevertheless, in reality initiatives might have, and often did, commence earlier.

5 The notion of relationship is as indicated based on the assumption that the course of events in social life has multiple and often mutually reinforcing causes. Hence, in contrast to a single directed understandings of causality (a causes b) the ‘arrows’ are understood as working in both directions. Rather than identifying a general causal link applicable to all cases the precise interactions will differ in each case.
conflicts. Empirically, the paper has partly been informed by materials collected during research trips to Indonesia and Sri Lanka,\(^6\) including interviews and various publications both deriving from primary and secondary sources. Agreements, NGO reports, research articles, and newspaper articles have furthermore been accessed through the Internet. As noted, the empirical presentation in this paper is considerably brief and summarising. Nevertheless, while not claiming to give an exhaustive picture of the peace attempts, they will hopefully serve as sufficient points of departure for a comparison.

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**CEASEFIRE AGREEMENTS AND PEACE PROCESSES: ACEH AND SRI LANKA**

**The Aceh conflict**

After commence of armed conflict between the government of Indonesia and the GAM movement in the mid-1970s, the first efforts to explore the possibilities of a negotiated settlement can be traced back to the end of the 1990s. At this time, there were a number of significant changes in Indonesia’s political landscape with the breakdown of the Suharto regime in 1998, followed by presidential shifts and an incipient democratic transition. These changes proved to be important for creating favourable conditions for the initiation of peace attempts during the 2000s.

**The 2000 Peace Process and the Humanitarian Pause**

The first effort to engage peacefully to find a solution to the Aceh conflict hence started in the late 1990s and early 2000. The successors of Suharto, President Habibie and President Wahid, both indicated changes in the policy towards Aceh, significantly by stopping the former military operation area, lifting restrictions on media (Large and Aguswandi, 2008: 99), and making symbolically important statements and apologies of former atrocities (Huber, 2008: 17). Despite a lack of support from many political and military fractions in Jakarta, President Wahid decided to explore an approach based on dialogue with GAM – an idea put in practice through an offer of assistance by Swiss-based NGO the Henry Dunant Centre, later known as Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre, or HDC). This effort was also welcomed by GAM (Huber, 2004: 22-23), and in January the first meeting between the parties was arranged. A few months later, in May 2000, a three months agreement on a Humanitarian

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\(^6\) Research trips have been made to Indonesia in April/May 2010 and in May 2011, as well as to Sri Lanka in October/November 2010 and in January/February 2012. The interviews have been conducted with persons who in different ways have been involved in or who have good insights into the peace processes and ceasefire agreements in Aceh and Sri Lanka.
Pause was signed in Switzerland by the Indonesian ambassador to the UN, Hassan Wirajuda, and by Zaini Abdullah as representative of the GAM leadership (Humanitarian Pause, 2000).

The rationale of the Humanitarian Pause agreement was to focus on facilitation of humanitarian assistance and to reduce violence and tension in order to enable its delivery, hence limiting the suffering of the Acehnese people. As such, it was a comparatively limited agreement, and with the low trust and immovable positions held by the warring parties this proved to be a possible way for them to engage in a ceasefire and commence a process of interaction without immediately addressing disputed political issues or forcing either side to give up on their claims. Furthermore, the humanitarian focus reflected the overall approach of the HD Centre. Still, with one of the objectives of the Humanitarian Pause expressed as ‘promotion of confidence-building measures towards a peaceful solution’ (Humanitarian Pause, 2000: Article 1) the parties nevertheless also took the step to declare intent to engage in a process with more long-term purposes than a three months pause of fighting. In order to make improvements of the humanitarian situation possible and to build support for a continuous process both among the warring parties and the public, three organisational bodies were established in order to enable its implementation; a Joint Forum based in Switzerland and two joint committees based in Aceh to carry out the policy of the Joint Forum (Humanitarian Pause, 2000: Article 3). Small monitoring teams chosen by the parties were also appointed to supervise its compliance.

During the initial three months of ceasefire, the violence in Aceh was reduced. Still, it was not entirely ceased – almost immediately after the ceasefire started reports were made about clashes between armed groups (Aspinall and Crouch, 2003: 18). Nevertheless, while the situation on the ground remained unstable the Humanitarian Pause was extended for another three months and some progress was made in the negotiations. Approximately a year after the dialogue process had started, a Provisional Understanding was reached where the parties committed to only use non-violent means to achieve political objectives and to deepen the process of dialogue in order to find a solution to the conflict (Provisional Understanding, 2001). This was followed by an initiative to improve communication channels between commanders and new security directives (Directive on Security Arrangements, 2001). Furthermore, in the most violent districts security zones were also established for an initial two weeks (ICG, 2003: 3). However, these first attempts to establish security zones indicated challenges of monitoring, and critic directed towards different aspects of implementation grew stronger while suspicion about the other party’s intentions at the same time increased. In this context, President Wahid sent an instruction to ‘resolve the Aceh problem’ in April 2001,
which in practice meant that a new military offensive was launched. By July 2001, the whole process can be described as ended.

