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**Disaster 'Caliphaticization':
Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, Islamic Aceh, and the Indian Ocean Tsunami**

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The devastation caused by the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami opened access for many different organizations to enter Aceh to conduct disaster relief operations. This paper examines the role of one such actor, the Islamic organization Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). Through its humanitarian work, including the provision of relief aid, medical care, and trauma healing, HTI pursued its political-religious vision of 'caliphaticization', the restoration of a global Caliphate and the implementation of Islamic law. Because Islam was already a dominant feature of the Acehnese context with the vast majority of Acehnese declaring a Muslim identity, the case of HTI's disaster relief work was one of intra-religious proselytization to proximate others. Even so, HTI's project was intended to be transformative. However, while the disaster clearly provided an opening for HTI to expand its work in Aceh, and while HTI experienced significant growth in the region as a consequence, its wider project of 'caliphaticization' failed to resonate with political elites and has had little impact on political processes. This paper analyses HTI's disaster relief work and assesses the reasons for both its rapid growth and limited political impact.

Keywords: Aceh, Indonesia, disaster relief, Hizbut Tahrir, Indian Ocean tsunami, Islam, disaster proselytization

Introduction

In her important article on changing religious beliefs in Southern Honduras following the devastating impact of Hurricane Mitch in 1998, Ensor (2003) argues that too little attention has been paid to the roles of religion in responding to disasters. Arguing that this has resulted in blinkered, and indeed insufficient analyses, she provides a textured study of the ways in which one specific community responded to both disaster and processes of reconstruction. Ensor argues that in the wake of the disaster, the predominantly Roman Catholic community of Morolica was marked by

significant conversions to Protestant Evangelicalism. The reasons for this religious transformation are complicated, but they include the proactive and energetic interventions of Protestant evangelistic groups, including local Evangelical pastors and the North American-based missionary organization Central American Mission (CAM; now called *Camino Global*). For Ensor, this is an example of 'disaster evangelism' in which the opportunity created by a disaster event is exploited by groups with conversionary agendas. The evangelical missionary groups not only constructed the first 100 houses in the resettlement village and distributed school supplies, toys, and clothes, but also distributed Bibles, built a large new church building, and helped organize daily prayer and worship activities.

A crucial feature in Ensor's case is that while both Catholics and Evangelical Protestants identified as Christian, in the context of Southern Honduras, their differences were such that the disaster response took place in a context of "religious pluralism". Evangelicals believed that they alone represented the true Christian faith and that Catholics remained beholden to immorality, indeed their misconduct was deemed among the causes of the catastrophe, and the lack of orthodoxy. 'Conversion' — that is "a process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and orientation" (Rambo 1993, p. 5) — was seen as necessary by some because theological, behavioral, moral and ritual gaps were imagined as clearly separating one group from the other. Yet, while some accentuated differences and disjuncture between the two groups, others showed that they were far from rigid or fixed. The religious pluralism was ambiguous. The boundaries remained "permeable and flexible" (Ensor 2003, p. 45) with certain Catholics attending both Catholic mass and Evangelical worship and even in the case of 'conversion' it remained unclear whether this was necessarily a permanent state or a temporary measure. Whether Catholics and Evangelicals were cut from the same Christian cloth, or whether they were altogether different fabrics, was a matter of ongoing debate in the religious contestation surrounding the disaster relief operations.

Ensor's paper serves as a valuable entry-point for my own research. Her examination of what we might call *intra-religious proselytization* sets up a striking parallel example to the case I present here on Islamic actors in the predominantly Muslim Indonesian province of Aceh after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Religious groups are frequently thought to use disasters as opportunities to disseminate their beliefs to distant others, but in both Ensor's and the case I examine here, the proselytization was instead directed at *proximate others*. Perhaps even more so than in Ensor's case, the case I discuss in this paper is one in which the interactions between outside missionaries and those affected by disasters took place in the context of perceptions of both similarity and difference.

This paper argues that the Indonesian branch of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (hereafter shortened with HT), which is known locally as *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (hereafter shortened with HTI) utilized the opportunity of the Indian Ocean tsunami to make inroads into Aceh in order to further their mission of 'caliphaticization'—the goal of reunifying Islam through the reestablishment of a world-wide Caliphate (Islamic

State).¹ Known as 'Verandah of Mecca' due to its history as being the first region of the archipelago to embrace Islam and also due to its reputation for ongoing fidelity to Islamic orthodoxy, Acehese generally did not respond to the explicit missionary goals of HTI with resentment or anxiety. Yet while many Acehese appreciated their work—including their religious propagation—the end goal espoused by HTI activists gained limited traction outside of the organization. The political-theological vision of Islamic globalization therefore received an ambivalent response among Acehese Muslims.

Methodology and Limitations of Study

The analysis I present here is based primarily on four months of fieldwork on HTI in Aceh in 2010-2011. Another additional three months of fieldwork was undertaken in 2012 to supplement and triangulate this initial research. The fieldwork involved qualitative research including in-depth interviews with as well as frequent informal discussions with 20 HTI members, including national and local leaders, most of whom had been directly engaged in post-tsunami relief work in Aceh. The interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim while the discussions are written on the field notes. The duration of both interviews and discussions vary from forty minutes to one and half hour depending on the context and situation. The grounded theory approach is used to analyze and interpret the data.

This study has faced several limitations. At the time of writing HTI had yet to make available any comprehensive report on their Aceh disaster relief projects. Such a report, were it to be released publically, would provide valuable data for further analysis and discussion. Logistically, it was also difficult to locate many of the HTI activists who had worked in Aceh after the tsunami. It was also difficult to trace HTI beneficiaries (tsunami survivors) because they had returned to their villages.

