Militarised Masculinity and the Rise of a New Local Political Elite in Post Conflict Aceh

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

…………………………

Sait Abdulah
Abstract

This thesis offers a feminist political economy analysis of the rise of a new local political elite in post-conflict Aceh. The scholarly literature on this topic has highlighted the roles of patrimonial political economy and democratisation processes in the GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, Free Aceh Movement) ex-commanders’ transition into a civilian political elite. However, this literature does not adequately explain gendered processes involved in how this elite has ideologically legitimated its hold on power, to win supporters and marginalise rivals through the reconfiguration of a militarised, hegemonic masculinity. The argument of the present thesis draws on interviews with former GAM commanders and rank and file soldiers, other civilian leaders, government officials, NGOs and women activists involved in post-conflict reintegration programs.

The thesis argues that certain images and practices of a militarised, hegemonic masculinity have allowed the ex-commanders to position themselves as a dominant group over other GAM groups in the context of new local political contestations. To assert their authority and leadership, the ex-commanders have acted to retain their honoured status via two gendered ideological constructions. The first is the creation of an ideal ‘warrior hero’, based on the gendered dichotomies of ‘combatant’ versus ‘civilian’, ‘warrior’ versus ‘traitor’, and ‘true soldiers’ and ‘supporting soldiers’. This has promoted a shared militarised identity among ex-commanders and their former foot soldiers within the KPA (*Komite Peralihan Aceh*, Aceh Transition Commission) to garner electoral support and neutralise civilian elite rivals. Second has been the construction of the ‘father-figure’ status of ex-commanders as economic providers for their former troops, which profoundly resonates with breadwinner expectations of the male foot soldiers. Women soldiers’ participation in the war was determined by the gendered assumptions of their sex difference. Consequently, their post-conflict retained military status is lower and their material needs are considered to be fewer than those of their former male comrades.
Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii
Glossary and Abbreviations .............................................................................................. vi
Chapter 1 .............................................................................................................................. 1
Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 1
The study and its significance .............................................................................................. 1
The approach ......................................................................................................................... 3
The methodology ................................................................................................................. 5
The findings ........................................................................................................................... 6
Thesis structure ..................................................................................................................... 9
Chapter 2 .............................................................................................................................. 13
Theoretical Framework ........................................................................................................ 13
Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 13
What is an elite? ..................................................................................................................... 14
The research gaps ............................................................................................................... 15
Feminist political economy ................................................................................................. 22
Masculinity .......................................................................................................................... 28
Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 31
Chapter 3 .............................................................................................................................. 33
The GAM in Conflict ............................................................................................................ 33
Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 33
The founding of GAM ......................................................................................................... 38
Acehnese nationalism during the armed struggle ............................................................... 46
Men’s roles, women’s roles and their status during the war ................................................. 50
The ex-commanders’ capacity to mobilise economic resources to rank and file soldiers ... 64
Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 67
Chapter 4 .............................................................................................................................. 69
Peacebuilding, Demilitarisation and Reintegration of the GAM Ex-Soldiers in the Post-Conflict Period ........................................................................................................... 69
Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 69
Keys facets of demilitarisation in Aceh .............................................................................. 71
How the reintegration of the GAM ex-soldiers worked.......................................................90
Conclusion............................................................................................................................99

Chapter 5............................................................................................................................101
Hegemonic Power and Masculine Hierarchies in Post-conflict Aceh ........101
Introduction........................................................................................................................101
The new local political and fiscal arrangements.................................................................102
Contending GAM elites and the establishment of the GAM political parties ...............106
Hegemonic masculinity in the post-conflict period .........................................................110
The marginalisation of the civilian GAM leadership.......................................................122
Conclusion..........................................................................................................................126

Chapter 6............................................................................................................................128
Responses of the Civilian Leadership and the Male Rank and File to Their Marginalisation ...........................................................................................................128
Introduction........................................................................................................................128
The reactions of the Irwandi/PNA group .........................................................................130
The response of the excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers ........................................136
Conclusion..........................................................................................................................149

Chapter 7............................................................................................................................151
Women Ex-Soldiers’ Perspectives and Experiences in Post-Conflict Political Power Contests .....................................................................................................................151
Introduction........................................................................................................................151
How is the warrior hero ideal connected to women ex-soldiers? ....................................152
Loyal women ex-soldiers’ perspectives and experiences in the KPA ..............................159
Women ex-soldiers’ grievances against the ex-commanders (the perspectives of the non-loyalist women groups) ................................................................................164
Conclusion..........................................................................................................................175

Chapter 8............................................................................................................................177
Conclusion............................................................................................................................177
Bibliography.......................................................................................................................183
Appendix One.....................................................................................................................197
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## Glossary and Abbreviations

Ac. Acehnese. Ind. Indonesian. Ar. Arabic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Aksi makuta alam</em></td>
<td>(Ac.) the State code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMM</td>
<td>Aceh Monitoring Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Anak buah</em></td>
<td>(Ind.) Subordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Arisan</em></td>
<td>(Ind.) Social gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of South East Asia Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASNLF</td>
<td>Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Babi</em></td>
<td>(Ind.) pigs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bangsa</em></td>
<td>(Ind.) Nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bapak</em></td>
<td>(Ind.) Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bencong</em></td>
<td>(Ind.) Gay or men who cross-dress and therefore considered not manly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bintara</em></td>
<td>(Ac.) GAM Police force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BKPP</td>
<td><em>Badan Kepegawaian, Pendidikan dan Pelatihan</em>, Personnel and Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP2A</td>
<td><em>Badan Penguatan Perdamaian Aceh</em>, the Aceh Strengthening Peace Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRA</td>
<td><em>Badan Reintegrasi Aceh</em>, Aceh Reintegration Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRR</td>
<td><em>Badan Rehabilitasi dan Reconstruksi</em>, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bupati</em></td>
<td>(Ind.) Head of District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Chan toy</em></td>
<td>(Ac.) Criminal who joined GAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COHA</td>
<td>Cessation of Hostilities Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cuak</em></td>
<td>(Ac.) Traitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Daerah</em></td>
<td>(Ind.) District</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darul Islam</td>
<td>(Ind.) Islamic state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinas</td>
<td>(Ind.) Local government department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOM</td>
<td>Daerah Operasi Militer, Military Operation Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPRA</td>
<td>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Aceh, Aceh Province Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dibawah Satu Komando</td>
<td>(Ind.) Under one command structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatwa</td>
<td>(Ind.) A legal pronouncement in Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARDC</td>
<td>the Congolese National Armed Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORKAB</td>
<td>Forum Komunikasi Anak Bangsa, Children of the Nation Communication Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum LSM Aceh</td>
<td>Aceh Civil Society Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPE</td>
<td>Feminist Political Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAM</td>
<td>Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, Free Aceh Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gampong</td>
<td>(Ac.) Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garis Komando</td>
<td>(Ind.) Command structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Halal</td>
<td>(Ind.) Lawful in Islamic terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halal Pilkada</td>
<td>(Ind.) Lawful election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haram</td>
<td>(Ind.) Unlawful in Islamic terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hari Raya Idul Fitri</td>
<td>(Ind.) Holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hijrah</td>
<td>(Ar.) Literally journey or migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions from Macca to Madinah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Ind.) In the thesis refers to a political label for rank and file ex-combatants who escaped from Aceh and moved to other provinces for safety reasons, before the MOU Helsinki was signed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ICG International Crisis Group

IFES International Foundation for Electoral System

*Imeum* (Ac.) Leaders

*Inueng Balee* (Ac.) Women soldiers

IOM International Organisation for Migration

IPAC Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict

*Jamaah* (Ar.) Can be translated as a group of Muslim pilgrims who follow the Prophet and his companions’ path in religion called *Ahlulsunnah wal Jamaah*, or simply as a group of people.

(Ind.) In the thesis, the term is used specifically by the ex-commanders to indicate a group of the GAM military division under Muzakir Manaf, the KPA.

JCSC Joint Claims Settlement Commission

*Jihad* (Ar.) Literally holy war against the infidel for religious duties.

(Ind.) A number of translations, such as struggling to fight lust (*hawa nafsu*) or striving to fight against the unbeliever. In the thesis, refers to a holy war, as frequently used by the interviewees, particularly rank and file ex-combatants, to claim their involvement in the holy war against Indonesian military counterinsurgency operations in Aceh.

*Jilbab* (Ind.) Headscarf

JKA *Jaminan Kesehatan Aceh*, Aceh Health Insurance

*Kandang lembu* (Ind.) Cow cage

*Kecamatan* (Ind.) Sub District

*Kesatuan* (Ind.) Corps

*Komandan Operasi* (Ind.) Operational Commander

KPA *Komite Peralihan Aceh*, Aceh Transition Commission

*Komando Tiro* (Ind.) Tiro Command
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kuecik/Geucik</td>
<td>(Ac.) Head of village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOGA</td>
<td>Law of Governing Aceh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahar</td>
<td>(Ind.) Dowry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majelis</td>
<td>(Ind.) National Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meunasah</td>
<td>(Ac.) Mosque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meudong</td>
<td>(Ac.) Members of the KPA who closed to the ex-commanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milad</td>
<td>(Ind.) GAM anniversary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNLF</td>
<td>Moro National Liberation Front</td>
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<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mualem</td>
<td>(Ac.) Famous name of Muzakir Manaf, a former GAM supreme commander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Government Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orang yang di dalam</td>
<td>(Ind.) Insiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orang yang di luar</td>
<td>(Ind.) Outsiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orang beprang</td>
<td>(Ind.) Combatants/fighters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td><em>Partai Aceh</em>, the Aceh Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Daulat Aceh</td>
<td>Aceh Sovereign Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pajak Nanggrooe</td>
<td>(Ac.) Local Tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panglima</td>
<td>(Ind.) Commanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pejuang</td>
<td>(Ind.) Warrior hero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pejabat</td>
<td>(Ind.) Government officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemuda gampong</td>
<td>(Ac.) Young villagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perintah</td>
<td>(Ind.) Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perempuan Merdeka</td>
<td>(Ind.) Liberated Women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PETA  Pembela Tanah Air, Country Defenders
PIB  Pasukan Inueng Balee, Women Soldiers Troop
Pilkada  Pemilihan Umum Daerah, Local General Election
PNA  Partai Nasional Aceh, the Aceh National Party
Pos Roda  (Ind.) Small place for community village watch
PPP  Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, United Development Party
Perang Sabil  (Ind.) Holy war
Prang  (Ac.) War
Putro Aceh  (Ac.) Women organisation under KPA
Rencong  (Ac.) Acehnese traditional weapon
RUF  Revolutionary United Front
Sagoe  (Ac.) Sub District
Shariah Law  (Ind.) Islamic Law
SIRA  Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh, the Aceh Referendum Information Centre
SMUR  Solidaritas Mahasiswa Untuk Rakyat, Student Solidarity for People
Srikandi Aceh  (Ind.) Women organisation under PNA
Suku  (Ind.) Ethnic group
Sultan  (Ind.) King
Syahid  (Ind.) Martyr
Tentra  (Ac.) Soldiers
TNA  Tentara Negara Aceh, the Aceh State Soldiers
TNI  Tentara Nasional Indonesia, the Indonesian National Soldiers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tengku</strong></td>
<td>(Ac.) Islamic scholars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Toke ganja</strong></td>
<td>(Ac.) Marijuana Drug dealers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRA</strong></td>
<td>Tim Relawan Aceh, Aceh Voluntary Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuhapuet</strong></td>
<td>(Ac.) Old guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Udeb beusare mate</strong></td>
<td>(Ac.) Life and death together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uang Rokok</strong></td>
<td>(Ind.) Cigarette Fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ulama</strong></td>
<td>(Ind.) Islamic scholar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ulee Mukim</strong></td>
<td>(Ind.) Civilian District Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UN</strong></td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNDP</strong></td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urienung</strong></td>
<td>(Ac.) Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>USAID</strong></td>
<td>United State Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wali</strong></td>
<td>(Ind.) Head of the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negara</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wali Nanggrooe</strong></td>
<td>(Ac.) Head of the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warung coffee</strong></td>
<td>(Ind.) Coffee shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wilayah</strong></td>
<td>(Ind.) Regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wilayatul Hisbah</strong></td>
<td>(Ind.) Sharia police</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The study and its significance