After decades of armed conflict, the Humanitarian Pause ceasefire initiated in 2000 can be considered a breakthrough in the sense that it was the first time the warring parties in Aceh reached a mutual agreement. As such, it provided an opportunity to take measures for improving the situation for people in Aceh and to build inter-party trust by working out a joint structure to handle issues of cooperation. Nevertheless, it was by large characterized by continuing violence and distrust, and the progress made can rather be described as sporadic glimpses of steps forward than robust and continuous peace initiatives. The Humanitarian Pause was primarily an agreement between the GAM and government leadership with a focus on security arrangements and a cessation of violence in Aceh within a limited time frame, and as the process unfolded there was not any significant changes in the parties’ behavioural patterns. Although there was an initial de-escalation of violence the agreement was violated from the very beginning, and the committees set up were not working properly. The government’s military troops remained in the region and assessments indicate that GAM gained military strength (Schulze, 2004: 17). Still, it can be argued that the situation on ground and the elite level negotiations were proceeding in somewhat different directions, with more progress being made in the elite level negotiations. As described in a report from the International Crisis Group (ICG) (2003: 3) ‘each step in the negotiation process seemed to produce a breakthrough that in fact never materialized’.

While the reason for ceasing violence mainly was justified by referring to humanitarian causes, the parties nevertheless also made the symbolically important declaration that they aimed to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. Furthermore, the parties outlined a broad framework for how future discussions on political issues could be carried out. Still, by the end of the day both stayed firmed by their positions and no fruitful discussions on the core issues were held. With the deteriorated situation on the ground, the lack of implementation of the ceasefire agreement and the absence of real steps towards a political settlement there seems to have been few incentives for the parties to make any further actions in order to develop the initiated peaceful engagement. For GAM a central reason to engage in the process appear to have been to gain recognition. To enter into a formal agreement with the government – and in addition an agreement worked out in an internationally backed process – enhanced the status of the movement. GAM also gained an opportunity to strengthen both militarily and expand their public support. The government side hence made efforts to lower the status of the agreement by refusing to call it a ceasefire (interview with Hasan Wirajuda, Jakarta, 28 April
2011). As the process proceeded President Wahid was furthermore increasingly facing intra-party difficulties with discontent and pressure both from politicians in Jakarta and from people within the army, partly with reference towards the international dimension of the agreement. Hence, the ceasefire can in many ways be described as ‘freezing’ the conflict situation and the process derailed after a few months.

**The 2002 Peace Process and the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA)**

The next ceasefire agreement in Aceh was signed approximately two and a half years after entering into the Humanitarian Pause, and almost three years after the initial confidential dialogue process between the Indonesian government and GAM had started. This time, there had been another shift in government in Indonesia with Megawati – former vice-President with close links to the military – resuming office as president after the impeachment of President Wahid. In the midst of continued military operations in Aceh, the parties met again in Geneva in February 2002 for talks facilitated by HD Centre, and in May a joint statement was made where a plan to engage in new a ceasefire was officially announced. This time, an extended mediation team had been created consisting of international diplomats referred to as the “wise men” (Huber, 2008: 18). Beyond the international diplomats engaged in the dialogue process, actors such as the United States, European Union (EU), Japan, Canada and the World Bank used economic rehabilitation of Aceh as an incentive in order to bring about an agreement (Schulze, 2006: 259). During an international donor conference in December 2002, pledges were also made to support the dialogue process in Aceh and to enable funding of a future international monitoring team to be located in the region (HD Centre, 2011). Seven months after plans for engaging in a ceasefire had been announced, the Cessation of Hostilities Framework Agreement (CoHA) was eventually signed on 9 December 2002 by Ambassador Sastrohandoyo Wiryono as representative for the Indonesian government and Zaini Abdullah representing the GAM leadership, this time furthermore formally witnessed by Martin Griffiths for HD Centre (CoHA, 2002).

In comparison to the former Humanitarian Pause agreement, the CoHA had a more detailed and comprehensive content, hence indicating an ambition to put more strength into the accord. This time around the agreement stated that hostilities and all acts of violence were to cease ‘forever’ in Aceh, not just for a limited period of time (CoHA, 2002: Article 5). Furthermore, the objective for ending hostilities more explicitly emphasizes intent to enable a proceeding to the ‘next phases of the peace process’ (CoHA, 2002: Article 1). In comparison to its predecessor, the CoHA accordingly to greater extent comprised a political dimension
with the May 2002 statement on an ‘all-inclusive dialogue’ as point of departure. The parties hence also confirmed their commitment to engage in a process intended to lead to the holding of elections for a democratically elected government in Aceh in accordance with the review of a law on special autonomy for Aceh (CoHA, 2002: Preamble). Furthermore, the CoHA also took more of a bottom up approach by moving closer to the field and by involving the decision makers on ground (CoHA, 2002: Article 2). Two organisational bodies were established as part of the agreement: the Joint Council with representatives from the party leaderships and the Joint Security Committee (JSC) located in Aceh. The parties also agreed to a phased time plan for the demilitarization of GAM combatants, and for the military forces to be relocated in a parallel process as well as to shift from being a striking force to a defence force (CoHA, 2002: Article 3).

