

YUDHOYONO'S LEADERSHIP IN MANAGING THE CRISIS IN ACEH

From Tragedy to Opportunity: President Yudhoyono's Transformational Leadership
in Managing the Crisis in Aceh

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to examine President Yudhoyono's leadership in managing the crisis in Aceh in the aftermath of the Great Tsunami in 2004, and at the height of the separatist movement in the province.

Problem with Hypothesis

The most critical problem for President Yudhoyono was twofold. First, how to make decisions, and act quickly in order to save lives and prevent more losses, given the limited resources he could direct in support of the ineffective local government. Second, President Yudhoyono faced a serious challenge from his political oppositions who strongly warned him not to "open" Aceh to foreign entities. The hypothesis to be tested in this study is to determine if President Yudhoyono applied the theory of "transformational leadership" in dealing with the crisis.

Proposed Methodology

The method of this study is to compare between core components of Bernard M. Bass' Transformational Leadership Model and President Yudhoyono's decisions and actions in dealing with the crisis in Aceh. The results will justify how President Yudhoyono had successfully managed the crisis in Aceh, and turn the tragedy into opportunity.

Conclusions

President Yudhoyono applied the principles of Transformational Leadership as suggested by Bass. His bold decisions and decisive actions allowed the Government of Indonesia deal with the aftermath of the disaster effectively, which led to a successful, one of the greatest multinational humanitarian operations in modern history; a remarkable post-Tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation; as well as a peaceful conflict resolution in Aceh.

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Background

With more than 17,000 islands, Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world. It stretches along the equator, between two continents, Asia and Australia, and between two oceans, the Indian and the Pacific. From Aceh, the westernmost province of Indonesia, to Papua, the easternmost province, is about the same distance as from California to New York in the United States. Indonesia's geographic position has made the country a strategic hub that connects countries in Europe and Middle East to those in Southeast and East Asia. However, Indonesia also sits on the "ring of fire", where it has the most active volcanoes in the world. This explains why Indonesia is so prone to natural disasters, from volcanic eruption to earthquake to tsunami.

On 26 December 2004, the Great Tsunami struck Aceh, the westernmost part of Indonesia. It was considered as one of the most devastating tragedies in human history, where more than 200 thousands people perished, and millions lost their properties. This event was the first, and probably the most serious, crisis ever encountered by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono during his ten years in the office from 2004 to 2014. In October 2004, he just won the country's first-ever direct presidential election. While still adapting with his new leadership position, and enjoying his "honey-moon" period, he was forced to focus on making quick decisions and taking decisive actions in order to save lives and recover Aceh from the disaster. For more than 25 years, Aceh had been the most volatile region in Indonesia due to an armed separatist movement, the "Free Aceh Movement" (GAM), which sought for independence. Since 1976 the Indonesian military had persistently engaged to combat the insurgents, and assure the

country's territorial integrity. Nonetheless, heavy military operations alone could not resolve the conflict permanently and bring Aceh to a long-awaited peace. On the contrary, the insurgents were able to exploit the bloodshed to gain support, both locally and abroad. No leaders, including President Yudhoyono, had never imagined or been prepared to deal with a combination of a prolonged armed conflict and an overwhelming natural disaster at the same time.

The profound degree of uncertainty in the aftermath of the Tsunami was highly frustrating. For days, no communication could be established; and the lack of information from the ground severely impeded the national leadership to obtain the actual situation and make timely decision. Hence, the initial assumption was that the local government, including the military and law enforcement institutions in the stricken areas, were all affected by the disaster, and had been physically damaged. The most critical problem for President Yudhoyono was twofold. First, how to make decisions, and act quickly in order to save lives and prevent more losses, given the limited resources he could direct in support of the ineffective local government. At the time, Indonesia had just been recovering from the financial and political crises; thus it lacked the competent institution, as well as the required funding and equipment to be projected for a disaster-relief mission of that scale. Given such reality, the country would have to ask for external assistance. This primarily meant that it should allow various government and non-governmental entities to enter Aceh, which had been isolated for more than two decades.

Second, President Yudhoyono faced a serious challenge from his political oppositions who strongly warned him not to "open" Aceh to foreign military forces. They especially refused to receive the offerings from the western countries due to the suspicion that they possessed hidden agenda to intervene with the ongoing conflict, support the insurgents' cause, and ultimately "help" disintegrate Aceh from Indonesia. Although "rejecting assistance when you

desperately need it” seemed irrational, such a concern was legitimate given the fact that the country had recently “lost” its province of East Timor, largely due to external interference. Clearly, President Yudhoyono should answer the complex question of “how to exercise effective leadership and use all power at his disposal in managing the humanitarian crisis, while at the same time, turning the tragedy into a long-lasting peace, security, and stability in Aceh amidst the constraints of time and logistical resources, as well as some domestic political challenges?”

The hypothesis to be tested in this paper is to determine if President Yudhoyono applied the theory of “transformational leadership” in dealing with the aftermath of the disaster, which led to a successful, one of the greatest multinational humanitarian operations in modern history; a remarkable post-Tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation; as well as a peaceful conflict resolution in Aceh. The method of this study is to compare between core components of Bernard M. Bass’ Transformational Leadership Model and President Yudhoyono’s bold decisions and actions both in the strategic and operational contexts. The results will justify how President Yudhoyono had successfully managed the crisis in Aceh, and turn the tragedy into opportunity. The independent variable, or the cause, in this study is the use of the key components of a transformational leader, and the dependent variable, or the effect, is the effectiveness of this approach in managing the crisis in Aceh.

President Yudhoyono: A Story of Self-Transformation

This paper begins with President Yudhoyono’s remarkable journey and transition from a military officer to a politician to a statesman. This is aimed to appreciate his unique characters and vast experiences, which will help explain his leadership style in dealing with complexity and uncertainty. Yudhoyono graduated top of his class from the Indonesian Military Academy in

1973. He had a great Army career, and considered as a progressive and intellectual officer. He attended various military trainings and educations at home and abroad, including the U.S. Army Airborne and Ranger Schools, and Infantry Advanced Course in Fort Benning, as well as the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) in Fort Leavenworth. During his time at CGSC, he took the opportunity to attend a Master's degree program in Leadership and Management at Webster University. Throughout his career, he earned a reputation as a well-rounded officer for his various tours of duty, from a brigade commander to an instructor, as well as multiple tours of area, from East Timor to Bosnia. All of his achievements had allowed Yudhoyono to reach the rank of Lieutenant General in 1998 at a relatively young age.