The emergence of a political elite in post-conflict Aceh, made up of formerly high-ranked GAM (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka or Free Aceh Movement) military commanders, is a significant development requiring explanation. This did not happen automatically. It was achieved through a power struggle involving other former GAM leaders from non-military wing and former rank and file soldiers. Because they lost their formal status as military commanders in the de-militarisation process mandated by the 2005 Helsinki agreement, the ex-commanders’ power base has had to be re-established – and then sustained and legitimated – in the post-conflict period. The argument of the thesis is that the ex-commanders engaged in a number of gendered practices to secure, legitimate and sustain their political authority and access into economic resources in the post-conflict period. The gendered practices I highlight are ideological in nature and embedded as an ordering principle in the ex-commanders’ new organisation, the Komite Peralihan Aceh (KPA, the Aceh Transition Commission).

The rise of the ex-commanders as a new local political elite has been well-researched. Since the establishment of the KPA by the ex-commanders during the demobilisation period, scholars have been concerned to explain how these high-ranking former commanders were able to secure political power through subsequent local elections. The KPA is headed by the former GAM supreme commander, Muzakir Manaf, and its organisational structure mimics its former GAM military force. Accordingly, scholars

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1 Interviewees used the terms ‘soldier’ and ‘combatant’ interchangeably. However, ‘soldiers’ (tentra) was more often used to refer in a general sense to all former members of the GAM military force, whereas ‘combatant’ was more often used for those who carried arms and fought in the war, particularly in contrast with the GAM civilians. Throughout the thesis both terms are used in this more specific sense. Importantly, although the new political elite in post-conflict Aceh is a civilian elite, they are not referred to as such in this thesis; so as to distinguish them from what is termed ‘the other civilian leadership’ who were not former commanders in the conflict. In other words, the term civilian denotes particularly non-military status within the GAM during the war, as this is the distinction both groups make in their political contestations.
have argued that the KPA has become the institutional basis upon which former commanders and their rank and file soldiers have been able to reunite and consolidate. They also agree that the position of the KPA is significant for the ex-commanders to accumulate wealth and legitimate and sustain their political power (Aditjondro 2007a and 2007b; Aspinall 2009; Prasetyo and Aditjondro 2010; Palmer 2010; Stange and Patock 2010; Hillman 2012; Sindre 2010, 2016). However, none have viewed the rise of the local elite as a form of *masculinity* politics – a term for ‘the capacity of certain men to control social resources through gender processes’ (Connell 1995, 205). This neglected aspect is the central focus of this thesis.

The scholarly literature on the local post-conflict politics in Aceh is dominated by two perspectives on the ex-commanders’ transformation into a new local political elite: the patrimonial political economy approach and the institutional democratisation approach. The former considers that the highly predatory, corrupt and patrimonial nature of Indonesian politics has shaped the former commanders’ capacity to appropriate post-conflict economic resources and thereby win political office (Aditjondro 2007a and 2007b; Aspinall 2009; Prasetyo and Aditjondro 2010; Palmer 2010; Stange and Patock 2010; Hillman 2012; Sindre 2010, 2016). The latter places more emphasis on the role that the introduction of institutional democracy through the Helsinki peace deal has had in both facilitating the peace and giving the ex-commanders opportunities to hold local political office, positions in the local bureaucracy and, through these, personally appropriate economic resources (Tornquist 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Ansori 2012; Miller 2012). There have been attempts to bring gender into post-conflict reintegration of the GAM ex-soldiers in Aceh; however, the gender analysis was under-developed, as the authors merely report on women’s roles in the peace process, including the women ex-soldiers’ marginalisation (Meghdadi 2009; Siapno, 2009; Jauhola 2010; Lee-Koo 2012; Uning, undated; Marhaban 2012, Myrttinen 2012).

This thesis focuses instead on gender processes involved in control over power resources. It is true, as other scholars have explained, that the ex-commanders have appropriated local post-conflict resources through predatory patronage relations, and the introduction of democratic institutions has been crucial in opening the doors for them to contest for local political power. However, in addition to becoming a new local elite by controlling resources and institutions, *ideology* is another crucial power resource that has been vital...
for the exercise of ex-commanders’ authority over the civilian GAM elite groups on the one hand and rank and file ex-soldiers on the other in local power contestations. By neglecting this ideological dimension, scholars have not adequately explained how the former commanders have legitimated their hold on power to win over supporters and marginalise their political rivals. What is more, the existing literature has failed to recognise how gender suffuses the ideology of the ex-commanders’ authority as a certain group of men, through the reconfiguration of a militarised masculinity as a hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is understood to be ‘the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allows men’s dominance over women to continue’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). Ideologically, it represents ‘the currently most honoured way of being a man’, which ‘only a minority of men might enact’ but which ‘all other men [must] position themselves in relation to’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). Importantly, the notion of hegemony does not imply total domination, as it can involve everyday contestation and thus be open to change and challenge (Connell 1987 and 2005). The ex-commanders’ practices amounted to the construction, promotion and appropriation of the highly-militarised representation of manhood to themselves. This neglected aspect of post-conflict power struggles is not only a research gap which this thesis addresses, it also becomes my scholarly contribution to wider academic debate on the political economy of peacebuilding and the post-conflict reintegration of ex-combatants in particular.

The approach

I employ a feminist political economy approach to the following key questions: How did the GAM ex-commanders’ group secure political power and wealth, and how have they legitimated and sustained this in the post-conflict period? In particular, what gendered ideological images and practices did the ex-commanders deploy to secure political office, and why? What political and economic effects did these gendered ideological images and practices have upon the ex-commanders’ rivals, notably the former GAM civilian leadership, as well as upon the male and female rank and file ex-soldiers? A feminist political economy approach is essential in offering a theoretical framework by which to explain the emergence of an overwhelmingly male local political elite. It also explains the power of certain men over others.
The feminist understanding of gender is that it is a social construction. This insight is used in this thesis to argue that it is not the ex-commanders’ categorical status as males—biological men—that bestows natural authority, rather it is gendered processes involved in the construction of certain expected behaviours and roles that matter in differentiating men from women (Richardson 2015). Thus, here ‘gender’ denotes the realm of social relations between men and women, as they pertain to being men and women in society. This is not to say the term is limited to this; it is important not to ‘obscure the analytic importance of gender as a constitutive element of all social relationships and as signifying a relationship of power’ (Cornwall 2003, 1326; also Scott 1985). In Connell’s view, gender is to be understood specifically as a structure of social relations and set of related practices that ‘bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes’ (Connell 2002a, 10). In other words, gender relates in some way to differences in male and females’ bodies that are linked to their reproduction. Nevertheless, gender does not only pertain to the social categories of ‘man’ and ‘woman’, it also works to distinguish certain men from other men via different, competing masculinities.

Feminist political economy contributes to the analysis of masculinity politics through its concern with the structural dimensions—material and ideological—that shape socioeconomic inequalities based on gender (Waylen 1997, 2000). In Connell’s words: ‘to analyse a social structure [like gender] is basically to work out its constraints, its internal pressures, tensions and disruptions, and its potentials for change’ (Connell 1985, 267). Accordingly, in tandem with ‘structure’, Connell also refers to ‘practice’ as a way of ‘focusing on what people do by way of shaping the social relations they live in’ (Connell 1985, 267 and 1987, 62). This is particularly useful in denoting the construction of certain gendered power relations vis-à-vis the ex-commanders’ reconstitution of a militaristic hegemonic masculinity. In this thesis, this is done by drawing directly on the perspectives and lived experiences of the ex-commanders themselves, as well as those of their men and women ex-soldiers, during both the conflict and post-conflict periods. This is important because a thorough structural analysis of gender is well-captured by understanding it via the consciousness and lived experiences of men and women (Pollert 1996, 646; also Sylvester 2012, 487).

The actual lived experiences of the ex-commanders and their male and female rank and file soldiers are shaped by existing gender relations in Aceh. These are embedded in a
patriarchal culture that intersects strongly with the prevalent cultural and religious beliefs of Acehnese people, drawing on Islam (Meghdadi 2009, Robinson 2009, Lee-Koo 2012). This system shapes general understandings of the gender differences in the roles men and women undertake in Aceh society (Meghdadi 2009). Whereas women’s responsibilities are confined to the domestic sphere, and to child rearing and nurturing, men are designated as the heads of households and main economic providers, and the key decision makers in households and communities (Nowak and Caulfield 2008).

The methodology

The arguments made in this thesis draw on the empirical findings from semi-structured interviews conducted with 72 individuals in Aceh province over seven months, between October 2014 and February 2015 and April and June 2016. The interviewees fall into four groups. First, 11 members of the elite ex-commanders group, ranging from the highest ranked, through middle-ranked to lowest, Sagoe (village level), commanders. Second, the GAM civilian leadership, represented by two formerly exiled leaders and six former civilian negotiators who were involved in the peace process. Both groups – the ex-commanders and the civilian leaders – were identified as belonging to the GAM leadership holding authority in the government of Aceh, through the parliament, bureaucracy and/or local political parties. Third, the interviewees included 43 former rank and file GAM soldiers: 21 male and 22 female. Fourth, the remaining interviews were with public officials and NGO personnel who had been involved in the reintegration of GAM ex-soldiers. They comprised of ten participants from public offices who were involved in the reintegration program, but were not members of GAM, and some NGO and the women activists who also participated in the reintegration program. Further details of the methodology is set out in Appendix 1.

Initial access to interviewees was established with the help of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies (CPCRS) – a NGO research centre in Aceh concerned with peace and conflict resolution in Aceh. The CPCRS provided contact details and initial introductions to the interviewees. Subsequently, to obtain further access the ‘snowballing’ technique was used. This means participants were asked to recommend to the researcher.

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2 The research obtained Human Ethics Committee approval from Murdoch University as Project Number 2014/114.
other potential interviewees whom they knew through personally or via their social networks. Still, getting access to interviewees, in particular to the male and female ex-soldiers, was a challenge. For example, former soldiers are now scattered and living in different locations and districts across Aceh Province. In some cases, interviews had to take place in remote areas where access by local transportation was difficult. Accordingly the researcher had to travel from one place to another and sometimes spend several days in the villages where the interviewees were living. Another challenge encountered during the field research was the anger that some male rank and file ex-soldiers felt over their unrecognised status as ‘combatants’, and the consequent unfair post-conflict economic distributions they were victims of. In cases where both the researcher and the interviewee(s) felt uncomfortable as a result, the researcher took measures, either to stop the conversation or ask whether the interviewee wanted to continue or not. In some cases, when male interviewees were armed, the researcher took additional precautions to avoid conflict.

