Preventing deadly conflict in divided societies in Asia: the role of local NGOs

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Deadly conflict in four divided societies in Asia

3.1 Brief introduction of Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Myanmar

Cambodia, Indonesia and Myanmar are located in South East Asia, while Sri Lanka is part of the South Asian subcontinent. These two regions have quite distinct characteristics with Myanmar providing the link geographically, historically and culturally. The four case countries' landmasses and populations differ substantially. On one extreme is Indonesia, which comprises 17,500 islands (of which only 5,707 have names), has a total size of 1.9 million square kilometres and a population of 220 million. It is nearly thirty times the size of the island of Sri Lanka, (66,000 sq. km) which has 18 million people. Myanmar (677,000 sq. km) is the second largest of the four case countries in terms of population size with 48 million and Cambodia (181,000 sq. km)—as in many other respects—the third with 12 million people. Over 75 percent of the population lives in rural areas in each of the four countries.

The ethnic composition in Indonesia and Myanmar is highly diverse (Figure 2) and multiple languages are spoken. Their unique geography (multiple islands and multiple mountain ranges, respectively) adds to the endurance of unique regional specificities. Government initiatives to relocate poor majority people to remote zones have not had the desired unifying effect in either country. Cambodia and Sri Lanka, on the other hand, each have one majority ethnic group composed of over 80% of the population and two smaller minority groups: ethnic Vietnamese and Chinese in Cambodia and Tamil and Muslims in Sri Lanka. Their geography (river deltas, dry zones and a few compact mountain zones) and smaller overall size appear to pose fewer challenges for control by security forces but rebel movements have managed to last for years and to negotiate favourable conditions.

Figure 1 Ethnic or linguistic composition, by country

Religious composition is also diverse in all four countries (Table 2). In Asia, Buddhism was introduced from India between 400 and 1100 AD, while Islam spread with Arab traders in the 14th century. Hinduism predates both religions in all four countries and Hindu minority pockets have survived, except in Cambodia. Christianity came with European spice traders and colonials beginning in the 16th century and although its leadership plays a prominent role in Asian societies the actual religious constituencies are quite small.

21 Source: Merriam-Webster. 2001. Online Atlas, http://www.m-w.com/maps/moremapsnyt.html, specific country pages. These pie charts are indicative of the ethnic composition as they are based on data from the 1990s, which may not be fully accurate. Also note that for Indonesia, language groups are used instead of ethnic groups. Other sources identify the following ethnic groups: Javanese 45%, Sundanese 14%, Madurese 7.5%, coastal Malays 7.5% and other 26%.
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### Table 2 Religious composition, by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Religions²²</th>
<th>% Buddhist</th>
<th>% Muslim</th>
<th>% Christian</th>
<th>% Hindu</th>
<th>Total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>220 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>48 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### 3.1.2 Location and geopolitical influences

Sri Lanka and Indonesia are island nations along busy international sea trading routes and richly endowed with natural resources that were of special interest to Renaissance Europe (tea, coffee and spices). Myanmar and Cambodia are part of the greater Mekong region, a region historically highly traversed and traded, with powerful ancient kingdoms and a long tradition of interstate warfare. While French and British colonial rule effectively governed the smaller countries of Cambodia and Sri Lanka, the Dutch and British rulers in Indonesia and Myanmar were concentrated in prime trading locations (e.g., capitals, ports, cash crop estates), while basic services, trade and tax relations with other parts of the country were managed through agreements with traditional local leaders and partnerships with Christian missionary orders. This governance system raised strong self-determination expectations among local ethnic leaders at the time of independence, which arrived quite abruptly upon defeat of the Japanese Imperial Army by the Allied forces in 1945.

This region was significantly affected by the Cold War and suffered from interstate warfare under the Japanese, French and Americans from 1940 to 1972. Cambodia was unwillingly drawn into the Vietnam War in the 1960s, in which over 700,000 civilians lost their lives. The American defeat was followed by the Vietcong victory over South Vietnam in 1975 and the Khmer Rouge revolution and genocide, which landed the region on the international diplomatic and economic boycott list of the USA and its allies, as part of the ‘Trading with the Enemy Act’ that lasted till the end of the Cold War. To meet its reconstruction and development needs Cambodia managed to secure support from Vietnamese, Russian and Eastern European countries. The end of the Cold War era brought a close to the international boycott and the UN Transition Council prepared the first free national elections in 1993. Myanmar allied itself with China after the 1962 coup and further alienated the international community when the Junta refused to hand over power to the newly elected government in 1988.

The countries have retained their geopolitical significance. Lately the Mekong region became notorious again as hotbed of illicit international trade and trafficking in drugs, small arms and human beings. Cambodia’s Prime Minister Hun Sen has been in power for over 25 years and maintains close relations with North Korea and China. Myanmar’s military autocratic rulers are at forty years the longest ruling Junta in history, who continue to provide a land route and harbour
facilities at the Indian Ocean to China that wishes to be in close strategic reach of neighbouring India without having to climb the “roof of the world.” Indonesia on the other hand shifted its socialist course after the coup of 1965 that ousted President Sukarno and brought General Suharto to power. He became a staunch ally of the West and received military and economic support from the USA. Indonesia’s unprecedented economic growth, also known as the Asian Miracle, was mirrored by a repressive and fraudulent administration, whose human rights violations were left unattended, because the international community did not intend to disturb the fragile Cold War power balance in the region. The Asian economic crisis of 1997 toppled the regime and a process of democratic transition started that is still ongoing.

Sri Lanka is a small country off the southern coast of giant India, which is currently overtaking China as most populous nation of the world. Sri Lankan domestic affairs have been deeply influenced if not dominated by Indian politics. Its strategic location in the Indian Ocean is enhanced by a big natural deep sea harbour of Trincomalee, but this asset could not be exploited due to the deadly conflict that has been ongoing in the North East for over 20 years now. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (=LTTE) is a professional, well armed local rebel movement with political and commercial relations all over the globe, that came under increased international surveillance only since the 11 September 2001 attacks. Despite this protracted conflict, Sri Lanka is the only case country that knows an uninterrupted democratic tradition, never had a military coup, but the recurring ethno-nationalist and religious party politics increasingly undermine the democratic process and lead to further militarization of the society. Table 3 provides a quick country overview of conflict history, poverty and rights indicators.

### Table 3 Conflict history, poverty, exclusion and rights indicators at first glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict history</th>
<th>Cambodia</th>
<th>SriLanka</th>
<th>Indonesia</th>
<th>Myanmar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year of last colonisation</td>
<td>1863</td>
<td>1815</td>
<td>18th century</td>
<td>1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By whom</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>British</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWII Japanese occupation</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Independence</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>1945/1948</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadly inter-state conflict since independence</td>
<td>1964-72</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coup d'état since independence</td>
<td>1970, 1975,</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1958, 1962,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Military or armed rebel induced)</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1988/1990</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-74</td>
<td>(ceasefire)</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1970-present</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-79</td>
<td></td>
<td>1999-2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1988</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Nature of intrastate conflicts:
- Armed ethnic rebellion
- Postcolonial conflicts
- Natural resource conflicts
- Armed secession movements

### Population in 2002:
- Size of the population: 12 million
- % of the population living below the poverty line: 38%
- % of the population living in rural areas: 80%

### Refugees:
- Internally displaced persons
- Diaspora as result of intrastate conflict
- Approximate size of national security forces
- % of national budget spent on defence (official)
- Independence of the judiciary
- Availability of free legal aid for poor
- NGOs providing protection to poor and minorities

### Civil and Political Rights:
- Year of signing of UN human rights covenants
- Presence of political prisoners
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3.2 Asian Minorities at Risk: societies at the brink of deadly conflict

Minorities at Risk project

The “Minorities at Risk Project” (MAR) is a valuable academic database that can provide a better understanding of the incidence, causes and risk factors of grievance seeking groups. This study defines ethnic identity as based on common values, beliefs and experiences. This can be manipulated by leaders to ignite violent conflict but can also be employed to resolve conflict through peaceful means. To prevent intrastate conflict successfully, structural policy changes are needed and these require an understanding of the social and political cleavages in the society and an analysis of the historic and contemporary grievances. Deadly conflict is not caused by poverty alone but by wilful and systematic exclusion and inequality on both a national and global scale.

The MAR project has been monitoring the political activity of 268 minority groups “at risk” around the world for twenty years and helps shed light on the world of ethno-nationalist movements. Ethnic groups are defined as people who share a distinctive and enduring collective identity based on belief in common descent and on shared experiences and cultural traits. Ethno-political groups are identity groups, whose ethnicity has political consequences, resulting either in differential treatment of group members or in political action on behalf of group interests. (Gurr, 2000, p.5-7) MAR’s longitudinal database on violent conflict not only maps conflict history, incidence, causes and eruption potential in a comprehensive way; it also attempts to provide an insight into the motivation and decisive factors that lead ethnic groups to take up arms to get “justice”. Minorities at risk are defined as minority groups that have collectively suffered or benefited from systematic discrimination in relation to other groups in the same state. Advanced minority groups are also included, because they can assume and abuse power as well, and can become quite vulnerable when their power wanes.

The MAR project has produced two major books. Published in the midst of the Balkan civil war in 1993, the first book concluded that never before had the world seen such widespread and intense societal warfare, which bodes ill for the future. Seven years later, the second book gracefully reversed these conclusions. The turbulence that had accompanied the end of the Cold War in the early nineties has subsided and three positive trends were highlighted. First, the number and magnitude of armed conflicts within and among states had reduced by nearly half since the early 1990s; second, conflicts over self-determination were being settled with ever greater frequency when ethnic groups could gain greater autonomy and power-sharing within existing states; and lastly, democratic governments outnumbered autocratic governments by two to one and continued to be more successful than autocracies in resolving violent societal conflicts.

The challenge to prevent deadly conflict therefore lies in sustaining these three positive trends that are understood to be the result of concerted efforts to build and strengthen democratic institutions in post-communist countries and the global South and of increasingly successful settlement negotiation of revolutionary and ethnic conflicts. However, the MAR project concluded in 2000 that these positive trends could be off set by three persistent obstacles:

- Virulent armed conflict in parts of Eurasia and Africa have the potential for metathesis into neighbouring states;
- New and transitional democracies everywhere are at the risk of reverting to autocracy;
- Lack of economic development undermines democratic institutions and breeds violent conflict.
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Two MAR research components are applied here. First, its comprehensive analysis of ethno-nationalist or self-determination movements is summarized and applied to the four countries to give a baseline of the ethnic identity situation. Second, the “Peace and Conflict Ledger” that measured the peace building capacity of 160 nations on over the past fifty years, is expanded.

National and minority peoples at risk

The MAR project starts out with assessments of global trends in violent conflict and correlations between democracy and peace building. It shows that the magnitudes of warfare declined significantly during the 1990s in countries in the top four levels of development. In the bottom quintile however, the trend is essentially flat. In these countries, which include most of Africa, high incidence of conflict during the last 20 years of the cold war continued through the 1990s. This evidence suggests that Africa, along with very poor and non-democratic states elsewhere in the world, will continue to experience serious warfare in the future and will pose a series of challenges to those responsible for maintaining regional security and preventing humanitarian disasters. Poor societies are at risk of falling into no-exit cycles of conflict in which ineffective governance, societal warfare, humanitarian crises and lack of development perpetually chase one another. With regards to Asia, the MAR project concludes:

"Asia has experienced greater magnitudes of societal conflict than any other world region. During the first half of the Cold War conflicts in Asia were mostly political and concentrated on Indochina. Ethnic warfare increased throughout the Cold War to a peak in 1991 after which both political and ethnic war show a significant decline, parallel to the global decline." (Gurr, 2000, p.10)

The MAR project postulates that a country’s capacity to build and maintain ‘social peace and security’ depends almost entirely on the characteristics of its polities (autocratic, transitional or democratic). To make their case, first the ‘average annual risk’ of armed political or ethnic conflict is calculated for each of the three types of polity from 1959 through 1999 to prove that democracies have had substantially less violent conflict than autocracies and that autocracies have been less violent than transitional regimes. Democracies have a better track record of negotiating an end to armed insurgency for self-determination than autocracies. However, it is important to point out that the self determination aspirations of minority groups, are not reduced under more democratic governance systems but here self determination movements are more likely to use conventional political strategies than rebellion. While this may lower risk of rebellion, the continued presence of self-determination movements implies that these divided societies remain vulnerable to deadly conflict.