The period between 1997 and 1998 was one of Indonesia's darkest histories. Indonesia was at the brink of a failed nation due to multidimensional crises. It started with a devastating financial crisis, which was followed by a nation-wide political and security crises. Massive, and anarchic demonstrations took place in Jakarta, the capital, and almost all major cities in the country. People demanded President Suharto who had ruled Indonesia for more than thirty years to step down, and a national reform, which was expected to forever change the country's political structure. Unfortunately, the Indonesian military was part of the problem. For three decades, institutionally, the military heavily involved in domestic politics; it was exploited to protect the non-democratic, centralized government. It was the reason why people expressed hatred towards the military.

Given the above circumstances, and despite facing serious opposition from within the military institution (i.e. the conservative camp), Yudhoyono was determined to step up, and lead a group of progressive officers to initiate a dramatic reform. He envisioned a new paradigm, and a redefinition of military as a profession, which included the requirement for the military

institution to give up a considerable political power and business opportunities. He realized that, to succeed, he should get the buy-in by presenting the right narrative to all stakeholders, which focused on the sense of urgency and the long-term value of a self-imposed military reform. In the end, the internal military reform, although painful to some, was regarded as the most critical juncture of the national reform, without which Indonesia would only prolong the crises.

For his contribution to the military, as well as national reform, Yudhoyono was appointed as a senior cabinet minister, responsible for political and security affairs. Despite his busy schedule as a minister, Yudhoyono still managed to earn his PhD in economics. He wanted to prove himself, and be a good role model for his organization that “there is always time for self-development” (Yudhoyono, 2015). During his tenure as a minister, he had to deal with several key issues with regard to Indonesia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, from ethnic conflicts to separatist movements to terrorism. Yudhoyono’s leadership was tested. However, his extensive military and academic background, allowed him to manage those security issues with confidence. Through a comprehensive approach, one by one, with the exception of insurgency in Aceh, he could achieve marked progresses, and solve the complex problems within his ministerial domain. His effective policies and actions earned him public trust, and increased his popularity. Unfortunately, this situation irritated President Megawati, and her political party and supporters. Multiple times, she completely disregarded or alienated Yudhoyono from making important decisions on political and security affairs. This growing, uneasy relationship with President Megawati forced Yudhoyono to resign from her cabinet (Yudhoyono, 2015).

Upon his resignation, Yudhoyono formed his own political party, and in 2004 he ran for president. Despite a rough competition with a number of strong and well-experienced political parties, his newly established Democratic Party could pass the electoral threshold. At the final

round, Yudhoyono beat the incumbent president. The 2004 presidential election was a historical moment for Indonesia, since it was the country's first direct presidential election since its independence in 1945. It had also made Indonesia as the third largest democracy in the world, after India and the United States. The Indonesian people highly expected President Yudhoyono to deliver his campaign promises, which primarily revolved around: economic growth; political stability and security; good governance and rule of law; freedom of speech; as well as education and healthcare. They also specifically urged President Yudhoyono to resolve his "unfinished business" as a minister: a peaceful conflict resolution in Aceh (Yudhoyono, 2015). President Yudhoyono came to office with full steam ahead. Nevertheless, only two months after his inauguration, he and the whole nation were shocked by the Great Tsunami in Aceh. The tragedy was the first, yet the biggest, test for President Yudhoyono's leadership in dealing with emergency and complexity.

Aceh: The Insurgency and the Great Tsunami

Indonesia had to endure a long history of separatist movement in Aceh, its westernmost province. Since its inception in 1976, the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) confronted the Government of Indonesia (GoI), pursuing a total independence from the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). It was in GAM's belief that Aceh had been extensively exploited by the central government. Despite living in one of the most resource-rich provinces, the Acehnese were among the poorest in the country. The disparity between Jakarta and Aceh in terms of infrastructure, education, and healthcare was also evident. GAM strongly felt that the unjust situation could not be fixed, and therefore, it decided to secede from Indonesia.

To achieve its end state, GAM exercised a two-pronged strategy. First, through insurgency, it attempted to wear down the Indonesian military forces operating in the area controlled by the GAM insurgents. Just like in typical insurgency, as part of its asymmetric tactics, GAM exploited the civilian populations as human shields, especially when fighting in urban terrains. This had forced the Indonesian military to commit a significant number of combat forces, and use them carefully, in order to defeat the insurgents, while at the same time protecting the innocent civilians, and other non-combatants. However, throughout the counterinsurgency operations, the Indonesian military could not avoid the risks of civilian casualties and collateral damage. Indeed this had severely impacted on the credibility of the Indonesian military as the defender of the people. GAM was able to exploit this situation to undermine the legitimacy of the GoI's efforts in dealing with Aceh. Using effective information operations, GAM spread the message to the local, as well as the larger Indonesian populations, that the Indonesian military's presence in the province was no more than a mere hatred towards the Acehnese. This endeavor was specifically targeted by GAM to influence, and gain larger popular supports, which included moral, manpower, and logistics. These would sustain GAM's operations on the ground.

GAM's second form of movement was political-diplomatic in nature. GAM fully realized that armed insurgency alone would be insufficient to achieve its goals. GAM must be able to garner international attention in support of its cause. In doing so, GAM engaged with state and non-state entities abroad, including those that were based in Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region. Using a similar approach of propaganda launched in Indonesia, GAM strived to convince the world that the GoI was an undemocratic tyrant, and that the Indonesian military had been committing human rights violations; together they did nothing more than deteriorating the

situation in Aceh. This effort allowed GAM to gain funding for weapons and equipment, and more importantly attract external pressures against the GoI. For example, the British Government prohibited the Indonesian military from employing the Scorpions, the British-made medium-tanks, in Aceh (Yudhoyono, 2015).

For more than 25 years, the GoI was determined that an independent Aceh would never be an option. For the most part, the GoI's approach towards Aceh had been military-focused. Each administration, from the Suharto's to Megawati's era, paid little attention on addressing the root causes of the conflict, and hence disregarding the values of other available approaches and resources. Most of the elites, including the military generals, failed to address GAM's grievances, and largely missed in distinguishing the "ends" from the "ways" in resolving the Aceh conflict (Yudhoyono, 2015). For them, a total destruction of the insurgents was the ultimate end state, which would only be possible through heavy military operations. In other words, military was perceived as the only means, and counterinsurgency was the only way to achieve such an end state (Yudhoyono, 2015). Therefore, they refused the notion to engage GAM in constructive dialogues, or to offer any sorts of political or economic concessions. The biggest factor why the GoI and the Indonesian military hesitated to "sit and talk" with GAM, and exercise non-military means was the bitter experience when the country had to loose East Timor in 1999 due to what was perceived as strategic-political miscalculation, as well as foreign intervention (Djalal, 2008).

