Article

The fragmentation of democratic and 'adat' institutions in Aceh's political elite after Helsinki: The failure of the concept of institution of social cohesion

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Abstract: This article analyzes the modes of organizing the political realm of society in Aceh, especially after the signing of the Helsinki MoU in 2005 by representatives of the Indonesian government and GAM as the two parties most interested in the social organization of Acehnese society. The post-conflict social and political phenomenon in Aceh is the fragmentation between democratic and customary institutions that can be directly observed by the public through their competition in local government elections. Former GAM leaders have chosen to revive Majelis Wali Nanggroe and Gampong as customary and cultural institutions to help the government organize the lives of Acehnese people post-conflict. This paper contends that the various relationships and networks of relationships present in institutional formations are understood and explained through the different rules and frameworks that define and regulate them. Data sources were collected through in-depth interviews with several key informants, such as former GAM members, DPRA members, university rectors, local Aceh mass media editors, and socio-political observers, field observations for eighteen days (5–22 August 2018), and literature studies. This qualitative research uses a new institutionalism approach that focuses on the dynamics of the social structure of Acehnese society, which was largely controlled by GAM before the Helsinki MoU and began to loosen after the elections and even formed fragmentation among former combatants in the struggle for leadership in local government institutions. This article finds that GAM elite divisions and conflicts after the conflict for official government positions occurred due to the absence of imagination of modes of organizing society that was able to connect structurally and functionally formal and informal institutions. Pragmatically, GAM leaders and negotiators tend to maintain identity politics as a resistance movement against the central government and at the same time, they continue to run governance in a special autonomy model that gives them a lot of constitutional, institutional and symbolic freedom.

Keywords: fragmentasi; GAM; Helsinki Accord; local governance; social cohesion

1. Introduction

This article analyzes the modes of organizing the political realm of society in Aceh, especially after the signing of the Helsinki MoU in 2005 by representatives of the Indonesian government and GAM as the two parties most interested in the social organization of Acehnese society. The conflict in Aceh, a prolonged and devastating

struggle primarily between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government, spanned nearly three decades, claiming thousands of lives and leaving deep scars on the region's social and political fabric. The conflict centered on issues of autonomy, resource control, and identity, with GAM demanding independence for Aceh. After years of violent clashes, peace was achieved through the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2005, marking a pivotal moment in Aceh's history. The MoU granted Aceh special autonomy and laid the foundation for political reintegration and post-conflict recovery. Now, nearly two decades later, Aceh has witnessed significant transformations. A new generation has emerged, one that has no direct memory of the conflict or the immediate post-conflict realities, highlighting the need to revisit and reflect on this period to ensure that its lessons are preserved and inform ongoing development efforts.

The special autonomy rights of Aceh Province through Law No. 18 of 2001 have given a distinctive character to Aceh's leadership model that illustrates two main points and will be the focus of this article. Firstly, Aceh's special autonomy rights guaranteed by Law No. 18/2001 have provided extensive accommodation to a model of political governance that is strongly characterized by its local characteristics. Aceh has many peculiarities compared to other provinces, ranging from local political parties, the Shari'ah Court, the Ulama Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama/MPU), and Wali Nanggroe as a unifying symbol of Aceh's customs and culture. Although Aceh has been granted extensive autonomy rights, when compared to other provinces in Indonesia, the problems of governance arrangements for more than two decades have not been able to bring prosperity to the people in this province.

The extensive accommodations made in Aceh's local political structure have led to challenges, which will form the second focus of this article: the power struggles among local elite figures. The peace agreement between the Indonesian government and GAM through the Helsinki MoU in 2005 has opened a huge space for political expression for GAM officials and members to emerge as candidates for local leaders, members of the legislature, or officials in Aceh's local government apparatus. This condition shows the accumulation of social capital that has long been monopolized by GAM so that during the period of political openness after the Helsinki MoU, not many non-GAM Acehnese local political figures were credible to occupy important government seats.

Much of the literature on Aceh focuses on issues of democratization and decentralization, autonomy and local institutions, peace process and reconstruction program, peace agreement and peace building, the establishment of sharia law, the creation of civil society and social transformation, and special issue regarding approaches to the Aceh question (Aspinall, 2013; Aspinall and Crouch, 2003; Barter and Wangge, 2022; Boonpunth and Saheem, 2022; Cardozo et al., 2022; Feener, 2021; Fuad et al., 2022; Gayatri, 2010; He and Reid, 2004; Hillman, 2012, 2013; Jemadu, 2004; Kingsbury, 2007; Lee, 2020; Lele, 2023; Miller, 2004; Missbach, 2011; Permana, 2021; Reid, 2004; Ridwansyah and Orsantinutsakul, 2022; Shadiqin and Srimulyani, 2021; Tornquist, 2011). This finding can easily be found through searches in international journal repositories, such as Taylor and Francis, SAGE, or JSTOR. If we try to search through the Indonesian version of Google Scholar, then we will find

more varied research results, such as the social structure of Acehnese society, the history of conflict in Aceh, the development of certain Islamic sects, or regional head elections. Based on this initial search, this article explores a topic that may not be widely discussed, but is important to research and understand, namely the social organization of politics in several traditional institutions that clash with modern institutions of leadership in post-MoU Helsinki 2005 Acehnese society.

Aspinall (2013) has already used the word 'fragments' to describe the situation of Indonesia's political dimension after the reformation in 1998. In contrast to foreign scholars who observed Indonesia's socio-political conditions after Reformasi, Aspinall concluded that Indonesia's social and political fragmentation after Reformasi was due to the ubiquity of clientelism and the broader application of the neoliberalism model, which had evolved fundamentally from its original theory of Thatcherism. The fragmentation of the Indonesian nation after Reformasi according to Aspinall is thus actually an elitist fragmentation patrimonially supported by loyal mass groups. This article uses the same perspective as Aspinall to look at the socio-political condition of Aceh after the Helsinki MoU in 2005, which was fragmented by the competition of GAM figures to enter the Aceh political arena openly.

