SYMBOLIC POLITICS AND THE ACEHNESE ETHNIC WAR IN INDONESIA

TESIS

Diajukan sebagai salah satu syarat guna
memperoleh gelar Magister Ilmu Politik
pada Program Pascasarjana
Universitas Diponegoro

Oleh:
KHAIRU ROOJIQIEN SOBANDI
NIM. D4B006054

PROGRAM STUDI MAGISTER ILMU POLITIK
PROGRAM PASCA SARJANA
UNIVERSITAS DIPONEGORO SEMARANG
2009

Sertifikat

Yang bertanda tangan dibawah ini saya, Khairu Roojiqien Sobandi menyatakan bahwa tesis yang saya ajukan ini adalah hasil karya saya sendiri yang belum pernah disampaikan untuk mendapatkan gelar pada program Magister Ilmu Politik ini ataupun pada program lainnya. Karya ini adalah milik saya, karena itu pertanggungjawabannya sepenuhnya berada di pundak saya.

Khairu Roojiqien Sobandi
Januari 2009

PENGESAHAN TESIS

Yang bertanda tangan dibawah ini menyatakan bahwa tesis berjudul:

SYMBOLIC POLITICS AND THE ACEHNESE ETHNIC WAR IN INDONESIA

Yang disusun oleh Khairu roojiqien Sobandi, NIM D4B006054 telah dipertahankan di depan Dewan Penguji pada tanggal 23 Januari 2009 dan dinyatakan telah memenuhi syarat untuk diterima.

Ketua Penguji

Drs. Purwoko, MS

Sekretaris Penguji

Drs. Tricahyo Utomo, MA

Anggota Penguji Lain

1. Drs. Priyatno Harsasto, MA

2. Drs. Teguh Yuwono, M. Pol Admin

Semarang, 23 Januari 2009
Program Pascasarjana Universitas Diponegoro
Program Studi Magister Ilmu Politik
Ketua Program

Drs. Purwoko, MS

Acknowledgment and dedication

This thesis research has grown out around of nine months literature review of symbolic politics and the Acehnese ethnic war in Indonesia. It has been written in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the double degree program of Master of Arts (Political Science) in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Wyoming, United States of America (USA) and Diponegoro University, Indonesia. This research was funded as a part of my scholarship from The Indonesian government in cooperation with the Department of Political Science of University of Wyoming, USA.

I am deeply indebted to Professor Stephanie Anderson (chairperson), Prof. Maggi Murdock, and Prof. Gracie Lawson-Borders, my committees. They have thought me the importance of analytical rigor and critical thinking. They have been instrumental in helping to shape the direction of my research, clarifying and organizing ideas, especially during the writing-up period. They have always been very attentive and helpful, and tireless editor of my work. They guidance and support have decisively determined the completion of this work.

It is to Professor Thomas Seitz, Purwoko, Tri Cahyo, Budi Setiyono, Teguh Yuwono, and Priyatno Harsasto the cooperation initiators between Diponegoro University, Indonesia and the University of Wyoming, USA; I express my gratitude for all their efforts in bridging the two institutions on a brilliant educational collaboration for the first time.

Living in Laramie, was made pleasant and comfortable through friendship and help from many friends: Agung Bakti, Rahmat Hidayat, Wijayanto, Fahmi Mubarok,

Gulam Manar, Ed Clark, Jeff and his family, Anne Spear, Josh King, Malynda Green-Wallace, Courtney Burns, Ahadjon Abdurahmonov, and Amelia McLaughlin.

My great thanks are addressed to those who helped in administrative matters and thought me during my coursework. I would like to mention among others, Patricia Flores and Jamie Le Jambre.

For the entire period of my studies at UWYO, I have received financial support through a scholarship from Indonesian embassy. To Education attaché and Indonesian embassy in US, especially Enda Wulandari, and Esti Rahayu, I express my thanks and gratitude.

It is to my big family that I owe my greatest debt, and it is to them that this thesis is dedicated. Only they know how much their emotional support has meant to me. They have made this entire endeavor seem worthwhile.

Semarang, January 2009

Khairu Roojiqien Sobandi

Abstract

The ethnic war in Aceh territory killed 13.000 to 50.000 of people and it remains problematic, especially in the 1950s, 1970s, and the end of 1990s. This thesis explores whether the symbolic politics theory of ethnic war, which was originally designed to explain conflict in the post-Communist societies of Eastern Europe, is also successful for explaining ethnic war and the subsequent peace in areas like Aceh where traditional social structures continued to exist. Facts support the hypotheses of symbolist theory. On the first two cases, myths justifying hostility were strong on both sides of the Acehnese and the Javanese Indonesian national government, the result of decades of conflict between Javanese national authorities and the Acehnese societies in Aceh territory. Ethnic fears, opportunity reasons, hostile feelings, chauvinist mobilization by ethnic elites, and security dilemma dynamics were also taken into account on the Acehnese ethnic conflict. On the other hand, the symbolist theory is also effective for explaining ethnic subsequent peace in the reform period (1998-recent). Hostile myths and fears did present, but the violence did not emerge because both elites chose not to let the conflict continues. The opportunity to mobilize for both elites did not present and therefore hostile mass conflict did not escalate. Recognizing this unique conflict involves identifying the patterns of their attachment to the traditional social structures, the sultanates and the *ulama* (the Islamic scholar).

Abstraksi

Konflik ethnis di wilayah Aceh telah membunuh 13.000 sampai 50.000 orang dan tetap problematic, terutama pada tahun 1950an, 1970an, dan pada akhir tahun 1990an. Tesis ini menganalisis apakah teori simbolik politik dalam konflik atau perang etnis, yang pada awalnya dirancang untuk menjelaskan perang etnis dalam masyarakat post-Komunis di Eropa Timur, juga sukses menjelaskan perang etnis dan perdamaian di daerah-daerah seperti Aceh yang struktur sosial tradisionalnya tetap ada. Fakta-fakta menunjukkan terbuktinya hipotesis teori simbolis. Dalam dua studi kasus pertama, mitos yang menjustifikasi permusuhan sangat kuat pada kedua belah pihak antara orang Aceh dan pemerintah Jawa Indonesia, hasil dari beberapa decade konflik antara otoritas nasional Jawa dan masyarakat Aceh di wilayah Aceh. Ketakutan etnis, alasan kesempatan, perasaan permusuhan, mobilisasi cauvinis oleh para elit etnis, dan dinamika dilemma keamanan juga turut berkontribusi dalam menjelaskan konflik etnis Aceh. Pada sisi lain, teori sombolis juga efektif untuk menjelaskan perdamaian sesudah perang pada periode reformasi (1998-sekarang). Mitos permusuhan dan ketakutan memang terlihat, tapi kekerasan tidak terjadi karena elit dari kedua belah pihak memilih untuk tidak membiarkan konflik tidak berlanjut. Kesempatan utk memobilisasi bagi elit dari kedua belah pihak tidak terlihat dan oleh karena itu konflik permusuhan massa tidak tereskalasi. Mengenali keunikan konflik ini mencakup pengidentifikasian pola-pola keterkaitan mereka pasa struktur social tradisional, ulama dan sultan.

Table of Contents

	Pages
Title page	i
Thesis Originality page (Pernyataan Keaslian Tesis)	ii
Approval Thesis Page (Pengesahan Tesis)	ii
Acknowledgement and Dedication (Persembahan)	iv
Abstract	vi
Abstraksi	vii
List of Tables	xii
List of Figures	xiii
1. Introduction	1
A. Introduction	1
B. The importance of the thesis	7
C. Arguments (Thesis statement)	7
D. Methodology and data collection	8
E. Hypothesis	9
F. The plan of the thesis	14
2. Literature review	15
A. Introduction	15
B. Interpretations of the ethnic conflict	17
C. Rational choice theory	19
a. Strengths of rational choice theory	24
b. Weakness of rational choice theory	27

c. Inapplicability of rational choice theory to the Acehnese conflicts 28

D. Psychological approaches 30

a. Strengths of psychological approaches 32

b. Weakness of psychological approaches 33

c. Inapplicability of psychological approaches to the Acehnese conflicts 35

E. Symbolic politics theory 37

a. Strengths of symbolic politics theory 39

b. Weakness of symbolic politics theory 42

c. Applicability of symbolic politics theory to the Acehnese conflicts 44

F. Conclusion 45

3. Indonesia and the Acehnese rebellions 48

A. Introduction 48

B. Geography and ethnicity in Indonesia 48

C. The politics and ideology in Indonesia 51

D. Ideological debate between the Islamic and secular nationalist groups 54

E. The Origins of the Acehnese rebellions 58

a. The *Darul Islam* movement under Daud Bereueh leadership 59

b. Free Aceh Movement under Soeharto's regime of the New Order era (1969-1998) 61

c. Free Aceh Movement in reformation era (1998 - now) 67

F. Conclusion 71

4. The Acehnese conflicts under Soekarno's period 74

A. Introduction 74

B. Myths justifying hostility 75

C. Fears of extinction 84

D. Opportunity to mobilization 89

E. Mass hostility 92

F. Hostile mobilization (The process of mobilization for war) 96

G. Conclusion 103

5. The Acehnese conflicts under Soeharto's period (The New Order era) 106

A. Introduction 106

B. Myths justifying hostility 107

C. Fears of extinction 113

D. Opportunity to mobilization 117

E. Mass hostility 119

F. Hostile mobilization (The process of mobilization for war) 122

G. Conclusion 129

6. The Acehnese subsequent peace after 1998 reform period 132

A. Introduction 132

B. Myths justifying hostility 134

C. Fears of extinction 137

D. Opportunity to mobilization 142

E. Chauvinist mobilization and the clashes 146

F. Conclusion 150

7. Conclusion 153

A. Introduction 153

B. Assessment of the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese conflicts 153

a. Assessment of the theory on the Acehnese conflict under Soekarno period 153

b. Assessment of the theory on the Acehnese conflict under Soeharto period 156

c. The Acehnese subsequent peace after the 1998 reform period 159

C. Strengths and weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory 162

a. Strengths of the symbolic politics theory 162

b. Weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory 164

D. Implications 166

8. References 168

List of tables

Table 3.1 Major Parties in Indonesian and Recent Parliamentary Elections Result (Percent of Vote) 56

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 The GAM's flag as the fighters' symbol of freedom and independent 6

Figure 2.1 A fighter risking his life securing the GAM's flag 35

Figure 2.2 The GAM's supporter provoke the emotions of the Indonesian military 36

Figure 3.1 The map of Indonesia 50

Figure 3.2 The Political map in Indonesia in 1955 55

Figure 5.1 The flag of GAM 109

Figure 5.2 The flag of the Aceh government Kingdom (1511-1530) 110

Figure 5.3 The flag of Ottoman Empire 111

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

After the Indonesian independence in 1945, Acehnese experienced an ethnic conflict whose savagery replayed some of the worst horrors of the Dutch colonial era. The Javanese Indonesian government and their military forces swept the Acehnese rebellions under the Daud Bereueh leadership in 1953 and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM, *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*) under Hasan di Tiro leadership from 1976 to the 1998 reform period. More than four thousands Acehnese died during the Daud Bereueh rebellion in 1953, and more than fifty thousands Acehnese were killed between 1976 and 1998 - reform period.[1] KontraS (*Komisi untuk Orang Hilang dan Tindak Kekerasan*, Commission for Missing People and Violent Actions), an Indonesian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), reported that since 1953 to the 1998 reform era, the Indonesian government and their military have murdered, tortured and victimized the Acehnese in order to terrorize the Acehnese population.[2]

These horrible events cry out for an explanation. What motivated both the Acehnese and the Javanese Indonesian leaders or the politicians of nations to organize torture, rape, terror, and even murder a large portion of their country's inhabitants? What

---

[1] Michael Runnner and Zoe Chafe, "Beyond Disasters: Creating Opportunities for Peace," edited by Lisa Mastny, *World Watch Report* (Worldwatch Institute, 2007), 21.

[2] KontraS, *Aceh, Damai dengan Keadilan? Mengungkap Kekerasan Masa Lalu* (*Aceh, Peace with Justice? Revealing the Past Violent*) (Jakarta: KontraS, 2006).

motivated their followers to sink to such brutality aimed against their near neighbors ethnic group? One could explain these events as the result of hatreds, manipulative leaders, economic rivalry and so on. These arguments should be combined to explain why ethnic conflict or war occurred and to explain why ethnic conflict does not happen. In this case, I would combine the rational choice and the psychological approaches, as noted above, by using the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese ethnic conflicts and the subsequent peace.

This research draws on the symbolic politics theory to examine three case studies of the Acehnese ethnic conflicts that include: the Aceh rebellion in 1953, Aceh rebellion under the Soeharto's New Order period from 1969 to 1998, and the Aceh rebellion in1998 reform period. I will focus on these three case studies because the Acehnese separatist group's existence continued under several different regimes in Indonesia. This research specifically analyzes the myths, fears, opportunities, mass hostility, and the hostile mobilization in determining ethnic conflict or war between the Acehnese and the Javanese Indonesian central government under several different regimes.

In 1953, Aceh' leaders, especially Daud Beureuh, was disappointed with the national Indonesian government, and thus they revolted as a part of the *Darul Islam* (Abode of Islam) movement in a struggle to create an Indonesian Islamic state.[3] In 1976, Hasan di Tiro returned from the United States to form *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement or well known as GAM) and for the second time the Acehnese declared

---

[3] C. Van Dijk, *Rebellion Under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia* (Leiden, Netherland: The Hague-Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 269.

its intention to have their independence. Thus in 1989, this rebellion resulted in a cruel counterinsurgency operation that caused thousands of civilian casualties.[4]

The last event, but not least significant, was in late 1998, in which the student movement protested and called for a referendum on independence similar to the 1999 referendum in East Timor. Negotiation between national Indonesian government and GAM continued and gave the special autonomy status. On May 2003, the peace process broke down because the military emergency status was affirmed and the Indonesian military launched large-scale offensives actions and so the war continues.[5] However, the sudden tsunamis that came into Aceh territory and destroyed most of the area formed a new situation on Aceh. GAM and the Indonesian government produced a new negotiation pace of with the assistance of Marti Ahtisaari, the peace noble prizewinner in 2008. Negotiation in 2006 resulted in an ethnic peace by giving the Acehnese a "self-government" position within Indonesia. Therefore, the three case studies above related to the nations and nationalism of a group or a creation of nations and the nationalism emotions.

Anderson put forward the concept of the "imagined political community" that refers to the creation of nations and nationality.[6] His work derived from the Marxist tradition; yet, Anderson, goes beyond political economic view and moves toward a cultural view in a way that nation and nationalism are constructed as cultural heritage. He

---

[4] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 2.

[5] Edward Aspinall and Harold Crouch, The Aceh Peace Process: Why it Failed Policy Studies 1(Washington: East-West Center, 2003), 45.

[6] Bennedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, revised edition, (London, UK: Verso, 1991).

argues that a nation is a modern cultural artifact that arose in the eighteenth century.[7] Furthermore, he gives his definition for nation that is "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." Anderson continues to explain that the nation is imagined in a way that members will never know, meet, or even hear each other, but he said that "in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[8] Anderson then recognizes that a nation is limited and has flexible boundaries.

On the Aceh conflicts case, the effort to re-emerge as an Aceh nation was constructed by the Aceh leaders. In this sense, Daud Bereueh imagined an Indonesian Islamic Community or nation-state and Hasan di Tiro imagined a pure Aceh nation like the glory of an Acehnese Kingdom in the 16th and the 17th centuries.

Daud Bereueh uses Islam as the chosen symbol that could unite Aceh, even a whole ex-East Indies territory and its community. His motivation to create an Islamic nation is due to his own cultural roots as a strong believer of Islam and because most of the ex-East Indies people were Muslim. It makes sense that Bereueh imagined a unity of an Islamic community (*ummah*) under a nation. Therefore, he convinced his group and justified any attempt to defend the idea of Aceh nation based on Islamic value as a holy purpose in the name of God. However, Soekarno, the first Indonesian president and a Javanese, challenged this effort by creating a more secular-nationalist nation of "Indonesia" that covers all the territory of ex-East Indies based on *Pancasila* regardless of religion, original region, or ethnicity. Both leaders had manipulated their followers to defend their personal and cultural feeling of belonging to their own nation. The Clash of

---

[7] Ibid. 13.

[8] Ibid. 15.

imagined communities between the Acehnese and the Indonesian government was unavoidable. The Acehnese attachment to Islam and Islamic nation was taken for granted, and thus they were willing to hate, kill and even die for the idea of the imagined Islamic nation.

In line with Daud Brereueh, Hasan di Tiro also manipulated the Acehnese personal and cultural feeling for an independent Aceh. His imagined community was an independent Aceh separated from Indonesia that was dominated by the Javanese ethnic group. He glorifies the Aceh Kingdom before the Aceh War in 1873. He convinced the Acehnese because he was the heir of the Acehnese hero and Islamic scholar (the *ulama*), Cik di Tiro. He combined the idea of an independent Aceh nation based on ethnicity and Islam values. This idea was also taken for granted by the Acehnese because the Acehnese followed their traditional leader (the Sultan and the *ulama*) of Hasan di Tiro as their loyal client to the patron (the Sultan and *Ulama*). The formation of GAM by Hasan di Tiro, as an heir of Acehnese Sultan and *ulama*, is a fact that the Acehnese have taken for granted the idea of an Aceh nation to set them free from the neo-colonial Indonesia. Another example is the GAM's flag as a symbol of the Acehnese pride as a nation who pursued freedom and independent from Indonesia state, as shown above:

Figures 1.1 The GAM's flag as the fighters' symbol of freedom and independent

Source: http://www.achehtimes.com/photos/gam/gam01/widowsdefend.htm (retrieved at March 20, 2008).

Soeharto, the Indonesian second president, who was a Javanese, crushed the idea of Aceh separation as an independent Aceh. He used *Pancasila* (a secular state foundation) as a symbol of Indonesian state to justify his action to crush Hasan Tiro and GAM. The leaders from both sides manipulated their intra-group and provoked them to take for granted the idea of nation or the creation of new nation. Hence, the followers who were attached and devoted themselves to the cultural myth and symbols like the flag or contending flag were willing to die for their nation's flag. In this sense, conflict was unavoidable.

In sum, the Acehnese ethnic conflict is about the politics of myth of a nation and ideological symbol of ethnic movement. The Acehnese rebellion from 1953 to the 1998 reform period in Indonesia is based on the dynamic of the myth and symbol of nation and triggered the Acehnese ethnic conflicts. The elite actors from both ethnic groups evoked the myth and symbols to start and end the conflict or war. In other words, the leaders

from both sides played key role in triggering and ending the ethnic conflicts in Aceh.

B. The Importance of the thesis

It is important to analyze the pattern of the Acehnese conflict using the symbolic politics theory because this theory can explain most of the ethnic conflicts and peace cases. In this context, this research contributes towards filling in the rational choice and the psychological approach's gaps by providing three case studies of the ethnic conflicts and peace. The focus is on the symbolic politics framework applied to Aceh, rather than on a comprehensive analysis of Aceh. Thus, this research's analysis is different from previous work in its framing of the Aceh situation as a symbolic politics issue to determine how well this case studies, based on literature review, shows the effectiveness of the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese ethnic rebellion in Indonesia.

C. Arguments (Thesis statement)

The Acehnese ethnic war in Indonesia broadens the explanation of power of the symbolic politics theory in Southeast Asian counties as applied in Eastern Europe and Africa. Symbolic politics theory was designed to analyze the ethnic wars in Eastern Europe. Stuart J. Kaufman[9] popularizes the theory in this area to give explanation of the roots of the ethnic wars. He began to develop his theory in Africa to explain the ethnic wars in Rwanda and Sudan. His theory negated the rational choice theorists that explain the ethnic wars in Africa. Furthermore, he picked Philippines as a case study of the Southeast Asian countries. Symbolic politics theory is successful as an explanation for the ethnic wars even when the traditional social structure is still kept by the ethnic

[9] See Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

groups. Therefore, the Acehnese ethnic war in Indonesia is a valuable case study that can be explained by explain symbolic politics theory in the sense that Acehnese ethnic war has similarities with ethnic wars in the southern Philippines, which still keep their traditional social structures, the sultanate and the Islamic scholars (the *ulama*).

D. Methodology and data collection

The results of this research are based on literature studies. The literature used consists of books, articles and internet sites. All references are secondary sources. Hence, I use triangulation data to give an unbiased and balanced approached to certain issues. A literature study is a form of qualitative method that has been criticized for being less representative and atypical.[10] Furthermore, it has been argued that qualitative methods produce un-replicable results and thus no generalization can be made from the findings.[11] Naturally the interpretations drawn from the literature studies are subjective and another person confronted the same material may not draw the same conclusions. However, the main usage of qualitative studies is to provide a foundation for future studies using a quantitative method of research from which generalizations can be made and any findings are possible to be validated.

The aim of this research is to test symbolic politics theory on the three cases of the Acehnese ethnic conflicts and peace process under different regimes in Indonesia. As noted above, the three cases are the *Darul Islam* movement in 1953, the GAM movement in 1976, and the GAM on the reform 1998 period. I focus on the dynamic of the symbolic

---

[10] David Marsh and Gerry Stoker, *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (Hampshire Palgrave, Houndmills, Basingstoke, 1995), 141.

[11] Ibid. 141.

politics theory by examining myths, fears, opportunities, hostile feelings, and hostile mobilization (hypotheses) on these three cases. These particular indicators are the matters that I will focus on the literature studies.

E. Hypothesis

I focus on the essential conditions for ethnic conflict or war of the symbolic politics theory through myths, fears, opportunity, hostile feelings, and hostile mobilization on the three cases as mentioned above. The first indicator is the myth justifying hostility (S1). The myth-symbols complex becomes one of the key aspects that are aggravating hostility through chauvinism or warrior (leader) ethos, which they believe that their own group is greater and better than others. The myths can be re-portrayed by elites to create such hostile conditions. Using the myth-symbol complex that is already familiar, the elite uses and propagates these myths as a way to gain justification. For instance, a myth of *Perang Sabil* (Holy War) was used as a means to fight in the name of Islamic religion against the colonialists. This myth has been exaggerated to justify the hostile situation and mobilize the ethnic war. The myths should present the perspective from one group that justifies the interest of ethnic domination and the other ethnic group who opposes it.

The next condition is the existence of ethnic fear (S2), where the ethnic group fears their existence is at risk. This condition creates an unfriendly environment for the other groups. These fears are inflated by emotions and feelings concerning who are members of the groups and who are not. These psychological developments justify the strength of ethnic fear to provoke ethnic mobilization and violence. Here, the myth-symbol complex plays an important role in exposing that one group is a victim or

offended by the other groups. Stuart Kaufman argues that historically, one of the groups has been dominated and been the victim of the other group's domination, and thus this condition trigger fears of ethnic group extinction. At the same time, it creates the feelings of revenge.[12] Furthermore, he argues that the myth of domination plays important role in creating the fears of the dominated group. Once fears exist in a group, it justifies any violence in the name of self-defense. Such fears and threats facilitate ethnic group mobilization and defense of themselves, even though they are the ones who aggressively create the war.

Another condition is the opportunity to mobilize the ethnic group (S3). Ethnic war will occur if freedom for the ethnic group to mobilize is present with no state's repression. State policies and political suppression is the strategy that can control the ethnic elites to mobilize the group and prevent the ethnic wars. Thus, if the policies and political repression are weakened then it will open a political freedom for the ethnic elites and such space can intensify ethnic violence. On the other hand, the leaders of the state who wanted to begin ethnic conflict have more opportunity to mobilize the apparatuses because they control the power. Here, ethnic war will happen if both sides gain the opportunity to manage and supply the groups with weapons and thus they need the area as the control center.

The symbolic politics theory holds that if the three preconditions—hostile myths, ethnic fears, and opportunity to mobilization—are present ethnic conflicts results if they lead to rising mass hostility by leaders making extreme symbolic appeals between

---

[12] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 31-32.

groups. Mass hostility (S4) arises because of the hostile emotions. Roger Peterson identified the hostile emotions—fear, hatred (ancient hatred), and resentment—that play important role in conflict.[13]

Fear arises when one group considers the rivalry group as a threat for them. Hence the collapse of the political center eliminates institutional constraints and will produce an anarchy situation. Under this condition, fear would be increased as well as the desire for security. Fear also arises when political elite manipulates fear for their own ends. On the political competition situations between elite's ethnic groups, one group creates fear, and possibly a security dilemma, as an effective mobilization strategy against the other. Peterson point out "Fear assumes that when the perception of threat becomes the primary concern, then the most threatening ethnic group becomes the most likely target of attack."[14] The next hostile emotion is hatred. Hatred or hate also plays a significant role in creating mass emotions like hostility. Ethnic hatred is a rivalry between conflicting ethnic groups; the antagonism is focused on purported innate characteristics of the opposing group.[15] The third hostile emotion is resentment. Resentment is the intense feeling that status relations are unjust combined with the belief that something can be done about it.[16] Resentment is also instrumental in that it alerts and compels the individual to take action toward a pressing concern. Resentment is a political sense of subordination. For example, a transmigration program from the Javanese Indonesian

---

[13] Roger D. Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[14] Ibid. 75.

[15] Ibid. 63.

[16] Ibid. 51.

government that sends Javanese people to Aceh is considered an act of political subordination of the Acehnese minority ethnic group. The transmigration creates such resentment from the Acehnese toward the Javanese side as land grabbers. Therefore, these three indicators of mass hostility will lead to hostile mobilization of ethnic conflict.

There are two processes of hostile mobilization (S5) for ethnic conflict or war, which are the mass-led conflict and the elite-led conflict.[17] Mass-led conflict occurs initially beginning with the existence of opportunity and some galvanizing events. In these cases, myth hostile and fears are already significant, and a large numbers of fanatics are present or in other words, nationalism is the central value of dissident politics. There is no single path of mass-led conflict follow to ethnic war. It could be a popular chauvinism, when the group mobilizing first is the majority. While for the other cases, the masses involved on the unorganized violence that create security dilemma and the leader create such chauvinist policies toward the minority. This pattern is a typical for repressed minorities.

The elite-led conflict process begins with the leaders motivated by ideological issues and the opportunism to mobilize their group for ethnic war in pursuit of their own goals. The elite actors use mass media as a propaganda device to manipulate ethnic symbols and provoke ethnic hostility, identifying the rivalry groups with enemies from group mythology and highlighting the threats they pose. Ancient disasters can be recast as current threats and violent methods can be promoted as the only alternative to group tragedy. The power of the elite actors is the key element to determine the existence of

---

[17] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 36-38.

war or negotiations. And if war is the chosen one, then usually the leaders put their blame on the rival group. The leaders usually demonize the rivalry groups for their own goals. Violent provocations by the extremist group begin with the cycle of violence by radicalizing opinion and creating symbols for future use. If the rival group responds in kind, a security dilemma spiral fed by violent propaganda takes off.

At this view, I argue that symbolic politics theory should be tested to explain broader cases, especially in Southeast Asia because it will give broader explanatory power of the theory. Thus, based on this research background, symbolic politics theory becomes the model to be tested in the Acehnese ethnic war and the subsequent peace.

Seeing these required conditions of ethnic war, I will test the symbolic politics hypothesis based on the following issues:

a. Myths justifying hostility must be present on at least one side in Indonesia, and probably on both (S1).
b. Fears of group extinction must be present on at least one side in Indonesia, and possibly on both (S2).
c. The opportunity to mobilize and fight must be present for both sides in Indonesia (S3).
d. There must be evidence of hostile attitudes between the Acehnese and Indonesian government (S4).
e. The Acehnese and Indonesian government must have mobilized around mutually incompatible political programs aimed at political dominance, at least in Aceh territory, as a result of the manipulation by leaders or counter-elites of ethnic myths and symbols (S5).

F. The plan of the thesis

For this research, I begin with chapter two by laying out the contending theories of the ethnic conflicts such as the rational choice and the psychological approach, the strengths and weaknesses, and the inapplicability of these theories to the Acehnese conflicts. Furthermore, I explain the details of the symbolic politics theory of ethnic conflict or war, explaining how the passionate politics of ethnic symbolism can lead to war and why it so often does not, the strengths and weaknesses, and the applicability of this theory to the Acehnese conflicts.

The main parts of this thesis research that follows is a series of case studies that explain how these ideas illuminate the causes of ethnic wars in Aceh in several different regimes. In the chapter three, I explain the political dynamic in Indonesia since 1945. In this chapter, I explain the contexts of the politics in Indonesia and how these political situations related to the Acehnese rebellions. I begin with the elite-led conflicts of the Acehnese rebellion in 1953 under Daud Bereueh leadership and in 1976 to 1998 period under Hasan di Tiro leadership in chapter four and chapter five, respectively. Chapter six considers the peace subsequent after the 1998 reform period a peace process that is also an elite-led process. Chapter seven sums up the lessons learned, especially the assessment of the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese conflicts. After the assessment, I continue to explain about the theoretical and policy implications.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction

This chapter focuses on theoretical tracking of the motivation, process, and the result of the ethnic conflict. This theoretical tracking is significance in order to get a better understanding of why and how ethnic conflict is happening in Aceh. The mainstream theory in explaining ethnic conflict is rational choice theory and another theory is the psychological approach. However, these theory could not explain comprehensively the ethnic conflict and thus, a more comprehensive conceptual theory in understanding the motivation of ethnic conflict or war is that the symbolic politics theory.

The symbolic politics theory is more comprehensive in analyzing ethnic conflict or war because the symbolic politics theory is a combination of the adequate explanation of the rational choice and the psychological theory. If we only utilize the rational choice theory, which means that the explanation for Aceh was that, the violence was a product of the security dilemma. However, that would, in turn, mean that we'd see the political agenda and choices of the elites or politicians that involved in this conflicts, and we don't see any political action based on the emotional or ideological expressions. For example, on the Acehnese ethnic conflicts, we would see the self-interest of the Javanese Indonesian government such as the transmigration program for the Javanese to Aceh territory, and at the same time we would not recognize that transmigration program is a symbol of the Javanese domination over the Acehnese demographically. Hence, the rationalist theory could not account an emotional based political agenda or programs.

On the other hand, if we adopt Psychological approach on the Acehnese ethnic conflicts then we would see the tools or devices that could trigger conflict. For example, flag or contending flag signed a superiority from a nation over the other nation and even negative feelings toward the other ethnic group. The GAM's flag aimed to shows their existence and superiority over the Javanese Indonesian government and even more the GAM's flag as a justification of their hostile feelings toward the neo-colonial Javanese Indonesian people. However, we could not see the myths and symbols that produce hatred lead to conflict because the recent leaders or elites to lead to ethnic conflict should activate those myths and symbols.

While, if we use the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese ethnic conflict then we would see the elites' political agenda and choices that involved in this conflicts and myths or symbols as devices for the elites that produce hostile situations and thus, the elite actors activates the myths and symbols as their devices to create hatred that certainly lead to ethnic conflict. It means that the symbolic politics theory combines both theory of rationalist and psychological approach on the ethnic conflicts. For example, the Hasan di Tiro had a political agenda to break away Aceh from Indonesia and thus, he use the GAM's flag as his device to create a symbol of the Acehnese freedom or nationalism ideology that lead to ethnic conflict with the Javanese Indonesian government.