From 2001 to 2003, the GoI attempted to adjust its approach towards Aceh. Yudhoyono, as the minister for political and security affairs was at the forefront of a more comprehensive strategy, incorporating various instruments of national power, in dealing with the insurgency. For Yudhoyono, the end state had always been a peaceful and stable Aceh within NKRI, while

military operations only served as one among various ways to achieve the end state (Yudhoyono, 2015). He asserted that non-military means were still available, and had not been exhausted; therefore, they must be properly exercised and leveraged. He also strongly believed that while security measures were important, they should be implemented in a manner that they would not bring about counterproductive outcomes. Military forces should be employed effectively and judiciously, and in support of non-military means. Excessive military operations, in his view, could jeopardize the accomplishment of the overall end state. He argued, the recipe for disaster was quite simple: “killing one innocent civilian would only strengthen the insurgents” (Yudhoyono, 2015). Although he made some progresses, just like when he introduced a substantial military reform following the 1997/1998 national crises, he again had to confront the military’s conservative camp that preferred the government’s resolve through military means alone. Most of the politicians also resonated the same tone as their military counterparts’: “no more East Timor” (Yudhoyono, 2015). This was the reason why the new strategy never produced a conclusive result.

The Indonesian military maintained its heavy presence in Aceh until the Great Tsunami hit the province. In the morning of 26 December 2004, an earthquake of 9.3 Richter scale occurred in the Indian Ocean with an epicenter off the west coast of Aceh. It triggered a devastating tsunami, killing more than 200,000 people, indiscriminately, including the Indonesian soldiers and GAM insurgents who were still fighting against each other (Djalal, 2008). It was indeed one of the deadliest natural disasters ever recorded in modern history. Everyone in the country was extremely shocked, as they saw, from some amateur footage broadcasted on national media, 10-meter sea waves sweeping an entire Banda Aceh, the capital

city of the province. The tragic scenery was just like Hollywood-made trailer of doomsday scenario; yet, every scene that happened in Aceh was real.

President Yudhoyono and most of his cabinet members were at that time in Papua, the easternmost province of Indonesia. The purpose of President Yudhoyono's visit to Papua was twofold. First, he wanted to see Nabire, a region in Papua that had been recently hit by an earthquake in order to appreciate the real situation on the ground, while handing out aid to the victims. Second, he was in Papua to attend a national Christmas celebration held in Jayapura, the capital city of the province, with the local communities who were predominantly Christians. When President Yudhoyono received an initial report about an earthquake in Aceh, his aides were suggesting him to assume that the earthquake in Aceh should not be as big, or as serious, as what had just happened in Nabire. President Yudhoyono refused to do so; he did not want to make any assumptions without concrete facts (Djalal, 2008). Therefore, he urged that the reports to be continually confirmed, and reconfirmed by the officials, including the military commanders in Aceh (Djalal, 2008).

Unfortunately, the news from Aceh was very unreliable due to the fact that the communications networks in Aceh had been completely paralyzed by the catastrophe that the survivors were unable to relay the full gravity of the situation (Djalal, 2008). Every update was much worse than the previous update: first, an earthquake; second; an earthquake followed by a big flood; and finally, not a big flood, but a Great Tsunami (Yudhoyono, 2015). The reports on the number of casualties were also updated in a similar tone: initially, less than one hundred; then hundreds of people, then thousands. Given these updates, President Yudhoyono confirmed his intuition that something extraordinary was afoot, and quickly declared the tragedy in Aceh as a national crisis.

The crisis in Aceh forced President Yudhoyono to demonstrate his true characters as a great leader. It was a test of leadership in times of crisis. In the absence of reliable information, and given the fact that the local government in Aceh was in complete disarray, President Yudhoyono stepped forward to make quick decisions and take all necessary actions in order to save lives, and alleviate the great burdens the Acehnese had to endure. Unfortunately, even in times of such crisis, not everyone had the same mindset in looking at the problems at hand (Yudhoyono, 2015). Some elements in the country could not even fathom the magnitude of the crisis, as well as the complexity of relief-efforts that would require a great deal of cooperation and synchronization among various entities. They also failed to define what was urgent, what was important, and what was less important within the context of humanitarian mission. The most notable instance was when President Yudhoyono was challenged by some of his political oppositions on the notion of opening Aceh for foreign assistance (Yudhoyono, 2015). For them, it should not be considered as an option because they believed that there is no such thing as “free lunch”, and that, in the long run, foreign entities would further complicate the situation in an already broken Aceh.

In response, President Yudhoyono appeared to the public, and firmly stated that dealing with the tragedy in Aceh would require extraordinary actions and resources far beyond Indonesia’s capacity (Yudhoyono, 2015). To save lives and recover Aceh from the disaster, he asserted, Indonesia must ask for foreign governments’ assistance, including through their militaries, as well as engage with various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) offering humanitarian aid (Yudhoyono, 2015). Further, he persuaded that everyone in the country must think and act rationally, and more importantly, set aside personal and political ego for a much greater cause. In other words, all should be united and show resiliency as a nation (Yudhoyono,

2015). This message was also directed to GAM members who also greatly suffered from the Great Tsunami. President Yudhoyono believed that by engaging GAM this way, he would create a new window of opportunity to terminate the armed conflict in Aceh permanently (Yudhoyono, 2015).

Transformational Leadership

As stated in the hypothesis, President Yudhoyono's leadership in managing the crisis in Aceh largely resembled the core components of transformational leadership. However, before testing such a hypothesis, this paper will discuss the prominent theory of transformational leadership. The discussion will include the definition of transformational leadership, and how it differs from transactional leadership, as well as the four components that make a person a transformational leader for his or her organization and followers.