To determine whether ethno-political groups are at risk, the MAR project assesses whether groups meet either or both of two criteria: first, the group collectively suffers or benefits from systematic differential treatment vis-à-vis other groups in the society, given the assumption that persistent disadvantages either originated in or are reproduced by social practices and public policies of advantaged groups. Second, the group is the basis for political mobilisation and action in defence or promotion of its self defined interests. In 1990 the MAR project identified 233 ethno-political groups at risk that made up 17.3 percent of the world’s population (see Table 4). In 1998 this number had increased to 275 groups or 17.4 percent of the world population.25 Disadvantaged and politically active minorities can be found in 116 of the world’s 161 larger countries. Twenty percent of these minority groups at risk are Asian (43), but in terms of absolute

25 It includes only groups numbering at least 100,000 persons (and, for instance, excludes indigenous rainforest tribes) and also includes advantaged (privileged) minority groups (e.g., the Chinese in Indonesia) (Gurr, 2000, p.9-13).
numbers of affected people, the picture is much less favourable: according to the MAR study 13.4 million or 77 percent of the world’s minorities at risk in the 1990s lived in Asia.

Table 4 Asian minority groups at risk, 1980s and 1990s, totals compared to global totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No. in 1980s</th>
<th>No. in 1990s</th>
<th>% of total pop. 1980s</th>
<th>% of total pop. 1990s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East, South East and South Asia</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>233 (19%)</td>
<td>275 (22%)</td>
<td>17.3 (59%)</td>
<td>17.5 (77%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MAR study makes an important distinction between national peoples and minority peoples:

- National peoples are regionally concentrated groups that have lost their autonomy to states dominated by other groups but still perceive some of their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness. Their political aim is to protect or re-establish a politically separate existence.
- Minority peoples have a defined socio-economic or political status within a larger society based on some combination of race, ethnicity, immigrant origins, economic roles and religion and are concerned mainly with protecting or improving that status.

Each main category consists of three distinct groups, see table 5. In 1998 a total 59 Asian national and minority peoples were at risk, spread over 24 countries. 61 percent of them are national peoples. Most Asian national peoples’ conflicts involve indigenous peoples’ claims, while the Asian minority peoples’ conflicts cluster mainly around communal issues. Hence, indigenous peoples and communal contenders make up nearly two thirds of all self-determination movements in Asia whereas they are 44 and 55 percent of the world’s total, respectively. (Gurr, 2000, p.19)

Table 5 National Peoples and Minority Peoples in Asia and the World in 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National peoples</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>World</th>
<th>Minority peoples</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>World</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethno-nationalists</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>Ethno clashes</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nat. minorities</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>Comm. Contenders</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indig. Peoples</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>Religious sects</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no of groups</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>Total no. of groups</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four case countries in this study however, deviate from the Asian average. First, ten out of the total of twelve high-risk groups (or 83%) are national peoples: five indigenous peoples, four ethno-nationalists and one national minority. Second, the only two minority peoples groups are ethno-clashes (Chinese business sector and stateless low cast Tamil estate workers) and their risk prognosis is low compared to the national peoples. Third, there are no communal contenders at risk identified in the case countries.

Table 6 details the twelve ethnic groups at risk. Seven groups are in the highest state of risk (0.7 score), including the Tamils in Sri Lanka, four ethnic groups on the eastern and western borders of Myanmar and two secessionist movements in the far west and far east of Indonesia. This large concentration of high-risk national peoples groups in the case countries, poses a major challenge to the government to negotiate sustainable and peaceful solutions. The regional concentration, the strong sense of cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and historic claims to (re-)establish an autonomous political existence further complicates the nation building process.

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24 Source: Gurr, 2000, p.12.
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Table 6 Twelve minority groups in the four case countries and their risk factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minorities at Risk</th>
<th>Cambodia</th>
<th>Sri Lanka</th>
<th>Indonesia</th>
<th>Myanmar</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National peoples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethno-nationalists</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Tamils 0.7</td>
<td>Aceh 0.7</td>
<td>Karen 0.7</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shani 0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National minorities</td>
<td>Cham -4.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous peoples</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Papua 0.7</td>
<td>Rohina 0.7</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chih 0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kachin -0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority peoples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethno clashes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Indian T 0.03</td>
<td>Chinese -1.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm. contenders</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious sects</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the high number of national peoples groups in Asia and their long standing differences with the States, it is not surprising that the level of political action of minority groups in Asia is higher than average. The MAP mapping of the movements' intensity and size of its resources revealed that Asia housed 55% of all large scale rebellions in 1995. The figures moreover indicate that national peoples groups in the four case countries are more mature movements with higher involvement in terms of number of people and financial resources. Finally, Asia seems to score high on the extremes: one third of the minority groups are not active politically or militarily, but nearly half of the minority groups are engaged in some form of rebellion. (see table 7).

Table 7 Summary of political action by Asian minority groups at risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political action</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>World</th>
<th>Asia/World</th>
<th>Case C/Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total no. groups</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>19 (32%)</td>
<td>71 (26%)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>04 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilisation</td>
<td>08 (14%)</td>
<td>86 (32%)</td>
<td>09%</td>
<td>01 (08%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrating or rioting</td>
<td>05 (09%)</td>
<td>40 (15%)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>25 (43%)</td>
<td>71 (26%)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>07 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Small scale rebellion</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>03 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Large scale rebellion</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>04 (33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that the signing of a ceasefire agreement makes a deep impact on the MAR scoring but it does not imply that these groups are no longer equipped to engage in armed conflict. The Kachin National Army for example signed an agreement with the Myanmar Junta in 1992, but remains heavily armed. Likewise, the LTTE retains its combat force, though it signed a ceasefire agreement in February 2002; the peace talks have been on hold since April 2003. The political follow-up processes initiated over the past five years to bring lasting democratic solutions to these regions, are still in early stages and the armed groups remain well stocked and prepared. The MAR project reaches a similar conclusion:

"... If working within the system fails or gains only symbolic, minor or short-term concessions, support for militancy will likely increase and grow even more resolute. Forecasting dynamic increases and decreases in the strategic use of protest and rebellion is a more difficult research task than identifying the structural risk factors that determine whether each tactic is present or absent (Gurr, 2000, p.228)."

The MAR project identified four indicators that can determine whether a group will initiate political action:

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25 The risk indicator signifies the risk of further rebellion or escalating current rebellion based on conditions measured in 1998. A score of over 0.5 signifies a substantial risk for violent conflict (PVS, appendix D, p. 321-337).
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- The salience of a group’s identity (e.g., level of economic and cultural discrimination);
- The collective incentives (e.g., governmental repression and loss of autonomy);
- The capacity for joint action (e.g., group capacity and territorial factors); and
- The external opportunities (cross border, international political support, and spill-over of regional conflicts).

Before moving to the case countries, the other component of MAR’s ethnic conflict monitoring work, needs some introduction.

Peace and Conflict Ledger

Since the 1990s, the MAR project monitors the democratisation processes and the State’s ability to deal with insurgent groups, by means of the Peace and Conflict Ledger. This ledger rates 160 countries using six indicators. The State’s capacity to manage conflict and build peace is considered high (given the green flag) when it has:

1. Avoided armed conflicts in recent years;
2. Managed (meaning dissuaded) movements for self-determination;
3. Maintained stable democratic institutions;
4. Represents a durable regime type;
5. Produces substantial material resources; and
6. Is free of serious threats from its neighbouring environment (p.2).

Failing to qualify on some or most of these indicators results in a respective yellow or red flag score. The six red, yellow or green scores are then added up and the majority colour determines the end score, without an internal weighing of indicators. The scores for the countries in Central, South and East Asia made Gurr reach three conclusions. First, Central Asia is the world’s second most serious crisis zone after Central Africa. None of the five red flagged countries in Asia (see table 8) has the institutional capacity or resources to deal effectively with conflict prevention. Since the War on Terror hit the region, volatility has only increased. Second, most countries immediately to the West and East of the Asian heartland are in the yellow zone, because of a combination of conflict generating traits and weak conflict management capacities. Third, the few green flagged countries are almost exclusively located in the East Asian subcontinent.

These Asian Peace and Conflict Ledger’s scores however, paint a rather positive picture. This might be caused by the propensity of the indicators to measure the nature of governmental institutions rather than the performance. Furthermore, the Ledger does not take social cohesion or equity indicators into consideration. Would three indicators be added which better reflect the State’s predisposition to respond to conflict with violence, the end scores change substantially: 1) the record of systematic human rights violations; 2) the incidence of absolute poverty (40% or more living below the poverty line is red); and 3) the degree of ethno-linguistic fractionalisation. Applying these additional criteria to Asian countries results in an increase from three to seven red flag countries, a reduction from 12 to 10 yellow flag countries and a reduction in green flag countries from eight to six. A closer look at the scoring of the four case countries on their institutional capacity to manage deadly conflict can be found in the relevant country sections below. For the complete Asia overview of the six MAR indicators and the three additional rights and civil society scores see Table 8 below.

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26 For details of the country scoring, see the cleavage and grievance analysis in the later part of this chapter.
Deadly conflict in four divided societies in Asia

Table 8 Peace and Conflict Ledger score sheet for Central, South and East Asia, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall PCL Score</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>MAR indicators</th>
<th>Proposed Additions</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>AC</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>Red</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
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<td>Green</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Legend
MAR indicators:
AC= avoid recent armed conflict
SD= manage self determination movements
RT= maintain stable democratic institutions
RD= durability of the political system
SR=societal resources, but measured is presence of substantial material resources
N= neighbourhood, being free from serious threats from external environment
Rights and civil society indicators
HV= country systematically violates human rights
AP= prevalence of absolute poverty
ED= ethno-linguistic diversity

*Yellow indicates there is serious risk for violent ethnic conflict, but in these cases, the numbers (total members of ethnic groups and battle deaths per annum) are too small to make it into the academic definition of deadly conflict.

** Although green is given to North Korea, this type of scoring does not redress extreme poverty and injustice when governments manage to silence all forms of dissent effectively.

In sum, the MAR research provides an invaluable long-term database on minorities at risk around the world. The data analysis of the minorities at risk and the State’s ability to manage conflicts in the four case countries confirms there is a serious risk for violent conflict. The countries show a higher than average risk with 83% of the regionally concentrated national peoples movements, which hold historic grievances over lost autonomy, cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and strive at a politically separate or autonomous existence. To control and resolve these strong self determination aspirations would require highly skilled, accountable and participatory governments. Unfortunately, the adjusted Ledger scores for the four countries show three red flags and one yellow, implying the peace building capacity of the four governments is limited.