This paper contend that the various relationships and networks of relationships present in institutional formations are understood and explained through the different rules and frameworks that define and regulate them. Unlike Aspinall, this article looks at the fragmentation of modern leadership institutions with traditional adat institutions. The article uses a historical approach with the conceptual framework of neo-institutionalism. It will focus on the dynamics of the social structure of Acehnese society, which was largely controlled by GAM elites before the Helsinki MoU and loosened afterwards.

1.1. The new institutionalism and complex social organization

Institutionalism is fundamentally the study of institutions within various contexts of human interaction. It focuses on institutions defined as "law, custom or practice", "government practices and customs", "social organization forms", "specific procedures and practices", "predictable patterned interactions" and "informal codes of conduct, written agreements, and complex organizations" (Guy, 1999; Lowndes and Roberts, 2013). These diverse definitions highlight that institutions permeate all aspects of our lives, including social, economic, and political spheres. We can view markets, elections, political parties, mosques, marriages, and media as types of institutions. Institutionalists argue that institutions shape and influence human behavior and identity in the contexts where interactions occur. However, a key question arises: what does it mean to classify an institution as "political"? Additionally, what distinguishes "old" institutionalism from "new" institutionalism?

New institutionalism emerged in the 1980s, primarily within political science, and retains many characteristics of the older approach while expanding in both theoretical and empirical dimensions (Guy, 1999). This emergence was a response to both internal and external challenges (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013). Internally, institutionalists aimed to refine the theory to address the established critiques of "old" institutionalism. Externally, as global society became more pluralistic and democratic,

the complexity and fragmentation of political organization increased, necessitating more advanced theoretical and methodological tools for political scientists. New institutionalists recognized that political outcomes are not solely determined by formal institutions and rules. They emphasized that the state influences and is influenced by society; that political democracy relies on both economic and social conditions as well as the design of political institutions; and that the formal structures of governance serve as arenas for competing social forces while also encompassing established procedures and structures that define and protect interests (March and Olsen, 1984).

To clarify the distinctions between old and new institutionalism, Lowndes and Roberts (2013) identified three key aspects: (1) new institutionalism starts with formal rules and structures but extends its focus to include informal conventions and coalitions that shape political behavior; (2) it critically examines how political institutions embody values and power dynamics rather than accepting them at face value; and (3) it recognizes that institutions not only constrain individual behavior but are also human creations that can change and evolve through the actions of actors. This article explores the interactions between informal local leaders and political actors within government agencies, offering an alternative explanation to relying solely on formal structures. Furthermore, local political behavior can be better understood by examining the diverse local and cultural wisdoms that persist within a society, serving as guiding principles alongside formal rules. Ultimately, local informal leaders can act as social forces that navigate the formal rules and local government structures in culturally and historically appropriate ways (de Archellie et al., 2020; Waworuntu et al., 2024).

Most contemporary institutions, such as businesses, government agencies, democratic organizations, religious groups, scientific communities, and markets, are structured and regulated within relatively separate autonomous spheres, each identifiable by its own unique system of rules (Burns and Flam, 1987). Actors in each institutional domain are aligned with the rule systems that hold legitimacy in their context, using these rules to structure, coordinate, and regulate their social interactions. This means that the way actors interact and the coordination mechanisms in each social relationship or institutional domain are linked to a specific social rule system, each with its own distinct logic or rationale (Burns and Flam, 1987). Each rationale encompasses not only particular organizing principles and transaction rules but also a jurisdiction of meaning. It delineates and identifies the legitimate participants (who should be included or excluded) in collective activities, the appropriate types of actions and interactions to undertake in that context, and the suitable times and places for engaging in those activities.

A system of rules comprises a network of social relationships, role frameworks, and "rules of the game," which outline to varying degrees who is allowed or expected to participate, who is excluded, what actions should be taken, and the timing, location, and manner of these actions, as well as the relevant parties involved (Burns and Flam, 1987). This system organizes specific actor categories or roles in relation to one another, defining their rights and responsibilities, including rules for authority and obedience, as well as their access to and control over both human and material resources. It also delineates the classifications, definitions, and appropriate discourses within the institutional domain. Consequently, an institution, as a framework of rules,

provides a structured and meaningful foundation for actors to interact and coordinate their actions. By guiding and regulating interactions, these rules establish recognizable behavioral patterns, making them understandable and meaningful for those who share knowledge of the rules.

This article will draw upon findings from interviews conducted with informants in Aceh province, secondary literatures, newspaper articles, and field observation data to reach its conclusion. The interviews were conducted during the fieldwork from 27 June to 11 July 2019. The total number of informants interviewed was nine and they were selected based on their capacity and experiences endured and witnessed the dynamics of socio-political changes in Aceh during the peace settlement in 2005 and the aftermath. The informants were member of local political party, member of local People's Representative Council, former rectors of local university, sociologist-former member of the national commission for human rights, historian, editor-in-chief of local newspaper, and staffs of the office of Wali Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam. Some of the questions we asked included: How would you describe the social and political situation in Aceh during the peace process and afterwards? How do you see the transformation of former GAM combatants after peace was achieved in 2005 with the signing of the Helsinki Agreement? To what extent was the political activism of former GAM combatants after the Helsinki Agreement and what were its dynamics? The answers to these questions were assessed based on relevance to the research questions, clarity, depth, and originality.

1.2. The tensions of socio-political construction of Acehnese society

Sociologically, a society will have structured patterns of social arrangements to fulfill the basic needs of its members. These social regulatory patterns are run by institutions that are historically and culturally shaped by members of that society. As social constructions, social institutions are "the ordered social relationships that grow out of the values, norms, statuses, and roles that organize the activities that fulfill society's fundamental needs" (Tischer, 2010). Sociologists generally agree on five areas in a society that contain basic needs that need to be regulated by social institutions, namely family, education, economy, religion, and politics (Tischer, 2010). In addition to fulfilling the basic needs of society, social institutions in a functionalist perspective also have the function of preserving social order and providing and maintaining a sense of purpose (Schaefer, 2017). Identifying and understanding the work patterns of social institutions can be done by exploring the social structure of a society because social institutions are one of the elements contained in the social structure.