In 1978, James MacGregor Burns conceptualized a new paradigm of leadership. He asserted that leadership could be broadly classified into two distinct forms: transactional or transformational (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Later, in 1985, Bernard M. Bass expanded upon Burns' ideas to develop what is known today as Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory. Transactional leadership focuses on the social exchanges that occur between leaders and followers (Northhouse, 2013). Thereby, transactional leaders lead through reward and punishment. For example, a manager offers pay-raises to his employees for their consistent demonstration of good performances and innovation in the workplace. Similarly, a military commander offers promotions to his soldiers for their dedication, discipline, and bravery in the battlefield. Conversely, managers and commanders may either deny those rewards, or punish their subordinates when they fail to exhibit the above characters and behaviors. Another

example, teachers will give either good or bad grades to students based on their efforts in completing the assignments. Transactional leadership is also common in the political realm. Politicians typically lead by trading one thing for another: jobs for votes, or subsidies for campaign contributions (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Naturally, people are responsive to incentives; this explains why some people consider transactional leadership as an effective mechanism to achieve an organization's goals. However, transformational leadership provides a better fit for leading today's complex organizations, where followers not only seek an inspirational leader to guide them through an uncertain environment, but also want to be challenged and to feel empowered (Bass and Riggio, 2006).

Transformational leadership focuses on the process whereby a person engages with others, and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2013). A transformational leader is typically attentive to the needs and motives of followers, and tries to help his or her followers reach their potential to the fullest extent (Northouse, 2013). A transformational leader will stimulate and inspire his or her followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, empower and develop their own leadership capacity (Bass and Riggio, 2006). In doing so, he or she strives to align the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Great leaders such as President Franklin Roosevelt, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela were regarded as transformational leaders, whose decisions and actions had forever changed an entire nation, and even, influenced the world.

To move followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them, a transformational leader must be able to extend his or her influence (Northouse, 2013). The big question is then: "what does it take for a leader to influence others effectively in the absence of

social transactions (i.e. rewards and punishments)?" According to Bass, there are four factors of transformational leadership that will answer the above question: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

First, the idealized influence, or charisma, is the emotional component of a leadership (Northouse, 2013). Transformational leaders behave in ways that allow them to serve as role models for their followers (Bass and Riggio, 2006). They usually demonstrate high standards of ethical and moral conduct; therefore, they are admired, respected, and trusted (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Additionally, transformational leaders provide followers with a vision, and emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Essentially, the charisma factor described leaders who are special, and who make others want to follow the vision they put forward (Northouse, 2013).

The second factor, the inspirational motivation, is descriptive of leaders who communicate high expectations to followers, inspiring them through motivation to become committed to, and a part of the shared vision in the organization (Northouse 2013). Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work (Bass and Riggio, 2006). In this respect, team spirit is aroused, and enthusiasm and optimism are displayed (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Through encouraging words, a transformational leader articulates a compelling vision of the future, which is aimed to get his or her followers' buy-in, and ultimately drive them to be part of the process, and achieve the end state.

The third factor, the intellectual stimulation, includes leadership that stimulates followers to be creative and innovative, and to challenge their own beliefs and values, as well as those of the leader and the organization (Northouse, 2013). Transformational leaders always try to instill

the culture of excellence within their organizations, where followers are expected to exercise their critical and creative thinking in dealing with various problems. Such an endeavor is key, especially when an organization is exposed to ill-structured, or the so-called wicked problems, which require fresh ideas, and outside-the-box course of actions. Transformational leaders will never isolate their followers from the organizational problems; instead they will incorporate all talents to better understand the nature of the problems before making any decisions. By looking at problems from different perspectives, a transformational leader can formulate the best solutions, and ensure that his or her organization will survive and excel.

The fourth factor, the individualized consideration, is representative of leaders who provide a supportive climate in which they listen carefully to the individual needs of followers (Northouse, 2013). By acting as a coach or mentor, transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual follower's needs for achievement and growth (Bass and Riggio, 2006). In doing so, leaders must appreciate the differences among their followers in terms of needs and desires, as well as methods to approach them (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Some people need more encouragement, some more autonomy, while others prefer more task structure (Bass and Riggio, 2006). To understand such differences, leaders must be willing to engage in two-way communications, and involve in a "management by walking around" (Bass and Riggio, 2006).

The four factors above suggest that transformational leadership produces greater effects than transactional leadership. Whereas transactional leadership results in expected outcomes, transformational leadership results in performance that goes well beyond what is expected (Northouse, 2013). This is the reason why more and more people perceive that transformational leaders are the more effective leaders with better outcomes than those who only exhibit transactional leadership (Northouse, 2013).

Testing the Hypothesis: President Yudhoyono's Leadership in Resolving the Crisis in Aceh

After understanding Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory, this paper will find whether or not President Yudhoyono's leadership qualities in resolving the crisis in Aceh really resemble with the four elements of transformational leadership as suggested by Bass. Such findings will later explain the result of GoI's efforts in managing the crisis in Aceh. The test of hypothesis will cover two critical areas: first, President Yudhoyono's leadership in natural disaster relief efforts; and second, his leadership in terminating the GoI-GAM conflict peacefully.

President Yudhoyono was a transformational leader because he had a clear vision with regard to resolving the crisis in Aceh, while displaying his strong charisma or idealized influence. As the leader of 250 million people, President Yudhoyono fully realized that it would be impossible to accommodate and satisfy everyone's ideas and desires. Therefore, he focused on finding, and justifying the common ground. He clearly laid out the challenges that his government must face in Aceh. However, he also emphasized the great opportunity of having a synchronized effort across the board (Yudhoyono, 2015). This was aimed to get the much-needed buy-in from his followers to support him in achieving the immediate objectives of saving as many lives as possible, including caring for the injured, and providing food and shelter, as well as the medium-long term objectives of rebuilding Aceh from the severe destruction. He believed that through a realistic vision, as well as a clear mission statement, he would be able to guide, and move people in the right direction towards achieving those objectives (Yudhoyono, 2015).

President Yudhoyono was determined to be a good role model for his followers in the government, as well as for the Indonesian people in general. For example, while in Papua, the

moment he found out about the tragedy in Aceh, he decided to immediately fly to Aceh. He wanted to show that in a crisis, a leader must be at the forefront (Yudhoyono, 2015). He was actually suggested by his closest aides and ministers that it would be better for him to return to Jakarta first before heading up to Aceh for several reasons (Yudhoyono, 2015). First, the tally of victims and the magnitude of destruction were not yet clear (Djalal, 2008). Second, they were concerned that the arrival of President Yudhoyono and his entourage would only make things more difficult for local officials (Djalal, 2008). Third, there was a concern that the damage to the airport would impede the landing of the presidential aircraft (Djalal, 2008). Fourth, the image of the local government would be undermined if President Yudhoyono landed in Aceh before aid could be provided at the local level (Djalal, 2008). Fifth, no one, including the military units deployed in Aceh, could guarantee the security situation within the impacted areas, specifically with regard to the security of President Yudhoyono and his ministers from the potential attacks launched by GAM insurgents during such an “unprepared” presidential visit. All the above considerations suggested that a stop in Jakarta would provide President Yudhoyono and his team with more time to prepare the visit. Nevertheless, President Yudhoyono preferred to stick to his intuition. He said, “this is a serious situation, a national crisis; I cannot afford to waste my time in Jakarta, I must take immediate action” (Yudhoyono, 2015).

