FROM REBEL MOVEMENT TO POLITICAL PARTY:
STUDY ON THE POST-CONFLICT DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION OF
THE FREE ACEH MOVEMENT

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by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMM	Aceh Monitoring Mission
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BRA	Badan Rekonstruksi Aceh
BRR	Bureau for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction
CoHA	Cessation of Hostility Agreement
COSA	Commission for Security Arrangement
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DI/TII	Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia
DOM	Daerah Operasi Militer
DPR	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat
DPRA	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Aceh
EU	European Union
FMLN	Farabundo Mari National Liberation Front
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOI	Government of Indonesia
GOLKAR	Golongan Karya
HDC	Henry Dunant Center
HRC	Human Right Court
IAIN	Institute Agama Islam Negeri
ICG	International Crisis Groups
IDP	Internal Displace People

IOM	International Organization on Migration
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MUNA	Majelis Ulama Nanggroe Aceh
MUSRENBANG	Musyawarah Rencana Pembangunan
KDP	Kecamatan Development Program
KIP	Komite Independen Pemilu
KPA	Komite Peralihan Aceh
KPO-PA	Komite Persiapan Organisasi-Partai Aceh
KSPI	Konfederasi Serikat Pekerja Indonesia
LOGA	Law on Governing of Aceh
OPM	Organisasi Papua Merdeka
PA	Partai Aceh
PAAS	Partai Aceh Aman Sejahtera
PAN	Partai Amanah Nasional
PBA	Partai Bersatu Aceh
PD	Partai Demokrat
PDA	Partai Daulah Aceh
PNA	Partai Nasional Aceh
PNU	Partai Nahtadhul Umah
PPP	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan
PRA	Partai Rakyat Aceh
PSTI	Persatuan Serikat Pekerja Transportasi Indonesia
PSPN	Partai Serikat Persada Nusantara
PUSA	Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh

RIS	Republik Indonesia Serikat
SIRA	Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TNA	Tentara Negara Aceh
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
WNA	Wali Nanggroe Aceh
ZILS	Zona Industry Lhoksemauwe

DARI GERAKAN PEMBERONTAK KE PARTI POLITIK:

KAJIAN TRANSFORMASI DEMOKRATIK PASCA-KONFLIK

GERAKAN ACEH MERDEKA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengkaji peranan yang boleh dimainkan oleh parti politik untuk mentransformasikan konflik dan membina perdamaian di kawasan pasca-konflik. Dengan melihat kepada kes transformasi politik oleh Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) kepada parti-parti politik tempatan, kajian ini melihat keupayaan pendekatan transformasi politik untuk menyelesaikan konflik jenis penentuan nasib sendiri serta pembinaan perdamaian yang berkekalan. Kajian ini memberikan fokus yang utama kepada objektif-objektif berikut: (1) untuk menyelidiki perhubungan antara demokratisasi dan transformasi politik satu pemberontakan kepada parti-parti politik; (2) untuk menentukan sejauh manakah keterlibatan bekas anggota GAM dalam membina institusi politik terutamanya parti-parti politik tempatan; (3) untuk mengkaji pembentukan parti-parti politik tempatan di Aceh dan peranan yang dimainkan untuk mengangkat peranan demokratik dalam usaha mentransformasikan konflik dan menyumbang kepada perdamaian yang mapan dan demokrasi yang stabil; (4) untuk mengkaji proses pembinaan demokrasi agonistik di Aceh, sebagai satu landasan institusional untuk melestarikan transformasi politik dan pembinaan demokrasi di Aceh. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah wawancara mendalam dengan pemain-pemain politik tempatan dan juga analisis wacana dengan melakukan analisis artikulasi politik, wacana politik, pembentukan identiti politik, dan gerakan demokrasi yang melibatkan anggota GAM dalam era demokratisasi baru di Aceh. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa transformasi

politik kelompok pemberontak kepada parti-parti politik merupakan faktor kunci keberhasilan transformasi konflik di Aceh. Sementara penglibatan anggota GAM dalam pemulihan sosio-ekonomi telah memberikan jalan bagi berlangsungnya transformasi politik secara pragmatis, keterlibatan mereka dalam pembentukan parti politik tempatan dan memberikan landasan institusional transformasi politik. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa keterlibatan kelompok pemberontak dalam pembentukan parti-parti politik tempatan itu sendiri tidak cukup untuk mentransformasikan politik di Aceh, tetapi ini memerlukan sokongan aktif dari parti-parti politik tempatan untuk menyuarakan dan mewakili permintaan demokratik di kalangan rakyat Aceh dan mempraktikkan demokrasi agonistik di arena pembuatan dasar-dasar awam.

