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Asymmetric Decentralization in Aceh: Institutionalization of Conflict of Interest by Elites of GAM

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menjelaskan tentang pelembagaan konflik melalui pelaksanaan otonomi khusus di Provinsi Aceh. Secara umum, salah satu tujuan implementasi kebijakan desentralisasi asimetris di Aceh adalah sebagai langkah penyelesaian masalah integrasi nasional antara Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) dengan Pemerintah RI. Namun, pelaksanaan desentralisasi asimetris di Provinsi Aceh justru menunjukkan hal yang berbeda. Meskipun terdapat resolusi konflik di antara pihak GAM dan Pemerintah RI, dinamika konflik bersenjata di Aceh berubah menjadi konflik kepentingan antara elite GAM di tingkat lokal sebagai bagian dari dinamika politik elektoral. Artikel ini disusun melalui studi literatur yang mengacu pada data sekunder untuk memahami proses politik elektoral sebagai saluran pelembagaan konflik pasca gerakan separatisme di Aceh. Artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa pemaknaan desentralisasi asimetris di Provinsi Aceh tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai resolusi konflik antara GAM dan Pemerintah RI. Di sisi lain, pelaksanaan otonomi khusus di Provinsi Aceh juga menjadi media pelembagaan konflik di antara elite eksponen GAM melalui pilkada (pemilihan kepala daerah) langsung pada tahun 2006–2017.

Kata kunci: konflik, elite, GAM, otonomi khusus, pilkada.

ABSTRACT

This article explains an institutionalization of conflicts in the implementation of special autonomy in Aceh Province. In general, one of the objectives of implementing the asymmetric decentralization policy is to resolve the problem of national integration between Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Government of Indonesia. However, the implementation of asymmetric decentralization in Aceh Province presents a different phenomenon. Although there is conflict resolution between GAM and the Government of Indonesia, the conflict dynamics change into a conflict of interest between GAM elites at the local level as part of the dynamics of electoral politics. This article is based on a literature study on secondary data to understand the electoral politics process has evolved to be a medium for institutionalizing conflict after the separatism movement in Aceh. This article shows that the understanding of asymmetric decentralization in Aceh Province not only served as a solution to the conflict between GAM and the Indonesian Government but also became a medium for institutionalizing conflict between GAM's elite exponents through local elections in 2006–2017.

Keywords: conflict, elite, GAM, special autonomy, local election

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INTRODUCTION

The special autonomy policy for Aceh Province does not guarantee that the governance process in Aceh will be free of conflicts at the local level¹. At the national level, one of the conflicts in the mid-1970s in Aceh is the rise of GAM as a separatist movement bringing the issue of national integration in Indonesia. Reflecting on the long history of Aceh, the existence of GAM is part of accumulation of Acehnese frustration toward the way of Central Government managing the natural resource since Orde Lama and Orde Baru (Aspinall 2007, 951). However, after decades of armed conflict, the two parties agreed to end the feud by signing the Helsinki Agreement, dating back to August 15, 2005. The agreement has ended the issue of national integration in Aceh, at least on paper.

The peace agreement is a proof that the issue of conflict in Aceh cannot be resolved through a military approach. Rather, the problem of national integration can be overcome through the democratization agenda, which refers to a control of the Acehnese civil elite to achieve peace (Hillman 2012, 149; Jemadu 2004, 315). One way to gain control over the Acehnese civil elites is the implementation of special autonomy through Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh. Through this legal instrument, several forms of special autonomy have been granted, including political, administrative, and fiscal rights². In other words, Aceh's Regional Government has extensive authority to independently solve many issues of the Acehnese people within the framework of Indonesian nation state.

However, despite the peace process that ends conflict and the special autonomy rights, elites in Aceh Province still deal with conflict among GAM exponents who have influence within society. After the Helsinki

1 Implementation of special autonomy policy in Aceh was given by the Government of Indonesia as a solution to finish the problem of national integration since the existence of separatist movement demanding independence in Aceh.

2 Aceh's special autonomy based on Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning Aceh Government has provided a space for Aceh to have special rights including 1) the establishment of local political parties (political fields); 2) has the authority in several sectors such as fisheries, maritime affairs, trade, and investment (administrative sector); and 3) 70% of profit sharing in oil and gas mining and special autonomy funds.

Agreement, the dynamics of the conflict changed from an armed vertical conflict between GAM and the Government of Indonesia—with the aim of secession—to a weaponless horizontal conflict among fellow GAM exponents through regional elections (*pilkada*) in Aceh. The horizontal conflict in this case was interpreted as a competition between GAM elite exponents, two of whom were the Governor and Deputy Governor, positions of Aceh Province to secure a place in the structural governance. Joining forces with local political parties, GAM exponents in Aceh played a significant role in the electoral politic process from 2006 to 2017. Some of the political processes included the gubernatorial elections in 2006, 2012, and 2017. In other words, these conditions indicated that there was a transition of the role of GAM exponents who were initially in favor of separatist movements against the RI (Republic of Indonesia) government into a conflict of interest between internal elite exponents through democratic institutions.