Prior to all interviews, the participant received a written explanation of the type of questions involved and it was explained to them that they could at any time refuse to answer any questions, terminate the interview, and/or request that their answers not be recorded. Because the study highlights the importance of the perspectives and actual experience of the ex-commanders and male and female ex-soldiers, during both the conflict and post-conflict periods, extensive use of interviewees’ own words is made in the thesis chapters. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and translated into English by the researcher. To gain additional, supporting evidence for the thesis, secondary data and information were collected from publications such as government reports, NGO and international donor reports, scholarly books and articles, conference or working papers, and newspapers.

The findings

The research confirms that, since the cessation of conflict, former GAM military commanders have needed to reassert their elite status and legitimise this through reconstituted militaristic imagery. Key has been the status distinction between ‘combatant’

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3 Some male and female ex-soldiers requested that the researcher not record the interview. When this happened, the researcher used notes exclusively.
and ‘support soldier’, and the ideas of ‘warrior hero’ (‘pejuang’) versus ‘traitor’ in relation to sacrifice for the nation, as well as ‘combatant’ and ‘civilian’ in relation to political leadership. Each of these distinctions is highly gendered (see Chapter 5).

The distinction between ‘combatant’ and ‘support soldier’ applied to men and women soldiers in the GAM. In her research into the Sierra Leone war, MacKenzie (2009, 247) reveals that women’s ascribed peaceful nature and abhorrence of the risks involved in war were assumed to originate from their reproductive capacity to ‘nurture, cooperate and sustain life’. This assumption affected the perceived definition of roles appropriate for women during the armed conflict. Consequently, despite the women soldiers having been involved in multiple roles during the war, including as combatants, due to these gender assumptions the women were not considered ‘real soldiers’ for the purposes of the peacebuilding disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process (MacKenzie 2009, 256). This gendered assumption not only undermined and devalued the women’s status, roles and contribution to the war, it was also implicated in the women’s low participation in the DDR program (MacKenzie 2009). Similarly, as Lucas (1988, 173) observes in the Algerian war, the gendered assumption that relegates women’s roles according to their ‘traditional and natural way of nurturing’ results in the association of men with fighting. Although women fighters in Algeria bore the risks of being killed while undertaking dangerous tasks in delivering supplies to the camps, the women are not considered ‘real fighters’ by their commanders and male comrades.

Similarly, in Aceh, in referring to women ex-soldiers’ contributions to the war, the ex-commanders distinguish between ‘combatants’ and those performing ‘support roles’. This distinction has validity in that the women did tend to perform ‘support roles’ – it is the reduced significance placed on these roles that is important, particularly in relation to perceptions of the risks the women faced and the level of their personal sacrifice. This distinction between combatant and support roles is underpinned by gendered assumptions about men and women’s binary sex differences. As a result, it is taken for granted that ‘real soldiers’ are men on the ground and that soldiering connotes the qualities of men, indeed marking them out as men and not women.

This perception obscures and devalues the contribution of women. Nevertheless, to position themselves as a dominant group over the other GAM civilian elite group in the
post-conflict era, the ex-commanders look for the support of not just male ex-soldiers, but also female ex-soldiers. Despite not recognising the women soldiers as combatants, the ex-commanders sought to create loyal female followers through their inclusion in the KPA to support the commanders’ candidacy in local electoral politics. Nevertheless, the women’s status and position in the KPA are peripheral. They are not considered eligible to stand as political candidates in the local electoral contestation. This reflects their continuing marginalisation based on the gendered assumption of their natural sex differences as women, and their perceived traditional and natural roles in the society - as dependents on their families, husbands and or their fathers. This gendered assumption intersects with the women’s relative lack of education and harsh economic circumstances.

The distinction between combatants and civilians which the ex-commanders applied was meant to bolster their own distinctive roles and contributions to the war, in comparison to those of their civilian GAM elites rivals: especially the ex-commanders’ combat experience and ultimate sacrifice to the nation. This constructed difference is linked to the contestation for political power, to justify their claims to being those who deserve to rule the future Aceh. The ex-commanders attached to themselves and their nationalism the ideal image of ‘warrior hero’ manhood. In the post-conflict situation, this ideological construction has been important for the GAM ex-commanders to legitimate their power and authority to rule Aceh. In addition to the warrior hero, the ideal of manhood has been accompanied by the ex-commanders’ claims to ‘father-figure’ status as the economic providers for their rank and file. This ‘father-figure’ ideal has resonated with the breadwinner status of the male soldiers. Meanwhile, to marginalise their other, civilian rivals, these gendered ideologies are also supported by practices involving threatened and actual violence, and even murder.

The thesis also examines the costs and consequences of the hegemonic masculinity asserted by the ex-commanders, both to the civilian elite group and the excluded male and female ex-soldiers. And it considers their responses. On the one hand, the marginalisation of the other, civilian elites has triggered the formulation of an alternative source of political legitimacy by the civilian elite group. In this, the civilian elite challenges the militaristic ideology of the ex-commanders by promoting alternative masculinities that value a contrasting, civic form of nationalism. There is also a group of ‘non-loyal’ female ex-soldiers who have departed from the mainstream ex-commanders’ organization (the
KPA) and confront the ex-commanders’ claims to power and authority by aligning politically with the civilian elite group. Meanwhile, the male rank and file soldiers who have not been given equal recognition as combatants have attempted to resist their exclusion via displays of alternative, protest masculinities – in violent or non-violent modes – in order to challenge the economic bases of the ex-commanders’ hegemonic power.

Thesis structure

In making these positions, this thesis proceeds in eight chapters. The next chapter, Chapter Two, deals in more detail with the theoretical framework of the thesis. There are some important points that need to be elaborated. First, it is explained what ‘an elite’ is, to highlight the GAM ex-commanders’ capacity to wield power through a range of power resources used by them as a group. Using Jean Paul Sartre’s notion of ‘series’ in his class analysis (Young 1994, Sartre 1976), it is explained how the ex-commanders share and are bounded by mutual interests to promote a particular ideology in the KPA. Second, a gap within the diverse literature on the rise of the new local elite in post-conflict Aceh is addressed, looking particularly at the studies of the patrimonial political economy and institutional democracy that have predominated. Third, the feminist political economy (FPE) approach employed in this thesis is outlined in detail. In this explanation, I engage with the various feminist political economy literatures that conceptualises gender as a social structure and also social practice. Because masculinity is involved in the rise of the new local elite, Connell’s concept of masculinity is employed (Connell 1987, 1993, 1995), along with notions of ‘the logic of masculinity’ (Hutchings 2008), and ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell 1987, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). As hegemonic masculinity relates to other forms of masculinities, attention is given to Connell’s concepts of ‘marginal masculinity’, ‘protest masculinity’ and the emphasis on feminity and ‘ambivalent femininity’ (later developed by Howson 2006). As gender contestation among masculinities and femininities is also shaped by militarism, the conception of militarism is used, drawing mainly from Enloe (1983, 1989, 2000), Niner (2011), Bevan and MacKenzie (2012) and Eichler (2014). To explain the particular form of political alliance made by disaffected women ex-soldiers, Hutchison et al.’s (2014) work is considered, particularly for its attention to the clientelistic form of political alliances.
Chapter Three relates to the historical background of the GAM in conflict. It includes background information on Aceh and gender relations. It is important to understand how the GAM operated during the conflict stage and the experiences that resulted for the commanders and the rank and file soldiers. In this chapter, the focus is mainly on how the GAM established military bonding on the basis of three elements: (i) the hierarchical nature of the GAM organisational structure which separated the military and civilian sections; (ii) Acehnese nationalism; and (iii) the ex-commanders’ capacities in mobilising economic resources during the conflict era. In this, Hutchings’ (2008) notion of ‘the logic of masculinity’ is used to explain how the military bonding in the GAM during the conflict stage was highly gendered, in binary terms. Subsequently, in this chapter, the actual lived experiences of men and women soldiers in the GAM are outlined, including their recruitment, military training, roles and sacrifice for the Aceh nation. This also covers their expectations for their future economic prosperity and employment.

Chapter Four covers the post-conflict Helsinki peace agreement and subsequent disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes, the establishment of the KPA and national Majelis (Council); and the disbursement of funds and soldiers’ grievances about this. The focus is on the processes of demilitarisation, which caused conflict and led to remilitarisation of a different kind. Remilitarisation in this study is not understood to involve the robust state military presence that occurred during the armed conflict period. Rather, it refers to processes linked to the ideology of militarism – which strongly values comradeship, the superiority of combat positions and hierarchical command – as a strategy used by the ex-commanders to gain support and legitimacy from their former rank and file soldiers. Despite the demilitarisation process, the ideology of militarism has remained intact and preserved in the KPA as a new ex-commanders’ organisation.

Chapter Five deals with hegemonic masculinity; in particular, how the ex-commanders have positioned themselves as an elite group via a militaristic ideology, to garner supporters and legitimate their authority against others who might threaten it. As peacebuilding provided spaces and opportunities for the ex-commanders to wield power in the post-conflict period, this chapter also outlines the new local political and fiscal arrangements, and the establishment of the GAM political parties – the Partai Aceh (PA, Aceh Party) and the Partai National Aceh (PNA, National Aceh Party). To secure support
from their male and female rank and file ex-soldiers, the ex-commanders promoted the ideal of the ‘warrior hero’ to tighten the shared sense of militaristic identity and solidarity within the KPA. In addition to the warrior hero ideal, the ex-commanders also constructed their father-figure status as economic providers. This ideal appealed to the male rank and file soldiers’ breadwinner obligations in the post-conflict period. Finally, it is also explained how the ex-commanders’ manoeuvres to marginalise the civilian elite were accompanied by threats of and actual violence.

Chapter Six discusses the two contrasting reactions of the civilian elite and the excluded male rank and file soldiers to their marginalisation by the ex-commanders in the KPA group. The civilian elite has sought to challenge the militaristic ideology of the ex-commanders by promoting a form of alternative masculinity that values civic forms of nationalism and by forging a civic political platform to back their claims to political legitimacy. In stark contrast, the disaffected male rank and file have challenged the economic foundations of the ex-commanders’ hegemonic masculinity in the KPA through manifestations of protest masculinity that involve both violent and non-violent means.

Chapter Seven deals with the women ex-soldiers’ perspectives and experiences in the post-conflict power contestation. In this chapter, the concepts of emphasised femininity (Connell 1987) and ambivalent femininity (Howson 2006) are used to explain how the ‘warrior hero’ ideal connects to women ex-soldiers and the resulting effect on the women’s inclusion in the KPA and the ex-commanders’ other patronage organisations. By utilising the concepts, the chapter also elaborates how the position of women in the KPA is marginal, as their inclusion is only targeted to forge loyal female followers to support the ex-commanders’ candidates in local electoral contests. Additionally, the chapter outlines how the different disaffected women ex-soldiers reacted to the ex-commanders in the KPA group. Some of the women reacted in the form of anger and resentment, and some others resisted the ex-commanders by making a political alliance with the civilian elite in the PNA group.