R3/ Y12/G8

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R3/ Y12/G8
3.3 Conflict, cleavages and grievances in Cambodia

Post colonial warfare and the regime of General Lon Nol

Since the fall of the kingdom of Angkor in the 13th century, political disruption and successive conflicts have plagued Cambodia. Central governance was introduced with the imposition of French colonial rule in 1863. During WWII Japan occupied Cambodia from 1941-45, after which France re-imposed its protectorate in 1946 with a new constitution that permitted the formation of Cambodian political parties and some limited international representation. Armed rebellion against the French rulers occurred throughout the colonial period, until Cambodia won its independence in 1953. The new Kingdom of Cambodia was led by Prime Minister Prince Norodom Sihanouk and initially made good progress in health, education and employment. During the 1960s, however, the country began to destabilize as a result of economic difficulties, corruption and geopolitical turmoil in the Mekong region. In 1965 Sihanouk broke off relations with the US and allowed North Vietnamese guerrillas to pass through the border areas in support of their military campaign against the US-backed government in South Vietnam. Four years later the US began secret bombing campaigns of Cambodia to destroy North Vietnamese forces. These carpet-bombing raids killed some 700,000 Cambodian civilians, destroyed numerous farms, and rendered much of the land deserted because of unexploded ordnance and chemical defoliation. (Ebihara, Morland, and Ledgerwood, 1994; Nee 1995)

In a US-backed coup in 1969, General Lon Nol deposed Sihanouk, who fled to China where he formed a life long alliance with the Chinese authorities and the Khmer Rouge to prepare for his return. Lon Nol proclaimed the Khmer Republic and sent the army to fight enemies on two fronts: the North Vietnamese guerrillas at the border areas and the local communist-backed armed groups, of which the Khmer Rouge was one. Gradually, the army lost territory and a state of emergency was declared in 1972, which paved the way for state-supported counter-terror tactics against the peasant population, like splitting, relocating and destroying villages in combat zones. Amidst the violence the Khmer Rouge found fertile ground to build its movement among the ranks of poor uneducated youths. The attacks on the Lon Nol forces were stepped up and slowly but surely, the countryside was overtaken. While the world watched in horror as the North Vietnamese troops overran South Vietnam and took Saigon, the young impoverished peasant fighters united by the Khmer Rouge reached Phnom Penh and declared the Republic of

27 Source: http://go.hrw.com/atlas.norm_h(tm/cambodia.htm
Deadly conflict in four divided societies in Asia

Democratic Kampuchea on 25 April 1975. Sihanouk briefly became head of state, but resigned in 1976 to be replaced by Khieu Samphan, with Pol Pot as prime minister.

Khmer Rouge revolution and the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea

The Khmer Rouge (KR) immediately initiated radical societal reforms. Pol Pot, "Brother Number One," renamed 1975 year zero. The country was sealed off; urban centres were deserted and its citizens forced to work in rural labour camps to develop its agricultural potential. The educated elite, religious leaders and business men were arrested and put to death in prison camps in a highly disciplined and documented, yet gruesome manner. Only a handful of Cambodia's elite, who managed to flee the country, survived. In a second migration wave in 1977, the Khmer Rouge leadership, known as the Anka, dissolved and relocated entire villages around the country. Farmers lost their possessions; families were split up and assigned to different camps around the country. Forced marriages organised by the KR leadership further broke down the family and community networks and solidarity. Opposition to the KR leadership was brutally suppressed: most dissidents were tortured or executed on the spot, usual with a blow to the back of the skull to save bullets. In four years of KR rule, approximately two million Cambodians died from political violence, exhaustion, starvation and disease.

Aware of the crimes against humanity, the international community looked on, unwilling to intervene after it diplomatically isolated the Mekong region in the wake of the Vietnamese "unification" in 1975. At last, the Vietnamese government intervened: in late 1978 it sent well-trained soldiers in lighting assault and took over Phnom Penh in January 1979. Pol Pot and the KR cadres withdrew to the mountain ranges on the northern and western border with Thailand and the People's Republic of Kampuchea was formed. The government-in-exile, including the Khmer Rouge and Sihanouk, retained its seat at the United Nations.

Throughout the next decade the Vietnamese-backed Cambodian government continued to fight the Khmer Rouge guerrilla warfare with the help of Vietnamese military advisors. Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians fled to camps across the border in Thailand. In 1980-82 a period of natural disasters (floods succeeded by severe droughts) struck Cambodia and exacerbated the suffering of the Cambodian people. With the international embargo in place, only international relief and development NGOs could provide disaster relief aid and for years they took care of food, medicine and fertiliser donations. In 1985 Hun Sen became prime minister. As the country began to recover gradually, these humanitarian programmes matured and by the mid-1980s a few agencies were allowed to open offices in country.24 Other than this limited assistance, political and civil rights remained curtailed and contact with foreigner aid workers prohibited until 1989.

Paris Peace Accords and the return of the Kingdom of Cambodia

In 1989, as the global political perspectives at the end of the Cold War era evolved, mounting international pressure led the Vietnamese military advisors to withdraw from Cambodia. Hun Sen

24 Novib started its relief work in 1980 with food shipments that were continued with support of the Dutch government for years. Furthermore from 1983 to 1990, Novib organised huge annual fertiliser shipments at the request of the Dutch government. In 1985 the Novib/Oxfam field office was opened and in 1987 the PADEK (Partnership for the Development of Kampuchea) program, a consortium of five northern NGO donors under Novib coordination, was established. At the start of the UN transitional government in 1991, PADEK had 15 foreign experts and 80 local staff deployed in four rural provinces and in the Phnom Penh slums; it was active in economic and infrastructural development projects, like housing, agricultural development, micro banking and water supply.
tried to attract foreign investment by abandoning socialism—the nation was re-named the State of Cambodia. Buddhism was re-established as the state religion and a transitional government, assisted by the UN and France, negotiated with the KR and a few smaller resistance groups and signed the Paris Agreements in October 1991. Prince Sihanouk returned after 13 years of self-imposed exile. As part of the Agreements, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was established for a two-year period to oversee the implementation of the agreement, the repatriation of refugees, the initiation of economic reconstruction programmes and the organisation of the first democratic elections in 1993. The election results were close and the international community pushed for the formation of an equal power share coalition government of the FUNCINPEC (Royalist Party) and Cambodian People’s Party (CPP), headed jointly by Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen, while Sihanouk was restored as king. The government-in-exile lost its seat at the UN and, in 1994, thousands of Khmer Rouge guerrillas surrendered in a government amnesty.29

The dual CPP-FUNCINPEC political leadership model, which was repeated at each and every ministry level, did not work out well. It paralysed much of the country’s economic reconstruction efforts because it encouraged corruption and collusion practices and it made international donor commitments fall far behind expectations. In 1997, the power struggle between Hun Sen and Ranariddh led to a coup that effectively ended the dual government and enhanced CPP’s political control. The FUNCINPEC’s leader Prince Ranariddh fled the country, to return only weeks before the next national elections. The July 1998 election was a CPP victory marred by reports of widespread voter intimidation and put Prime Minister Hun Sen in firm control of the recovering state, while Ranariddh became president of the National Assembly. The first ever communal elections in February 2002 further consolidated CPPs power through victory in all but 23 of 1,620 communes. This trend was sustained in the national election of July 2003 with another firm victory for the CPP which further strained its relations with other political parties. It took 11 months to get a new cabinet in place.

Bad governance has deeply affected Cambodia’s development efforts; several key donors ended their bilateral aid relations in the late 1990s, poverty levels have remained unaltered (40 percent lives below the poverty line and 60 percent of the rural population is now landless); illegal exploitation of natural resources continues and the country, which has very limited health services, is being hit hard by the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus.

Peace and conflict ledger and minorities at risk

Cambodia’s overall MAR score on the Peace and Conflict Ledger is red, as the capability of its government to build a peaceful society is deemed very limited, because armed conflict is pervasive, while the autocratic regime does not have the institutional means or resources to deal effectively with it. Only three of the nine indicators score other than red: avoided armed conflict and limited neighbourhood threats (both yellow) and no ethno-linguistic diversity (green). Only the indigenous Cham people of Muslim faith are identified to be at elevated risk, but their capacity to claim their rights is very small.

One of the striking aspects of the Khmer Rouge genocide, in which two million people perished, is that it was technically not genocide because neither ethnicity nor religion was a factor in the persecution and assassination of defenceless civilians. The Cambodian population is among the

29 In 1996 two top KR leaders, Ieng Sary and Khieu Sampan, were granted amnesty by Royal pardon. Pol Pot died of old age in his jungle hideout in 1998.
most homogenous in Asia, with 89% of Khmer origin. Speaking the same language and living subsistence rural lives in extended families. The legally correct term for the atrocities is crimes against humanity. The risk of ethnic conflict remains minimal, as nearly 90 percent of the Cambodia population is of Khmer origin. The MAR study identifies only one national minority group, the Vietnamese, but they are at an extremely low risk of mobilising for revolt: -4.4.

Meanwhile, the perpetrators of the Khmer Rouge crimes against humanity remain unchallenged. Not until 1999 were two former KR leaders arrested, but the royal amnesty of the two surviving key leaders remains unquestioned. In June 2003, a UN accord for a Khmer Rouge Tribunal was finally signed. It is to be held in country by a combined local and international group of judges and prosecutors. But little progress has been made. The militarization, however, continues and Cambodia still spends 30% of its annual budget on defence; it has the highest number of colonels and generals per soldier and has seen three richly endowed World Bank led demobilisation programmes have not been successful, due to lack of political will and corruption.

Historic, cultural and class cleavages

A. Historic and post-colonial grievances

- Historically, before the arrival of the French in 1863, Cambodians did not have a clear concept of nationhood; borders drawn on a map did not define Cambodia. Sanghean Bit (1991) argues that the nation concept was “embodied in a cultural version of political geography”, where the Khmer language was spoken and where their rulers ruled. Nation was thus closely tied with ethnicity. Villages seemed independent entities, with local leaders managing their own affairs and paying occasional tribute to the royal court. When more collaboration was needed (i.e., for ceremonies or to meet a common threat) the response was situational and short term. As a consequence, Cambodia never developed enduring but flexible institutions within its society to mediate its relationships with forces of foreign influence.

- French colonial rule engendered a deep sense of distrust among Mekong nations by recruiting Vietnamese as Cambodia’s colonial officers (the Vietnamese were considered more clever and able) and offering educational opportunities in France only to Vietnamese, while Cambodians could study in Vietnam. This, some local scholars argue, gave Cambodians a sense of second-class citizenship that deeply wounded its national pride.

- The Vietnam War spilled over into Cambodia in 1969 and indiscriminate carpet bombing rendered an estimated 700,000 dead. It was a war over foreign ideologies, which had no basis in natural resources richness or ethnic conflict among the people. The indiscriminate brutality against civilians, however, added to the frustration, chaos and emergence of anti-regime rebel groups who, in the absence of geographic or ethnic identities, used ideology to mobilise their supporters. Cold war alliances made it easy for communist-oriented groups, including the KR, to obtain Chinese support. The brutality of war eroded ethical values and made the radical system change, indicated by the declaration of year zero, an apparently acceptable choice amidst all madness.

- The formation of the Khmer Rouge started as a post-colonial grievance against the US-backed Lon Nol regime and the small, well-educated and French-oriented elite. Although the KR killed most of the elite, those who escaped to France, Australia and the US in 1975, returned in the 1990s, after the UNTAC period, to rebuild the country. The distinction between the Khmer Khmer (who stayed inside and endured all the hardships) and expat Khmer (who led better lives in the rich West or in the UN/Thai refugee camps) is still felt in all walks of life.
B. Cultural and religious cleavages

- Four decades of war and political violence have eroded moral and ethical values and deeply limited the ability to resolve conflict humanely. Various local experts postulate that traditionally the Cambodian culture was innately violent and hence, it is the Cambodian culture that created the Khmer Rouge, not the KR that created the culture of violence. The top down tradition in governance and conflict resolution in the Cambodian culture further reinforces the use of violence. Hence the "seeds of violence come from our own culture and structure", concludes one of the leading conflict training practitioners in Phnom Penh.  