Local political parties in Aceh provided a path for local elites to gain power in Aceh Province. In this case, GAM exponents such as Irwandi Yusuf, Muzakir Manaf, Zaini Abdullah, and Muhammad Nazar tried to realize the dreams of GAM without forming a separatist movement. Because of limited access to power resources after the armed conflict, GAM exponents were actively involved in various democratization agendas at the local level, particularly asymmetric decentralization policies in Aceh Province. In other words, the special autonomy policy in Aceh has become a medium for GAM exponents to fight for structural political positions in Aceh Province.

The asymmetric decentralization policy in Aceh can be seen as an initial step in overcoming the problem of national integration between GAM and the RI. Nevertheless, conflict at the local level in Aceh cannot be resolved solely through the implementation of Law Number 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh. In this regard, the implementation of special autonomy only acts as a medium of national integration to eliminate primordialist conflicts (Noor 2008, 98).

Previous studies have identified three approaches that highlighted a change in the dynamics of governance in Aceh after the implementa-

tion of the Helsinki Agreement. The first one is that the institutionalization of democracy at the local level between the central and regional actors was unbalanced, taking effect on the national integration process (Ufen 2007; Barter 2011; Törnquist 2011; Hillman 2012). Second, the implementation of democratization at the local level, which was not widespread in Aceh, was believed to be a result of the actors who were unable to adjust in asymmetric decentralization institutions, causing the implementation of privileges under the Helsinki Agreement to negatively impact Aceh (Kingsbury 2007; Basyar 2008; Zainal 2015). The third approach proposes that there were two factors to solve the conflicts in Aceh, namely, power and profit sharing earned from the utilization of natural resources and ethnic problems in Aceh (Hartzell & Hoddie 2003: Aspinall 2007, 2009; Wilson 2015).

However, previous studies have yet to explain in detail the choices of GAM elite exponents in fighting for the interests of post-armed conflict. This applies especially with regard to the choices of GAM elite exponents who can be eliminated in the electoral politic process, which certainly no longer employs the separatist approach as the way to reach their goals. On the other hand, even though special autonomy is granted as a means to overcome national integration problems, it also leads to uncertainty and competition among GAM elites when the mechanisms available for the distribution of political resources are only available through the electoral process. Competition between GAM elites being the only possible mechanism has created a space for institutionalizing competition among themselves through regional elections in Aceh. In other words, the asymmetrical decentralization policy became a space for competition between GAM exponent elites to fight for structural positions in Aceh Province after the Helsinki Agreement. To understand these conditions, the author has a more elaborative question in this article: *Why and how has the special autonomy policy turned into a medium for institutionalizing conflicts of interest in the form of competition between GAM elites in Aceh?*

This article argues that conflict institutionalization in electoral politic occurs because of the role of GAM exponent elites who have chosen

the path of electoral politics as a means to achieve group interests that cannot be achieved through separatist movements. Democracy is not merely an institution of conflict, but the choice of GAM elites to surrender the political distribution of political resources through democratic mechanisms has made democracy itself an institution of conflict. GAM is no longer a single group when dealing with democracy, but it is divided into individuals who compete with each other. The change in orientation from political groups to individual politics is intriguing and calls for deeper discussion.

This article is based on literature studies using secondary data collected from various results of previous studies. This article consists of a discussion that explains the GAM elite exponents who became local elites in Aceh. It also tries to explain the role of GAM elites in the process of electoral politic between 2006 and 2017. The last section offers a discussion on local elections, which became a consensus among the elites of GAM exponents in Aceh.

THEORY REVIEW

This paper uses conflict theory as the main analytical tool for understanding the conflicts that occurred in Aceh Province after the implementation of special autonomy. This paper reviews conflict theories developed since Clifford Geertz and Lewis A. Cosser as analytical tools. Gertz's explanation on conflict is interesting to be used as a basis given the combination of primordial loyalty and political loyalty in a conflict between the political elites, which relates to the situation in Aceh. According to Gertz's belief, a nation that has a variety of races, tribes, and religions can become sources of conflict for new countries (Rauf 2000, 61). Among these diversities, every community has a tendency to gather around what is alike to them in the midst of diversity. In other words, society is seen as a group that is built on political loyalty and primordial loyalty in a country.

Geertz posited that political loyalty is relatively impermanent, but primordial loyalty is the nature of human beings that it is very strong and not easily shaken (Rauf 2000, 67). He assumes that there are three

important effects of combining political loyalty and primordial loyalty. First, the merging of the two loyalties results in a change in political loyalty (Rauf 2000, 68). Second, the combination causes both mixed political issues and primordial issues. Third, the incorporation of political demands and primordial demands results in the manipulation of primordial group support by political leaders for political interests (Rauf 2000, 69).