FROM REBEL MOVEMENT TO POLITICAL PARTY:

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THE FREE ACEH MOVEMENT

ABSTRACT

This study examines the roles that can be played by a political party to transform conflict and build peace in a post-conflict region. It specifically focuses on the political transformation facilitated by a peace agreement to end the conflict. By looking at the case of the political transformation of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) into local political parties, this study sees the viability of the political transformation approach to resolve self-determination conflict and build sustainable peace and a stable democracy. This study especially focuses on the following objectives: (1) to investigate the linkages between democratization and the political transformation of a rebellion into local political parties; (2) to determine the extent of participation of former GAM members in building   political institutions and especially local political parties; (3) to study the formation of local political parties in Aceh and the roles that they have played to carry out democratic tasks to transform the conflict and contributing to a sustainable peace and a stable democracy; (4) to study the process of building an agonistic democracy in Aceh, which can be seen as an institutional basis for sustaining the political transformation and building democracy in Aceh. This study uses the method of in-depth interview with the local political players to gather data and information. It also uses the discourse analysis approach to analyze political articulations, political identity formation, and democratic movements that have involved former GAM members in the new era of democratization in Aceh. The study finds that the political transformation of the rebel group into local

political parties is the key factor for the success of conflict transformation and peace building in Aceh. While the participation of former GAM members in socio-economic recovery programs provides a pragmatic basis of political transformation, their participation in the building of local political parties provides an institutional basis for political transformation. The study finally concludes that the engagement of the former GAM into local political parties itself is not enough to transform politics in Aceh, but it should be supported by reactivation of the local political parties in articulating and representing democratic demands of the Acehnese people and practicing agonistic democracy in the arena of public policy making.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis studies the transformation of a rebellion movement into a political party in a specific context of post-conflict society which is undergoing political transition toward democracy. The case of the transformation of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) to be local political parties in Aceh is used here as a case study. In this case, the viability of the political transformation scenario, as one aspect of the Helsinki Peace Agreement in 2005, and which was translated as the transformation of the rebellion movement to be a democratic political party to resolve the self-determination conflict in Aceh will be carefully examined. As will be elaborated below, this study argues that for GAM which had a long history and experience involved in a protracted civil war, it would not be easy to transform themselves to be a democratic political party as the war experiences in the past might continue to influence their political transformation in the post-conflict peacebuilding process. Moreover, there are also many obstacles in terms of organizational capacity and political institutionalization that might be encountered by GAM as they enter into a new phase playing a new role as a democratic political party. There are prospects for the political transformation of GAM contributing to democratization in Aceh, but only if the local political parties representing the former GAM could properly do their duties as democratic political subjects within the scenario

of a democratic Aceh. The following research background presents the reasons behind this study followed by the literature review, research questions, research objectives, research design and method, key concepts and chapter outlines of the study.

1.1. Background

Aceh used to be one of the major conflict 'hot spot' areas in Indonesia. But then, the political transition toward democracy at the national level which has also affected the Aceh region, combined with the extraordinary devastating impacts of the Tsunami disaster that hit Aceh in December, 2004, followed by the peace negotiation in Helsinki which culminated in the signing of the MOU in August, 2005, have brought the Aceh region from war to peace.

The Aceh conflict in the modern period began since 1976 when members of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), led by Teuku Hasan Di Tiro, declared the independence of Aceh from the Republic of Indonesia. This self-determination conflict basically originates from the rise of ethno-nationalist sentiment as a consequence of the centralist approach of the Indonesian government's policies on Aceh that created socio-economic injustices for decades in Aceh[1]. In response to the independence movement, however, the Indonesian government under the authoritarian regime of the New Order government launched military operations in Aceh. The greatest military mobilization was undertaken

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[1] Tengku Hasan Di Tiro, *Perkara dan Alasan Perdjuangan Angkatan Atjeh Sumatra Merdeka*, speech to the Scandinavian Associaton of Southeast Asian Social Studies, Goterborg: Sweden, August, 23, 1985; Tim Kell, *The Roots of Aceh Rebellion*, 1989-1992, Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesian Project, 1995.

during the period of what was called the 'Military Operation Area for Aceh' (*Daerah Operasi Militer/*DOM-Aceh) for ten years from 1988 until 1998 that resulted in devastating impacts on human lives and causing social-economic destruction and political instability in Aceh society[2].

The conflict continued to take place even though the New Order government collapsed in 1998 and was replaced by the new democratic transition government. In this period, the conflict not only involved armed rebel groups, but also brought together groups of civilians who were looking for a democratic solution and better prospect for the Aceh society[3]. However, the situation in Aceh has not changed much during this early period of political reform. The demand for specific treatment of the past human rights violations, referendum, and also in part for Aceh independence, have proliferated in scope and intensity. In coping with the escalated conflict situation, the new democratic transitory government's policies seemed mostly vague. On the one hand, the government still carried out recurrent military operations, while at the same time seeking out a peaceful route of political negotiation.

It was since the collapse of the New Order government, and when democratic reform has taken place, that Aceh attracted broader public attention, not only from the national public but also in unprecedented degree from the international community. Possibility for taking up peaceful solution has become more likely, particularly because of the growing political demands from the various civil society groups in Aceh that

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[2] Human Rights Watch, 'Indonesia: Evidence of War Crime in Aceh', Bangkok: HRW, November 24, 1999.
[3] Michele Ann Miller, *Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia, Jakarta's Security and Autonomy Policy in Aceh*, London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

mostly revolved around the urgency of democratic and peaceful solution for the enduring conflict. Though the central government went on enacting more stringent security measures in Aceh, a peaceful route was opened up, especially since President Gus Dur's administration, by appointing an international third party to mediate the conflict and facilitate peace negotiation[4].