Finally, the Conclusion addresses the contribution the thesis makes to the scholarly literature on the political economy of peacebuilding and post-conflict reintegration of ex-combatants. Post-conflict Aceh in the aftermath of the peace agreement provides an interesting phenomenon for exploring the legitimation of the ex-commanders’ group over
political rule and access to resources. Through employing a feminist political economy approach, the thesis presents a different angle in looking at how the new local political elite (the ex-commanders) has established, secured and legitimated their political power and authority in a new civilian context through exposing an ideal militarised masculinity as ‘warrior hero’.
Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter elaborates on the approach adopted in this thesis in explaining the rise of a new local political elite in post-conflict Aceh. Using a feminist political economy perspective, I highlight the crucial role of ideology as a power resource in the GAM ex-commanders’ pursuit of their interests in gaining political office and enhancing their access to economic resources. Ideology as a power resource is especially important in how the ex-commanders established their dominant position vis-à-vis the male civilian elite and their former foot soldiers, to garner supporters and marginalise rivals. Their ideology is highly gendered in that it is strongly manifested in the construction of the ‘warrior hero’ as the ‘ideal man’. This imagery functions to hierarchically valorise and legitimate the ex-commanders’ claims to a right to and access to political authority and economic resources vis-à-vis other GAM groups.

The feminist political economy approach adopted focuses on a structural account of social and economic inequalities between men and women that are based on gender. As Cook and Roberts (2000, 3) state, feminist political economy understands that gender is crucial to our ‘understanding of social, political and economic structures and the way in which individuals behave within these structures’. To elaborate on this feminist political economy approach, this chapter is organised into three sections. The first explains the concept of an elite and, in relation to the ex-commanders, how they can be considered to constitute a group and what their key power resources are. The second section elaborates on the existing research gaps in relation to understanding the rise of the GAM ex-commanders as a new local elite in post-conflict Aceh. The final section outlines the approach to gender, drawing on various feminist political economy scholars.
What is an elite?

An elite is ‘a powerful minority affecting public and political outcomes in a systematic and significant way’ (Turner 2006, 162). The power of an elite can take two forms: an individual or group can indirectly shape the broader structural context or setting in which the actions or choices of others must take place, and or they can directly influence and shape the choices and actions of other individual and group (Hay 1997, 50, 2002, 185).

In the case of the GAM ex-commanders, the thesis is concerned with power resources involved in their efforts to secure their elite status by winning over supporters and weakening political rivals. Other scholars have highlighted how the ex-commanders have exercised material and institutional power resources: from the GAM military authority structure itself, to positions in the bureaucracy, parliament and political party, and their resulting capacity to appropriate local resources. Important as all these are, it is argued they do not sufficiently explain how the ex-commanders have managed to secure power in a post-conflict setting. It will be maintained that these material and institutional power resources have been accompanied by ideological ones, to differentiate the ex-commanders as a group and bring into their wider circle supporters that include male and female rank and file ex-soldiers. This is all to legitimate the ex-commanders’ claim to having higher status over the other male civilian group and rank and file ex-soldiers, and also to back up the practice of violence they use against opponents.

Whilst the ex-commanders are considered as a group, this is not to argue that they act as a coherent unit. Rather, drawing on Jean Paul Sartre’s notion of a serial collectivity (see Young 1994, Sartre 1976), it is argued the ex-commanders have mutual interests in promoting a particular ideology regarding their shared status. Through this, they have forged their social collectivity in the KPA and thus established their authority.

Sartre developed the notion of a ‘social series’ when discussing class. He rejected the notion of class as a group, in the sense of denoting a ‘self-consciously, mutually acknowledging collective with a self-conscious purpose’ – on the basis of which they are more likely to act as a group (Young 1994, 724, Sartre 1976). Instead he refers to class as a series: ‘a social collective whose members are unified passively by the objects around which their actions are oriented or by the objectified results of the material effects of the
action of the others’ (Young 1994, 724, Sartre 1976). In other words, members of a series are connected to each other within their collective via the same material conditions and practices they face as a result of past actions (Young 1994, 724-725, Sartre 1976). Sartre’s notion of a series is useful in explaining the fragility of the ex-commanders as a cohesive group; a characteristic which has developed following the demilitarisation process. The social collectivity of the GAM ex-commanders in the KPA is not simply constituted by a shared sense of belonging, common fate and solidarity as former high-rank military GAM commanders. Instead, social collectivity in the KPA is characterized by a less organized and more fragile unity between the ex-commanders that pertains to their ongoing political economy interests.

At the end of the conflict, the ex-commanders each faced the problem of losing power and status. The problem was that, as a direct consequence of the demobilisation of the GAM insurgency movement, the GAM military organizational structure was dismantled and, with this, all their formal military status. No longer positioned within a military command structure, their collectivity was now shaped by each of them having interests in gaining strategic positions in local political offices and thereby access to economic resources. However, these shared interests pertained mostly to the ex-commanders seeking power as individuals, and not collectively, as a group. Hence, having common interests in the absence of a tight military command structure has been both an impetus for collective action and a source of intra-group tension. Besides the fact that each ex-commander is now connected through the same goals of securing political office and economic resources, all also are aware of how their interests, choices, and actions are limited structurally. In particular, they are aware of the potential for conflict with each other, especially in securing the support of their former foot soldiers. Nevertheless, critical to the argument of this thesis, the political and economic objectives and interests they share push the ex-commanders to constitute themselves as a social collective ideologically via the institutional means of the KPA. This has proven necessary, as the political and economic objectives and interests they pursue are impossible to achieve individually.

The research gaps

Scholars have recognized the ex-commanders’ emergence as an elite, but there are differences in emphasis between how these scholars explain this emergence. Several
scholars focus on the legacy of the Indonesian political-economic structure, which involves patrimonial networks and related predatory behaviours in the appropriation of local economic resources (Aditjondro 2007a and 2007b; Aspinall 2009; Palmer 2010; Prasetyo and Aditjondro 2010; Stange and Patock 2010; Hillman 2012; Sindre 2010, 2016). The term patrimonial is rooted in Max Weber’s typology of authority types, wherein traditional domination is based on the loyalty that individuals gain from their traditional status (Gerth and Wright Mills 1977). This term was further developed by political scientists to characterise the social relations of power between state and society that are based on personalised use of governmental power and elite factionalism. As such, these scholars stress how the persistence of the New Order patrimonial political economy shaped the GAM ex-commanders’ interests in re-building and consolidating their political power for personal wealth gains.

Aditjondro (2007a and 2007b) unpacked how patronage political economy networks and predatory behaviour by national business elites saw them appropriate local post-conflict reconstruction funds in the name of human disaster relief in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami in Aceh. These networks, established in the Suharto era, included some former high-ranking Indonesian military commanders who had close business links with the top KPA leadership in large business contractor sectors. Aditjondro argues that, in turn, this triggered the rise of a new local business elite in Aceh, comprised largely of former high-ranking GAM commanders in the Muzakir Manaf group with links to elite national business groups with strong interests in expanding into the Aceh region.4

Most prominent among such local post-conflict studies is Aspinall’s piece on ‘combatants to contractors’ (2009). He drew on Aditjondro’s work to explain how the ex-commanders’ co-option of local political and economic resources was shaped by broader structural factors that already existed in Indonesian politics. Aspinall (2009, 3) argued that the peace-building process was important in facilitating the reintegration of the GAM ex-combatants into civilian life, but their transformation into a new elite had more to do with

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4 For example, Muzakir Manaf, head of the KPA and the Pulo Gadeng Business group owner, signed a MOU with the younger brother of Surya Paloh, an Acehnese close crony of Suharto, to build eleven gas stations in Aceh (Aditjondro 2007b). There was another MOU to extend a gas station project between Muzakir Manaf and companies linked to the former Vice President, Jusuf Kalla, in Lhokseumawe (Aditjondro 2007b).
their capacity to draw on and regenerate the already patrimonial Indonesian political economy structure. In elaborating on his argument, Aspinall focused on how the GAM ex-commanders appropriated resources in post-conflict construction sectors through old patrimonial structures and networks that were in existence during the armed conflict, and through the use of violence (Aspinall 2009, 4 and 31-34).

Subsequently, this patrimonial political economy approach has been used extensively by scholars to analyze the rise of the GAM ex-combatants group to power locally. For example, Sindre (2010) argued that the historical political pattern of the interactions between the GAM and the Indonesian state was both an opportunity and a constraint for the GAM ex-combatants in seeking a stake in local power. It could influence the ex-commanders to become political actors who pursue reforms, but also could turn them into a predatory group whose ultimate goal is to make personal economic and political gains. Some other scholars have applied Aspinall’s framework to the study of the GAM mainstream political party, the Partai Aceh (PA, Aceh Party), and in particular to how the legacy of old patrimonial structures has enabled the party to succeed in local legislative elections and also to sustain and accumulate political and economic resources (Palmer 2010; Stange and Patock 2010 Hillman 2012; Sindre 2016).

In contrast, other scholars place more emphasis on the dynamics of the local peace and democratization processes in strengthening the GAM ex-commanders’ political and economic capacity to hold political office. Although to some extent these scholars also draw on the work of Aspinall (2009), they link the emergence of the local elite more specifically to how the local democratization process, as a result of the peace deal, provided opportunities to gain political office and access economic resources. For example, Tornquist (2010a, 2010b, 2011), Ansori (2012), and Miller (2012) maintain that the institutionalisation of democracy in Aceh through the Law of Governing Aceh or (LOGA),5 as an elaboration of the 2005 MOU Helsinki, was instrumental in transitioning the GAM from a rebel movement into a political party. The subsequent elections gave the former GAM insurgency group a share in local political power. They argue that this

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5 The Law of Governing Aceh (2006) covers the institutional and procedural arrangements for local elections, including the mechanisms by which to establish local political parties (Miller 2012, 48).
democratization package has also contributed to the dynamic of elite conflict over power and resources.

In explaining the rise of the new local political elite, there have been attempts to consider gender issues. Myrttinen’s (2012) comparative study of the reintegration of ex-combatants in post-conflict Aceh and East Timor raised gender questions in the course of asking who benefited most from the post-conflict reintegration process in both places. Whether the process of reintegration was done through the inclusion of former insurgents into security sectors (police, army or private security institutions) via employment, or the inclusion of former rebel groups into the business sector or even illegal activities (logging, smuggling, robbery), he argued that this process was trapped in male-dominated networks and institutions. Thus, it was male, not female ex-combatants who benefitted most from the process, both economically and politically. Though gender is mentioned in his work in terms of the ways in which male-dominated institutions prevailed and affected the reintegration process in East Timor and Aceh, the concept is under-developed. Myrttinen (2012) tends to use gender for disaggregating men and women, rather than as an explanatory factor in the outcomes for them from the reintegration process. In other words, he does not elaborate on how the institutions come to be male-dominated. While Myrttinen refers to ‘societal attitudes’ that devalue the contributions of women, he does not go into any detail on gender dynamics vis-à-vis militarisation. There have been also other gender studies on the reintegration of GAM ex-soldiers in post-conflict Aceh, by both academicians and activists (Meghdadi 2009; Siapno, 2009; Jauhola 2010; Lee-Koo 2012; Uning, undated; Marhaban 2012). These studies have focused on women’s roles in the peace process, including the women ex-soldiers’ marginalisation, but again they under develop gender relations and masculinist politics. Lee-Koo (2012, 61) ‘positions gender relations as a central unit’ of her analysis but the logic and content of masculinities is not elaborated on in any detail. Nevertheless, this thesis builds on this literature through a more concerted focus on gender dynamics involved in the GAM ex-commanders’ post-conflict political ascendancy.