As I discuss below, HTI activists were recruited from HTI chapters all over the Indonesian archipelago and, upon the conclusion of their activities in Aceh, they generally returned home. However, the selected respondents that I was able to interview were directly involved in HTI's tsunami relief efforts, which means that the data provided here is a first-hand and reliable. To mitigate these limitations, this research was further supplemented through internet-based research and through consulting texts produced by or about the HT movement in Indonesia and globally.

The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami: Disaster as Opportunity

The earthquakes and tsunami that struck Aceh on 26 December 2004 caused a massive loss of life and tremendous damage. It was among the world's most destructive natural disasters, with over 275,000 fatalities in fourteen countries across two continents. Because the Indonesian province of Aceh was the closest to the epicenter, the area suffered greater devastation than any other nation, accounting for

167,000 dead or missing, 500,000 displaced persons and estimated damages of US\$ 4.5 billion (BRR Joint-Report 2005).

The disaster event also opened Aceh to the world for the first time in decades. Largely sealed off from outside organizations for over three decades due to a simmering civil conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM, *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*) and the Indonesian military, Aceh had virtually no active civil society beyond the mainstream Islamic groups that of *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah* as the largest Islamic organizations Indonesia. The disaster dramatically and quickly transformed this isolation. On the evening of 26 December 2004, the Indonesian president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, declared a national disaster and initiated emergency search, rescue and aid operations.

In the next few days, Aceh was opened to outsiders and help came flooding in from across the world. Numerous relief organizations came from all over the world to offer assistance. Among those involved in the relief process were approximately 124 international NGOs, 430 local NGOs, dozens of donor and United Nations agencies, various Indonesian government agencies, the Indonesian military and various other foreign military forces. However, these figures almost certainly underestimate the actors involved as many other groups were also involved in the relief process, including numerous religious groups and informal or loosely organized actors. The total amount of finances dedicated for relief and reconstruction in Aceh was about US\$7 billion (projected from 2005 to 2009). This amount is considered to be one of the largest reconstruction programs undertaken in the developing world (BRR Joint-Report 2005).

Among numerous actors that entered Aceh in the wake of the tsunami was the HTI. HTI had previously had only a limited presence in the province. The disaster created new opportunities for the group to greatly expand its work in the province in order to seek to further advance its transformative religious-political vision.

The Origins and Development of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia

Before discussing HTI's work in Aceh after the tsunami, it is important to start with the brief introduction of the movement. Historically, HT was established in Jerusalem (*al-Quds*) in 1953 as a Sunni Muslim organization by a Palestinian Islamic scholar and judge, Sheikh Taqiuddin an-Nabhani. An-Nabhani and his followers aimed at restoring the Caliphate (*Khilafah*) system which was abolished in 1924 when Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the first President of the Turkish Republic, officially ended the Ottoman claim to the title. According to HT literature, the "caliphate" is when all Muslim countries are united into a single state that is based upon Islamic principles, or Shari'a (In. *Shariah*). At the beginning, an-Nabhani's focus was on strengthening the movement within the Arab region including Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. By the 1960s, an-Nabhani and his followers had planted many chapters of HT across the Middle East and North Africa (Osman 2010b, p. 737). From its base in the Middle East, HT continued to expand such that it now operates in about forty countries in five

continents. By the early 1990s, HT's expansion into countries in Central Asia, North Africa, Europe, and Southeast Asia had successfully turned HT into "a genuinely global movement" (Fealy 2007, p. 154).

The Indonesian chapter of HT, known as HTI, was founded in early 1982 by an Australian of Jordanian-Lebanese descent, Abdurrahman al-Baghdadi (Bubalo & Fealy 2005; Taji-Farouki 1996). Al-Baghdadi was among a significant group of HT members who had fled their home countries in the Middle East in the 1970s to escape persecution against the group. Settling in Australia, al-Baghdadi continued to be active in organizing HT activities. Over the course of a number of years, al-Baghdadi had significant contacts with Mama Abdullah Bin Nuh, a prominent Indonesian Islamic scholar with many adherents. Bin Nuh had first connected with HT when he visited his son studying in Australia in late 1970s where he also met with members of HT, including al-Baghdadi. Bin Nuh later invited al-Baghdadi to visit Indonesia in the late 1970s and soon after that, in 1980, al-Baghdadi decided to migrate permanently to Indonesia. He settled in Bogor and initially taught Arabic at Al-Ghazali, Bin Nuh's *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). A few years later al-Baghdadi decided to establish an Indonesian chapter of HT (Osman 2010b, p. 739).

Throughout the New Order era (1965–1998) HTI was forced to work clandestinely. President Suharto was wary of possible competition from Islamic groups, and the radical ideology of HTI meant it would have been quickly suppressed by the state. As a consequence HTI did not have a public presence until 2000, two years after the *reformasi* brought an end to the New Order regime. The growth of HTI after the 1998 political transition was part of the general flourishing of civil society groups at this time. The movement has grown quickly, spreading out from Bogor into other parts of Indonesia, including Jakarta and other urban centers around the archipelago.

The movement has also received increasing public attention. HTI was thrust into the attention of the mainstream media when, on 11 August 2007, it organized the International Caliphate Conference (KKI, *Konferensi Khilafah Internasional*) in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. The event was attended by an estimated one hundred thousand participants from many different countries, though most came from Indonesia. With the slogan of "Now is the time for the Caliphate to lead the world" (*Saatnya Khilafah Memimpin Dunia*), the gathering called for the reestablishment of a global Islamic state. The date of the conference, 11 August 2007, corresponds to 28 Rajab 1342 in the Islamic *Hijri* calendar, which was seen as a symbolically important date as it was on the same day eighty years ago that the Ottoman Caliphate was abolished. HT believes that the end of the Ottoman Caliphate was the starting point after which Muslims became divided and weak.