Negotiations between the Indonesian government and GAM was held for the first time in May 1999 in Geneva facilitated by the Henry Dunant Center (HDC). This ended with an agreement on Humanitarian Pause and based on this agreement both parties to the conflict agreed and were committed to end the armed conflict by focusing more on humanitarian problems[5]. Though it was bound by commitment to humanitarian values, the Geneva Peace Agreement, however, has remained not so binding in practice. The Humanitarian Pause did not work effectively because of its apparent limitations in concrete implementation of the agreement. Moreover, during the period when the peace agreement came into effect, there occurred many violations of the agreement like violent intimidation, mysterious killings and even many cases of armed confrontations between the Indonesian military and the GAM's armed faction[6].

Facing these human rights and peace agreement violations, the peace process and the HDC that functioned as facilitator seemed too weak to prevent and overcome the violations and recurrent violence. As a consequence, the peace process kept declining

[4] Lambang Trijono, 'Determinasi Diri Aceh, Mencari Solusi Demokratis', dalam Lambang Trijono, *Pembangunan sebagai Perdamaian, Rekonstruksi Indonesian Pasca-Konflik*, Yogyakarta: YOI and Padii, 2007.
[5] Kompas Cyber Media, 24 November, 2002.
[6] Otto Syamsudin Ishak, 'Between War and Peace', *Inside Indonesia*, April-June, 2000.

from day to day, with regard to its limited capacity in endorsing the peace agreement, particularly in dealing with hard-liners and spoilers from both parties[7]. Meanwhile, during that time the position of Gus Dur as president in Jakarta seemed increasingly unstable as the president was coping with a lot of pressures from his political opponents in parliament[8]. Confronted with these pressures, President Gus Dur then issued a Presidential Decree whose contents resulted in policies that mainly offered more opportunities for the hard-liners in Jakarta to take on military measures[9].

While the peace process was overtaken by a military approach at that moment, the government of President Megawati that replaced Gus Dur attempted to continue the negotiation. Formal negotiation between the Indonesian government and GAM was held in December 2002 resulting in the second peace agreement which was officially called CoHA (Cessation of Hostility Agreement). However, the problem of spoilers remained in place, and continued to haunt the peace process. This became more urgent when the CoHA seemed difficult to be implemented. The situation then grew worse and finally drove President Megawati to issue a Presidential Decree on Martial Law for Aceh that impeded the peace process and closed off the route to a more promising peace agreement[10].

It was something completely beyond expectation that the Tsunami disaster hit Aceh in December 2004, destroying Banda Aceh city and many more towns on the west

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[7] Edward Aspinall and Harold Crouch, *The Aceh Peace Process: Why it Failed?* Policy Studies, Washington: East-West Center, 2003.
[8] ICG, 'Aceh: Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace', *ICG Asia Report*, June, 12, 2001.
[9] Afridal Darmi, "Di Balik Kulit Politik Hukum Jakarta terhadap Aceh, Analisis Sosiologis Yuridis Inpres No. 4 tahun 2001 dan Kaitannya dengan Pembentukan Kodam Iskandar Muda", Jakarta: NGO HAM-Aceh in collaboration with CSPS, 2001.
[10] Aspinall and Crouch, *op.cit.* 2003.

coast of the Aceh province, resulting in more or less 120,000 deaths. Unexpectedly, the Tsunami disaster brought a significant change in the relationship between the central government of Indonesia and the Aceh people. The newly elected President Susilo Bambang Yudoyono and Vice-President Jusuf Kalla then initiated a series of meetings with GAM leaders which resulted in peace negotiation between the parties that was successfully conducted in Helsinki from January to August 2005[11]. In the peace negotiation, both the Indonesian government and the GAM succeeded in achieving a peace agreement called the Helsinki Peace Agreement which then proved to bring crucial impacts on social and political changes for peace.

The points of the Helsinki Peace Agreement, especially in regard to the issues of self-government, building local democracy, transformation of rebellion to local political party, autonomy in managing economic resources, recognition of an Acehnese identity, specific handling and treatment of violence-related practice and human rights violations and reconciliation[12], are somehow incredibly surprising. It can be said that the peace agreement represents a fundamental breakthrough in the historical course of the political relationship between the Indonesian central government and the Aceh people, as it covers points addressing the main problems which have so far become the core problems and root causes of the Aceh conflict.

This agreement must be implemented on the ground, but as usual, the post-agreement period is always laden with potential problems and obstacles. It was

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[11] Aspinall, Edward, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh?* Washington: Policy Studies. East-West Centre, 2005.