- The argument for a culture of violence contradicts the harmony-oriented social behaviour of the Khmer society, which is based on Buddhist principles. In his book "The Warrior Cult", Bit (1991) examines the historical roots of the inherent conflict between Cambodian social and psychological behaviours. Buddhism is 'a unifying force in creating a strong sense of national identity and is one of the basic institutions of society', yet at the same time Buddhism, as practiced by the overwhelming majority of Cambodians, is more 'an expression of the Cambodian way of life than a separate institution or faith'. Cambodian culture places high value on harmony in personal relationships and in the functioning of society at large. Core Buddhist values of non-violence and compassion were, however, overshadowed by elements from prior indigenous and Hindu religions, like accepting ones' present incarnation because it can not be changed. Bit concludes that the leadership and power concepts in Cambodia are based on Hindu concepts and emphasize supreme authority and unquestioning obedience to authoritarian governance.

- The Cham, the cultural and religious descendent of the medieval Cham Kingdom that once stretched over parts of Cambodia and Vietnam, was seriously affected by the Khmer Rouge terror. This indigenous Muslim minority has an ancient oral tradition, refuses to use written Arab or English Koran texts and struggle to maintain their unique identity. Their numbers have become small and their living conditions are poor. The use of violence in Kampong Chchanang province, where most Cham people live, is among the highest in the nation.

C. Social cleavages and class conflict: labour and land

- Ethnic Chinese Cambodians have historically been over represented in the trade and transportation business, as elsewhere in Asia. Their associations were first in trouble in the 1960s, when their Friendship Association was closed down. Envy over their economic success is growing and is at times manipulated.

- A second endangered minority group are the Cambodians of ethnic Vietnamese origin, who live in the eastern border areas and along the rivers. Most are landless fishermen and they are among the poorest in Cambodian society. They are prone to economic and political violence and are generally mistrusted by the Khmer majority.

- New political elite developed during the Kampuchea period and post 1997, under the leadership of Hun Sen, who managed to consolidate its power base through the cooption of the army and business sectors. With a weak and corrupt judiciary, most state violence goes unpunished and impunity prospers. Their international allies are few and mostly found among like-minded regimes in the region, of which only a few remain. As many of Hun Sen's allies were involved in the Khmer Rouge movement, there has been a great reluctance to convene an international tribunal and to this day none of the KR perpetrators were convicted. This unresolved past has perpetuated political impunity and left deep scars on Cambodian society.

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Source: Interview with the director of Conflict resolution program in Phnom Penh, 15 February 2002.
3.4 Conflict, cleavages and grievance in Sri Lanka

Post-colonial ethno-nationalist politics

The post-independence history of Sri Lanka has been filled with intense and often violent struggle between different groups vying for political power. Sri Lanka was first colonised by the Portuguese and the Dutch in the 17th century, but after 1815, British rulers exercised control over the island, then known as Ceylon. The British brought in low cast Indian Tamil labourers from southern India to work in the newly established tea, rubber and coconut plantations in the nineteenth century. The more highly educated indigenous Tamil population held most of the colonial positions. During WWII Ceylon was spared from combat and at the time of the hand over of power in 1948, ample effort and thought had been put into the transfer. Unfortunately, the small but resource rich nation faced a major challenge: how to institute and exercise majority rule while safe guarding minority rights and living up to the promise of democracy in a multi-ethnic society with a population consisting of 74% mostly Buddhist Sinhalese, 18% Tamils (Hindu and Christian) and 7% Muslims.

The 1947 Soulbury Constitution introduced a unitary, majority form of government to Sri Lanka but Article 29 provides a constitutional guarantee against discrimination towards ethnic minority groups by placing restrictions on the parliament in its legislative scope concerning ethnic and religious minorities. This constitutional guarantee was, however, violated in a series of political acts starting in 1948 with the adoption of the “Ceylon Citizenship Act”. The first Sinhalese majority parliament deprived the Indian Tamil community of its citizenship rights, under the pretext that this group had been brought in by the British colonial rulers in 1848 as migrant workers for their tea estates and should now return to India. Over the next few years, regional and ethnic-based power sharing was rejected by the parliament in favour of an increasingly centralized, presidential system of government. At this time, the indigenous Tamil population, which enjoyed privileged positions under British rule, first protested against the legalized discrimination against ethnic minorities and the relocation of Sinhalese to thinly populated Tamil areas in the East.

Source: http://go.hrw.com/atlas/norm.htm/srilanka.htm
Exclusion, inequality and creation of contemporary grievances

Sri Lankan politics changed dramatically when Singhalese culture, religion and language were touted as unifying factors in post-independence politics. This was a response to the Buddhist revivalism and the Singhalese language movement (Swabhasa) and exploited the spreading unrest among the semi-educated unemployed and poor farmers. The “Sinhala Only” movement was largely comprised of rural teachers, retailers and Buddhist monks, with whose support the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) came to power in 1956. Under Bandaranaike’s presidency, majority rule became synonymous with serving the interests of the majority population. This political transition coincided with the release of a report by the “Unofficial Committee of Inquiry” entitled “The Betrayal of Buddhism.” The report warned of threats to Buddhism and Singhalese culture and argued that the preservation of this cultural heritage was vital for the survival of the country and therefore the principle responsibility of the State. The “Sinhala-Only Act,” passed by the Sri Lankan Parliament in July 1956, made Singhalese the sole official language of the country, replacing English as the bridging language and downgrading the status of the Tamil language. In addition to the one language rule, the Act standardized higher education and restricted the public service employment opportunities of Tamils. On top of these discriminatory measures, the parliament approved a large-scale Singhalese land development and migration project in the Tamil dominated Eastern province (the “dry zone”).

The language and public employment restrictions were the breaking point for the Tamil minority. Initially they took up non-violent protest in the Gandhian tradition in front of the Parliament building to reclaim lost rights, demand equal status for the Tamil language and lobby for constitutional changes which would give Tamil-majority areas in the north and east autonomous powers within a federal, undivided State. Tamil parliamentarians organized sit-ins in the public parks in Colombo and tarring over the new Singhalese only lettering only buses running through the Tamil-speaking North and East. The government responded with brutal force, which triggered more anti-Tamil riots throughout the country. The unarmed Tamil demonstrators got frequently attacked by organized thugs while the police did not intervene (Ackerman and Duval, 2000, p.460-463). In 1959, when President Bandaranaike tried to calm the nation and proposed to accommodate some of the Tamil grievances, he was assassinated by a Buddhist monk. Singhalese only policies were continued under the leadership of Mrs. Bandaranaike, who came to power after her husband’s assassination. She took Singhalese politics to the next level with the 1972 constitution, in which Buddhism became the national religion and the centralized political majority control was consolidated, denying demands for regional autonomy.

Having exhausted all peaceful, inclusive, political means, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was founded as a political party in 1976 and called for a separate Tamil State articulated in the Vaddukoddai Resolution to be the ‘Free, sovereign, secular, socialist State of Tamil Eelam based on the right to self-determination inherent to every nation.” This new ethno-nationalist political orientation hardened the positions along ethnic lines. The parliamentary elections of 1977 were the first violent elections and were won by the United National Party (UNP). President Jayawardene initiated a new era of State-sponsored communal violence. In 1979, as the Singhalese-Tamil conflict escalated, a state of emergency was proclaimed and the “Prevention of Terrorism Act” (PTA) introduced. This act is commonly understood to be responsible for the militarization of the ethnic conflict, as it justified grave human rights abuses by the security

32 Chelvanayakam, (also known as ‘the trouser-ed Gandhi’ insisted that their aims could only be achieved by “weapons, which call for strength of will and honesty of purpose” as in India, where freedom was obtained by this righteous power. However, Ackerman and Duval point out that Chelvanayakam’s Gandhian methods were not adapted to the Sri Lankan situation in which the “oppressor” was not a foreign power but an ethno-nationalist government elected by the Singhalese majority.
forces, including illegal arrests and detentions, torture, disappearances and sexual assault of Tamil women. Tamil youths, disappointed by the lack of political success in ending discrimination, formed resistance groups in the Tamil-majority North and East regions and soon thereafter decided to pursue their cause through armed combat.

Civil war: 1983–2002

Communal violence turned into civil war in 1983, when Tamil guerrillas in Jaffna attacked a convoy and killed thirteen soldiers. Widespread riots by retaliating Sinhalese mobs in Colombo and other cities in the South lasted for five days left hundreds of Tamil civilians dead and rendered thousands more homeless. The security forces neither protected Tamil civilians from the mobs nor persecuted Sinhalese perpetrators afterwards. In the aftermath of these traumatic events, all members of Parliament were asked to swear allegiance to the unitary Sinhalese Buddhist nation. Many Tamil parliamentarians refused and were forced to step down; this drove the remaining non-violent political Tamil equal rights movement underground. The most powerful militant Tamil group was the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) led by Prabhakaran, and it became the leader in a secessionist war against the state in the 1990s. This highly disciplined, well-trained paramilitary group initially received support and training from outside sources, which supposedly included the Indian army and Lebanese Hamas. While the young Tamil guerrilla ranks grew, more soldiers were sent to the North to protect the unity of the country. In 1985 the government launched a large military campaign in the North and East to target Tamil militants and it resulted in huge casualties on both sides. It caused a steady stream of internally displaced persons, who fled to refugee camps in the border provinces, and international refugees who managed to escape to Europe, Australia and Canada and soon formed a powerful Diaspora. India’s Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi brokered peace talks between Tamil groups and the Sri Lankan government in Bhutan’s capital Thimpu in 1985. The Tamil side—represented by the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF; including Prabhakaran), People’s Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOT) and TULF—presented a four-point agenda as the basis for negotiations, better known as the four “Thimpu Principles.” Although these principles still resonate today, no agreement was reached.

Beyond Thimpu, negotiations between the two governments continued and resulted in the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987, which contained key elements for a peaceful settlement that are still on the table today: the establishment of a provincial council system, devolution of centralized political power to the regions, and an interim merger of the North and East provinces. Part of the Accord was the deployment of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) to separate the battling parties in the North East. Although Tamil politicians had been involved in the Accord talks, none of the Tamil militant groups had been consulted. Therefore, upon its signing, the LTTE withdrew from the political process altogether and attacked the IPKF in late 1987. Meanwhile in the South, the Sinhalese government, the main political parties and the general public were divided over the issue of devolution of power. The creation of provincial councils was especially perceived as a threat to Sinhalese unity that could lead to a permanent division of the country. The SLFP initiated a political protest against the Accord and the UNP, while the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) launched an armed insurgency. The Sri Lankan government then faced combat

31India’s direct interest stems from fear that the Sri Lankan Tamil secession struggle would spill over to Tamil Nadu.
34The four “Thimpu Principles” recognize: Tamil as a distinct Sri Lankan nationality; the right to full citizenship and other fundamental democratic rights; Tamil homeland and guarantee of territorial integrity, and the inalienable right of self-determination of the Tamil nation.
Preventing Deadly Conflict in Divided Societies in Asia

from two sides: from the Tamil insurgents in the North East and from the Singhalese Marxist guerrilla’s in the South. Thousands of innocent civilians lost their lives in the process (over 30,000 deaths in the South alone), while huge numbers of refugees moved around the country to find safe haven.

In late 1988, the newly elected UNP President, Ranasinghe Premadasa (a vocal opponent of the Indo-Lanka Accord) and the LTTE agreed to a ceasefire. After fourteen months of negotiations, the LTTE-UNP alliance ended upon reaching their shared, immediate goals: in March 1990 the Indian Peacekeepers withdrew from Sri Lankan soil and the North-Eastern Provincial Council, where moderate Tamils had won political control, was disbanded. At the same time the JVP guerrillas in the South were ‘pacified’ when six of the seven JVP leaders were captured and shot ‘while attempting to flee’ security forces. Phase II of the Tamil Eelam war started only three months later: the LTTE resumed its armed combat with the security forces and began to eliminate the leadership of the smaller Tamil armed groups (Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front EPRLF, PLOT). At the same time, President Premadasa was busy managing the situation in the South after the JVP demise and attempting to silence the vocal NGO peace advocates through the installation of the Presidential Inquiry Commission into NGO work. With the successive assassinations of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 and Premadasa in 1993, both attributed to the LTTE, another unsuccessful chapter in recent Sri Lankan peace negotiation history was closed.