To implement the ceasefire agreement, an international monitoring team was deployed by 150 monitors; 50 from GAM and the army respectively as well as 50 monitors that were invited from Thailand and the Philippines, whom were not to be regarded as representatives from their own countries but to serve as responsible to the HD Centre (Aspinall and Crouch, 2003: 33). To facilitate the work of the Joint Security Committee as well as to move closer to the field the focus of security improvements was geographically bounded to ‘peace zone’ areas (CoHA, 2002). The agreement was to be implemented in two steps, with an initial two months confidence building phase, followed by a five months demilitarisation phase. In the initial phase the agreement seemed to be working quite well; the organisational structures were relatively quickly put in place; the first peace zone was established; and the levels of violence dropped significantly. However, during the implementation of the demilitarization process the situation became all the more challenging due to mistrust between the parties and different opinions on what the demilitarization should include (ICG, 2003: 1). Furthermore, the government and GAM also had different interpretations of what had been agreed upon in the CoHA regarding how the process of reaching a political solution was to unfold. In this context, the violence – which had been significantly reduced with the signing of the CoHA – started to escalate again. After failed efforts of peace talks, President Megawati launched the so far largest military operation in the region by the end of May 2003 (Huber, 2008: 19).

Just like the first peace attempt in Aceh, the second process hence also derailed. Nevertheless, in comparison to the Humanitarian Pause this ceasefire agreement was stronger, had a more active role and a more evident political dimension. Through a commander-to-commander mechanism (an idea briefly introduced in the end of the earlier attempt) decisions, actions and responsibility moved closer to actors operating in the field. In the beginning
violence dropped significantly which meant an improved security situation in the region and hope raised among the public. In this ceasefire, measures undertaken were also to greater extent implemented and new steps were gradually taken. One example being the establishment of peace zones which was more robust than the former effort of creating security zones and was at least partly implemented. Importantly, the parties also managed to cooperate for the first time on mutually determining responsibility for violations (ICG, 2003: 11). Furthermore, with the experiences from the former ceasefire people from each party had also had more time to interact and get familiar. The increased international engagement through the international advisory team and the international monitors was furthermore an incentive for GAM to engage in the process. However, the parties importantly still had different views of the meaning of the agreement and perceptions of the other’s intentions. The government side still saw a future peace settlement to be reached within the unitary state, while GAM on the other hand saw the CoHA as a gate to elections and independence. As a former GAM negotiator describes is ‘they won’ with the CoHA as it stated that elections should be held which GAM was confident would result in a referendum in favor for independence (interview with Nur Djuli, Banda Aceh, 12 May 2010). By the time of the breakdown of the peace process the ‘hardliner’ approach within Indonesian politics, favoring a ‘no compromise’ position, had furthermore gained dominance (Aspinall, 2005: 9). Hence, in the context of increasing violence, problems arising over the implementation of the demilitarization process and a growing suspicion between the parties, extensive military operations were launched again.

The 2005 Peace Process and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

After the most extensive period of fighting – and in the context of the devastating tsunami that hit the Aceh coastline on 26 December 2004 – a third peace process was initiated between the government of Indonesia and GAM. While the tsunami indeed fastened the process, for example through the distribution of aid and money from donors, the process was nevertheless initiated before the tsunami (Ahtisaari, 2008: 10). In the autumn of 2004, political changes had yet again taken place in Jakarta with Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono assuming the presidential office in October 2004 after winning the first direct presidential elections ever to be held in Indonesia. Furthermore, after initiating contacts both with GAM and the government, Finnish businessman Juha Christensen approached former Finnish president and well-known international mediator Martti Ahtisaari in February 2004, who later on became formally involved in the arrangement by the end of 2004. In December 2004 the parties
confirmed to hold talks, and the first round took place in January some weeks after the tsunami. However, GAM declared a unilateral ceasefire the day following the tsunami, but this initiative was not responded with any similar measure by the government. Instead of using a step-by-step approach by agreeing on a ceasefire in order to build confidence and pave way for negotiations, the process focused on reaching agreements on substantial political issues before a ceasefire was put into effect based on the formula emphasized by mediator Ahtisaari that ‘nothing is agreed until everything is agreed’ (Ahtisaari, 2008: 10). The question of a ceasefire was nevertheless brought up especially during the first rounds of negotiations, with GAM calling for a ceasefire agreement while the government wanted to proceed talks without a formal ceasefire arrangement. However, as described by a participant during the negotiations, a separate agreement on a ceasefire during talks eventually became a ‘non-issue’ as the security aspect in negotiations were strictly on ‘political security arrangements’ (interview with Shadia Marhaban, Banda Aceh, 17 May 2010). Although there was no formal ceasefire agreement during the negotiation phase, the mediators nevertheless stressed the necessity for both parties to inform their units and troops on ground about the ongoing peace talks and to order them not to make any operations or moves.

After months of peace negotiations a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 15 August in Helsinki by the Indonesian Minister of Law and Human Rights Hamid Awaludin, Malik Mahmud on behalf of GAM leadership, and witnessed by the facilitator Ahtisaari (MoU, 2005). The MoU was thus to be perceived as a final ‘comprehensive peace settlement’, that dealt with the future relationship between GAM and the Indonesian state as well as with socio-economic, political and security related matters. As a primary security arrangement the parties agreed that ‘All acts of violence between the parties will end latest at the time of the signing of this MoU’ (MoU, 2005: Article 4). Furthermore, a four phased demobilization was initiated and as part of the MoU an international monitoring team with mandate to make binding decisions – the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) – was established by the EU, five contributing countries from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Norway and Switzerland (Wiratmadinata, 2009: 78). Despite an initial uncertainty and some minor challenges, the implementation process proceeded comparatively smoothly. Furthermore, besides the changed security situation it both enabled socio-economic improvements and a new law on the governing of Aceh to be passed.