The social structure of Acehnese society is shaped and influenced by customary factors and Islamic values adopted since the time of the Acehnese sultanate. According to Hurgronje (1906), historical sources that record the organization of Acehnese society are sourced from several Acehnese chronicles and books of laws published by Acehnese sultans. Hasjmy (1983) reported that there are very few historical sources that can be used as references to get a precise picture of the state administration of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam (which nowadays located in Banda Aceh). Kitab Adat Makuta Alam is one of the customary laws issued by Sultan Iskandar Muda or Sultan

Meukuta Alam (1607–1636) and is most often referred to for a description of the distribution of power and the organization of the social order of Acehnese society. This book, also known as Adat Kanun or Qanun Meukuta Alam, regulates the relationship between the people and the ruler and generally contains regulations on trade, navigation, import-export taxes, administration, ceremonies, and harbor management (Hasjmy, 1983; Hurgronje, 1906).

The Sultans of Aceh, and leaders in general, have always been trained to live the doctrines of adat and Sharia law side by side. This principle of parallelism between adat and sharia was common at that time in the early Islamic sultanates and kingdoms of the archipelago. Sultans would usually revert to adat rules when faced with difficult decision-making situations (Hurgronje, 1906). The legitimacy of the Sultans' power and wisdom was associated with "adat", whether practiced in writing or orally, to consolidate their power, territory or priviledge (Hurgronje, 1906). The Sultan as the supreme ruler in the sultanate of Aceh could distribute some of his power to local rulers (Uleebalang and panglima sagoe) to take care of trade and tax matters or port regulations. In addition, the Sultan also distributed some of his power to the ulama to take care of the religious life of the people (Hurgronje, 1906).

Another observation was presented by Hasjmy (1983) on the sources of law during the Kingdom of Aceh Darusslam. According to Qanun Meukuta Alam, the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam based all its laws on Islamic teachings by referring to four sources of law, namely the Quran, Hadith, Idjma' Ulama Ahlussunnah Wal Dajama'ah, and Qias (Hasjmy, 1983). These four sources became the reference for the laws applicable in the Kingdom of Aceh Darusslam, namely Law, Adat, Reusam, and Qanun. Hukum is legislation that regulates religious matters; Adat is legislation that regulates state matters; Reusam regulates society; and Qanun regulates security or defense (Hasjmy, 1983). Hierarchically, these four regulations are used in stages starting from the main rule (Shari'i), the rule of the government or Sultan (Ardili), the rule of the Commander-in-Chief of the War Forces (Dlaruri), special rules made by the Sultan (Nafsi), and rules made by regional rulers or Hulubalang/Uleebalang ('Urfi) (Hasjmy, 1983).

The distribution of power in the state administration of the Kingdom of Aceh can be seen from the Qanun Meukuta Alam.

> "*The Kingdom is called Kerjaaan Aceh Darusslam with Banda Aceh Darussalam as its capital city and consists of the Central Government (Kingdom), Regional Government (keulebalangan and kemukiman) and Village Government (Kampung). In the Aceh Besar region there were three federations consisting of several local governments, called 'Sagoe*" (Hasjmy, 1983).

According to Hurgronje, the constitutional structure as recorded in the Qanun Meukuta Alam was formed at an indeterminate time. The regulation of community order was initially through the Kawom mechanism, which is a group of relatives who come from the male lineage in a region (Hurgronje, 1906). Kawom had heredity-based rules, values and customs that governed the lives of its members. However, at an indeterminate time, the Kawom-based regulatory model began to be displaced by the Gampong regulatory model which combines several Kawoms in an area and is headed by an Uleebalang. Thus, the descent-based Gampong custom began to be replaced by the area-based Gampong custom (Hurgronje, 1906).

Gampong is the smallest administrative unit of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam (Hasjmy, 1983; Hurgronje, 1906). According to Hurgronje's (1906) account, Gampong consisted of three elements: Keuchhi' who has one or more Waki, Teungku, and Ureueng Tuha. The Keuchhi' or Keuchik, or Bapak Gampong (headman or father of the Gampong), is the leader of the Gampong who derives his legitimacy of power from the Uleebalang and is usually entitled to pass his position down to his descendants although the Uleebalang can appoint a replacement from a different descendant. The Keuchik is in charge of running the administration and supervising the Gampong as an extension of the Uleebalang (Hurgronje, 1906; Satriani, 2008). The Keuchik leads a Gampong together with the imeum meunasah or teungku (according to Hurgronje's notes). The Imeum/Tengku Meunasah or mother of Gampong is in charge of all religious affairs including leading prayers in the meunasah and teaching children to read the Quran (Hurgronje, 1906). The third element is the Ureueng Tuha or Tuha Peut who represents a group of elders in a Gampong who are considered experienced, wise, wordly wisdom and good manners, able to provide advice to the Keuchik in carrying out his duties. If there are young people who are considered to have the wisdom to represent the community, they can join the Tuha Peut (Hurgronje, 1906).

A detailed historical and sociological examination of Gampong was conducted by Gayatri et al. (2008) by combining historical sources, colonial government regulations, Republic of Indonesia government regulations, and ethnographic field data collection. Gampong can be defined legally, physically and as a social organization (Gayatri, 2008). Gampong has survived from the royal period until the reformation period despite being the object of village institutional homogenization during the New Order period through Law No. 5 of 1979 on Village Government. Efforts to revive the tradition of Gampong institutions gained legal legitimacy after the issuance of Qanun Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Province No. 5/2003 on Gampong Government and Law No. 11/2006 on Aceh Government. Qanun No. 5/2003 and Law No. 11/2006 are the follow-up and operationalization of regional autonomy arrangements after the enactment of Law No. 44/1999 on the Implementation of the Specialty of the Special Province of Aceh.

Gampong as a social institution has proven itself to be an instrument of social cohesion for the people of Aceh over a long historical trajectory. Empirically, Gampong's resilience can be understood vertically and horizontally. Vertically, Gampong is used by the ruler as an instrument of social control, while horizontally the people of Aceh build Gampong as modes of organizing society in social, political, religious, and law realms. Hurgronje's (1906) report is the first detailed account of Gampong, followed by the research of Hasjmy (1983) and Gayatri et al. (2008) which empirically illustrates the resilience of Gampong. Somadisastra (1977) enriched the description of Gampong resilience by adding local leadership variables to his analysis. The Aceh Community Assistance Research Project (ACARP) (2007) report empirically and extensively informs the resilience and role of Gampong as a social institution in the process of community recovery and physical reconstruction in three regions of Aceh. From a legal and institutional perspective, Kurniawan (2010) critically analyzes the role of Gampong leadership in the success or failure of development.