[12] Martii Ahtasaari, H. Awaudin, and M. Mahmud, "Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government of Indonesia and The Free Aceh Movement", Helsinki: August 15, 2005.

agreed that all points of the Helsinki Peace Agreement must come into effect and is to be seen as a joint commitment for peace between the conflicting parties. As such it needs to be sustained by establishing democratic political institutions to support and to realize the peace agreement. After the Helsinki Peace Agreement, Aceh then enters into a post-conflict phase and began to deal with specific problems related to that phase such as post-conflict recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Among the many problems that have to be dealt with, the greatest challenge for the Aceh's post-conflict society is how to put the Helsinki MOU into effect through the continued process of democratic political institutionalization. Even though the Helsinki Peace Agreement at the initial stage has de-escalated the conflict, it does not suffice to promote a long term peace. To be effective, it requires the proper working of democratic political institutions that guarantee the channeling of articulated demands of the people from various levels of the Aceh society. How to build democratic political institutions in line with the Helsinki Peace Agreement would be the most challenging part of Aceh's post-conflict peacebuilding. This does not need to be interpreted solely as a change in the form of government, but rather as a fundamental change in power relationships between the Indonesian central government and the Aceh region and its people.

1.2. Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted and also many books and articles have been published during the post-conflict period to observe the implementation of the Helsinki

MOU and to foresee the future of post-conflict peacebuilding in Aceh. These cover various issues ranging from the security sector reform to social-economic recovery, transitional justice, democratization, and political development.

In his article on *Managing Peace in Aceh*, Rizal Sukma evaluated the implementation of the Helsinki MOU by presenting an optimistic view about the future of the Aceh's peace process[13]. One important issue underlined by him was the successful DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) and SSR (security sector reform) programs. According to him, the successful DDR has significantly contributed to the reduction of violence across the Aceh region and has further advanced the progress toward peace. However, he also made a critical point that there are many challenges to sustain the security improvement and peace progress. The absence of a democratic mechanism of conflict settlement is the most challenging part. This creates a specific dilemma to move forward toward sustainable peace. Unfortunately, after the security has improved and the rebels laid down their arms, this was not immediately followed by the establishment of a democratic mechanism for dispute settlement resulting in security measures and the use of violence as the preferred way to resolve conflicts.

The positive evaluation regarding the security improvement was also highlighted by other researchers. In her article on *Re-Paving the Road in Aceh*, Christine Beeck

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[13] Rizal Sukma, "Managing Peace in Aceh: The Challenge of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding", Banda Aceh: the First ICIOS Organized by ARI and the BRR-Aceh, February 24-27, 2007.

pointed out that the security sector reform in Aceh has contributed much to peace progress[14]. She elaborated that, in accordance with the Helsinki MOU, GAM embarked upon four phases of disarmament, handing in over 840 weapons to the AMM (Aceh Monitoring Mission). In parallel, a total of 25,890 non-organic Indonesian military and 5,791 non-organic police were pulled out of the Aceh region.

Meanwhile, after the handing over of the weapons, GAM ex-combatants returned to their homes and families. Some have engaged in social-economic recovery and political activities initiated and promoted by the peace process. However, Beeck also noted that the reintegration of ex-combatants was not going smoothly on the ground. As the MOU only sets out very vague provisions for reintegration, details regarding reintegration mechanism and questions on beneficiaries had to be resolved on the ground which often caused many confusions and delays in the delivery of reintegration assistance. This resulted in increasing levels of frustration among the former combatants who fulfilled their commitments toward the Helsinki MOU but felt that they have not received very much in return.

This finding about the feeling of dissent among the people toward the implementation of the peace process was also confirmed by the other researchers in the areas of social-economic recovery. In its special report on *Issues Facing the Peace Process in Aceh*, the IOM (International Organization on Migration) revealed that the timely provision of reintegration and rehabilitation assistance are critical to the continuation of peace process. The report pointed out that the problem of peace

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[14] Christine Beeck, Brief 35, *Re-Paving the Road to Peace: Analysis of Implmentation of DD&R in Aceh Province, Indonesia*. Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC)., 2006.

vulnerability remains to be a serious obstacle for community stabilization and reintegration. By using a meta-analysis approach to identify the wedges of peace vulnerability, IOM found that there were still existing conflict-carrying capacity groups of the vulnerable people in Aceh who were left behind by the reintegration policies. This lack of a proper handling of the social and economic recovery and reintegration programs, if it were not reduced substantially, would easily instigate the emergence of new conflicts in the prone to conflict region[15].

Similarly, the early warning sign of the less successful impacts of social-economic recovery and reintegration programs to promote the peace process was also given by other researchers. In their report on *Assessment of the Impacts of Bureau of Rehabilitation for Aceh and Kecamatan Development Programme (BRA-KDP)*, Patrick Barron et.al. (2000) show that despite effectively assisting the conflict victims across the Aceh region and reaching out to marginalized groups in many villages, the BRA-KDP was still limited in targeting the conflict victims that can be expected to support the peace process[16].