In this third attempt to solve the armed conflict in Aceh in 2005, the parties hence embarked on a peaceful path that now has proceeded for almost 7 years. The last peace
attempt differed significantly from the earlier ones both in terms of context and procedure. The process was initiated in the context of the most intense period of fighting that proved costly for both parties, and moreover, it gained speed in the aftermath of the tsunami. Some significant changes were also made in comparison to earlier initiatives, for example with the involvement of a new mediator who in his turn was backed by an international community that significantly increased their attention to the region after the natural catastrophe. The scope and sequencing of the process also differed in this attempt. The unilateral ceasefire declared by GAM in the beginning of the process was not responded to by the government, and once negotiations started it was done based on the formula that nothing should be agreed until a settlement both on political and security related issues could be reached. Accordingly, the MoU that was finally reached after a few months hence comprised terms for ending violence in Aceh with demobilization of GAM combatants and relocation of Indonesian soldiers.

Still, while the primary rounds of elite level negotiations took place before a ceasefire was reached, the agreement only represented a framework with many issues of implementation and the exact feature on the new law of governing Aceh left to be decided. During negotiations and in the immediate time after signing there was accordingly a lot of uncertainty about how the process was going to proceed (Aspinall, 2005: 18). However, the measures undertaken were fairly smoothly implemented, and to oversee the implementation a more robust international monitoring mission was established with a stronger mandate than earlier missions. Importantly, resources were also brought in by the international community that could support the demobilization and reintegration process. In comparison to earlier processes, this one also gave more room for civil society to participate in later phases of the process, notably by having an opportunity to make inputs on the drafting of the new law on governing Aceh. Furthermore, another influential factor in this third peace attempt was the fact that a number of politicians in Jakarta who earlier had supported negotiations as a way to end the armed conflict now was in power and taking leading roles in the process. Furthermore, both parties were prepared to make some concessions, significantly with GAM dropping their demand on an independent state and accepting the notion of ‘self-government’ (Aspinall, 2005: 16). Hence, significant progress was made both on the ground in Aceh and in the elite level negotiations, and the support from the international community gave the agreement an extended amount of strength.
The Sri Lankan conflict
A few years after the armed conflict between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE officially started in 1983, Sri Lanka’s neighbouring country India got involved in efforts to reach an end to the armed conflict. This resulted in an agreement between the Sri Lankan and Indian governments, and in Indian peacekeeping troops being sent to the northern parts of the island (de Silva, 1998: 232-233). However, this effort turned out to be a failure as the Indian peacekeeping forces themselves got involved in the fighting. In the late 1980s, the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE then met for talks mainly on how to get the Indian forces to leave the island (Uyangoda, 2007: 33). No progress was however made on finding a peaceful settlement to the conflict. The failed peace attempts in the 1980s were followed by a period of intense fighting, before the government and the LTTE engaged in a new peace process in the mid-1990s. This process was initiated in the context of a government shift in Sri Lanka, with the People’s Alliance (PA) winning elections after 17 years in opposition against ruling United National Party (UNP), based on a campaign that urged for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The 1994 Peace Process and the Cessation of Hostilities agreement (COH)
When the PA leader Chandrika Kumaratunga assumed office as Prime Minister, she offered to hold unconditional talks with the LTTE and made a number of good will gestures. Importantly, central persons within the UNP, whom at the time still held the presidential post, also supported Kumaratunga’s approach (Rajanayagam, 2006: 170-171). The LTTE also responded positively to the gestures and took some similar measures. In September 1994, a letter conversation was initiated between the parties, and the following month a first round of talks was held in the northern city of Jaffna. Already in the first letter, the LTTE declared themselves prepared to engage in a ceasefire (LTTE letter 2 September 1994, published in Balasingham, 2004: 204-205). However, it soon became evident that the parties had different opinions of how the negotiation process should be structured. The LTTE demanded a permanent ceasefire and for humanitarian improvements to be implemented before substantial talks about a political settlement (Balasingham, 2004: 198). The government, on the other hand, wanted to negotiate these issues in parallel (Höglund, 2004: 156–157). Nevertheless, when Kumaratunga won the Presidential election in November, the LTTE declared a one-week unilateral ceasefire, to which the government responded a few days later. Furthermore, despite evidently different opinions on the procedure and provisions of a ceasefire, a Declaration on Cessation of Hostilities agreement (COH) was signed on 5 January 1995
simultaneously in Colombo by Kumaratunga, as President and Chief of the armed forces since November 1994, and in Jaffna by LTTE leader Phrabakaran (Cessation of Hostilities, 1995). The agreement came into effect three days later and would prove to last for almost four months.