By August 1994 the nation had grown tired of war and the continued state of emergency. The new progressive political coalition (People’s Alliance) came to power with a balanced peace agenda. A third Bandaranaike (Chandrika Kumaratunga, the daughter) was elected Prime Minister and a third ceasefire came into effect amidst great anticipation of a just peace at last. Alas, only six months later the ceasefire was broken by the LTTE and an embittered government went for an all out ‘war for peace’ strategy. Kumaratunga attempted a two-track strategy, launching the “devolution package”, a constitutional reform proposal, in August 1995 while the war continued. She argued that these constitutional reforms were for the Tamil people, while the military offensives were directed against the LTTE. But she failed to gather the two-third parliamentary majority required for constitutional reforms and the dual strategy failed. In July 1998 the LTTE showed its power and determination by bombing the highest security area of the Temple of the Tooth (the most sacred Buddhist shrine in Sri Lanka). This disrupted the venue and, to the embarrassment of the Sri Lankan government, the preparations for the celebration of 50th independence anniversary. After a failed attempt to take Kumaratunga’s life in 1999, the LTTE became internationally black listed as a terrorist organisation and the war further intensified.

Ceasefire, peace negotiations and ethno-nationalist polarisation

The fourth ceasefire and peace negotiations commenced two months after the most violent national elections ever, which were held in December 2001. The UNP Prime Minister, Ranil Wickramasinghe, negotiated a ceasefire, offering LTTE regional autonomy in the North East if they agreed to lay down their arms. With Norwegian politicians as peace brokers and the Norwegian military as peace monitors, the ceasefire took effect in February 2002. Three rounds

While the physical damage to the temple was minimal—part of an outer wall collapsed and there were no casualties—the symbolic value of the attack is immeasurable, especially to the Buddhist Mahā Sanga. Besides being the holiest Buddhist shrine in Sri Lanka, the Temple of the Tooth is also one of the seven holy shrines in Asia because it keeps one of the relics of the Buddha (the tooth) and is a place for international pilgrimage.
Deadly conflict in four divided societies in Asia

of peace talks were held before the process stalled in April 2003, over the sole representation of the Tamil people by the LTTE and the set up of an interim administration for the North and East.

To create a sound economic basis for the nation's post-conflict reconstruction, the UNP launched an equally speedy, neo-liberalist economic recovery programme, including the privatising of state corporations and relaxation of tax legislation, to attract international financial institutions, aid agencies and private companies to invest in Sri Lanka. These major economic policy changes led to increased unemployment and a sharp increase in the cost of living in 2003 and opposition to the UNP government grew. Meanwhile, the Sinhalese nationalist parties and Muslim fractions had joined together to claim their part of the peace negotiations. President Kamaratunga dissolved the parliament and called for elections, which were held on 2 April 2004. The PA/JVP alliance won against all odds; the large victory for the socialist JVP party suggested it was primarily the dissatisfaction with the economic reform policy that led to the UNP loss. The ceasefire has held since then, but remains fragile because the coalition government is divided according to ethno-nationalist interests, which makes a united political stance in future peace negotiations increasingly difficult. Meanwhile a rift has occurred in the LTTE ranks as well and may have lasting implications for the future of the highly privatised, efficient armed rebel groups.

Peace and conflict ledger and minorities at risk

Sri Lanka scores yellow overall in the Peace and Conflict Ledger, which analyses a regimes' capability to build peace. Two red scores identify the governments' failure to manage self-determination movements and to avoid armed conflict. The two green flags are awarded for Sri Lanka's durable regime type and for maintaining stable democratic institutions. In reality, Sri Lankan regimes have alternated between periods of autocratic and democratic rule, which would validate a score of yellow at best. In addition, democratic values have been eroded by the perpetual state of emergency, the PTA, the legalised exclusion of part of the population and the culture of political violence. A third green score also needs review; being an island does not preclude the presence of geopolitical threats. India and Tamil Nadu have had a serious impact on the progress of the war and peace negotiations and their involvement justifies a yellow flag. With two red, three yellow and one green, the picture starts to alter. When the three additional indicators are added, three more red scores appear, landing Sri Lanka in the endangered category. Given the current deadlock in the peace process, it is conceivable that the war in the North and East could not only resume, but be more deadly than anything seen thus far.

The MAR study monitors two minority groups at risk, but it is wise to add the Muslims as a potential third group at risk in the grievance analysis. The Tamil population in the North and East are categorised as a national people in the MAR and, at 0.7, at high risk. The Indian Tamil are identified as a communal contender in the MAR study and at low risk for revolt, because of their low level of organisation. However, as a destitute minority group they remain very vulnerable to violence from both other ethnic groups and the state.

Historic, cultural and class cleavages

A. Historic and post-colonial grievances

- The Tamil population in the North and East holds historic and contemporary grievances against the ruling Sinhalese majority governments for their policies of exclusion and discrimination.

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• The LTTE has been fighting for an independent home land for the Tamil population in the North and East since 1983, effectively running parts of the region since 1991. They have developed a global network of business enterprises and coordinators who collect donation for Diaspora Tamils in North America, Europe and Australia. Furthermore, they are involved in illicit trade in arms and drugs. As a privatising private armed movement known for their professional suicide commando’s and Sri Lankan war record, they are, on the list of terrorist groups in five countries. Claiming to be the sole representative of the Tamil people, they engaged in combat with fellow Tamil armed groups in the 1980s and eliminated all but the Eelam People’s Democratic Party (EPDP).

• The Southern part of the country that is predominantly Singhalese has twice endured violent anti-separatist, Marxist-inspired insurrections, in which no Tamil or Muslim groups were involved. In 1970-71 and 1987-89 waves of political violence took place and involved the JVP, People’s Liberation Front, and various State agents, ranging from the Sri Lankan armed forces, the police, the Special Task Force (STF) to numerous paramilitary groups, all of which committed brutal acts of murder, torture and mutilation. These periods of terror are still deeply felt in the collective consciousness of the Singhalese people (Senaratne, 1997, p.59-72). The JVP reinvented itself as a political party in 2000. It sees itself as a Marxist people’s alternative to macro economic, neo-liberalist policies and formed an alliance with the People’s Alliance in the 2004 election. It is currently in charge and opposes transition of power to the LTTE.

B. Cultural and religious cleavages

• The Muslim minority is targeted by the LTTE in the Eastern province and by Singhalese in the Central Highlands. In view of negotiations for sole representation by the LTTE, increasing contemporary grievances are building among Muslims who feel sacrificed for Buddhist Singhalese peace purposes; they are demanding some form of autonomy in the East.

• Buddhist senior clergy has been active in protecting Sri Lankan unity in different forms. from the “Sinhala Only” movement in 1953 to the recent formation of the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) party, which won 10 seats and was formed so that they could participate in the political debate on the regional autonomy for the North East.

• There is a culture of violence in governance and politics. Growing ethno-nationalist politics have led to violent elections and violent parliamentary proceedings in recent years. There is great concern over eroding moral values and the use of violence after twenty years of war, states of emergency, the PTA and other undemocratic policies that undermine civil and political rights.

C. Social cleavages and class conflict: labour and land

• The Indian Tamils, a minority people and communal contender according to the MAR, were brought to Sri Lanka by the British colonial authorities about a century ago to work in the tea and rubber estates in the central highlands. They were affected by Singhalese ethno-nationalist politics immediately upon independence in 1948, when their rightful citizenship was denied and they were asked to return to India. Two decades later India agreed to take only a handful back, which left over 700,000 people stateless and confined to the tea estates where they were born and are de facto bonded labourers. An alliance between the LTTE and Indian Tamils was never forged because of marked cast difference (high versus outcast) and the absence of a common history. In the 1990s, a citizenship scheme was finally set up and approximately 400,000 Tamils were finally granted Sri Lankan identification. Lack of education, poverty, alcohol abuse, domestic violence and discouragement by the estate leadership makes indigenous civil society in Central Highlands vulnerable and weak.
3.5 Conflict, cleavages and grievances in Indonesia

Map 4 Map of Indonesia

Post colonial independence struggle

After the defeat of the Portuguese and British Royal fleets, the Dutch established colonial rule over what eventually became Indonesia in 1670. The initial attention was focussed on the spice trade when the ‘Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie’ (= VOC) established a trading monopoly in partnership with local leaders. In the 19th and 20th century the Dutch colonial powers became increasingly involved in local governance and engaged in armed confrontations around the archipelago to unify the Dutch East Indies; fighting battles in some provinces and granting “zelfbestuur” (i.e., self governance) to others. The occupation of Indonesia by the Japanese Imperial Army in 1942 marked the end of the Dutch rule. Upon surrender of the Japanese, Indonesia proclaimed independence on 15 August 1945. The Dutch, however, were in desperate need of their old trade revenues to rebuild their own infrastructure after five years of German occupation and refused to acknowledge the new political reality and re-established colonial rule. The two “politionele acties” (police operations) in 1947 and 1948, aimed at countering the fierce resistance, were unsuccessful and resulted in the inevitable Dutch exit in December 1948.

Dutch Guinea (West Papua) however, remained under Dutch control until 1962, when in August the "New York Agreement" was signed between the Netherlands and Indonesia and ratified by the UN General Assembly next 21 September 1962. The indigenous Papuan population was never consulted. It stipulated that the Netherlands was to withdraw from West New Guinea and transfer authority to the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) on 1 October. The UNTEA was to hand over the governance of West New Guinea to Indonesia on 1 May 1963, under the condition that the Papuan population would, within six years, determine in a free and fair manner, whether they wanted to remain under Indonesian control or chose independence. In a much dispute and rather selective consultation of 1,000 Papua elders in 1969, it was decided that West Papua would become officially part of Indonesia as the province of Irian Jaya.

In the early years of the young nation series of ethno-nationalist rebellions emerged. These groups had joined the national independence struggle in 1945, assuming they would gain autonomy or independence for their province, but this did not occur. (See Map 8) According to Steward and Fitzgerald (2001, p.69) an estimated 30,000 people were killed in the deadly

36 Source: http://go.hrweb.com/atlas norm.htm#indonesi.htm
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conflicts in Aceh, Central Sumatra, South Kalimantan, Sulawesi and the Southern Maluccu between 1950-1960.

Map 5 Political map of Indonesia on 1 December 1948

Indonesia: Situation on December 1, 1948

- Republik Indonesia
- Dutch military occupation
- Dutch-founded "Negara"
- Other areas under Dutch control

Old and New Order Regime

President Sukarno and several other leaders of the Indonesian resistance movement (the Old Order) ruled for nearly two decades upon independence. Despite serious efforts to develop a more democratic rule in the 1950s, e.g. by allowing more press freedom, taking over economic interests from Dutch companies and promoting political pluralism, the regime faced major problems. Aspiring new local ethnic leaders voiced increasing demands for autonomy, politically exploiting the growing inequality between Java and the other islands. Another major problem was the weak control over the military, especially over local commanders. Sukarno’s decision to establish military councils met with rejection and military rebellion in Sumatra in the late 1950s. In response, Sukarno introduced the policy of ‘guided democracy’ to overcome the differences between key actors and regions of the country. Governing power was increasingly centralised in state institutions and political parties were instructed to follow the government political policy or dissolve. The mounting pressure reached its peak in October 1965 when seven high-ranking officers were kidnapped and killed and the Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia =PKI) was quickly accused. Within days a number of civil organisations with military support formed a coalition to purge the PKI, its mass organisations and other left-winged groups. In what became the most violent chapter in Indonesian history, PKI members and presumed sympathisers were hunted down, arrested and killed without legal process (ELSAM, 1999, p.152). Over the next two years more than 600,000 trade unionists, peasant leaders and community leaders lost their lives. In addition thousands were arrested, incarcerated as political prisoners and held for up to 15 years under deplorable circumstances on remote islands like Buru.

