

Research impact: making a difference

Applying lessons from the Aceh conflict to EU peacekeeping missions

Evaluation of the EU's Aceh Monitoring Mission contributed to better application of human security principles in other peacekeeping missions

What was the problem?

In 1976 conflict erupted in the Indonesian province of Aceh between the newly formed Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian military.

This conflict was the result of the central government in Jakarta renegeing on its promises for regional autonomy as well as the exploitation of Aceh's resources by the central government following the discovery of natural gas.

The conflict lasted for three decades. During this period both the Indonesian military and GAM committed human rights abuses in their efforts to sway the population to support Indonesia or an independent Aceh. Some 100,000 Acehnese were killed, most of them civilians.

Following the 2004 Tsunami, secret talks between GAM and the central government in Jakarta were turned into official negotiations to end the conflict. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 15 August 2005.

What did we do?

After the fall of President Suharto in 1998, Dr Kirsten Schulze (now Associate Professor of International History) began researching and publishing widely on the Indonesian conflict, the resolution of the Aceh conflict (1976-2005) and the transition from conflict to negotiated settlement. She found that the fall of Suharto not only allowed the Indonesian government to explore avenues other than force to resolve the Aceh conflict, but also presented the Free Aceh Movement with the opportunity to modify its strategy and to transform itself into a genuinely popular movement.

In 2005 Schulze was invited by the British Embassy in Jakarta to brief a team on the history and causes of the conflict so that they could prepare the ground for the European Union's Aceh Monitoring Mission (2005-2006). She was subsequently invited by the European Union to conduct an evaluation of the Monitoring Mission's work.

The evaluation formed part of the design of a broader 'Human Security and European Security and Defence Policy', which focused on the changing nature of security risks and led to a set of proposals for military and civilian capabilities guided by human security principles.

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Schulze produced four evaluation publications, whose recommendations included decommissioning of Free Aceh weapons, redeployment of Indonesian forces, reintegration of former combatants and human rights monitoring. Her research established that the support of the UK, Swedish and Finnish embassies, good leadership by the head of the Monitoring Mission, a swift amnesty for Free Aceh Movement prisoners and a commitment to the peace process by both sides were all crucial to the successful conclusion of the Mission's aims.

Schulze found, however, that the primacy of human rights was more challenging to implement and required a bottom-up approach to the reintegration of former combatants as well as improvements in staff training.

What happened?

In 2002 Javier Solana, then High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union (EU), initiated a 'human security' project. Practitioners and academics worked together to develop proposals for the redesign of European security capabilities, which would incorporate a shift away from a 'traditional security' approach and towards one of 'human security'. In 2004 the human security project published A Human Security Doctrine for Europe.

In 2006 the Finnish foreign ministry asked the research team to prepare a report on how the doctrine could usefully be taken forward during Finland's Presidency of the EU. The human security team conducted an evaluation of existing European Security and Defence Policy missions (including the Aceh Mission) and

Schulze's insights into the Aceh conflict proved vital for the assessment of the root causes of conflict. Her 12 recommendations for the future European Security and Defence Policy included:

- the recruitment of monitors proficient in the local and the mission language
- a more culturally-sensitive training programme
- a clear definition of the human rights mandate
- compulsory training on human rights.

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The evaluation was presented at the first seminar on European Union Human Security in 2007 and at a European Union peacekeeping seminar in 2009. Both seminars taught practitioners how

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to promote the inclusion of human security principles into policymaking. The seminars' conclusions were published on the European Security and Defence Policy website.

The Report on the Implementation of European Security Strategy of the European Council (2008) directly cited the human security study group's findings on the European mission evaluations, including Aceh, and acknowledged that a state-based, traditional security approach to peacekeeping is too limited and that there should be a new emphasis on 'human security' with its focus on human rights.

The Directorate General for External Policies of the European Parliament's Common Security and Defence Policy reported that Schulze's research fed directly into both European Union security policy and policymaking by individual member states. The Belgian High Commission adopted a human security doctrine, and the concept has been included in the British 'security and stabilisation' manual.

Given the high proportion of female-led households in Aceh following the conflict, the European Union directly addressed Schulze's recommendation to achieve a greater gender balance in peacekeeping missions and to make training more gender sensitive, and invited Member States to actively pursue strategies to recruit more women.

Schulze's work on the Aceh conflict has become part of the training material at the European Crisis Management Centre in Finland, which has also published a manual that incorporates the findings from her research.

Dr. Kirsten E. Schulze is Associate Professor in International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She works on communal and separatist conflict in Indonesia and the Middle East as well as militant Islamism. Dr. Schulze was appointed Deputy Director of the LSE Southeast Asia Centre in October 2014. From 2012 to 2014 she was the Head of the LSE Ideas Southeast Asia Programme and from 2004-2012 she ran the Indonesian seminar series at the Chatham House Asia Programme. Dr. Schulze has a DPhil from Oxford University (1994) and worked as a lecturer in Politics at Queen's University Belfast (1994-1995) before coming to the LSE.

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