In Cosser's view, the conflict creates a clear boundary between groups. The boundary is identified as an identity with a group to then be kept and protected from being fused with the boundaries of the surrounding structures. In this case, Cosser considers that conflict is an instrumental process in the formation, unification, and maintenance of structures (Poloma 2007, 107). Cosser considers conflict as instrumental due to the formation of an identity that intersects with other identities. Instrumental is interpreted as a medium through which conflict forms and involving several parties. In this case, identity has the potential to produce an inter-group conflict (out-groups) that can strengthen the identity of group members (in-groups).

In addition to identity creation, Cosser believes that there is a mechanism that can channel the overflow of conflicts that occur between groups to eliminate the possibility of destruction of existing structures. In Cosser's belief the the overflow of conflict can be detected by the relations and identities of the groups existing to get the interesting in the competition between the groups. Cosser refers to the mechanism as safety value (Poloma 2007, 108). In this paper, safety value is considered an identity in the form of values that trigger competition among actors after the resolution of separatist movements in Aceh Province.

In this paper, the author interprets primordial loyalty and political loyalty as a trigger for competition among actors involved in the elections in Aceh Province. The competition between GAM exponents that ensued after the enactment of Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning Aceh Government becomes the corpus of this paper. In addition to the cultural approach, the author uses a structural approach to understand

the consensus process that results in conflict resolution among local elite groups in Aceh Province.

In addition to the theory of conflict and consensus, this article also uses Vilfredo Pareto's elite circulation theory analysis tool. In Pareto's view, there is an interpretation of derivation that explains the existence of elite turnover not only based on numbers but also based on the ability of the elites who are able to survive and reach a higher position (Pareto 1935, 1397–1420). In this case, Pareto mentions the concept of residue, which is interpreted as an emotional or irrational structure of human actions dominated by an illogical part of human actions (Permana 2017, 15). Residue is seen as the main factor of the behavior of actors not only as trying to achieve a higher position but also as attempting to maintain the power they have.

According to Pareto, there are two divisions of residue. The first one is a combination of actions based on the ability to produce innovation, speculative activity, and acts of skepticism (Permana 2017, 15). This combination enables actors to make social changes carried out by the elites or to become a resource for elites when executing actions. The second is an action that tends to be conservative and dominated by a desire to maintain the status quo. In this case, it relates to elite actions to maintain political stability, national interests, and military activities. In other words, Pareto believes that the elites who want to maintain their power must be able to do a combination of the two residues.

He also believes that politicians are inspired to always be winners through the desire to obtain wealth, power, and appreciation (Pareto 1935, 502). If the elites do not have the ability to regulate these matters, then they will be replaced by other elites. Therefore, Pareto then creates two categories of elites: Fox and Lion. For Pareto, the success of elites in managing power depends on the elite's ability to utilize influence and power among the Foxes and Lions. In this article, elite theory becomes an analytical tool to understand the behavior of GAM elites who seek to achieve individual interests through access to special autonomy.

RESEARCH METHODS

This article is based on a literature study of a collection of qualitative data including books, documents, online news, journals, and various written sources that are relevant to the problem of this research. This research only focuses on the conflict dynamics between GAM elite exponents who influenced institutions through the process of local elections as a form of elite circulations at the local level. The use of this approach aims to paint a specific picture of the dynamic competition between GAM elite exponents at the local level as a transitional form of the separatist movement conflict into competition in the regional elections in Aceh Province.

This study is focused on explaining the competition between GAM elite exponents in the Aceh Province, which occurred through a special autonomy policy, namely, the implementation of regional elections in Aceh. In addition, the special autonomy policy in Aceh is seen as a transitional phase from the armed conflict between GAM and the RI to competition among GAM elite exponents who interacted as political elites through regional elections in Aceh Province. In other words, this research is intended as a means to understand the dynamics of the electoral politics as a medium for institutionalizing conflict in Indonesia.

GAM EXPONENTS AS POLITICAL ELITES IN ACEH

GAM is a form of many separatist movements that were initiated in Aceh. Separatist movements in Aceh are inseparable from the historical experience of Aceh as an area rich in diverse natural resources. During the era of President Soekarno, Aceh played an important role in national integration. Soekarno called Aceh Indonesia's capital in the process of pioneering a unitary state amid a variety of primordialism spread throughout Indonesia (Pane 2001, 59–62).