President Yudhoyono’s bold decision to visit Aceh immediately was surprising for many. However, that decision sent a powerful message that in dealing with a crisis, everyone must share a sense of urgency to be present in the impacted areas. Only then, one could appreciate the actual condition on the ground; “seeing is believing”. Such a decision was even more critical given the fact that the local government was completely ineffective, and the information and communication infrastructures to support the president’s decision-making process were severely

damaged. President Yudhoyono reminded his team the difference between micromanaging and leading in crisis (Yudhoyono, 2015). In a normal circumstance, leaders must avoid any practice of micromanaging, which would kill their followers' initiative and creativity. However, he believed that in times of crisis, where subordinate leaderships were in total disarray, good leaders must be able to adjust themselves, and "take over" the situation, while at the same time rebuilding the capacity and confidence of the subordinate leaderships (Yudhoyono, 2015). Further he argued that, in a crisis situation, the president who would normally make decisions or take actions at the strategic level must also be able to think and act as a mayor of a city, or a battalion commander, at the "tactical" level (Yudhoyono, 2015). By setting a good example of a crisis leader, President Yudhoyono was able to change the mindset and behavior of his followers who were previously uncomfortable in dealing with uncertainty, and inclined to do business as usual.

President Yudhoyono strongly believed that to gain trust and respect from his followers, he must match his words with his actions. For him, in a crisis situation, he could not just appear to the media, and tell people why they needed to act quickly. Although he was exposed to a degree of risks, he showed his willingness, determination, and moral and physical courage to share danger and hardship with the victims, as well as all parties responsible for the disaster-relief efforts. For this, President Yudhoyono was highly admired. More importantly, such a display of charisma or idealized influence allowed him to earn credibility, and gain commitment from his followers in the executive, as well as people in general. Charisma was key to trust building; and trust was critical for President Yudhoyono to effectively lead, and navigate his followers through a multitude of challenges in the aftermath of the Great Tsunami in Aceh.

The second factor of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation. President Yudhoyono was a transformational leader because he always presented himself as a positive and optimistic leader, who believed that there would be ways and opportunities to resolve the crisis in Aceh despite the magnitude of the problems he and the GoI had to face. He repeatedly reminded his staffs on the degree of complexity and uncertainty in Aceh, which would require an effective leadership, a unity of command, as well as a synchronization of efforts (Yudhoyono, 2015). Therefore, he urged all the parties involved to go all out. However, in doing so, he did not want to overwhelm his team only with problems and challenges, which seemed impossible to resolve. Instead, he consistently extended a positive message to his team, and people in general that “there is always a way out of every problem; and every crisis contains opportunities” (Djalal, 2008). President Yudhoyono’s mentality in looking at the crisis greatly encouraged his team to be more resilient and confident in making decisions and taking actions on the ground.

Given the scale of the impact of the natural disaster in Aceh, and the fact that time was not on his side, President Yudhoyono had to heavily rely on the Indonesian military’s capacity. The military was the most effective institution to deal with the crisis for two main reasons. First, naturally, soldiers were trained to encounter various unpredictable, dangerous scenarios. They were the only professionals who had the ability to provide humanitarian assistance, while at the same time, sustaining and protecting themselves from security threats. Second, the military was the only organization that had the capability to project its forces into isolated and or contested areas. Their aircrafts and ships could be effectively employed for rapid transportation of soldiers to the impacted areas in Aceh, which was critical in the distribution of humanitarian aid, especially waters, foods, and medical supplies. Therefore, he particularly expressed his high expectations to the military generals for them to work hard, and “go the extra mile” (Yudhoyono,

2015). President Yudhoyono also took the time to inspire and motivate the on-filed commanders, and their young officers, and soldiers, to do the best they can do, given the centrality of their roles in the humanitarian operations. Not only with the military, President Yudhoyono also showed a “hands-on” leadership with his cabinet members, as well as various non-ministerial civilian agencies involved in the disaster-relief efforts (Yudhoyono, 2015). He motivated the civilian leaderships to manage their priority of resources accordingly. He also emphasized that the typical rigid bureaucracy should not impede their contributions to support their military counterparts.

In motivating his followers, President Yudhoyono also provided the intellectual stimulation. This third factor of Bass’ Transformational Leadership, allowed him to unleash their followers’ full potential, and achieve extraordinary outcomes for their respective organizations. Although President Yudhoyono was trying to be “hands-on” in every situation that emerged on the ground, he avoided dictating his followers on how to do things. While he was determined to be at the forefront, he managed to exercise his span of control effectively, and make the best use of his formal structure to delegate the extraordinary works that must be accomplished concurrently. For him, the best way to achieve the end state was by centralizing the control, while decentralizing the execution (Yudhoyono, 2015). He believed that this kind of leadership would stimulate his followers to be creative and innovative. These two qualities were critical to find the best course of actions in dealing with the complex problems.

To allow creativity and innovation, President Yudhoyono realized that he must first establish a positive working climate for his team. Although Aceh was in a complete chaos, and everyone was working under great pressures, he managed to create an environment that encouraged critical thinking among his followers. He believed that there was no single solution

to the crisis; therefore, he persistently challenged his followers to “think outside the box” (Yudhoyono, 2015). However, in doing so, he reminded his team to always think like a man of action, yet act like a man of thought. He even urged his followers to challenge their own beliefs and values, and come out from their “comfort zones”. He believed that by doing so he would be able to remove the conservative way of thinking, while empowering his followers to exercise all the opportunities arising from the tragedy. Additionally, before making any decisions, President Yudhoyono tried to incorporate the best and brightest talents, from whom he could obtain alternative perspectives and solutions to the ill-structured problems. He argued that the more brains involved in a decision-making process, the better, and more comprehensive decision he would be able to produce (Yudhoyono, 2015). Nevertheless, he was cognizant that it should not be done at the expense of the timeliness of that decision. Finally, President Yudhoyono also underscored the importance of a solid teamwork, which revolved around the seamless flow of information, as well as the sharing of resources among all parties involved in the humanitarian efforts in Aceh. For him, to achieve effectiveness and efficiency, all entities must appreciate their respective capabilities and limitations, and share them with their counterparts; this would allow everyone to compliment and support each other (Yudhoyono, 2015). All of the above efforts ultimately led to a new culture of excellence within President Yudhoyono’s administration, and made him a transformational leader.