A similar finding in this respect was also found by other researchers. In their report on *the Multi-Stakeholders Review of Post Conflict Programmes in Aceh*, the UNDP and the World Bank presented an early warning sign that the welfare policy deficits will create social tensions if the creation of new jobs and social welfare that are supposed to be provided by the policies did not match with the needs of dislocated

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[15] IOM, *Meta Analysis, Vulnerability, Stability, Displacement and Reintegration, Issues Facing the Peace Process in Aceh*. Jakarta: IOM Research report for Indonesia, 2008.
[16] Patrick Barron et.al., *Community-Based Reintegration in Aceh: Assessing the Impacts of BRA-KDP,* Jakarta: Indonesian Social Development Paper, No. 12, the World Bank, 2000.

conflict victims left behind by the policy process with many international development and donor agencies leaving Aceh when the post-tsunami recovery projects ended[17].

The little chance available to cope with the social-economic recovery, that to some extent created a feeling of injustice among the people during the transition period, made many people in Aceh began to feel uncertain about the future of peace. This will obviously be seen if there was a lack of decisive policies to deal with the social and economic injustices and, if this was not resolved properly, it can create political instability in Aceh. As is shown by assessment done by the monitoring body for the Aceh's reconstruction, mass protests emerged against unjust social-economic recovery and reintegration policies and created social tensions and violent conflicts during the recovery and reconstruction phases[18].

This social-economic injustice issue, and the subsequent social-political protest and unrest that emerged, became more serious as there was also another issue of a lack of transitional justice which continued to intensify the discontents among the people. In his critical report on *Peace Without Justice?* Aspinall revealed that the Aceh peace process right now goes somehow like 'runaway without justice'[19]. According to him, the aspects of human rights and justice, especially when it comes to deal with the past human rights abuses, has been one of the least successful aspects of the implementation of the Helsinki MOU. Failing to deal with these human right violation in the past, and

[17] UNDP and the World Bank, *Multi-Stakeholder Review of Post-Conflict Programme in Aceh*, Jakarta: UNDP-Bappenas, December, 2009.
[18] Aceh Monitoring Update, Banda Aceh: 1-3 November, 2006.
[19] Edward Aspinall, "Peace Without Justice? The Helsinki Peace Process in Aceh". Center for Humanitarian Dialoque (HD) Report, 2007.

the failure to establish the HRC (human rights court) and the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission), according to him, will result in the persistence of grievances which will cause many Acehnese to view every error or failing of the central government policy in the long term as having a potential to reignite violent conflict.

Similarly, there are also early warning signs given by other researchers in regard to the failure of transitional justice. In their article on *Aceh Peace Process from a Transitional Justice Perspective*, Ross Clarke et.al underlined the urgency to deal with transitional justice issues in Aceh. They argued that, despite considerable progress in security condition and violence reduction, rising political tension between and among various actors have illuminated the need to evaluate post-conflict peacebuilding efforts from transitional justice perspective[20]. Analyzing the current peacebuilding efforts alongside the victim perspectives, they found that the growing discontent among the people highlights significant gaps in transitional justice. According to them, the current reintegration process in Aceh bears too much of the burden. The programs focused too much on short-term economic assistance, and not addressing more pertinent long-term needs. As a result, there will be increasing tension among the people. In regard to this, acknowledging the truth about what happened in the past, therefore, is a necessary precondition for the successful recovery, reintegration and institutional reforms, as they will restore the community's trust in governing post-conflict institutions.

From the research findings in the fields of security reform, socio-economic recovery and transitional justice outlined above, it can be said that the successful

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[20] Rose Clarke et.al., "Considering Victims: The Aceh Peace Process from a Transitional Justice Perspective". New York: International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), 2008.

progress in security sector reform is not immediately followed by the improvement in socio-economic recovery and transitional justice programs. To resolve this paradoxical peace process, many researchers argue, as outlined from the discussion above, that the improvement of democratization and public policy would be the key solution to resolve the discontinuity of the peace progress.

But, the story in the field of political development seems to tell us a different notion. Many studies in the field revealed that the implementation of the Helsinki MOU in the area of democratization and public policy has so far not done much for Aceh. In the book *From Rebellion to Peacebuilders*, Dudouet et.al. argued that the principle of 'nothing is agreed until everything is agreed' introduced by Martii Ahtiasaari during the Helsinki peace negotiation has been successful to reach a comprehensive peace agreement. Several advantages can be obtained by the Aceh people from having such a comprehensive peace agreement. In terms of political development, it addressed the Indonesian state's security concerns as well as the GAM's grievances by introducing extensive power devolution measures[21].

Moreover, the drafting of a new law for Aceh, the Law on Governing Aceh/LOGA, has helped to initiate the political transformation. In addition, the GAM's transformation into a cohesive political party, the Aceh Party, also met with outstanding political achievements, including taking the majority of the seats in the local legislature in the 2009 local election. However, though it was politically very promising for

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[21] Veronique Dudouet et.al., *From Combatants to Peacebuilders. A Case for Inclusive, Participatory and Holistic Security Transitions*. Policy Report, Berghof: Berghof Foundation., 2012.

democracy to develop, the effective transformation of rebels into political leaders remains a crucial test, as high popular expectations for better public policy and delivery and political change often clash with a low level of experience of the new leaders in running local government and administration.