Aceh as an area rich in natural resources, especially fossil gas, became a region over which elites in Aceh fought to gain independent control of all forms of wealth for the sake of the people of Aceh. According to Sulaiman, the people of Aceh are divided into two economic

groups, 1) traditional agriculture and 2) large plantations—exploitation of forests and hydrocarbons and industry (Schulte Nordholt and van Klinken 2007, 307). The majority of Acehnese are traditional farmers, whereas the ruling groups are contractors who partnered with the central government in the New Order era. The number of these contractors is in the thousands, and they are spread throughout the provincial and district levels (Schulte Nordholt and van Klinken 2007, 308). In other words, the middle class who had invested in the New Order era had at least contributed to creating an identity of capital control between local people and the group of contractors facilitated by the state in utilizing natural resources found in Aceh. The group of contractors as a middle class in Aceh had domination control to explore the natural resources. In my opinion, the control of natural resources by the contractors resulted in the identities on economic control between the elite of Aceh as local people giving the basis of movement to GAM and the political elites of Indonesian government.

In addition to the division of groups based on economic control, the political elites in Aceh comprised mostly clerics who controlled Aceh after the social revolution, which forced the Acehnese aristocrats to seek refuge in North Sumatra in the era of President Soekarno (Pane 2001, 3–5). The emergence of ulama groups as part of the political elite in Aceh was inseparable from the social revolution that occurred in post-independence Sumatra. According to Reid (1979) and Sulaiman (1997), the aristocrats who had power over land were attacked by popular militias led by Teungku Daud Beureuh in 1946 (Schulte Nordholt and van Klinken 2007, 307). The absence of aristocratic roles in Aceh was then taken over by a group of scholars whose religious identity was well rooted in the history of Aceh. This is an example of how Acehnese people, who are very Islamic, value ethnic and religious bonds. Up until now, a variety of elite groups founded in Aceh were inseparable from the bonds of primordialism, which have created a strong bond in safeguarding the interests of the people of Aceh.

In addition to primordial bonds, the Acehnese who felt marginalized because of policies set by the central government of the Old Order

and New Order regimes then supported separatist movements in Aceh. These movements emerged in various forms, eventually reaching their peak when GAM became a medium for long-lasting separatist movements in Indonesia (Sulaiman 1997, 219). The striking difference due to GAM's support of separatist movements in Aceh is that there are orientation observers who initially emphasized religious values to a more secular orientation. The secular orientation of GAM elite gives more medium for the elites of GAM to get attention from outsider to bring support of Aceh independent. According to Aspinall, there was a change in ideological orientation due to the openness of the new elites who led the Aceh separatist movement and strategically sought international support for Aceh's independence (Aspinall 2009b, 222).

The author identifies two bonds that are interwoven within Acehness society, namely, primordial bonds and political bonds. Both reflect the emergence of loyalty to the traditions found in Aceh, namely, Islam, and political loyalty to the local elite, namely, the GAM exponents. These two loyalties grew in the era of democratization, even though they had to deal with the problem of national integration. Before the Helsinki Agreement³, GAM always spoke about both of these loyalties in various separatist activities. However, after the Helsinki Agreement, the GAM elite exponents competed with one another for structural positions, namely, the Governor and Deputy Governor of Aceh Province. With the Helsinki Agreement and the implementation of special autonomy for Aceh, there are two sources of conflict that have been resolved: 1) primordialism-based conflicts, such as elites' idea of applying Islamic Shari'a, and 2) a new channel for the Aceh political elites to achieve their goals without the central government interfering in them. The two resolved sources of conflicts inspired GAM elite exponents to fight for their interests by local political parties to access power sharing in

³ The Helsinki agreement enables the establishment of local political parties in Aceh, and this condition provides a wide range of opportunities for GAM through legal rules in the democratic system. One of them was reflected in the regional head election held on December 11, 2006. However, GAM was said to have failed to mobilize its elites in one local party. It is said that 50% of GAM elites advanced as independent candidates at the district/city level (see Törnquist, Prasetyo and Birks 2010, 215).

local elections as a right of asymmetrical decentralization implementation in Aceh, without the separatist movement but in the way of local democratization in Aceh.

Conflicts that turned into competition among elites still sparked contestation because of the loyalty of GAM exponents in Aceh. As Gertz posits, loyalty in society is the forerunner of the existence of conflicts in the community, the GAM exponent maintains the identities of GAM as the people struggling the right of local people of Aceh. In the electoral political process of Aceh, the conflict reflected in the separatist movement became a competition between GAM elites. In other words, conflicts relating to the problem of national integration can be resolved through asymmetric decentralization policies, but conflicts of interest in the form of competition stemming from the loyalty of the political elite can continue in the implementation of special autonomy for Aceh.

This condition is exhibited in the dominant role of GAM exponents, who turned into political elites over the control of local political parties. Therefore, what Gertz calls a combination of political demands and primordial demands results in the manipulation of primordial groups' support by political leaders for their interests. In this case, the contestation process for regional head elections reflects the approach that GAM exponents use to manipulate the people to secure structural political positions in Aceh Province.