The social structures, leadership models, institutional arrangements, and customary wisdom values that have existed in Gampong since the 16th century represent the ideal social organization model of Acehnese society. This idealism is evident in the rebirth of the Gampong concept as the smallest administrative unit within Aceh Province through Qanun No. 5/2003 and Law No. 11/2006. These two regulations demonstrate the Acehnese people's ideal expectations of Gampong as a social organization capable of providing social arrangements for the Acehnese society (modes of organizing society). However, the institutional model of the Gampong that was reborn, after its legal and formal disappearance between 1979 and 2003, underwent several adjustments to harmonize with Acehnese local government regulations.

The choice of Gampong as a mode of organizing society in Aceh indicates it as a variable that distinguishes Aceh from Indonesia's administrative, legal, political, and social systems in general. This distinction is cemented by the rule of Islamic sharia law which has been a historico-cultural feature of Acehnese society since the sultanate period. However, the selection of the Gampong as an institutional representation of GAM's identity politics after the conflict was not equipped with a systemic structural and functional concept, which only resulted in a pragmatic-formal leadership model. This is because, in practice, the implementation of the Gampong-based management model clashes with the concept and structure of the Indonesian bureaucracy in general, which has undergone democratization and will be elaborated further in this article. In our fieldwork, we found that the Gampong and Wali Nanggore Aceh are merely formal customary institutions established under the Helsinki agreement, filled with customary leaders who come from and are elected by the older generation of GAM members. Meanwhile, the leadership of formal local government institutions is contested by the younger generation of former GAM members.

2. GAM transformation and leadership challenges in the era of decentralization

The Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), hereafter referred to as the Helsinki MoU, between the Indonesian government and GAM became a formal turning point in the rebuilding of Aceh in almost all dimensions of life. The signing of the MoU on 15 August 2005, after five rounds of talks from January to July, was accelerated after both parties saw the importance of the peace process in the reconstruction of Aceh after the tsunami (Aspinall, 2005, 2007). The Helsinki MoU contains agreements governing the life of Acehnese society after the tsunami and conflict, ranging from the governing of Aceh, human rights, amnesty and reintegration into society, security arrangements, and monitoring missions. At the beginning it is explicitly stated that "A new law on the Governing of Aceh will be promulgated and will enter into force as soon as possible and not later than 31 March 2006". In general, the Helsinki MoU agreed by the Indonesian government grants sovereignty to the people of Aceh to govern themselves in accordance with their historical and cultural specificities (MoU article 1.1.6). Schulze (2007) argues that the two parties in the Helsinki MoU were part of a broader politico-military strategy, not merely representatives of two entities seeking peace. Following Schulze's (2007) argument,

the Helsinki MoU can be said to be the product or result of thinking and debating the political-military strategies of the Indonesian government and GAM. Thus, to understand the processes and events that occurred after the signing of the Helsinki MoU, we must use the political perspectives and military/security strategies used by both parties, despite the institutional transformation of the actors involved in the process.

GAM is the main actor that underwent significant institutional transformation after the Helsinki MoU. The transformation of GAM from a military movement to a political movement has been widely discussed in research reports and scholarly articles. The Aceh Monitoring Mission/AMM report with the World Bank illustrates a detailed picture of the process of reintegration of GAM members into society that began after the signing of the Helsinki MoU in 2005. The report informs us that by the end of January 2006, or six months after the Helsinki MoU, 90 percent of GAM members returned to their villages of origin without any problems, almost 75 percent had not yet returned to work, the main field of work to be taken up was the agricultural sector, almost all GAM members required assistance in the reintegration process and aid management (World Bank and AMM, 2006). The results of the Aceh Monitorinf Mission/AMM and World Bank research are meaningful for understanding the condition of Aceh at the time, especially in the political and leadership sectors. A key concern is the gap between the world of GAM combatants, who spent almost thirty years in the jungle and mountains, and the outside world, which operated under the rules of the government of the Republic of Indonesia. The problem is complicated when GAM leaders seek to occupy official posts in the executive and legislative branches of government with an education background that is generally elementary school (33 percent), junior high school (31 percent), very little high school (19 percent), and rarely a university degree (less than 3 percent) (referring to the 2004 SUSENAS survey) (World Bank and AMM, 2006).

Other research focuses on the political sector as an implementation of one of the agreements in the Helsinki MoU. One year after the MoU, the government issued Law No. 11/2006 on the Governing of Aceh (Undang-Undang Pemerintahan Aceh/UUPA). UUPA guarantees the freedom of former GAM members to channel their political aspirations in the form of candidacy as candidates for regional heads, legislators, and also guarantees the formation of local political parties as a new institution of GAM's struggle. Schulze (2007) critically emphasizes that the success of the Helsinki MoU and GAM's subsequent transformation process was part of the political-military strategy of the Indonesian government and GAM. In contrast to the common view that the Helsinki MoU was achieved due to the need for reconstruction of Aceh after the tsunami, Schulze (2007) observes that both the Indonesian government and GAM suffered from a weakened military sector so that reconciliation through foreign mediators was considered the best way to end the conflict.

