

# The Role Of Former Free Aceh Movement (Gam) Elites' In Maintaining Peace In North Aceh Regency Of Indonesia

Muhammad Bin Abubakar<sup>1,\*</sup>, Saifuddin Yunus<sup>2</sup>, Zulhilmi<sup>3</sup>, Dahlan A Rahman<sup>4</sup>

*1* Magister Programm of Public Administration, Universitas Malikussaleh, Aceh Indonesia

*2, 3,4* Sociology Department, Political Science Department, Universitas Malikussaleh, Aceh Indonesia

Corresponding author: [mabubakar@unimal.ac.id](mailto:mabubakar@unimal.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

*This study analyzed the governance of North Aceh regency under the ex-GAM elite in the post MoU Helsinki peace agreement between the GAM and the Unitary State of Indonesia Republic (NKRI) in Finland, August 5th 2005. It focuses on the strategies of the GAM elite in maintain peace and the establishment of sustainable development in the regency of North Aceh in particular through which people welfare and dignity could be restored after long period of conflict. The data for this study is drawn from deep interview and focus group discussion with the elites of GAM, not only those who were in the government, but also out side the government. This study found that the elite of GAM had played important role in ensuring that the governance of North Aceh regency must be within the corridor of maintain peace, enhancing people welfare and sustainable development. To achieve these, they called upon all political parties in the region to guard the UUPA (the Law of Governing Aceh –LoGA) against anykind of political conspiracy that would against triggered conflict in Aceh. With regards to special autonomy fund, the elite argued that it is no need for the renewal, because the Acehnese have been self-reliance since.*

**Keywords:** Political Elite, Combatan of GAM, and Local Governance.

**DOI :** 10.29103/icospolhum.v3i.154

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the post of peace agreement or the so called MOU Helsinki in Finland between the GAM and the NKRI, the politicking in Aceh has taken new phase, particularly with the establishment of KPA (Komite Peralihan Aceh/ Aceh Transition Committee) and BRA (Badan Reintegrasi Aceh / Reintegration Aceh Body). The KPA is a vehicle through which the GAM Elite consolidate their political influence and maintain the center elite authority within the local society; and to name a few: Muzakir Manaf, Sofyan Daud, Zaini Abdullah, Zakaria Saman, Malek Mahmud are among the elite at the regional politic and Tgk Zukarnaini (Tgk Ni), Tgk Darwis Jeunib, Tgk Abrar Muda, and Abd Hanif are those controlling the KPA of the Pase territorial of the Northern Part of Aceh. The elite aware of the political implication of their direct involvement in the local politicking. . The

purpose of these two bodies were politically designed as the extended hands of the GAM, implying that the MoU has not terminated the GAM.

Research on post conflict Aceh has been abundance. After tsunami disaster inparticular, Aceh gained international attention, not only the phenomenon of devastated condition of Aceh, the long perpetuated political conflict had also force the world to come for help, finding solution to end the conflict and bring peace into the region. Peace was the most urgent and important startegy to rebuild Aceh after the disaster of tsunami.

Literatures in Aceh has been varied in their discourse, there are which focus on the conflict and peace agreement, Syariah and Secular politics and not less which discuss the local politics and the ex-combatan, ranging from economic and their politicking. Research by [1][2]discussed the six points of MoU of Helsinki that

limited the authority of the central government (Indonesia) on Aceh: foreign affairs, foreign defence, National security and monetary and fiscal, judicial jurisdiction and freedom of religion. These points would be implemented as soon as the Law on governing Aceh (Undang-Undang Pemerintahan Aceh (UUPA) Nomor 11 tahun 2006) was passed by the legislative (DPR) that not later than March 31, 2006. However, the Aceh government has to secure other regulations that regulate the implementation of UUPA, including on the points-natural resource exploration: oil and gas, the land law and the Committee of Truth and Reconciliation.

Following the implementation of LoGA, the most important political change in Aceh was the birth of local parties as it was mandated in the MoU and the rise of local independent candidate for the local government-Provincial, Regincial and Municipal level- for the governorship, regenciship and mayorship. The local head government, for the first time in Indonesian political history, would be directly elected by the people in the election in 2006. Since 2006 to 2017 election, the support of the ex-GAM elites has been indispensable factor for a candidate to win the election. Long before the nomination, candidates have to approach the former elite for recommendation and blessing (restu).

This shows that GAM, which was once known as a guerrilla strategy, is now turning to a political strategy that is currently one of the most familiar and trendy strategies in the Indonesian people [3]. So in addition to the KPA to actualize in politics, these former GAM combatants formed the Aceh Party (PA) as a local party. It is understood, then, that the pattern of local political power of former GAM combatants was able to influence the government in Aceh.