I will discuss the three contending theories of ethnic conflict or war, which are the rational choice, the psychological, and the symbolic politics theory by explaining the main arguments, the strong and weaknesses, and the inapplicability or the applicability of these theories to the Acehnese conflicts. In this research, I will use the symbolic politics theory in analyzing the Acehnese conflicts because this theory has more power ability

than the rational choice and the psychological approaches. The symbolic politics theory succeeds in examining the ethnic conflict in Aceh by explaining the political agenda and choices of the elites or politicians that involved in this conflicts, which is the main arguments of the rational choice theory, and the actors' strategy and devices to trigger conflicts, which is the argument of the psychological approach. It implies that is the symbolic politics theory succeeds to recognize the motivations, the strategy, and the devices of the actors to activate an ethnic conflict or war because without recognizing these aspects, the ethnic conflict or war will never been occur.

B. Interpretations of the ethnic conflict

Three major different views have dominated the interpretation of ethnic war or conflict. One is the rational choice theory, which focuses on the self-interest foundation for ethnic group formations. The elites gain power through mobilization of certain ethnic groups to pursue the elites' goals. Thus, ethnic war is the result of the competing economic group interests. As shown in works by Ted Robert Gurr (1970), Robert H. Bates (1983; 1998; 2000), Ernest Gellner (1997), Benedict Anderson (1983; in Hutchinson, J. & Smith, A. (Eds.), 1994; 1998), Dennis Chong (2000), Ravi Bhavnani (2006), James Fearon and David Laitin (1996), Barbara F. Walter (2004), and David Lake and Donald Rothchild (1996).

The second major view is the psychological approach, which emphasizes superiority, prejudice, and negative feelings toward the other ethnic groups. Stuart J. Kaufman acknowledges three main theories of psychological approach, which are

primordialists, constructivists, and symbolist's theories.[18] A prominent constructivist theorist of ethnicity is Anthony D. Smith, who focuses on the importance of a "myth-symbol complex".[19] The next theorist is Roger Peterson, who emphasizes that emotions can effectively motivate ethnic violence.[20] George. E. Marcus, who analyzes the role of emotion in politics, supports this view.[21] In the same sense, Daniel Bar-Tal, et al., argue that collective emotional elements are constructed, preserved and moreover, they resolved conflicts.[22]

The third type of interpretation is the symbolic politics theory, which originally derived from Murray Edelman's conception of myths and symbols.[23] Stuart J. Kaufman, who explains that ethnic wars are the result of politics of myths and symbols, prominently represents the theory. The assumption is that ethnic myths and symbols exist and bound their ethnic group. An ethnic war will occur when ethnic myths mitigate hostility toward the other group, create fears of group extinction, and present the

---

[18] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 23-27.

[19] See Anthony D. Smith, "The Origins of Nations." In *Nationalism*, edited by Hutchinson, J. & Smith, A. (London: Oxford University Press, 1994). Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 1998). Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also Anthony D. Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004).

[20] See Roger D. Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[21] See G. E. Marcus, "Emotion in Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (2000): 221–250.

[22] Daniel Bar-Tal, Eran Halperin, and Joseph D. De Rivera. "Collective Emotions in Conflict Situations: Societal Implications." *Journal of Social Issues* 63, no. 2 (2007): 441-460.

[23] Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (Chicago, IL: Markham Publishing Company, 1971).

opportunity to mobilize. Thus, if both groups use politics that intend to dominate other ethnic group, then ethnic war will come up as a consequence.[24]

C. Rational choice theory

The origins of the rational choice theory are derived from the instrumentalist approach. A classical theorist of the rational choice on ethnic conflicts is Ted Robert Gurr.[25] In general explanation, he explains that his book describes political violence, a phenomenon that includes all collective violence within a political society against the political system that involves competing political groups and the incumbent with their policies.

For Gurr, the fundamental and prior rebellion problem has to do with the social and psychological forces that cause men to rebel. The central idea of psychology is that if an individual senses a large gap between what he gets and what he deserves, he will become angry. Given the opportunity, he will rebel. When many people sense such a gap simultaneously, rebellions occur. Such a starting point leads quickly to consideration of relative deprivation, justifications for political violence, dissident coercive control, and regime coercive control as determinants of the likelihood and magnitude of political violence. In his book, Gurr stated that the concept of relative deprivation is the key to

---

[24] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001). Stuart J. Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice? Testing Theories of Extreme Ethnic Violence." *International Security* 30, no. 4 (2006a): 45-86. Stuart J. Kaufman, Satoshi Machida, and Yu Wang. "Symbolic Politics and Ethnic Conflict in Malaysia and the Philippines." *International Studies Association Annual Meeting*, San Diego, California, 2006b. See also Stuart J. Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics and Ethnic War in the Philippines." *International Studies Association Annual Meeting*, Chicago, IL, 2007.

[25] See Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970).

explaining why men rebel. Gurr suggests that, "Relative deprivation, defined as perceived discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities is sufficiently general to comprise or be related to most of the general 'preconditions of revolution' identified in order theoretical analyses."[26]

In addition, Gurr suggests that the tactical use and threatened use of political violence are characteristic of participants and leaders who perceive a potential for alleviating deprivation within the existing political system. "But if dissidents believe their objectives can be obtained only by transforming the system, they are likely to use terroristic tactics to publicize their existence and objectives, and to widen popular support by providing symbolic models for aggression and by demonstrating the regime's incapacity to provide protection, hoping ultimately to overthrow it." [27]

Another classical work of the rationalist is Robert Bates, who argues that modernization motivates development and social change in a way that ethnic groups integrate because there is a rational calculation in competing with each other to gain limited goods that benefit them.[28] In fact, in his first work, Bates concludes that the ethnic conflict in Africa was fundamentally caused by the state that distributed economic

---

[26] Ibid. 37.

[27] Ibid. 212.

[28] See Robert Bates, "Modernization, Ethnic Competition, and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa." In *State Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas*, edited by Rothchild, D., & Olorunsola V. A. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1983). Robert Bates, Rui J. P. de Figueiredo, Jr., and Barry R. Weingast. "The Politics of Interpretation: Rationality, Culture, and Transition." *Politics & Society* 26, no. 4 (1998): 603-642. See also Robert Bates, "Ethnicity and Development in Africa: A Reappraisal." *The American Economic Review* 90, no. 2 (2000): 131-134.

goods in a frame of patron-client networks.[29] The elites take their privileges in an ethnic group in relation to the other ethnic groups to mobilize the members of the group to pursue the elites' self-interests. The elites acknowledge that ethnic groups, as an institution, are effective instrument for them to pursue their self-interests. Moreover, the elites use ethnic groups because they know that it is easier for them to mobilize the intra-ethnic group because the elites can use a common language.

Furthermore, in his second work, Bates argues that ethnic groups could alter the formation of human capital, and thus variety of the ethnic group does not always mean political violence. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that it could be on the opposite side, where ethnic diversity could motivate political violence in a sense that members of certain ethnic groups are keen to take risks to make conflicts with the other groups with the expectation to gain more benefits, even though they realize that it could only gain losses.[30] Here, Ernest Gellner claims that industrialization and its high degree of mobility could create a high culture. Thus, a nation of an ethnic group is a creation of man as the result of industrialization. Furthermore, he explains that socioeconomic conditions, organization traditions, and ideological features can motivate ethnic groups or conflicts among nations.[31] Therefore, the conflicts won't happen if socioeconomic conditions,

---

[29] Robert Bates, "Modernization, Ethnic Competition, and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa." In *State Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas*, edited by Rothchild, D., & Olorunsola V. A. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1983), 163-165.

[30] Robert Bates, "Ethnicity and Development in Africa: A Reappraisal." *The American Economic Review* 90, no. 2 (2000): 131-134.

[31] See Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (New York: New York University, 1997), 60-62.

organization traditions, and ideological features are modernized. For example, he point out that Islamic fundamentalism is a condition that could lead to conflicts.

Another Rationalist is Dennis Chong, who argues that rational choice theory exists in every individual's decision-making, and he also calculates that "individual calculations of self-interest weigh social pressures and incentives alongside more tangible material factors." He also states "current interests are contingent on past decisions." [32] Chong explains how rational choice incentives and social influences connect and influence each other. He intends to combine the sociological and rational choice analyses, values, norms, and symbols in politics. His main argument is that norms and values are very crucial to understanding political choice; however, the norms and values have to develop. However, he does not explain the interests of an individual or a community. Interests don't always mean material interests, and at this point, he cannot explain why a group of people had conflict with another group. An ethnic group could have a war because of non-material interests. Another scholar of rational choice theory is Ravi Bhavnani. He used an agent-based model of within-group interaction to explain an ethnic war in Rwanda. This model grasp the phenomena of Hutu ethnic group mobilize coercive behavior through the formation of Hutu ethnic group norms to trigger ethnic wars with other ethnic groups. In this sense, the Hutu used their norms to evoke ethnic wars.[33]

---

[32] See Dennis Chong, *Rational Lives: Norms and Values in Politics and Society* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 12-14.

[33] See Ravi Bhavnani, "Ethnic norms and Interethnic Violence: Accounting for Mass Participation in the Rwandan Genocide." *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 6 (2006): 651-669.

Norms as collective decision of group become a self-interest rationale. The self-interest can be consistent with group identification and action in the name of a group. Therefore logically, norms are ethnic identity. Identities are about how individuals relate to one another. The relationship is between individuals through norms as members of groups, for example family or ethnic kin. Material interests, for instance basic survival and economic benefits, dominate these structures. Then, norm as institution create constraints and opportunities for certain behaviors. In institutions, decisions and actions are rational.

James Fearon and David Laitin put forward a cooperation equilibrium theory. This theory explains the escalation of conflict and spiral of the security dilemma to the point of violence that is in no one's obvious self-interest. Conflicts are said to escalate as rational individuals take steps to defend themselves. In doing so, they threaten the security of others, creating a security dilemma.[34] Even when individuals and groups don't see each other's arming as a threat, arming of insurgency groups in Aceh has tense the attention and wrath of the Indonesian military. Fearon and Laitin analyze why groups, when presented with an escalating security dilemma, cooperate instead of raise arms in self-interested defense. Here, the explanation of equilibrium theory can answer the question, which is spiral equilibrium and in-group policing equilibrium. Spiral equilibrium theorizes that as others see a situation spiraling toward violence, they cooperate in a self-interested way with one another and conflicting parties in order to

---

[34] See James D. Fearon, and David D. Laitin. "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation." *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4 (1996): 715-735.

lower tensions. The in-group policing equilibrium theorizes that groups ignore the offenses of others, assuming their own ethnic group will sanction them.

In line with Fearon and Laitin, Barbara F. Walter essentially argues that cost and benefit calculation is used in making any kind of agreement. Furthermore, ethnic war will happen if one ethnic group refuses to agree because the cost is more than the benefits. Thus, it is impossible to achieve an agreement when ethnic groups in conflict meet face-to-face because the cost of tolerance to the other group is higher than the benefit in achieving agreement.[35] Here, the security dilemma is the explanation of rationality to such attitudes as genocide. David Lake and Donald Rothchild develop on analysis of security dilemma from James Fearon to emphasize that ethnic war arises mainly because information failures and troubles of commitment prevent competing groups from getting a negotiated agreement that all would prefer.[36] However, an ethnic conflict or settlement is not always based on the costs and benefits calculation, because people often use myths and symbols to demonize and dominate other groups, which can lead to conflicts.

a. Strengths of rational choice theory

Rational choice theories can explain that extreme ethnic violence (war and genocide) is the result of the actor's utility-maximizing strategy. For example, Fearon stated that the cases of Sudan's civil war and Rwanda's genocide claimed that the rationalist models are proven because the genocide can be understood as resulting from

---

[35] Barbara F. Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement." *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (1997): 335-364.

[36] David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict." *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996): 41-75.

information failures, commitment problems, or rational power-conserving elite strategies.[37] Hence, rational choice theory assumes that ethnic conflict is the result of an actor's rational activity of widespread interests such as prosperity, power, and security. David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild stated that rationalist rationale is essentially taken from the instrumentalist conception of what ethnic identity is: "The instrumentalist approach . . . understands ethnicity as a tool used by individuals, groups, or elites to obtain some larger, typically material end .... [Ethnicity] is primarily a label . . . that is used for political advantage." [38] Ethnic war, in this logic, is the result of the rational pursuit of individual and group self-interest. Two different types of ethnic conflict reveal how this process works: One type emphasizes that ethnic conflict arises depending the elite motivations; the second type places the security dilemma at the center of the process by which a rational clash leads to war.

Ethnic conflict based on rational choice theory is fundamentally caused by motivations of the actors who utilize their power in an ethnic group to mobilize the group's members secure the actors' self interests. The elites recognize ethnic groups as an effective institution for them to pursue their self-interests and they understand that it is easier for them to mobilize the intra-ethnic group because the elites can use a communal language. This type of rational theory analyzes that masses do not want violence but elites do. Leaders who are concerned about losing power provoke ethnic conflict in order to change the agenda toward issues that support their staying in power. The mass

---

[37] James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379-414.

[38] David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, eds., *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 5-6.

recognize the violence, so even if they are unsure about which side provoked it, they can rationally intensify their fear that the other group might be harmful. Consequently, the mass may rationally support policies that provoke conflict, war or even genocide, calculating that the costs of violence are lower than the costs of facing vulnerable violence. At this point, rational choice theory can explain the self-interest of actors as maximizers of group potential.

Another explanation of the conflict process is found in Fearon's work about international conflict that states that uncertainty and security dilemma can create conflict. Fearon's work explains how conflict arises because of misinformation or propaganda. Uncertainty is a key concept in explaining misinformation because uncertainty create and often overestimate about the rival group's resentment and thus, uncertainty can lead to conflict in response.[39] Moreover, Lake and Rothchild explain that the conflicted ethnic groups are uncertain about the result of conflict and thus the group calculating to be the loser may not understand how to avoid conflict by compromising beforehand.[40]

The next explanation from Russell Hardin (1995) about conflict is the existence of security dilemma. Security dilemma arises because of no certainty of trustable commitment between groups. It is very possible that in the future one group may break the commitment to another group. Thus, military action often provokes a security

---

[39] James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379-414.

[40] David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996): 41-75.

dilemma.[41] Therefore, this situation creates a motivation for conflict, even that with deadliest violence. A powerful explanation of rational choice theory is an application of the security dilemma in relations with ethnic conflict. This application is presented by Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," to show that security dilemma is a key factor in the rational choice theory or in the realist model of international relations theory. The security dilemma model explains the disintegration of Yugoslavia and interactions between Russia and Ukraine, to illustrating the theory's utility and articulation.[42]

b. Weaknesses of rational choice theory

Rationalist theory is exclusively based on a rational calculation and material interest. This limited focus of the roots of ethnic conflict, specifically a rational calculation and material or economical interest are completely the key factors of the competition of the groups that chase these interests and calculations. Here, the rational choice theory ignores the non-rational (myth and symbols) calculation and non-material interests in favor of an ethnic competition that could very possibly lead to an ethnic conflict or war.

Ethnic conflict or war is not based merely on the rational calculation and economical interests, but also on the myths and symbols that are manipulated by the elites that utilize emotions to mobilize groups. It is essential to note that the Acehnese ethnic wars continue regardless of the form of national government power in control.

---

[41] Russell Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[42] Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993): 27-47.

Thus, the rational choice theory could not exactly explain the Acehnese ethnic wars in Indonesia. One could use the symbolic politics theory to analyze how the Acehnese ethnic wars began, interpret the nature and development of the conflicts, and predict the future of the Acehnese ethnic wars.

Fearon and Laitin remark that nonviolent and cooperative interactions are more universal than violence between groups. Collaborative alliances are one form of cooperative relations and thus may be more expected than not. Yet, they do not base their assumption of cooperation on groups' shared criticism and objectives. Instead, the dynamics of spiral equilibrium point to the minority groups' fear of increased violence by central government as a starting point. This fear then compels minorities to cooperate, which may take the shape of signing ceasefires with the government as a means to minimize tensions. It also may compel them to form alliances with one another in an attempt to formally influence the actions of neighboring ethnic armies.[43] However, the fact that conflict still exists is proof that collaborative alliances between ethnic groups are vulnerable. This vulnerability arises because ethnic groups have their myths that are exaggerated as a device to fight against the other groups, such as warrior ethos.

c. Inapplicability of rational choice theory to the Acehnese conflicts

Concerning the argument from Anderson of imagined political community; rational choice theory is inapplicable because Indonesia as a single "imagined political community" has failed because of the extreme differences on cultural feeling of

[43] James D. Fearon, and David D. Laitin. "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation." *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4 (1996): 715-735. See also James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379-414.

belonging to a nation. The Acehnese and West Papuan ethnic groups, for example, have distinct histories from the rest of Indonesia ethnicity. Specifically, Anthony Reid (2004) argues that the Acehnese have a significant different cultural historical background from the larger Indonesian groups. The Aceh's economic, politics, and culture were more related to the Indian Ocean and the Malayan Peninsula and not closely related to the Java Sea, which was owned by the Javanese ethnic group until the late-nineteenth century.[44] The Acehnese have a different sense of nation, and thus since Indonesia gained independence in August 17, 1945, the Acehnese wanted to build their own nation.[45]

As stated by the rational choice theory, ethnic conflict or war is merely based on rational calculation and economical interests. Moreover, Fearon and Laitin argue that the interactions between ethnic groups are nonviolent and cooperative.[46] However, in fact, the ethnic conflict or war also could arise because of the myths and symbols that are utilized to manipulate the ethnic group by the elites, politicians or leaders who exploit emotions to mobilize the ethnic groups. Nevertheless, ethnic conflict still exists regardless of the resources competitions or rational calculation, for example, the myth of warrior ethos in the Acehnese ethnic group. By enacting the myths of warrior ethos in group defense, religious dignity, and self-sacrifice for the ethnic groups, the actors will receive honor from their groups as heroes or *sabilillah*, those who died in the name of God and the Acehnese ethnic group. Another significant example is the independent of

---

[44] Anthony Reid, "War, Peace and the Burden of History in Aceh," *Asian Ethnicity* 5, no. 3 (2004): 301.

[45] Edward Aspinall, "From Islamism to Nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia" *Nations and Nationalism* 14, no. 2 (2007), 249-251.

[46] James D. Fearon, and David D. Laitin. "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation." *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4 (1996): 715-735.

the Acehnese would be considered merely as a strategy in pursuing the Acehnese elites' self-interests and thus, the rationalist theorist could not account an ideological reason in pursuing Acehnese independent from the Indonesian state. Therefore, pure rationalist theory is incomprehensive in analyzing the Acehnese war against the Javanese Indonesian side.

D. Psychological approaches

Psychological approaches deal with power over other ethnic groups, prejudice, and negative feelings about the other group. A prominent constructivist theorist of ethnicity is Anthony D. Smith, who focuses on the importance of a myth-symbol complex to explain who a group's members are, its nations and history, or the meaning of being a member of an ethnic group.[47] The myth-symbol complex is the fusion of myths, memories, values, and symbols. Here, the status of group symbols to control the existence, status, and group's security furthermore, it is the reason why people of certain ethnic groups are eager to fight and even die for it. The people are even devoted to their leaders who manipulate those symbols for the leader's self-interests. Nationalism is supported by the sacred ethnicity in a way that a nation is like a religion that needs to be worshiped. For example, Free Aceh Movement (GAM) has its own flag, theology about Islam and mythical history such as the *Hikayat Perang Sabil* (HPS) or the holy war, and in return the people get a sense of strength as a nation. GAM used the HPS lyrics in order

[47] Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (London, Oxford University Press, 1999).

to influence the Acehnese people to view Indonesian rulers as colonialist.[48] At this view, one can see the power and the presence of ethnicity. Fighting for one's own ethnic group means gaining respect, self-interest, for the sake of the ethnic group and its territory, influencing the other people through one's beliefs and for one's nation. This ethnic loyalty will be a success in a way that symbols appear convincing and relevant. In recent situations where ethnicity has become more important because of the people's literacy and mass media, which makes obvious the relationship of the state and ethnic groups, and even mobilizes the group in the name of ethnic and nationalism.

On the other side, Roger Peterson (2002) introduces the three different emotions that can motivate ethnic violence. They are fear of a threat from the other group, hatred of it, or resentment of its higher status, which is usually implied by its political domination. Here, he focuses on the mechanisms motivating ethnic war and the importance of emotions in manipulating people's objectives and their preferences.[49] G. E. Marcus analyzes the role of emotion in politics supports this view. At this point, he concludes that emotions are triggered by historical events and furthermore, emotions lead to a quick evaluation of the recent condition in politics.[50] It implies that ethnic wars deal with the emotional need to demonize the other groups, which can create hostile situations that could lead to conflicts. On the other hand, Daniel Bar-Tal, et al. argues that collective

---

[48] Teuku I. Alfian, "Aceh and the Holy War (Perang Sabil)" In *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, edited by Anthony Reid (Seattle: Washington DC, University of Washington Press, 2006), 117-119.

[49] Roger D. Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[50] G. E. Marcus, "Emotion in Politics" *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (2000): 221–250.

emotional elements are a construct of society that resolves conflicts.[51] Robert T. Schatz and Howard Lavine show that national symbolism motivates a psychological attachment to the nation as an abstracted social entity. Symbolic involvement guarantees certain political engagement such as at the intra-group and intergroup levels with the nation as a social-political system.[52]

a. Strengths of psychological approach

Psychological theories present a powerful argument in explaining ethnic conflict and even war. Donald Horowitz introduces an emotional motivation in ethnic war.[53] Horowitz argues that people tend to choose maximizing the difference between their group and another rather than maximizing benefits of their own group. Here, people give some benefits for their group to guarantee that the other group obtained even less.[54] The ethnic group conflict is directed into such competition for group benefits. The consequences are that the competition fights for dominance of the state to show their group's status of superiority compared to the other group and thus the competition legitimizes the group's pursuit of a superiority status objective.[55] Therefore, ethnic conflict is about superiority upon the other groups through political domination toward

---

[51] Daniel Bar-Tal, Eran Halperin, and Joseph D. De Rivera. "Collective Emotions in Conflict Situations: Societal Implications" *Journal of Social Issues* 63, no. 2 (2007): 441--460.

[52] Robert T. Schatz, and Howard Lavine. "Waving the Flag: National Symbolism, Social Identity, and Political Engagement" *Political Psychology* 28, no. 3 (2007): 329-355.

[53] Donald Horowitz, Ethnic Groups in Conflict, Barkley, and Los Angeles: California, University of California Press, 1985).

[54] Ibid.185 and 226-227.

[55] Ibid. 145-147.

the other groups. Horowitz's explanation shows that the psychological logic of emotional driving forces is more vigorous than economic, linguistic or any other particular benefits.

Another powerful explanation of psychological approaches is about prejudice. Kaufman explains that myth-symbols of a group, including prejudice, play an important role in ethnic group war. An emotional feature of prejudice, stereotyping and negative feeling, creates a hostile situation toward the other group.[56] At this point, Horowitz explains that in addition to the contest for dominance (superiority), fear of group extinction is also a powerful motivation for ethnic war. Such feelings of worry are because of demographic fear and domination by opposing groups in history. In short, Horowitz argues that this fear of extinction is directed to the hostile feeling, and finally leads to violence of conflicted groups.

Horowitz's argument about the roles of emotions as part of psychological logic in the ethnic group war illustrates the weaknesses of rational choice theory. The ethnic conflict or war is not purely because of economic or material benefits. Nevertheless, the ethnic wars arise because of the psychological factor, which is the competition of superiority over the other group and thus the competition motivates a hostile attitude even though they must destroy other groups for some cost.

b. Weaknesses of psychological approach

The theory from Anthony D. Smith, as mention above, which is concerned with the importance of a myth-symbol complex, cannot explain the ethnic conflict in a way

---

[56] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 26.

that the myth and symbols were only the tools that exist in a group or nation. Here, the myth-symbol complex is merely a tool to defined ethnic identity such as language, religion, culture, and territory. Myths and symbols can be found in ethnic group history and thus the creators of myth-symbols are often not the parties that manipulate the myth-symbols, but it is the leader or politicians who take advantage and exploit the myth-symbols to mobilize certain ethnic groups in certain events.[57] The myths and symbols are a device for elites to mobilize the ethnic group for their self-interest. Here, if the myths and symbols that produce hatred should be activated by the elites, then an "ancient hatred" should be activated and changed into a "modern hatred" by the recent elites to manipulate the myths and symbols that already exist in inside ethnic group history.

On the other hand, emotion is a very important element of psychological approach because political decisions often are motivated by emotions. However, ethnic conflict arises because emotion or contest for status cannot consistently explain ethnic war. Emotions need tools and actors to mobilize certain ethnic group to have conflict or war with other groups. The tools, like complex myth-symbols, and actors, like leaders or politicians, can mobilize ethnic groups to have conflict and war without considering costs and benefits of the war, for example, the flag. The group's flag or the contending flag is a symbol that stimulates a sense of competition of superiority and emotions of certain ethnic groups as shows below.

---

[57] Ibid. 24.

Figure 2.1 A fighter risking his life securing the GAM's flag

Source: http://www.achehtimes.com/photos/gam/gam03/index.htm (retrieved at March 20, 2008).

Here, political choice is generally an emotional expression and politics are about manipulating the emotions of people as individuals and as a group. Furthermore, symbols exist as devices for these manipulations. Therefore, the symbolic politics theory is more coherent in a way that the theory fills the gaps between the existence of symbols as ethnic identity and emotions as a political choice's expression.

c. Inapplicability of the psychological theory in the Acehnese conflicts

Psychological theory focuses on the importance of the emotions through myth-symbols, such as the flag. The flag or contending flag, as a certain group symbol, can provoke a sense of competition of superiority, domination and emotions of certain ethnic groups. In Aceh, Free Aceh Movement (GAM) used the flag as the symbol of freedom to fight against the Indonesian national government including the Indonesian military. The GAM uses the flag to provoke emotions of the Acehnese and the rival group, which is the Indonesian national government and its military, to show their superiority and its political dominance in their own territory. The flag obviously is an effective tool that used is

by GAM elites or politicians like Hasan di Tiro, the leader of GAM, to mobilize the Acehnese to fight against the Indonesian national government and its military.

Figure 2.2 The GAM's supporter provoke the emotions of the Indonesian military

Source: http://www.achehtimes.com/photos/gam/gam03/onguard.htm. (Retrieved at March 20, 2008).

The image above shows that the supporters of the GAM to provoke the emotions of the Indonesian military and to show the GAM domination in Aceh territory use the GAM flag. Here, the flag of GAM is only a device for the actors to provoke conflicts. It implies that it is the actors who should activate the emotions through the flag myth-symbols to trigger the conflict or war. Thus, emotions and myth-symbols cannot instantly be used as factors that trigger the conflict or war. The psychological approach, in Acehnese ethnic conflicts can only be used because the role of emotions is very important as a device for actors to set up a conflict. It implies that the psychological approach of emotions is inapplicable in analyzing the Acehnese ethnic conflicts.

E. Symbolic politics theory

This theory was originally taken from Murray Edelman's book on the conception of myths and symbols.[58] Edelman argues that politicians or elites can manipulate ethnic myths and symbols to evoke emotional responses in their followers, thus motivating them to change their preferences to align with the superficial good, or need, of the ethnic group. Hence, Edelman is combining his idea with Smith's concept about the importance of a myth-symbol complex to explain who a group's members are, its nations and history, or the meaning of being a member of an ethnic group. He also includes Roger Peterson's idea about the importance of emotions in manipulating people's objectives and their preferences and the role of emotion in politics. Here, ethnic wars clearly involve emotions to demonize the other ethnic groups, which can lead to a hostile situation and furthermore, the ethnic conflicts or wars.

Stuart J. Kaufman explains that ethnic wars are the result of the mobilization of myths and symbols.[59] For example, a flag has an attractiveness to evoke emotions of an ethnic group or a nation, and a flag as the symbol that has its own myths can lead to conflict and war. The key assumption of this theory is that "people make political choices

---

[58] Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (Chicago, IL: Markham Publishing Company, 1971).

[59] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Kaufman, Stuart J. "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice? Testing Theories of Extreme Ethnic Violence" *International Security* 30, no. 4 (2006a): 45-86; Kaufman, Stuart. J., Satoshi Machida, and Yu Wang. "Symbolic Politics and Ethnic Conflict in Malaysia and the Philippines" *International Studies Association Annual Meeting*, San Diego, California, 2006b, and Stuart J. Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics and Ethnic War in the Philippines" *International Studies Association Annual Meeting, Chicago*, Illinois, 2007.

based on emotion and in response to symbols."[60] At this point, the assumption is that ethnic myths and symbols exist and bond the ethnic group.

Thus, if both involved parties used politics that intended to dominate other ethnic groups, then ethnic war will come up as a result. The case in Balkans, Sudan and Rwanda's ethnic genocide had justified that symbolic politics has the power to explain the ethnic war. Furthermore, the most recent work of Kaufman in the Philippines concludes that ethnic war in the southern Philippines can be explained by the symbolic politics theory. Symbolic politics theory emphasizes that violence is driven by hostile ethnic myths and an emotionally driven symbolic politics based on those myths. An ethnic war will occur when ethnic myths justify hostility toward the other group, fears of group extinction, and the opportunity to mobilize.

At this view, I argue that symbolic politics theory should be tested to explain broader cases, especially in Southeast Asia, because it will give a broader explanatory power of the theory. The symbolic politics theory was intended to explain the ethnic war in post-Communist societies of Eastern Europe, which have no traditional social structures like in Southeast Asian countries, because their previous social structures had been destroyed by Stalinist terror.[61] The traditional social structure in Aceh, the patron-client system, is nevertheless a critical factor in explaining its dynamics of escalation and de-escalation of ethnic group conflicts. On this system, the patron (the elites) is

---

[60] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 29.

[61] Stuart J. Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics and Ethnic War in the Philippines," *International Studies Association Annual Meeting* (Chicago, Illinois, 2007), 27.

traditional leadership that spread through family network as an attachment to the traditional aristocratic class, the sultanate and the Islamic scholars (the *ulama*).[62]

The sultanate and the Islamic scholars (the *ulama*) as the local leaders or elites play a very significant role in the Acehnese movement against the Javanese Indonesian side. Daud Bereueh or Hasan di Tiro is claimed as the heir of sultanate and at the same time, they are also as the Islamic scholars. The significant factor in enabling elites like Bereueh and di Tiro to mobilize because hereditary aristocrats with social power to mobilize followers. It was this social stratum that helped the GAM to mobilize the Acehnese so quickly to revolt against the Indonesian state. Thus, based on this literature review, symbolic politics theory becomes the model to be tested in the Acehnese ethnic wars.

a. Strengths of symbolic politics theory

Symbolic politics theory was designed to fill the gap of the rational choice and psychological theories that could not satisfactorily explain the ethnic war. The symbolic politics theory successfully combines the substantial elements of rational choice theory and psychological approaches. The symbolic politics theory is able to grasp the important roles of elites or politicians' strategies of self-interest. Here, the logic of rational choice theory of the elite's motivations and security dilemma is the central matter of the ethnic group conflict or war process. On the other hand, symbolic politics theory also identifies

---

[62] Alfian, "The Ulama in Acehnese Society," in *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, compiled by Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Shiddique, Yasmin Hussain (Pasir Panjang, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 82-86. See also Yusny Saby, *Islam and Social Change: The Role of the Ulama in Acehnese Society* (Bangi, Malaysia: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2005).

the important role of emotions as part of psychological approaches. Emotions in a form of competition of status through political domination and fear of extinction are very effective in stimulating people to have conflict or war against the rival group. Therefore, symbolic politics theory is more satisfactory in explaining the ethnic conflict or war.