The Cessation of Hostilities agreement can be described as a comparatively limited agreement in terms of scope and content, focusing on ceasing offensive operations and on freezing current military positions (Cessation of Hostilities, 1995: Points 1-4). Besides declaring prohibited acts, the parties also managed to agree on an outline for an organizational structure to inquire complains about violations to the ceasefire and settle potential disputes through the establishment of local committees. These committees were proposed to comprise five representatives: two from each party respectively and one international representative who would also act as chair. The international representatives were invited from Canada, the Netherlands, Norway and the ICRC, and proposed to work together with prominent domestic leaders such as religious leaders and officials (Cessation of Hostilities, 1995: Points 5a-f, 6). The cessation of hostilities was agreed to continue until notice of termination was given by any of the parties, which should be announced at least 72 hour in advance (Cessation of Hostilities, 1995: Point 7). No stated aim or declaration explicitly outlined how the agreement related to the broader peace process and the negotiations.

After the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities agreement, there was an immediate decrease of violence, although incidents still occurred. Contact was rather quickly established between military leaders in the field from each party respectively, and interim arrangements were set up to handle immediate problems, in particular in the East. Reportedly, the violent incidents that occurred were furthermore sorted out (Rajanayagam, 2006: 187). Nevertheless, as the process proceeded, the parties increasingly accused each other of violating the ceasefire and the dialogue between the parties became more and more hostile. While monitoring committees had been established, the international monitors never got a chance to begin their work as the LTTE contested the functioning of the committees. In the context of increasing violations to the ceasefire agreement, the government and the LTTE nevertheless managed to hold also a third and fourth round of talks. However, by that time, the negotiations had reached a deadlock and both parties suspected the other of having hidden agendas (interview with Jayadeva Uyangoda, Colombo, 27 January 2012). Hence, no progress was made in the talks and in April 1995, the LTTE notified their withdrawal from the Cessation of Hostilities agreement. The following month, the Sri Lankan government announced the entire peace process ended.
After more than a decade of violent conflict in Sri Lanka, the 1995 Cessation of Hostilities agreement was the so far most comprehensive mutual undertaking between the government and the LTTE. A new political leadership that framed the conflict differently, made gestures of good intent and showed willingness to meet some of the claims held by the LTTE proved important for creating favorable conditions for the parties to engage in a peace process. As years leading up to the agreement had been characterized by continuously intensified warfare, the reaching of a mutual ceasefire in that context, which at least initially improved the security situation in the war-affected areas, made the ceasefire a symbolically important first step in search for an end to the violent conflict. Nevertheless, the ceasefire proved to be in essence only a first step that froze the military status quo rather than creating an arena for constructive changes. It soon became evident that the parties had different views about the meaning of a ceasefire and what role such arrangement should have in relation to the peace process. Hence, the government on the one hand was cautious about entering a ceasefire and merely wanted an agreement on cessation of violence in order for political negotiations to commence, while the LTTE on the other hand was keen to establish a ceasefire and once the Cessation of Hostilities agreement was sealed they stressed for the agreement to be strengthened. In contrast to the government, the LTTE called for visible improvements on ground before engaging in substantial political talks (Balasingham, 2004: 198). Hence, with different ideas about what role the ceasefire should have and how the process should proceed, the ceasefire became a source for new disputes and mistrust about the other’s intentions, which was further fueled by ceasefire violations and lack of implementation. Rather than engaging in discussions on substantive issues in the established dialogue, the ceasefire hence became an issue of debate between the two parties. Furthermore, while the government stressed for talks on substantial political issues in order to find a solution to the conflict, they were not able at the time to present a picture on what such political solution could look like. This also illustrates the uncertainty that pervaded the peace process. Hence, within only a few months, the ceasefire was terminated. Consequently, the whole peace process derailed and the parties returned to armed conflict.

The 2002 Peace Process and the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA)

The peace process that ended in 1995 was followed by a so called ‘War for Peace’ strategy by the Sri Lankan government and intensive military operations by both parties. In 1999, President Kumaratunga made some efforts to explore the possibility for renewed talks with the engagement of Norway as facilitator, which resulted in an understanding on immediate
humanitarian measures (Goodhand et al., 2011: 33; Gooneratne, 2007: 10). In late 2000, the LTTE furthermore declared a unilateral ceasefire but without government response. In the end of 2001, there was another shift in government in Sri Lanka, which proved to open up new opportunities for peace initiatives when the UNP won the elections and Ranil Wickremesinghe entered the post as Prime Minister. Kumaratunga from rival party PA however maintained President. In contrast to President Kumaratunga, the Wickremesinghe government agreed to unconditionally meet LTTE’s demands for an incremental step-by-step procedure by starting with a ceasefire, followed by humanitarian improvements and reconstruction in order to pave way for a political solution (Gooneratne, 2007: 10-11). Wickremesinghe contacted the Norwegian facilitators in order to resume the dialogue with the LTTE. The LTTE announced a one-month unilateral ceasefire, to which the government responded with the same gesture. After another months’ extension, the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) was signed on 22 February 2002 by the LTTE leader Phrabakaran and Sri Lankan Prime Minister Wickremesinghe (Ceasefire Agreement, 2002).

Based on ‘position papers’ from both parties, the Norwegian facilitators formulated text drafts for the Ceasefire Agreement that were brought back and forth to each party for commenting, making amendments and reversing (Goodhand et al., 2011: 35-36; Balasingham, 2004: 360; Gooneratne, 2007: 10-11). The CFA is more comprehensive and detailed than the ceasefire agreement reached in 1995, based on the rationale to build confidence step-by-step in order to pave way for a proceeding peace process. Besides prohibiting offensive operation and stipulating a separation of the armed forces, the parties also agreed to undertake ‘confidence-building measures’ aimed at restoration of normalcy in war-affected areas (Ceasefire Agreement 2002: Article 2). To oversee compliance with the ceasefire agreement, a Nordic monitoring group referred to as the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) was established in accordance with the CFA (Ceasefire Agreement 2002: Article 3).