The pattern of political strengthening carried out by the elite of former GAM combatants is indeed very interesting with the slogan "struggle" so that it attracts the interest of the people of Aceh. This also has an impact on the existing governance in Aceh which is influenced by the elite political behavior patterns of former GAM combatants. In addition, the role of GAM elites in carrying out governance in Aceh is also due to the term "Penutoh" from the commander and regional commander of the KPA. This is the most important aspect in understanding the political process of the elite of former GAM combatants who have a great influence both in the social environment of society and government. However, the existence of GAM combatant elites in the most dominant area is the North Aceh Regency area which is included in the Pasee area. Accordingly this paper would attempt to analyze the role of the GAM elite in North Aceh Governance and its implication on the welfare of the people in the regency.

### **Literature Review**

Political Elite; Robert Putnam is a political scientist from Harvard University who discusses the power of political

elites. Putnam describes power as a pyramid that has levels. Starting from the first level of decision makers to the second level that has a form of influence, but not in the decision-making process. The third level is the society that carries out a political decision. Steven Lukes as a political scientist also explained about the form of political power which consists of two kinds. First is the form of power that can be seen in the formal structure of government. In this case such powers in the executive, judicial and legislative. The second is a form of hidden power. Hidden power is power that is invisible in a government structure but has major implications for political decisions [4].

The political process that goes on there is a response of the political elite and they are present and come from political parties or non-State groups. The political pattern of the political elite is indeed very strong and can influence the policies taken by the government. Pareto as quoted by Varma states that Elite is also defined as people who are capable and successful in occupying high positions in society usually they are people who belong to the same class that is smart and rich. In addition to the foregoing, there are symptoms of the use of force by elites to maintain power both within the community and in organizations [5]. The picture of the political elite is very clear more about the highest influence or power in the government or nongovernment so that its influence is very strong.

A good governance process that has the role of a quality political elite so that the government process runs optimally. It was Mosca who explained that where the ruling elite or so-called political elite. This political elite is an organized group that has political authority. The elite class consists of an organized minority who will impose their will through manipulation or violence, especially in democracies. The political elite has all the political functions, can monopolize power and enjoy every advantage of the power gained. The power of the elite possessed does not come from the community or economic position, but from organizations related to the public power of the state, the actions of the political elite are formed on the basis of the will of society [6][7].

Haryanto defines the political elite as actors who occupy the top positions in local political institutions. The masses have always been described as numerous, powerless, ruled, and not involved in political decisionmaking. In fact, in the theory of the political elite of the 'masses', the 'people' or the 'public' in politics are always apathetic and do not know much about the policies of local government (Haboddin, 2020). The political elite in all its actions and influences always uses the power it has so that it is respected by elements of society. However, the political elite becomes influential if political interests are increasingly raised in the community as its supporters.

The strongest relationship so far is between the political elite and the mass media. The drama of political democracy played out is a pattern of mutual benefit between the political elite and the mass media. Political elites or rulers whose essence is the carrying out of the mandate (sovereignty) of the people, always display political drama such as in the parliament building (DPR) which is always aired, as well as talk shows, dialogues and public debates that are sometimes broadcast live, all these dramas that are full of mutual influence and nuanced struggles for power, validity and authority [8].

The formation of a political elite is inseparable from the stronger and stronger the popularity possessed by a person in a group both tribal and organizations and political parties. However, in government, the role of the political elite is more about formulating policies and tends to maximize political interests in their discussions. So it can be understood that the political elite is a shop that is formed in the aspect of quality and quantity that is equally supported by the community so that it has a great influence on society. So a qualified political elite provides space for political participation and actualization for the people.

Governance, it is a concepts in the field of public policy studies.. Tiihonen which states that the theory and concept of governance is intended as a new process of governing), a new methode by which society is governed. The concept of governance can be distinguished in several variants including (1) governance: public administration and public policy; (2) governance international relations, (3) European Union governance, (4) governance in comparative politics (Abdullah, 2016). The new process in governance is a new direction in renovating government which tends to have bureaucratic pathologies. This requires good and accountable governance that must be carried out by leaders in government.

Grindl's model and Adaptive Governance combines two concepts to measure how adaptive government capacity building is with the following indicators: (1) Adaptive human resource development. (2) Strengthening Adaptive Organizations. (3) Institutional renewal of Adaptive Government. The new theory of the social contract addresses the concept of "social capital, norm, political culture" hints that the existence of effective government institutions due to the attribution of collectiveness and political power which desperately needs commonality with the four norms of political correctness of society such as; structure of authority, scope of authority, hierarchy of authority, source of authority (Norman et al., 2020). So this model provides a combination of government capacity with efficient and accountable governance indicators.