The next strong point of the symbolic politics theory is that symbolic politics theory refers to political activity focused on arousing people emotions rather than addressing interests. It implies that the symbolic politics theory addressing the weakness of rationalist theory and psychological adequate explanation.

The weakness of rational choice theory is that political choices are not based on the rational interests. The political choice is often driven by emotional considerations rather than the cost-benefit calculation. Even Kaufman explains that emotions change people preferences.[63] More fascinatingly, an insight looking from a rationalist theorist, Samuel Popkin, on his book entitled *The reasoning Voter*, mention that "data presented in an emotionally compelling way may be given greater consideration and more weight than data that is statistically more valid, but emotionally neutral."[64] It implies that emotional decisions on political choices are stronger than rational decisions. In short, people are more likely to base their decisions on emotion.

In this sense, Kaufman argues, "people choose by responding to the most emotionally potent symbol evoked."[65] He continue to argue that political choice is mostly

---

[63] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, 27-28.

[64] Samuel L. Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns* (the 2nd edition) (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 16.

[65] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, 28.

emotional expression, politics is mostly about manipulating people's emotions, and symbols provide the tool for such manipulation because symbols have both cognitive and emotional effects.[66] Therefore, symbolic politics theory shows the strong point that political choices is mostly driven by emotional decisions than the cognitive judgments by using the symbols to manipulate the elites' supporters.

Another strong point of symbolic politics theory is that this theory is applicable to explain the major ethnic group conflict such as the ethnic war in Syria (1998), Sudan and Rwanda (2000), the post-Communist societies of Eastern Europe (2001), Palestinian-Israel (2004), Malaysia (2006), and the Philippines (2006 and 2007). These conflicts illustrate that symbolic politics theory is more coherent than rational choice and psychological theory.

In the research of Kaufman for Sudan and Rwanda cases (2000), he tested, head to head, the rational choice theory which previously was explained by Fearon and Laitin compared to the symbolic politics theory. The symbolic politics theory indicators such as the myth, fears, opportunity, hostile mass attitudes, mass hostility, and hostile mobilization were present in Sudan and Rwanda war.

The rationalist theory could not identify the reason of the member of conflicting ethnic groups to adopt elites predatory goals. Moreover, the rationalist theory on Sudan and Rwanda war failed to explain why ethnic cleavages were so prominent in these cases but not others. While the symbolic politics theory could explain the reason of why members of the conflicting ethnic groups follow the predatory elites goals. It was the

---

[66] Ibid. 29.

emotion of myths, symbols, and fears of extinction of the member of ethnic group that makes the supporters follow the predatory elites goals. Furthermore, symbolic politics theory could explain the extreme ethnic cleavages in Sudan and Rwanda. This extreme cleavage arises because the elites put so much effort and so many resources into making symbolic appeals. The result was that the symbolic politics theory is more successful than the rational choice theory in explaining the Sudan and Rwanda ethnic war.

The symbolic politics theory is shown to have more power than rational choice and psychological theory in explaining the ethnic conflict or war, the deadliest ethnic violence, and even the ethnic peace, as illustrated in the cases of Syria, the post-Communist societies of Eastern Europe, Palestinian-Israel, and the Philippines. The symbolic politics theory could even explain the extreme ethnic violence in Sudan and Rwanda by comparing it to the explanation of rational choice theory in the same case of Sudan and Rwanda. In the comparison case of Malaysia and the Philippines, symbolic politics theory could satisfyingly investigate the reason for conflict or war in the Philippines and why in Malaysia the ethnic conflict did not take place.

b. Weaknesses of symbolic politics theory

Despite the strong elements of the symbolic politics theory, this theory has some weaknesses. The symbolic politics theory has not become a theory that can explain most of the ethnic conflicts or wars around the world. Hence, this theory needs further explanation and more analysis toward the phenomena of the ethnic war. The most significant testing on the symbolic politics theory was in post-communist countries in the Balkans. However, the rest of the cases have not been representative because the

cases were investigated in very small number and only for certain ethnic war events. Therefore, this theory needs to be tested further through much research to prove its explanatory power of the ethnic war.

One significant weakness of the symbolic politics theory researches mostly only analyzes conflict, war or even the most extreme ethnic violence-notably by Stuart Kaufman (1998, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2007). However, only in Malaysia does the symbolic politics approach explain the ethnic peace. This fact shows that the symbolic politics theory has not been widely used as a theory that can explain the ethnic peace. Even for the Malaysian case study, the symbolic politics theory only is used to test one conflict that arose in Malaysia around 1960s between the Chinese and Malays ethnic group.

Cases like the Acehnese ethnic wars, which have been going on for more than fifty years from the Daud Bereueh movement until the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), are relatively new and needs more testing. The complexity of the Acehnese ethnic wars are also a very interesting case in Southeast Asia because the Acehnese ethnic wars have a very long historical journey even if we compare the wars to the ethnic conflict in Malaysia and the Philippines and the conflicts remaining unresolved. Aceh has become a gate to Southeast Asia since in the colonials' era and thus, Aceh plays a very important role in Southeast Asia. Here, the symbolic politics theory should be tested in the case of the Aceh wars because it can give a more explanatory power to the theory.

c. Applicability of the symbolic politics theory in the Acehnese ethnic conflicts or wars

The symbolic politics theory is vastly applicable for the Acehnese ethnic conflicts or wars because this theory can explain the interests, motivations, and choices of the actors, the devices that the actors use to provoke conflicts, and the reasons to have conflicts. For example, On the Aceh case, the elite actors like Daud Bereueh or Hasan di Tiro, had different interests, motivations, and choices in defending their ethnic group. Daud Bereueh's movement used religious motivations of Islam to defend their identity as the Acehnese separate from the North Sumatran people who have a different religion, Christianity, and to form the Indonesian Islamic state. Daud Bereueh's movement used the myth of Islam to encourage, provoke, and even manipulate the Acehnese to join with the *Darul Islam* movement to create their own Islamic nation. Thus, the physical conflicts between the Daud Bereueh movements through the *Darul Islam* rebellion were unavoidable.

On the other hand, Hasan di Tiro through GAM (Free Aceh Movement) has different interests, motivations, and choices in defending the Acehnese ethnic group as a political entity. He used nationalism rather than Islamism as a motivation to fight against the Javanese Indonesian central government. He used nationalism of the Acehnese ethnic group to differentiate from the majority of the Indonesian people who are more than 80% Muslim. Nationalism implies that the Acehnese differentiate their identity as the Acehnese ethnic group with the Javanese ethnic group who dominate the Indonesian people. In this logic, Hasan di Tiro exaggerates the differences to provoke the emotions of the Acehnese and at the same time, to trigger the Javanese Indonesian central

government's emotions. In response, the Javanese used their power philosophy to dominate the Acehnese. Therefore, both Acehnese elites, Daud Bereueh and Hasan di Tiro, substantially used the myth-symbols such as the flag, religion, ethnicity or nationalism as their devices to create emotional supporters and the ethnic masses to create a hostile attitude and situation to stimulate group members to fight against the rival group like the Javanese Indonesian central government.

F. Conclusion

This study derives partly from my disagreement with dominant theory about the ethnic conflict or war, which are the pure rational choice theory and the psychological approach. First, the mainstream theory is the rational choice theory that has been widely used and accepted by scholars. This theory derives from the instrumentalist approach. This approach mainly used the cost and benefits calculation on ethnic conflicts. It is the elites who use the instrument of ethnic group to gain their own interests. The rationalist theorists consider that people take any political choice is based on the rational calculation. Thus, every people will consider the costs and benefits of conflict or war. In this sense, war will only happen if the people choose to war because they already consider the benefits is bigger than the cost if they go for war. Clearly, the pure rationalist theorists can be located in the instrumentalist approach in interpreting the ethnic conflict or war. However, the cost-benefits calculation fails to count the non-rational factors, for example, the role of the emotions, and ideological consideration in ethnic conflict or war.

Second, there is also the psychological approach that emphasis the significant role of the emotions that trigger ethnic conflict or war. For example, fears, hates, and

resentment are the concrete construction of hostile emotions. In addition, the competition of domination over the rival group to shows their superiority motivates hostile attitudes toward their rival group. In this sense, any political choice from the fanatic supporters and their elites is based on emotional considerations than the rational considerations. Thus, conflicts arise because of the emotions from one group over the other group in purpose of the political domination. Psychological approaches deal with power over other ethnic groups, prejudice, and negative feelings about the other group. At the heart of this argument is the notion that emotions are created through myths and symbols. The myth and symbols is a device to defined and control ethnic identity, existence, status, and their security. Therefore, the fanatics supporters of certain ethnic group are willing to fight and even died for their ethnic group's myths and symbols. However, the psychological approach could not explain why the myth and symbols motivates ethnic war. In fact, this approach neglects the importance of leaders or politicians. In this case, it is the elites who could activate the myth and symbols, by provoking the followers to defend their ethnic group's myth and symbols, for their own goals and thus conflict would arise. Another problem is the role of emotions on ethnic group conflict. Emotions is also could not directly become the trigger of conflict. Emotions need devices for example, myths and symbols, and leaders to mobilize hostile emotions to lead to conflict or war.

My study provides an alternative interpretation of the Acehnse ethnic conflict. Focusing on the three significant case studies of the Acehnese rebellion, I emphasis the study of symbolic politics theory as tool of analysis in explaining the motivation, the process and the result of the Acehnese ethnic conflicts since 1945 to the recent situations. I argue that the Acehnese and the Javanese Indonesian leaders or elites should see the

Acehnese rebellions as a politics of myths symbols. The outbreak ethnic conflict in 1953 and in the Soeharto New Order period, and the subsequent peace in the 1998 reform period should be understood in terms of the politics of myths and symbols, particularly the conflict between the leaders that provoke the ideological myths and symbols in order to shows their political dominations over the rival group. Therefore, the symbolic politics theory is combining the rationalist theory and the psychological approach in explaining the Acehnese ethnic conflicts in a more comprehensive manner.

After this literature review I will utilize the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese rebellions. Initially, Chapter 3 will discuss the setting of Indonesian and the context of the political situation and finally the nature of the Acehnese conflicts. The objective of chapter 3 is to give deeper understanding of the political setting of the Acehnese rebellions in Indonesia. Chapter 4,5, and 6 will apply the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese rebellions on three different regimes and periods in Indonesia, which are under Soekarno regime, Soeharto regime, and the reform regimes after 1998.

CHAPTER 3:

INDONESIA AND THE ACEHNESE REBELLIONS

A. Introduction

This chapter will explain the significance contexts of the geography and ethnicity, the politics of Indonesia, and how the Indonesian politics relate to the Acehnese rebellions. In this chapter, my discussion will begin by acknowledging the geography and ethnicity of Indonesia and will continue with exploring the politics and ideology in Indonesia since 1945. Furthermore, this chapter will analyze the ideological debate between the Islamic ideology proponent and the secular nationalist proponent that influence the stance of the Acehnese in dealing with the Indonesian central government. I will carry on my discussion on the nature of the Acehnese movement from their first rebellion in 1953 to their most recent rebellion in 1998 and the period after the changes of the Indonesian regime from an authoritarian to a more democratic regime. The objective of this chapter is explaining the significant setting of the Aceh conflicts in Indonesian context.

B. Geography and ethnicity in Indonesia

Before further discussion of the Indonesian politics, it is necessary to identify the geography and ethnicity of Indonesia in order to recognize the complexity of the Indonesian government in coping with the archipelago territory, which is more prone to the separatism movements. As Monica Toft illustrates, the existence of regional concentration of a particular group is very nearly a necessary condition for ethnic

rebellion.[67] This factor obtained in Aceh, as most of the Acehnese ethnic group was concentrated in Aceh territory.

Geographically, Indonesia is an archipelago that located in Southeast Asia, which consist of 17,508 islands. It is between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The area in total is 1,919,440 sq km and consists of 1,826,440 sq km of land and 93,000 sq km of water. More prominently, the country's geographic position on the Pacific Rim of Fire leaves the country vulnerable to earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunamis such as the one that struck Aceh and Nias in 2004.[68] This tsunami contributed to changes in the political constellation between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian central government. The post-tsunami conditions have changed the attitudes of the Acehnese through the GAM and also change the Indonesian central government so that negotiations for peaceful situation are achievable.

The Indonesian area spans from Sabang to Merauke, a geographical allegation of the Indonesian nationalists to show their claim in managing the ex-Dutch colonial area after Indonesian independence in 1945. Under the symbolic language of "from Sabang to Merauke," the Indonesian nationalist wanted to show that the Indonesian national space of Sabang of Aceh territory which start at the northern tip of Sumatra, the westernmost town, which lies off the coast of Aceh, and spans to Merauke, which lies in the southeastern corner of Irian Jaya (West Papua) territory. This entire region, nationalists believe, is integrated in a nation-state of Indonesia. However, these two territories,

---

[67] Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[68] "The CIA World Factbook-Indonesia," 2008. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html (accessed July 05, 2008)

Sabang in Aceh and Merauke in Irian Jaya, ironically are in the provinces where the demands for independence from Indonesia are very strong and as a result, the Indonesian nationalists often use this symbolic language to propagate its political agenda of a nation-state based on geographical territory.[69] Consequently, it is very difficult for the Indonesian central government to manage the more than 3,000 miles long archipelago and thus, rebellions, such as the Acehnese revolt, are more likely to occur in Indonesia.

Figure 3.1 The map of Indonesia

Sources: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html (retrieved at June 20, 2008).

Regarding ethno-linguistic issues, officially, the Indonesian people use *Bahasa Indonesia* as the national language, which originated from Malays language. However, the largest ethno-linguistic group is the Javanese, which comprise 40.6% of the

[69] David Webster, "From Sabang to Merauke: Nationalist Secession Movements in Indonesia," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 48, no. 1 (2007): 85.

Indonesian population.[70] At the same time, there are more than 300 ethnic groups with unique ethnic languages in Indonesia. Each ethnic group in Indonesia has their own territory base that very possibly leads to chauvinistic sentiments. Consequently, as Monica Duffy Toft shows, the existence of regional concentration of a certain groups is a required condition for ethnic insurgence, but when certain group stretch in different area, they almost never rebel.[71] This pattern is detected in many places in Indonesia. The rebellions of Papuan, Moluccas, East Timorese, Sundanese in West Java, and the Acehnese are examples of the consequence of the ethnic group concentration based upon territory. This phenomenon is known as regionalism revolt. Hence, these ethnic group rebellions fulfilled one of the necessary conditions of insurgency to revolt to the Indonesian central government.

Therefore, based on the geography and ethnicity in Indonesia, it is very difficult for the Indonesian central government to rule a 3,000 mile long archipelago, which consist of 17,508 islands, and more than 300 ethnic groups with their own ethnic languages. As a result, it is easy for separatist movements to gain ground in Indonesia.

C. The politics and ideology in Indonesia

On March 1, 1945 the Investigating Committee for the preparation of Indonesian independence was established under the support of Japanese occupation authorities to prepare for the Indonesian independence. This committee consisted of all representations

---

[70] ibid."The CIA World Factbook-Indonesia," 2008, citing data from 2000 census. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html (accessed July 05, 2008).

[71] Monica Duffy Toft, *Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 2003).

of the Indonesian ethnicity and geography. Here, there were two groups that oppose each other on the issue of the philosophical basis of an Indonesian state. There were the Islamic proponents who wanted to make an Islamic Indonesian state formally and the secular nationalist proponents who intended to unite all religions that exist in Indonesia.[72]

Both trains of thought had roots in the history and development of the Indonesian movements desire to gain independence. The secular nationalist groups argue that the struggle for independence began with the establishment of the first nationalist Indonesian movement of *Budi Utomo* (Noble Endeavor) on May 20, 1908, which arguably was "the first organization of the Indonesian nation which was arranged in a modern fashion, and which was the major significance."[73] The *Budi Utomo* was the pioneer of all other nationalist groups, which were based in Java because all of the members were the Javanese ethnic group. This movement came into existence as a reaction against colonialism and was aimed at a free Indonesia based upon nations. A free Indonesia became the final goal of the *Budi Utomo*. Hence, the secular nationalist group intended to unite all the different groups, ethnicity, geography, or even religions background under a principle unitary nation-state of Indonesia. In this context, on June 1, 1945, Soekarno (a secular nationalist and the first President of Indonesia) offered his Fives Principles (the *Pancasila*) as the intended basis of the state. They are as follows: *Kebangsaan* (Nationalism), *Internasionalisme atau Pri-Kemanusiaan* (internationalism or

---

[72] Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam, and the Ideology of Tolerance* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 10-11.

[73] Saifuddin Anshari, *The Jakarta Charter of June 1945* (Selangor, Malaysia: Muslim Youth Movements of Malaysia, 1979), 1.

Humanitarianism), *Mufakat atau Demokrasi* (Deliberation or Democracy), *Kesejahteraan Sosial* (Social Prosperity) and *Ketuhanan* (Beliefs in God). Furthermore, Soekarno offered the *Eka Sila* (One State Principle), which was the *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation, a unitary or integrality) principle[74]. It implies that Soekarno intended to create one nation-state of Indonesia based on the secular nationalist principles, the *Pancasila*.

On the other hand, Islamic nationalist groups referred to the establishment of the *Sarekat Islam* (S.I, Islamic Association) on October 16, 1905, as the starting point of the Indonesian nationalist movement. In addition, the Islamic group aimed that the struggle for the Indonesian independence had started a hundred years ago. It involved the heroes Abdul Hamid Diponegoro, Imam Bonjol, Sultan Babullah of Ternate, Teungku Cik di Tiro from Aceh and many others hero whose *jihads* (holy struggle in the name of God) shaped the history of Indonesia. Here, the Islamic groups aimed to formally create an Islamic Indonesian state in order to preserve an Indonesian independence for *Ummah* (Muslim community) and the freedom of Islam. Hence, the Islamic groups urged The Preparation Investigating Committee for Indonesian Independence to formally use the Islamic principles as the state philosophical basis of Indonesia by stating that they used the *Shari'ah Islam* (Islamic Laws). At the end of June 1945, The Preparation Investigating Committee for Indonesian Independence finally decided to use the *Piagam Jakarta* (Jakarta Charter) as the basis for the state principles. However, the words "with

[74] Ibid. 2.

the obligation to carry out the *shari'ah Islam* (Islamic Laws) for its adherents"[75] became the center of a debate on national level and triggered the regional Islamic rebellions in West Java, South Sulawesi, South Kalimantan, and in Aceh under the *Darul Islam* (Abode of Islam) banner. [76] Therefore, both groups of Islam and secular nationalists were claimed they had their own historical roots basis to justify they ideology regarding on their struggle for the formation of the Indonesian new nation-state. However, the states philosophical basis remained unresolved until Indonesian gained and proclaimed its independence from the Japanese on August 17, 1945 and decided to adopt the *Pancasila* as the philosophical basis to govern the state. The Independence took place in Jakarta, the Indonesian capital city.

D. Ideological debate between the Islamic and secular nationalist groups

Islamic proponents' political thoughts recognize that the majority of the Indonesian people identify Islam as their religion. 86.1% of the Indonesian populations are Muslim, 237,512,355 people, and thus, Indonesia has largest Muslim population in the world.[77] However, not all those who identify as Muslim are devoted to Islam although they formally call themselves Muslim. One reason why it is difficult to determine Indonesian devotion to Islam is because there are many different types of Muslim in Indonesia. According to Herbert Faith and Lance Castles stated that there are five

---

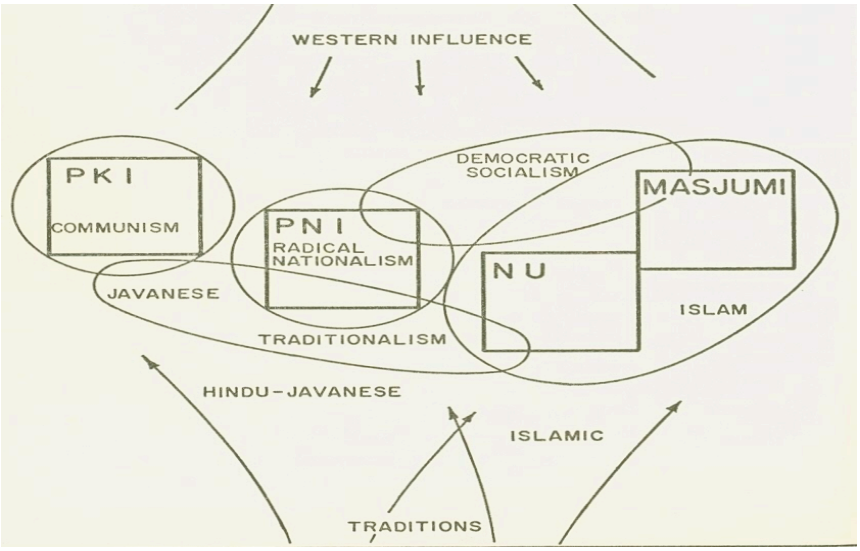
[75] Ibid. p. 20.

[76] Cees Van Dijk, *Rebellion Under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia* (Netherlands: Hague-Martinus Nijhoff, 1981). See also Cees Van Dijk, "Islam and Socio-Political Conflicts in Indonesian History," *Social Compass* XXXI, no. 1 (1984): 5-25.

[77] Ibid. "The CIA World Factbook-Indonesia," 2008, citing data from July 2008 estimation.

influencing fundamental political Indonesian thought, which are radical nationalism, Javanese traditionalism, Islam, democratic socialism, and communism. These ideologies molded and influenced the Indonesian people, especially those who are Muslim. [78]

Figure 3.2 The Political map in Indonesia in 1955



Source: Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, "Indonesian Political Thinking: 1945-1965" (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), 14.

Clifford Geertz argues that ideologically, there are two types of Muslim people in Indonesia. The first type is *santri*. *Santri* define those Muslim who are very religious and strictly follow Islam and the second type of Muslim is *abangan*. *Abangan* is a syncretistic people, the "statistical Muslims" or "Muslims of a sort" [79] or in other words, *abangan* is the secular people who acknowledge the existence of religion but they do not practice the religion." S*antri* is a religious and a devoted person to Islam as their ideology and

[78] Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, "Indonesian Political Thinking: 1945-1965" (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), 12-24.

[79] Ibid. 8.

abangan is on the other side of *santri* and thus, *abangan* ideologically, is more close to nationalist. The political preferences of *santri* people tend to adopt Islam as their ideology and their political preferences include choosing the members of the house of representative and they prefer Islam as their philosophical basis for Indonesian state. In contrast, the *abangan* people prefer secular nationalist when voting for their representative and prefer *Pancasila,* as the Indonesian state philosophical basis.

In fact, many Indonesian, since the 1955 general election, tended to support secular nationalists (*abangan*) rather than *santri* even though most of Indonesian identifies them as Muslim. This pattern of support was shown in every general election in Indonesia. The two most recent general elections (1999 and 2004) in Indonesia also indicate that the secular nationalist (*abangan*) is still stronger rather than the *santri*.

3.1 Major Parties in Indonesian and Recent Parliamentary Elections Result (Percent of Vote)

Name	**Notes**	**1999**	**2004**
Golkar (functional Group Party)	Secular party, former ruling party of Suharto [nationalist, abangan]	22.4	21.6
PDI-P (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle	Secular party, the third-largest party under Suharto's rule [and this party originated was the re-birth of PNI of Soekarno, the first Indonesian President's party]. [nationalist, abangan]	33.7	18.5
PKB (National Awakening Party)	Inclusive party, supported by Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organization.	12.6	10.6
PPP (United Development Party)	Islamist party, the second-largest party under Suharto's rule.	10.7	8.5
PD (Democrat Party)	Secular party, newly formed before 2004 elections as political vehicle for Yudoyono. [nationalist, abangan]	-	7.5

PKS (Prosperous Justice Party)	Islamist party, supported by networks of educated young Muslims.	-	7.3
PAN (National Mandate Party)	Inclusive party, supported by Muhammadiyah, the second-largest Muslim organization.	7.1	6.4

Source: Qodari, Muhammad. "Indonesia's Quest for Accountable Governance." *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 2 (2005): 79.

Hence, the Indonesian people prefer to use the *Pancasila* (secular nationalist principles) as the philosophical basis of the Indonesian state rather than Jakarta Charter or *Piagam Jakarta* (state based on the Islamic religion).[80] In fact, the Indonesian constitution forces the government to remain relatively neutral on the issue of religion. This rejection of Indonesia's Islamic identity has caused several regional conflicts within the country.

One of the consequences of rejecting Islam as the guiding political force was the rise of regional revolts. For example, a radical Islam movement has challenged the Indonesian national government almost since the state's creation and dates from the late 1940's and erupted in 1953 under Kartosuwirdjo leadership. The revolt initially began in the West Java province and spread out to Aceh under the banner of *Darul Islam*. The *Dural Islam* (Abode of Islam) movement was the earliest Islamic group that challenged the secular nationalist Indonesian central government, which until the 1960's used military resistance to shape and influence the creation of an Indonesian state based on Islam. The *Darul Islam* movement aimed to create Negara Islam Indonesia (NII, Indonesian Islamic State). Furthermore, the *Darul Islam* movement had spread to Aceh

[80] Bilveer Singh, "The Challenge of Militant Islam and Terrorism in Indonesia," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 58, no. 1 (2004): 48-49.

led by Daud Bereueh, the Acehnese *ulama* (Islamic scholar) leader, who considered Indonesian national government inconsistent with the principles of Islam as a state philosophical basis[81]. Starting from 1976, Hasan di Tiro, the descendant of Tengku cik di Tiro, as an Islamic hero in Indonesia and the leader of Free Aceh Movement (GAM), fought for the Acehnese Islamic nation-state independence not only because of greater autonomy on religious issues and the economic exploitation by Jakarta, but also under the banner of nationalism.[82] Therefore, the political ideology debate occurred on a national level had influenced the position of the Acehnese in taking action to defend their identity and its political entity as part of the Islamic community in creating the Indonesian Islamic State.

E. The Origins of the Acehnese rebellions

The history of the Acehnese rebellion has lasted for decades, even though not continuously in the form of clearly armed conflicts. Despite the fact that all events are interconnected, every period of rebellion has its own cause, actors, local as well as national influences, and reactions of the Indonesian central government to the Acehnese rebellion. The rebellions of the Acehnese are symbolized by the events that motivate the Acehnese to revolt against the Indonesian national government. The three symbolic events are the Daud Bereueh movement in 1953, the formation of Free Aceh Movement

---

[81] Ibid. p. 50.

[82] Edward Aspinall, "From Islamism to Nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia," in *Nation and Nationalism* 13, no. 2 (2007): 245-246.

and its complexity throughout the New Order era under Soeharto regime (the second Indonesian President), and the GAM in the Reformation era after 1998.

Since Indonesia gained its independence on August 17, 1945, the Indonesian central government could only exercise minimal control over the Aceh region because of the struggle to ensure Indonesian state survival in the face of increasing Dutch disturbance. At the same time, the Dutch had made no attempt to re-inhabit Aceh and thus Aceh was left to its own devices.[83] Consequently, Aceh's commitment to the Indonesian central government at that moment was strengthened by the fact that it was free to run its own affairs without central interference, and the Acehnese expected that their region's "historical separateness and its contribution to the national revolution …would be accorded due recognition in a future Indonesian state." [84] At the same time, the Acehnese had given plenty economic and political contributions to the Indonesian central government in the emerging periods of Indonesia's independence. For example, in 1948, the Acehnese contributed financial assistance and two airplanes from the Acehnese people to the Indonesian central government.[85]

a. The *Darul Islam* movement under Daud Bereueh leadership

In 1953, the Acehnese was felt disappointed by the Indonesian central government because nit abandoned the autonomous status of the Aceh region and

---

[83] Clive J. Christie, A Modern History of South East Asia Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism (New York: I.B. Touris. Co. Ltd, 1996), 146.

[84] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992* (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University, 1995), 10.

[85] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992* (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University, 1995), 10.

designated Aceh as a part of the North Sumatra province. Moreover, Aceh had its own military force under Daud Bereueh, the Acehnese *ulama* (Islamic scholars) leader that was very influencial in the Acehnese peoples' lives, and the Acehnese military had its own trading networks that were separate from the Indonesian central government control until the end of 1952. The policies from Indonesian central government that included Aceh part of the North Sumatra Province had insulted the Acehnese self-respect and more importantly, the policy also damaged the network of self-government that had been operating in the late 1940's.[86] The Acehnese objections were based on the fact that they were already loyal to the Republic of Indonesia through contributions of airplanes and financial assistance. The Acehnese contributions were a concrete devotion and the Acehnese people were kind of hero during the revolutionary years. However, because of their forced inclusion in North Sumatra Province, they had been marginalized and betrayed by the Indonesian central government.[87]

Another disappointment of the Acehnese was that the constitution of the Indonesian state was not based on Islam or the Jakarta Charter and instead the Indonesian's constitution was based on *Pancasila* (the Five Principles), which prioritized secular principles. Historically, the Acehnese have a strong identity as militant Muslims because Aceh is well known as Pasai Kingdom, the first Islamic kingdom in Malays area. Moreover, when they fought against the Dutch, the Acehnese used the myths of *Hikayat Perang Sabil* (HPS, the Epics of the holy war) as their Islamic depiction of the holy fight.

---

[86] Clive J. Christie, A Modern History of South East Asia Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism (New York: I.B. Touris. Co. Ltd, 1996), 148.

[87] Ibid. 148.

Those who struggled in this epic would be rewarded with the delights of paradise.[88] This epic also includes discussion of prosecuting holy war against infidels. Hence, the Acehnese have a strong identity as devoted Muslims. The consequences of adopting the myth of HPS resulted in a revolt to have an Islamic Indonesian state in 1953 under Daud Bereueh leadership through the *Darul Islam* rebellions.[89] Bereueh was a very central leader because the Acehnese recognized him as an Islamic leader, a noble heir, and as an official Aceh local government leader.

b. Free Aceh Movement under Soeharto's regime of the New Order era (1969-1998)

The second symbolic event is the insurgency led by Hasan di Tiro. The insurgency started in 1976 with the formation of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Hasan di Tiro established GAM as the Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF) in October 1976. He is a descendant of well-known *ulama* (Islamic scholar) family of Muslim clergy and more importantly, he is a grandson of Teungku Cik di Tiro, the hero of the anti-colonial fight against the Dutch.[90]

---

[88] Edward Aspinall, "From Islamism to Nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia," in *Nation and Nationalism* 13 no. 2 (2007): 245-246.

[89] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*, (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985). See also C. Van Dijk, Rebellion Under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981).

[90] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004), 4. See also Lukman Thalib, *A Historical Study of the National Movement for the Independence of Acheh-Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaya Press, 2002), 259.