According to HTI, the KKI event was "the largest gathering of Muslim activists from around the world" (BBC 2007). For HTI, it was a public display of the movement's growing strength in the country. Within political Islam in Indonesia, HTI had successfully grown from small beginnings to become a rising star within the political establishment. The movement continues to attract considerable attention

because of its status as a transnational movement which pursues a global, rather than merely national, agenda. Fealy (2007) suggests that HTI is the only organization in Indonesia that is directed by a Middle East leader (for further discussion and analysis of the origins, development, and impact of HTI see also Muhtadi (2009) and Mohamed Osman (2010a; 2010b))

Similar to the history of national HTI, the first entry of HTI into Aceh was in the first instance not into the provincial capital. Rather than beginning in Banda Aceh, HTI was initially established in Meulaboh, in West Aceh district. Meulaboh is located about two hundred and forty kilometers from Banda Aceh. However, unlike the carefully strategized emergence of the national organization, the first chapter of HTI in Aceh was incidental and not planned. HTI was introduced to Meulaboh in the late 1990s by an Acehese graduate of the Institute of Local Governance (*Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri*, IPDN), located in Bandung, West Java. During his studies this man became a member of HTI and, when he returned home after graduating, he sought to establish the first HTI chapter in the province. In 2002, two HTI activists, one from Meulaboh of West Aceh and the other from Kalimantan, established HTI in Banda Aceh. At that time, the movement was not yet well known among the Acehese public.

'Caliphization'

According to the movement's website, the central aim of HT is:

“...to resume the Islamic way of life and to convey the Islamic *da'wah* [call] to the world. This objective means bringing the Muslims back to living an Islamic way of life in *Dar al-Islam* [the domain of Islam] and in an Islamic society such that all of life's affairs in society are administered according to the Shari'ah rules, and the viewpoint in it is the *halal* [lawful] and the *haram* [prohibited] under the shade of the Islamic State, which is the *Khilafah* [Caliphate] State.”

(Hizb ut-Tahrir N.d.)

HT further describes that the entire world is suitable for Islamic propagation. While the starting point for the organization is people in Muslim countries who have already embraced Islam, it is nevertheless self-consciously a global movement with a global agenda: the restoration of a global Islamic Caliphate which will ensure the implementation of the Islamic way of life for all believers. The global horizon of HT's vision is apparent in that HT has a chapter established in the United States of America, a country considered by HT as *darul harb* (domain of war). The ambitious goal of 'caliphization' should be seen as an Islamic globalization project (Nuridin 2011). Various theories have been articulated to help make sense of this religious vision of a borderless world.

First, the notion of the global *ummah* (Islamic society) promoted by Islamism is a globalization project that can be categorized into three levels: (a) as a matter of

“growing interconnectedness”; (b) as a subjective comprehension of this growing interconnectedness; and (c) and as particular projects that seek to “manage and steer globalization in a particular direction”. This final form of globalization they label “globalism” and it is within this category that they suggest Islamism best fits, as an “alternative globalism” (Hamel, Lustiger-Thaler, Pieterse, and Roseneil 2001, pp.22–23). For Hamel et al., (2001, p. 23) Islamism is all encompassing, involving “strategic, political, economic, social or cultural” affairs. Furthermore, they suggest that among the key sources of inspiration for Islamic globalism are frustration and disaffection with Western forms of globalization. From this point of view, ‘caliphaticization’ has the potential to become a global symbol of resistance and struggle against Westernization and global Western hegemony.

A second explanation, polarization theory, is found in Barber’s *Jihad vs McWorld* (1992) and Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* (1996). Barber argues that the global situation is one of dialectical contestation between globalization, symbolized by the fast-food chain McDonalds, and cultural polarization or tribalism, which is a form of cultural fundamentalism that represents a struggle for liberation from the hegemony of ‘outsiders’. Similar to Barber, Huntington’s thesis is based on polarization of the West with the Rest. Huntington proposes that the world is divided into major cultural blocks, or ‘civilizations’, which are closely connected with religious affiliation. For Huntington the major current cultural ‘clash’ is between Christianity and Islam. As Huntington (1996, p. 209) notes: “The twentieth-century conflict between liberal democracy and Marxist-Leninism is only a fleeting and superficial historical phenomenon compared with the continuing and deeply conflicted relation between Islam and Christianity.” Interestingly, Huntington’s thesis has been taken up and re-deployed by HT itself in its publication *The Inevitability of the Clash of Civilisation* (Hizb ut-Tahrir 2002).

A final explanation examines the theological conceptualization of the relationship between Islam and society. According to some theologians, Islam is conceptualized as encompassing both religion and state (*din wa daula*). Islam is therefore said to involve a holistic approach in which a complete social system comprising values, beliefs, and practices covering all domains of life (cf. Stauth 1998, p. 69) is set forth. Thus, religious dimensions cannot be separated from political or economic matters and vice versa. It is a total or all-encompassing system of existence. Similarly, the concept of *ummah* encompasses different races, nationalities, and cultural groups and is therefore universal in intent. HT believes that the holistic (*kaffah*) implementation of Shari’a will not be possible without uniting global Islamic society and establishing the Islamic Caliphate as its first foundations. The unity of the *ummah* is derived from faith rather than referring to geographical territory. Thus, the HT’s agenda of establishing a global caliphate can be seen as a clear example of its global reach.