The concept of governance can also be seen in governance in village governance as a breakthrough in realizing

aspects of transparency and accountability. Good governance reflects the characteristics of good government and is a very important role in planning development activities, both at the national, regional and village levels. Good village governance is an effort made in the process of implementing village government in order to realize professional, efficient and effective, open, and responsible village governance to improve the welfare of the community (Ali & Saputra, 2020).

### **Methodology**

This research was conducted in the Pasee area, North Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. This research uses qualitative methods with a descriptive analysis approach [9]. This research was conducted in the Pasee area, North Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. This research uses qualitative methods with a descriptive analysis approach [10]. Data analysis in this study is carried out through the following procedures, namely the first stage of data reduction, second, data presentation and third conclusion drawing (Sugiono, 2013; Bugin, 2012).

### **The Finding and Discussion of the Research**

The North Aceh Regency: the demographic

The total population of North Aceh in 2021 is 608,106 people. The highest number of occupations in North Aceh Regency is found in Lhoksukon District, 8.25% (49,773 people), Dewantara 7.61% (45,882 people), and Jambo Aye land 7.34% (44,222 people). The area that has the smallest population distribution is in Geurdong Pase district, which is only 0.92% (5,534 people).

North Aceh Regency consists of 27 sub-districts and has different geographical conditions. In addition, the value of the North Aceh Regency Literacy Rate has increased and has been trending positively in the last five years (2016-2020). The higher the literacy rate of an area illustrates that the higher the population aged 15 years and over who are able to read and write and can understand simple sentences. The better value of this number illustrates the effectiveness of implementing basic education programs in an area running effectively, including in the current North Aceh Regency. This can be seen in the following chart:

Graphs 1: Literacy Rate of Residents Aged 15 Years and Over According to Gender in North Aceh Regency.



Source: Aceh Utara dalam Angka, 2021

Over the past five years (2017-2021) North Aceh Regency has experienced an increase in HDI value and HDI rank in Aceh Province, which was originally ranked 16th in 2017 to 14th in 2021. The HDI figure of North Aceh Regency itself is still included in the range of 60 to 70 which makes North Aceh Regency included in areas that have moderate human development status. According to Law No. 11 of 2009 on Social Welfare, Social Protection is a whole effort directed at preventing and addressing risks from social shocks and vulnerabilities. The following is the percentage of households according to the type of social protection program in North Aceh Regency in 2021.

Tabel 1: Persentase Rumah Tangga Menurut Jenis Program Perlindungan Sosial di Kabupaten Aceh Utara

Social Protection Program Smart Indonesia Program Prosperous Family Card Acceptance Acceptance of Hope Family Card Non-cash

Food Aid

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Yes	14,41	10,14	21,17	28,81	
No	85,59	89,86	78,83	71,19	

Sumber: BPS Aceh Utara, 2021.

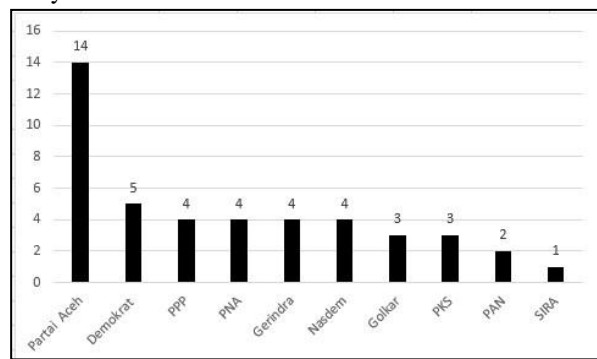
Based on the table above, it can be seen that there are various types of social protection programs that have been implemented in North Aceh Regency. The percentage of recipients of Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT) dominates more than other types of social protection programs with a total of 28.81 percent in North Aceh Regency in 2021.

**a.The Rise of The Former GAM Combatants Entrepreneurs**

The rise of former GAM combatants Entrepreneurs in the economic sector with the complexity and segregation of hot local politics, including power struggles by fellow local parties and national parties, or even fellow ex-GAM

fighters is something interesting to see. In North Aceh, the political arena is not the only arena of fighting, former GAM combatants fight fiercely in the economic arena. Despite the fact that today the majority of members of the People's Representative Council of North Aceh Regency are mostly from the Aceh Party, which is a local party affiliated with the GAM Combatants. The strong influence of the former Komabatan GAM in North Aceh samai today is still felt, this can be seen from the 45 DPRK Members of North Aceh who filled parliamentary seats, 14 of which were filled by the Aceh Party. As can be seen in the chart in this section:

Graph 2: Number of North Aceh DPRK Members By Party.