The insurgency arose because central and regional failed to commit to a policy of special autonomy of Aceh Province. However, the Free Aceh Movement's main goal is to gain Aceh independence while the *Darul Islam* revolt sought an Islamic state. For 25 years (1951 through 1976), Hasan di Tiro lived in the United States of America as a student and later became a businessman. Even he claims, in his published diary, that he was in exile in the United States of America.[91] Moreover, di Tiro was committed as an Indonesian delegation member in the United Nations until the *Darul Islam* rebellions broke out in 1953 and di Tiro choose to support Daud Bereueh. Hasan di Tiro secretly returned to Aceh because of his beliefs in his historical family obligation, which is to struggle for the Acehnese independence.[92]

The GAM's ideology is national liberation. Hence, the GAM's purpose is to make the Acehnese free from all political suppression, including the Indonesian government.[93] GAM portrayed the Javanese Indonesian government as the continuation of the Dutch colonial rule. They have similarities in terms of their behavior of invasion and occupation of the Acehnese people. In contrast, the Indonesian government described the GAM as a betrayer of the Republic of Indonesia. Moreover, the GAM's objective is to ensure "the survival of the people of Aceh-Sumatra as a nation; the survival of their political, social,

---

[91] Hasan di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary* (Noshborg, Sweden: National Liberation Acheh Sumatra, 1981), 15.

[92] Hasan di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary* (Noshborg, Sweden: National Liberation Acheh Sumatra, 1981), 6-16. Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 4. See also Lukman Thalib, *A Historical Study of the National Movement for the Independence of Acheh-Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaya Press, 2002), 259.

[93] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 6.

cultural, and religious heritage which are being destroyed by the Javanese colonialist" and to reopen "the question of decolonization of the Dutch East Indies or 'Indonesia." [94] Here, Schulze categorized the Acehnese as ethnically nationalistic and follower of Islam.[95]

Schulze pointed out that the Acehnese nationalist movement constructed by GAM is ethnic rather than public. They construct themselves through the primordial perspective that ties the Acehnese through blood, religion and ethnic group affiliations. Therefore, an Acehnese is defined as "a person whose family has resided in Aceh over several generations, is Muslim, and is a member of one of Aceh's nine *suku* [ethnic group]: Aceh, Alas, Gayo, Singkil, Tamiang, Kluet, Anek Jamee, Bulolehee, and Simeuleu."[96]

The GAM was a small, very organized, and ideological organization that consisted of 70 people as their core organizers, which led by a highly educated elite class.[97] The GAM declared the Acehnese an independent nation for the second time in December 4, 1976 after Daud Bereueh declared its independence for the first time. The second declaration of Aceh independence aimed at showing the political and ideological features of the Acehnese fights. This second declaration was a symbol that created a hostile situation in Aceh and was an instrument to mobilize the Acehnese to follow Hasan

---

[94] See the ASNLF website (www.asnlf.net) retrieved at July 8, 2008.

[95] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 7-8.

[96] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 7.

[97] Ibid. 4.

di Tiro, as the leader of Acehnese. However, the GAM's members were unprepared well in term of the organization financial supports and in the armed forces to fight against the Indonesian military forces. For example, the GAM owned only a "few old guns and remnants from World War II", and got money from townspeople to support their fights.[98] It was proven by the fact that, by the end of 1979, Indonesian central government ran counterinsurgency operations and easily crushed the GAM by government forces.

Even though the GAM failed, it was never entirely destroyed by the Indonesian government forces. During the 1980s, some of the GAM members remained in the forests of Aceh and the recruitment of GAM members continued.[99] From his new exile in Sweden since 1976 to recently,[100] di Tiro commanded his followers in Aceh by sending recorded speeches and writings. Furthermore, he searched for International political and military support and opened GAM organizations in Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, the United States, and Europe.[101]

In 1989, GAM consolidated its organization and was more aggressive than it had been in 1977 because in 1989, GAM had larger amount of supporters and a more skilled military. Their actions spread throughout the Aceh territory aggressively. In 1989 through

---

[98] Kirsten E. Schulze, The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 4 (2003), 243.

[99] Hasan di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary* (Noshborg, Sweden: National Liberation Acheh Sumatra, 1981), 66.

[100] Hasan di Tiro had been lived in USA since 1951 through 1976 and since then after he lived in Sweden as his exile.

[101] Kirsten E. Schulze, The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 4 (2003), 244.

1991, GAM had gained strength and had around 200 to 750 active members. Even though Libya had provided military training, it did not offer the GAM any additional funds or weaponry. Some money was apparently raised among the Acehnese, weapons were stolen, or perhaps, purchased, from the Indonesia security forces. GAM acquired 200 automatic rifles and light machine guns by June 1990.[102]

The activities of the Free Aceh Movement provoked a harsh response from the Indonesian military. In fact, the Indonesian government deployed 6,000 troops in Aceh, bringing the total number of soldiers in July 1990 to 12,000 troops.[103] Since July 1990, Aceh was designated a *Daerah Operasi Militer* or "DOM" (area of military operations) by the Indonesian central government. This designation implies the military has a heightened degree of authority and could perform its maneuvers with impunity. The Indonesian military, well known as ABRI (currently called TNI), adopted a strategy in Aceh centered on a terror campaign known as "shock therapy," which aimed to create fear in the society and make the Acehnese abandon their support of the GAM.[104] While the separatists were widely reported to have committed violence, there was a big difference in the scale of violence between the two sides in this respect. Indonesian lawyers reported in November 1990 that the community criticized the Indonesian armed forces actions, and that "their hatred and fear of ABRI" had reached its peak. The

---

[102] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992* (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University, 1995), 22-23.

[103] Ibid. 74.

[104] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 4.

Indonesian military personnel were stereotyped as a party that was unaware and reckless of local customs and traditions, thus worsening the degree of popular antipathy.[105]

In addition to military policy adopted by Indonesian government, an estimated 50,000 Javanese, who came as part of a national transmigration program of Soeharto, the second President of Indonesia, in the 1980s and 1990s, were terrorized into leaving their homes in North, East, and Central Aceh. Following harassment by the GAM including terrorization, the acquisition of property and goods through the use of force and even arms threats in September 1999, thousands of the Javanese transmigrants were escaping Aceh reported by The Jakarta Post.[106]

Nonetheless, the Indonesian military forces accomplished their main goal of neutralizing the GAM's paramilitary threat.[107] The Indonesian central government's response was victorious and immediately effective. Since the DOM policy was implemented in the 1991, the GAM's actions decreased to a minimum and many of GAM's leaders in the field had been captured or killed. However, the government faces new burden of human right violations, antipathy, and more importantly the increase of the Acehnese support and the popularity of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) for the Acehnese freedom and independence. According to the International Crisis Group report of 2001, the number of casualties resulting from the conflict between 1990 and 1998 was

---

[105] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992* (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University, 1995), 74-76.

[106] Kirsten E. Schulze, The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 4 (2003), 261.

[107] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992* (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University, 1995), 74.

1,000-3,000 killed, 900 to 1,400 Acehnese missing and presumed dead, 500 maimed, and 700 dwellings torched. The Javanese Indonesian government caused the vast majority of deaths.[108]

By the end of the DOM policy in 1998, GAM had nearly been defeated in Aceh. However, the potential power of GAM is still powerful and continues to survive. It is because the leader of GAM, Hasan di Tiro, was secure in exile where he continued to spread the idea of the Acehnese independence. Another reason is that some of the GAM's elite members escaped to Malaysia and continue to exist alongside the refugees. And the last reason why GAM continues to have power is that the DOM is responsible for along with the new generation of the Acehnese to witness the military violence. After Soeharto falls in 1998 the new generation of the Acehnese strongly identified themselves as supporters of GAM. The Acehnese continued to feel as if were the victims of the Indonesian military.[109] When Soeharto's regime collapsed, it was a great opportunity for the Acehnese to claim their right to justice and freedom. Here, the GAM re-emerged and furthermore transformed into a more popular ethno-nationalist movement since the reformation era in 1998 onward.

c. Free Aceh Movement in reformation era (1998-now)

---

[108] International Crisis Group, *Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace*, Asia Report 17 (Jakarta: International Crisis Group, 2001), 3.

[109] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 5.

The reformation era of 1998 brought important opportunities for GAM to develop and re-establish itself because of the financial crisis in the Indonesia state and because of the momentum of the East Timor referendum to separate from the Indonesia state in 1999, the proximity of the 1989 DOM, and the decline of credibility of the Indonesian central government. The people of Aceh found the courage to come forward and bring the years of terror and brutality to the attention of the communities. The fast growing for desire a referendum to choose whether or not the Acehnese wanted to stay a part of Indonesia or if they wanted to separate as their own nation-state was the common will of the Acehnese and a the measure of their political activism after years of suppression under DOM.

Inspired by the Timorese referendum in choosing whether they wanted to stay a part of Indonesia or if they wanted to be an independent nation-state of East Timor, which resulted in Indonesia being forced to give up its claim on the territory, made the people of Aceh look for a similar option. In September 1999, East Timor's referendum was held and in the following month, there were massive rallies across Aceh that encouraged a similar referendum. The referendum of East Timor was a "blueprint" for the Acehnese and also a key propaganda strategy employed by the media and other information communication technologies. The Acehnese assumed that the international community would have the same sympathy for them as they did for the East Timor people. Baharuddin Yusuf Habibie, the Indonesian transition President or the third President, who replaced the President Soeharto, visited Aceh in March 1999 and promised that the army's abuses would be investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted. These promises went unfulfilled and only encouraged secessionist sentiment and

damaged the central government's credibility (Head, 1999 on www.wsws.org, retrieved at June 23, 2008). In addition, the arrival of the Abdurrahman Wahid, the fourth Indonesian President, in October 1999 brought little relief to the Acehnese although Wahid stated that he would personally handle the Acehnese conflict. Once in office, however, he was pressured by his administration to withdraw his support.[110]

The reluctances of the Acehnese to build a peace process with the Indonesian government were because of the Indonesian commitment problem and the violence of the Indonesian military during the DOM era. The Acehnese had little reason to believe the Indonesian national government's assurances of special autonomy because the promises of commitment regarding the Acehnese conflict were broken. The Indonesian military's violence actions during the DOM period made a renewed conflict more likely, due to widespread antipathy towards the Indonesian military. Therefore, it provided the GAM with willing recruits who were motivated to take revenge on the military.[111]

On May 18, 2003, the negotiations between the Indonesian national government and GAM finally failed. The GAM negotiators rejected the autonomous status for the territory within Indonesia that was offered by the Indonesian central government and refused to put down their arms. As a result the Indonesian national government warned the GAM that this offer of an autonomous status and ceasefire order was their final offer in that negotiation. Hence, the Indonesian national government had warned that GAM's rejection would mean a new military attack and this stalemate ended the peace process.

---

[110] International Crisis Group, *Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace*, Asia Report 17 (Jakarta: International Crisis Group, 2001), 4.

[111] Ibid. 31.

On the GAM side, Malik Mahmud told journalists "the Indonesian government wishes to continue its war on the Acehnese." He continued stating that, "We shall fight. We are ready. We have been fighting for twenty-seven years."[112]

Regarding this issue, obviously the GAM and the Indonesian national government had very different goals. The GAM wanted independence because they had memories of the brutality of the Indonesian military in the DOM era from 1989 to 1998. They have strong feelings regarding their distinct identity, which derives from the history of the pre-colonial sultanate, the resistance to the Dutch military actions and more recently the GAM insurgency due to a reaction to the policies and behavior of the Javanese Soeharto regime.[113] In contrast, the Indonesian national government wanted an autonomous status within Indonesia for Aceh. These different desires of the GAM and Indonesian government regarding negotiation have made it difficult for both parties to reach an agreement.

Because the Indonesian national government under Megawati Soekarno Putri's leadership, the fifth Indonesian president and descendant of Soekarno, perceived the GAM as refusing to compromise, signed a decree placing Aceh under martial law. In May 19, 2003, the Indonesian national government under Megawati Soekarno Putri's leadership immediately implemented military Integrated Operation I and II (Minority Rights Group International, 2005: p. 20). Directly after the decree been signed, the military commander in chief, General Endriartono Sutarto, commanded tens of thousands

---

[112] The Jakarta Post, May 19, 2003 (www.jakartapost.com) retrieved at July 10 2008.

[113] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992* (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University, 1995).

of troops to gather in Aceh to begin a "Security Restoration Operation" for purpose of "[destroying] GAM forces down to their roots." The troops' duty, he said, was simple: "they ha[d] the task of finishing off, and killing those who still engaged in armed resistance." [114] This message of martial law marked the end of the negotiation process that had begun early in 2000. The enforcement of the military operations ended exactly a year after its implementation in May 19, 2004 and since this date the Indonesian national government declared civil emergency status in Aceh territory.

F. Conclusion

The formation of the Indonesian nation-state in an archipelago has created a great deal of complexity when it comes to managing the archipelago for the Indonesian central government. This situation arose because geographically, Indonesia consists of more than 17,000 islands and ethnically, Indonesia has more than 300 ethnic groups that have certain territory that is more prone to separatism because of the ethnic group concentration in certain places. These unique geographical and ethnic concerns have created various political and ideological debates from the beginning of the Indonesian formation in 1945. The debates were between the Islamic supporters and the secular nationalists supporters. The Islamic supporters claimed that Indonesia should be an Indonesian Islamic state based on the Jakarta Charter, while the secular nationalist groups demanded Indonesia should be a unitary secular state based on *Pancasila*, which prioritized a secular nationalist principles.

---

[114] *Kompas*, May 20, 2003 (www.kompas.com) retrieved at July 12, 2008.

One of the consequences of these ideological conflicts was the attitude of the Acehnese in response to secular nationalists' Indonesian government. The Acehnese who identified themselves as strong believers of Islam were concerned about the secular Indonesian state basis that would threaten the Acehnese through the designated policy of the Indonesian central government that included Aceh a part of the North Sumatra Province whose population consist of North Sumatrans who were non-believers of Islam. Hence, to defend their identity as strong believers of Islam, the Acehnese revolted against the Indonesian central government under the *Darul Islam* (Abode of Islam) banner in 1953. Therefore, the adoption of Islam as the dominant religion and the basis for the political movement was clearly the main reason the Acehnese revolted against the secular Indonesian central government.

However, the revolts for the Acehnese change over time from Islam as the main basis of the Acehnese rebellion to nationalism combined with Islam as the guiding force. The Acehnese, through the leadership of Hasan di Tiro, differentiated their identity as Acehnese from the Javanese Indonesian government. In 1976, di Tiro took the opportunity to change the Acehnese identity from strong believers of Islam to Aceh nationalists. Di Tiro promoted the idea that Aceh should be viewed as a separate nation by promoting ethnic pride designated Aceh as the formal language of the Acehnese nation. The Javanese Indonesian central government was seen as the oppressors of the Aceh nation. Obviously, di Tiro's political agenda was to combine a new identity of Aceh nationalism and Islam as traditions of the Acehnese values. With this ideological combination of Islam and nationalism, he attracted the Acehnese attention to support his

political agenda to create a new Aceh nation by re-declaring Acehnese independence in 1976.

Hasan di Tiro succeeded in attracting masses of the Acehnese peoples' support to create their own nation to gain their freedom from the Javanese Indonesian government. The Acehnese supported the GAM under Hasan di Tiro leadership because the Indonesian government exploited the Acehnese resources by taking most of their economical resources to Java and left nothing to the Acehnese. Moreover, the Javanese Indonesian government continued to use *Pancasila* as the state basis of Indonesia, while the Acehnese still wanted to uphold Islam formally as their legal basis in Aceh territory. Hence, conflicts were unavoidable between the Acehnese and the Indonesian central government though its armed forces.

After we discuss the contexts of geography and ethnicity, the political dynamic in Indonesia and the nature of the Aceh rebellions. On chapter 4 I will analyze the symbolic politics approach on the first case study of the Acehnese rebellion under the first Indonesian president, Soekarno regime. The aim of chapter 4 is to give details explanation of the applicability of the symbolic politics approach on the first erupt of Aceh conflict under the Javanese secular nationalist Soekarno regime.

CHAPTER 4:

THE ACEHNESE CONFLICTS UNDER SOEKARNO'S PERIOD

A. Introduction

After we discuss the context of Indonesian politics, the debate of ideology, and the relationship of Indonesian politics to the nature of the Acehnese rebellions; I will now discuss the applicability of the symbolic politics approach on the first outbreak of the Acehnese conflict under Soekarno regime. This study attempts to explain the first outbreak of the Acehnese conflict within the Indonesian state against the Indonesian central government under Soekarno leadership. Focusing on the myth hostility, fears, opportunity, mass hostility, and hostile mobilization my main goal is to highlight the symbolic politics theory on the 1953 Acehnese rebellion under the *Darul Islam* movement. I argue that the outbreak of the Acehnese conflict must be viewed as a result of the politics of the myths and symbols from both elites. The elites from both sides utilize the myths and symbols that exist on their own group to provoke the hostile situations and thus, mass hostility arise especially on the Acehnese side.

The Acehnese under Daud Bereueh leadership feel threaten by the fact that Soekarno forces the Acehnese to adopt secular *Pancasila* ideology rather than the Islamic ideology in Indonesia. Moreover, Soekarno insist to include Aceh territory to the North Sumatra Province. These Indonesian government policies are considered a threat to the existence of the Acehnese identity. In response the Daud Bereueh declared the

Acehnese independent as a way to shows their nation's strength over the Javanese Indonesian side. Kartosuwirjo as the *Darul Islam* movement leader supported this revolt. Thus, conflict between the Javanese Indonesian government and Daud Bereueh movement was unavoidable because myths, fears, and opportunity were present. Conflicts are more likely to happen because the Daud Bereueh evoked the myths and symbols of the Acehnese as the true believers of Islam.

In this chapter my discussion will begin by exploring the three preconditions of the Acehnese ethnic conflict; the myths of hostility from both ethnic groups, fears of extinction on both sides, and the existence of opportunity for mobilization leading to hostile situations. These hostile situations are followed by mass hostility, which created elites like Soekarno and Daud Bereueh. Eventually, their politics of myths and symbols created hostile emotions among their supporters and thus, conflict arose.

B. Myths justifying hostility

The Acehnese used the myth of Islam as a way to fight against the Dutch colony, the non-believers of Islam, concretely created by the *Hikayat Perang Sabil* (the Epic of the Holy War) for the devoted Muslim of Aceh.[115] The Daud Bereueh used his power as an Islamic scholar leader of the Acehnese to revive this myth in order to gain support from the Acehnese. He used this support to justify his political agenda and create new hatred toward the secular nationalists of Indonesian central government. Peter G.

[115] Teuku I. Alfian, "Aceh and the Holy War (*Prang Sabil*)," in *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, edited by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006).

Riddell[116] stated that historically, the Acehnese had their experiences with the colonials, starting from the Portuguese in the 16th and the 17th Century and then the Dutch. The Acehnese ethnic identity formation began through the anti-colonial campaigns, using the Islamic value and its myths as their core political culture. In the 16th and the 17th Century, the Acehnese identified themselves as the 'Serambi Mecca' to shows their identity as the most devoted territory and people to Islam. At that time, the Acehnese dealt with violence, which became an effective catalyst in identity formation. The contact with the Ottoman Turkish authorities led to the acquisition of significant material assistance. The Aceh sent various envoys to Sulaiman the Great in Constantine in 1563, requesting help against the Portuguese. Furthermore, this sense of pan-Islamic authority overriding pan-Malays sentiment is found in the developing perception of final authority laying not with the Acehnese, but with significant people in the Muslim heartlands of Mecca.

Here, the Acehnese identified themselves as the strong believers of Islam because they feel significantly related to the Ottoman Empire in Turks. More importantly, they felt bound with the people in the Muslim heartlands of Mecca and it implies that the Acehnese felt more devoted to Islam than the rest of the Indonesia ethnic groups. These myths and symbols of Islam and its relationship with the Mecca Muslim community allow the Acehnese to justify hostile conditions against non-believers and secular Javanese ethnic groups. This hostility is present after the revolution from 1945 to 1949 and fueled the debate of the formation of the Indonesian Islamic state.

---

[116] Peter G. Riddell, Aceh in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: "Serambi Mekkah" and Identity," in *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, edited by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 46-48.

Under the Dutch periods, the Acehnese wrote their ethnic literature on the epics of *Hikayat Perang Sabil* (HPS), also known as jihad or the Holy War. This HPS myth-symbols complex is a very important text that was used by the Acehnese in fighting the Dutch colonialism. The Acehnese persisted with the tradition and rhetoric of Holy War, a belief that had been deeply rooted among the Acehnese people.[117] This is the language of the Moslem community that glorifies the heroism of the *sabililah*, from Arabic, which means one that dies for the faith. The Acehnese has emerged as heroes seeking death as the only means towards the highest self-fulfillment. This passion to kill those enemies who are not Muslim brings social and spiritual merit. In this case, the enemies were the colonials who were non-believers of Islam.

The myth-symbol complex becomes one of the key aspects that is increasing hostility through chauvinism or warrior (leader) ethos, in which they believe that their own group is greater and better than the other groups. The myths can be re-portrayed by elites to create such hostile conditions. Using the myth-symbol complex that is already familiar, the elite uses and propagates these myths as a way to achieve legitimacy. The myth of *Perang Sabil* (Holy War) was used by the Daud Bereueh movement under the *Darul Islam* movement as a means to fight in the name of Islamic religion against the non-believers of Islam and the Javanese ethnic group through the Indonesian central government. This myth has been exaggerated to justify the hostile situation and mobilize the ethnic war.

---

[117] Teuku I. Alfian, "Aceh and the Holy War (*Prang Sabil*)," in *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, edited by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 117-119.

Moreover, during the revolutionary period from 1945 to 1949 the Acehnese gathered with the rest of the Indonesians, including the Javanese, to fight against the Dutch who intended to return to the ex-Dutch East Indies territory. The Acehnese used the myth in fighting the *kaphee* or non-believers of Islam against the Dutch. This myth was meant to demonize the Dutch and create a symbol for religious fighting against the Christian Dutch. As a result the Acehnese elites and the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) gained full popular support from the Acehnese people.[118] The Acehnese symbolized the struggle of revolution and together with the rest of Indonesia defended Islam from the Dutch. Obviously, the Acehnese are strong believers of Islam and thus they are willing to share the revolutionary struggle with the rest of Indonesian because both parties have the same religion.

However, after the revolution ended, the Indonesian central government upset the Acehnese by not using Islamic law and instead used *Pancasila* as the states basic principle to unite all religions, cultures, languages, and demographic differences. Hence, the Acehnese made an expression to demonize the Indonesian central government saying *habis manis sepah dibuang* (meaning "after the sugar cane has been chewed it is thrown away"). The Acehnese success in the Indonesian revolution had been forgotten once the Dutch were defeated and Indonesia gained its independence in 1945.[119] This expression created the myth that the Acehnese started to hate the Indonesian central government, which was dominated by the Javanese ethnic group. In other words, the Acehnese made

---

[118] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*, (Singapore, Institute of Souteast Asian Studies, 1985), 30.

[119] Ibid. 41.

an expression of dissatisfaction to mythologize the secular Indonesian central government as an inconsistent party. This myth further legitimized the Acehnese creation of hostile attitudes toward the Indonesian central government.

In line with the Acehnese expression, the Acehnese mythologize the Indonesian central government, which is dominated by the Javanese. Arguing their intentions are similar to the Dutch intention, which wanted to make Aceh a secular or non-Islamic territory. The Dutch fought against the Acehnese *ulama* or Islamic scholars to Christianize the Acehnese. Meanwhile the Indonesian central government under Soekarno's leadership wanted to make a unitary Indonesian state by making all territories, including Aceh, form under the secular state based on *Pancasila*. Consequently, the Indonesian central government duplicating the Dutch colonial strategies by followed the policies applied by the Dutch in Java.

In fact, in a disappointing meeting with the first Indonesian president of Soekarno in Kutaraja in 1948, the president only promised the Acehnese he would try to make Aceh an Islamic region. Soekarno emphasized his reluctance of an Islamic Indonesian state and only stated that Indonesia would be based on Islamic principles, which believes in God, to include the *Pancasila*.[120] This behavior of the Soekarno was influenced by the myth of power in the Javanese political culture. *Pancasila* is based on the concept of the power of Javanese culture, which stipulates that power would increase if the leader could unite the heterogeneous groups of Indonesia under his leadership. Hence, it implies that the *Pancasila* as state principles is clearly referred to the concept of power of the

[120] Ibid. 30.

Javanese culture.[121] In this context, the Acehnese see the *Pancasila* as derived from the Javanese culture that dominated the Indonesian central government. This government also appears to want to dominate Aceh territory.

Furthermore, the Acehnese *ulama*, which gathers in *Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh* (PUSA, all Aceh Religious Scholars' Association), has become the opposition of the Javanese oriented Indonesian central government. This is because the Indonesian central government consider the *ulama* strongly supported by the Acehnese people in struggling for the Islamic state.[122] In this sense, the *ulama* create the myth of non-believers of Islam for the Indonesian central government because the central government unwilling to uphold the Islamic law of Indonesian state through the *Piagam Jakarta* (Jakarta Charter).[123] Hence, it justifies any *ulama's* actions to uphold the Islamic state in Aceh and thus this Islamic myth justify the hostile attitudes.

At the national level, it was the ideological competition between the nationalists versus Islamic groups in frame of nation-building process. The nationalist groups prefer to uphold the secular ideology of *Pancasila* as the Indonesian state philosophy. Meanwhile, a number of Islamic groups favor the Jakarta Charter in order to uphold the

---

[121] Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 26.

[122] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*, 48-49.

[123] Martin van Bruinessen, "Islamic state or state Islam? Fifty years of state-Islam relations in Indonesia," in *Indonesien am Ende des 20* edited by Ingrid Wessel (*Jahrhunderts*, Hamburg: 1996), 22-23. Liem Soei Liong, "Indonesian Muslims and the State: Accommodation or Revolt?" *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988): 869-896. See also Nadirsyah Hosen, "Religion and the Indonesian Constitution: A Recent Debate," Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 36, no. 3 (2005): 419.

Islamic identity in the state philosophy.[124] Moreover in 1949, an Islamic group called the *Darul Islam* movement, which the Acehnese merge with, arose in West Java. Under the leadership of Sekar Madji Kartosuwiryo it responded to the competition between the nationalist and Islamic groups. The *Darul Islam* movement's objective was to create a *Negara Islam Indonesia* (Indonesian Islamic State) as republic. Kartosuwiryo thus symbolized the pioneer of the modern Islamic group movement in Indonesia.[125]

In short, the Acehnese revived the "ancient hatred" toward the *kaphee* Dutch, which dominated Aceh and tried to Christianize and oppresse the Acehnese. Hence, the image of the Dutch colonists became one of non-believers of Islam and the oppressors of the Acehnese. In the same way, the Acehnese recreated a modern hatred toward the secular Javanese oriented Indonesia central government as the non-believers of Islam and the oppressors of the Acehnese. This myth was to justify their movement to make the Indonesian state an Islamic state because the Acehnese perceived themselves as strong believers of Islam.[126]

The Javanese Indonesian myths. The Javanese are the majority ethnic group in Indonesia, until recently they comprised 40.6% of the Indonesian populations.[127] The Javanese ethnic group dominates the national structure of Indonesia. Furthermore, the ex-

---

[124] Liem Soei Liong, "Indonesian Muslims and the State: Accommodation or Revolt?" *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988): 872.

[125] Ibid. 873-874.

[126] B. J. Boland, *The struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 174-175.

[127] The CIA World Factbook, "Indonesia," 2008, citing data from 2000 census. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html (accessed July 05, 2008).

Dutch capital for the Dutch East Indies was in Batavia, which is located on Java Island. It has become the centre of Indonesia. All central economic, political, social and even cultural ideologies are on Java Island. Hence, it is no wonder that the Javanese dominate the Indonesian government. For the newly independent government, Aceh, just as it was for the old colonial authorities in Batavia or Jakarta, revealed to be a remarkably complex region to control. The Javanese people called and described the Acehnese as a "stubborn" people.[128]

On the other hand, the mythologies of Javanese culture, that is the concept of power were obviously the main symbols for the Javanese Indonesian central government under Soekarno leadership. This symbol brought conflict with the regions that did not want to obey them. The myth of the Javanese concept of power had influenced Soekarno in implementing various policies to all regions and affected the way the Indonesian central government behaves. The concept of power in the Javanese culture required that if a leader wants to have the ultimate power then he must be able to unite all different sources of power. For example, Indonesia is a perfect imagined community that unites all differences such as ethnic groups, religions, or even culture.[129] Hence, the motto of Indonesia is "Bhineka Tunggal Ika" or unity in diversity.[130]

---

[128] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion* (Singapore, Institute of Souteast Asian Studies, 1985), vii.

[129] Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 26, 35-36.

[130] Louise Prentice, "Intersecting Forces: Relevance of the Panca Sila to contemporary Indonesian Society," in *Asian Social Scince* 3, no. 9 (2007): 3.

Another example is the *Pancasila*. *Pancasila* is the concept of unifying the diversity that exists in Indonesia as the philosophical basis of the state. The first principle of *Pancasila* stated that the Indonesian belief of "One Lordship". Here, the Indonesian people admit religions that exist in Indonesia and thus; it also mean that Indonesia through the leader (president) unites the religions diversity. It implies that Indonesia wanted to harmonize the differences through unifying all differences. For instance, the policy of not granting Aceh an autonomous status and then including them in the North of Sumatra was meant to unify the diversity. In this sense, Soekarno attempted to unite Aceh, which is predominantly a Muslim area with the predominantly Christian area of North of Sumatra. This decision was meant to increase his power over the regions in Indonesia as the single political entity.

Soekarno's interests for national unity were part of his concern attributed to the Javanese cultural myth about a dispersion of power. Hence, he directed the *Pancasila* ideological foundation, which referred to the 1928 nationalist struggle of the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Oath of Youth). The *Sumpah Pemuda* was an Indies-wide youth congress, which declared that the future independent republic would create "satu bangsa, satu bahasa, and satu tanah air" (one people, one language, and one nation).[131] The *Sumpah Pemuda* mythologizes the Javanese Indonesian central government and military to guard Indonesian independence and guarantee the diverse nation comprising hundreds of ethnic groups and religions. Hence, when the Acehnese had spoken out against the Islamic

---

[131] See Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 36. See also Douglas Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 11.

Indonesian ideological foundation, the Javanese Indonesian central government claimed that the Acehnese were betraying the *Sumpah Pemuda* Oath. Therefore, the *Sumpah Pemuda* Oath myth was justifying hostility of the Javanese Indonesian government.

Furthermore, in the concept of power of the Javanese stated, "power does not raise the question of legitimacy."[132] The Javanese Indonesian central government implemented the policy toward the Acehnese without an agreement between the central government and the Aceh regions declaring it was justifiable. Hence this myth of power, in this context, is justifying hostile attitudes of the Javanese to oppress the Acehnese. In addition, the myth of Java as the centre of power and the belief that the leader is justified to act in any means to make the followers obey legitimizes the use of violence, conflict, and even war.

C. Fears of extinction

The Acehnese fears. According to Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, in his book "The Republican Revolt: A study of the Acehnese Rebellion," soon after the revolutionary period ended in 1949, the Acehnese began to ask that the future of the Indonesian state to be an Islamic state rather than a secular state. Initially, the Acehnese were successful in channeling their demand to make an Aceh province based on the Islamic Law through Syafruddin Prawiranegara, the Deputy Prime Minister.[133] In December 1949, this demand responded without restraint by Syafruddin Prawiranegara, acting as the Head of the

[132] Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 23.

[133] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*, (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 35-36.