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6 See Niner (2011) on how the post-conflict veteran scheme in Timor Leste benefited men and disadvantaged women.
The works of Aspinall and others are important in explaining how the ex-commanders rebuilt as a new local elite to secure local political and economic power. However, they fail to adequately account for other important aspects of power relations, in particular gender ideology as a power resource. As previously mentioned, to contest local political office and to access economic resources, the ex-commanders could no longer rely on their status as GAM military leaders once they lost their formal military rank. Hence, they had to re-establish their political authority over the GAM civilian elite and rank and file ex-soldiers, through a mix of old and new means. Here the old means refers to the power resources that the ex-commanders used during the conflict, which they carried over into the post-conflict period. These retained power resources include a highly gendered militaristic ideology and Acehnese nationalism (see Chapters 3 and 5). On the other hand, the new means refers to the creation of new institutions, such as the KPA and the PA, which have functioned as vehicles for the ex-commanders’ ideological constructions, and the material benefits that they have gained from controlling these political institutions. The combination of old and new means have enabled the ex-commanders to exercise power both directly and indirectly in the new civilian environment.

Ideology is here understood as ‘any systematic set of practical or theoretical ideas which articulate the interests of a group’ (Gamble 1981, 12). Ideology can take both forms of power, direct and indirect (see Hay 1997). As a direct form of power, ideology shapes the choices and actions of individuals in response to the context in which they find themselves. For instance, the ex-commanders also apply ideology in promoting the slogan ‘udeb buesare mate beusajan’ (life and death together) to espouse the ‘warrior hero’ ideal, and to create unity among the ex-commanders and their rank and file ex-soldiers. In response to this slogan, many of the rank and file ex-soldiers directly supported their ex-commanders’ candidates in the PA, the GAM mainstream political party. Ideology as indirect power helps to shape the structural context or setting in which the actions and choices of others take place. It does so by being the basis for categorising different groups as worthy of certain roles and authority and or support. For example, to stratify the

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7 The Acehnese phrase udep buesare mate besajan emerged during the interview with T Sarjani, a former GAM commander for Pidie District. In his experience, the slogan was effective in spurring military bonding, solidarity and cohesion between the commanders and their troops during the war. He maintained that ‘no one could leave the group, especially during the battle field, until death came’. According to him, the slogan is still used within the KPA to maintain unity among former GAM ex-commanders and their ex-soldiers under the leadership of Muzakir Manaf (Interview with the author, Pidie, January 2015).
military status of their ex-soldiers in relation to de-militarisation processes, the ex-
commanders set up a grading system that is underpinned by their perceived combat
experience in the battle zone and their loyalty to the ex-commanders. This had a major
impact on the future lives of the ex-soldiers involved.

In relation to militaristic ideology, Enloe (1983, 13) maintains that militarism is crucial in
justifying the idea of the superiority of ‘combat,’ which is always linked to idealized
notions of manhood. Military institutions ultimately view a ‘combat’ position as a place
where men in uniform can validate their manliness over other men and women in a
hierarchy of rank and gender. It is linked to the idea that a quality of being and performing
specific tasks related to fighting in battle zones necessitates so-called masculine traits that
entail substantial strength, bravery, and preparedness to use violence, in contrast to
feminine qualities of weakness, timidity and passivity (Enloe 1983, 13-15). Thus, the
military has been crucial to the making of the idea of manliness and the legitimation of
men’s dominant position in the social order (Enloe 1983, 12-13). The mutually
constitutive relationship between militarism and masculinism always values men and
masculinities over women and femininities (Brittan 1987 and Hooper 2001). In this
gendered rendering, militarism – comprising a strong idea of combat – is fused with the
idea of manhood in order to exert its power as an ideology. Therefore, it is not combat
positions *per se* that have superiority over other, non-combat roles in the military; rather,
it is the ascription of robust masculine qualities to combat positions which works to
underpin and signal their elevated status.

Evidence of the pervasive masculine militarism often seen in post-war societies is to be
found in a number of studies. For example, in post-conflict Timor Leste, Niner (2011)
oberves that the persistence of militarism in that country facilitated the rise of armed and
clandestine elites within local post-conflict political power struggles. In their emergence,
these local elites have relied on a form of militarised masculinity that values men’s
combat contributions during the war and ideas about their ‘sacrifice’ for the independence
movement. Moreover, she follows Enloe in arguing that militarised masculinity is
constructed in binary opposition to the ‘feminine’ (2011, 429). Thus, militaristic and
masculinist ideology has allowed for the continuation of male dominance in contemporary
Timorese society that further marginalises the status of women, including that of women
ex-soldiers. Bevan and MacKenzie (2012) also examine militarised masculinities in Timor
Leste, in this case in relation to post-conflict security sector reform and the New Zealand Police’s Community Policing Pilot Program (CPPP) in particular. Importantly, they stress that the observed militarised masculinities are not singular and monolithic, but rather ‘diverse, adaptable and context specific’ (Bevan and MacKenzie 2012, 523). Nevertheless, they are constructed in relation to ‘femininity’.

Writing on militarised masculinities in International Relations more broadly, Eichler (2014) also stresses that the construction of militarised masculinities is dynamic. Moreover, she agrees that militarised masculinities are not only multiple and specific to particular contexts, but also that their construction are to be ‘understood in relation to femininities and gendered power relations’ (Eichler 2014, 84). Finally, in her previous research in Sierra Leone, MacKenzie (2009, 256-257) reveals that during the armed conflict women soldiers in fact had multiple roles and activities in soldiering. This included active combat duty during the war. However, due to the pervasiveness of the socially constructed militarised-masculinist ideas of men as ‘real combatants’ and women as victims of the conflict, women ex-soldiers’ roles and contributions to the war as combatants were not recognised. As a result, men soldiers have been scrutinised as a potential threat to the ongoing peace, whereas women soldiers have been ‘desecuritised’. This has rendered the DDR policy and program as one that has benefited ‘threatening’ men over ‘non-threatening’ women.

In post-conflict Aceh, militarised masculinities are multiple, contextual and constructed in relation to femininities and gender power relations. Militarised masculinities are reflected in how the GAM ex-commanders contested political power between 2012 and 2014. In the case of the ex-commanders in the KPA group, militaristic ideology was important in enabling them to redefine and re-establish their honoured status over other GAM groups. They promulgated a hegemonic masculinity by re-asserting the glorification of the historical cultural ideal of the ‘warrior hero’, or in Acehnese terms pejuang or orang berprang, to single out those who went to the battlefield. In claiming the warrior hero for themselves, these ex-commanders asserted the superiority of the GAM military division, its combat roles, aggressiveness and violence. This ideal was used overtly to establish the male bonding that is important for holding together a single command structure and esprit de corps under the leadership of Muzakir Manaf. It was also widely socialised within and through the KPA itself, in it being known as the former GAM military group’s new
organisation. Hence, those who belong to or were supporters of the KPA acquired an elevated status as ‘real’ GAM ex-combatants by virtue of their association with this organisation and its ideology. By establishing the KPA, the ex-commanders had the capacity to influence indirectly the choices and actions of their former rank and file soldiers. Last but not least, this ideological construct was used to assert that it is the ex-commanders alone who deserve to rule Aceh, not the members and followers of the other GAM groups.

By contrast, other GAM ex-commanders, particularly the middle ranked commanders who left the KPA and immediately joined the civilian leadership of the PNA/Irwandi group, have strongly upheld masculine ideals which underscore democratic citizenship, inclusivity and reduced violence. Accordingly, these middle ranked ex-commanders also attributed ideological features to the ideal man that differed markedly from those of their former higher ranking commanders in the KPA group. Importantly, these differences occurred in the context of the middle ranked ex-commanders’ patronage relations with the civilian leadership in the PNA group, through which they derived economic benefits during Irwandi’s tenure as Aceh governor from 2006-2012.

Importantly, the ideal ‘warrior hero’ masculinity upheld by the ex-commanders in the KPA group was constructed in relation to the asserted femininity of the women ex-soldiers. In the post conflict period, women ex-soldiers were included in the KPA, but only in peripheral positions and roles. In the KPA, women ex-soldiers were praised for their contribution to the war as women soldiers who, according to their ex-commanders, possess feminine qualities that enabled them to undertake supporting roles as spies, informants and logistics. The women’s inclusion in the KPA was to validate the militarised masculinities ideal of the GAM ex-commanders as the ‘warrior heroes’ who greatly contributed to the war.

**Feminist political economy**

As already noted, this thesis employs a feminist political economy approach (FPE). As such, a gender lens is applied to political and economic power structures and contestations. According to Runyan and Peterson (2014, 40), lenses function as ‘conceptual filters that enable us to see somethings in greater detail [and] “order” what we
see’. In other words, a gender lens is a way of seeing or drawing attention to gender relations that otherwise are taken for granted and overlooked. Gender itself denotes the socially constructed differences between men and women that relate to reproduction. As Connell states, gender ‘is not an expression of biology, nor a fixed dichotomy in human life or character. It is a pattern in our social arrangements, and in the everyday activities or practices which those arrangements govern’ (Connell 2002a, 9). By viewing gender in that way, I argue in the thesis that it is not the ex-commanders’ categorical status as males that gives them authority, it is rather gendered processes of constructing different forms of maleness vis-a-vis femininities that underpins the ex-commanders’ power over access to political authority and economic resources.

Feminist political economists tend to understand gender as an aspect of social structure. As Waylen (2000, 27) states, a gendered political economy approach considers ‘how to analyze the individual is, therefore, the question of how to analyze structures’ (see also Risman 1998, 2004; Cook and Roberts 2000; Young 2002 and Cohn 2013). Gender as a social structure is understood by Cohn (2013, 3) as ‘a way of categorizing, ordering and symbolizing power, of hierarchically structuring relationships among different categories of people, and different human activities symbolically associated with masculinity and femininity’ (see also Scott 1985, 1067-1068; Risman 1998, 297-298 and 2004; Young 2001, 14 and 2004, 420; Runyan and Peterson 2014, 5-6).8

Whilst Connell (2002a, 9) says that ‘gender is a social structure’, she has also used the concept of practice to understand how structures develop and are changed (Connell 1987, 95). In her words: ‘to describe structure is to specify what it is in the situation that constrains the play of practice. Since the consequence of practice is a transformed situation which is the object of a new practice, “structure” specifies the way practice (over time) constraints practice’. As a social structure, gender never escapes the dynamic process in which the actions or practice of people can contribute to configuring their social context or structure. Connell (1995, 72) argues that:

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8 Cohn’s (2013, 2) term ‘structural’ refers to ‘the contexts in which … experience is embedded’. This is similar to Hay’s (2002) understanding of structure as the context or setting which individuals or groups shape in wielding power indirectly.
Social practice is creative and inventive, but not inchoate. It responds to particular situations and is generated within definite structure of social relations. Gender relations … form one of the major structures of all documented societies. Practice that relates to this structure, generated as people and groups grapple with their historical situations, does not consist of isolated acts.