The implementation of special autonomy in Aceh provided a space for GAM elite exponents to manipulate primordial loyalty and political loyalty through local political parties that were very influential in Aceh⁴. This can be seen in the legislative elections in Aceh where Aceh Party was able to gain a vote of 46.93% at the provincial level, and in some districts, it could secure a majority of 70% votes (Barter 2011, 120–121). In this case, the primordial bonds that developed in the Acehnese society were institutionalized through local political parties. In addition, groups based on such bonds in Aceh did not occur after the

4 After the enactment of Law No. 11 of 2006, all governors elected from 2007 to 2018 were GAM exponents who had roles in Local Political Parties, some of which were Irwandi Yusuf (Governor of Aceh 2007–2012 and 2017–2018), Zaini Abdullah (Aceh Governor 2012–2017), and Muzakir Manaf (Deputy Governor of Aceh for the period 2012–2015).

Helsinki Agreement, due to the Law Number 11 of 2006 concerning Aceh’s government. Thus, the special autonomy policy implemented in Aceh can solve the problem of national integration originating from primordial bonds. On the other hand, the policy was able to provide a space for institutionalizing conflict in the form of competition among GAM elite exponents who contested regional elections to achieve their goals.

Conflicts of interest at the local level occurred after the Helsinki Agreement. GAM elite exponents who had strong influence within the community competed with each other to throne the Governor and Deputy Governor positions of Aceh Province in the 2006–2017 elections. This condition was seen with the election of Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammad Nazar as the Governor and Deputy Governor for the period of 2007–2012. The two elected leaders were figures of GAM exponents who held important positions when separatist movements in Aceh were still happening. Irwandi Yusuf was a special staff member of the GAM Army Central Command, coordinator of the GAM negotiator, and also chairman of the Nangroe Aceh Party Advisory Council, whereas Muhammad Nazar was the chairman of the Aceh Central Information Referendum Information Presidium and also Chair of the Independent Voice of Aceh Party (SIRA).

Table 1. GAM’s Figures as Political Elites in the Local Government of Aceh Province

No.	Name	Position in GAM	Position in the Local Government
1	Irwandi Yusuf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Staff of GAM Central Army Command • - Coordinator of GAM consultants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - Governor of Aceh 2007–2012 • - Governor of Aceh 2015–2018
2	Muhammad Nazar		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - Deputy Governor of Aceh 2007–2012
3	Zaini Abdullah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - Minister of Health • - GAM’s Minister of Foreign Affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - Governor of Aceh 2012–2017
4	Muzakir Manaf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - GAM’s commander 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - Deputy Governor of Aceh 2012–2017

Source: Taken and synthesized from various sources.

The success of GAM leaders in the 2006 local election illustrates that GAM had a role in maintaining peace after the Helsinki Agreement. In addition, GAM’s victory through the Aceh Party in the 2009

elections highlighted that GAM played an important role in the political dynamics in Aceh. Without the role of its actors, peace would have been difficult to achieve (Törnquist, Prasetyo and Birks 2010, 216). Within GAM itself, after the Helsinki Agreement, there were two factions fighting for power, namely, *Kelompok Pro-demokrasi* (Pro-democracy Group) and *Kelompok Muda* (Group of the Youth), who still wanted to go on with the separatist movements (Törnquist, Prasetyo and Birks, 246). However, the majority of GAM elites believed that winning meant being involved in parliament.

In the next election in 2012, Irwandi Yusuf lost to Zaini Abdullah and Muzakir Manaf, who were elected Governor and Deputy Governor of Aceh Province for the period of 2012–2017. Zaini Abdullah was a GAM official who served as the Minister of Health and Minister of Foreign Affairs of GAM, whereas Muzakir Manaf was a GAM Commander and Chair of the Aceh Transitional Command who also served as General Chair of the Aceh Party. The elite transition illustrates that there was competition even between GAM exponents in taking the positions of Governor and Deputy Governor of Aceh Province.

In the 2017 election, Irwandi Yusuf won the election again as the Governor of Aceh Province after defeating the other candidates, who were also fellow GAM exponents. In this case, the transfer of power was again controlled by GAM exponents through the political process of direct regional elections. Although there was a democratic leadership shift in the political process in Aceh, conflicts occurred within the community at the grassroots level. One trigger for the power struggle in the middle of GAM exponents is the influence of the shift of GAM elites' points of view in interpreting the struggle that GAM had endured as a separatist movement. One change that GAM executed was no longer prioritizing Islamic beliefs. Put more precisely, the struggle of GAM was a more secular struggle in terms of realizing justice for the people of Aceh through gaining independence to manage various resources in Aceh (Aspinall 2009b, 223) the secular struggle of GAM exponent presents new medium for accessing the support from Aceh people to win the regional election for governor candidates in Aceh.

On the other hand, the presence of GAM exponents as community leaders in Aceh was inseparable from the rise of old-rooted and marginalized primordialism in Aceh. This always brings the idea that Aceh must have independence in managing its vast resources. This situation provided space for GAM exponents to become local elites who had a major influence in Aceh, although there was a competition within the group. Nonetheless, due to the primordial encouragement and the experience of GAM leaders in the separatist movement—perceived as defending the interests of the Acehnese—special autonomy can be understood as GAM exponents in realizing the group's ideals. In other words, the exponents of GAM played a big role in strengthening primordialism bonds and loyalty to former leaders of the separatist movement in Aceh.