Pemerintah Darurat Republic Indonesia (PDRI, Temporary Government of the Republic of Indonesia), to established the province of Aceh. In addition, he also appointed the military region of Aceh as the governor of Aceh. On the contrary, the Indonesian Prime Minister Abdul Halim soon rejected the Acehnese demand, even though the Acehnese gained the approval of Syafruddin Prawiranegara. Even more, Soekarno, the Indonesian president, did not support the idea of Indonesian Islamic state.[134]

It implies that the imagined community of Indonesia under the Republic of Indonesia was the unity of all culture, religion, and ethnic groups that exist in the ex-Netherland colonial territory. While the Acehnese's imagined political community was an Islamic Indonesian state. The distinct imagined political community between the Acehnese and the Indonesian central government was influenced by the dominant culture in each party. The Indonesian central government under Soekarno leadership was influenced by the Javanese culture. The Javanese culture influenced Soekarno to unite all regions of ex-Netherlands colonies.[135] Historically, the period of Sultanate in Aceh was viewed as the first Islamic Kingdom, Kingdom of Peureulak, to be recognized in the region of Southeast Asia.[136] Therefore, the Acehnese and the Javanese Indonesian government had different the imagined communities. In this sense, the Acehnese felt threaten by the fact that the dominant Javanese ethnic group wanted to make domination

---

[134] Ibid. 35-36.

[135] Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 35-38.

[136] Lukman Thalib, *A Historical Study of the National Movement for the Independence of Acheh-Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaya Press, 2002), 1-4.

through assimilation program under the secular "imagined community" state of Indonesia.

Specifically, the Acehnese felt threaten by the decision of the Indonesian central government policy to included Aceh in the North Sumatra Province. The Acehnese feared the loss of their identity as Acehnese, which is a devoted Muslim region. The Acehnese see Islam, as their religion, as the symbol that drove them to fight against the Dutch before Indonesian independence and in the revolutionary period of Indonesian in 1945 to 1949. The Acehnese thought that their ethnic group's existence is at risk. These fears were inflated by emotion and feelings of the in and out-group. The Acehnese felt that they were not part of the North Sumatra Province because they have distinct characteristics, historical heritages, and cultural differences. Hence, the Acehnese were reluctant to be included in the North of Sumatra Province because they fear being dominated by the non-Aceh, Christian, and secular people in North Sumatra and Java area. This condition can confirm an unfriendly manner to the other groups.

Historically, the Acehnese had long experience of being dominated by the Dutch as a colony in Aceh. The Acehnese had been dominated and been the victims of the Dutch domination, and thus this condition triggered fears of the Acehnese ethnic groups extinction under the Indonesian central government. Furthermore, the myth of domination plays an important role in creating the fears of the dominated group. Once fears exist in a group, it justifies any violence in the name of self-defense. Such fears and threats facilitate the Acehnese ethnic group mobilization to defend themselves. For example, the Dutch oppressed the Acehnese especially the *ulama*, the informal

Acehnese leaders and Islamic scholars, as a form of domination to show their superiority over the Acehnese. The myth of the Dutch and the Javanese Indonesian domination create such fears for the Acehnese and more importantly creates the feelings of hatred and revenge to the rival group. In this case the rival group is the Javanese Indonesian central government.

In addition, the Acehnese have a long history dealing with the Sumatra area. Since the 1500's, before the Acehnese dealt with the Dutch, the Acehnese perceived themselves as a single nation. This single nation even ruled over the Sumatra territory. However, the coming of the Dutch to the Aceh land significantly changed the situation. The Acehnese fell short in their rule over the other Sumatran territories. Even more, the Acehnese and Aceh territory was dominated by East Sumatra.[137] This situation shows that the Acehnese, psychologically, could not accept the domination of a non-Acehnese leader in Aceh because they fear being dominated by the non-Acehnese in their own home.

However, the Indonesian central government has simply called this fear as only a regional sentiment.[138] The Indonesian central government did not recognize the psychological development of the Acehnese, which could stimulate the power of ethnic group fear to provoke ethnic mobilization and violence in the form of a revolt. The Indonesian central government's policy of uniting the Aceh area with the North of Sumatra Province offended the Acehnese and fueled the fear of non-Acehnese

[137] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*, (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 39.

[138] Ibid. 36.

domination. Therefore, the Acehnese felt threaten by the policy and such fears facilitate the Acehnese ethnic group mobilization to defend themselves.

The Javanese Indonesian fears. The formation of Indonesia as an imagined community is the final answer for the Javanese Indonesian central government. Which derived from the *Sumpah Pemuda* myth that there was demand to unite a nation from all the ex-Dutch East Indies territories under one banner of Indonesia despite the differences of ethnic languages, religions, territories, and ideologies. This myth of *Sumpah Pemuda* had created a strong state philosophical foundation, which is the *Pancasila*. The *Pancasila*, the five principles, was designed to establish a political compromise. *Pancasila* could construct a common platform on which all competing ideologies could meet and yet not threaten the essential unity of the Republic. Soekarno even emphasis that National unity will be threatens if one exclusive ideology, Islam in particular, were to be enshrined as the basis of the state for all citizens.[139] Hence, it implies that the national unity will be threaten if there is an ideology dominating one another or if one region is unwilling to unite because of the ideological, religions, culture or languages differences. In this sense, there will be no Indonesia as a nation if each of the regions of the ex-Dutch East Indies is unwilling to gather in one nation of Indonesia. This illustrates the fear of the dominant ethnic group of Javanese because they have lost their power or domination over the rest of the Indonesian territory. This insecure condition could create a hostile manner toward the rival group.

---

[139] Douglas Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance*, 12.

The Javanese Indonesian government feels insecure because the Acehnese have disrupted the creation of the Indonesian state. The Acehnese actions stimulate a hostile manner for the Javanese. These psychological developments rationalize fear to provoke ethnic mobilization, conflict, or even to act in the deadliest violence, genocide. The myth of national unity of Indonesia plays important roles in exposing that the Acehnese embarrass the Javanese ethnic group. The Acehnese felt that they had been very loyal to the Javanese Indonesian central government and that is the reason the Acehnese demanded their own province and asked Islamic law be used as the Indonesian state philosophical foundation. In fact, this Javanese fear justifies any violence in order to keep the national unity, as self-defense, under the secular Indonesian state. Such fear and threats stimulate the ethnic group mobilization to defend on their belief for self-defense.

D. Opportunity to mobilization

The ethnic conflict or war will take place if freedom for the ethnic group to mobilize is present with no state's repression. Aceh, under the Soekarno period, had significant opportunity to mobilize the Acehnese ethnic group because the Acehnese, especially the *ulama*, dominated the local rulers and local government structures. It had shown the Indonesian situation after gaining its independence from the Japanese in 1945. The period after Indonesian independence was the period of reclaiming the independence from the Dutch and maintaining the stability of domestic politics of Indonesian as a state and nation. This situation was illustrating the ignorance of the Indonesian central government toward the regions and thus it creates the feeling of regional sentiment as an opportunity to revolt toward the ignorant central government.

The Indonesia state, at this time, was vulnerable and combined with President Soekarno's centralizing policy created the opportunity for ethnic conflict or war in Indonesia. As Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin points out, vulnerable states like Indonesia typically establish control in their central territory to gain order. In exchange for maintaining order, these regional leaders are given power to control what passes in the institutions of the state in their regions. Soekarno aimed to centralize power under his leadership in 1950's by supporting his own cabinet, the loyal regional leader such as the North Sumatra leader, and regional military, to challenge the Acehnese leader, the *ulama*. The process weakened state institutions in regions like Aceh and Sumatra because the threatened *ulama* used their local institutions to keep power. One result of this process was the rise of regional sentiment from the East and North Sumatra regions, with Soekarno supporting the North and East Sumatra challengers.[140] In Aceh, the local leaders of *ulama* were strongly supported by the Acehnese because the Acehnese were very dependent on the religious leaders. For this reason, the Indonesian central government attempted to disengage the Acehnese from their *ulama* so that it could gain control. For example, the Indonesian central government dropped the Acehnese leaders and upheld the non-Acehnese leadership in Aceh territory.[141] This process showed the ignorance of the Indonesian central government's policy with respect to the prevailing local conditions. This created the opportunity needed for the regional sentiment to mobilize the ethnic group into using conflict or war.

---

[140] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion* (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 63-76.

[141] Ibid. 63-64.

The Acehnese people felt embarrassed by the central government's treatment of the *ulama*. Here, the Acehnese value system was deeply based on Islam. Hence, the Acehnese would no doubt have opposed any contradiction to religious values. Obviously, the insult to the *ulama*, as their religion's teachers, was against the Islamic religion. This gave the *ulama* the opportunity to mobilize. For example, the effect of the policy for putting non-Acehnese in the Aceh region was unacceptable behavior for the non-Acehnese. This policy ignored the local norms and beliefs allowing gambling and alcohol consumption, inappropriate relationships between men and women, and even the institutionalization of prostitution. The policies for putting the non-Acehnese in bureaucratic structure in Aceh had seriously distracted from the Acehnese values system. Therefore, it affects the image of the Indonesian central government in Aceh through its official's inappropriate behavior. In this sense, the *ulama*, as the Acehnese religious leader, used their own resources to fight back. The *ulama* fought back using the threat of force in the name of Islam as their religion. The politicization of religion and the militarization of politics could not be kept separate for long. Fueled by Soekarno's policy concerning the demand of Aceh Province to be separated from the North of Sumatra Province and the Islamic Law as the Indonesian state philosophy rather than the secular *Pancasila*, the result was political violence along religious lines. Another opportunity factor was demographic concentration. As Monica Duffy Toft shows, the existence of regional concentration of a certain group is a required condition for ethnic insurgence, while certain groups almost never rebel.[142] This factor detected in Aceh, as most the

---

[142] Monica Duffy Toft, *Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 2003).

Acehnese was concentrated in the tip of the northern of Sumatra. Hence, the Acehnese fulfilled one of the necessary conditions of insurgency to revolt against the Indonesian central government.

In mid-1951, the Acehnese disappointment toward the Indonesian central government heard by Kartosuwirjo, the highest leader of *Negara Islam Indonesia* (NII, Indonesian Islamic Nation). In early 1952, Kartosuwirjo instantly sent his representative, Abdul Fatah, alias Mustafa, to approach Daud Bereueh. Abdul Fatah gave a copy Kartosuwirjo's *dakwah* (religious explanation) on the *Darul Islam* movement and requested Daud Bereueh and his loyal followers of the Acehnese to merge with the *Darul Islam* movement. The Kartosuwirjo's *dakwah* mostly contained Islamic ideological justification of the *Darul Islam* movement in Indonesia to convince Daud Bereueh of the religious movement in the name of Islam. In early 1953 the *Darul Islam* encouraged the Daud Bereauh to prepare the military supports. Daud Bereueh gained the military support from *Persatuan Bekas Pejuang Aceh* (Association of the Veterans of Aceh) and the *Pandu Islam* (Islamic Boy Scout) as the youth military forces.[143] The joining of the *Darul Islam* and the support from the local military have created the opportunity for the Daud Bereueh to mobilize the Acehnese to revolt against the Indonesian central government.

E. Mass hostility

The Acehnese hostility toward the Javanese Indonesian. While myths justifying hostility sometimes remain hidden in a society, those in Indonesia did not. The negative

---

[143] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion* (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 88-95.

stereotypes of *kaphee* (non-believers of Islam) Javanese generated chauvinistic feelings among the Acehnese over the Indonesian central government. This was because the Javanese, under Soekarno leadership, rejected the implementation of the Islamic law based on the Jakarta Charter as the Indonesian state philosophy. In addition, the Acehnese also put the negative stereotype of the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI, Indonesian National Military) since the ended of the revolutionary period of 1945 to 1949 as the non-believers' army. Seeing these attitudes, Aspinall argues that the basic mind-set of the Acehnese in Aceh is ethno-religious chauvinism. Furthermore, he argues that this attitude case from the formation of identification of the Acehnese with the dominant local culture as ''Aceh [nese] is identical with Islam." Hence, he argues that the Acehnese become fluctuating and unpredictable neighbors.[144] Thus, these negative images of the Javanese as *kaphee* people have been persistently expressed and preserved in Aceh society.

The existence of negative attitudes of the Javanese and their supporters has also been confirmed in Aceh society. The Acehnese rejected and labeled the Javanese Indonesian central government as *kaphee* because the non-Acehnese government officials in the Aceh local government had really bad behavior such as gambling, drinking liquor, or even engage in prostitution. These values are against the Acehnese local values and beliefs. Moreover, the Acehnese describes the Javanese Indonesian central government and its supporters as similar to the *kaphee* Dutch. The Javanese have a very similar attitude to the Dutch, betraying and acting in inconsistent manners toward the Acehnese.

---

[144] Edward Aspinall, "From Islamism to Nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia," in *Nation and Nationalism* 13, no. 2 (2007): 245-247.

For example, the Acehnese success in supporting the Indonesian revolution through blood and wealth had been forgotten once the Dutch were defeated and Indonesian independence was gained. More importantly, the Acehnese defense in the Indonesian national revolution period of 1945-1949 was forgotten.[145] In general, the Javanese Indonesian government under Soekarno leadership maintained a secular or *kaphee* behavior that cannot be trusted. It is important to note that this negative image of the Javanese showing the Acehnese feelings of hostility were obviously strong and widespread throughout Aceh territory.

The Javanese Indonesian hostility toward the Acehnese. The explicit Javanese attitude toward the Acehnese was a negative stereotype that had to be stamped out. The stubborn myth symbolize that the Acehnese had always many demands of the Indonesian central government. For example, the Acehnese insisted on to implementation of Islamic Law of the Jakarta Charter as the Indonesian state basis philosophy was a concrete form of stubborn people. Another example of the myth of the Acehnese being stubborn was their rejection to be included to the North of Sumatra Province in 1950's. The Daud Bereueh, as the leader of the Acehnese, kept claiming that even though the Indonesian central government remained passively silent concerning the existence of the Province of Aceh, it did exist. In early September 1950, Daud Bereueh strongly banned the regional Information Office to spread out the information about the Indonesian central government's policy of the establishment of the Province of North Sumatra, which included Aceh. More importantly, at the end of October 1950, Daud Bereueh left Aceh

---

[145] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*, (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 41.

and went to Java to convince the Indonesian central government to recognize the Province of Aceh. His reason to go by himself was because he thought that the Javanese would respect him for his loyalty during the revolutionary period.[146] In this sense Daud Bereueh, as the Acehnese representative, became really forceful and demanding of the Javanese Indonesian central government. Thus, the Javanese describe the Acehnese as the stubborn people who did not obey their decision. Therefore, it creates a negative stereotype and attitudes of the disobedient Acehnese in the eyes of the Javanese Indonesian central government. In the myth of the Javanese culture of power, the ruled people must obey the ruler and more importantly, the ruled people never ask the ruler decision on them as the follower.[147] The Javanese myth of the conceptions of the proper relations between ruler and ruled is that the relations between ruler and ruled did not allow for any social contract system of mutual obligations between the ruler and ruled.[148] It implies that the rulers always know what is best for the community and the ruled people need only to do what the ruler order to them.

In addition, the patron-client model is a perfect model to explain the relation between the central of Javanese Indonesian central government (patron) and the regions such as Aceh (client). Anderson points out that the patron-client model is parallel to the elite-mass approach, which is symbolized by the terms of *pemimpin* and *rakyat*. The term *pemimpin* referred to the leader or elites, while the term *rakyat* referred to the people or

---

[146] Ibid. 46.

[147] Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 46-50.

[148] Ibid. 58-63.

the masses. It assumed that the *rakyat* are those who are the party that unintelligent, while the *pemimpin* are more knowledgeable.[149]

The case of Soekarno as *pemimpin* and his relations with the *rakyat* was as the *penyambung lidah rakyat* (literally means "the extension of the people's tongue" or vox populi).[150] Any words or statements from Soekarno for the Javanese are more like orders. In the case of Aceh, when Soekarno was reluctant to approve the existence of the Province of Aceh, it implies that the Javanese follow on what Soekarno said to the Acehnese to obey the *pemimpin*. Therefore, the Acehnese disobedience to Soekarno created a series of negative feelings and attitudes from Javanese toward the Acehnese. This myth of Javanese power relations between the ruler and the ruled has created hostile attitudes of the Javanese Indonesian central government to take actions toward the Acehnese as *rakyat* who do not want to obey the ruler of Indonesia.

F. Hostile mobilization (The process of mobilization for war)

Aceh was the only region that escaped from the Dutch reoccupation in the revolutionary period. For this reason Aceh constituted a practically independent region. The *ulama* (Islamic scholars) directly took the position in Aceh and established an independent region from the Dutch. The *ulama* became the forerunner of resistance against the Dutch colonial expansion in Aceh territory. Hence, in this logic, Syafruddin Prawiranegara, the Deputy Prime Minister, declared Aceh as a separate province from the

---

[149] Ibid. 58.

[150] Ibid. 62.

North Sumatra Province. Nevertheless, the Indonesian central government declared plans to include Aceh into North Sumatra Province in August 1950.[151] The Indonesian central government triggered many conflicting events that lead to the first Acehnese conflict against the Indonesian central government.

Furthermore, the Aceh provincial representative assembly supported the Indonesian central government. The Aceh representative controversially supported and showed their loyalty to the Indonesian central government, which on the contrary to the *Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh* (well known as PUSA, or Aceh Islamic Scholars Association) shown their disagreement. The PUSA members felt threatened by this situation. Hence, the PUSA threaten to retreat their members from the provincial government. Seeing this condition, the Indonesian central government with Prime Minister Muhammad Natsir, persuaded the leader of PUSA, Daud Bereueh, to gather in an integral nation-state of Indonesia based on the unity of diversity basis. However, Natsir's persuasion to Daud Bereueh failed and met a dead end.

Consequently, the Indonesian central government took actions through the changing of the administrative personnel in Aceh region. It was a Javanese who became the chief of administration in Aceh. More importantly, the Indonesian central government transferred the local military units to the other islands such as the Sulawesi Island and replaced them with troops from outside the Acehnese. Another change made by the Indonesian central government was the usage of the Acehnese that against the existence

---

[151] Lukman Thalib, *A Historical Study of the National Movement for the Independence of Acheh-Sumatra*, 175-185.

of PUSA. These people formed an organization of *Badan Keinsafan Rakyat* (BKR, People's Consciousness Agency) to replace the incapable PUSA members of the provincial government personnel. The reaction of the PUSA and the Acehnese local military toward the Indonesian central government was the resignation of some PUSA members from the Aceh provincial government and the resignation of the Acehnese local military. Hence, the PUSA members and the Acehnese local military made propaganda to the Acehnese people about the wrong policy of the Indonesian central government.[152]

Even more, by the end of November 1951, sixteen *ulama* of PUSA were arrested and put behind the bars in Medan.[153] Those arrested were related to the campaign of anti-Indonesian central government and BKR and none of the arrested *ulama* were brought to court. The anti-PUSA people under the leadership of Tarmuli went to Daud Bereueh's home in Kutaraja and when they arrived they shouted insults at him several yelled, "the head of the killers and looters." [154] At the same time, they chased Daud Bereueh into the backyard, with some soldiers threatening to shoot him. The provocation was intended to provoke the PUSA to act and to show the domination of the Indonesian central government through the BKR and formal local military that filled by non-Acehnese.

More importantly, in 1953, the tensions were increasing as the 1955 Indonesian national general election approached. The tensions at the national level were over the ideological conflict between the proponent of Islamic state and the opponent of the

---

[152] Ibid. 194-195.

[153] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*, 61.

[154] Ibid. 61.

Islamic state or the secular parties. The national tensions between the Islamic state supporters and the secular nationalist supporters were relevant to the tensions in Aceh region. A central symbolic event that connects the national and Aceh situation was the All-Indonesian *ulama* conference in Medan-North Sumatra in April 1953. At this conference, hostile attitudes came out explicitly from the *ulama* in Indonesia by sending the massages to the people around Indonesia of final decision to make an Indonesia Islamic state. More significantly, the national *ulama* conference was held under the chairmanship of the representative of the Aceh *ulama* or PUSA leader, Daud Bereueh. After the conference, Daud Bereueh directly took a trip all over Aceh to propagate the *ulama* conference decision.[155]

Under Daud Bereueh's leadership, the PUSA members who agreed on devoted Islamic values and the formation of the Indonesian Islamic state created para-military units. The two units of the para-military recruitment were the para-military Boy Scout Organization (*Pandu Organisasi*) and Ex-revolutionary Troops of Aceh Veterans (*Bekas Pejuang Aceh*). Daud Bereueh organized these two para-military organizations in preparation of the making of an Indonesian Islamic state. The Daud Bereueh movement invoked the Acehnese communal mythology. At that time, Daud Bereueh invoked an Islamic mythology rather that an ethnic or nationalist mythology. For the Acehnese, Islam being a communal religion and ideology, and at the same time it was also the Acehnese way of life that have a certain territory for the exercise of its belief and teachings and for the religious rule of *Shari'a* (Islamic laws) and adapt laws.

---

[155] Lukman Thalib, *A Historical Study of the National Movement for the Independence of Acheh-Sumatra*, 195.

On September 20, 1953, Daud Bereueh declared the formation of the Islamic state of Indonesia under the banner of *Darul Islam* movement. At the same time, the declaration of the Islamic State of Indonesia followed by the well-planed attacks by the Boy Scout Organization (*Pandu Organisasi*) and Ex-revolutionary Troops of Aceh Veterans (*Bekas Pejuang Aceh*) to several Indonesian military and police unit posts in most of the district (*Kabupaten*) in Aceh. On September 21, 1953, Daud Bereueh cleverly took the opportunity to mobilize the Acehnese ethnic group to arise the rebellion under the banner of *Darul Islam* movement when Soekarno, the first president of Indonesia, opened the National Sports Week in Medan. Daud Bereueh proclaimed the establishment of Negara Islam Indonesia (NII, Islamic State of Indonesia) in Aceh. He declared the NII by announce his political manifesto in Indrapuri village in south of Kutaraja. His political manifesto was the justification of his rebellion because he acknowledge that the Acehnese consider their territory as the "doorstep of Mecca", which historically their resistance used the Islamic myth-symbols to fight against the Dutch colonial. It implies that the Acehnese used chauvinist and Islamic myth-symbols complex mobilization in their struggle against the Javanese Indonesian central government.

Daud Bereueh, on his political manifestation, stated that politics is part of Islam as their religion they believe in and thus, Islam should be the basic foundation of Indonesia nation-state. He demonize the President of Soekarno in the first place because he consider that Soekarno did not understand about Islam by stated " Our God has said: Any one who does not practice the laws established by God is an Infidel." [156] Moreover,

---

[156] Herbert Faith and Lance Castles, "Indonesian Political Thinking: 1945-1965" (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), 213.

he called the secular laws was a chaotic laws that should be replaced by the Islamic laws. More importantly, Daud Bereueh provokes the Acehnese in his political manifestation by saying that he warns the Indonesian central government not to used physical violence through armies. However, Daud Bereueh stated that if the Indonesian central government insisted to use the military and then Daud Bereueh claimed ready used his military and arms in facing the infidel Indonesian central government.[157]

The Aceh political manifestation implies that Daud Bereueh felt fear of their ethnic group existence was at risk. These conditions confirm a hostile manner to the Indonesian central government. He portrayed the Acehnese as the victims of the secular Indonesian central government. The Acehnese mythologize their experiences of being dominated by the Dutch and been the victim of the Dutch colonial domination and Daud Bereueh re-emerge this fear in dealing with the policy of the Indonesian central government and thus, this condition trigger fears of the Acehnese ethnic group extinction. At the same time, this situation forms revenge to the oppressors, the Indonesian central government. Once fears arise in the Acehnese ethnic group, it justifies any actions, including the deadliest violence, in the name of self-defense. Here, such fears and threats facilitate the Acehnese mobilization to defend themselves, even though it was the Acehnese are the ones who aggressively create the conflicts.

This political manifestation proclaimed when most of the provincial government of Aceh were in Medan to attend the national sport week. All channels and instrument of communication between Aceh and Medan were cut-off. With this situation, the *Tentara*

---

[157] Ibid. 213.

Islam Indonesia (TII, Islamic Army of Indonesia) took chances to mobilize the Acehnese to prepare with weapons and rifles in villages ready to attacks the closest towns.

Soon, the Acehnese elites began manipulating these groups, who came to be known as the *kaphee* (non-believers of Islam), for their own purposes. Such elites also overvalued the threat of the Javanese Indonesian central government in public propaganda. Therefore, the Acehnese tended to associate all bad behaviors with the Javanese Indonesian central government. By this time, the violence seemed out of control. The Acehnese were re-emerge *perang sabil* (holy war in the name of Islam) against the *kaphee* Javanese Indonesian central government. The Acehnese under *Darul Islam* demonize the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI, Indonesian national military) associated them as *tentara kaphee* (the non-believers' army). The Acehnese chanted the Islamic cry of "Allahu Akbar" (God is the Greatest). More over, the Acehnese under *Darul Islam* rebellion exaggerated hostile feeling toward the *kaphee* Indonesian government by using the flag, a white crescent and star on red background.[158] The Acehnese painted and furnished their houses with this red flag to shows that they support the rebellion and to shows their domination over the Aceh territory.

In early October 1953, the Acehnese under *Darul Islam* took six of seven *Kabupaten* (towns) and two out of twenty-one *kewedanaan* (district). The youths, school children, teachers, villagers, and even the Acehnese government officials join the rebellion. Hence, the Aceh government administration totally malfunctions. The mass involvement signed that the rebellion were well prepared by the PUSA members long

---

[158] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*,83-84.

before the outbreak.[159] Instantly, conflicts between the Acehnese and the Indonesian military were unavoidable. More than 4000 people died in defending their beliefs on the conflict between the Acehnese and the Indonesian central government.[160]

G. Conclusion

The Daud Bereueh movement centered the theme of ideology was the primary motivation for the Acehnese to fight against the Indonesian central government and Islam was the main identity that united the Acehnese rebellions under Daud Bereueh leadership. The preconditions of the symbolic politics theory for ethnic violence are all present in the Acehnese conflict on this period. Opportunity to mobilize, mutually hostile mythologies generating emotive symbols of conflict, and ethnic fears steaming from the histories of ethnic domination are present in this period. These conditions produced a politics of extreme nationalist group of GAM and ethnic hostility.

The mobilization process of the ethnic war in 1953 was primarily elite-led process on both sides. The Javanese Indonesian central government were refuse to granted an Aceh province and force the Acehnese to adopt the secular Indonesian national state foundation, the *Pancasila*. Therefore, Soekarno mobilize the military to attack Aceh. While Daud Bereueh mobilize the *ulama* who became the informal local leaders in Aceh under the Aceh Islamic Scholars Association (PUSA). He also creates para-military Boy Scout Organization (*Pandu Organisasi*) and Ex-revolutionary Troops of Aceh Veterans

---

[159] Ibid. 85.

[160] M. Djali Yusuf, *Perekat Hati yang Tercabik* (Bond of Torn Heart) (Yayasan Ulul Arham, Jakarta, 2002), 69.

(*Bekas Pejuang Aceh*) to attack the Javanese government in the name of Islamic myth of the Islamic state.

The declaration of the Islamic State of Indonesia followed by the well-planed attacks by the Boy Scout Organization and Ex-revolutionary Troops of Aceh Veterans to several Indonesian military and police unit posts in most of the district (*Kabupaten*) in Aceh. In September 21, 1953, Daud Bereueh cleverly took the opportunity to mobilize the Acehnese ethnic group to arise the rebellion under the banner of *Darul Islam* movement. The Soekaro's government and their military introduced to restore order quickly by counter-insurgency operations. What drove this security dilemma that led to conflict were the actions of armed groups and the also the provocations of the elites using the Muslim myths, fears of domination over the rival group and chauvinist mobilization had make conflict likely to happen in Aceh.

In chapter 4, I already addressed the puzzle of how myths and symbols, fears, opportunity, mass hostility, and hostile mobilization lead to conflicts between the Acehnese under Daud Bereueh and the Javanese secular Soekarno regime. After chapter 4 as the first case study, I will utilize the symbolic politics approach on chapter 5 of the second phase of the Acehnese rebellion under Soeharto regime, the second Indonesian president and well known as the New Order regime. The goal of chapter 5 is to presents deeper explanation on the reasons of the Aceh ethnic conflict under the Javanese Soeharto regime from 1969 to 1998 period based on the symbolic politics approach. On chapter 5, I will discuss specifically on the hostile myths and symbols, fears of extinction, opportunity to mobilization, mass hostility, and chauvinist mobilization. These

indicators intend to show the applicability of the symbolic politics theory on Aceh ethnic conflict under the Soeharto regime.

CHAPTER 5:

THE ACEHNESE CONFLICTS UNDER SOEHARTO'S PERIOD

(THE NEW ORDER ERA)

A. Introduction

The continuation of the Acehnese conflict was started since the changes of the Indonesian regimes from the Soekarno's Old Order period, the first president of Indonesia, to the Soeharto's New Order period, the second president of Indonesia in 1965 after a military coup. The Acehnese gained the status of Aceh Province in 1959 and two years later in 1961 it received *Daerah Istimewa* (special region) status from Soekarno and was guaranteed autonomy of religion, customary Islamic law and education. As a result, Daud Bereueh gave up the rebellions against the Indonesian central government. However, the relations between the Acehnese and the Indonesian central government remained problematic.[161]

Ethnic conflict between the Acehnese and the Javanese Indonesian government under Soeharto regime occurred because of a fundamental clash between the Acehnese myth-symbol complex focused on fears of ethnic (nation) domination and the Javanese one emphasizing the sovereignty and the national integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Each party defined dominance in Aceh as an important to its national existence and saw the other party aspirations as a threat of group extinction. Aceh itself thus became, for both parties, a symbol of national aspirations and of the hostility of the other party. The

---

[161] Edward Aspinall and Mark T. Berger, "The Break Up of Indonesia?" in *Third World Quarterly* 22 no.6 (2001): 1016.

result was a security dilemma and violence, then a politics of nationalist extremism that led to conflict or war.

This chapter examines the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese ethnic conflicts under the Soeharto's New Order period from 1969 to 1998. Specifically, my discussion will begin by exploring the three necessary conditions of the Acehnese ethnic conflict, which are the myths hostility from both conflicted ethnic group, fears of extinction from both sides, and the existence opportunity to mobilization the could lead to the hostile situations, followed by mass hostility, which created by both elites between Soeharto and Hasan di Tiro. Eventually, their politics of myths and symbols create hostile emotions among their supporters and thus, conflict arise as a result.

B. Myth justifying hostility

The Acehnese myths. The myth in the first rebellion of the Acehnese was the identity myth of Islam rather than as a nation of the Acehnese ethnic group. The Acehnese during the Daud Bereueh era identified themselves as strong believers of Islam because, historically, they felt that they had a very strong connection to the Ottoman Empire and Mecca as the heartland of Islam and thus, the Acehnese strongly defend their identity, as devoted Muslim, by declaring their effort in creating an Indonesian Islamic state used the Jakarta Charter. Consequently, the Acehnese through Daud Bereueh leadership was revolt under the *Darul Islam* movement to create Indonesian Islamic state by using the Islamic identity myth. Therefore, conflict was unavoidable between the Acehnese and the secular Indonesian central government in 1953.