The final factor of Bass’ Transformational Leadership is the individualized consideration. In dealing with the crisis in Aceh, President Yudhoyono was aware that he must be supported by a solid team that clearly understood his end state. However, as a new president, he realized that he had yet to consolidate his credibility within a large bureaucracy. In order to gain trust from his followers, primarily his special staffs, cabinet ministers, and military leaders, he must show his

willingness to better understand their personal and professional needs and desires. One of the biggest challenges for President Yudhoyono was to align the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the different organizations, and the nation (Yudhoyono, 2015).

As a young democracy, the political situation in Indonesia was highly complicated. Unlike in the U.S. political system, where the new elected president would have the full liberty of choosing his cabinet secretaries, most likely from his or her own political party, President Yudhoyono did not have the luxury to do so for his administration. Constitutionally, the President Yudhoyono retained the prerogative to appoint whomever he preferred as his cabinet ministers, as well as various heads of national agencies. Nonetheless, in practice, President Yudhoyono must accommodate the various interests expressed by different political parties that supported his candidacy (Yudhoyono, 2015). Therefore, President Yudhoyono could not fill his new office only with people who were coming from his Democratic Party; he should include politicians from other parties, some of whom had different political platforms and agendas (Yudhoyono, 2015). In this respect, President Yudhoyono must accept whoever appointed by other political parties as their representatives in the government. Consequently, he could not really guarantee the level of competence, as well as the integrity of those party-based representatives who would work under his leadership.

Given the above political reality, President Yudhoyono was determined to abide by his own principle: “loyalty to my party ends when loyalty to my country begins” (Yudhoyono, 2015). He believed that by being a good example, he would be able to change others’ behaviors. He openly stated that all political parties, including his Democratic Party, would naturally pursue their own best interests; however, he stressed that it should not be done at the expense of the much larger national interests. President Yudhoyono applied this principle in resolving the crisis

in Aceh. Since the beginning he presented the urgency for all parties to come together, to clearly frame the problems, and agree upon the GoI's ultimate end state in Aceh. Only then, he argued, the GoI would be able to find the best course of actions.

Not only did President Yudhoyono have to realize the different mindsets and interests in his organization, but he also had to understand the inherently different characters and levels of competence among his followers. In dealing with the crisis in Aceh, President Yudhoyono engaged his followers in constructive two-way communications in order to gain and provide candid feedback with respect to any progress and or difficulty on the ground (Yudhoyono, 2015). President Yudhoyono also carefully measured his followers' levels of performance and effectiveness. From his own observation, and confirmed by a credible quantitative analysis, he could categorize his followers into three groups: high-performers, average-performers, and below-performers (Yudhoyono, 2015). Each of them required President Yudhoyono to exercise three different styles of leadership and approach. First, for the high-performers, he provided them with more autonomy, which allowed them to further their creativity and innovation in achieving the objectives in Aceh. Second, for the average-performers, he provided them with more mentoring and coaching sessions, which allowed them to significantly improve their performance. Lastly, for the below-performers, President Yudhoyono provided them with more guidance and task structure to meet his standards. For all his efforts in understanding his followers' different interest and capabilities, and in improving their overall performance in managing the crisis in Aceh, President Yudhoyono proved that he was a transformational leader.

Turning a Tragedy into Opportunity

As illustrated in previous discussion, President Yudhoyono's transformational leadership had changed his followers' behaviors, and moved them in the right direction towards achieving the shared vision in Aceh. His enduring commitment and optimistic mindset allowed him to turn the tragedy into opportunity that would forever change the course of history in Aceh, and the country in general. Several key outcomes of President Yudhoyono's transformational leadership in managing the crisis in Aceh are as follows.

First, President Yudhoyono's bold, yet risky, decision to "open" Aceh for foreign government and non-government entities to support the GoI's humanitarian efforts throughout the province had led to a successful, one of the greatest multinational humanitarian operations in modern history. Governments, militaries, and organizations around the world quickly responded to President Yudhoyono's call for humanitarian assistance in Aceh. Hand in hand, they worked together with the GoI and the Indonesian military to save lives, and recover Aceh from the tragedy. This gave them the opportunity to closely assess the dedication, and the conduct of the Indonesian soldiers on the ground, from removing thousands of dead bodies, to providing waters, foods, shelters, and medical supplies for the survivors.

Such a rare, first-hand experience had significantly changed their perceptions on the Indonesian military, which was often perceived in the past as human rights violators. This explained why in 2005, a year after the Great Tsunami, during his meeting with President Yudhoyono, President George W. Bush officially announced that the U.S. government had lifted a decade plus of military embargo towards the Indonesian military (Yudhoyono, 2015). It was indeed a significant achievement for President Yudhoyono. Despite initially challenged by his political oppositions, his decision turned out to be the foundation of a new chapter of U.S. –

Indonesia military-to-military relations. Since then, the U.S. military started to invite the Indonesian officers to participate in various professional military education programs, including at the CGSC, Fort Leavenworth. Additionally, on a yearly basis, joint exercises between the two militaries are held as part of the confidence/capacity-building initiatives. Finally, now the Indonesian military is allowed to procure various American-made advanced weapons system, which are critical for the institution as it strives to transform itself into a more modern and effective fighting force in the 21st century.

President Yudhoyono's transformational leadership also resulted in a remarkable post-Tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction. The initial damage and loss assessment for Aceh was around US\$4.5 billion; when combined with a fluctuating inflation rate and an estimated US\$1.5 billion for upgrading the neglected facilities within the province, raised the total funding required for the reconstruction to more than US\$7 billion (BRR, 2009). Fortunately, the response from the national and international communities was unprecedented, with a total of US\$7.2 billion pledged (BRR, 2009).

Through his personal appeal and active diplomacy, President Yudhoyono was not only able to invite foreign militaries' humanitarian aid at the initial stage of the crisis management in Aceh, but he was also able to subsequently attract a significant amount of financial assistance from various foreign governments and NGOs to rebuild the province. He, however, viewed that acquiring external funding was only an initial step of a long-term and complex recovery program. He wanted to make sure that such a program could be accomplished effectively in a timely manner. Therefore, in April 2005, President Yudhoyono established an independent coordinating Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh, or the BRR. To lead this agency, he appointed a former Indonesian minister, Kuntoro Mangkusubroto.