Similarly, in their article on *From Politics to Arms to Politics Again,* Aguswandi and Wolfram Zunher also pointed out that there are many obstacles for GAM to transform itself to be a new democratic political leader. According to them, the fate of the future of GAM will depend not only on GAM's capacity to organize themselves politically as a democratic political party, and especially to deal with the need to unify the internal divisions among its political factions, to respect the political differences and bargaining skill with national political parties, but also will be much influenced by outside factors, such as the availability of political changes and democratic solutions mainly offered by the Indonesian central government[22].

In this respect, similar conclusions were also underlined by other researchers who studied the internal logic of GAM's political organization as a liberation movement. In their report on *The Political Transformation of GAM*, Nurhasim et. al. argued that the role of GAM would be still very significant as a political and social movement during the post-Helsinki MOU period. GAM as a political movement still exists, though there are some modifications to their organization. However, they also noted that the impact of the political transformation was very limited among the GAM leaders and members.

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[22] Aguswandi and Wolfram Zunher, "From Politics to Arms To Politics Again: The Transition of The Gerakan Acheh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement-GAM)", Based on Contributions from Tgk. Nashruddin Ahmad and Dolly. Berghof: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2008.

It is clearly seen, for instance, in the political splits among the GAM leaders, especially between the conservative and progressive factions during local election and in responding to the current political development in Aceh[23].

This internal division among the GAM leaders can be an obstacle to the peace progress and can reduce the capacity of the GAM to transform itself to be a democratic political party. In the article on *GAM vs GAM in the Aceh Election,* the International Crisis Group (ICG) found that competition between GAM leaders to be prevalent during local political elections[24]. Similarly, in her article on *The Political Exclusion to Inclusion,* Sindre also underlined that the political divisions among the GAM leaders, especially between the reformers and the militant groups, and between the old and the young leaders in responding to the current political development in Aceh, has reduced the capacity of GAM to politically transform itself to be a democratic political movement[25].

One crucial point that can be underlined from the research findings in the field of democratization and political transformation above is that the building of democracy compatible with peace building would be the key factor for the success of the Aceh's post-conflict political transformation. However, many research findings have also shown that the democratization process taking place in Aceh during the last decade seems still far from ideally developing into a democratic post-conflict peace building process.

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[23] Nurhasim, Moch (2008), *Transformasi Politik Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM).* Laporan Penelitian, Jakarta: LIPI, 2008.
[24] ICG, "Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace*", ICG Asia Report*, June, 12, 2010.
[25] G.M. Sindre, "The Political Exclusion to Inclusion: the Political Transformation of GAM", in O. Tornquist et.al (ed.), *The Role of Democracy for Peace and Reconstruction*, Yogyakarta: PCD, 2010.

In their report on *Aceh's Post-Conflict Elections and Their Implications,* for instance, Clark and Palmer found that despite being in general peacefully run, the 2006 local election at district level was also marked by political intimidation and violence[26]. This research finding was also confirmed by other researchers. In his report on *Local Leadership and the Aceh Conflict*, MacGibbon found that the old style of personal and patrimonial rules remains a major characteristic of the local leadership in Aceh society, even though, it has entered into a new era of democracy[27]. This was also noted by Aspinall in his article *From Combatants to Contractors,* that instead of being peacebuilders, most ex-combatants prefers to become contractors of development projects after the civil war[28]. The similar finding was also found by Prasetyo and Aditjondro, in the *Profitable Peace*, that the political elites both in Aceh and Jakarta are more likely to look for their own economic benefits than to improve social welfare and well-being of the conflict victims and the majority of the Aceh people[29].

Seen from the broader perspective of political transformation, the study done by Tornquist provided substantial finding about the current democratic crisis in Aceh. Investigating whether the democratization process is in line with the Helsinki Peace Agreement scenario, Tornquist in his book *The Role of Democracy for Peacebuilding and Reconstruction in Aceh* showed that the democratic transformation in Aceh now has been reduced into a narrow power sharing and political compromises among elites. He

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[26] S. Clark and B. Palmer, "Peaceful Pilkada, Dubious Democracy, Aceh's Post-Conflict Elections and their Implications", Jakarta: The World Bank, 2008.
[27] Robert Mac Gibbon, "Local Leadership and the Aceh Conflit", in A. Reid (ed.), *Verandah of Violence; the Background to the Aceh Problem*, Singapore, 2006.
[28] Edward Aspinall, "Combatants to Contractors: the Political Economy of the Peace in Aceh, SEAP, Indonesia, 87, 2009.
[29] S.A. Prasetyo and G.J. Aditjondro, "Profitable Peace', in Olle Tornquist et.al (ed.), *the Role of Democracy for Peace and Reconstruction*, Yogyakarta: PCD, 2001.

argued that the recent tendency in the democratization process of moving away from democratic transformation to a power sharing among dominant power holders both in Aceh and in Jakarta was the most critical problem of the Aceh political transformation. Moreover, according to him, the return of power sharing to the forefront is not only not in accordance with the basic agreement reached in Helsinki to promote political equality and give a fair chance for all to participate with the local party, but it will also seriously create exclusion impacts on popular support for democratization[30].