However, the Acehnese rebellion, during the Soeharto's New Order era, used a different myth in provoking the Acehnese people to join the revolt. It was the myth of sovereign Aceh state before the Aceh war on March 26, 1873, where the colonial Dutch came to annex the land of Aceh. It is Hasan di Tiro who was re-emerging the myth of creation of the *Negara Aceh Sumatra* (Aceh Sumatra State). He proclaimed *Negara Aceh Sumatra* on December 4, 1976 and claimed it as a "Successor State" free from Dutch domination and was hand over on December 27, 1949 to Indonesia.[162] He also used a symbolic language of neo-colonial to describe Indonesia because Indonesia gained and continued to rule the ex-Dutch territory in the Dutch East Indies.

Hasan di Tiro did not formally declare Islam as the foundation of the Acehnese national state to create an image of nationalist secular nation that is accepted by the West. However, di Tiro still used the myth of Islam as ways to grasp the Acehnese heart because di Tiro recognizes the Acehnese have a very high pride of Islam. Hence, it is not shocking that di Tiro provoke the supporters of GAM regarded their struggle as a holy war (*udep sare mate syahid*) even though they acknowledge that they were fighting against the Indonesian government whose majority were Muslims.[163]

Apparently di Tiro acknowledge that the usage of the Islamic slogans, after the declaration on December 4, 1976, were not effective to attract the Acehnese Islamic scholars (*ulama*) to the GAM's side. Hence, Hasan di Tiro introduced new Aceh national

---

[162] M. Isa Sulaiman, "From Autonomy to Periphery: A Critical evaluation of the Acehnese Nationalist Movement," in *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, edited by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 135.

[163] Ibid. 135.

symbols by taking the aspirations from the myths of the Acehnese glory in the past and the heroism of the people in fighting the Dutch colonial. It was the myth-symbol of the GAM's flag. Hasan di Tiro present the two myth-symbols in the GAM's flag to the Acehnese was related to the Acehnese Kingdom as an independent nation and to the Muslim identity of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the combination of the two myth-symbols manifested on the flag of GAM as follow:

Figure 5.1 The flag of GAM

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Aceh_Movement

The first aspiration of the GAM's flag is related to the heroism and the myth-symbol of the Acehnese Kingdoms before the Dutch colonial came in to the Aceh nation in 1873. The flag of the Aceh government Kingdom, named "Alam Zulfiqar" those made by Sultan Ali Mughayat Shah (the first Aceh Sultan) in the 1511-1530 period[164], as follow:

[164] This image of the Aceh government kingdom can be found in, http://www.chinahistoryforum.com/index.php?s=735fd03b1aa58da4b5a9f774e13d8ee4&showtopic=9865

Figure 5.2 The flag of the Aceh government Kingdom (1511-1530)

Source: http://img156.imageshack.us/my.php?image=acehflagalamzulfiqar02mi7.jpg

This flag was the symbols of the Aceh government of Sultan Ali Mughayat Shah that memorizing the glory of the Aceh Kingdom as a nation over the Malays peninsula. Di Tiro mythologizes the past glory of the Acehnese Kingdom through the *Alam Zulfiqar* flag. This flag symbolized Aceh as a political entity of a nation. Hasan di Tiro re-emerge the myth-symbols of this Aceh nation's flag aimed to rise of ethnic sentiments with claims that the Sultanate of Aceh had previously extended beyond the present administrative territory. Di Tiro uses this device to differentiate the Acehnese as a separate nation from the Javanese Indonesian nation. Furthermore, di Tiro uses this flag myth as a symbol to fight against the dominance Javanese Indonesian oppressor.

The second aspiration of Hasan di Tiro to use the recent GAM's flag was related to the Ottoman Empire. The relation to the Ottoman Empire symbolized close

connections between the Acehnese and the Ottoman Empire as the Centre of the Muslim in the world. It implies that the Acehnese identified themselves as strong believers of Islam alike in the Ottoman Empire period. It is shown on the similarities between the GAM's flag and the Ottoman Empire's flag, which had the star and the crescent moon as the symbols of Islam, as shown below:

Figure 5.3 The flag of Ottoman Empire

Source:http://www.chinahistoryforum.com/index.php?s=735fd03b1aa58da4b5a9f774e13d8ee4&showtopic=9865

These two myths-symbols' aspirations had formed the GAM's flag myth-symbol to create a new identity of Acehnese as a nation that devoted to Islam. The creation of the new myth creates hostility among the Acehnese in a way that the Elite or politician like Hasan di Tiro manipulate the past pride and heroism of the Aceh Kingdom to be used as his device to introduced Aceh as a separate nation with Indonesia based on its historical background of the Aceh Kingdom which had strong relations with the Ottoman Empire. It implies that di Tiro create a myth of an Acehnese nation's flag to justified a hostile condition and attitudes to the Javanese Indonesian as a different nation before the Javanese Indonesian dominate Aceh. In other words, the Acehnese created a challenge

through a creation of Acehnese nation with its GAM's flag myth to the secular Javanese Indonesian nation under Soharto leadership.

The Javanese Indonesian myths. At this period, Soeharto manipulated the Javanese people through his political agenda of the national integrity as one nation. He used the agenda of the national integrity myth as a way to eliminate all other ideologies that could disrupt his plan to centralize his power into his hand only as the president. Here, he wanted to create a nation pride through his national integrity policy as a symbol of a strong nation. Therefore, all other identities that already exist such as religion, ethnicity, or any other identities should only follow his agenda. He uses the *Pancasila* as his device to create a national integrity because the *Pancasila* was a symbol of unity of a pluralistic country.

Initially, the purpose of *Pancasila* was to create a common ground for the creation of an independent, unified, modern Indonesian state regardless of religion, ethnicity or regional origins. However, every regime including their contestants claimed their own interpretation of *Pancasila* and even legitimizes any actions is *Pancasila* based. Hence, Douglas Ramage argues that *Pancasila* is a very flexible Indonesian ideology because of various interpretation of *Pancasila* that legitimize all actions of a regime or the oppositions as an effective justification device to achieve their own goals.[165] Soeharto even frame the *Pancasila* as a way to terminate any other ideologies for example, capitalism, communism, or even religion based ideology. It was proven by his

[165] Douglas Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance*, (London: Routledge, 1995).

controversial policy in 1984 of *Pancasila* as the only ideological foundation that should be adopted by any organizations in Indonesia. Soeharto's government codified *Pancasila* into national law and thus the government banned any organizations that rejected to adopt *Pancasila* as their rules, constitutions, or characters.[166]

The Soeharto's government aimed to integrate all Indonesian regions uses the device of *Pancasila* as a sole ideological foundation. The Javanese Soeharto's government would eliminate any ideologies that threat the Indonesian national sovereignty of the *Pancasila*. In fact, Soeharto's government demonized the GAM rebels as separatists or GPK (*Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan*/Security Disruptive Movements) that disrupt the Indonesian national integrity. Therefore, the myth of national unity by using *Pancasila* as a sole ideological foundation effectively creates a hostile attitude toward the Acehnese that rebels against the Soeharto's government.

C. Fears of extinction

The Acehnese fears. Typically, the strongest ethnic fears are underlain by the histories of ethnic domination. The Javanese had dominated the Acehnese since Indonesia gained its independent in August 17, 1945. The Acehnese fears were particularly acute because domination and minority status were associated in their minds with ethnic domination. It was proven by the extreme domination by killing the Acehnese who were engaged with the Daud Beureuh movement. Furthermore, the domination associated with ethnic domination because of the Javanese Indonesian government under

[166] Ibid. 3-4.

Soekarno leadership insists to include Aceh territory to the North Sumatra Province. It symbolizes a Javanese ethnic group domination over the Acehnese because Soekarno, as a Javanese, intended to re-group all ex-East Indies Dutch colonial territory under a nation called Indonesia regardless their religion, ethnicity, or regional origins.

Another domination of the Javanese over the Acehnese was an ideological domination through *Pancasila* ideology over Islamic ideology. The Acehnese who claimed as the strong believers of Islam felt threaten by the Soekarno's decision in using *Pancasila* as the Indonesian state philosophical foundation. The Acehnese felt threaten because Soekarno obligated the Acehnese to adopt *Pancasila* as their sole fundamental state principles. Consequently, the Acehnese fear had no space to practice their culture and religion as their identity. It implies that this policy symbolizes Javanese ethnic group domination over the Acehnese.

The Acehnese feared that the same thing would happen in Aceh like in the Soekarno presidency and in the past of the Dutch colonial period used the symbol of ethnic domination refers to the process. Thus they referred to the Soeharto's government program in 1971 of transmigration by sending more Javanese to the Aceh territory.[167] The new Javanese resident in Aceh got many advantages and privilege through transmigration program such as, they got land to farm and some money to life outside Java Island.

---

[167] Riwanto Tirtosudarmo, *Demografi dan Konflik: Kegagalan Indonesia Melaksanakan Proyek Pembangunan Bangsa?* (Demography and Konflict: The Indonesian Failure in Implementing the Nation Development Project) in *Konflik Kekerasan Internal: Tinjauan Sejarah, Ekonomi-Politik, dan Kebijakan di Asia Pasifik (Internal Violent Conflict: History, Political Economy, and Policy Perspective in Asia Pacific)"*, eds. Dewi Fortuna Anwar et al. (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2005), 73-74.

Historically, this transmigration program was similar to the Dutch colonial program in order to fulfill a very cheap Javanese labor to gone to outside Java Island, include Aceh territory. It was known as a Javanese domination (Jawanisasi) project.[168] This *Jawanisasi* project had create ethnic group conflict in ways that transmigration program merely aimed to assimilate, if not dominate, all ethnic group in Indonesia to achieve national integration by sending the Javanese to outside Java Island. This history has exacerbated by the fact that the Javanese took control in Aceh local government structure or street level bureaucracy, military, or even as business elites who dominate private and government companies. For example, Tim Kell on his work mentioned that most of the elite, who dominate the economical resources such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) production, were the Javanese.[169] Hence, demographically, the Acehnese received this massage as a Javanese ethnic domination over the Acehnese.

The Javanese Indonesian fears. The Rebellious and stubborn image of the Acehnese/GAM has developed into a chauvinist Acehnese and fundamentalist of Islam. This image encourages fear as well as hostility toward the Acehnese. Even di Tiro admitted that the Javanese colonial indeed put a strong labeled the GAM as "the terrorist or the separatist".[170] The stereotype of the Acehnese as rebellious, stubborn, chauvinist, and fundamentalist, is inevitably a source of fear, surely made worse for those whose

---

[168] Ibid. 67.

[169] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992* (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University, 1995), 27.

[170] Hasan di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary* (Noshborg, Sweden: National Liberation Acheh Sumatra, 1981), 28.

parties used myth as "the terrorist, the separatist" or GPK[171] (*Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan*/ Security Disruptive Movements). Anyone socialized by threats such as the GPK is likely to have a visceral reaction in case of conflict with real GAM. The tough image projected by the Soeharto's government and military as "GPK," surely contributed to such fears. In Addition, some Javanese settlers on Aceh were victimized by GAM's members engaged in criminal in response to the loss of their land.[172] Many of the Javanese victims choose to stay behind the Indonesian military, undoubtedly increasing fears among the Javanese who remained.

Furthermore, Hasan di Tiro exacerbated the fear of the Javanese by stated that the choice for the Acehnese is that life in slavery of the Javanese or death with honor as a free man.[173] It implies that di Tiro propagated to the Javanese Soeharto government that GAM would fight against the neo-colonial Javanese in any ways. For example, di Tiro mention on his diary that he would love to lead the Acehnese to fight against the neo-colonial Javanese and thus he returned to Aceh in 1976 to declare the Acehnese independence as a nation.[174] Hence, undoubtedly this propaganda creates fears among the Javanese.

In addition, the GAM also used the *hikayat perang sabil* (the epic of the holy war), which explained how sufferers in the war would be rewarded with the happiness of

---

[171] The term of GPK used by Soeharto's government to demonized the separatist movement in Aceh of GAM.

[172] Riwanto Tirtosudarmo, *Internal Violent Conflict: History, Political Economy, and Policy Perspective in Asia Pacific,* 73-75.

[173] Hasan di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary,* 12.

[174] Ibid. 24-25.

paradise. The main theme of the *hikayat perang sabil* and epics is prosecuting holy war against infidels.[175] It implies that the Acehnese have duty to engaged with the holy war against the infidels Dutch colonial and the Javanese. Di Tiro claimed that *hikayat perang sabil* epics are a holy war against the neo-colonial Javanese.[176] As a result, it creates fears among the Javanese because this physical fear among Javanese was strong and visceral. One could says "the GAM believe that they will go to heaven only if they have killed a Javanese, which represented by the Javanese Indonesian military and Soeharto government. The Javanese reaction to this fearful situation was hostile panic by declaring the DOM (*Daerah Operasi Militer*, Military Operation Territory) in 1989 to 1998. The fear remains pervasive until the reform period after 1998.

Another fear of the Javanese Soeharto government was his ambition' s failure to integrate Indonesia under *Pancasila* as sole state philosophical foundation. The GAM declaration of independent in 1976 is considered as a serious threat to the unity of Indonesia and against the *Pancasila*. These situations create a sudden panic among the Soeharto government and thus it creates a hostile situation and attitudes of the Soeharto government and the military to react toward the GAM's independent.

D. Opportunity to mobilization

The weakness of the Indonesian state, combine with President Soeharto's centralizing policy in his ruling period, created the opportunity for ethnic war in

---

[175] Edward Aspinall, "From Islamism to Nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia," in *Nation and Nationalism* 13 no. 2 (2007): 248.

[176] Hasan di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary*, 24-26.

Indonesia at that time. The Soeharto's government policy by declaring *Pancasila* as a sole philosophical foundation and the creation of DOM created the opportunity for ethnic war in Aceh. As Tim Kell points out, weak states like Indonesia typically manage to establish political order in their central base (Java Island) only by putting his client in regions and took all decisions from central government only as their patron. In exchange for maintaining order, these clients are given control of what passes for the institutions of the state in their regions.[177] Soeharto attempted to centralize power in the 1984 by producing *Pancasila* as sole philosophical foundation of any organizations and banning any other ideologies like ideologies based on regional origins, ethnicity, or religions. Hence, regions like Aceh revolts against this policy and furthermore the process weakened state institutions in this region. The GAM used their power over those institutions as political assets in their struggle to take over the state power in Aceh.[178]

One result of this process was the rise of GAM with their paramilitary associated with Hasan Tiro's political leader. In Aceh, the Acehnese armed groups called AGAM (armed forces of Free Aceh Movement) engaged in terrorist violence, apparently at the command of GAM's politicians.[179] On the other hand, Soeharto's government used his client such as the Governor or local legislative in Aceh to fight back including the threat of force by implementing integrated military operation area, well known as DOM, in response. Indonesian police and more importantly, the national army became tools in

---

[177] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992*, 32-33.

[178] Ibid. 42-43.

[179] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 12-13.

these local struggles. The result was politics became increasingly lawless throughout Aceh territory in the 1989 to 1998. The politization of religion and militarization of politics could not long be kept separate. The result was political violence along nationalism lines.[180]

Yet another opportunity was demographic concentration. Monica Toft illustrates, the existence of some regional concentration of a particular group is very nearly a necessary condition for ethnic rebellion.[181] This factor obtained in Aceh, as most of the Acehnese ethnic group was concentrated in Aceh territory.

Even more importantly, as early as 1987 Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi became involved, on one account after he heard about the Aceh-Sumatra independence. Qaddafi began giving the GAM's members military and ideological training. Starting in 1988, this covert military training aid was because of Hasan di Tiro's personal network to maintain his bilateral link to the outside power.[182]

E. Mass hostility

The Acehnese hostility toward the Javanese Indonesian. As identified by Peterson, hostile emotions—hate, fear, and resentment—play important role in conflict. The fact seems to support the GAM's claims that the Acehnese saw the Javanese Indonesian government and armed groups as their enemies. For example, Hasan di Tiro

---

[180] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992*, 32-39.

[181] Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[182] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992*, 72-73.

claimed on his diary that the Javanese Indonesian government and Indonesian military are similar to the Dutch colonial and thus the Acehnese must fight against the neo-colonial Javanese Indonesian government.[183] They exploit every Acehnese resources such as LNG (liquid natural gas) and give nothing to the Acehnese prosperity. Moreover, they oppress and dominate the Acehnese as a minority ethnic group.[184] Therefore, the Acehnese hostility was the result mainly of fear.

Another hostile emotion of resentment also played a role, the image of the Javanese were the land grabbers. For example, Peter Chalk point out that transmigration program was a symbol of Javanese domination over the Acehnese by sending Javanese people to outside Java Island such as Aceh territory. [185] Hence, this desire to assert political dominance in the Aceh province based on the belief that the Acehnese are the "owners and masters" of Aceh territory even if they had become the minority in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the creation of negative stereotype of the secular and neo-colonial of the Javanese generated chauvinistic feelings among the Acehnese over the Javanese people. As di Tiro claim on his published diary, he stated that the nature of the Acehnese movement was nationalist religious chauvinism. In this context, di Tiro illustrate that the

---

[183] Hasan di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary*, 12.

[184] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992*, 27.

[185] Transmigration policy was known as *Jawasisasi* project because of most of them were the Javanese people. This program is a symbol of the Javanese domination over the other ethnic groups in Indonesia. See Peter Chalk, Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh" in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 24 (2001): 254. Riwanto Tirtosudarmo, "Demography and Conflict: The Indonesian Failure in Implementing the Nation Development Project" in *Internal Violent Conflict: History, Political Economy, and Policy Perspective in Asia Pacific*, eds. Dewi Fortuna Anwar et al. (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2005), 73-74.

Javanese was similar to the Dutch colonial as the aggressor and thus, it was justifiable for the Acehnese to fight against the neo-colonial Javanese.[186]

The Javanese Indonesian hostility toward the Acehnese. The negative stereotypes of the GAM generated chauvinistic feelings among the secular Javanese over the Acehnese even before the DOM implemented in the end of 1980s. Aspinall argues that the basic mind-set of the Javanese ethnic group under Soeharto's government was ethno-nationalist chauvinism. According to him, this attitude came from the identification of secular nationalist with a dominant national culture as secular nationalist Javanese. Therefore, he argues that the Javanese Indonesian government recognizes the GAM merely as the GPK or separatist.

Damien Kingsbury illustrates the point with the typical attitudes expressed in Indonesian newspapers regarding the GAM's attitudes. The Javanese Indonesian government controls the media though the Press Act articles 11 to support only the Indonesian government for the unity interest (nationalism). For example, Kingsbury point out that the Javanese Indonesian government required all journalists to adopt the "*Pancasila* journalism." According to this concept, every media should support any government policies and acts in the name of national interest.[187] In this context, any separatism action such as the GAM viewed as a form of betraying the commitment to *Pancasila* as a symbol of the Indonesian unity. Therefore, the media create a negative image of GAM as GPK (national security disturber), chauvinist, separatist, and even a

---

[186] Hasan di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary*, 12.

[187] Damien Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia*, (Australia: Oxford University Press, 1998), 147-151.

terrorist image. Furthermore, these negative images of the GAM have been persistently expressed and preserved in the Indonesian society.

The existence of negative attitudes of Javanese toward the GAM has also been confirmed in media as the Javanese Indonesian government propaganda. They tightly control the media contents. According to Kingsbury, the Soeharto's government ban any media contents related to ethnicity, race and religions and the activities of separatist movement such as in Aceh.[188] Consequently, most of Indonesian society only knows GAM as a bad party who want to disrupt the unity of Indonesia or Indonesian nationalism. The Javanese prejudice toward the GAM is not a new phenomenon. It is the legacy of the Acehnese-Javanese hostility perpetuated under Soekarno's government between separatism and integration.[189] An ignorant and biased media aided by educated elites perpetuates the Acehnese-Javanese hostility to this day.

F. Hostile mobilization (The Process of Mobilization for War)

The precondition for hostility and fear such as ethnic history domination, contentious symbols, and potentially hostile mythology existed and thus, the violence mobilization process was elite-led. Both elites, the GAM and the Javanese Indonesian government, mobilized their resources to create political competition for ethnic dominance. Their purpose was to create a security dilemma for both sides as a way to protect and increase their own power.

---

[188] Ibid. 156.

[189] Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*, (Singapore, Institute of Souteast Asian Studies, 1985).

The first main issue for the Acehnese was the creation of *Pancasila* as a sole state ideological foundation. The policy raised a Javanese symbolic status above over any other symbols as a national symbol. The Javanese Soeharto government required every Indonesian citizen to adopt the *Pancasila* as the only ideological principles of live regardless their religions, ethnicity, or their region origins. Bennedict Anderson stated that historically, *Pancasila* was taken from the Javanese mythology as Javanese symbols of great courage, faithfulness, and honor.[190] Thus, the *Pancasila* basically was a symbol of the Javanese superiority over the other ethnic groups in Indonesia such as the Acehnese. This symbolic subordination of the Javanese language was annoying, but that fact did no lead to separatist violence as this policy passed in Indonesia.

Separatist violence occurred mainly because The GAM elites stood to gain power by promoting separatist violence against the *Pancasila* policy. The Acehnese elites chose to turn the *Pancasila* issue into an ethno-nationalist struggle for group dominance. Thus, they immediately acted by promoting the Acehnese independence to challenge the Javanese Soeharto's government. They justified their step by claiming that the GAM independence was the right of the Acehnese to be free from the neo-colonial Javanese. Moreover, *Pancasila* policy was a form of disrespectful attitude of the Javanese toward the right of the Acehnese. The real political agenda was already declared by Hasan di Tiro to create Aceh nation-state as their final goal. Hence, as Schulze explained that the

---

[190] Pancasila symbolized by an "eagle" or "Garuda" in Javanese version. See Benedict Anderson, *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University, 1965), 47.

GAM's ultimate goal was to create an Acehnese nation-state separate from Indonesia.[191] Thus, this tactics made accommodation difficult to achieve.

The Indonesian media was another powerful device for the Javanese Indonesian government and their military: by playing on the symbolic issues at stake and stirring up anti-GAM (Acehnese) chauvinism, the media contribute an important role in building popular support for Soeharto government and the military to act in the name of nationalism. This media propaganda was to justify the military action to uphold the *Pancasila* myth as a symbol of unity of diversity in Indonesia. As the Press Act mentioned that any action of criticism of state leaders, the role and action of Indonesian military, or the *Pancasila* itself were a form of crime because it against the national interest.[192]

On the other hand, the GAM was demonized by the Soeharto government as separatist who against the *Pancasila*. It implies that the GAM had been done a heavy crime and thus they were criminal. Since all media was still controlled by the Indonesian government, there can be no doubt that its editors were acting on orders from the government. The Indonesian media build popular support from the Javanese ethnic group by portrayed the GAM as separatist and criminal. The facts that GAM attacks against the Indonesian police, the army, and civil authorities had worsening the image of GAM as criminal for the Indonesian society.[193] Another important evidence in mid-1990, the

---

[191] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004), 6-7.

[192] Damien Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia*, 147.

[193] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992*, 66-68.

Indonesian media found that GAM attack the Javanese transmigrants in North Aceh and thousands of them were intimidated by GAM's members.[194] Consequently, the Indonesian society was persistent to the Indonesian government reaction and the military.[195] The GAM's separatism of ethno-nationalist movement, combined with the growth of terror of their armed groups, worked to increase the feelings of threat on the Javanese Indonesian side.

Throughout Soeharto period, the Indonesian press continued to encourage feelings of threat and inclinations toward a violent response among the Javanese population by manipulating nationalist symbols. The Indonesian independence is a symbol of unity of diversity regardless religions, ethnicity, and regions origins. Therefore, the Indonesian press portrayed the GAM as a betrayer of the unity Indonesia.

Instead of seeking compromise, both sides acted to exacerbate the security dilemma. The Acehnese elites provoked the Acehnese nationalist movement into overreacting, and then used that overreaction to justify further moves toward secession. The Acehnese feared by the fact that more Javanese settlers to come to Aceh territory under transmigration program, and thus they fear of the Javanese domination in term of population. The Acehnese acknowledge that they are a minority ethnic group compared to the Javanese, thus they intimidate the Javanese settlers to defense themselves. This interethnic security dilemma create an emergent anarchy among the Acehnese because

---

[194] Kirsten E. Schulze, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: Strategy and the Aceh Conflict, October 1976-May 2004," in *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, ed. Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 235.

[195] Damien Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia*, 148-149.

they fears of physical insecurity were exaggerated on all sides. It was the Acehnese elites who exaggerated fears because of their manipulation and provocations of violence. As di Tiro provocation toward the Acehnese, he mentioned that the GAM's tactics was offensive whenever an opportunity present.[196] Here, the GAM gained popular support especially in rural area because the Javanese more concern and dominance in urban area of Aceh. Hence, the GAM took this opportunity to dominate the rural structure, for example, fill the village officials by the GAM's members, civil servants, schoolteachers or even small traders. Moreover, they could serve their members of the armed forces and they got assistance from the veteran of the *Darul Islam* rebels in this area.[197] In this context, most of rural area were dominate by the GAM and thus, it create such fear among the Javanese in urban area of Aceh. Therefore, the GAM succeeds to create security dilemma among the Javanese in urban area.

Di Tiro's command justified the Indonesian military actions to protect the manipulation of *Pancasila* as a symbol of unity in diversity of Indonesia. The Javanese elites like Soeharto fear that his ambition to unite all regions regardless their religions, ethnicity, or regional origins under his power would meet a failure ends. Thus, the reaction of the Soeharto's government was simply to command the military to act more

---

[196] Kirsten E. Schulze, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: Strategy and the Aceh Conflict, October 1976-May 2004," in *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, ed. Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 230.

[197] See Rizal Sukma, *Security Operations in Aceh: Goals, Consequences, and Lessons*, (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004), 6. See also Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992*, 68-69.

offensive than ever. In 1989, the policy was immediately to implement a massive integrated military operation (DOM) in Aceh territory.[198]

The Indonesian military provoke the fear of the Indonesian government in purpose to eliminate the GAM's movement by exaggerated the GAM's members. General R. Pramono, for example, believed that the GAM member were "everywhere" and thus he stated that the GAM followers estimated around hundreds of thousands.[199] However, this hyperbolic statement was only to justify their action to immediately implement the DOM in Aceh and create such fear among the Javanese Indonesian society. He provoke the fear of the Javanese government and society by stated: "the situation [in Aceh] was frightening and chilling . . . . GPK [GAM] had already seized 27 units of ABRI's [Indonesian Military] weapons."[200] Moreover, the Aceh Governor during that period, Ibrahim Hasan, exaggerated the conflict escalation by stated that the Aceh regional development was disrupted by the GPK (GAM) actions such as intimidated people, school were closed, and even more the terror acts.[201] Therefore, the Indonesian military succeed in manipulating and provoking the situation and create a security dilemma for the Javanese Indonesian government and the escalation of conflict had been higher than ever.

---

[198] The DOM was referred to a military operation in Aceh, which was the *Jaring Merah* (Red Net) operation as a security approach since 1989 to 1998. See Kirsten E. Schulze, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: Strategy and the Aceh Conflict, October 1976-May 2004," in *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, ed. Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 244.

[199] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992*, 66-67.

[200] Rizal Sukma, *Security Operations in Aceh: Goals, Consequences, and Lessons*, 7.

[201] Ibid.

The consequences were the Acehnese ethnic cleansing because the real power of GAM was not enough to crush the Indonesian military. In fact, many observers agreed that GAM members in July 1990 were not more than 750 people. While the Indonesian military at that period had already around 6000 troops and brought again 12.000 troops to Aceh territory under the DOM's policy. Therefore, logically, it is difficult to believe that the Indonesian military in Aceh had no capacity to crush the GAM because GAM had out of number of members.

The Soeharto's government and the Indonesian military's response to the Acehnese rebellion was the politics of generalization and stigmatization. They tended to see every Acehnese potentially as GAM members.[202] This demonization of the Acehnese were used to justify cruel military actions and served as the basis of a brutal counterinsurgency campaign without considering the human rights.

The Javanese Indonesian military mobilize the civilians under an organization of *Ksatria Unit Penegak Pancasila* (Nobble Warriors for Upholding *Pancasila*) in purpose to kill the GAM members and to force the Acehnese to accept the *Pancasila* as their ideology under Indonesia nation-state. In fact this group had help the Indonesian military kill around 300 Acehnese that suspected as GAM members. The Indonesian military were nurture, support, organize and even train some basic defense skills of this group.[203]

---

[202] Rizal Sukma, *Security Operations in Aceh: Goals, Consequences, and Lessons*, 10.

[203] Ibid. 10-11. See also Kirsten E. Schulze, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: Strategy and the Aceh Conflict, October 1976-May 2004," in *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, ed. Anthony Reid, 248.

Therefore, this action heightened the escalation of conflict or even an ethnic cleansing in Aceh.

Thousands of Acehnese became victims of this brutality, for example, the Acehnese tortured, raped, arrested without any clear reasons, disappeared or even killed. Moreover, villagers were under the Indonesian military tight control because they acknowledge that the basis of the GAM movement in rural area.[204] In 2001, Human Right Watch reported that more than 1,258 Acehnese were killed and even Amnesty International in 1993 reported 2,000 Acehnese had been killed under the DOM period. Moreover, Human Right Watch give an account at least 500 Acehnese disappeared.

G. Conclusion

The central theme of the GAM under the Hasan di Tiro leadership in this period was the nationalist Ideological and economical motives. The ideological motivation of GAM was to re-create an Acehnese nation that break away from the Indonesian state. Hasan di Tiro use this myth to provoke the Acehnse to regain their past glory of the Aceh Kingdom. However, the Javanese Indonesian government also provokes the Javanese by the mythology of *Pancasila,* which basically a Javanese symbol of a dominance position over the other ethnic groups, to dominate ideologically over the Acehnese. Moreover, the economical motivation is also plays significant role in creating hostile emotions for the Acehnse and the Javanese Indonesian government. Thus, it creates a security dilemma because the GAM aim was to create their own nation-state and fight against the

---

[204] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, (Washington, 5.

economical exploitations by the Javanese Indonesian government. The DOM policy was a result of the elites manipulation and provocation to lead the ethnic conflict by using the symbols to create such fear among the ethnic group member. A massive Javanese military under the Indonesian central government command had crush a relatively small numbers of the GAM's core members. Thus, these fears justify offensive actions in the name of self-defense from both sides.

In this context, the conflicts were imbalance because the strength of the GAM's power was not as big as the Javanese Indonesian side. Even though, Hasan di Tiro could provoke the Acehnese myth and symbols, they were lack of resources to fight against the Javanese neo colonial. Hence, the Javanese Indonesian government could easily take the oil and LNG for them selves and shares nothing for the Acehnese. These imbalance conflicts had created such an Acehnese ethnic cleansing. This ethnic cleansing easily seen because after the declaration of Aceh independence in 1976 by Hasan di Tiro, the GAM was not develop under the Javanese Indonesian control by implementing the military operation to terrorize the Acehnese for more than ten years.

After we analyze the second case study on chapter 5 of the ethnic conflict in Aceh, I will develop the symbolic politics theory on the subsequent peace on ethnic peace after the 1998 period in Indonesia. On chapter 6, I will discuss the necessary conditions of the symbolic politics theory on ethnic peace in Aceh. The elites on both sides plays very important role in influencing the peace process through the negotiations between the GAM under Hasan di Tiro leadership and the Indonesian government. The purpose of chapter 6 is to give different perspective on explaining the ethnic peace in Aceh after

the 1998 reform period. The symbolic politics theory on chapter 6 intends to give clearer explanation on the reasons of the ethnic group peace process.