In the immediate period following the signing of the Ceasefire Agreement in February 2002, violence was significantly reduced and the parties undertook a number of measures that led to security and humanitarian improvements. Furthermore, some progress was also made in the political process. After some three months, the parties met for a first time to discuss implementation of the CFA (Goodhand et al., 2011: 39). From September, six rounds of formal peace talks were thereafter facilitated by Norway in 2002 and 2003, all located in foreign venues. As results from these meetings, the parties also created a number of joint committees and began to briefly discuss a political solution to the conflict based on federalism (Uyangoda, 2005: 19). Informal arrangements were also made as an effort to keep the
dialogue ongoing at ground level (interview with Austin Fernando, Colombo, 10 November 2010). Nevertheless, as the process proceeded, the security situation however became increasingly unstable, and after the sixth round the LTTE abandoned the talks in April 2003 while they still formally maintained their commitment to the CFA. Nevertheless, it was heavily violated and it became increasingly difficult for the SLMM monitors to perform their tasks (Swedish Embassy in Sri Lanka, 2008). By 2006, after notable changes in the internal political dynamics and failure of new attempts for peace talks, the hostilities significantly increased and in January 2008 the CFA was officially announced as ended by the government.

The Ceasefire Agreement hence lasted for six years. In comparison to earlier attempts to find a negotiated settlement to the armed conflict in Sri Lanka, the efforts that centered on the 2002 CFA can be described as the most far-reaching attempt. There was an evident decrease of violence, a monitoring mechanism to inquire and rule complaints, measures taken for normalization in the North-East, and six rounds of direct talks were made possible during which some progress was made on finding a solution to the conflict. In this respect, the ceasefire agreement reached in 2002 can initially be described as a comprehensive and action-oriented ceasefire. With the basic preparations already made and with a foundation to build on, it was possible to capture the momentum that was created in the context of a changed political environment in Sri Lanka, with a new government that was prepared to meet the LTTE’s claims for entering a peace process and with the facilitation of a third party. Nevertheless, while the immediate effects are evident, the constructive momentum proved to be difficult to maintain and cultivate in the long-term. In the light of mutual accusations, of CFA violations and of changing internal political dynamics, the ceasefire was not strong enough to transform the protracted conflict but instead became a source of new disputes. Hence, as the process proceeded, criticism against the CFA continuously increased, centering on the high degree of CFA-violations by the LTTE and the absence of any sanctions towards their behavior. Furthermore, the LTTE was seen as given space to expand their state-building project by creating a bureaucracy and advancing their guerilla forces into a conventional army (Perera, 2011; Goodhand et al., 2011: 37). By 2006, the LTTE were collecting taxes, maintaining law and order, and demanding customs for persons entering the LTTE controlled territories (Manoharan, 2006: 20). These developments also had effects on the larger political landscape in Colombo, where nationalist groups started to gain more influence and in many ways used the Ceasefire Agreement to serve propaganda purposes. With a lack of progress, the CFA eventually lost credibility among people in the country. Accordingly, during the six years of being in effect, the role and impact of the CFA significantly changed over time, and
in the end, the agreement remained only on paper while the peace process had derailed and a full-fledged war was carried out.

**COMPARISON OF CEASEFIRE AGREEMENTS IN ACEH AND SRI LANKA**

In the former section, ceasefire agreements and peace processes in Aceh and Sri Lanka were outlined and analysed. In this part, I will make some comparisons both within and across the two conflicts, focusing on the (i) initiation, (ii) form and content, and (iii) implementation of ceasefire agreements. As earlier emphasized, the aim is to highlight and discuss some central similarities and differences between ceasefire agreements in Aceh and Sri Lanka in order to make some preliminary comparative insights as part of a broader research project.