Source: http://www.gimonca.com/sejarah/sejarah08.shtml

Estimates of the deaths in 1965-1966 vary dramatically: from a low 78,000 to a staggering two million. The actual figure is believed to be well over 600,000 (Sulsityo, 2000, p.29).
Amidst all the organised chaos, the New Order regime came to power through a coup in 1965. General Suharto was proclaimed President in 1966 and managed to consolidate power swiftly by building close alliances with the military and the private sector. With political opposition effectively eliminated, new dissenting voices were skilfully co-opted or silenced and the infamous and persistent KKN culture (kollusie, korrupsi and nepotism) was born. Individual liberties were curtailed or suspended under the pretext of preserving Indonesian territorial integrity and economic prosperity. The international community paid hardly any attention to these human right atrocities. ELSAM (1999, p.153) argues that it was the heightening tension of the Cold War, Sukarno’s affiliation with socialist countries and his antagonism towards the US that explain the scant international attention these gross human rights violations received. Military intervention in all aspects of society was facilitated in the “Dwi Fungsi” (dual function) policy, which gave the ABRI (Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia) the role of both defender of the national security and developer of the political system. Military personnel were placed in important government positions, like that of the vice-president and key ministers, were granted allotted seats in parliament and formed a governance structure parallel to the civilian administration that ran all the way up from village headman (Babinsa), to sub-district (Koramil) to district (Korem) and up (Lay, 2003, p.12). The New Order regime also controlled the political process by using its bureaucracy to have its Golkar party candidates elected, allowing only a few token state-approved political parties to compete. Civil society was discouraged from regrouping through prohibition of the freedom of assembly and the freedom of expression, among others.

In the 1980s and 1990s Indonesia experienced a period of unprecedented economic growth that brought great prosperity, and improved health and educational services. But the revenue was not distributed fairly among the different islands and ethnic populations, nor was the economic growth based on environmentally sound and sustainable development strategies. With an emerging middle class, a new NGO sector arose in the 1980s that questioned the development policies, even though civil and political freedoms continued to be curtailed and civil society remained weak. The Indonesian development model, dubbed the “Asian Miracle”, became a model for economic development in Asia. However, democratic checks and balances were increasingly lacking and official corruption reached such alarming rates that Indonesia became known as a world’s worst ‘kleptocracy’ and landed on the top of corruption watch lists.

Domestic and international protests over unsustainable and harmful natural resource exploitation and persistent human rights abuses intensified after the East Timor Dili massacre in December 1991, but they were systematically rebuked and no political action was taken. The Dutch bilateral aid relations were discontinued in 1992 and aid agencies asked to leave the country overnight, because of ‘their interference with internal political affairs’. The power of the New Order regime and the military however, had begun to decline because it failed to respond to growing middle class demands for more political freedom. In 1993, Suharto invited the Islamic groups into the political debate through the formation of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectual Association. But the effort to realign political and economic powers came too late to save the regime. The Asian economic crisis of 1997 acted as a catalyst for political change on all fronts: economically, politically and socially. Indonesia was thrown into a turbulent transition process with spontaneous mass demonstrations, formation of new political parties and expansion of civil society; but economic crisis, increasing social violence exposed the weak social cohesion and countered these positive developments.

Transformasi

A dramatic increase in inflation and unemployment ignited street protests and riots across the country in 1998. In Jakarta, students from five universities coordinated their protests and took to
the streets in mass demonstrations. When these protests turned violent in May, six students were killed in clashes with security forces, spinning off violence around town and almost 1,200 people were killed in bloody street riots, among others in Glodok, the Chinese neighbourhood of Jakarta. Suharto was forced to step down after thirty years of autocracy. The Interim President, Habibi, was charged with organising the democratic elections of 1999 while deadly confrontations raged between ethnic and religious groups in Moluccas and Kalimantan. The progressive Muslim leader and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) chair, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, became the first democratically appointed President, by the newly elected Parliament.

This complex democratic transition process commenced during the worst economic crisis in Indonesia’s history\(^59\) and it runs on three parallel tracks:

- Political transition: from an autocratic system of governance to a democratic one;
- Economic transition: from a centralised patron-client and crony capitalist economy to a rule-based market economy; and
- Governance transition: from a centralised socio-political system to a decentralised one, based on principles of regional autonomy.

As in many countries undergoing democratic transition, the weakening of the Indonesian state continued. Since 1998 Indonesia has seen a succession of ineffective Presidents (four hand-overs in five years) who have failed to tackle both official corruption and restructure the armed forces. The economic malaise has resulted in negative growth, widespread unemployment and a decline in education and health facilities. Moreover, deadly communal conflicts erupted in 1999 in at least nine provinces around the country, most notably in the Moluccas and Kalimantan. Indonesia also became the stage for terrorist attacks and Aché’s struggle to secede led to new martial law and security operations there in 2003. As a result, the economic malaise continues and absolute poverty has tripled from 12% of the population living below the poverty line in the mid 1990s to 35% in the summer of 2002.

The hastened political decentralisation process that was initiated in late 2000, in an attempt to curb violent social and communal unrest around the archipelago, has further complicated this complex transition. No time was given to first build or strengthen the local political institutions that are needed to tackle local governance issues concerning division of responsibilities and the coordination of authority, finance and security between Jakarta and regions. Furthermore, the distribution of the revenues from the natural resources, both within the new autonomous provinces and amongst the different Indonesian regions, remains a matter of continued political debate. (Tadjoeddin, 2002, p.11-13)

In the past, episodes of major political change in Indonesia were accompanied by outbreaks of deadly social violence. A government in transition is not only vulnerable, but it creates conditions that are conducive to violence and destabilisation. But widespread violent conflict since 1998 has resulted in far smaller numbers of fatal casualties than in previous decades. While some deadly conflicts are rooted in historic grievances, the eruption of deadly violence appears to have been motivated by local resentment over a combination of economic and social issues and ill perceived government responses. Furthermore, some conflicts were instigated through outside intervention and have continued for years. For example, the conflict in Southern Moluccas intensified with interference from the Islamic Jihad and the lack of security forces. Similarly, tensions between

\(^{59}\) The national GDP contracted 13.2% in 1998 alone. This is equalled only by the impact of the Great Depression in the US and Europe following the 1929 stock market crash. It took a decade to recover from that event and there was no added burden of political transition. Source: UNDP/GOI, Indonesian Human Development Report 2001.
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Maluccu refugees and the local villagers in Poso (East Sulawesi) were aggravated by fundamentalist Muslim groups that exploited their religious differences.

A study by UNSFIR\(^{40}\) entitled "Anatomy of Social Violence in the Context of Transition" attempts to analyse the intensity, nature and location of social violence in Indonesia over the past decade. Table 9 indicates that the most lethal form of intrastate violence is communal violence, which accounts for 77% of all casualties, followed by separatist violence, amounting to 20%.

Table 9 Social Violence by category 1990 – 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social violence</th>
<th>No. incidents</th>
<th>Of which w/death</th>
<th>Number of deaths</th>
<th>% of total deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communal violence</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>4771</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separatist violence</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>1370</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-community violence</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial violence</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>6,208</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A closer look at communal violence shows that the most deadly form of communal violence is related to ethnicity, religion and transmigration, which accounts for 68% of all communal violence related deaths. The most deadly single event was the May 1998 riots in Jakarta, which resulted in 1,202 casualties. (See Table 10. Source: UNSFIR, 2002, p.28 and p.39)

Table 10 Communal violence by category 1990 – 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communal violence category</th>
<th>Deaths Number</th>
<th>% of total</th>
<th>Incidents Number</th>
<th>No. of cities/districts affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic, religion, migration</td>
<td>3,230</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 98 riots</td>
<td>1,202</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in political views</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil commotion (tawuran)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue of “dukan santet”</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competing resources</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The food riots</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,771</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peace and conflict ledger and minorities at risk

In his study on minorities at risk, Gurrr follows four groups in Indonesia, three of which are national peoples: East Timor, Aceh, West Papua, and one which is a minority people: the ethnic Chinese. East Timor gained independence in 2001, after two years of UN transitional governance. The political transformation lead to increased aspirations for regional autonomy and a declining grip on national security. Historic cleavages re-emerged and contemporary ones sprang up. Indonesia did not succeed in avoiding armed conflicts, nor did it manage the self determination movements successfully. Furthermore, although Indonesia had durable institutions for thirty years, the New Order autocratic style did not stimulate these institutions to be flexible and responsive agencies that could adjust to the political transition process easily.

\(^{40}\) UNSFIR, the United Nations Support Facility for Indonesian Recovery, is a research institute established in Jakarta in 1999 to assist the government and international community in research for policy development.

\(^{41}\) UNSFIR based its research on a decade long newspaper article analysis. The number of deaths due to State-community conflicts is, therefore, undoubtedly dramatically higher than the 59 persons stated because of the prolonged military repression and past and present restrictions on freedom of the press.
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In the 2001 Peace and Conflict Ledger, Indonesia scored as a yellow flag country, which translates into a democracy with some risk. Its risks arise because it has trouble controlling secession movements and has a new political system (two red scores); it has difficulties in avoiding armed conflict, has limited resources to overcome the crisis and is located in a somewhat unstable neighbourhood (three yellow flags), but it has long standing democratic institutions (green). In reality, the regime has not been able to prevent deadly conflict and there is a growing militant Islamic Jihad that engages in terrorist attacks on internal foreign interests (the bombings of a Bali night club frequented mainly by foreign tourists in October 2002 and of the Marriott hotel in Jakarta in May 2003). Other cross-border issues include the ongoing stream of Asian mainland economic refugees passing through to make their way into Australia illegally; the illegal labour migration of Indonesians to Malaysia and the Muslim armed struggle in neighbouring Southern Philippines. In sum, as in many other countries in transition, the Indonesian government seems weakly positioned to prevent or deal with intrastate conflict effectively. Even without measuring scores on human rights violations, absolute poverty and the degree of ethno-linguistic factions, it would not be hard to consider Indonesia in the red zone.

Historic, cultural and class cleavages

A. Historic and post-colonial grievances

- There are two armed separatist movements, in Aceh and West Papua that are demanding unconditional independence and whose claims are based on historic grievances. Aceh, which fought bitter wars for independence with the Dutch colonial rulers in the late 19th century, was deeply affected when the promised "special region status" was not granted to them by President Sukarno despite their support for the struggle for independence from the Dutch in 1950. West Papua, on the other hand, was incorporated by the Republic of Indonesia in 1963. Its majority Christian population had anticipated assistance from the international community to gain independence but did not see its aspirations reflected in the referendum of 1962. Other regional autonomy movements, of which there are many with diffuse demands that range from a larger share in natural resource revenues, to enhanced political status and voice in decision making, to federal solutions that require constitutional amendments.