Despite its development at the objective level of society as elaborated above, the development of democratic politics at the subjective level of political party development is also very crucial to promote the political transformation of the former rebel group into democratic political parties. This is especially important in the case of Aceh. However, in his research on *Local Political Parties in Aceh, Engine of Democratization in Indonesia*, Murizal Hamzah shows that the development of local political parties, especially the Aceh Party as the representative body of the former GAM in the democracy period, is very slow, even if from the very beginning its development has been highly underlined by the Helsinki MOU[31].

The Helsinki MOU scenario itself is very unique especially in its political aspect to transform the rebellion movement into a democratic political party. This kind of peace agreement is very rare in the world of peace negotiation. Comparatively, as recorded by

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[30] Olle Tornquist, "Introduction and Conclusion: From Liberal and Social-Democratic Peace to Indonesian Normalization", in O. Tornquist et.al (ed.), *the Role of Democracy for Peace and Reconstruction*, Yogyakarta: PCD, 2010.
[31] Murizal Hamzah, "Local Political Parties in Aceh: Engines of Democratization in Indonesia", in O. Tornquist et.al (ed.), *the Role of Democracy for Peace and Reconstruction*, Yogyakarta: PCD, 2010.

Anna K. Jarstad in her *Power Sharing: Former enemies in Joint Government*, many conflict settlements of civil war in post-conflict conflict regions mostly took in the form of power sharing than through political transformation[32]. But, there was also a case where the peace building process has taken the form of political transformation from rebellion to be a political party. In his study on *Political Party Development in Post-War Societies,* for instance, Jeroen de Zeeuw shows this to be the case in peacebuilding in El Salvador. The peace agreement reached between the El-Savadorian government and the Farabundo Mari National Liberation Front (FMLN) to the same extent has taken a form of a political transformation from rebellion to a political party[33].

In comparison to the other cases of post-settlement peace building in many countries, such as in Angola, Bosnia, and Guatemala, the political transformation in El-Salvador seems to be success story of post-settlement peace building. However, to create a self-sustaining peace process, political transformation itself is not enough. It should be accompanied by economic and security reforms. As underlined by Chris van der Borgh in his article in *Triple Transition and Governance in El-Salvador[34],* the triple transition of political democratization, economic reform and changing security regime are complementary to each other in fostering social transformation from war to peaceful and stable democracy.

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[32] Anna K. Jarstad, "Power Sharing: Former Enemies in Joint Government", in in Anna K. Jarstad and Timothy D. Sisk (ed.), *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 2008.

[33] Jeroen de Zeeuw, "Political Party Development in Post-War Societies: The Institutionalization of Parties and Party Systems in El Salvador and Cambodia". University of Warwick, Department of Politics and International Studies, February, 2009.

[34] Crish van der Borg, "Triple Transition and Good Governance in El-Salvador', in Jolle Demmers et.al., *Good Governance in the Era of Global Neo-Liberalism, Conflict and Depolitization in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa*, New York: Routledge, 2004.

1.3. Problem statement

As has been elaborated in the literature review above, although the roles of political party in resolving and transforming a self-determination conflict is very strategic, the issue of political party development in post-conflict society is almost neglected by many researchers. This is not only in the Aceh case but also in other post-conflict regions. As informed by de Zeeuw, most researchers in the field of post-conflict peace building tend to undermine the role of political party development in building peace and, on the contrary, highlight the danger of political party development and competition, particularly in societies with deep ethnic-religious division[35].

Moreover, many researchers also argue that, instead of supporting political party development, or democratization, what is needed first and foremost in developing post-war society, and developed countries in general, is the development of a strong state that can provide security, to ensure the rule of law and deliver basic social-economic services[36]. This liberal peace notion has been widely accepted among the international development agencies, so that makes them tend to keep a distance from political party promotion, and keep democratic assistance away from political parties, and steered it toward the direction of civil society instead[37].

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[35] Jeroen de Zeeuw, *op. cit.,* 2009.
[36] Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Sander, "Democratization and the Danger of War"., *International Society*, Vol. 20, No.1. 1995.
[37] Julie Hearn and Mark Robinson, "Civil Society and Democracy Assistance in Africa", in Peter Bunell (ed.), *Democracy Assistance, International Co-Operation for Democratization,* London: Frank Class, 2000.

Opposing this unrealistic view, this study argues that political party development has a strategic role to transform conflict and promote peace building in post-conflict society especially which is undergoing political transition toward democracy. By using the case of local political party development and political transformation of GAM to local political parties in Aceh, this study examines the viability of the political transformation strategy to resolve self-determination conflict and build stable democracy and peace in Aceh. In doing this, this study will carefully examine the root causes of conflict and the viability of political party development and strategy of political transformation to transform conflict and build a peaceful and stable democracy in the post-conflict region.