It can be noted that the government's reason for providing space and access to the establishment of local political parties was actually an attempt to "divert" the attention of former combatants of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) from gun battles to local political "battles" among themselves. The former GAM combatants united to form the Aceh Party, which has changed its name twice, namely the Free Aceh Movement Party (GAM), changed again to the Aceh Independent Movement Party

(GAM), both of which still use the abbreviation GAM. Because it was considered to cause controversy and confusion, it was finally agreed that the name would be Partai Aceh. The Aceh Party itself was founded in Banda Aceh on 4 June 2007, based on Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution and Qanun Meukuta Alam Al-Arsyi. The party has a structure from the center (Aceh Province) to the Gampong (village) level (Aceh Party, www.partaiaceh.org). Aceh Party won the 2009 Legislative Election with 47% of the vote and won the 2009 Presidential Election for the SBY-Boediono with 93% of the vote, as well as winning the Aceh Governor-Deputy Governor Candidate Pair in the 2012 Aceh Regional Election (Nurhasim, 2012). However, in the 2014 elections, the Aceh Party's vote share experienced a significant degradation, gaining only 29.25% of the vote and 29 seats out of 81 contested DPRA seats. This decline was due to the Acehnese people's dissatisfaction with the performance of the Aceh Party, which tended to prioritize the aspirations of their own group (Nurdiansyah, 2014). Another reason is that there is already a visible division in the face of the 2014 presidential election. Muzakir Manaf as Chairman of the Aceh Party officially supported the Prabowo-Hatta pair. Meanwhile, the Tuha Peut Assembly of the Aceh Party, such as Zakaria Saman, Zaini Abdullah supported Jokowi-JK (Gayo, 2014).

Aspinall (2009) argues that the reintegration of former GAM leaders and members after the Helsinki MoU was facilitated by the reconstruction situation of Aceh after the tsunami. GAM leaders transformed into contractors and were able to win project contracts, despite their lack of skills and capacities, by using their political and coercive resources and cooperating with local officials. With the resources of GAM leaders, the corrupt behavior of government officials, GAM's cooperation with established contractors, and the abundance of foreign aid funds available to rebuild Aceh, Aspinall notes that GAM leaders began to transform into construction sector entrepreneurs. With GAM's political and coercive resources still at its disposal and the ease with which local government contracts could be secured, Aspinall (2009) argues that based on Aceh's experience after the tsunami and the Helsinki MoU, corruption in the short term can be instrumental to maintaining peace. The struggle for reconstruction funds and the dynamic post-tsunami construction sector not only produced new construction entrepreneurs from within GAM but also determined the future pattern of power competition among former GAM elites for social capital in the 2006–2017 regional elections. In the context of democracy, such competition is more open and unrestricted than the closed and feudalist struggle for traditional leadership.

Among former GAM combatants, after the Helsinki MoU, they are not only fragmented but have also factionalized into small groups. Moreover, command lines became difficult to use, when GAM members had to fill vacancies at the lower regional levels, which were far from the reach of the center, such as administrative districts and cities that had to be held by various groups of them, who previously had their own command lines. There has been a transformation in the form of their internal organization, in order to respond to the strategies and political constellations taken. This has led to the formation of increasingly tense cliques. Especially influenced by the large number of members who are scattered outside the supervision of the command, causing the formation of initiatives from members in carrying out strategies in each location. The polarization that occurred intensified at the same time when GAM began to transform from a military organization to practical politics, in the form

of a party. This action unwittingly gave birth to the embryo of factionalization which not only rubbed against each other, but also created hidden conflicts between them because it caused an intersection between the actions of the actors, the structure of the institution to be formed, and the figures who would serve in it. The concrete form of their fractionalization and fragmentation can be seen in the 2017 regional election campaign. In that election, there were already visible divisions with the presence of two local parties formed by the respective factions of GAM, namely Partai Aceh and Partai Nanggroe Aceh. Both parties began to build affiliations with national parties in accordance with their party platforms or also because they received material support from several national parties operating in Aceh.

GAM's political transformation from a military movement to a political movement that occurred as one of the implications of the Helsinki MoU showed GAM's internal divisions. The beginning of the split was seen when GAM held the All-Acehnese World Congress in May 2006 (Stange and Patock, 2010). One of the agendas of the congress was to select a candidate for governor representing GAM. The congress recommended Tengku Nasiruddin as GAM's gubernatorial candidate, but Nasiruddin rejected him outright. The GAM leadership then appointed Abdullah Hasbi as his successor, which was rejected by some GAM members because they considered the GAM leader in Sweden to be too paternalistic and did not open space for other members who also had leadership capacity. Hasbi's appointment was opposed by younger GAM members, one of whom was Irwandi Yusuf, who managed to capitalize on the success of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) that he led for one year in the run-up to the 2006 Aceh elections (Stange and Patock, 2010). The peak of the split was seen when in October 2006 Malik Mahmud as GAM Prime Minister revoked Irwandi Yusuf's mandate at the AMM and replaced him with Zakaria Saman (former GAM defense minister) (Stange and Patock, 2010). In brief, the Aceh election was won by Irwandi-Nazar and left GAM split into two groups: The old GAM, dominated by the 1976 generation and some of the 1980s, and the new GAM, dominated by the 1980s and later. This split not only signifies the demarcation of age groups and generations, but also shows the fading of GAM's ideology of struggle and the loosening of GAM's line of command, which indirectly impacts on the paradigm of their development model.

Based on historical data, the two rebellions that emerged in Aceh, Darul Islam in 1953 and GAM in 1976, were caused by the dissatisfaction of some Acehnese people with the central government (Aspinall, 2003; Schulze, 2003, 2004, 2007). Schulze (2004), citing the declaration of independence of the Acheh-Sumatra National Liberation Front/ASNLF, states that the ideology of ASNLF, which later transformed into GAM, was "one of national liberation aimed at freeing Aceh from 'all political control of the foreign regime of Jakarta'". This ideology still has three subcurrents and characteristics according to Schulze (2003), namely Achenese ethnic nationalism and Islam, anti-capitalism and anti-westernism, and human rights and democracy. Schulze's (2003, 2004) observations can be used as a basis that GAM's ideology survived until the signing of the Helsinki MoU and led to the internal breakup of GAM in 2006. Thus, based on the historical trajectory from the establishment of GAM in 1976 until the 2006 Aceh regional elections, it can simply be said that the democratization of Aceh politics has had an impact on the fading of GAM ideology.