Connell’s notion of practice is relevant to this thesis. Her practice-based approach is useful as it stresses the interrelationships between people’s actual lived experience and their social structure (Connell 1987, 61). Thus, this thesis argues that there are relatively constant connections between structure and practice. The prevailing gender structure strongly governs the ex-commanders’ use of the ‘ideal warrior hero’ version of manhood and the additional ‘ideal father-figure’ roles as the economic providers for the rank and file. But in turn, the ex-commanders also indirectly reproduce the gendered structure through the establishment of the ex-commanders’ institutions such as the KPA, the political party and decision to stratify their ex-soldiers through the grading system. This includes the practice of the ex-commanders to directly distribute the economic resources by awarding contract business to their male loyal ex-soldiers, and to directly block the civilian elite access to resources, including the direct practice of violence, terror and intimidation targeted to the civilian elite. As the structure presents itself in people’s practical lived situation – in ways people actively conduct their everyday, actual lived experience – the active practice of the excluded male rank and file, for example, can also alter the structure; particularly through the manifestation of protest intended to challenge the economic basis of the ex-commanders’ power.

Different FPE scholars can highlight somewhat different facets of gender as a social structure, yet these can be understood coherently only through their interrelationships (Cohn 2013, 5). It is Cohn (2013, 5) who usefully highlights the three constitutive facets of gender: gendered identities, gendered symbolic meanings and gendered institutions.

In relation to gender identity, Cohn (2013, 9-10) rejects the notion this is something that is absorbed and internalised in an unambiguous fashion. She argues instead ‘gendered

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9 For example, Young (2002, 422) nominates the sexual division of labour, normative heterosexuality and gendered hierarchy of power, whereas Connell (2002a, 55-68) identifies power relations, divisions of labour, emotional relations and symbolic relations.
selves’ are ‘something that is continually being produced in accordance with the multiple social settings and structures within which we live’. Accordingly, gendered identity is understood by her, not as an internal and personal sense of one’s own gender, but as ‘a situated accomplishment’. This means that the social construction of gender in particular social interactions has a specific code or set of expectations that shapes how identity is realised and enacted (Cohn 2013, 9; also West and Zimmerman, 1987, 127). The conception of gendered identity embedded in social structure relates also to the other multiple structures of power and inequality in society, such as class, race and sexuality (Cohn 2013, 10).

Cohn’s second facet of gender is the symbolic dimension, which functions to legitimate and naturalise hierarchical power relations between different categories of people. Here gender is understood as not only ways of thinking which shape our experiences, understandings and practices as gendered beings, but also as ‘metaphors, dichotomies and values which structure ways of thinking about other aspects of the world, … [such as] war and security’ (Cohn 2013, 11). Cohn’s understanding of gender structure as operating at the level of the symbolic links to ideology as a meaning system that is constituted in relation to powerful interests (Gamble 1981, 12). Thus, according to Barrett (1980, 97), ideology refers to ‘the processes by which meaning is produced, challenged, reproduced, transformed’. As noted also by Turner (2006, 279), ‘meanings can be said to be ideological only insofar as they serve power; thus ideology is not defined by its specific content but by its contextual construction and function … the social meanings we define as ideological are constitutive of domination’ (Turner 2006, 279). Barrett (980, 112) similarly indicates the importance of the context of gendered imagery, thereby arguing that ideology cannot be separated from its material conditions in any particular historical circumstances.

Cohn’s symbolic facet of gender is reflected in Hutchings’ (2008) notion of ‘the logic of masculinity’. In this, Hutchings is able to explain how masculinity operates at the symbolic level but also shapes structure and practice. Hutchings notes that feminist international relations theorists often invoke the concept of masculinity to explain ‘the ongoing invisibility of women and gender in the theoretical frames through which … international politics is understood’ (Hutchings 2008, 23). However, she distinguishes between ‘what masculinity is’ (the qualities associated with masculinity) and ‘what
masculinity does’ (the hierarchical logic of exclusion in masculinity as a relational concept). She argues that, since the content of masculinities is variable, it is problematic to consider that this is what shapes the theory and practice of international politics (Hutchings 2008, 27). Whereas the content/qualities of masculinity are variable, masculinity is ‘invariable’ in its ‘exclusionary effects’. Hence, Hutchings (2008, 30) argues masculinity works through the logic of binary contrast and contradiction. This gives masculinity ‘flexibility and malleability and enables change’ whilst still legitimating ‘a fixed-value hierarchy’ wherein masculinity is constantly valued over femininity. In short, masculinity is understood as a form of symbolic – and ideological – ordering in terms of binary, exclusionary oppositions.

Finally, Cohn (2013, 15) also maintains that gender is also highly embedded in institutions which condition gendered divisions of labour and differential access to power and resources between the differential categories of people. Institutions embody, and therefore also produce and reproduce, gender expectations. It is institutions that are the confluence of the material processes, gendered identities and gendered symbolic meanings that make and remake hierarchical gendered power relations (Cohn 2013, 16).

Thus, linking to the thesis, at the level of identity, the construction of a ‘warrior hero’ ideal of manhood is key to the perceived and bolstered identity construction of the ex-commanders as the leaders of the GAM combatants who fought and sacrificed most for the Aceh nation. This identity construction is not understood as a personal attribute emanating from the former GAM commanders, but rather it is viewed as an effect of gender as structure and practice that values combatants over civilians, on the basis that civilians are regarded as not having been prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice of their life for the nation. In this post-conflict setting, the ex-commanders practice or do gender as a ‘situated accomplishment’ to differentiate their identities from those of the other civilian GAM elites by claiming also that the latter do not conform to the ideal of manhood.

Subsequently, in relation to the symbolic level, the imagery of the ‘warrior hero’ as the ‘real soldier’ and ‘combatant’ who fought and sacrificed for the nation works as a gendered meaning system. The ex-commanders cultivated this meaning system as an ideological power resource by which to maintain and rebuild the unity that existed between them and their loyal supporters (male and female ex-soldiers) during the conflict.
period. At the same time however, they utilised this meaning system to marginalise and exclude the civilian elites who did not fight in the war and male and female ex-soldiers who were not recognised as ‘true soldiers’ of the GAM. This ideological power resource was thus important in legitimating the ex-commanders’ interests and success in gaining strategic positions in political office and thereby privileged access to economic resources.

At this symbolic level, the logic of masculinity is embedded in the context through which the ex-commanders construct meanings to support their interests in wielding power and authority. In conditioning indirectly others’ preferences, choices and actions to serve these interests, the logic of masculinity is a crucial ideological power resource. In the case of the ex-commanders and male civilian elite rivalries for example, the binary logic of masculinity works in relation to the construction of a black and white distinction between ‘great warriors’ and civilians. Importantly, this contestation has taken place in a post-conflict civilian context wherein all actual military attributes have been dismissed as a result of the demilitarisation processes. In this context, the manhood idea is promulgated ideologically to fit the interests of the GAM ex-commanders group to legitimate their higher status vis-à-vis those who threaten them.

Gender has worked at the institutional level, in ways in which the KPA as the new ex-commanders’ organisation has operated in the post-conflict period in Aceh. As an organisation, the KPA is highly gendered: it embodies certain gender norms and relations, including in the allocation of work and resources predominately to male members who are recognised as former GAM soldiers. The KPA is also strongly structured according to a retained military rank hierarchy and perceived combat experience, as determined by the ex-commanders. All these facets of the KPA have had significant impacts on the differential access to power and resources (see Chapters 4 and 7).

As discussed above, Cohn (2013) has focused on the interconnections between these three elements of gender as a social structure - identity, symbolic meaning and institutional. These are all relevant to this thesis’s research into the ex-commanders’ practices in wielding power, directly and indirectly. However, Cohn does not specifically discuss masculinity because, like many feminists, she has been concerned mostly with women and gender. Hence, in order to build on Cohn (2013), this thesis employs Connell’s (1987, 1993, 1995) conception of masculinity as a way to specifically analyse the gender
dynamics involved in the rise to power of a specific group of men as a new local elite in post-conflict Aceh.

Masculinity

For Connell (1995, 71), masculinity does not denote the personality or character of most men, and is therefore not to be regarded as a behavioural average. Rather, Connell aims for a conception of masculinity that links to the processes by which women and men conduct and experience gendered lives. Hence, she defines masculinity as a socially constructed site in gender relations, consisting of both a set of practices whereby men and women engage in that social construction and the implications of such practices in terms of ‘bodily experience, personality, and culture’ (Connell 1995, 71). Rather than understand masculinity in the singular, Connell more broadly considers multiples masculinities (1995, 76). Connell’s (1993) framework of masculinities is political in the sense that it pertains to struggles over power and distributions of resources embedded in gender relations. However, as particular masculinities are defined historically in terms of power dynamic relations and in-built tensions with other social structures, masculinities are subject to change and may take other, new forms in certain contexts.

Connell furthered developed the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ to stress different forms of masculinities and their interrelationships. Conceptually, the term draws on the Gramscian notion of hegemony in relation to class domination (see Connell 1987, 1995, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). In this Gramscian sense, hegemony is a political strategy to legitimate the domination and control exercised by a particular group over others under particular historical circumstances (Donaldson 1993; Connell 1995; Hearn 2004 and Howson 2006). As Carrigan, Connell, and Lee (1987, 94) express it, hegemony ‘always refers to a historical situation, a set of circumstances in which power is won and held.’ For Connell, hegemonic masculinity always relates to the pursuit of a dominant position in a certain patriarchal gender structure that, in turn, produces gendered hierarchies among men as well as between men and women (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 836).

Connell’s conception of hegemonic masculinity is useful for this thesis. This is because her conception of hegemonic masculinity pertains to ideology – rather than being the actual characteristics or identity of a dominant group. Hence, following Connell (1987,
1995, 2002b, 2005), hegemonic masculinity in this study is defined as the configuration of practices involved in the making of an exalted ideal of manhood and the implication of this for the construction of a status group, to the exclusion of other groups. In the Aceh context, hegemonic masculinity explains how the GAM elite ex-commanders have sought to exercise and legitimate their power, status and authority through the ideological glorification of militarised masculinity in and through the KPA.

In her later work, Connell (2005, 846-853) has reformulated the concept of hegemonic masculinity in some key respects. Of most relevance to this thesis, she has shifted from an original focus on hegemonic masculinity in relation to ‘the global dominance of men over women’ to give more attention to divisions among men and so-called ‘subordinate masculinities’; and also the agency of women in the social construction of hegemonic masculinity via what she terms ‘emphasised femininity’. In social interactions, different masculinities are said to be in tension with each other (Connell 2002b). Accordingly, hegemonic masculinity, as exerted by a particular group of men, is positioned strategically to be in conflict with the non-hegemonic masculinities (both ‘marginalised’ and ‘subordinate’ masculinities) of other groups of men. This serves to ensure the ‘patriarchal dividends’ from maleness are in fact spread unevenly among men, according to how they are positioned vis-à-vis hegemonic masculinity and social structures of class, race and sexuality – leading to tensions and conflicts in patriarchal societies among men.