Based on the three explanations outlined above, it can be argued that globalization is not a single phenomenon, but rather a diverse set of projects. It can involve not only Americanization or Westernization but also Islamization, or to be specific, in this case, ‘caliphaticization’ (Nuridin 2011). In fact, globalization processes are open-ended

and should be considered “as much a process of easternization as of westernization, as well as of many interstitial influences” (Pieterse 2009, p. 59).

Moreover, from the perspective of the anthropology of globalization, each globalization project can be seen as operating along similar “flows” or “scapes” which Appadurai (1990) proposes includes the “ethnoscape”, “technoscape”, “financescape”, “mediascape”, and “ideoscape”. These scapes are “deeply perspectival constructs, inflected very much by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors” (Appadurai 1990, p. 296). As a result, many “core” movements tend to localize their global agenda into different localized forms. This process is apparent in HT’s ‘caliphaticization’ (see i.e. Bubalo and Fealy 2005, and Horstmann 2009).

The concept of “ideoscape” is particularly valuable for examining HTI’s work. In his book *The System of Islam*, An-Nabhani (2002) proposes that there are three ideologies that exist in the world namely Islam, capitalism and socialism/communism. HT’s ideology is Islam which is based on a historical perspective of the Prophet Muhammad, particularly his struggle to establish an Islamic state. HT interprets the concept of Islam from a decidedly political standpoint. The theological dimension of HT’s ideology emphasizes the implementation of Islamic law by restoration of a political unit, the global Islamic state. For HT, the global caliphate offers an alternative to that of socialism and capitalism. In my view, HT’s ideology is an “ideoscape” which refers to “concatenations of images... often directly political and frequently [having to do] with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it” (Appadurai 1990, p. 299).

In order to achieve its ideology, HT has a three-stage strategy. First, *tastqif* or culturing, which is the formation stage in which HT attempts to disseminate the ‘culture’ of HT. Second, *tafa’ul ma’a al-ummah*, or interaction with the society, which is aimed at increasing the awareness and understanding within a given society of HT’s ideology. Third, and ultimately, *istilam al-hukm*, or ruling the law whereas the Islamic law will be implemented and the caliphate system will be installed (An-Nabhani, 2001).

In many parts of the world where HT is active, including in Aceh, the organization sees itself as currently engaged in the second stage. In order to reach the final stage, the movement conducts five activities as follows (Sofyan 2012):

1. *Tsaqafah murakkazah* (centralized culturing), which is conducted internally through the practice of *halaqah* (study circle) by movement members;
2. *Tsaqafah jama’iyah* (public culturing), which is conducted among the wider Islamic *ummah* through seminars, lectures, discussions, and other public events;

3. *Shira' al-fikri* (ideological struggle) in order to contest and supersede other ideologies not relevant to Islam such as capitalism, communism, imperialism, and *kufur* (infidels);
4. *Kifah as-siyasi* (political struggle) which involves opposing infidel imperialist occupations of Muslim countries and also standing against Arab and Islamic leaders who perform tyrannical practices against their Muslim citizens;
5. *Tabanni masalih ummah* (adopting the interest of the Muslim society) where the movement evaluates what problems are faced by the Islamic community and seeks to implement solutions based on Islamic values.

Post-Disaster 'Caliphaticization'

While the first four of these activities have been conducted by HTI throughout Indonesia since it was first established in the country in the 1980s, HTI conducted the fifth activity, the *tabanni masalih ummah*, for the first time in Indonesia only after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in the form of a disaster relief program in Aceh. For HTI, the first condition to offer the help is whether there are any Muslims in need of assistance. Thus, helping the tsunami survivors is not only as a humanitarian obligation but also a religious necessity because the Islamic *ummah* is perceived as one body, when any part of the body suffers the whole body feels the pain. When members of the *ummah* face suffering, support from other Muslims should be provided.

In Jakarta, HTI leadership was deeply concerned with the devastation in Aceh. They believed that Acehnese Muslims would face multiple challenges in the weeks and months ahead, and believed that a quick response was needed. First, the survivors needed relief supplies to fulfill their basic needs. Second, numerous survivors were injured and needed medical treatment. Third, in the aftermath of the disaster the survivors would be emotionally or psychologically shaken and therefore would need support in the form of 'mental health' or 'trauma healing' interventions. Consequently, on the same day of the tsunami, HTI launched an Aceh disaster relief program called *Tabanni Mashalih Aceh* (Adoption of Aceh Interest, TMA). The TMA was intended to last for two years until December 2006. As I shall demonstrate in the following sections, central to the TMA program of disaster relief was the political-religious project of 'caliphaticization'. Through the TMA HTI sought to implement its global vision aimed at strengthening the Shari'a and expanding the ideology of the global Caliphate in Aceh.

As it turned out HTI in Aceh was poised and ready to be deployed into action at the time of the disaster. Just prior to the tsunami, starting on 25 December 2004, HTI launched a two-day program called "HTI Goes to Campus" in Banda Aceh. The event was initiated by Harits Abu Ulya, the head of HTI's Political Division at the national level. More than three hundred students participated in the event, mainly from the Ar-Raniry Islamic State Institute (now University) and the University of Syiah Kuala.

The first day of this campaign was deemed successful, but on the second day the disaster struck. At eight o'clock in the morning on 26 December, HTI committee members arrived at the designated venue expecting the imminent arrival of other participants. The sudden earthquake and the ensuing tsunami completely disrupted their plan. The event was cancelled and all the gathered HTI members fled to a house belonging to an HTI cadre that survived the disaster (Sofyan 2012). Later that day, the HTI team learned that two members of HTI chapter in Banda Aceh were missing, while the fates of forty-five members of the Meulaboh chapter were unknown.