This fading paralleled the loosening of GAM's line of command as a military organization. The World Bank and AMM (2006) report and Aspinall's research, which uses a political economy approach to analyze the reconstruction of Aceh, the reintegration of former GAM combatants into Acehnese society, and GAM's transformation from a military to a political organization, prove that since the Helsinki MoU followed by Aceh's political democratization, GAM has lost command control over some of its members in the field. The first evidence was Irwandi Yusuf's victory in the 2006 Aceh gubernatorial election over GAM deputy Abdullah Hasbi, who was fully supported by GAM leaders abroad and most of GAM's senior leadership. This was followed by the reality that GAM was beginning to lose its source of funds to finance its members. The funds provided by foreign donors and jointly managed by Bappenas (Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional) and the Aceh Reconciliation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) to assist the reintegration of GAM members were not sustained. As such, former combatants, political prisoners and civilian sympathizers of GAM tend to realistically find economic opportunities to continue their lives without having to rely on their former commanders. In other words, the line of command is almost certainly no longer as tight as it was during the pre-Helsinki MoU struggle. It can also be argued that the democratization of Aceh's politics has led to the loosening of GAM's command line after the Helsinki MoU, as well as the strengthening of customary institutions and the tendency to contest democratic institutions.

3. The trap of power politics

The fading of ideology and the loosening of command lines did not necessarily make GAM lose influence in Acehnese society. GAM symbolically still shows its existence in the form of organizations (Aceh Transitional Committee/Komite Peralihan Aceh [KPA], Aceh Wali Nanggroe Institution, political parties [Aceh Party, Aceh National Party]), Wali Nanggore, heads of government (governors, mayors, and regents), members of DPRD/Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (provincial, district, and city), and GAM's birth anniversary ceremony on 4 December. This symbolic presence not only shows identity but is also a tool for former GAM members to fight for the implementation of the articles agreed in the Helsinki MoU. However, as stated by Tengku Nasrudin bin Ahmad, a former GAM negotiator during the 2003 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), ten years after the Helsinki MoU, former GAM elites who succeeded in occupying government positions were caught up in power politics (aceh.tribunnews.com). Nasrudin's statement was proven during the 2017 Aceh governor election, which was attended by six pairs of candidates. Four gubernatorial candidates were former GAM elites, namely Zakaria Saman (former Minister of Defense), Zaini Abdullah (former Minister of Health and Minister of Foreign Affairs; former Governor of Aceh for the period 2012–2017), Muzakir Manaf (former Commander of the Aceh Nanggore Army/TNA), and Irwandi Yusuf (former GAM negotiator and former Governor of Aceh for the period 2007–2012).

During the 2019 Aceh legislative elections, Partai Aceh, the main political arm of GAM after the Helsinki MoU, was only able to win eighteen out of a total of eighty-one seats in the Aceh Provincial Legislative Assembly (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat

Aceh/DPRA). Although still in the majority, the Aceh Party's seat tally was significantly lower than in the 2014 (29 out of 81 seats) and 2009 (33 out of 69 seats) elections. Meanwhile, there was an increasing trend of national parties gaining seats in the DPRA, such as Gerindra, PKS, Demokrat and PKB. Nasdem is the only national party that has decreased its seat acquisition. In total, Aceh's four local parties comprised of former GAM members (Partai Aceh, SIRA, Partai Daerah Aceh, and Partai Nanggroe Aceh) were only able to gain 28 out of 81 seats in the DPRA. As of the writing of this article, there is no research that discusses the factors that caused the decline in the seats of Partai Aceh as the political motor of GAM after the Helsinki MoU and the simultaneous increase in the seats of national parties in the DPRA.

Observing the trend of open competition between former GAM elites in local elections in Aceh, especially the 2017 gubernatorial election, and based on the results of the literature review in the previous section, we interviewed nine interviewees representing the viewpoints of the Lembawa Wali Nanggore bureaucracy, local Aceh media, members of the Aceh Provincial DPRD/DRPA, former Rector of UIN Ar Raniry, Rector of Unsyiah, academics, experts on Aceh's culture and history, and former national NGO activists. The questions we asked were about the patterns of local leadership in Aceh that emerged and can be observed after the Helsinki MoU, when GAM transformed from a military movement into a political movement. The answers representing the views of the interviewees will be presented thematically with the aim of exploring and understanding the modes of organizing political realm of society in Acehnese society.

Almost all interviewees unanimously stated that the GAM split that had begun since the 2006 Aceh governor election had caused the popularity of local parties that were generally managed by former GAM combatants and most of the GAM elite to decline. One of the anomalies found was the increase in popularity and the re-election of Irwandi Yusuf as Governor of Aceh for the 2017–2022 period. Irwandi turned out to be one of the GAM elites who was respected and liked by the people of Aceh due to his success in leading the Aceh Monitoring Mission/AMM (2005–2006) and as Governor of Aceh for the period 2007–2012. Irwandi created the Aceh Health Insurance/JKA program when he was Governor.

> "…, the public has also seen the results of his (Irwandi's) work in 2006 and 2007–2012. At that time there was JKA, for example, free medical treatment, which is now adopted nationally as BPJS. It was originally implemented in Aceh, sir. People seeking treatment only need to bring their family card and ID card, then they can enter the hospital. Now you have to photocopy the family card and all kinds of other letters. That's why Acehnese people are a bit disappointed with BPJS, why is it not the same as JKA. While JKA is much more perfect, as well as for the medical staff, the benefits obtained by medical personnel are much greater from JKA compared to BPJS." (Asrizal, Member of DPRA).

With the JKA program, Irwandi managed to gain the support of the Acehnese people when he won the 2017 Aceh governor election with the support of the Nanggore Aceh Party, which he founded with several former GAM combatants in 2012 under the name Aceh National Party.

The GAM elite split, as illustrated by the gubernatorial and legislative elections, cannot be identified as a single cause. Despite the split, GAM's struggle to transform

into a political party and the struggle for the executive leadership remains a symbol of resistance.

> "*In 2006, the first regional elections were held. Because Aceh had just finished the conflict, the pattern of selecting prospective leaders had a symbol of struggle, a symbol of resistance…, Not even half of the total DPRA seats, sir, not even half because 34 less than one, 34 out of 69 finally they are in power again in parliament. Maybe they don't know what it has to do with the executive and legislative (divisions), even though at that time we thought that both of them were symbols of resistance, both of them were from GAM.*" (Asrizal, Member of DPRA).

The GAM elite split was not only caused by the struggle for political power, as stated by Tengku Nasrudin bin Ahmad above, but also by the absence of facilitation and assistance in organizational and governance from the central government after the Helsinki MoU.