Source: Sekretariat DPRK Kabupaten Aceh Utara, 2022.

**b.Welfare and Sustainable Development**

A manifestation of the role of the elites of former GAM combatants in the government is to realize welfare for the people of Aceh in general. This is also done by the elites of former GAM combatants in North Aceh Regency where they realize welfare for the public. So the strengthening can be realized in the political process in government with aspirational policies so that they are optimal. This benefit can also be felt by the community in North Aceh Regency in realizing the progress of North Aceh in various sectors. This is as stated by Halim Abe as the Commander of the KPA for the Kuta Pasee region stating that:

Gam elites in North Aceh and Lhokseumawe believe that the UUPA is a political force that can provide dignified community welfare, as well as sustainable development. So in elite governance GAM always tries to collect the aspirations of the community through musrembangdes and musrembangcam which are then formulated in the Regional RPJM (Wawancara, 12 Oktober 2022).

From the data above, it can be understood that the important point in realizing welfare in North Aceh district is to absorb various aspirations from the community produced from both village and sub-district level musrembang. Then this governance can be carried out if

all the elements in the government can run together. So the elite of former GAM combatants in the North Aceh Regency government have synergy in carrying out welfare programs for the community. The formulation of people's aspirations through the RPJM synergizes with the executive and legislature. This must be done in realizing the maximum welfare of the people of North Aceh. The progress of North Aceh will also be carried out when the political will of all elements has the same goals in the dimension of sustainable development. This sustainable development process needs to be maximized by the North Aceh Regency government. It is also related to the aspect of improvement.

In ensuring development and welfare are realized GAM elites who gain Trust in the Executive always coordinate with GAM elites in the Legislature. Gam elites believe that without the support of legislators the UUPA is unworkable. Nevertheless along the way they felt as if the UUPA belonged to the PA they fought for themselves in the legislature. While other legislators do not feel that the UUPA is something that must be maintained (Wawancara, 11 Oktober 2022). From the data above, it can be understood that the synergy and coordination of the elites of former GAM combatants in the government is one of the important things. So this process can realize the welfare and sustainability of development that must be carried out in North Aceh district in particular and Aceh as a whole. So this commitment needs to be carried out by the elites of former GAM combatants in the government. The platform planned by the elites of the former GAM must also run according to common expectations not just the former GAM combatants. The process of overseeing the running of the government program can also be carried out because the government is also led by elements of former GAM combatants in the executive and legislature. So the process of realizing community welfare through the education process so that it can produce competent human resources for North Aceh in general.

### c. UUPA

The lex specialist regulation in Aceh gives Aceh special authority. Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh is a national regulation. Then all the important points in the UUPA must be realized by the central government. So the authority of the central government is very clear as well as the authority of the Aceh government, it is very clear in the distribution of results between the Central Government and the Aceh Government. In North Aceh Regency, the position of the elites of the former GAM combatants is very strategic in government both in the executive and legislature. A strategic position in parliament is the District People's Representative Council as Chairman and chairman of the Commission. While in the executive served as Regent and Deputy Regent of North Aceh. Proses pelaksanaan

program pemerintah harus berjalan maksimal seperti yang tercantum pada UUPA.

Konseppembangunan berkelanjutan juga can run to the maximum. However, there are obstacles felt in its realization such as the following delivery of Abu Len (Commander of KPA Pase):

Actually, the program from the Regent and Board Members also received obstacles from the District Apparatus Work Unit (SKPK), especially during realization. For example, in the legislature, the realization of development using the aspirational funding of DPRK members cannot be carried out in the relevant agencies, for various reasons and problems. The impact is that the development and welfare of the people are not carried out optimally (Wawancara, 11 Oktober 2022)

From the data above, it can be understood that the implementation of this government program is not optimal because of the miss-perception of the leadership in the government with the SKPK device. In addition, the implementation of UUPA up to the district level did not run smoothly so there was a need for evaluation. in addition, the realization of the Helsinki MoU items whose derivatives are in the UUPA has not been fully realized which has been running the post-conflict reintegration process, the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR). However, there are some things that have not been realized, such as the issue of flags and emblems and the concept of sharing natural resources 70% for Aceh and 30% for the central government which is not too clear. So that the implementation of UUPA has not run optimally. The process of implementing the concept of Self Government (self-government) which is the concept of the Commonwealth State (Commonwealth). So this concept is very paradoxical with the concept of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. This Commonwealth concept is the hope of former GAM combatants that can be realized. This also requires human resources as stated by the Head of PA North Aceh Regency Muhammad Thaib (Cek Mad), namely:

Actually, there are things that need to be done in governance in North Aceh Regency, namely the potential for human resources or called potential humans because a government will run optimally if human resources are of high quality. I think there are many things that can be done in improving North Aceh district, so there are several things that can be done, namely realizing the development of the creative economy of the community in North Aceh and synergizing performance with SKPK devices with leaders in the district. However, I once offered this concept when I became regent but it was not optimally realized (Wawancara, 16 Oktober 2022).