- There are many regional autonomy movements with diffuse demands that range from a larger share in natural resource revenues, to enhanced political status and voice in decision making, to federal solutions that require constitutional amendments. The legacy of Javanese political and social repression is aggravated by the severe human rights abuses committed by the Indonesian Army over past decades (Malley, 2001). Like the contemporary grievances against the ruling Javanese elite have emerged in a third province, Riau in Central Sumatra, with a growing but yet unarmed separatist movement. The resource rich province has claims based on economic injustices (natural resource exploration) with some historic connotations; and hence they oppose control over and unequal distribution of economic and natural resources by the Javanese elite.42

42 A main problem that Indonesia has been facing since independence is nation building. In his essay "Can We Find Indonesia" Sulistyow unmask five historic fallacies that shape the illusion of a state today. First, there was no Old Indonesia before the colonial era; it is an 'imagined community.' Second, Indonesia never had a harmonious, peaceful environment and conflicts have never been managed openly. As a result potentials for conflict mount until they explode in 'uncontrolled situations'. Sulistyos posits that this cultural heritage of collectively running amok ignited much of the post-1997 violence. Third, Indonesia was not born from the womb of a revolution in which people joined hands to make the sun of joint power more than its separate components; instead the revolutionary attitude of its leaders has justified an attitude of survival of the fittest. Fourth, Indonesia was never a rich country. Last, transformation does not automatically lead to democracy. (Sulistyo, 2003, p.1-4)
B. Cultural and religious cleavages

- Many historic and contemporary grievances are reinforced by cultural, ethnic and religious differences. The Papuan and Timorese people of East Indonesia have Melanesian roots and most adopted the Christian faith during the Dutch colonial times, unlike the ruling majority Malay Muslim population, which is largely concentrated in Java and Sumatra.

- The Aceh Adat leaders on the far western tip of Indonesia have traditionally adhered to more conservative interpretations of Islam, including Sharia law. and never identified with the progressive Malay Islamic tradition of mainstream Malaysian and Indonesian political leaders. Hence they have managed to maintain a strong sense of identity and belonging to a “gentile”. This was further enhanced by the brutal suppression of any dissenting voice by the Indonesian military (TNI), especially in the 1980s and 1990s.

- The Moluccas was, for centuries, the nucleus of the VOC spice trade and the region developed close ties with the Dutch rulers. Most KNIL soldiers (i.e., colonial army) were of Christian Maluccu descent and chose to move to the Netherlands upon independence in 1949. There they nurtured dreams of an independent state and formed the Republic of South Moluccas (RMS), after armed opposition to the Indonesian State failed in the 1950s.

- Kalimantan, on the other hand, was covered by pristine rainforest until recently and its indigenous communities, located in remote valleys, led fairly undisturbed lives. The collusion of power between the political military and business sector has resulted in callous exploitation and the destruction of natural resources. In addition, in the 1970s land was grabbed to make way for huge transmigration projects for poor Muslim farmers from overpopulated Java. Years of frustration and discrimination resulted in a series of brutal communal fights between indigenous people and migrants in 1997-1999.

- A different cultural cleavage and historic tension exists between the ethnic Chinese and indigenous Indonesians, whose relationship also deteriorated in the 1990s. It culminated in the May 1998 riots with targeted attacks on Chinese properties around the country, which lasted for months and caused great loss of human lives and material goods. As a result approximately 150,000 people, 70,000 of whom are believed to be ethnic Chinese, left the country. (UNSFIR, 2001, p.39) Economic envy is cited as the main cause for the anti-Chinese conflicts. Chinese control approximately 75% of the local economy (retail sector, local transportation sector and commercial imports) but they are less than five percent of the population. Part of this wealth was accumulated through their political affiliation with the New Order regime in the 1990s, bringing them political returns as well, which led to more envy.

C. Social cleavages and class conflict: labour and land

- During the New Order era, after the labour and peasant organisations were crushed in the 1965 coup, it became very hard to advocate for improved labour and land rights. Labour groups saw some relaxation of the restrictions in the late 1980s because of strong international pressure but in the mid 1990s the restrictions were reinstated and labour leaders incarcerated. This explains, to some extent, the broad public support for the 1998 student democratisation movement and protest demonstrations, which ultimately led to the fall of the New Order regime.

- As for the land conflicts, their nature differs in urban and rural areas. In urban areas the core issues are land titles in slums and evictions of farmers for urban and industrial expansion. In the rural areas, the main conflicts arise around indigenous people and unsustainable natural resource exploitation (massive logging: major mining of gold, copper, iron, gems: oil exploration). There are also serious land title issues in transmigration zones around the country; these zones were created for poor rural Muslim families from overpopulated Java to reduce that island’s unemployment problems.
3.6 Conflict, cleavages and grievances in Myanmar

Armed conflict erupted in Myanmar immediately upon its independence in 1948. Historically, Myanmar was never a cohesive nation. It was formed as result of a series of trade agreements and three colonial wars in the 19th century. Authoritarian British colonial rule managed to keep the nation together for a century. To control the recurring small and large insurgencies by different ethnic minority groups at the borders, the British applied divide and rule tactics. Strong ethnic sentiments were exacerbated by induced immigration of Indian professionals to work in the colonial government or to take up intermediate professional positions and occupations. The British, Indians and Chinese managed to progressively control the economy, relegating the indigenous Burmese essentially to agriculture and petty trading. Through the introduction of a monetary economy, most traditional Myanmar business interests got marginalized, creating divisions and antipathies that still resonate in society. Indian moneylenders gained an effective monopoly over non-institutional credit and in the wake of the Great Depression in the 1930s, many Burmese both were forced to foreclosure and lost their land to foreigners or became deeply indebted. The retrieval of Burmese control over its economy became a central, legitimising theme for the government since.

The Union of Burma was politically fragile since its inception. It was negotiated compromise to provide the British with a legitimate nation to which to hand over the power. The charismatic leader General Aung San had negotiated the new Constitution in the year prior to independence, but he was assassinated in July 1947. The Constitution placed central power with the Burman majority population, which composed two thirds of the population and gave limited local

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43 Source: http://go.hrw.com/atlas/norm.htm#myanmar.htm
44 Burma was renamed Myanmar by the military Junta in 1988. This study uses the official name even though most development experts continue to use the name Burma and groups in exile are still going by that name.
45 The Burmese colonial Army was composed of 13 percent Burmese, 37 percent Indians and the remainder ethnic minority recruits from mountainous areas, who were placed in ethnically based regiments along the periphery, on the model established by the British in India. (Steinberger, 2000)
authority to a number of minority areas. Most ethnic minority leaders did not recognise the majority Burman government as their new central government that was perceived as an extension of colonial rule. Within the first year of independence, the ethnic minority people lost hope that regional autonomy could be achieved through participation in the new democratic process. Ethno-nationalist revolts broke out in the border provinces in 1949 and groups with Marxist sympathies began to mobilise in Myanmar’s heartland, the Irrawaddy delta.

In the early 1950s, much of rural Myanmar was wracked by deadly conflict. Two factions of the Burmese Communist Party and the People’s Volunteer Organisation, consisting of World War II veterans, went underground, as did the armed Karen, Karenni, Mon and Pao movements. In an attempt to provide adequate protection in the rural areas bordering the conflict zones, the government encouraged the formation of village defence forces. They were helpful in restoring government control, but abuses of power, like the burning of villages by government troops to keep them from falling into rebel hands, became common. Myanmar enjoyed a form of democratic rule from 1948 to 1958 and from 1960 to 1962: a military caretaker government briefly held power from 1958 to 1960. The Junta took over power in 1962 and remains in charge today.

Protracted ethnic conflict and militarization of Myanmar

Deadly conflicts of varying intensity dominated life in Myanmar for the next fifty years. There are six main factors explaining why these conflicts have not been resolved.

1. Abolition of democratic rule and institution of military rule
The fragility of the Union was evident from the beginning. For example, the constitution allowed the large Shan State and the smaller Kachin State (the latter having its independence recognized by both the Burmese and the British in 1876) to secede from the Union after a ten-year trial period. Secession was, however, never a practical option. The government did use the threat to the territorial integrity of the Union of Burma, would the right to autonomy be claimed, as the justification for the 1962 military coup. The Junta governed by decree until 1974, when military rule was legalized in the form of a unitary constitution run by the military with a single-party, Marxist oriented political system. There was a fictive balance between the seven minority ‘States’ (provinces) and the seven Burman ‘divisions’ (provinces as well). Elections were organised in 1988, because the Junta felt confident that its party would win. The landslide victory of Aung San Suu Kyi’s (ASSK) party led the military to annul the election results and clamp down brutally on mass demonstrations, putting the leader under house arrest. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was established and its 1997 successor, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), is still in power.

2. No commitment to a common solution involving all ethnic parties and interests

46Interestingly each of these ethnic nationalist movements had a different origin. The ethnic tensions between the Karen and Burman were fuelled by the Karen’s involvement in the British colonial army to put down Burman revolts. The Karenni Movement emerged in part as a revolt to the Karen, their mega neighbour ethnic group, because they feared being evicted from their traditional lands. Other ethnic groups, like the Kachin and the Wa, have close ethnic ties with Chinese minority groups and used their ethnic connections, geographic remoteness and poppy culture as justification and means to separate themselves from Central Myanmar and its majority government.

47This analysis is in part based on a presentation by M. Boyle, Min Win, and E. Scheper at the Kennedy School of Government (Harvard University) which was entitled “Prospects for Burmese Democracy: An Opportunity for a New Direction”, May 2001.
The first wave of ethnic armed insurgency upon independence and the second wave commencing after the 1962 coup, aggravated the fear of loss of territorial integrity and generated conflicts among ethnic insurgent groups over whose claim was most valid. The Junta successfully prolonged the British divide and rule strategy, in which each group battled and negotiated with the Burman government independently and often at the cost of the others. The ceasefire with the Kachin National Army allowed the Junta to devote its full attention to fighting the Shan and Karen, and the “liberated” territory of Manaplaw fell in 1997.

3. Lack of constitutional guarantees to safeguard security of minorities
The inequality built into the original constitution of the Union of Burma, guaranteeing some ethnic groups autonomous status and denying the interests or rights of others, proved a major disaster from the onset. An additional problem was that the Shan and Kachin could not have been assured that the constitution would protect their rights, because the powers of the State and ethnic groups were not clearly delineated in the constitution. After the 1962 coup, political parties were outlawed, private newspapers closed and businesses and industries across the country nationalised. After long drawn out battles, the Kachin were the first ethnic group to negotiate an autonomy status successfully under a ceasefire agreement in the early 1990s. It was important for the SLORC, both politically and militarily, to have a ceasefire partner in the remote Northern provinces bordering China, as not to stretch the capacity of the armed forces over too large a geographic area and too many battlefronts. Additional ceasefire agreements were signed in the late 1990s with i.e. Mon and Karenni and negotiations with the Karen are currently under way.

4. Economic deprivation and exploitation after the Junta consolidated its power
After the Kachin ceasefire, the military regime could consolidate its power and started to generate a disproportionate share of the economic profits from trade and investment in Myanmar. The growing concentration of resources and investments in the central Myanmar provinces, while remote provinces remained deprived of the essential basic provisions, further aggrieved ethnic groups. From one of the richest Asian nations at the time of independence, Myanmar sunk to one of the thirty poorest nations on earth in just 25 years.

5. Asymmetry of negotiating power between warring factions
Negotiations between warring parties in a deadly conflict are likely to be successful only when there is a rough parity of interests and capabilities. In Myanmar, the military regime holds a disproportionate share of political, economic, diplomatic and military power, in part because of its long-standing association with China. None of the ethnic insurgencies have been strong enough to challenge the military regime on purely military terms, and constant in fighting among the ethnic groups ensures the military regime’s preponderance of power. In the absence of local peaceful or military solutions, hope has been redirected to the international community to pressure the military government to step down and end the abuse and deprivation in Myanmar.

6. Geopolitical importance and ineffective third party intervention
Given the historic territorial tensions between India and China, the position of Myanmar as a proxy to maintain the power balance between them is of key importance. After independence, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, India provided assistance to Nu’s Democratic Government to protect it from collapse. China initially supported the Communist Party through the 1970s, but switched its support to the military regime in the 1980s. India has, therefore, remained a more peripheral actor.