**Initiation and by whom**

In order to understand the nature of ceasefire agreements and how they relate to peace processes, theoretical insights have pointed to the importance of exploring the initiation of such engagement. Hence, it raises questions about how and by whom a ceasefire was initiated, as well as when and why such endeavour was undertaken. This overview of peace processes and ceasefire agreements in Aceh and Sri Lanka indicates that in both conflicts, ceasefires have been preceded by intense periods of fighting, and been initiated in the context of changes in the political environments with government shifts that have opened up a window of opportunity for peace initiatives. Hence, new government actors have made statements and gestures of good intent as ways to explore the possibilities to engage in new forms of interaction. Nevertheless, in order to understand the initiation of ceasefires, the asymmetrical character of the conflicts should also be emphasized, with the main conflicting parties being on the one hand internationally recognised governments and on the other hand regionally based non-state groups. Theoretical insights have suggested that in intrastate conflicts, recognition and legitimacy can have significant influence by changing the parties’ perceived statuses, positions and power-relations. Accordingly, for a non-state actor making secessionist claims – like GAM in Aceh and the LTTE in Sri Lanka – becoming a party to an agreement with the government can *per se* in essence be understood as a symbol of recognition. In Sri Lanka in 1994-1995, the LTTE repeatedly stressed for a ceasefire both in the letter conversation and during the first rounds of peace talks, and in the 2002 process they held the initiation of a ceasefire as a claim for engaging in a dialogue. Furthermore, both in the mid-
1990s and in the early 2000s, the LTTE initiated unilateral ceasefires before the parties entered mutual arrangements. In Aceh, the Indonesian government deliberately avoided the word ‘ceasefire’ in the agreements in 2000 and 2002, as this concept was perceived to have given GAM the status of a recognised party in equal to the government. Furthermore, like in Sri Lanka, GAM declared a unilateral ceasefire in Aceh in early 2005, and when talks commenced they furthermore stressed for a formalised ceasefire arrangement. Changes in status and recognition can furthermore also be influenced by external involvement and support in initiating a ceasefire. For example, when the Humanitarian Pause was settled in Aceh in 2000, the signing of the agreement abroad caused lot of critic among groups in Jakarta, who saw the international involvement as giving recognition to GAM. Consequently, meanwhile GAM on the one hand wanted to increase the level of internationalization, the government on the other would only allow the involvement of a small NGO like the HD Centre. Likewise in Sri Lanka, with experiences from the Indian intervention in the mid-1980s, the peace talks and the ceasefire that began in 1994 was initiated without external involvement, meanwhile in the second attempt the small state of Norway was involved partly based on their geographical distance and modest approach.

Hence, the actors involved in initiating a ceasefire and setting the agenda can hold different levels of authority and degree of support, which can have impact on the status of the agreement both among elements within the main parties, among its’ constituencies, and internationally. Accordingly, the actors involved can also indicate the political will and capacity to put an agreement into force. In Aceh, the first two ceasefires in 2000 and 2002 notably lacked support both among influential political factions in Jakarta as well as within the military. In a similar way, internal fractions posed challenges in Sri Lanka when the 2002 CFA was initiated by the Prime Minister as head of government, meanwhile the President – still Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces – was not a party of that process. Accordingly, how and by whom a ceasefire is initiated – as well as the actors not involved in that process – can indicate what kind of conflicts that might be at the forefront as the process proceeds.

At last, the timing of when a ceasefire is initiated in relation to other initiatives in a peace process should also be considered. Chouenet-Cambas (2011: 19) suggests that a ceasefire initiated in the beginning of a process might be valuable, and sometimes necessary, as an entry point by reducing tension and signalling good will. However, in protracted violent conflicts, the deep mistrust that prevail after years of fighting might make such effort impossible for parties to accept if there is uncertainty of whether anything valuable, or at least acceptable, will come out of the process (Ramsbotham et al., 2011: 184-187). In this study,
most of the ceasefire agreements were initiated before or during the commencement of peace talks, and as separate undertakings signed before any agreement on substantial issues was to be reached. Only the 2005 peace process in Aceh differs in that respect, as no ceasefire was established before core issues of negotiations had been settled in the MoU – a procedure stressed by mediator Ahtisaari and agreed by the conflicting parties, though partly with hesitation. Hence, this raises questions about the building of trust and confidence and how this relate to the meeting of claims held by parties in order for them to be willing to engage in a ceasefire.

Form and content
For understanding the form and content of a ceasefire agreement, it is necessary to consider experiences and preferences held by the various actors involved as well as the form and content of possible earlier ceasefire agreements. Accordingly, these aspects can have influence on the degree of formalization, substance and levels of details. While the overview of peace processes and ceasefire agreements in Aceh and Sri Lanka reveals some instances of verbal declarations of unilateral ceasefires, all processes nevertheless encompasses bilateral written agreements. These have foremost between separate agreements, with exception of the last peace process in Aceh in 2005 where the mutually agreed cessation of violence was part of a substantive peace accord.

A comparison of ceasefire agreements within the same conflict indicate that each ceasefire agreement have been stronger and more detailed than the former, with a more profound organisational structure and explicit links to the overall peace process. When the Humanitarian Pause was settled in Aceh in 2000, it was the first time after decades of prolonged violent conflict that the parties were to engage in new forms of interaction and the agreement was comparatively limited in form, scope and content. As such, it mainly focused on reducing violence in order to facilitate the delivery of immediate humanitarian aid. The subsequent 2002 CoHA took departure from the experiences gained in the previous attempt and can in many respects be described as stronger and more detailed. For example, it had a clearer line of decision-making with only one joint committee on ground, and it involved senior representatives as well as commanders with the power to give direct orders to troops in the field. Beyond humanitarian and security concerns, the CoHA also had a more evident political dimension and links to the broader peace process, with its’ departure in the ‘all-inclusive dialogue’ and statement on a future holding of elections in Aceh. In 2005, the parties had yet again been able to gain more experiences of what was working and not; about the
other party’s behaviour during ceasefires and negotiations; responses from the international community and from the public; as well as the costs of failed processes. Hence, while there are a number of factors that together made possible the unfolding of the third peace attempt, changes both in terms of content and procedure also indicate a learning process and an ability to make changes that eventually proved important for embarking on a peaceful path in Aceh. Hence, it can be suggested that the Humanitarian Pause and the CoHA contributed to lay the ground for the last peace process.