The BRR's mission was to restore the livelihoods, and strengthen the communities in Aceh by designing and overseeing a coordinated, community-driven reconstruction and development program (BRR, 2005). The program involved up to 20,000 projects implemented by hundreds organizations, including local and national government institutions, multilateral and bilateral agencies, and national and international NGOs, along with thousands of volunteers and other participants from all around the world (BRR, 2005). According to BRR, there were several key challenges and considerations for the agency. First, the BRR must ensure that it could minimize the likelihood of overlapping projects done by various funding agencies and implementing partners. Second, the BRR must ensure that all the donor funds were spent optimally with a high degree of transparency and accountability. Third, in the efforts of rebuilding Aceh, the BRR must respect all the concerns raised by the local communities, and involve them throughout the rehabilitation and reconstruction project.

Given the above challenges, President Yudhoyono closely supervised all the developments made by the BRR. He regularly held progress meetings with BRR, and provided the agency with constructive feedback for improvement (Yudhoyono, 2015). He also paid regular visits to Aceh in order to confirm what had been reported with the actual condition on the ground. His actions had inspired and motivated all parties involved in the rehabilitation and reconstruction program to achieve the targets of completion. President Yudhoyono's actions also allowed the GoI to earn trust from its foreign counterparts. The whole BRR program, which was considered as one of the largest humanitarian programs in history, was completed in 2009. Since then, Aceh has not only physically recovered from the Great Tsunami, but has also been in a much better condition across the board. All these suggested that President Yudhoyono's transformational leadership had again turned the tragedy into opportunity.

The final, and most important outcome of President Yudhoyono's transformational leadership was a peaceful conflict resolution in Aceh. As discussed earlier in this paper, in the aftermath of the Great Tsunami, President Yudhoyono attempted to create a new window of opportunity to resolve the armed conflict in Aceh permanently. He believed that the tragedy had severely damaged GAM's will to fight (Yudhoyono, 2015). They lost their families and properties, as well as their bases of support. In such a difficult situation, they realized the "cold fact" that Aceh could not survive without the GoI. They bought President Yudhoyono's words "in this tragedy, there is no good guys or bad guys; everyone is a victim" (Yudhoyono, 2015). They also openly appreciated what President Yudhoyono had genuinely done to recover Aceh from the tragedy.

President Yudhoyono did not want to miss such a rare momentum. To avoid unnecessary "noises" from his political oppositions, he, both personally and through special envoys, quietly made several contacts with GAM leaderships to discuss the future of Aceh (Yudhoyono, 2015). In the process, President Yudhoyono sent a very clear message on the GoI's end state with regard to Aceh: "Aceh will never be an independent state; it is final" (Yudhoyono, 2015). However, he was open to listen and discuss GAM's various desires and interests, other than separation from Indonesia. He promised to renew the GoI's approach and policy towards Aceh, including the possibility to grant the province with a greater autonomy, and offer various sociopolitical and economic concessions. Nevertheless, before engaging GAM in further dialogues, President Yudhoyono wanted to make sure that GAM could first understand the GoI's end state, and the corridor of discussion. For him, such a clear statement would serve as a critical foundation to move forward.

Learning how serious President Yudhoyono was in resolving the conflict in Aceh, GAM ultimately agreed to put down their weapons, and give up their insurgency, to pursue a peaceful conflict resolution with the GoI. After a series of dialogues, in August 2005, eight months after the Great Tsunami, the representatives from the GoI and the GAM came to Helsinki for the final peace talks, mediated by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari. The event culminated in the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between both sides that confirmed the commitment to a peaceful, comprehensive, and sustainable solution to the conflict in Aceh with dignity for all (MoU between the GoI and the GAM, 2005).

Through the MoU, both parties committed themselves to creating conditions within which the government of the Acehnese people could be manifested through a fair and democratic process within the unitary state and constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (MoU between the GoI and the GAM, 2005). Both parties were also deeply convinced that only the peaceful settlement of the conflict would enable the rebuilding of the post-Tsunami Aceh to progress and succeed (MoU between the GoI and the GAM, 2005). Finally, both GoI, including the Indonesian military, and the GAM committed themselves to building mutual confidence and trust. The MoU detailed the agreement and the principles that would guide the transformation process, which included issues on the governing of Aceh; human rights; amnesty and reintegration into society; security arrangements; the establishment of the Aceh Monitoring Mission; and the potential dispute settlement. The historic peace deal could not be achieved without President Yudhoyono's transformational leadership. His long-term vision, optimism, commitment, and actions had all ended the 30-year armed conflict, and started a new era in Aceh.