In part because the HTI team was already together and in part because HTI was able to quickly mobilize its wider networks, HTI was able to mount a rapid disaster response. Beginning on the same day, HTI opened its first *posko* (relief center) in Banda Aceh, which was staffed by surviving HTI members. HTI also opened its centers in Jakarta and Medan to actively solicit financial support.

Although the final financial report was not available at the time of writing, the most recent publically available report shows that HTI received more than one billion rupiah in donations (approximately USD\$100,000).² The Jakarta center was also responsible for volunteer recruitment and later on served as a key relief aid warehouse and transit point from Jakarta to Aceh. The selection of HTI volunteers was restricted to its members only, who came from different HTI chapters across Indonesia. Only one day after the tsunami, relief supplies began arrived from HTI Medan in North Sumatra, consisting of instant noodles, rice, blankets, and other basic needs.

The 'Caliphization' of Acehnese Society

HTI's disaster relief program, the TMA, aimed at implementing a post-disaster 'caliphization'. It targeted both the Acehnese community in general and also the Aceh elites who designed the master plans for post-tsunami reconstruction in Aceh. The former is the central focus of this section and the following section addresses HTI's rather less successful impact on political elites.

HTI's TMA program was conducted in five districts, namely Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar, West Aceh, Aceh Jaya and North Aceh. The first *posko* was established in Ulee Kareng, Banda Aceh. HTI later opened *poskos* at many different sites within those five districts, mostly at the 'barracks' (temporary shelters), schools, and mosques, which in the Aceh context are indeed public and community spaces. The selection of HTI centers at public places demonstrates that HTI sought to engage the wider community affected by the tsunami, rather than just pre-existing HTI affiliates. Based on the three problems identified by HTI as mentioned earlier in this essay, the TMA project was divided into three programs: relief aid, medical care, and 'mental recovery'.

During the emergency period, HTI's activities were, like many other relief actors, extremely varied involving both skilled interventions by professionals as well as both in-kind and cash transfers. In order to address logistical issues involved in delivering relief services, HTI recruited members who were skilled in operating heavy

machinery such as excavators, bulldozers and trucks. Most of these volunteers were graduates from vocational schools or had work experience in the engineering sector. These volunteers were engaged in cleaning-up operations in public places, such as schools and mosques which had been damaged or made unusable following the disaster. They also helped transport relief aid to the disaster area.

In terms of in-kind support, HTI distributed a variety of basic needs items such as tents, blankets, water tanks, food, and cooking sets. In some cases, HTI also distributed cash as a direct mandate (*amanah*) from individual donors who specifically asked HTI to distribute it to tsunami survivors. However, HTI differed with many other humanitarian organizations providing similar services in its focus on 'religious aid' (*logistik agama*). HTI distributed the *Holy Quran* and praying sets, which included *sarung* (traditional cloth used by Indonesian men during prayer), *mukena* (prayer dress for women), and *sajadah* (prayer mat). Most of these praying kits were supported by *Dompot Dhuafa*, one of the biggest Indonesian Islamic philanthropy organizations. To help in distributing 'religious aid' HTI members involved Senior High School students who had participated in HTI's 'mental recovery' program. The aim was increase the students' sense of solidarity with each other and the wider affected community.

Another of HTI's program was focused on providing medical care. For this program HTI mobilized medical doctors and other health professionals from among its Indonesian-wide membership. Medical professionals were recruited in Jakarta and then deployed to Aceh for varying lengths of time. At HTI centers they provided medical health care for those injured during the disaster itself as well as for those experiencing health problems in the days and weeks following the disaster. HTI also provided medical supplies and a mobile clinic service for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living in the barracks.³

The last category, which was one of the key strengths of HTI's relief work and which is particularly notable for the way it combined humanitarian practices with HTI's Islamic agenda, is that of 'mental recovery' activities. Similar to other organizations providing psychosocial support, HTI also focused on 'mental health' healing among tsunami survivors. However, unlike the two previous HTI programs that relied heavily on trained professionals who had expertise and skills in particular areas, the mental recovery program was understood as being the responsibility of each HTI member living in Aceh. In order to become a member of HTI, an initiate (*daris*) has to conform to expected patterns of behavior and be willing to give time and financial resources for the movement. He or she must study a number of designated books (called 'adopted' in HT parlance) on a regular basis, usually one every week. There are about 23 such 'adopted' books which are regarded as part of the core curriculum such as *Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, *The Economic System of Islam*, *Adoption in Hizb ut-Tahrir*, *The Islamic State*, and *Structuring of the Party*. There are also a great number of non-adopted books including titles such as *How the Khilafah was Destroyed*, *The Ideal Economic Policy*, *The Refutation of the Theory of Liability in Western Law*, and *The Environmental Problem – Its Causes and Islam's Solution*.

Once a *daris* is viewed as a potential cadre, he or she will be sworn (*qasam*) into the movement and will become a guider (*mushrif*) who will disseminate HT ideology to the community as well as teaching other initiates (*darisin*). HTI's approach to post-disaster mental recovery was closely associated with this system of recruitment.

It was reported that as of 28 February 2005, two months after the tsunami, about 250 HTI members were deployed in Aceh as volunteers. Most of these volunteers were called *da'i* (preachers) and their work was focused on 'mental recovery' activities. In general, the 'mental recovery' program involved issuing a call for the Acehese survivors to overcome their sadness and trauma in order to continue their lives. A key component of this call was to invite the Acehese to always remember God, to support God's law, and to strengthen their faith (*aqidah*). 'Mental recovery' was therefore seen as synonymous with active proselytization, but even so the intent among all the HTI members I interview was clearly to help Acehese Muslims recover from the disaster as quickly as possible. They saw the deployment of Islamic teaching as the most effective mechanism to achieve this end.