CHAPTER 6:

THE ACEHNESE SUBSEQUENT PEACE AFTER THE 1998 REFORM PERIOD

A. Introduction

After we discuss the Acehnese conflicts under the Soeharto New Order period in chapter 5 and in this chapter 6, the symbolic politics theory analytically takes the next step to explore the subsequent peace after 1998. This chapter will begin to discuss the applicability of the symbolic politics theory after the fall of Soeharto in 1998. The collapse of Soeharto regime had been became a symbol of changes and freedom of the Indonesian society from an authoritarian regime. At the same time, GAM under Hasan di Tiro leadership start to gained more popular support from the Acehnese and even from the international society. GAM took advantage of anger, new political openness, and demands for East Timor-style referendum, to rebuild. Furthermore, GAM getting more aggressive to fight against the Javanese Indonesian central government. Indonesian political and economic crisis create chaos situations and thus this situation threat the Indonesian integration from Sabang to Merauke.[205] The Acehnese under di Tiro leadership keep struggling for their freedom as a separate nation from Indonesia. The main focus of reformation in Indonesia was to change centralize authoritarian system into decentralize democratic system. Therefore, autonomy was the only option for the

[205] Sabang symbolize Aceh province and Merauke symbolize Irian Jaya or Papua province. This phrase symbolizes an Indonesian nationalism and pride as one nation that diverse in ethnicity, religions, regional origins, or even ideologies. Besides this phrase meaning a patriotic statement of a unity of Indonesian state, Donald K. Emmerson explained that the phrase is ironically also a symbol of the oppression from the Indonesian central government in Aceh and Papua province. See Donald K. Emmerson, "What is Indonesia?" in *Indonesia: The Great Transition*, edited by John Bresnan (Maryland, United States of America: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.Inc, 2005), 17-18.

Indonesian transition government under Baharuddin Jusuf Habibie leadership to keep a unity of the Indonesian society. Thus, autonomy as a symbol of changes and freedom became a central debate in reformation period.

This chapter examines the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese ethnic conflict and the subsequent peace after 1998 reform period. This chapter specifically analyzes the myths, fears, opportunities, mass hostility, and the hostile mobilization in determining the existence of the ethnic conflict or peace between the Acehnese under Hasan di Tiro leadership and the Javanese Indonesian central government in the reform period.

Ethnic conflict would be occurred because of a fundamental conflict between the Acehnese myth-symbols complex focused on fears of ethnic domination and the Javanese Indonesia government under the transition government period emphasizing the sovereignty and Indonesian national integration and saw the regional aspirations as threat for Indonesian existence. Geographically, Aceh is one of Indonesian unity pride symbol and thus, the Indonesian government insists that Aceh should be inside the Indonesian nation-state at any risk. However, the lack of opportunity to mobilize became a factor of ethnic peace under the Helsinki agreement in 2006. Moreover, the mass hostility did not appear on the Javanese Indonesian side. Therefore, the ethnic conflict did not occurred because the lack of elites' manipulation on the politics of the myth and symbol in one side.

B. Myth justifying hostility

The Acehnese myths. The myth of the Acehnese rebellion under di Tiro leadership on reform period was similar to the Acehnese rebellion under Soeharto's regime, as mentioned in chapter 5. Di Tiro even used the symbol of reformation in Indonesia, which is the myth of freedom. On a similar intention of Hasan di Tiro under Soeharto regime, on chapter 5, he led the Acehnese movement pursuing their ultimate goal to create independence Acehnese nation. Di Tiro re-emerge the past glory of the Aceh Sumatra State before the Dutch colonial annex the Aceh territory. They used a mythology of the Aceh Sumatra State as a way to portrayed the Acehnese as an independent nation that separate from the Javanese Indonesian nation. Kirsten E. Schulze explains that Hasan di Tiro with his Acehnese movement ultimate goal was to re-gain independent from the neo-colonial Javanese government. She continue to explain that the GAM maintains that Aceh sovereignty should have been returned to the Sultanate of Aceh, which is to Hasan di Tiro as Aceh Sultanate descendent.[206]

The mythology of freedom for the Acehnese also means that they could free from the Javanese Indonesian oppression. The military operation from 1989 create a grievance for the Acehnese because the Acehnese victimized in all form of violence such as intimidation or even be killed because of suspected as rebel. Thus, Hasan di Tiro and GAM gained more popular support from the Acehnese because the Acehnese felt as an in-group of the GAM to fight against the Javanese Indonesian military oppressor.

---

[206] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 6-7.

Another action from Hasan di Tiro was the usage of freedom myth-symbol that creates a hostile attitude and situation as a creation of the religious and nationalist Acehnese identity. Hasan di Tiro keep provoking the Acehnese people using religious and nationalist myth-symbols such as the epics of holy war against the (neo) colonial that oppress the Acehnese identity as devoted Moslem and a nationalist people. Thus, the Aceh nationalism was getting stronger than ever. In addition, The GAM flag, as a religious-nationalist symbol, was more popular than ever because the Acehnese perceives this flag as a symbol of freedom from the Javanese Indonesian government. Elite or politician like Hasan di Tiro manipulate the past pride and heroism of the Aceh Kingdom to be used as his device to introduced Aceh as a free nation based on its historical background of the Aceh Kingdom.

The myth-symbol of freedom, religious, and nationalism through the GAM's flag gained the biggest Acehnese popular loyalty. The data from the combined intelegence unit (SGI, *Satuan Gabungan Intelijen*) shows that the core GAM's members in 2002 was 3,649. It was more than 520 percent larger than the GAM's members in 1976, which are only 70 GAM's core members. Even more, in 2003 the GAM's core members are 5,517. It increased 75 percent than the GAM's core members in 2002.[207] However, Kirsten Schulze mentioned that this intelligent data should be viewed cautiously because these data may not be accurate. The accuracy of the data was questioned because probably the Indonesian government would like to shows that GAM had no large popular support from

[207] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 14-18.

the Acehnese. Schulze continue to argue that the GAM's members probably even more than 5,517 people.

More importantly, the creation of East Timor state in 1999 from Indonesia became a blue print for the Acehnese to fight to re-gain their freedom from the neocolonial Indonesia. Since the Indonesian government under B. J. Habibie allowing the East Timor bid for independence in 1999, the Acehnese struggle raising expectations that a similar event might occur in Aceh. Hasan di Tiro and the GAM have used East Timor experience as a blueprint for Aceh nation to gain freedom from the Javanese colonial government.[208]

The Javanese Indonesian myths. At this period, NKRI (*Negara Kesatuan Republic Indonesia*, Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) is an imagined community became a final end for the Indonesian government and its military. Thus, the myth of NKRI (*Negara Kesatuan Republic Indonesia*, Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) as a final imagined community creates a hostile attitude from the Indonesian government in a way that they would fight against any parties who would disturb this mythology. It was clearly stated by General Ryamizard Ryacudu that the creation of NKRI (*Negara Kesatuan Republic Indonesia*, Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) was a final price and the Indonesian military would fight for the NKRI at any cost.[209]

---

[208] Ibid. 41.

[209] See *KOMPAS*, "TNI Minta Maaf pada Rakyat Aceh (TNI apologize to the Acehnese people)," May 14, 2003. Retrieved at October 15, 2008.

Donald K. Emmerson argue that historically the creation of Indonesia came from the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Oath) as a symbol of the unity in diversity of Indonesia. He mention that the oath contain of three symbols, which are one nation, one people, and one language.[210] The mythology of the 1928 Youth Oath is became a basis of the Indonesian military in reformation period to portray the Acehnse as a betrayer of this oath. Thus, General Ryacudu alert any groups that betray the Youth Oath would trigger a hatred and disaster.[211] In other words, the myth of NKRI as an imagined community creates a hostile attitude of the Javanese Indonesian military.

In this sense, the myth of unity in diversity and from Sabang to Merauke became more prone to conflict than ever. The Indonesian government used these myths to eliminate any separatist groups such as the East Timor movement, which eventually East Timor gained their independent from Indonesia. These myths also used by the Indonesian military to justified their actions to eliminate Acehnese separatist movement. For example, the continuation of the military operation of DOM policy in 1998 and afterward to eliminate the GAM was the fact that Indonesian military would do anything to defend Indonesia unity from Sabang to Merauke territory.

C. Fears of extinction

The Acehnese fears. Apparently, the histories of ethnic domination became the strongest Acehnese ethnic fears. Essentially, the Acehnese ethnic fears on reform period

---

[210] Donnald K. Emmerson, What is Indonesia? In Indonesia: The Great Transition, edited by John Bresnan (Maryland, United States of America: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Inc, 2005), 17.

[211] See *KOMPAS*, "TNI Minta Maaf pada Rakyat Aceh (TNI apologize to the Acehnese people)," May 14, 2003. Retrieved at October 15, 2008.

were similar to the Acehnese movement under Soeharto government. The first issue is the Acehnese economical exploitation by the Javanese people. This domination creates such fear from the Acehnese because the Javanese also dominate the economical resources such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) and oil under Javanese Soeharto regime. Tim Kell argues that these economical resources were Java centric in a way that the economical exploitation benefits went to non-Acehnese people. He continue to argue that it was exacerbated by the over centralization of state power, especially under the Soeharto regime. The Acehnese have no freedom to conduct and manage their own trade and any other economy activities.[212] Historically, Aceh's economy was not dependent with the Indonesian people as an independent state in the past centuries.[213] Thus, the Acehnese have no freedom to run their business because they must pay taxes and burden by trade law of the Indonesian central government, which based in Java.

Another Acehnese fear is the Javanese Indonesian military brutality. The GAM's propaganda portrayed the Indonesian military as the Javanese Indonesian military. This negative image arise because the Indonesian military dominated by the Javanese people and their actions follow the Javanese central government. The purpose of this negative image was to create fear among the Acehnese. The experience of *Darul Islam* movement and more importantly the DOM policy have made the Acehnese trauma because of the Javanese military brutality. In sum, the Acehnese was victimized by the military in the

---

[212] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University, 1995), 27.

[213] Ibid. 27-28.

name of national integrity without considering the human right of the Acehnese to be free from fear.

The next issue is autonomy status. Autonomy is an old issue that demanded by the Acehnese since Soekarno to Soeharto's regime. It is the Acehnese experience under Soekarno regime that promises to give more autonomy to the Acehnese in practicing the Islamic *Shari'a* law, education, economy and the granted a province status. However. This promise was never been implemented and only a lip service from the Soekarno to integrate Aceh to the Indonesian territory.[214]

Furthermore, under the Soeharto New Order regime, the status of *Daerah Istimewa Aceh* (Aceh Special Region) in practicing Islamic shari'a law and Aceh local culture also only a myth. It is because the law and the local culture were never implemented. The fact, Soharto regime requires to adopt *Pancasila* for all regions as the sole ideological state foundation and the only law in Indonesia.[215] Moreover, Soeharto obligate to use the Javanese terms for the lowest governmental structure for village. The Acehnese term for village is *gampong*, and replaced by the Javanese term of *desa*. Therefore, the special autonomy of Aceh was only a rhetoric and the Soeharto's government took the autonomy status back and only symbolize Aceh as special region without any privilege granted to the Acehnese. Thus, it symbolizes the Javanese domination over the Acehnese on the state power.

---

[214] Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 293.

[215] Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University, 1995), 42-43

The Javanese Indonesian fears. The disloyal image of the Acehnese/GAM and their leader of Hasan di Tiro have developed into a chauvinist nationalist Acehnese. This negative image motivates such fear and hatred toward the Acehnese. All Acehnese are suspected as disloyal people by the Indonesian military and thus, the Acehnese terrorize by the Indonesian military to prevent the Acehnese to support GAM. As a consequence, the Indonesian military is strongly firm to any military operations in Aceh territory. For example, they gather the villagers and the village leader to declare their loyalty to the NKRI (Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia). The Indonesian military also mobilize the villagers to attend the ceremony to declare and oath the villagers' loyalty to NKRI and these activities propagandize through the Indonesian television. The villagers also must show their loyalty to the Indonesian flag as a symbol of loyalty. Moreover, the Acehnese required making an Indonesian citizens identification card as a symbol of loyalty to the NKRI and as a symbol of their rejection toward the GAM.[216]

The Acehnese under Hasan di Tiro was strongly firm on their stance to gain their independent from Indonesia by using the East Timor blueprint to separate from Indonesia through a referendum. Hasan di Tiro used this blueprint as a public relations propaganda strategy by expecting the international support for East Timor could be transferred to Aceh.[217] Immediately, the Indonesian military react to GAM's stance by declaring war to any separatist activities from NKRI. Thus, the Indonesian military act in overreaction

---

[216] Heru Cahyono, "Dampak Konflik pada Kehidupan Pedesaan di Aceh (Conflict Effect to the Villagers in Aceh)" in *Beranda Perdamaian: Aceh Tiga Tahun Pasca MoU Helsinki (Veranda of Peace: Aceh Three years Post-Helsinki MoU)* edited by Ikrar Nusa Bhakti (Yogyakarta, Indonesia: P2P-LIPI-Pustaka Pelajar, 2008), 333.

[217] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization* (Washington, East-West Center Washington, 2004) 41.

manner because of the provocation of Hasan di Tiro and the GAM separatist activities. It implies the Indonesian central government fear to the situations. Hasan di Tiro's strategy is considered as a serious threat to the unity of Indonesia. These situations create an immediate panic of the Habibie government and thus it creates a hostile situation and attitudes of the Habibie government and the military to react toward the GAM's independent. The Indonesian government offers autonomy as a final answer for Hasan di Tiro. However, di Tiro immediately rejected the proposal because they had trauma of the autonomy experience either under Sokarno or Soharto's government.

The negative image of autonomy was associated with military violence actions. As the GAM leaders explained that special autonomy would be rejected because its negative associations with violent military rule.[218] Historically, the term of autonomy for the Acehnese was merely the language of the Javanese Indonesian government to dominate the Acehnese through the military actions such as the DOM policy. One of GAM elites, Bakhtiar Abdullah, explained that the term of autonomy represents the conflict status with all Indonesian military cruelty such as murder, torture, rape, abduction, robbery, and various other serious human right violations.[219]

GAM's demand was firmly on the option of referendum to determine the future of Aceh. In this context, Aceh students formed the Aceh Referendum Information Center (*Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh*; SIRA) to support the GAM to demand a referendum on independence for Aceh. Thus, the tens of thousands of students did their

---

[218] Edward Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh?* (Washington: East-West Center Washington, 2005), 26.

[219] Ibid. 29.

demonstration to support he referendum on Aceh independent. However, this situation responded carefully by the Indonesian government and military. For example, on September 22, 1999, the Indonesian House of Representative (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR) and People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*, MPR) granted a broader authority to the Aceh province of the special autonomy for Aceh. Thus, the Indonesian executive and legislative had been support the special autonomy option for the Acehnese within Indonesia.

D. Opportunity to mobilization

According to the symbolic politics theory of ethnic war, there would be no mass hostility if there were little opportunity to mobilize their own ethnic groups. Apparently, the situation after the riot in 1998 in Jakarta had open up the political space for the Acehnese to gain political opportunity of freedom to come up to the surface. On the other hand, the Indonesian government and the military were lack of opportunity to react. They were on the weakest position ever since the student movement in 1998, which resulted in the collapse of the Soeharto regime and the power of military. Thus, the mass ethnic hostility did not escalate.

Four factors, in addition, made the hostile situations more controllable. First, the changes of the Indonesian government from authoritarian to a more democratic government lead to the changes of the Indonesian government behaviors toward the Acehnese by controlling the Indonesian military to act more carefully. Therefore, there was little opportunity for the Indonesian military to act offensively toward the Acehnese.

The people's demand on democratization required the transition government to act wisely and on non-violence manner toward the Acehnese movement. The weak position of central government and military has lead to negotiations process between the Indonesian government and the GAM. This negotiation process was support by the media freedom in Indonesia. The democratization in Indonesia resulted on the press freedom. Thus, the Indonesian media could cover the story of the negotiation process freely. The press freedom contributes to the lack of opportunity for the Indonesian government and military to act offensively. Any reactions from the government and military became a concern and create a public opinion in domestic and international level.

The second factor was the internationalization of the Acehnese movement negotiations issue weakens the Indonesian government and its military position to react offensively toward the GAM rebellions. The internationalization of this issue was the existence of the Hendry Dunant Center (HDC) as a mediator of the Indonesian government and the GAM movement under Hasan di Tiro control. The mediation of HDC under the Martti Ahtisaari leadership brought to new stage of peace. At the same time, GAM gains more opportunity to mobilize the Acehnese by this international negotiation. Hasan di Tiro also was used this dialogue to gain international legitimacy and support. However, the international community on the neutral side and not to support the Acehnese break away from the Indonesian state as long the Indonesian could maintain the human right and a more just situation in Aceh. Thus, Hasan di Tiro and the GAM were on a weak side because they did not get the international support as they

expected.[220] While, once again, the Indonesian government reacts carefully as they realize their less legitimacy on domestic and international level. The Indonesian government keeps offering the GAM's elites to not break away from Indonesia as the only option to protect the unity of Indonesia.

The third factor is the tsunami disaster factor. On the December 26, 2004, the sudden earthquake and tsunami had destroyed most of the infrastructure and estimated killed 129.775 people, 38.786 missing and 504.518 tsunami–displaced in Aceh Province from both the Acehnese and the Javanese people, and also their military forces.[221] Jean-Christophe Gaillards argue that tsunami disaster should be considered as what they called "tsunami disaster diplomacy." This form of diplomacy is a powerful catalyst in diplomatic talks, since negotiation between both sides was ongoing before the disaster and was favored by recent changes in the political environment.[222]

This disaster suddenly had created new situations in Aceh. Both sides had been lost their supporters. Many of GAM fanatic supporters killed and thus it led them to negotiation as the only way to save their people. In this sense, Hasan di Tiro and the Indonesian central government came to new proposal on the negotiation process. It is precisely as Gaillards stated that tsunami disasters have a short-term impact on diplomacy but, over the long-term, non-disaster factors, especially the internal political factors, have

---

[220] Michael Runnner and Zoe Chafe, "*Beyond Disasters: Creating Opportunities for Peace*," edited by Lisa Mastny, World Watch Report (Worldwatch Institute, 2007), 21.

[221] Shannon Doocy, et. al., "Tsunami mortality in Aceh Province, Indonesia" *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 85, no. 2 (2007): 273.

[222] Jean-Christophe Gaillard, Elsa ClaveÅL, Ilan Kelman, "Wave of peace? Tsunami disaster diplomacy in Aceh, Indonesia" *Geoforum* 39 (2008): 511.

a more significant impact.[223] One significant internal political factor is the political will of the elite actors from both sides to continue the negotiation process. GAM under Hasan di Tiro's leadership offer a self-government option rather than an autonomy or special autonomy option. The Indonesian government suspected that the term of self-government was problematic because the term was suspected as another term for self-determination of even independent.

Eventually, GAM's elites explain that the details of the self-government were, as follows: (a) greatly expanded authority to a "self-governing" territory of Aceh within Indonesia, with only minimal powers reserved to Indonesia; (b) a recognition of Acehnese symbols like a flag; (c) a different political system notably signed by the existence of the local political parties; (d) to protect Aceh's special rights from the Indonesian House of Representative (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR); (e) a judicial system largely independent from that in the rest of Indonesia, with no right of appeal to the Supreme Court in Jakarta over decisions by the top Acehnese court; (f) strong human rights demand on the past military abuses; and (g) replace the Indonesian National Military (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, TNI) by the locally recruited police force.[224] The problematic term of self-government and special autonomy was solved by the agreement in Helsinki on August 15, 2005. This agreement avoids the usage of the self-government and special autonomy terms.[225] Therefore, the elite actors from both sides plays

---

[223] Ibid. 523.

[224] Edward Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh?* (Washington: East-West Center Washington, 2005), 30-31.

[225] Ibid. 42-43.

significant roles in continuing the peace processes after the tsunami disaster diplomacy ended.

Another important factor was the economic factor. The Aceh territory is rich of LNG (liquid natural gas) and oil. This economy resource shows the Acehnese dominance of the Indonesian economy made a total split with Acehnese too costly for the Javanese Indonesian government to attack GAM because they control of the Aceh economic resources has therefore served as a significant economy sources. The Acehnese dominance over the LNG (liquid natural gas) and oil in Aceh territory would only make the investors more reluctant to run their business in Indonesia.[226] Thus, the Indonesian government aimed to protect the investors and thus, negotiations was inevitable for the Indonesian government. All of these considerations affected the opportunity structure for violent action on both sides. The Indonesian government had no incentive to permit further violence, as it would limp the economic potential on which their future success depended.

E. Chauvinist mobilization and the clashes

According to the symbolic politics theory of ethnic war, if both myths justifying hostility and fears of extinction exist in an ethnic group, mass hostility toward the other ethnic group aiming at political dominance becomes more likely—but it must, to have effect, be mobilized politically. This is what occurred in Aceh chaotic situations in 1999. GAM members in Aceh, which was motivated by a mythology demanding political

---

[226] Ibid. 14-17. See also Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization* (Washington, East-West Center Washington, 2004), 37-39.

domination and by a fear of ethnic extinction, began to launch hostile action against their mythical enemy, the Javanese neocolonial government. In this pursuit they were mobilized by the chauvinist GAM's elites like Hasan di Tiro. Since 1999 to 2004, GAM strategy was aimed creating chaotic situation through guerrilla warfare and a political strategy of internationalization.

The guerrilla's strategy of Hasan di Tiro was to provoke the Indonesian National Military (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, TNI) to react offensively toward the GAM members. The tactics were mainly of hit-and-run ambushes and continued by the retreat into the mountains or villages among the villagers. One GAM guerrilla fighter stated "We don't have to win the war; we only have to stop them from winning."[227] The guerrilla's tactic was only to provoke the Indonesian National Military (TNI) to react abusive and charged as the human rights abuser. For example, GAM fanatic supporters attacks on vital industries, Javanese migrants, and populated areas in order to provoke and demonize the Indonesian National Military (TNI). Furthermore, the Indonesian National Military (TNI) abusive actions would attract the international community to suppress and put the Indonesian government in the corner. Therefore, the Indonesian government would be in a very weak position in facing the International community and the GAM in negotiations process.

This strategy resulted on the Security Operations (*Operasi Keamanan*) from the Indonesian National Military (TNI) in order to create a friendlier image in front of the

---

[227] Kirsten E. Schulze, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: Strategy and the Aceh Conflict, October 1976-May 2004," *in Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, edited by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 228.

Acehnese and the International community.[228] However, the international non-governmental organization (NGO) through the Hendry Dunant Center (HDC) under Martti Ahtisaari intervened quickly putting the GAM and the Indonesian government on the same table to solved the conflicts.[229] There is no evidence that there was any fear in the Javanese Indonesian side before the clash on the reform period. In fact, they felt that they were embracing an important victory at that time. The Indonesian National Military (TNI) felt that they succeed to create a new image of human right friendly. The GAM failed to expect the incoming attacks from the Indonesian military when the GAM members did feel that something was coming. Hasan di Tiro also expects that the HDC would tend to defend GAM, but the fact that the HDC on a neutral position.[230] It implies that Hasan di Tiro and his GAM failed to gain the international support for the Acehnese Independent break away from the Indonesian state. Therefore, negotiations were the only way to maintain their legitimacy.

After both sides had an agreement of Helsinki in August 15, 2005, the elites from both side agree to create a new peace situation and thus, ethnic conflict did not occurred like the previous periods.[231] It was proven by peace, just, and transparent Aceh Governor

---

[228] Ibid. 244-247.

[229] See Konrad Huber, *The HDC in Aceh: Promises and Pitfalls of NGO Mediation and Implementation* (Washington: East-West Center Washington, 2004) also sees Edward Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh?* (Washington: East-West Center Washington, 2005).

[230] Kirsten E. Schulze, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: Strategy and the Aceh Conflict, October 1976-May 2004," *in Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, edited by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 244-247.

[231] Edward Aspinall, The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh? (Washington D.C.: East-West Center Washington, 2005).

direct local election in December 11, 2006. A year after the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding, they hold a democratic Aceh Governor directs election for the first time ever. According to the Helsinki MoU, the Acehnese even have privilege to form local political parties and the Acehnese could support an independent Governor candidates. Thus, many of the ex-GAM members create some of the local political party and endorse the independent candidates. The International Crisis Group reported that the Aceh Governor direct election was not creating conflict because both elites from GAM and Indonesian government did not provoke the politics of the myths and symbols. Even more, GAM bring a massage of peace and change on the Aceh Governor local direct election by endorsing an independent candidates, which were Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammad Nazar. Furthermore, the International Crisis Group reported, "during the campaign, Irwandi and Nazar called themselves the Struggle and Peace Team (Pasangan Perjuangan dan Perdamaian)." [232] Furthermore, the Indonesian president and his vice president also encourage a peace situation. In a newpaper article on *Presiden: Pilkada Aceh Titik Bersejarah* (Local Direct Election: Aceh Local Direct Election as a Historical Momentum) (Kompas, December 11, 2006), Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the president of Indonesia for 2004-2009 periods, point out that the Aceh Governor direct local election as a historical peace momentum to create a more just development in Aceh and the unity of the Indonesian nation-state. Two days latter, in article *Wapres: Kita Harus Ikhlas GAM Menang (Vice President: We Must Accept GAM's Winning)* (Kompas, December 13, 2006), Yusuf Kalla, the vice president of Indonesia for 2004-2009 periods,

---

[232] International Crisis Group, *Indonesia: How GAM Won in Aceh*, Asia Briefing No. 61 (Jakarta: International Crisis Group Report, 2007) 4-5.

describe that the Indonesian people should learn to accept the Aceh Governor direct local election won by ex-GAM's members, which is Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammad Nazar. Therefore, both sides commit to create a peace conditions after the Helsinki agreement in 2005 through the peace, just, and transparent Aceh Governor direct local election as the symbols of peace and change for the Acehnese future life.

In sum, when GAM had the opportunity to mobilize, their ambivalent mythology and lack of fear prompted political rather that violent mobilization. When they were given cause to fear-by the Javanese Indonesian government-their opportunity for violent counter-mobilization was quickly stopped by the HDC under the leadership of Martti Ahtisaari. Hasan di Tiro for GAM and the Javanese Indonesian government finally meet an agreement based on the Helsinki agreement in 2005. A neutral Mediation of the HDC resulted in a more promising future of the Acehnese within Indonesia. The GAM and the Acehnese could enjoy more just situations of the economical share of central and regional. Moreover, politically, the Acehnese could change the Indonesian political system by the existence of local party in certain regions and independent regional leader candidates. Culturally, the Acehnese could practice the Islamic *shari'a* law as their identity.

F. Conclusion

After I talked about the myth of hostility, fears of extinction, opportunity to mobilization, and chauvinist mobilization and the clashes, the pre-conditions of the symbolic politics theory on ethnic peace does present on the Aceh subsequent peace. The

lack of opportunity from both sides, and the reluctance elites from both sides to continue the war has resulted in negotiations process.

Agreement between the Indonesian government and Hasan di Tiro for GAM on the reform period was predictable. The situation did not include all the pre-conditions for ethnic violence: hostile mythologies and ethnic fears did exist but there were lack of opportunity to mobilize their own ethnic groups. These conditions did not produce a politics of the chauvinist movement and ethnic hostility. GAM's elites actively provoke the Javanese Indonesian elites to react utilizing the myth and their fears to create such opportunity to mobilize the Indonesian nationalist people. However, the Indonesian government did not provoke the myth and the fears of the Javanese politically. There were no responses from the Indonesian elites government in counter-mobilization to the GAM provocations. Therefore, elites from both sides reluctant to evoked the hostile emotions, myths, and symbols to conflicts.

In addition, tsunami disaster had contribute to change the attitudes of GAM and the Indonesian government and agreed to a more win-win solutions by a more just sharing among them. The mediation of Marti Ahtisaari also plays an important role as a symbol of neutral side to solve the conflicts. Thus, ethnic violence was avoided. The third party of Marti Ahtisaari expected to support the Acehnese independence by Hasan di Tiro and his GAM, but HDC under Marti Ahtisaari leaderhip stand on a neutral side. At the same time, they also insist the Indonesian government to not to use military actions in the name of the universal of human rights. Eventually, this situation makes both Acehnse and the Indonesian government sides had no other choices but to negotiate for peace.

After we discuss the subsequent ethnic peace in Aceh after the 1998 reform period, finally, I will conclude the research by making the assessment of the theory to shows the applicability of the symbolic politics approach and to explain the strengths and weaknesses of the theory. On the first part of chapter 7, I will assess the symbolic politics theory on the three case study of Aceh problem to shows the reasons of ethnic conflict and the subsequent peace in Aceh. I will continue to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory based on the three case studies on the second part. The objective of chapter 7 is to give conclusion on the explanatory power of symbolic politics theory on Aceh war in Indonesia.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION

A. Introduction

On earlier chapters, I discussed the symbolic politics theory on the case studies. Now I pull it all together how the theory relates to Acehnese ethnic conflict and the subsequent peace. This chapter aimed to assess the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese ethnic conflict and the subsequent peace by analyzing the precondition of ethnic conflict through the myths, fears, opportunities, mass hostility, and the hostile mobilization. Thus, the symbolic politic theory would find the importance of it by seeing the pattern of the conflicts and subsequent peace. Symbolic politics theory applied on the three important events of the Acehnese conflicts, which are the Acehnese conflicts under Soekarno, Soeharto, and after the 1998 reform period. Based on the three case studies, the symbolic politics theory shows its strength in explaining the Acehnese problem in Indonesia. Furthermore, this chapter aimed to analyze on the strengths and weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory on the Aceh ethnic conflicts.

B. Assessment of the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese conflicts.

a. Assessment of the theory on the Acehnese conflict under Soekarno period

The first case study shows that myths justifying hostility (S1) are clearly present and important in the Acehnese case, a history of the Aceh war against the colonial Dutch and continue against the Javanese neo-colonial government. The Acehnese widely accepted the "Javanese neo-colonial government" as non-believers of Islam or secular nationalist, while the Javanese Indonesian government saw the Acehnese was the

stubborn people who did not wanted to adopt the *Pancasila*. The perception that Acehnese wanted to change *Pancasila* with an Islamic basis led also to Javanese Indonesian fears of group extinction (S2). The combination of the Acehnese stereotypes about the Javanese and violence by Javanese created similar fear on the Acehnese side. Opportunity for rebellion (S3) was provided by the difficult terrain and demographic concentration of Acehnese in Aceh province; the weak state institutions in regions; the insensitive central government to the local value; the Acehnese disappointment toward the Indonesian central government; and the creation of local military of DI/TII. Hostile mass attitudes—negative stereotype—on the Javanese side (S4) were present, as shown by the fact the Acehnese insist to implement the Islamic Law of the Jakarta Charter as the Indonesian state basis philosophy was a concrete form of stubborn people. Another example of the myth of stubborn was when the Acehnese rejected to be included to the North of Sumatra Province in 1950's. Hostile attitudes on the Acehnese side also existed, primarily as a result of fear and resentment rather than hatred. The Acehnese fears arise because of the non-believers of Islam (*kaphee*) of Javanese Indonesian government and their military insist to adopt secular nationalist state foundation of *Pancasila*. The Javanese Indonesian government was also troubling behavior that cannot be trusted. It is important to note that this negative image of the Javanese showing the Acehnese feelings of hostility were obviously strong and widespread throughout Aceh territory.