Myanmar’s strategic alliance with China precluded structural interventions from outside actors until recently. The US trade ban, issued in 1988, has many loopholes for multilateral investments especially in natural resource exploitation. The effectiveness of the diplomatic pressure from the
Deadly conflict in four divided societies in Asia

European Union has likewise been hampered by Germany and France’s refusal to support the international economic investment boycott. The United Nations has been taking moderate steps to intervene, in part because China wields a veto on the Security Council. Numerous attempts by the US to put Myanmar on the agenda of the UN Security Council have failed because of China’s objections. At last, in 1999, the ILO suspended Myanmar from its General Assembly meetings for its continued widespread use of forced labour. In November 2003 a UN General Assembly resolution was adopted to call for restoration of democracy and exercising of human rights. The special UN rapporteur on Myanmar visits twice a year, while the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) dialogue (led by Thailand) organises forum discussions on a regular basis. Unfortunately, these diplomatic efforts have thus far shown few results.

Peace and conflict ledger and minorities at risk

In the Peace and Democracy Ledger, Myanmar’s total yellow flag score is largely based on the Junta’s success in curbing secession movements, which reduces the risk of deadly violence to moderate. The previous analysis, however, begs a different scoring. MAR’s regime type and durability scores are too optimistic: the regime is supposedly in a transitional stage between autocracy and democracy (yellow) and is considered to have high durability of political institutions because they were established before 1985 (green). However, this durability is based on totalitarian rule and militarization of the society and does not imply Myanmar has the ability to deal with conflicts in a peaceful manner. On the contrary, conflict is being suppressed. Furthermore, the transitional stage of the regime might stretch over a prolonged period, as there is no genuine political drive to allow for increasing political diversity. Taking the human rights indicators into the equation makes the picture gloomier. The question of durability without democracy becomes apparent. While the Junta has managed to suppress the armed struggle, aspirations of independence have not waned and ethnic identities have only been reinforced. Thus, as long as the autocratic regime is not willing to look for durable solutions to historic and contemporary grievances, the country remains vulnerable to deadly conflict.

The MAR overview of minorities at risk in Myanmar identifies two ethnic self-determination movements (Karen, Shan) and four smaller indigenous peoples’ groups fighting for regional autonomy (Rohinga, Chin, Kachin, Mon). This study would move the Kachin to the self-determination category and add the Wa to the latter group. Disenfranchised by the government, the poorly organised Rohingas are very vulnerable. Some smaller ethnic groups along the Chinese border are deeply involved in illicit trading of drugs and arms, with security forces as trading partners. At the same time, the low risk scores for the Kachin and the Mon is based on their signed ceasefire agreements with the SPDC in the 1990s, but it does not imply that their combat capacity waned.

Furthermore, Myanmar has the longest ruling Asian Junta (forty years in power) that abolished democratic institutions, annulled fundamental constitutional rights and drained the nation’s natural resources for military and personal gain. As a result, Myanmar’s economic ranking toppled from one of the richest Asian nations upon independence to one of the thirty poorest countries in the world at present. The Junta’s poor governance record has led to UN economic sanctions and UN special rapporteur monitoring since 1986, while the ILO banned it from its General Assembly in 2000 for its widespread forced labour practices. Another inconsistency in the MAR scoring is the geopolitical impact: given longstanding cross-border issues with the Chin and Rohingya minority groups, plus the extent of the illegal trade in drugs, weapons and humans, Myanmar justifies a yellow score. Adding the three red scores on human rights, poverty and ethnicity indicators would make Myanmar score red on seven out of nine indicators.
Preventing Deadly Conflict in Divided Societies in Asia

Historic, cultural and class cleavages

A. Historic and post-colonial grievances
- Regional autonomy and self determination aspirations of ethnic minority groups were poorly addressed in the decolonisation process and toughened political elites to promote their ethno-nationalist ideals. Less than a year into independence, the opposition leadership lost faith in the democratic process, which was dominated by a Burman majority, and opted for armed struggle.
- Various ethnic secession movements (Kachin, Shan, Karen, Karenni, Mon and Chin) soon started to fight each other as well, over seemingly minor historic issues, which played into the hands of the military power to take over governance in 1962.
- Myanmar has the longest ruling Junta, and civil governance and military responsibilities are colluded in every walk of public life. Military personnel and relatives are furthermore favoured when it comes to employment, education opportunities, housing and health care.

B. Cultural and religious cleavages
- Opposition to the Burman dominated Buddhist government has been accumulating for forty years. The Karen, Kachin and Karenni leadership, which are largely Baptist Christian and strongly identify their faith as a unifying factor in the battle against the Burman military regime, are the main opposition.
- Inter-group conflicts exists among all ethno-nationalist groups, and is especially targeted against the Kachin, who were the first to sign a ceasefire accord in 1992, negotiated a much better deal than groups that fought for a decade longer and their action freed up armed forces resources to increase combat on other fronts (e.g. the fall of Manaplaw).
- The Rohingas, a Muslim minority in the Arakan State, are a very vulnerable exploited group; refugees were forcibly returned from neighbouring Bangladesh in the mid 1990s, after which they have been receiving support from the UN and international NGOs.

C. Social cleavages and class conflict: labour and land
- Forced labour has long been a major issue. At any given time at least 500,000 people are forced to work in state projects or provide services to the military.
- The Junta’s diplomatic and economic alliance with China has led to a steady influx of Chinese businesses and rural migrants. Cultural concerns and envy complaints are increasingly heard, especially in the northern parts of the country.
3.7 Comparative summary of cleavages and grievances

Table 11 summarises the key grievances and cleavages that have influenced intrastate conflict in the four case countries. Grievances and cleavages are often multi-dimensional and combine issues of ethnic identity with religion and governance. There are seven key factors that recur in the analysis: ethnic exclusion, nation building, ethnic majority governance, historic insurgency, a culture of violence, geopolitical influences and religion.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 11 Comparative summary of cleavages and grievances</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grievances</td>
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<td>Historical, regional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deprived national people 3x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colonial divide/rule 3x</td>
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<td>Post colonial grievance 3x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural, religious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture of violence 3x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deprived minority people 4x</td>
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<td>Ethnic inter-group fighting 2x</td>
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<td>Class</td>
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<td>New political elite 2x</td>
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<td>Chinese business dominance 3x</td>
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<td>(land and labour)</td>
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<tr>
<td>State</td>
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<tr>
<td>No imagined community 3x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Militarization 4x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cold War cleavages 1x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic governance dominance 3x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religiously inspired anti-separatist movement 1x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim minorities 3x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nationalist Buddhist Clergy 1x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malay vs Melanesian 1x</td>
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<tr>
<td>State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transmigration 3x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eco violence 3x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Silenced trade unions 3x</td>
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<td>Forced labour 1x</td>
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Ethnicity is a major factor in the exclusion and inequality practises that have caused many deadly conflicts in Asia. Because of the lack of strong bridging relationships between ethnic groups, ethno-nationalist leaders have been tempted to favour their own group members over others. In some countries, like Sri Lanka, this was initially a reaction to past colonial favouritism. In others (Indonesia and Myanmar), it was part of an autocratic attempt to build a new nation where there was none before the colonial era.

Three of the four countries have been facing major nation building challenges since independence. In chapter II a nation was defined as an imagined community with territorial limitation, political sovereignty and legitimacy and with deep horizontal comradeship and notions of equality. These traits were lacking in Cambodia, Indonesia and Myanmar and still pose major problems for the building of social capital and social cohesion, as chapter IV will highlight next.

Politics in three countries are dominated by senior representatives of the majority ethnic group (Singhalese, Javanese and Burman), which creates resentment and loss of faith in the democratic system among minority ethnic groups. Constitutional provisions at the time of independence to prevent ethnic majority rule in Sri Lanka and Myanmar did not protect minority rights and were overturned within the first decade. Centre versus periphery sentiments were further fuelled by unsustainable exploitation of natural resources (logging, mining), the revenues from which remained with the government and international partners (so-called eco-violence). Large state supported transmigration programmes aimed at relocating poor ethnic majority peasant families to less densely populated remote areas had clear ethno-political undertones as well. The large Mahaweli irrigation scheme in the North Eastern dry zone of Sri Lanka relocated primarily poor Singhalese peasant family to a predominantly Tamil area. Likewise, Javanese peasant families were relocated to Kalimantan, Sulawesi and West Papua in large state supported agricultural colonization projects. Another ethnic tension was aggravated when Chinese business dynasties managed to broker good relationships with the regimes in three countries; this helped to further their economic enterprises and provided them with some political influence as well. This increased society’s envy and wealthy Chinese business families across Asia have been subject of anti-government riots in recent years.
Japanese forces occupied Cambodia, Myanmar and Indonesia during WWII and the insurgency groups continued their armed struggle when the colonial rulers reclaimed their protectorates in 1945. Some armed groups joined in the national effort with the understanding that they would obtain the right to self determination upon the ‘liberation’ but in both Indonesia and Myanmar, these expectations or commitments were bluntly rejected at independence and further suppressed under the pretext of nation-building. This reinforced historic grievances and ethnic identities of contesting groups and kept them vigilant, which further complicated the nation-building process.

Concern over a growing culture of violence was highlighted in three countries throughout the interviews. In Cambodia its roots are thought to be imbedded in ancient Angkor culture and hence centuries old, but in Indonesia and Sri Lanka it is believed to be linked to the armed struggles since independence. The insurgencies have polarised political parties, militarized the society and promoted social bonding among identity groups. The cultural tradition of not dealing with conflict openly is thought to have aggravated the deadly outcome of conflicts over the past fifty years in Cambodia and Indonesia. In Sri Lanka, the culture of violence seems more a consequence of the recent civil war and would, therefore, be somewhat easier to address if the political will is there.

Geopolitical influences deeply have impacted the nation-building process in the case countries. The Indochina Wars had a devastating impact on Cambodia’s social cohesion. Although ethnic and class differences were minimal, insurgent leaders managed to mobilise poor and deprived rural youth using political ideologies to fight the different governments backed by France and the US. In its aftermath Cold War alliances with either western governments (e.g., the New Order regime) or community governments (e.g., the Chinese-backed Myanmar Junta) provided international and military resources to build and prolong autocratic rule. This allowed for the denial of the most basic civil and political rights at the cost of many lives as well as large scale corruption and nepotism practices. Recently, the war on terrorism has added a new dimension to geopolitical involvement in Asia, especially in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Indonesia. As a result of the intrastate conflicts and international support, militarization is on the rise in all four countries, and the lack of accountability of the armed forces is increasingly alarming.

Religion appears of influence in violent conflict, but is often linked to the ethnic identity of a group, not the other way around. There are three exceptions: in the three majority Buddhist countries, small traditional Muslim minority groups have missed out on participation in development efforts and belong to the poorest groups in the country. Second, in Sri Lanka the Buddhist clergy has mobilised itself politically, winning 10 seats in parliament in the 2004 national election, and is very vocal in promoting an anti-secessionist, Buddhist nationalistic agenda. Likewise, the JVP, the Sinhalese Buddhist Marxist party, moved from armed struggle to the political arena and became the third largest party in Sri Lanka in the 2003 national election.

In sum, exclusion and inequality in the context of ethnic diversity, nation building and militarization are major causes of grievance in all four case countries. However, there are other studies that claim the incidence of deadly conflict will decline and exclusion and inequality factors can be overcome, when sustainable levels of national economic development are reached, because civil wars occur almost exclusively in the poorest and most marginalised countries. Chapter IV will review two recent mega conflict studies by the World Bank and Woodrow Wilson Center, which postulate that the lack of economic development is the major conflict risk and apply their findings and sets of risk factors to the four case countries.