To deliver this program, the HTI members mostly used two books as their reference: *Nearness to Allah (Taqarrub Kepada Allah)* and *Pillars to Strengthen an Islamic Personality (Pilar-Pilar Pengokoh Nafsiyah Islamiyah)*. Both books convey guidance on how Muslims can live in such a way as to be nearer to God. Some characteristics praised in the books were patience and sincerity, including in the face of disasters. From my interviews with many HTI activists, it was clear that they thought the ideas presented in these books were decisive for survivors' 'mental recovery'.

The 'mental recovery' activities were conducted in public spaces, particularly the barracks, mosques, and schools (Sofyan 2012). Each location was intended to target particular groups of potential beneficiaries based on their age and gender. The barracks-based 'mental recovery' program engaged IDPs who lived in these temporary arrangements. HTI holds to fairly sharp rules of gender segregation, and the movement has long-standing norms that regulate HTI-organized events. If an audience involves a mix of male and female individuals, only male members (*shabab*) are supposed to address the group, however in the case of women-only gatherings only women (*muslimah*) are supposed to present speeches. These gender norms influenced the dynamics involved in 'mental recovery' programs. HTI activists divided barrack's residents into four groups: 'public' (open for any gender), female adults only, youth females only, and children. The public activities were usually conducted immediately after designated prayer times. HTI members provided 'mental healing' through a short lecture or *kuliah tujuh menit* (literally, a 'seven minute lecture', commonly known as *kultum*). In the case of public lectures, only men would address the gathered group. If the audience was female only then female HTI members delivered the speech. The women-only activities were also differentiated by age. These activities took place on only an occasional basis and were less regular than the public events. Other beneficiaries included children aged between five and ten years old whom HTI volunteers taught how to read the Quran. For instance, in

Lambaro Siron of Aceh Besar, seventy children attended this program. They were also invited to read letters sent by children from an Islamic Secondary School in Bogor of West Java. By doing this, it was expected that the children would feel supported and encouraged by their peers.⁴

Mosque-based 'mental recovery' programs took place within the first few months of tsunami. Some IDPs also temporarily lived in mosques, which were often the only remaining structures for many devastated communities and which were also regarded as holy places. This program followed a similar format to that undertaken in the barracks, involving a *kultum* connected with the five daily prayers, although this was most consistently practiced after *Subuh* (dawn prayer) and *Isha* (late evening prayer). An additional activity undertaken in mosques was to deliver sermons each Friday following prayers. On 12 January 2005, one prominent HTI member, Harry Moekti, who was particularly well-known because before becoming an active preacher he had been one of Indonesia's most famous rock stars, delivered a speech at the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque of Banda Aceh after *Subuh*. In order for Moekti to deliver this sermon, HTI had to get permission from the *Imam* (mosque leader). Given their recognized skill in preaching, it is not surprising that HTI members were requested to deliver sermons in many mosques, including being invited to do so by some of the most prominent religious leaders in Aceh. HTI reported that the Provincial Head of Islamic Courts (*Mahkamah Syariah*) at that time, Sofyan M. Saleh, had invited HTI to deliver sermons on regular basis.⁵

The school-based 'mental recovery' program was run at Senior High Schools across Aceh. About 2,500 teachers died during the disaster and many who survived struggled to continue to perform their duties. The result was a severe lack of trained teachers. In the first weeks after the tsunami there were no teaching activities at most Acehese schools. In response, HTI recruited members whose profession was teaching or who had backgrounds in education. When they came to Aceh, their first responsibility was to fill the gaps in teaching. The Head of the Educational Department in Banda Aceh and many school principals welcomed this initiative and gave permission for HTI members to serve as temporary substitute teachers. In the third week after the tsunami, HTI volunteers in Banda Aceh started teaching. While teaching subjects across the regular curriculum, HTI members frequently sought to connect their teaching materials to 'mental recovery', which was focused on strengthening the students' Islamic faith and providing an Islamic interpretation of disasters as *musibah*, an examination from God.

In general, the teaching focused on reinforcing the Interestingly, as a part of their 'mental recovery' activities, HTI members sought to actively counter conversion efforts by non-Islamic missionaries as well as the work of non-Islamic Faith-Based Organizations that delivered religious messages as part of their disaster relief programs. Just as the tsunami opened new opportunities for HTI to make incursions into Aceh, it was also seen as opening opportunities for other proselytizing efforts. Christian missionaries in particular were seen as a direct threat to Aceh's Muslims.⁶ Some HTI volunteers claimed to find evidence about such evangelism attempts,

including reports on songs taught to Muslim children that contained proselytizing messages, finding stores of books entitled *Kasih Allah* (Love of God) which contained Christian teachings, and rumors about a missionary from Northern Sumatera who was seen as a new 'Snouck Hurgronje' by pretending to be a newly converted Muslim and wanting to learn about Islam but really seeking a Christian evangelistic agenda. Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) was a Dutch scholar who, because of his knowledge of Islam and his knowledge of Acehnese society, succeeded in weakening the Acehnese resistance during colonial times. His activities are still viewed negatively by many Acehnese today. HTI claimed that the problem of Christian proselytism was not taken seriously by the government. When HTI members compiled a comprehensive report on different types of proselytizing by missionary organizations and submitted it to the government there was no formal response. HTI members thought that the government was reluctant to take decisive action because of the possibility it would dissuade some aid providers from their humanitarian activities. In response to this issue, HTI worked together with other Islamic groups. In Banda Aceh and Meulaboh, HTI initiated an Islamic Groups Forum where HTI invited sought to organize Islamic groups to work together to counter apostasy. HTI also sent groups of preachers whose task was to seek to dissuade Acehnese Muslims from changing their religion by strengthening their religiousness through mental recovery activities.