Symbolic mobilization (S5) is present on both sides as expected. The mobilization was mainly elite-led process on both sides. For the Javanese side, first covertly, but then overtly in Soekarno's rejection of the Aceh province creation and required Acehnese, under the Daud Bereueh leadership, to adopt secular nationalist state foundation of

Pancasila. In order to pursue this objective, the Javanese Indonesian military was mobilized by the Soekarno to attack the Acehnese and their elite, especially Daud Bereueh. For the Acehnese, the movement was also elite-led process. The Acehnese elites especially the Aceh Islamic Scholars Association (PUSA, *Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh*), para-military Boy Scout Organization (*Pandu Organisasi*) and Ex-revolutionary Troops of Aceh Veterans (*Bekas Pejuang Aceh*) supported the Daud Bereueh movement, so the counter-elite leading the movement had to rely on their own resources. The *Darul Islam* movement under Kartosuwirjo, instantly played an important role and also became key motivation for the Acehnese to join the movement. The Daud Bereueh movement tried to create a myth of devoted Muslim and Indonesian Islamic state. It implies that they were fighting for their religion and the Muslim community against the secular nationalist regime. Obviously, it was the symbol of Islam that provided a rallying point.

There was an essential security dilemma in Aceh: each side's security efforts threatened the other side. The broad perception of threat on the Acehnese side motivated mass mobilization under the banner of *Darul Islam* movement. At September 20, 1953, Daud Bereueh declared the formation of the Islamic state of Indonesia under the banner of *Darul Islam* movement. At the same time, the declaration of the Islamic State of Indonesia followed by the well-planed attacks by the Boy Scout Organization (*Pandu Organisasi*) and Ex-revolutionary Troops of Aceh Veterans (*Bekas Pejuang Aceh*) to several Indonesian military and police unit posts in most of the district (*Kabupaten*) in Aceh. In September 21, 1953, Daud Bereueh cleverly took the opportunity to mobilize the Acehnese ethnic group to rebel under the banner of *Darul Islam* movement. The

Soekaro's government and their military introduced to restore order quickly by counter-insurgency operations. What drove this security dilemma that led to conflict were the actions of armed groups and the also the provocations of the elites using the myths, fears and chauvinist mobilization against which it took place.

b. Assessment of the theory on the Acehnese conflict under Soeharto period

This section aimed to assess the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese ethnic conflict by analyzing the precondition of ethnic conflict through the myths, fears, opportunities, mass hostility, and the hostile mobilization. Thus, the symbolic politic theory would find the importance of it by seeing the pattern of the conflicts.

Myths justifying hostility (S1) are present in the Acehnese case on the Soharto's period. It was the myth of sovereign Aceh state before the Aceh war on March 26, 1873, where the colonial Dutch came to annex the land of Aceh. Di Tiro re-emerge the myth of creation of the Negara Aceh Sumatra (Aceh Sumatra State). He proclaimed Negara Aceh Sumatra on December 4, 1976 and claimed it as a "Successor State" free from Dutch domination and Javanese neo-colonial. Another device was the used of the GAM's flag as a myth-symbol of their pride, glorify of their past, and a symbol of freedom. On the other hand, Soeharto used the myth of *Pancasila* as a symbol of unity of diversity to eliminate any other ideologies that could disrupt his plan to centralize power into his hand only.

This Soeharto force to adopt *Pancasila* led to the Acehnese fears of group extinction (S2). Negative stereotype of the Acehnese sides also created similar fear on

the Javanese Indonesian side. For example, the stereotype of the Acehnese as rebellious, stubborn, chauvinist, and fundamentalist, is inevitably a source of fear for the Javanese Indonesian side, surely made worse for those whose parties used myth as "the terrorist, the separatist" or GPK. Another example was the used of the *hikayat perang sabil* (the epic of the holy war) by the Acehnese. Di Tiro claimed that *hikayat perang sabil* epics are a holy war against the neo-colonial Javanese side.

Opportunity for rebellion (S3) was provided by the weakness of the Indonesian state, combines with President Soeharto's centralizing policy in his ruling period, demographic concentration of the Acehnese in Aceh province territory, and the existence of physical training and ideological support from Muammar Qaddafi, the Libyan dictator, in 1987. Hostile mass attitudes on the Javanese side (S4) were also present, as shown by the image of the Javanese were "land grabbers" by sending the Javanese settlers under the transmigration policy. On the other hand, hostile attitudes on the Acehnese side also existed, primarily as a result of fear and resentment. The Javanese Indonesian government controls the media though the Press Act articles 11 to support only the Indonesian government for the unity interest (nationalism). The existence of negative attitudes of Javanese toward the GAM has also been confirmed in media as the Javanese Indonesian government propaganda. They tightly control the media contents.

Symbolic mobilization (S5) is present on both sides as predicted. On the Javanese side, violent mobilization was primarily elite-led process explicitly since the first place. The fact was shown on the 1984 *Pancasila* policy as the sole foundation of the state. The Javanese Soeharto government forced every Indonesian citizen to adopt the *Pancasila*

as the only ideological principles of live regardless their religions, ethnicity, or their region origins. On the Acehnese side, in the similar process, the movement was much more elite-led. The policy raised a Javanese symbolic status above any other symbols as a national symbol. Separatist violence occurred mainly because the GAM elites stood to gain power by promoting separatist violence against the *Pancasila* policy. The Indonesian media was another powerful device for the Javanese by playing on the symbolic issues at stake and stirring up anti-GAM (Acehnese) chauvinism. Instead of seeking compromise, both sides acted to exacerbate the security dilemma.

The Acehnese elites provoked the Acehnese nationalist movement into overreacting, and then used that overreaction to justify further moves toward secession. The Indonesian military provoke the fear of the Indonesian government in purpose to eliminate the GAM's movement by exaggerated the GAM's members. This hyperbolic statement was only to justify their action to immediately implement the DOM in Aceh and create such fear among the Javanese Indonesian society. The consequences were the Acehnese ethnic cleansing because the real power of GAM was not enough to crush the Indonesian military.

In sum, ethnic conflict between the Acehnese and the Javanese Indonesian government under Soeharto regime occurred because of a fundamental clash between the Acehnese myth-symbol complex focused on fears of ethnic (nation) domination and the Javanese one emphasizing the sovereignty and the national integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Each party defined dominance in Aceh as an important to its national existence and saw the other party aspirations as a threat of group extinction. Aceh

itself thus became, for both parties, a symbol of national aspirations and of the hostility of the other party. The result was a security dilemma and violence, then a politics of nationalist extremism that led to war.

c. The Acehnese subsequent peace after the 1998 reform period

This part examines the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese subsequent peace after 1998 reform period. This chapter specifically analyzes the myths, fears, opportunities, and chauvinist mobilization in determining ethnic peace between the Acehnese and the Javanese Indonesian central government in the reform period.

Indonesian political and economic crisis in 1997 create chaotic situations and soon it lead to the fall of Soeharto authoritarian regime in 1998. The collapse of Soeharto regime had became a symbol of changes and freedom from an authoritarian regime. At the same time, GAM took advantage of anger, new political openness, and demands for East Timor-style referendum, to rebuild. GAM start to gained more popular support from the Acehnese people and even the international society. The present of hostile myths (S1) and fears (S2) are important in the Acehenese peace process.

However, the violence did not escalate because the Javanese Indonesian government and their military chose not to let it; instead of moving on to the next step in the escalation process, continued chauvinist mobilization, Javanese elites react very careful in responding the Acehnese provocations. Violent escalation may well have been possible. Nevertheless, the Javanese elites had strong strategic reasons to decrease their oppressive military actions because of the existence of the International community

pressure on the violation of human rights from the foreign countries with their investors and the activists beyond border like the international non-governmental organizations. This pressure led to the next reasons of the Javanese side. They needed the Acehnese economic contribution such as LNG (liquid natural gas) and oil productions, and because of their fears of extinction were soften by the reassertion of the Javanese political control in Indonesia.

The tsunami disaster in December 26, 2004, also play crucial role as a new symbol of negotiation because both side lost their people in most of Aceh territory. On the Acehnese side, the tsunami immediately changes GAM position to separate from Indonesia. The absence of fears of extinction on Acehnese side and the changes of the Acehnese myths removed the motivation for initiating violence. Marrti Ahtisaari, the mediator and the 2008 peace noble prize winner, able to convince both side to agree on the mutually win-win solutions. The Javanese side did not use a military approach as usual in facing the new situations in Aceh and thus, this reaction prevented them from fighting back. It implies that the Javanese reassured that their dominance was safe because Aceh territory still on the Indonesia territory. While the Acehnese quickly found that their people and economy resources were protected. Resentments were also manageable, as both sides retained high status in their own eyes: The Javanese maintained their political dominance, while the Acehnese kept their political and economic dominance, and continued to feel culturally superior.

Ethnic conflict would be occurred because of a fundamental conflict between the Acehnese myth-symbols complex focused on fears of ethnic domination and the

Javanese Indonesia government under the transition government period emphasizing the sovereignty and Indonesian national integration and saw the regional aspirations as threat for Indonesian existence. Geographically, Aceh is one of Indonesian unity pride symbol and thus, the Indonesian government insists that Aceh should be inside the Indonesian nation-state at any risk. However, the lack of opportunity to mobilize for the Javanese became a factor of ethnic peace under the Helsinki agreement in 2006. Furthermore, the mass hostility did not appear on the Javanese Indonesian side. Therefore, the ethnic conflict did not arise because the lack of elites manipulation on the politics of the myth and symbol in one side.

In short, the applications of symbolic politics theory on the three important period of time of the Acehnese conflicts and subsequent peace had shows the strengths of the theory in explaining the phenomena. The hostile myths (S1) and fears of extinction (S2) were clearly present on the three case studies. Both sides had an enemy image of the other long before the conflicts broke out. Apparently, fears arise because of the political domination from one ethnic group over the other ethnic group.

However, the opportunity to mobilize (S3) was present on the first two case studies, while the opportunity to mobilization on the third case study did not present. Furthermore, the lacks of opportunities did not lead to the hostile mass attitudes (S4). The three case studies show that the elites from the Acehnese and the Javanese sides play a very important role in determining the violent (S5). On the first two case studies, the elites from both sides let the violent broke out. While on the last case study, the elites from the Javanese side (government-led) did not counter the provocations and

mobilizations of the Acehnese elites. Therefore, the ethnic conflicts are likely determine by the elites manipulation and provocation toward the hostile myths and fears of extinction from their own ethnic group to create a hostile mass mobilization and eventually, violent was inevitable.

C. Strengths and weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory

a. Strengths of the symbolic politics theory

The symbolic politics theory of ethnic war on the Acehnese ethnic war in Indonesia does usefully account for the outbreak of the conflict and even more can account for peace process. The Acehnese case is interesting because the degree to which every other theory of ethnic war also has some relevance. For example, every responsible account of the Acehnese conflict emphasizes its economic dimensions- the economic competition argument about ethnic war. The factors here include the competition for land between minority ethnic group and the Javanese immigrants on the Aceh territory, the deep poverty of the Acehnese group and the pervasive discrimination against them in the provision of public services, and the general want of economic opportunity for both the Javanese immigrants and the Acehnese.

Applying symbolic politics theory, I found a number of important points in the three cases. In three cases, I found strong myths in the majority group justifying hostility against the minority. I also found significant fears on the majority side—indeed, even stronger on the Javanese Indonesian side, where the fear was of extinction of the entire group. In three cases there was some degree of opportunity for the minority group to mobilize, and the minority group had a territorial base where their group was concentrated. In three cases there were powerful elites, especially on the majority side, who engaged in chauvinist mobilization and mobilizing their followers for violence against the minority group. Most significantly, this chauvinist mobilization in three cases included a big government crackdown against the minority group in response to initial

outbreaks of violence even though most of the violence seems to have been aimed against the minority group. The minority group thus had a reasonable basis for fearing for their situation.

The "ancient hatreds" theory works for the Acehnese on a moderate level. The best existing history of the Acehnese - (neo) colonial relations was between the Acehnese and the Dutch colonial, and the Acehnese and the Javanese neocolonial government in Indonesia. Hasan di Tiro, the highest leader of the Acehnese claimed that there was indeed a long history of the Acehnese- (neo) colonial warfare there. Furthermore, cultural institutions like the "*Hikayat Perang Sabil*" epics served to keep the memories of that conflict alive among the Acehnese before the 1950s. The resulting stereotypes and prejudices were measurable among the Acehnese throughout the century. Thus, "ancient hatreds" actually did play an important role in the Acehnese conflicts.

On the other hand, elite manipulation also played an essential role in promoting ethnic mobilization and communal war: there was no spontaneous outburst of popular hatreds. The Javanese Indonesian government like Soekarno and Soeharto played a pivotal role, as did fading the Acehnese aristocrats like Daud Bereueh and Hasan di Tiro who steered the Acehnese counter-mobilization. Soekarno and Soeharto's manipulations worked in the background consistently to escalate the violence.

The result of those manipulations, in turn created a situation in which a genuine security dilemma arose, as hypothesized by security dilemma theories of ethnic war.[233]

---

[233] The security dilemma theory of ethnic war was first formulated in Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993), 27-47.

The creation of *Pancasila* as secular state ideological foundation, the Soekarno's command to include Aceh into the North Sumatra Province and continue by the Soeharto's policy to make *Pancasila* as the sole ideology in Indonesia territory was a source of insecurity for the Acehnese. The Acehnese mobilization was almost entirely driven by fear among ordinary Acehnese; the conflict is not explicable without attention to this factor.

Moreover, the Acehnese inclined to violent resistance had help from Libya under Qadafi leadership, who provided military and ideology training. This help combined with other opportunity factors-the Acehnese demographic concentration- to make the Acehnese resistance possible.

b. Weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory

Although the symbolist explanation is effective, factors overlooked by all of the competing political science explanations also proved important in this case. First, it is significant that the *Darul Islam* and Free Aceh Movement (GAM) self-consciously define themselves as warrior groups. In symbolic politics theory context, their group myths justify any hostility and violence toward the out-groups.

Second, the social structure of the Acehnese groups, though not precisely a cause of the conflict, is nevertheless a critical factor in explaining its dynamics of escalation and de-escalation. As a developing state, patron-client system seems widely used to co-opt the peripheral area like Aceh. The Javanese Indonesian government used a centralization system as a way to co-opt the peripheral Aceh by putting their client

such as the military and Aceh provincial government. However, it is the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) are considered as the leader of Aceh. These *ulama* had sources of power outside the state apparatus. The significant factor in enabling politicians like Daud Bereueh and Hasan di Tiro to mobilize, respectively, the *Darul Islam* and GAM hereditary aristocrats with social power to mobilize supporters. It was this social stratum that helped the GAM to mobilize or to de-mobilize the Acehnese so quickly. In this case, the Acehnese under GAM organization of Hasan di Tiro leadership unite as one ethnic group.

Another important weakness is that there is no specific path in explaining the ethnic conflict based on the symbolic politics theory, especially the elite-led process in Aceh. It seems that the symbolic politic approach tend to be more an elite-led process than the mass-led process. It is because the interactions between the elite and the mass, especially in developing countries, tended to be more elitist than the masses. The elites assumed as the true leader that should be obeyed by the followers because they have the sources of power such as the cultural attachment of aristocratic blood, wealth, or religiosity.

On the case of Aceh conflicts, the interaction between the elites and the masses is based on the patron-client system where the aristocratic elites are extremely influencing the client (the masses). The elites play important roles in manipulating the myths and symbols of the ethnic group or in responding the politics of the myths and symbols of the ethnic group. For example, Hasan di Tiro is the descendant of aristocratic class of the Aceh Sultanate, the international entrepreneur, and at the same times, he also as the *ulama* (Islamic scholar). He is a prefect combination of the patron-client system on

traditional Aceh social structure. In sum, the elites is playing an utmost important role in influencing the ethnic conflict or the ethnic peace like in Aceh ethnic group conflict.

D. Implications

A major implication of this research is that ethnic conflict or war is very difficult to prevent. An analysis of hostile myths, fears, opportunity reasons, hostile feelings, and chauvinist mobilization shows why this is so. Myths, fears, opportunity reasons, hostile feelings, and chauvinist mobilization are all reasonable explanations of ethnic conflict or war. Based on the research, the elites from both sides more dominant to use these symbolic politics elements in triggering or preventing the ethnic conflicts. Thus, the symbolic politics theory argues that it is the elites who led the escalation or de-escalation of the ethnic conflicts. The elites utilize the traditional social structure of patron-client system to mobilize the masses to fight in the name of their nations. The implication of this argument is that the symbolic politics theory more focuses on the elite than the mass preferences in ethnic conflicts. In short, these theoretical limitations become a caution for the future research in analyzing the ethnic conflicts.

The future research also should take a closer look at the roles of the masses in escalating or de-escalating ethnic conflicts. The Acehnese roles in Aceh conflicts and subsequent peace are also an important elements in determining the actors the involved in conflicts because these supporters are willing to die in the name of their nations and symbols of the groups. Furthermore, it is the masses that make the ethnic conflicts or war arise and continue even into the most bloodiest war like genocides.

More over, the future research should observe deeper on the interactions between the elites and the masses in the ethnic conflicts. The interactions between the elites

and the masses will result wars or peace situations. Hence, the patterns of the interaction between the elites and the masses are also critical elements in utilizing the symbolic politics of myths, fears, opportunity, hostile feelings, and chauvinist mobilization in escalating or de-escalating conflicts with the other groups.

The situation in Aceh has changed to a great extend, the implications from this analysis must be drawn with carefulness. The Acehnese under Hasan di Tiro leadership is strong as one Acehnese ethnic group. Hasan di Tiro unites all the Acehnese under his leadership. This bond, like later ones, was traceable in part to the myth of Hasan di Tiro as the *Ulama* (Muslim religious leaders) and the descendant of the Aceh Kingdom. Therefore, Hasan di Tiro as the Acehnese Muslim religious leader and the aristocrat is the main element of the disputes and the subsequent peace.

The Indonesian central government strategy of international negotiation that strengthened the GAM position by accommodating GAM's aspirations under Hasan di Tiro leadership with the Indonesian central government at the same time made a cohesive peace deal are very possible, because it meant that accommodation with the rebel group would come at a benefit to GAM's elites and members, in the end as in the beginning, then, the solvency of achieving peace in Aceh stems from the bond of the Acehnese and strong leadership. That popular and unselfish leadership also remains a key successful implementation of Indonesian central government policies for economic development. Interestingly, the GAM under Hasan di Tiro has a strong common Aceh identity that allows the Acehnese ethnic conflicts resolved. Therefore, the future research should take a closer look in other countries that have similar ethnic conflicts and peace conditions like in Aceh, Indonesia.

REFERENCES

Alfian. “The Ulama in Acehnese Society.” in *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, compiled by Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Shiddique, Yasmin Hussain. Pasir Panjang, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985.

Alfian, Teuku I. “Aceh and the Holy War (Prang Sabil).” in Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem, edited by Anthony Reid. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006.

Anderson, Benedict. "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism." In Nationalism, edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith. London: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism (revised edition). London, UK: Verso, 1991.

Anderson, Benedict. Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Anderson, Benedict. Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1965.

Anshari, Saifuddin. The Jakarta Charter of June 1945. Selangor, Malaysia: Muslim Youth Movements of Malaysia, 1979.

Aspinall, Edward and Harold Crounch. The Aceh Peace Process: Why It Failed. Washington, WA: East-West Center Washington, 2005.

Aspinall, Edward and Mark T. Berger. “The Break Up of Indonesia?” in Third World Quarterly 22, no.6 (2001): 1003-1024.

Aspinall, Edward. "From Islamism to Nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia." Nations and Nationalism 14, no. 2 (2007): 245-263.

Aspinall, Edward. The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh? Washington, WA: East-West Center Washington, 2005.

Bar-Tal, Daniel, Eran Halperin, and Joseph D. De Rivera. “Collective Emotions in Conflict Situations: Societal Implications.” Journal of Social Issues 63, no. 2 (2007): 441-460.

Bates, Robert, Rui J. P. de Figueiredo, Jr., and Barry R. Weingast. “The Politics of Interpretation: Rationality, Culture, and Transition.” Politics & Society 26, no. 4 (1998): 603-642.

Bates, Robert. “Ethnicity and Development in Africa: A Reappraisal.” The American Economic Review 90, no. 2 (2000): 131-134.

Bates, Robert. “Modernization, Ethnic Competition, and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa.” In State Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas, edited by Rothchild, D., & Olorunsola V. A. Boulder, Colorado, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1983.

Bhavnani, Ravi. “Ethnic norms and Interethnic Violence: Accounting for Mass Participation in the Rwandan Genocide.” Journal of Peace Research 43, no. 6 (2006): 651-669.

Bilveer Singh. “The Challenge of Militant Islam and Terrorism in Indonesia.” Australian Journal of International Affairs 58, no. 1 (2004): 47-68.

Boland, B. J. The struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971.

Brown, David. “Why is the Nation-State is so Vulnerable to Ethnic Nationalism.” Nations and Nationalism 4, no.1 (1998): 1-15.

Brubaker, Rogers and David D. Laitin. “Ethnic and Nationalist Violence.” Annual Review of Political Science 24 (1998): 423-452.

Bruinessen, Martin van. “Islamic state or state Islam? Fifty years of state-Islam relations in Indonesia.” in Indonesien am Ende des 20, edited by Ingrid Wessel. Jahrhunderts, Hamburg: 1996.

Cahyono, Heru. “Dampak Konflik pada Kehidupan Pedesaan di Aceh (The Conflict Effect to the Villagers in Aceh)” in Beranda Perdamaian: Aceh Tiga Tahun Pasca MoU Helsinki (Veranda of Peace: Aceh Three years Post-Helsinki MoU), edited by Ikrar Nusa Bhakti. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: P2P-LIPI-Pustaka Pelajar, 2008.

Chalk, Peter. “Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh” in Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 24 (2001): 241-269.

Chandra, Kanchan. “What is Ethnic Identity and Does It Matter.” Annual Review of Political Science 9 (2006): 397-424.

Chong, Dennis. Rational Lives: Norms and Values in Politics and Society. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Christie, Clive J. A Modern History of South East Asia Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism. New York: I.B. Touris. Co. Ltd, 1996.

Crow, D. Karim. “Aceh-The 'Special Territory' in North Sumatra: A Self-Fulfilling Promise?” Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs 20, no. 1 (2000): 91-104.

Delanty, G. and Kumar, K., eds. The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism. London: SAGE Publications, 2006.

di Tiro, Hasan. The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary. Noshborg, Sweden: National Liberation Acheh Sumatra, 1981.

Dijk, Van C. “Islam and Socio-Political Conflicts in Indonesian History.” Social Compass 31, no. 1 (1984): 5-25.

Dijk, Van C. Rebellion Under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia. Leiden, Netherland: The Hague-Martinus Nijhoff, 1981.

Doocy, Shannon, et. al. “Tsunami mortality in Aceh Province, Indonesia.” Bulletin of the World Health Organization 85, no. 2 (2007): 273-278.

Edelman, Murray. Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence. Chicago, IL: Markham Publishing Company, 1971.

Emmerson, Donald K. “What is Indonesia?” in Indonesia: The Great Transition, edited by John Bresnan. Maryland, United States of America: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Inc, 2005.

Fearon, James D. "Rationalist Explanations for War." International Organization 49, No. 3 (1995): 379-414.

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. “Explaining Interethnic Cooperation.” American Political Science Review 90, no. 4 (1996): 715-735.

Fearon. James D. Ethnic Mobilization and Ethnic Violence. Forthcoming in the Oxford Handbook of Political Economy. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2004.

Feith, Herbert, and Lance Castles. eds. Indonesian Political Thinking 1945-1965. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1970.

Gaillard, Jean-Christophe, Elsa ClaveÅL, Ilan Kelman, “Wave of peace? Tsunami disaster diplomacy in Aceh, Indonesia.” Geoforum 39 (2008): 511–526.

Gellner, Ernest. Nationalism. New York, NY: New York University, 1997.

George. E. Marcus. “Emotion in Politics.” Annual Review of Political Science 3 (2000): 221–250.

Greenfeld, Liah. “Modernity and Nationalism.” In The SAGE handbook of nations and nationalism, edited by Delanty, G. and Kumar, K. London: SAGE Publications, 2006.

Grosby, Steven. “Territoriality: The Transcendental, Primordial Features of Modern Societies.” Nations and Nationalism, 1 no. 2 (1995): 143-162.

Gurr, Ted Robert. Why Men Rebel. N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970.

Hardin, Russell. One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Horowitz, Donald L. “Patterns of Ethnic Separatism.” Comparative Studies in Society and History 23, no. 2 (1981): 165-195.

Horowitz, Donald. Ethnic Groups in Conflict. Barkley, and Los Angeles: California, University of California Press, 1985.

Hosen, Nadirsyah. “Religion and the Indonesian Constitution: A Recent Debate.” Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 36, no. 3 (2005): 419-440.

Huber, Konrad. The HDC in Aceh: Promises and Pitfalls of NGO Mediation and Implementation. Washington, WA: East-West Center Washington, 2004.

Huxley, Tim. “Disintegrating Indonesia? Implications for Regional Security.” Adelphi Paper 349. London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2002.

International Crisis Group. Aceh: Why Military Force Won’t Bring Lasting Peace. Asia Report 17, Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2001.

International Crisis Group. Indonesia: How GAM Won in Aceh. Asia Report 61, Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2007.

Kaufman, Stuart J. "Symbolic Politics and Ethnic War in the Philippines." International Studies Association Annual Meeting. Chicago, IL, 2007.

Kaufman, Stuart J. "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice? Testing Theories of Extreme Ethnic Violence." International Security 30, no. 4 (2006a): 45-86.

Kaufman, Stuart J. Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Kaufman, Stuart J., Satoshi Machida, and Yu Wang. "Symbolic Politics and Ethnic Conflict in Malaysia and the Philippines." International Studies Association Annual Meeting. San Diego, California, 2006b.

Kaufmann, Chaim. "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars." International Security 20, no. 4 (1996): 136-175.

Kell, Tim. The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992. Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Publication no. 74. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995.

Kingsbury, Damien. The Politics of Indonesia. Australia: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Kolsto, Pal. "National Symbols as Signs of Unity and Division." Ethnic and Racial Studies 29, no. 4 (2006): 676-701.

KontraS. Aceh, Damai dengan Keadilan? Mengungkap Kekerasan Masa Lalu (Aceh, Peace with Justice? Revealing the Past Violent). Jakarta: KontraS, 2006.

Kooistra, Mieke. Indonesia: Regional Conflicts and State Terror. UK: Minority Rights Group International, 2001.

Lake, David A. and Donald Rothchild. "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict." International Security 21, no. 2 (1996): 41-75.

Lake, David A. and Donald Rothchild. Eds. The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Leifer, Eric M. "Competing Models of Political Mobilization: The Role of Ethnic Ties." American Journal of Sociology 87, no. 1 (1981): 23-47.

Liong, Liem Soei. "Indonesian Muslims and the State: Accommodation or Revolt?" Third World Quarterly 10, no. 2 (1988): 869-896.

Malesevic, S. Identity as Ideology: Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Marsh, David and Gerry Stoker. Theory and Methods in Political Science. Hampshire: Palgrave, Houndmills, Basingstoke, 1995.

McCulloch, Lesley. Aceh: then and Now. UK: Minority Rights Group International, 2005.

McGibbon, Rodd. Secessionist Challenges in Aceh and Papua: Is Special Autonomy the Solution. Washington, WA: East-West Center Washington, 2004.

Petersen, Roger D. Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred and Resentment in

Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Popkin, Samuel L. The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns (the 2nd edition). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Posen, Barry R. "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict. " Survival 35, no. 1 (1993): 27-47.

Ramage, Douglas E. Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam, and the Ideology of Tolerance. New York and London: Routledge, 1995.

Reid, Anthony, ed. Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006.

Reid, Anthony. "War, Peace and the Burden of History in Aceh." Asian Ethnicity 5 no. 3 (2004): 301-314.

Riddell, Peter G. "Aceh in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: "Serambi Mekkah" and Identity." in Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem, edited by Anthony Reid. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006.

Runnner, Michael and Zoe Chafe, "Beyond Disasters: Creating Opportunities for Peace," edited by Lisa Mastny, World Watch Report. Worldwatch Institute, 2007.

Saby, Yusny. Islam and Social Change: The Role of the Ulama in Acehnese Society. Bangi, Malaysia: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2005.

Schatz, Robert T. and Howard Lavine. "Waving the Flag: National Symbolism, Social Identity, and Political Engagement" Political Psychology 28, no. 3 (2007): 329-355.

Schulze, Kirsten E. "From the Battlefield to the Negotiating Table: GAM and the Indonesian Government 1999–2005." Asian Security 3, no. 2 (2007), 80-98.

Schulze, Kirsten E. "Mission Not so Impossible: The AMM and the Transition From Conflict to Peace in Aceh, 2005-2006." The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technology University, Working paper series no. 131 (2007), 1-52.

Schulze, Kirsten E. "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: Strategy and the Aceh Conflict, October 1976-May 2004," in Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem, edited by Anthony Reid. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006.

Schulze, Kirsten E. "The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization." Washington, WA: East-West Center, 2004.

Schulze, Kirsten E. "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM." Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 26, no. 4 (2003), 241-271.

Sjamsuddin, Nazzaruddin. The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985.

Smith, Anthony D. "The Origins of Nations." In Nationalism, edited by Hutchinson, J. & Smith, A. London: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Smith, Anthony D. Myths and Memories of the Nation. London: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Smith, Anthony D. Nationalism and Modernism. New York, NY: Routledge, 1998.

Smith, Anthony D. The Antiquity of Nations. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004.

Smith, Anthony. "The Origins of Nations." In Nationalism, edited by Hutchinson, J. & Smith, A. London: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Sukma, Rizal. Security Operations in Aceh: Goals, Consequences, and Lessons. Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004.

Sulaiman, M. Isa. "From Autonomy to Periphery: A Critical evaluation of the Acehnese Nationalist Movement." in Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem, edited by Anthony Reid. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006.

Thalib, Lukman. A Historical Study of the National Movement for the Independence of Acheh-Sumatra. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaya Press, 2002.

Tippe, Syarifudin. Aceh di Persimpangan Jalan (Aceh at a Crossroads). Jakarta: Pustaka Cidesindo, 2000.

Tirtosudarmo, Riwanto. "Demografi dan Konflik: Kegagalan Indonesia Melaksanakan Proyek Pembangunan Bangsa? (Demography and Konflict: The Indonesian Failure in Implementing the Nation Development Project?)" in Konflik Kekerasan Internal: Tinjauan Sejarah, Ekonomi-Politik, dan Kebijakan di Asia Pasifik (Internal Violent Conflict: History, Political Economy, and Policy Perspective in Asia Pacific)."eds. Dewi Fortuna Anwar et al. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2005.

Toft, Monica Duffy. The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 2003.

Walter, Barbara F. "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement." International Organization 51, no. 3 (1997): 335-364.

Webster, David. "From Sabang to Merauke: Nationalist Secession Movements in Indonesia." Asia Pacific Viewpoint 48, no. 1 (2007): 85.

Worldwatch Institute Report. "Aceh: Peacemaking After the Tsunami." In Beyond Disasters: Creating Opportunities for Peace, edited by Lisa Mastny. Washington DC: Worldwatch Institute, 2007.

Yusuf, M. Djali. Perekat Hati yang Tercabik (Bond of Torn Heart). Jakarta: Yayasan Ulul Arham, 2002.