In Sri Lanka, when the Cessation of Hostilities was reached in 1995 it symbolized the possibility of changing the means of interaction between the parties by reaching negotiated settlements. Nevertheless, this first ceasefire agreement was also limited to freezing current positions held by the parties without any direction of where the process was heading. The subsequent 2002 Ceasefire Agreement was in that respect more comprehensive and detailed, and some of the uncertainty that pervaded the former agreement was addressed in the latter. The connection between the ceasefire and the peace process was more explicit and the agreement focused more on building confidence between the parties also through non-military measures in order to pave the way for a final peaceful solution. Hence, similar to the Aceh experience, a comparison of the two peace processes and ceasefire agreements in Sri Lanka indicate that lessons were learned from earlier experiences that resulted in changes in the subsequent effort.

**Implementation**

Beyond the initiation, form and content, issues related to the implementation of a ceasefire agreement can be important not only in order to avoid an imminent relapse to war but also for finding constructive ways to manage conflicts in the long-term and change the patterns of interactions. Statements of good intentions, observable changes in behavior, and cooperative measures, can be vital in order to build trust and confidence. Obeying to a ceasefire agreement and implementing different undertakings can hence be assumed to influence changes in attitudes, behaviors and relationships. However, on the contrary, a poorly implemented ceasefire can also aggravate the situation and increase mistrust and discontent. Reviewing the implementation of ceasefires in Aceh and Sri Lanka, there was in all cases structures aimed at facilitating the implementation through joint committees and monitoring mechanisms. In Aceh for instance, it was considered a notable step forward when the parties for the first time managed to cooperate and in a joint effort determine responsibility for ceasefire violations during the 2002 CoHA agreement. Nevertheless, in many cases, the committees set up were
not working properly. Furthermore, issues related to the monitoring seem to have been a common source of disputes. While the ceasefire monitoring in most cases had an international dimension, these missions were in many respects characterised by their limited mandates. Furthermore, there has been unwillingness to allow more powerful external actors as monitors, since this would have been perceived as trespassing state sovereignty. For instance, when monitors from Thailand and the Philippines was brought in to oversee compliance of the 2002 CoHA in Aceh, the government stressed that the monitors were not to be regarded as representatives of their own countries. Moreover, contextual changes have also affected the capacity of international monitoring, most notably during the last 2002 Ceasefire Agreement in Sri Lanka where a critical part of the mission was forced to leave the island after several participant countries had banned the LTTE as a terrorist organization. Also in the case of Aceh, it has been argued that powerful states were hesitant to engage and exert influence as they were unwilling to jeopardize their relationship with the Indonesian government due to the ‘war on terror’.

Furthermore, while I have suggested from within-case comparisons that lessons had been learned from earlier experiences that resulted in changes in the subsequent effort, the analysis of ceasefires in both Aceh and Sri Lanka nevertheless show that experiences and learning from earlier efforts also can have negative implications. Hence, they illustrate the risks of freezing ceasefires in internal armed conflicts where the parties hold non-negotiable positions and where the long-lasting antagonism has created deep mistrust. A freezing ceasefire without visible signs of progress might lead to loss of faith in the process, both among the parties and the public, and create doubt of whether the process could bring about real changes. There is a risk of new disputes arising over elements of the ceasefire arrangement and of aggravated mistrust as result of violations to the agreement. Furthermore, just as different groups can make gains from a continuous conflict, gains can also be made from a continuing but badly functioning ceasefire. This risk, and the consequences, of freezing ceasefires became most evident with the 2002 CFA in Sri Lanka, where the ceasefire agreement remained on paper for several years while the conflict re-escalated and the continuing mediation effort was caught up in the conflict dynamics with accusations of possible biases. Hence, the 2002 CFA in Sri Lanka importantly highlights the difficulties of maintaining and cultivating a momentum, and the risk of ending up in a freezing process and a ‘no war, no peace’ situation. In Aceh on the other hand, the two failed attempts of interim ceasefire agreements were followed by a process where such arrangement was deliberately avoided with reference to the earlier bad experiences.
Concluding remarks

This overview and analysis of the relationship between ceasefire agreements and peace processes in the conflicts in Aceh and Sri Lanka hence raises questions about the prospects for interim arrangements to prove fruitful in intrastate armed conflicts where the future status of the state is still being fundamentally contested. It can furthermore be argued that these challenges becomes even more evident in territorial conflicts, when the ceasefire agreement freezes military positions on ground and recognizes territorial control held by the parties. Hence, while a peace process in many ways needs to be a long-term commitment, there is nevertheless a risk that the process drags out in the context of interim arrangements. While the uncertainty of a future arrangement maintains, there is a risk for a continued and potentially growing suspicion both among the main parties and among the public. Thus, beyond exploring the conditions for when a conflict is ripe for resolution, it is also necessary to focus more attention on how that momentum is cultivated.

As mentioned in the beginning of the paper, this is a work in progress and a preliminary and not exhaustive analysis of the relationship between ceasefire agreements and peace processes in Aceh and Sri Lanka. Accordingly, it will be further developed in the continuing work on my dissertation. I hope to be able to further explore how the ceasefire agreements relate to other initiatives in the peace processes and whether the ceasefires have tended to reinforce or undermine such initiatives.

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