As mentioned above, the root cause of the Aceh conflict can be traced from the political disputes between the Aceh leaders and the Indonesian central government regarding the issue of how to manage Aceh. Moreover, the conflict was also driven by the GAM to free Aceh and its people from perceived social-economic injustices created by the centralist Indonesian New Order government's policies on Aceh[38]. In responding to the political conflict, a comprehensive peace agreement has been achieved by the Helsinki Peace Agreement in 2005 that can be expected to resolve and transform the conflict and build democracy in Aceh[39].

Taking into consideration these conflict and peace factors to transform conflict and building peace, the study examines whether the strategy of conflict transformation effectively addresses the root causes of conflict and prospectively build sustainable

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[38] Tengku Hasan Tiro, *op. cit.*, 1985; Tim Kell, *op.cit.*, 1995.
[39] Martii Ahtasaari, et.al., *op.cit.*, 2005.

peace and stable democracy in Aceh. The study argues that political party development can be expected to transform self-determination conflict and build sustainable peace if it was supported by democratic political conditions either at the subjective level of local political party development or the objective level of the building of democratic society in Aceh. Based on this assumption, the study will focus more on the linkages, or nexus, between the local political party development and conflict transformation in Aceh.

As informed by the literature review above, the development of local political parties in Aceh was much influenced by the internal political dynamics and divisions among the GAM. Moreover, there were also external factors that weakened its development, including coming from the intervention of the central government that makes Aceh's local political parties less-developed and much dependent on national political parties.

Following the liberal and plural democracy perspective, the formation of political party to be a democratic political party can be seen in its capacity to articulate and represent democratic demands of the society and to formulate popular democratic demand, or general will of the people[40]. Moreover, the liberal and plural democracy perspective also argues that political conflict would unlikely take place if there was a transformation from antagonistic, or conflicting power relation, to agonistic politics, or peaceful co-existence of power relations among the political parties[41]. To follow this perspective, the study will examine the formation of local political parties in Aceh, how they were formed in a democratic process, and the transformation of power relations

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[40] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reasons*, London: Verso, 2007.
[41] Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, London: Verso, 2005.

from antagonistic to agonistic relations. To what extent this process has been going on in Aceh will be the main focus of the study.

1.4. Research questions

As discussed above, the settlement of the Aceh conflict takes the form of political transformation of the GAM's rebellion movement to local political parties. This type of conflict settlement is very rare in the world of peace building. Different from the conflict settlement in many places that mainly take the form of power sharing[42], the self-determination conflict in Aceh was ended by deliberate peace negotiation between the conflicting parties to build local democracy[43].

In this kind of conflict transformation, the development of local political party and its effectiveness to deal with the past conflict and to build the future of peace and stable democracy will determine the success of political transformation. However, as informed by many studies, the development of local political parties in Aceh has been very slow and less developed. This is mainly caused by the internal political divisions within GAM and political intervention of the central government and the dependency of local parties on national political parties.

Taking into consideration these factors that have influenced the development of local political parties in Aceh, the study will examine the political transformation of

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[42] Anna K. Jarstad, *op.cit.*, 2008.
[43] Martii Ahtasaari, *op.cit.*, 2005.

GAM to a local political party by focusing on two main problems. First, the formation of local political parties to be a democratic political party by examining to what extent they have been able to articulate and represent democratic demands that came out from the development of a new democracy in Aceh. Second, the political transformation of Aceh from an antagonistic to an agonistic power relations under the working of democratic society.

Based on these two main focuses, the study specifically addresses the following research questions:

(1) Is there a democratization process taking place in Aceh and has this brought about political transformation to the region?

(2) What is the extent of involvement of GAM's leaders and members in the building of local political parties in Aceh?

(3) Are democratic demands being articulated by Aceh local political parties?

(4) Is there a strategy to resolve internal political divisions within the GAM leadership and unifying them under an Aceh local party?

(5) Are there interventions by the central Indonesian government and national political parties on the development of the Aceh local political parties?

(6) Is there co-operation between the Aceh local political parties and national political parties?

(7) Is there competition among the Aceh local parties and between them and national parties in building an agonistic democratic politics in Aceh?

1.5. Research objectives

This study is mainly aimed to contribute to the theoretical and practical development in regard to the political transformation and democracy building in Aceh. Specifically, the study is expected to achieve the following research objectives:

(1) To investigate if the democratization process is going on in Aceh and to what extent this has brought about political transformation to Aceh;

(2) To determine the involvement of GAM leaders and members in establishing and building local political parties in Aceh;

(3) To determine if Aceh local political parties have played a role in articulating and representing democratic demands of the Aceh society;

(4) To identify the political strategies (if any) developed by the Aceh local political parties to resolve internal political divisions within the GAM and to unify them under a local political party;

(5) To determine if there has been any intervention by the central Indonesian government and national political parties on the development of local political parties in Aceh;

(6) To study the extent of co-operation between the Aceh local political parties and the national political parties;

(7) To identify if there is any competition among the Aceh local political parties as well as between the Aceh local political parties and the national political parties in building an agonistic democratic politics in Aceh.