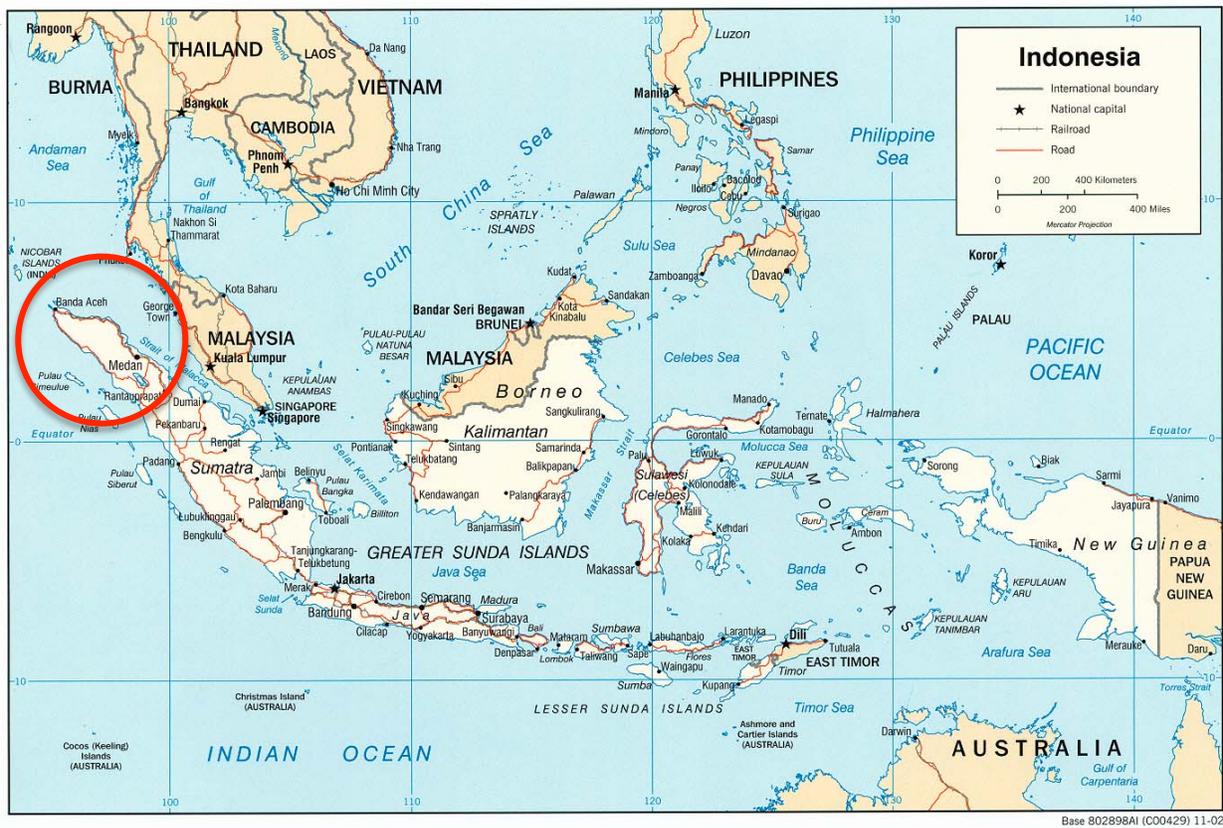
Conclusion

The core components of transformational leadership as suggested by Bass had served President Yudhoyono well in dealing with the crisis in Aceh. They allowed him to acquire the much-needed buy-in from his followers to work together in the same direction in dealing with the uncertainty and the complexity of the problems, and achieve the shared end state. They also allowed him to motivate, and at the same time challenge his followers to unleash their full potential to accomplish extraordinary results, beyond their own expectations. All the positive outcomes in the aftermath of the Great Tsunami, including the rebuilding of Aceh and the peaceful conflict resolution, justified how President Yudhoyono had effectively leveraged his prior experiences, and exercised his leadership to successfully turn a tragedy into opportunity. Although some elements might argue that those achievements in Aceh were nothing more than a blessing in disguised, this paper concluded that they were actually the result of a sound and deliberate process, which could only be achieved through President Yudhoyono's transformational leadership.

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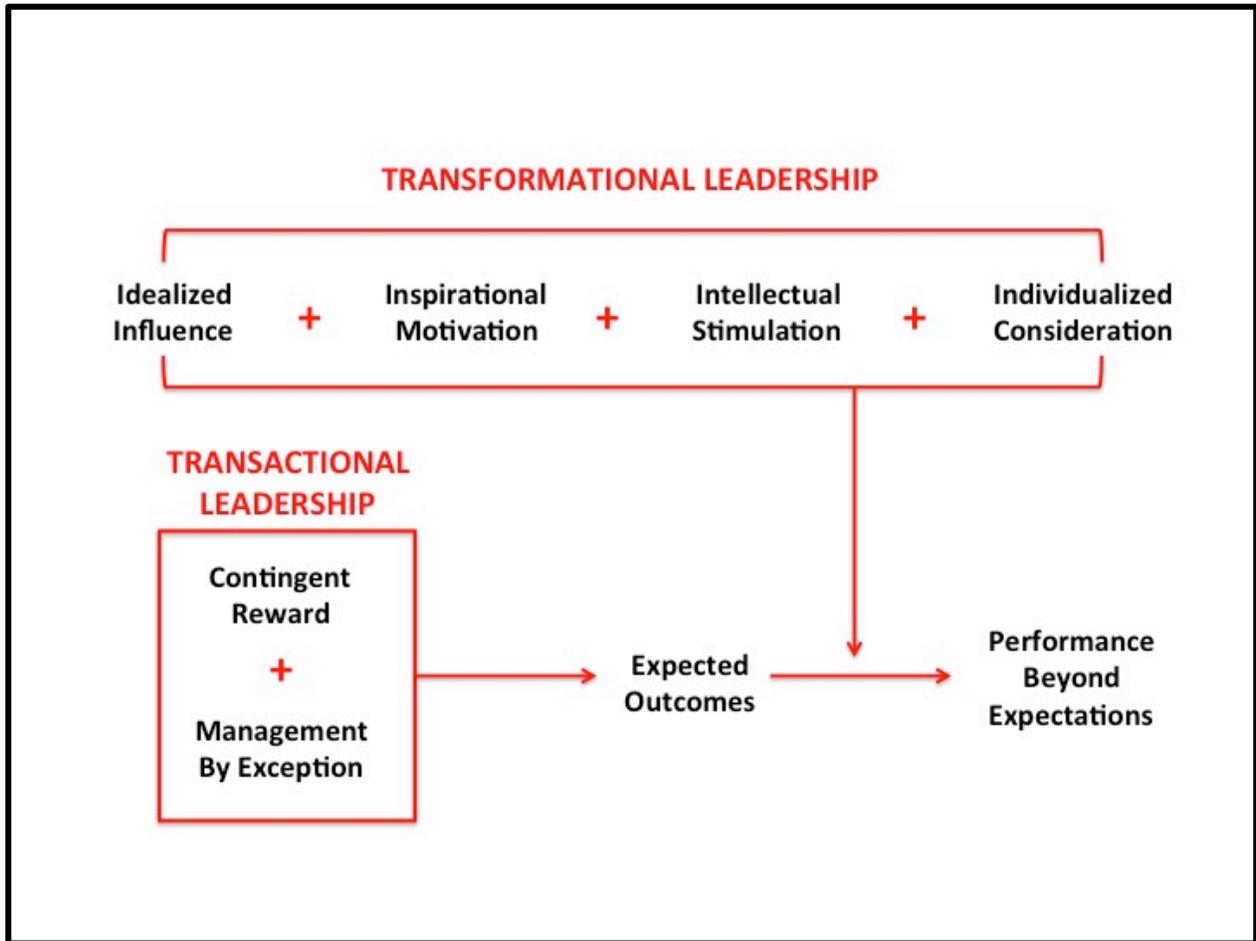
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Map of Indonesia (Highlight: the Province of Aceh)



<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/indonesia.html>

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