The absence of facilitation and mentoring has had a significant impact on the lack of organizational vision of Acehnese leaders from among former GAM combatants. The result that emerged and became a symptom in Aceh was the struggle for the seats of executive and legislative leaders to fulfill certain personal or group interests. While the senior generation of GAM prefers to enter as customary leaders in the Wali Nanggore institution, although its performance is still barren because it has not been well connected with modern institutions.

> "*The leader must be a role model. Now it seems that it tends to be pragmatic. If those who are chosen are those who can, I said earlier that they can, only the pragmatic ones. So not the ideal. Not choosing those who should be honest.*"

> "*So that's just pragmatic not ideal anymore. When this happens, some of these good institutions, which should be able to mobilize human quality, become neglected. Try, for example, the Wali Nangroe Institution. It is wide (scope of authority), so far it has not functioned, but the people are great, the institution is great, the socialization has been done, the budget is there. What are the benefits? Just one example, not to mention others. This assembly, that assembly, are not working optimally." (Yusni Sabi, Aceh culture expert, former Rector of UIN Ar-Raniry).*"

The split in the GAM elite did not simply make former GAM combatants lose symbolic ties. Specifically, the symbol of resistance in question is the efforts made by former GAM combatants through political channels to demand the realization and implementation of the points of the Helsinki MoU agreement.

> "*But if this resistance problem can still be ignited, it can still be provoked. Still, sir, because there are still many things agreed in the Helsinki MoU that have not been fulfilled by the central government.*" (Asrizal, DRPA Member).

> "*As I have said, we only demand that all the points of the Helsinki MoU be implemented for Aceh. This demand is constitutional and binding on the parties between GAM and the Government of Indonesia. . . Yes, maybe not a referendum anymore, but total independence, maybe. Aceh is asking for independence, out of the Republic of Indonesia. If the MoU is not heeded.*" (Muzakir Manaf, Chairman of the Aceh Transitional Committee, quoted from www.modusaceh.co).

"We ask the central government to be serious in completing the points of the MoU agreement, only a few points of the Helsinki MoU have been fully realized including the formation of local parties, while other peace promises have not been realized, if not immediately realized it can have an impact on Aceh's current peace." (M. Jhoni, Spokesperson for the Aceh Transitional Committee/Party Aceh Pase Region, quoted from www.rri.co.id).

The symbolic bond of resistance of former GAM combatants against the central government using the unrealized instruments of the Helsinki MoU still does not make them solid in a resistance movement. This resistance movement became weaker when the aspirations of former GAM combatants were largely accommodated by the entry of national parties in Aceh and recruiting former GAM as functionaries or leaders. Especially for the older generation of GAM who already feel established in the WNA traditional institution as leaders.

4. Leading without a concept and transactional politics between ex-GAM and religious leaders

The politics of power, the lack of governance assistance from the central government, the individual pragmatism of new GAM elite leaders, and the openness of political opportunities for leadership candidates have resulted in a new pattern of leadership in Aceh after the Helsinki MoU. As a preliminary study, this article identifies the new pattern of leadership in Aceh after the conflict as the management of organizations, executive and legislative, without structural and functional references. Structurally, the leadership in Aceh appears to be simply carrying out the model that has been established according to state rules and laws and subsumed by the 2006 Law on Governing Aceh. The result of this incorporation and implementation of existing rules is seen in the conditions described in the previous sections, namely the tendency for GAM elites to struggle for power over official positions provided by law. Functionally, the official institutions, whether executive, legislative or auxiliary, were unable to coordinate their institutional functions. The most obvious evidence is the lack of role of the Wali Nanggroe Institution in overseeing the role of the executive in the development process, including its role in managing the institutions under it, namely the Gampong.

Structural and functional references were definitively in place for the people of Aceh, represented by GAM, as stated in the Helsinki MoU on "Governance in Aceh" and later explicitly stated in the 2006 LoGA. GAM as the representative of the Acehnese people-based part of its choice on its collective-historical memory by choosing the mode of organizing society of the sultanate period, namely the reinstallation of the Gampong institution as the smallest administrative unit in the Acehnese government system. As identified by the interviewee:

"That's why after this conflict there were changes related to adat and changes in the structure of government. There is wali nangroe, there is sharia court, and there is adat assembly. There is no connecting. There is no big umbrella. Wali Nangroe is not mentioned administratively in charge of what. In the qanun there is none, in the structure there is none, so there is no coordination. Wali Nanggroe

sometimes just sits. There are many problems and people also ask, what is the role of the Wali.

So, a leader knows the ideal shape of the institution that must exist but realizing it does not have imagination [Sic! concept], what will be the logical consequences. What is the role, how is the connection, how is the budget. That's not there, sir.

That's why if we sort out the Acehnese on the one hand have a strong historical memory, sir, from time to time. So, the position of Wali Nanggroe was revived as the highest representation of GAM post-MoU Helsinki. However, in the future there is no imagination [Sic! concept], sir. Whether the organization formed is appropriate, then later what functions, what consequences. The small parts supporting the system are not thought of." (Otto Syamsudin).

The absence of the institutional concept as a reference to the ideal shape of modes of organizing the society has also had an impact on the social life of Acehnese society. The people have fully become the owners of the votes that candidates must compete for during elections. As a society with a strong Islamic character, candidates usually use religious narratives to get closer to the voting public and utilize religious scholars to convince the public to vote for one candidate.

"*Political morality is applied to religion in various dimensions of life, so that religious morality is applied to politics or doing business. This has been reversed. Political morality or political manners have been applied religiously but through politics, and so on. This condition is also happening in Aceh. These are politicians. Some politicians take advantage of this. Politicians don't look for right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, but where the majority is, that's where the politician goes.*" (Yusni Sabi, Aceh culture expert, former Rector of UIN Ar-Raniry).

The majority of Acehnese voters are clustered in groups led by charismatic and influential clerics. In a patrimonial society where the ulama are the most trusted figures, these ulama are informally more powerful than government leaders and politicians.