This paper considers that special autonomy for Aceh not only is able to overcome the problem of national integration, the conflict of relations between GAM, and the RI but also becomes a medium for the competition of local elites who are former GAM exponents. In this regard, the agenda of democratization at the local level, through regional head elections and the role of local political parties in Aceh, became the most important way to manage conflict. In this case, the special autonomy policy—local political parties can participate the local election in Aceh—was a determinant of the ongoing circulation of the GAM elite exponents after the Helsinki Agreement. Therefore, it is necessary to interpret the role of local political parties in the process of local democratization, which contains exponents of separatist movements that influence the dynamics of the implementation of special autonomy in Aceh.

LOCAL ELECTIONS IN 2006, 2012, & 2017

Local political parties in Aceh provided space for GAM elite members to be directly involved in fighting for primordial interests after the end of armed conflict between GAM and the Indonesian Government. One form of interest is the process of mastering the government structure by GAM exponents in independently managing the government in Aceh

Province. During the election of the Governor and Deputy Governor of Aceh Province, local political parties in Aceh became a tool for GAM exponents to gain power through the local election. This can be seen with the role of several local political parties in Aceh. Some of them have influence, namely, Aceh Party, SIRA Party, Nangroe Aceh Party, and Aceh Regional Party. In other words, local political parties in Aceh are a reflection of the channel through which GAM exponents gain power in Aceh.

The presence of local parties in Aceh is part of conflict institutionalization, according to the Helsinki Agreement. Local parties in Aceh did not exist as a form of Aceh's elite exponent unit sought to fight for independence for Aceh. In this case, GAM diaspora groups comprised senior elites with different views in managing post-conflict Aceh. According to Missbach (2011), the conflict in Aceh persisted because of the emergence of Acehnese diaspora that had long lived abroad in Aceh to continue the struggle for influence through different ways. This condition gave rise to differences of opinion between the senior elite (diaspora) and junior GAM (local elite groups in the area) in responding to the political dynamics after the conflict in Aceh.

Differences in factions among GAM elites show that an identity formed between the elites after the Helsinki Agreement. In this case, Cosser (in Poloma 2007) considers that every identity has the potential to generate potential inter-group conflicts (out-groups) that can strengthen the identity of group members (in-groups). The condition is seen in the group differences between senior elites and GAM's junior elites in response to political contestation in Aceh. This condition arose from the defeat of candidates proposed by the GAM diaspora by the GAM elite in Aceh, as is Missbach's view (2011):

For example, during the gubernatorial election in December 2006, the winners were not the two candidates, Humam Hamid and Hasbi Abdullah, who had been proposed and endorsed by the GAM leaders in Sweden. It was Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammad Nazar, two prominent young figures from GAM and SIRA, the organization that had been

pushing for a public referendum in Aceh, who won the ‘hearts and minds’ of the Acehnese electorate. (Missbach 2011, 190)

Table 2. Results of Aceh’s 2006 General Election of the Governor and Deputy Governor

No.	Candidates	Votes	Percentage	Political Party/Affiliation
1	Irwandi Yusuf–Muhammad Nazar	768,745	38.2%	Independent
2	Ahmad Humam Hamid–Hasbi Abdullah	334,484	16.6%	PPP
3	Malik Raden–Sayed Fuad Zakaria	281,174	13.9%	Golkar, PDIP, and small party coalition
4	Azwar Abubakar–Nasir Djamil	213,566	10.6%	PAN, PKS
5	Ghazali Abbas Adan–Shalahuddin Alfata	156,978	7.8%	Independent
6	Iskandar Hoesin–Saleh Manaf	111,553	5.5%	Small party coalition
7	Tamlicha Ali–Harmen Nuriqamar	8,327	3.9%	Small party coalition
8	Muhammad Djali Yusuf–Syauqas Rahmatillah	65,543	3.2%	Independent

Source: Mietzner 2007.

The victory of Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammad Nazar exposed the competition between GAM’s elite exponents in Aceh. The struggle for the top position in the governance structure in Aceh by GAM exponents gave birth to a different and stronger identity in the asymmetric decentralization policy in Aceh. This condition was inseparable from change undertaken by GAM elites in achieving GAM’s ideals. Post 1998, some groups chose to continue to support the separatist movement as a medium for achieving independence, but there were other fractions that wanted to use the pro-democracy movement as a channel to achieve the goals of GAM elites. In other words, the conflict of interest found in internal GAM became kindling for competition between GAM elites during local election in 2006. By the local election in 2006 the GAM exponents success became a lokal political elite as Governor of Aceh Province.