Marginalised masculinities are so-called because they are not in conformity with the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group (Connell 1995, 81). Their marginal status arises from the intersection of gender with class and race: marginalised masculinities are those attending to subordinate classes or ethnic groups (Connell 1995, 81). By contrast, subordination is relative to the structure of sexuality (as in the example of the subordination of gay masculinity) (see also Howson 2006, 62-64, Ford and Lyons 2012, 5-6). Tensions among men and masculinity lead to forms of ‘protest masculinity’. Protest masculinity is ‘a response to powerlessness, a claim to gender position of power, a pressured exaggeration (bashing gays, wild riding) of masculine conventions’ (Connell 1995, 111). This is what Connell sees as ‘a claim to power where there are no real resources of power’ (Connell 1991, 160). In this thesis, whereas the term marginal masculinity refers to the civilian GAM leadership, made up of the former exiled leaders and the GAM negotiators, the protest masculinity applies to a group of disgruntled male
ex-combatants who have rebelled against their elite ex-commanders in the KPA by committing a range of criminal acts involving guns (see Chapter 6).

Having already addressed ideology, Connell (1995 and 2002c) views violence as a means of asserting domination and resistance among masculinities: ‘it is very often a means of claiming or defending privilege, asserting superiority or taking an advantage’ (Connell 2002c, 95). According to her, violence practised by men is not frenzied or merely driven by individual motives, but rather is organized – and even if the preserve of a group of men – as a collective and not an individual practice. The practice of violence as a means to an end – securing men’s status, privilege and power – is conducted in and is linked to men’s social networks. In this context, masculinity is built up and maintained in collective ways which exclude women via expressions of aggression (Connell 1991, 157).

Hegemonic masculinity works differently in relation to the domination of women, through forms of femininities that are either compliant and conformist, or non-compliant and resistant – or a complex combination of these (Connell 1987, 183-188). ‘Emphasised femininity’ is ‘an adaptation to men’s power’ that stresses ‘compliance nurturance and empathy’ as essential qualities of women (Connell 1987, 188). Hence, it provides ideological support to hegemonic masculinity, at the same time as it blocks the expression of other forms of femininity. Unlike emphasised femininity, ‘ambivalent femininity’, as further developed by Howson (2006, 68), refers to a particular version of femininity that ‘neither accepts nor rejects holistically the current dominative hegemonic principle and more importantly the position they construct for women’. Thus, ambivalent femininity ‘always incorporates a complex and strategic combination of compliance, resistance, and cooperation’ (Howson 2006, 68). However, neither Connell (1987, 1995) nor Howson (2006) elaborate on the strategies of ambivalent femininity to contest hegemonic masculinity. In the thesis, the concept of emphasised femininity applies to the loyal women ex-soldiers group who have conformed to the hegemonic masculinity of the ex-commanders in the KPA, whilst the term ambivalent femininity refers to the disaffected women soldiers groups who rejected the ex-commanders and left the KPA. This latter group of women ex-soldiers manifests its ambivalence in the mix of resistance, compliance, and cooperation exhibited towards different factions of ex-commanders, on the one hand rejecting and challenging those in the KPA, whilst on the other seeking political alliances with the middle rank commanders who were expelled from the KPA.
Conceptually, Hutchison et al. (2014, 135) have developed a typology of political alliances to capture the different power dynamics entailed in links forged between individuals and or groups with competing ideological and material interests, commitments and resources. Given the patronage nature of the GAM, Hutchison et al.’s concept of a ‘controlling clientelist’ alliance is useful in the case of the ties between women ex-soldiers and the male civilian elite in the PNA group, as this form of alliance tends to arise when a weaker group depends on a stronger ally for resources and protection (see Chapter 7).

Conclusion

This chapter has explained the gender analysis approach in this thesis, which draws from feminist political economy (FPE). FPE provides a theoretical underpinning for understanding gender as a fundamental factor in political and economic power contestation between groups, especially when investigating the material and ideological dimensions of socio-economic inequalities between men and women. Hence, FPE is presented as a useful framework to explain the rise of a new local political elite in post-conflict Aceh, most especially in relation to how gender works in and through the strategies deployed by the ex-commanders to exercise power and authority over the civilian elite group and the excluded male and female rank and file ex-soldiers. But, as FPE scholars have tended to focus on women and the dynamics of their subordination, to explain the rise of a male local political elite this thesis also draws on Connell’s scholarship on masculinities (1995, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) and her concept of hegemonic masculinity and its relationship to other masculinities (marginal masculinity and protest masculinity) and femininities (emphasised femininity and ambivalent femininity) in particular.\(^\text{10}\) These concepts are helpful in highlighting the gendered structural and ideological practices which other literature on the rise of a new political and economic elite in post-conflict Aceh has overlooked.

This chapter has explained also how militarism as an ideology underpins the power and authority exercised by the ex-commanders over other GAM civilian groups and male and female rank and file ex-soldiers, most notably via the construction of a militarised hegemonic masculinity, most clearly embodied in the ‘warrior hero’ as a manhood ideal.

\(^{10}\) The notion of ambivalent femininity was developed later, by Howson (2006).
In espousing this ideal, the ex-commanders strategically invoke their ideological power resources to tighten male bonding, spur the *esprit de corps* of their former male and female foot soldiers and thereby legitimize their holds on political office and economic resources that flow from this. Underpinned by gender ideology, militarism functions to demarcate who fits and does not fit the mold and hence who is in and out of the favoured group. To further explain these gender dimensions of the ex-commanders’ rise to power and authority in post-conflict Aceh, the next chapter will turn to the historical background of how the GAM operated in the conflict era, especially in terms of how militaristic bonding was established in the organisation and how this functioned as a power resource to legitimate and sustain the GAM commanders’ political power and authority as military leaders, and later as a civilian elite.
Chapter 3

The GAM in Conflict

Introduction

This chapter explains the bases for military bonding within GAM in relation to the relative roles and status of men and women soldiers during the conflict period. ‘Military bonding’ denotes ‘the bonding together of members of an organisation or unit in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, their unit, and their mission’, often through a shared ‘sense of purpose and belongingness’ (MacIntyre 2008, 57-58). Crucially also, the strong feelings of pride and comradeship entailed in military bonding contribute to rank and file soldiers’ preparedness to follow the orders of their commanders (MacIntyre 2008, 57-65). This was evident in the case of GAM, military bonding being crucial for its formation as a tight military force. However, the foundation of this bonding in the GAM was highly gendered in that it involved the valorization of men’s military roles and status over those of women’s.

Military bonding was established within the GAM during the conflict period on the basis of three elements. First, the hierarchical structure of the GAM placed both civilian and military groups within a chain of command that operated downwards from the top leadership in exile and, within the military group also, from high ranked commanders down to their troops. Although this command structure pervaded the whole organisation, for obvious reasons it was stronger in the military group. This helped to build a particularly strong sense of comradeship and unity within the military group in Aceh, but simultaneously created a sense of difference from the civilian elite, in particular those living in exile overseas. A second element of the military bonding was Acehnese nationalism. The ideological construction of Acehnese nationalism early in the conflict era cultivated, among both the commanders and their male and female soldiers, feelings of sacrifice for the Aceh nation (bangsa) that drew on Islamic notions of jihad (holy war). To the degree that these feelings were shared, they further unified the GAM military group. The third element was the military commanders’ capacity to mobilise economic resources, such as money collected from illegal taxing, illegal
logging and protection rackets. The commanders mobilised such resources either for their own personal or group use, or to distribute to their rank and file soldiers. Not only did this enhance the bonds between the military commanders and rank and file soldiers during the war, it also created expectations of future economic benefits among the male and female rank and file ex-soldiers, particularly in relation to employment.

These elements combined to establish firm military bonds; however, the bonding was also highly gendered. Ideologically, the binary logic of masculinity (Hutchings 2008) worked particularly in relation to the differential evaluations of the GAM men’s and women’s contributions to the conflict, especially perceptions of their levels of personal sacrifice for the nation. Gendered divisions of labour meant that women tended not to perform the most highly valued combat roles; however, this was not the key reason why women’s contributions were relatively devalued. Of greater significance was the gendered association of men with masculine characteristics of bravery, which meant their sacrifice was considered necessarily greater, especially in association with the binary logic of masculinity. In their ‘support roles’, women soldiers were less directly involved in combat, although they continually stress their sacrifice in terms of their willingness and actual risk of being killed. Thus, through the masculinisation of sacrifice, the women’s active contributions to the insurgency struggle were undervalued, during the conflict and in the subsequent post-conflict era. This binary logic of masculinity extended to the ideological gendering of places, specifically ‘the hills’ as places of fighting – and therefore of men – and the villages as places of social reproduction and family, considered to be the domains of women.

In order to explain how military bonding developed in the GAM during the armed conflict, this chapter is organised into five sections. The first section offers some background on Aceh. It includes an overview of gender relations which are strongly embeded in Acehnese local cultural traditions and Islamic religion, including Sharia law. The second elaborates on the founding of the GAM and its hierarchical command structure. The third section covers the ideological construction of Acehnese nationalism. Fourthly, the chapter explores male and female foot soldiers’ roles and status during the war. Finally, the fifth section discusses the GAM commanders’ ability to mobilise economic resources to their troops.
Aceh

Aceh is located at the northern end of Sumatra Island, in the western part of Indonesia. In 2013, its population reached for about 4.7 million people (The Aceh Province Bureau Statistic, 2013). More than 80 percent are ethnically Acehnese and almost all are Muslims (Wennmann and Krause 2009). During President Suharto’s New Order era, Aceh was well known as an area of armed conflict or ‘trouble spot’ (*daerah rawan*) (Robinson 1998, 127). Suharto’s modernisation project contributed to the escalation of armed conflict, mainly because it involved extensive exploitation of natural resources, ethnic marginalisation, and harsh military measures (Aspinall 2001, 1007). Following the discovery of liquid natural gases (LNG) and oil in 1971, Aceh was considered to be one of the fastest growing provinces economically (Robinson 1998, 135, Schulze 2006b, 185). Abundant deposits created AUS$2.72 -$4.08 billion annually in export revenue for about a 40 year period (Ross, 2005, 40-41, *Serambi Indonesia* 2014). Due to this remarkable discovery of resources, in the 80s Aceh had contributed 30 % of Indonesia’s oil and gas exports (Braithwite 2010, 353). However, the benefits of the LNG boom were not equally shared with Aceh as they went above all to the central government, foreign investors and non-Acehnese workers (Robinson 1998, 135, Schulze 2006b, 184, Brown, 1994, 148). Overall, whilst Aceh contributed to the national economy, it did not gain ‘a great deal in return’ (Robinson 1998, 136).