"*So who is the most powerful? The figures who control these religious symbols, these appear as rulers. But the real rulers, the rulers of the people, are the ulama. The center of power is pesantrens, boarding schools, which are led by scholars.*" (Samsul Kahar, Editor-in-Chief of Serambi).

"*There is no more sacred here. There are only a few sacred hands, a few kyai who have followers. The others are no longer sacred actually, they have become commodities, cursing in the name of religion. Calling others misguided in the name of religion. Even when religion, if the mosque becomes a symbol of quarrel, when prayer becomes a source of quarrel, what else is sacred? Only politics is sacred today. That is, in my best understanding.*" (Yusni Sabi, Aceh culture expert, former Rector of UIN Ar-Raniry).

A further consequence of elite divisions, the absence of ideal institutions governing society, and the commodification of religion and clerics, is the formation of a fragmented society. The society is driven by pragmatic and material factors that in the short term can solve life's problems. This can be reflected in Aceh's position as the province with the highest poverty rate on the island of Sumatra and sixth in Indonesia

in 2019 according to the Aceh Central Bureau of Statistics report (www.bps.aceh.go.id). This data shows the poor management of development in Aceh for fourteen years after the Helsinki MoU. Another statistic from the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) lists Aceh as one of the most corrupt provinces in Indonesia (www.mediaindonesia.com).

The phenomenon of corruption in post-conflict areas has been studied by Billon (2008). He mentioned that corruption can occur due to the unequal distribution of state assets or resources in post-conflict areas. The 2008 World Bank report 'Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update 2008' confirmed this by showing a slight increase in the number of corruption-related conflicts in Aceh during 2008. Other studies also point to concerns about the continuance of corruption in Aceh after the conflict as a result of political elite power struggles over resources (Safaruddin et al., 2024; Yahya et al., 2018). However, the findings of these studies cannot confirm how corruption is actually perceived by the people of Aceh given that this phenomenon is an elitist behavior involving some former GAM combatants and will make the public reluctant to respond to it.

This study is significant in advancing the understanding of post-conflict governance and social organization by examining Aceh through the lens of neo-institutionalism and complex social organization. Empirical findings reveal a new pattern of leadership in Aceh, characterized by the management of organizations, both executive and legislative, without clear structural and functional references. Structurally, leadership in Aceh adheres to models established by state rules and the 2006 Law on Governing Aceh. This incorporation has led to power struggles among GAM elites over official positions defined by law. Functionally, institutional coordination has been weak, exemplified by the Wali Nanggroe Institution's failure to oversee executive roles in development or manage subordinate institutions like the Gampong. Furthermore, the absence of a cohesive institutional concept to guide the ideal modes of societal organization has negatively impacted Acehnese social life. However, a key limitation of the study lies in the inability to fully access information from a broader range of ex-combatants of GAM and members of the general populace, which may have restricted the depth and representativeness of the findings. Despite this, the study offers critical insights into the challenges of institutional adaptation and governance in post-conflict settings.

5. Conclusion

Research on fragmented society identifies at least three factors that cause fragmentation within a society: industrialization (Durkheim), inequity within the institutions, the state, civil society, and the household (Narayan), and interpersonal relations (Orbell, Zeng, and Murford) (Wee, 2002). These three factors may not appear predominantly in the case of post-conflict Aceh, making it difficult for researchers to understand the social, political, historical, and cultural phenomena that emerged and persisted after the Helsinki MoU. Jackson and Scott (2007) provide an illustration to understand the phenomenon of local governance in post-conflict societies. According to them, in post-conflict societies, the pattern of community regulation is characterized by the weakness of formal institutions and the strong role of informal institutions

(Jackson and Scoot, 2007). Technocratic intervention models with a political economy approach may find it difficult to solve the problem of social fragmentation in post-conflict societies because the resolution of this intervention model will favor de facto power holders rather than de jure power holders. Meanwhile, the series of facts that have been exposed in the previous section show the complexity of the problem of social fragmentation in Aceh even though the leadership factor as one of the causes of fragmentation is very easy to identify.

This article finds that GAM elite divisions and conflicts after the conflict over official government positions occurred due to the absence of imagination of modes of organizing society that were able to connect structurally and functionally formal and informal institutions. The absence of structural connections is illustrated by the absence of hierarchical demarcation between formal government leaders represented by the Governor and informal leaders represented by Wali Nanggore. Both leaders are supported by an official administrative bureaucracy funded by the APBN and APBD. At the functional level, there is no connection between formal and informal institutions in exercising authority and power, whether executive, consultative or legislative. This can be clearly seen in the Wali Nanggore Institution, which has made almost no functional contribution to the management of Aceh's governance and development since the signing of the Helsinki MoU.

This article concludes that GAM leaders and negotiators tend to maintain identity politics as a resistance movement against the central government. This can be observed constitutionally, institutionally and symbolically. Within the constitutional framework, GAM fights for its autonomy rights through the articles of the Helsinki MoU and is partially implemented in the Law on the Governing of Aceh number 11 of 2006/UUPA. Institutionally, identity politics can be seen in the establishment of the Aceh Transitional Committee, the Aceh Party, and the Wali Nanggore Institution. Institutionally, GAM elites attempted to institutionalize identity politics through the UUPA and made the Gampong institution a symbolic institution. Gampong is a customary law institution, an administrative unit that has geographical physical boundaries, and a social organization that regulates patterns of relationships in Acehnese society that was formally revived as a mode of organizing Acehnese society after the conflict. The choice of Gampong as Aceh's mode of organizing society indicates that it is a variable that distinguishes Aceh from Indonesia's administrative, legal, political and social systems in general. Formal democracy is at odds with local customary systems, such as in the management of Acehnese social cohesion in the post-Helsinki MoU development.

This article recognizes the limitations of conducting research. We found two limitations: (1) access to research informants who were difficult to reach for interviews, (2) the size of the research area made it difficult for researchers to conduct field observations of community life in the Gampong setting. Based on our research, this article suggests further research to test whether GAM's esprit de corps factor is still strong enough to withstand the outbreak of physical conflict between GAM elite supporters who compete for formal and informal positions. In other words, whether GAM still has a solid line of command to organize the movement and struggle of its members in various political vehicles after the conflict ends.

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