In the 2012 elections, competition between GAM exponents became increasingly apparent with the competing candidates for Governor and Deputy Governor positions coming from GAM elites. Both pairs represent the identity of the old and young groups in electoral politics in Aceh. The success of Zaini Abdullah and Muzakkir Manaf in the 2012 elections showed that there was support from the senior group, represented by Zaini Abdullah, and Muzakkir Manaf from the

junior group, who were both with the Aceh Party to strive for structural positions in the Aceh governance.

Table 3. Results of Aceh's 2012 General Election of the Governor and Deputy Governor

No.	Candidates	Votes	Percentage	Political Party/Affiliation
1	Ahmad Tajuddin–Teuku Suriansyah	79,330	3.33%	Independent
2	Irwandi Yusuf–Muhyan Yunan	694,515	29.18%	Independent
3	Darni M. Daud–Ahmad Fauzi	96,767	4.07%	Independent
4	Muhammad Nazar–Nova Iriansyah	182,079	7.65%	Demokrat Party, PPP, SIRA Party
5	Zaini Abdullah–Muzakir Manaf	1,327,695	55.75%	Aceh Party

Source: Taken and synthesized from KIP Aceh (2007)

The victory of the senior and junior groups of GAM exponents, Zaini Abdullah as a senior elite of GAM and Muzakir Manaf as a junior elite of GAM, was proof that GAM elites who had influence among the Acehnese people could yield significant voting power. The power relation established between GAM exponents and primordialists—religion and ethnicity—in Aceh was the main factor in the victory of GAM members as a form of cooperation between GAM exponents to compete with other GAM members through regional elections.

The 2017 regional election still showcased the contestation among GAM exponents through the electoral political agenda in Aceh. The victory of Irwandi Yusuf and Nova Iriansyah is proof that the elite circulation in Aceh Province revolved between GAM exponents through direct elections. Pareto (1935) argues that the success of elites in managing power depends on the ability of the elite to use influence and power among the elite group that is contained in a different identity, insider and the outsider of GAM exponent in the case of local election Aceh. The success of Irwandi Yusuf, as a GAM exponent who was able to defeat Muzakir Manaf, was an elite transition that could be achieved by exponents who were able to integrate with the GAM non-exponent group. In this case, Irwandi Yusuf represented the community groups outside GAM as well as parts of GAM itself.

Table 4. Results of Aceh's 2017 General Election of the Governor and Deputy Governor

No.	Candidates	Votes	Percentage	Political Party/Affiliation
1	Tarmizi A. Karim– T. Machsalmi Ali	406,865	16.9%	Golkar, Nasdem
2	Zakaria Saman–T. Alaidinsyah	132,981	5.5%	Independent
3	Abdullah Puteh–Sayed Mustafa Usab Al-Idroes	41,908	1.7%	Independent
4	Zaini Abdullah–Nasaruddin	167,910	6.9%	Independent
5	Muzakir Manaf–T. A. Khalid	766,427	31.8%	Aceh Party, PPP, Gerindra, PBB, PKS, PAN
6	Irwandi Yusuf–Nova Iriansyah	898,710	37.2%	Demokrat, PKB, PDIP, PNA, PDA

Source: Taken and synthesized from KIP Aceh (2007)

The success from Irwandi Yusuf's re-election continued, as GAM exponent maintained office throughout the three election periods, namely, 2006, 2012, and 2017. The victory of GAM exponents in Aceh in the electoral politic agenda as regional heads reflected that local elites with non-GAM backgrounds were still unable to represent Aceh. I argue that GAM exponent elites are elite local groups adjusting themselves through the identities of GAM struggling the right of Aceh people without separatist movement after the Helsinki Agreement to create a space to legitimize the interests of GAM elites that cannot be achieved before the peace treaty between GAM and the Government of Indonesia.

With GAM exponents claiming victory as Governor and Deputy Governor of Aceh, the central government greatly benefited because the conflict of interest was localized among GAM exponents due to there is no separatist movement after Helsinki Agreement. However, the conflict did not reflect which occurred before the Helsinki Agreement. The asymmetrical decentralization policy in Aceh provided room for institutionalization of the conflict by local democratization mechanisms involving GAM Elites as actors dominating the electoral politic process in Aceh. Therefore, the process of implementing electoral politic through the role of local political parties in Aceh became a perfect medium for institutionalizing conflict in the form of competition among GAM exponent elites, which continued to be reflected in the local elections in 2006, 2012, and 2017 at the provincial level.

LOCAL ELECTIONS AS CHANNEL TO CONSENSUS

During the conflict between GAM and RI in 1976–2005, it was estimated that 9,000 people were killed (Turner 2007, 96). This condition was further aggravated by the earthquake and tsunami that struck Aceh in 2004. There was no other choice for GAM and the RI than to sign a peace treaty to solve the problems in Aceh. In the hard times, the Helsinki Agreement came as a conflict resolution that was agreed by both parties, GAM and the RI. On the other hand, the treaty created an isolated space of conflict at the regional level, because the contestation was no longer between GAM and RI. Thus, the parties involved, after the Helsinki Agreement, were GAM exponents who had major influence within the Acehnese community.