While disaster relief projects generally operate for limited and specific durations, surprisingly HTI has not formerly announced an end of the TMA project. Unlike relief aid distribution and medical care, the 'mental recovery' program remained active. According to HTI, the *ummah* always requires help to strengthen their *aqidah*—which is a part of 'mental recovery'. Mental health problems were not only seen as the trauma and sadness experienced after the tsunami, but also the possibility that Muslims might 'lose their faith' during the crisis and ensuing relief processes.

As a result of the 'mental recovery' program, many tsunami survivors became interested in HTI ideas and decided to join the movement. The exact number of people who joined the movement due to its disaster relief operations is not clear. However, from my interviews with HTI activists I would estimate the number to be in the hundreds. The TMA program proved successful in attracting Acehnese to join HTI. Expanding from only two chapters located in Banda Aceh and Meulaboh before the tsunami, the movement has grown such that it is currently active in many more districts including Aceh Besar, Aceh Singkil, Aceh Tamiang, Bener Meriah, Bireuen, Gayo Lues, Lhokseumawe, Nagan Raya, North Aceh and Langsa.

'Caliphization' among Political Elites

Given the historical status of Aceh as the 'Verandah of Mecca' and also on account of the relative isolation caused by decades of conflict between the Indonesian state and Acehnese separatists (Reid 2006), Aceh was granted special autonomy to implement Shari'a law in 2001 with enactment of the Special Autonomy Law. The implementation of Shari'a law was further extended through the enactment of various

local regulations (*qanun*) which, among other measures, regulated Islamic dress requirements and also prohibited gambling, alcohol consumption, and *khalwat* ('improper covert association' between unmarried members of the opposite sex) (Feener 2013, pp. 129-151). Following the 2004 tsunami and the Aceh peace agreement in 2005, the rate and extent of implementation significantly increased. Shari'a implementation was further strengthened by the 2006 Law on Governing of Aceh which guaranteed Aceh the ability to adopt and apply Islamic law. Feener (2012; 2013) argues that the progressive rolling out of Shari'a law after the tsunami was a concerted attempt at "social engineering" in order to reconstruct post-disaster Acehese society in particular directions. While this general trajectory was certainly one which HTI supported, nevertheless HTI did not achieve the political influence it had desired. The implementation of Shari'a law in Aceh took place despite, rather than because of HTI.

Not long after the tsunami, the Indonesian Government began developing a master plan for Aceh's reconstruction and rehabilitation. HTI saw this planning process as an opportunity to approach the government to develop Aceh based on its understanding of Islamic teachings. HTI claimed that although Aceh was given special autonomy to implement Shari'a law, it was never fully implemented. In order to complete the task a more thoroughgoing and comprehensive approach was necessary. HTI approached the local government and other relevant stakeholders seeking to frequently meet with them to strengthen their 'brotherhood bond' (In. *silaturrahim*) and inviting them to attend HTI events. To enhance these efforts, HTI also issued two publications intended to encourage the government to shift their political position to agree with Shari'a concepts advocated by the movement.

The first was booklet was entitled "Aceh, the Archipelago and the Islamic Caliphate" (2005). This thirty-two page report was authored collectively by a team and no individual authors' names are given. This collective authorship is a common approach adopted by HTI and has been used for other publications such as Hizbut Tahrir's Manifesto for Indonesia (HTI 2009; *Manifesto Hizbut Tahrir untuk Indonesia*). The booklet argues that prior to independence Indonesia used to be a center of Islamic power, starting from the Sultanate of Aceh in the western part of the archipelago to the Sultanate of Ternate in the East. Those Sultanates had a very close relationship with the Ottoman Caliphate in Turkey particularly concerning trade, military support, politics, religion, and state sovereignty (HTI 2005a, p. 21). The Ottoman Caliphate is recorded as having sent troops to the Indian Ocean to the secure the route for pilgrims on their way to Arabia. The presence of the Ottomans also contributed to economic growth resulting from the pilgrimage (HTI, 2005a, pp. 11–12). Further five hundred Ottoman soldiers, including specialists on firearms, marksmen and technical experts, were sent to Aceh to support the Aceh Sultanate's attack on Portuguese-held Malacca in 1568 (HTI 2005a, p. 5). The Ottoman Caliphate also built a military academy in Aceh, the so-called *Askar Baitul Makdis*, as a center of military training. This academy was crucial in providing training to not only

Aceh's but also many of wider archipelago's most famous military heroes of that time (HTI 2005a, p. 15).

The booklet also argues that historically mainstream Indonesian Islamic organizations such as *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah*, along with Sarekat Islam, had paid close attention to the collapse of the Islamic Caliphate in 1924 (HTI 2005a, pp. 27–28). According to HTI, this fact suggests that the position of mainstream Islamic organizations supposed to support the *khilafah* vision as the leader of global *ummah* (HTI 2005a, p. 29). While *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah*, each of which boast contemporary memberships in the millions and which occupy central places in the modern politics of Indonesian Islam, are not known as actively supporting HTI's political agenda, the booklet argues that their failure to do so runs against their own historical appreciation of the importance of the Caliphate as well as running against what HTI argues constitutes orthodox Islamic theology.