From the above data, it can be understood that this process does not have an understanding between the government

and the SKPK device. So that every implementation in government programs has not been as expected. Regarding the UUPA, some of the authority of the Aceh government still overlaps with other national regulations. So the overlapping things in the regulations make every program of the North Aceh Regency government not realized smoothly. The potential of quality human resources also cannot be maximized properly. Therefore, an understanding is needed in the SKPK device in realizing each planned North Aceh Regency government program.

## CONCLUSION

**The role of the elite of former GAM combatants in the governance process is critical in the effort to achieve performance accountability. The existence of elites of former GAM combatants in the government was able to change the face of the government to be more targeted for the benefit of the community. In addition, the program planned by the North Aceh district government can be carried out properly and sustainably. In an effort to realize the development process, it is also based on aspects of post-conflict resolution so that it runs simultaneously. The political pattern carried out by the elite of former GAM combatants in government governance during the special autonomy period can also be implemented in North Aceh Regency. This is inseparable from the synergistic performance of all components in the North Aceh Regency government. The political elites of former GAM combatants in the government formulated policies for the betterment of all communities in North Aceh Regency. Persuasive patterns are indispensable**

## REFERENCES

- [1] E. Januar and A. Marziah, "TANTANGAN PEMERINTAH ACEH DALAM MENGIMPLEMENTASI UNDANG-UNDANG PEMERINTAH ACEH (UUPA)," *Al-Ijtima`i Int. J. Gov. Soc. Sci.*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2019, doi: 10.22373/jai.v4i2.457.
- [2] A. Waizenegger and J. Hyndman, "Two solitudes: Post-tsunami and post-conflict Aceh," *Disasters*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2010, doi: 10.1111/j.14677717.2010.01169.x.
- [3] S. Andika, E. Saputra, D. S. Ningsih, Sarabila, and A. Jonsa, "Preman Receh: Pengaruh Mantan Kombatan GAM Terhadap Politik di Tanah Rencong Aceh di Era Otsus," *Public Policy*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 24–40, 2019.
- [4] F. Farid and P. Priyatmoko, "DINAMIKA INTERAKSI ANTARA ELITE POLITIK LOKAL DAN ELITE AGAMA DALAM KONTESTASI PEMILIHAN PRESIDEN 2019 DI KOTA PASURUAN," *J. Polit. Indones. (Indonesian J. Polit.)*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2021, doi: 10.20473/jpi.v6i1.29883.
- [5] A. Moertopo, "Politics And Raw Materials: The Challenges Of The World Today And Their Consequences For Domestic Policies," *Econ. Financ. Indones.*, 1974.
- [6] H. Ramdhani, "Realitas Elit Politik Lokal dan Persepsi Masyarakat dalam Proses Pemekaran Daerah," *JPPUMA J. Ilmu Pemerintah. dan Sos. Polit. Univ. Medan Area*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2019, doi: 10.31289/jppuma.v7i2.3014.
- [7] P. Prasetyo, W. D., Harsan, T., & Pujiyana, "Partisipasi Politik New voter Dalam Pemilihan Umum 2019 Di Kelurahan Sumber Kecamatan Banjarsari Kota Surakarta.," *Civ. Educ. Soc. Sci. J. (Cessj)*, 2019. [8] F. Rani, B. Ginting, and P. Tarigan, "Asymmetric Decentralization Aceh; Governor Consultation and Consideration Context on Central Government Administrative Policy," *IOSR J. Humanit. Soc. Sci.*, vol. 20, no. 9, 2015.
- [9] B. Raja, J. Pamina, P. Madhavan, and A. S. Kumar, "Market Behavior Analysis using Descriptive Approach," *SSRN Electron. J.*, 2019, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3330017.
- [10] D. M. A. Lexy J. Moleong, "Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif (Edisi Revisi)," *PT. Remaja Rosda Karya*, 2019, doi: 10.1016/j.carbpol.2013.02.055.