The special autonomy policy applied in Aceh not only was given as a gift for Aceh's wealth as an area that has abundant resources but also emphasized a form of electoral politic implementation after the armed conflict between GAM and RI. This condition, as posited by Olle Törnquist, helped Aceh's democratization, which took place through institutional strengthening based on power sharing through the relation between group participation and representation in Aceh (Törnquist 2011, 823).

Before the Helsinki Agreement, the parties involved in the conflict were elites from the GAM and RI groups. After the signing of the treaty, the GAM exponents who tried to further their interests through the political process explained in Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Aceh Government became local elites involved in the conflict of interest to achieve political position in Government of Aceh Province. In other words, the presence of special autonomy in Aceh can be considered as contributing to the institutionalization of conflicts of interest through the electoral politics agenda after the Helsinki Agreement.

Rauf sees an election process as the basis for conflict and political consensus, as well as a way out of conflict that occurs between contestants who fight for political positions (Rauf 2000, 36). In connection with this view, the involvement of Aceh's local political parties is an extraordinary right for GAM's elites and the right presents a medium of

conflict of interest in the form of competition between the elite of the GAM exponents as a process to reach political consensus in Aceh. In other words, the competition and victory among elite GAM exponents in local elections was a transition from a separatist movement to a conflict of interest among internal elite exponents of separatist movements who believed in national integration⁵.

In addition, the change in the role of the GAM elite exponents as the Governor and Deputy Governor of Aceh revealed an elite circulation process that occurred within the GAM exponents' circle. In this case, elites show themselves as actors who play an important role in a structure. From Pareto's point of view, the elites in this case are considered Foxes, that is, elites who are able to balance power depending on how well they can utilize their influence and power among groups of actors.

In this case, GAM elite exponents experience a change in how they achieve their goals. GAM elites are proof that there are two changes in the orientation, namely, 1) a change in the conservative way of thinking and 2) a shift in how to achieve goals. The first change was reflected through an elite orientation that did not prioritize the idea of applying Islamic Shari'a, being secular, and also making adjustments to the political process of democracy that was carried out together regardless of faith. This condition is seen in GAM as an organization that uses Islam doctrine, the struggle of implementation of shari'a in Aceh, as a basic value in its struggle to achieve its interests. However, within the membership hierarchy, there is an opposing idea of the establishment of an Islamic state and the application of the Shari'a law (Kingsbury 2007, 165).

Second, the shift in how to achieve goals was practiced through the local elections. On the basis of this case, it can be said that GAM exponents Irwandi Yusuf, Zaini Abdullah, and Muzakir Manaf are elites regarded as Foxes. The author believes that elites, who tend to be

⁵ Lewis Coser believes that conflict has positive and negative functions. In this case, conflict and consensus in Rauf's view have similarities, which are to create positive functions—integration (see Dahrendorf 1994, 256).

regarded as Foxes, have the ability to adjust themselves more quickly, even in competitive conflicts, through the political process of democracy. This condition reinforces the view that the mechanism of regional head elections can be a medium for conflict resolution among elite exponents who fight their way for structural positions in Aceh Province. Thus, special autonomy applied in Aceh catered to the conflict between local elites. However, as most characters of the local elites in Aceh were perceived as Foxes, negotiations in resolving conflicts are possible. Therefore, special autonomy can be both a source of conflicts and consensus in Aceh.

CONCLUSIONS

Asymmetric decentralization in Aceh Province has been heralded with resolving conflict between GAM and the Government of Indonesia. On the other hand, the implementation of special autonomy has also created a new space that reflects the institutionalization of conflicts of interest among GAM's elite members in Aceh. In other words, GAM elite exponents have participated in the electoral democratization in Aceh Province without using any means of the separatist movement. GAM elite exponents involved in the struggle for power structures in Aceh Province have experienced adjustments in the mechanism of democracy. This adjustment can be seen through the orientation of GAM elites who abandoned conservative methods and separatism in achieving their goals.

Nonetheless, the competition among GAM elites has also proven the existence of political loyalties affecting the Acehnese people, which is different from the primordialism bonds that were much developing in the separatist movement era. The behavioral adjustment of GAM elite exponents provided room for an elite circulation, which stayed in effect among the elite GAM exponents during 2006–2017. On the other hand, the agenda of electoral politic in Aceh led to new competitions among the local political elite in Aceh. This condition is seen as an expansion of the role of local elites, GAM exponents, who have a broad influence in the community after the Helsinki Agreement. This

condition made GAM elite exponents choose the path of electoral democratization as a medium for competition. Therefore, electoral politics in the form of regional head elections in Aceh Province illustrates the institutionalization of conflict, which allowed old elites to adapt to the local democratic mechanism in Aceh.

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