In the last part of the booklet, HTI concludes that historically Muslims in the Indonesian archipelago were attached to the Islamic Caliphate and that the abolishment of the Caliphate has severely weakened the *ummah*. This weakening has led to Indonesia becoming an independent country based on secularism and nationalism rather than Islam. HTI therefore encourages all Indonesian Muslims to continue their struggle for *khilafah*, not only as a form of obedience to the command of God but also as an effort to continue Indonesia's own rich history. Consequently, the refusal to struggle for the Caliphate, according to HTI, is a form of denial of Indonesian history as well as of God's command (HTI 2005a, pp. 30–31). The booklet therefore argues for the integration of the global caliphate agenda into national and local perspectives, including particularly in Aceh.

The second publication was entitled "*The Supplement of the Blueprint of Aceh Darussalam Development*" (HTI, 2005b). This is a much more extensive text with over three hundred and seventy-six pages divided into seventeen chapters. This publication shares some of the booklet's core concerns. It was also published in the same year and was authored by an anonymous HTI collective. The Supplement argues that the government's master plan to develop Aceh should be based on HTI's vision of Islamic principles. However, much of the content of the supplement is very general, focusing more on the national context rather than Aceh specifically. Most of the arguments in this publication are based on the writings of Taqiuddin An-Nabhani, the founder of the global HT movement.

The supplement also presents statistical evidence on conditions in Indonesia. For example, in a chapter of this supplement entitled "The Islamic Shariah in Implementing Clean and Good Governance", HTI quoted the surveys of Transparency International which listed Indonesia among the top ten most corrupt countries in the world. According to HTI analysis, the poor and corrupt bureaucracy in Indonesia was due to individual moral failing and also the capitalist system. Consequently, HTI recommended Islamic governance through the caliphate should be viewed as the only viable solution to cure this evil (HTI 2005b, pp. 156–171).

HTI submitted this publication to the Coordinating Unit for Disaster Management (*Satuan Koordinasi Pelaksana Penanggulangan Bencana, Satkorlak PB*) and the Director of the State Shari'a Agency (*Dinas Syariat Islam*), Alyasa Abu Bakar. HTI claimed that the State Shari'a Agency recognized that only HTI had a fully comprehensive plan for the implementation of Shari'a in Aceh. However, even though the supplement was submitted to the government, it was never used as a reference in any future Aceh development plan, even by the State Shari'a Agency. The eventual post-disaster development plan was regulated through Presidential Decree No. 30/2005 on the 'Master Plan for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias Island-North Sumatra Provinces' which did not refer to the HTI's Supplement and did not pursue any identifiable strategy of caliphization.

Several other attempts to persuade the Aceh government to implement HTI's vision for Shari'a in Aceh were similarly ineffective, if not entirely inconsequential. HTI members concluded that the implementation of Shari'a in the province had failed. A key problem for HTI was that Shari'a restricted to particular areas, such as dress requirements and alcohol consumption, rather than being viewed as applicable to, and indeed as regulating, every aspect of life. HTI also claims that there were institutional flaws in Aceh because the State Shari'a Agency had limited power to enforce Shari'a law. Similarly, the Aceh government has limited human resource capacity to implement Shari'a. Finally, HTI activists believe that there was a lack of political will from the Acehnese elites, especially from the Governor, to adopt comprehensive Islamic teachings in the region. HTI, therefore, perceived their own work among political elites as a failure: the third and ultimate stage of HTI's strategy, which as outlined earlier involved a thoroughgoing implementation of Islamic law and the establishment of a global caliphate system (*istilam al-hukm*), remained well outside of HTI's reach.

Conclusion

Despite their aggressive missionary agenda, and their desire to undertake a relief program that worked well beyond the provision of basic needs in order to also involve the transformation of every feature of Acehnese Muslims' lives including, but not limited to, the system of governance under which Acehnese would live, HTI received a remarkably warm reception in post-tsunami Aceh. A significant part of the reason for this is because of the sense, among both HTI members and those affected by the tsunami, that they shared the same Islamic faith. However, while HTI had some success in drawing in new cadres into the organization, their attempt at furthering the goal of 'caliphization' was a dismal failure. Their political vision gained little traction among elites who showed practically no interest in embracing the far-reaching measures HTI recommended. Of course, the goal of re-establishing the Caliphate was always an extremely ambitious one, but HTI's methods also revealed a certain paradox in their attempt to articulate a nationalist vision for a global Islam.

The Indian Ocean tsunami created new opportunities for HTI and numerous other groups to enter into Aceh and pursue their respective projects, whether these were humanitarian, practical, theological or political. However, as the work of HTI shows, even those that were received warmly did not have a free ride among those affected by the disaster. Help was appreciated, ideas were listened to, but outside agendas were never accepted uncritically or wholesale. The opportunity presented by the disaster was not, therefore, a blank check but rather more like an invitation for supper—potentially transformative, but only temporarily so.

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Notes

1. The writing of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* as the global movement follows the English standard while *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* follows the Indonesian spelling.
2. See <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Cahaya-Hati/message/2474> (Retrieved April 30, 2012). One billion rupiah is a substantial amount of money in terms of average middle class incomes in Indonesia, though of course it was only a very small proportion of the US\$13.5 billion pledged or donated internationally for relief and reconstruction for all countries affected by the tsunami (Telford 2012, p.30).
3. See http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ppiindia/message/23868__ (Retrieved April 30, 2012).
4. See <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Cahaya-Hati/message/2474> (Retrieved April 30, 2012).
5. See <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/ppiindia/conversations/topics/24903> (Retrieved April 30, 2012).
6. Some reports on this issue see for instance the following links: http://www.jafariyanews.com/2k5_news/jan/15_muslimswarn.htm, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/42df61022.html>, and <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A18348-2005Jan18.html>, accessed 4 May 2012

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