The modernisation project promoted by the New Order required unity of all Indonesian society that composed of multi-ethnicity, traditions and cultures. To achieve the overall objective of bringing unity in diversity and national identity, the political legitimacy of the New Order project relied heavily on the spirit of national integration and multi-ethnicity (Aspinall 2003). This political objective was needed to overcome primordialism, underdevelopment, and ethnic exclusivity (Aspinall 2003). However, the practice of the national identity project shown by the regime was in stark contrast with reality, given the strong dominance of the Javanese culture and tradition in central government offices with little representation of the local (Robinson 1998, Brown 1994, Aspinall 2003). The strong Javanese representation reflected also in Aceh where the LNG project hired more non-Acehnese, particularly the Javanese transmigrants, than local Acehnese people (Robinson 1998). This caused popular resentment of the local Acehnese to the New Order policies in Aceh (Robinson 1998, Aspinall 2007b).
In addition, the New Order policy applied very strict security measures to protect any threats to the region (Robinson 1998, 137). This security approach was known as the *Nanggala* Intelligence Operation (1977-1979) and the Red Net Operation (also commonly referred to as the *Daerah Operasi Militer* or Military Operation Area) (1989-1998). These two military measures employed systematic counterinsurgency methods by means of targeted killings, rapes, and public executions (Robinson 1998, 141, also Schulze 2006a, 244-248). As a result of these heavy-handed military operations, it was reported that in this period, more than 1,000 people were killed, approximately 2,000 disappeared and many thousands more were displaced and or became widows and orphans (Sulistiyanto, 2010, 442-443). The Banda Aceh Legal Aid Foundation also reported 625 cases of rape and torture of women (Brightwite 2010, 352).

There is no doubt that gender is a crucial factor shaping the lives of Acehnese people. Gender relations are embedded in a patriarchal culture in which local custom (*adat*) and Islamic beliefs and practices intersect (Meghdadi 2009, Robinson 2009, Lee-Koo 2012 and 2018). *Adat* values, norms and practices shape gender segregation in stipulating that women have more responsibilities within the household, such as overseeing the morality and education of their children, whereas men are able to socialise outside the household, typically in a *muenasah* (a public place for praying and gathering) (Robinson 2009, 25). In relation to divisions of labour, women’s tasks are associated with rice cultivation (*mita breuh*) for example, while it is the men who sell the rice (*mita peng*). Men are expected to earn money outside the home, and to support their families financially accordingly (Srimulyani, 2010, 331, Robinson 2009, 25).

Gender relations in Aceh have also been shaped by the fact that the practice of Islam has been sequentially formalised through the implementation of Sharia law. This has further enforced a gender order in which men are designated to be the main economic providers, holders of property and inheritance, whereas women’s responsibilities are confined to the domestic sphere to take care of the children (Nowak and Caulfield 2008). When Aceh was granted ‘special region’ status (*Daerah Istimewa*), following negotiations with Daud Beureueh, the leader of Darul Islam Rebellion, the introduction of Sharia law was limited to one bylaw restricting the sale of food and drink during Ramadhan (Ichwan 2011, 188,
Dissatisfied with this narrow application of Sharia law, some Acehnese Islamic scholars, including Daud Beureueh himself, continued to struggle for its further implementation. In response, in 1962 the Indonesian government issued a decree that provided for ‘the orderly and proper implementation’ of ‘elements of’ Sharia Law, bringing an end to the rebellion despite Beureueh’s view that ‘the situation was not ideal’ (Ichwan 2011, 188). Over the next decade, Acehnese desires to strengthen Islam were thwarted by the increasing centralisation of state power under Suharto (Miller 2004, 336). In 1968 the provincial government of Aceh passed a regulation on the enforcement of Sharia law to the Indonesian government which the Indonesian government simply ignored (Miller 2004, 336).

After the collapse of the New Order regime, to avoid national disintegration and accommodate Acehnese demands, President Habibie formally recognised the original ‘special region’ (Daerah Istimewa) agreement through Law No. 44/1999, thereby giving Aceh ‘control over its religious, cultural and educational affairs’ (Miller 2004, 339). Subsequently, under President Megawati Sukarno Putri, Law No. 18 of 2001 on ‘Special Autonomy for the Province of Aceh Special Region as the Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam’ expanded on the previous law by allowing the implementation of Sharia law (Miller 2004, 343). There followed the establishment of a Sharia court (Mahkamah Shariah) to regulate Islamic practices in relation to marriage, divorce and inheritance and obligations with respect to conduct, such as the wearing of the headscarf (jilbab) for women, and banning the consumption of alcohol, gambling and other forms of Islamic misconduct (Miller 2004, 344-345). Later, in accordance with the 2005 Helsinki agreement, Sharia law was addressed in the Law No. 11/2006 regarding the governing of Aceh. This new law covered the new institutionalisation of the Islamic conduct, such as the establishment of a Sharia police force (Wilayatul Hisbah)12, whose main tasks are to monitor and enforce the rule of law and punish offenders, and the establishment of the Islamic Scholars Council (Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama) which is responsible for

11 The Darul Islam was the first rebel movement in Aceh to emerge after Indonesian independence in the Sukarno era. It erupted between 1953 and 1962. It sought to establish Aceh as an Islamic state (see Alchaidar 1999, Schulze 2004, Aspinall 2007a and 2007b).
12 The Wilayatul Hisbah is an Islamic religious police force responsible for Islamic Sharia law enforcement in Aceh province. It is regulated under the Decree of Aceh Governor, Number 1/2004. In 2015, a security guard in the governor’s office estimated that around 3,000 ex-soldiers are employed as security guards and around 1,000 are hired as forest police. (Conversation with the author, Office of Aceh Governor, February 2015.)
resolving disputes and interpreting Islamic discourse around the implementation of Sharia. Law No. 11/2006 also mandated the Council to make a *fatwa* (a legal pronouncement in Islam).

**The founding of GAM**

In the mid 1970s, almost fifteen years following the end of the Darul Islam revolt movement, and against the background of the Suharto New Order’s harsh and exploitative policies and practices in relation to Aceh, grievances over natural resources appropriation, ethnic marginalisation and the severity of military operations crystallised and another rebel movement seeking for independence of Aceh from the Indonesia emerged (Robinson 1998, Aspinall 2007b).

In 1976, Hasan Di Tiro and some other members of the then Acehnese civilian intellectual middle class (including Zaini Abdullah, Husaini Hasan, Zubir Mahmud, Muchtar Hasbi) announced the formation of the Aceh-Sumatera National Liberation Front (ASNLF) – later renamed as the GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* or Free Aceh Movement) – and declared the independence of Aceh from Indonesia. At that time, Hasan Di Tiro had only a few supporters, mostly young men intellectuals and several Islamic scholars. Hasan Di Tiro’s supporters included some of his own relatives, who were formerly middle-ranked soldiers in the Darul Islam Rebellion, and some ex-foot soldiers from the same period who lived in his hometown Pidie (see Schulze 2004, 4 and 14; also Nessen 2006, 184).

The GAM’s founding structure was militaristic in that orders could only be given according to rank or position in the chain of command. Although there were both civilian and military groupings with the GAM, each adhered to this militaristic command structure and, accordingly, complied with the decisions of the Tiro command in exile overseas, especially regarding the political direction of the movement in terms of international lobbying and domestic internal policies. Nevertheless, the command structure was most strongly established within the military group in Aceh, thereby increasing the military bonding between commanders and the male and female rank and file, but also contributing to a sense of difference between the military commanders as insiders and the exiled civilian leaders as outsiders.
At the top level of the GAM organisation was Tiro’s cabinet in exile, the so-called Tiro command (see Figure 3.1). The Tiro cabinet more or less reflected that in a modern civilian state. It comprised a head of state or Wali Negara and ministers who were accountable to that head of the state. All of them lived in exile, mostly in Sweden. The exiled cabinet was responsible for setting overall political goals, including international diplomacy and lobbying, and setting the strategy for general domestic politics, including some military and civilian governance matters such as appointment of the military supreme commander, transferring arms, and policing the payment of taxes (pajak nanggroe). As the Wali Negara, Hasan Di Tiro appointed some male loyal civilian intellectuals, such as Zaini Abdullah, Husaini Hasan, Zuber Mahmud, and Muchtar Hasbi, as his first ministers. The composition of the civilian cabinet varied over time, depending on Hasan Di Tiro’s decisions.

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13 Abu Razak, former GAM vice-supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016 and Munawar Liza, former GAM negotiator, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
14 Zakaria Saman, former GAM Minister of Defence, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, May 2016. The GAM leadership who lived in exile in Sweden comprised Hasan Di Tiro (Wali Negara), Malik Mahmud (Prime Minister), Husaini Hasan (Ministry of Education), Zaini Abdullah (Ministry of Health), and Zakaria Saman (Ministry of Defence) (for details see Hasan, 2015).
15 Pajak nanggroe or state tax was a GAM fund-raising method to mobilise resources. Initially the pajak nanggroe arose from Hasan Di Tiro’s decision to collect tax from several foreign private companies operating in North Aceh; see Sulaiman (2000, 32-33). This activity was extended by the GAM between 1998-2005 to levy taxes not only from big companies operating in Aceh but also from civil servants, small traders and contractors across Aceh; see Aspinall (2009, 6) and Schulze (2004, 24-25).
16 For details on the format of Hasan Di Tiro Cabinet, see Alchaidar (1999, 150).
At the second stage of the GAM’s structure, there were two important domestic units: the local military organisation, which consisted of high ranking commanders (Panglima); and the civilian administrative unit, which comprised domestic civilian government and GAM police (Bintara). This administrative unit included civilian men who were peace agreement negotiators for the GAM. The GAM domestic civilian government’s main responsibilities were to release marriage and birth certificates, provide mechanisms to handle disputes in villages, and so on. It was headed by 17 civilian governors across Aceh Province. The civilian organisational structure was designed down to the village level (Ulee Mukim, Sagoe, and Geucik). Uniquely, the civilian GAM also comprised police officers (Bintara) whose main task was to assist the domestic civilian government.

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17 Munawar Liza, former GAM negotiator, and Abdul Manan, former GAM governor of Sabang, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
18 Idem.
in disseminating key information from the Sweden-based exiled leaders, such as the international lobbying outcomes and various religious matters. The Bintara was also involved in handling dispute mechanisms within the GAM.

Munawar Liza, a male, civilian, middle-class intellectual who acted as a former GAM civilian negotiator, stated in an interview that the civilian negotiators were a part of the GAM’s structure. They were responsible for assisting the Tiro cabinet, especially in matters related to the peace negotiation process between the GAM and the Indonesian government. They consisted of western-educated Acehnese men and also some who had studied in universities in Aceh or in Indonesia. They devoted their time and energy actively to the GAM movement for the independence of Aceh, but through non-violent means. Munawar Liza did not mention by name those who were involved in the peace negotiations but, through his help, the researcher was able to meet with key civilian GAM negotiators: Irwandi Yusuf (former GAM propagandist), Nur Djuli (former GAM intellectual in Malaysia), Amni Bin Ahmad Marzuki (former GAM negotiator), T Kammaruzaman (lawyer and former GAM negotiator), and T Nassirudin Bin Ahmed (former GAM negotiator).

The GAM military organisational structure in the field was called the Army of the State of Aceh or Tentara Negara Aceh (TNA), and was headed by the Panglima TNA (chief commander) (Schulze 2004, 12). Under the Panglima, there were 17 Panglima wilayah or regional commanders, each responsible for four or five Panglima Daerah (district commanders). Under the Panglima Daerah there was the lower level, more numerous Panglima called the Panglima Sagoe (Sagoe or village commanders). In an interview, the former GAM vice commander, Abu Razak, explained that ‘the field GAM military structure operated under the command of the exiled GAM leadership in Sweden’, the Tiro Cabinet. In other words, the military commanders were clearly subordinate to the exiled leaders in Sweden.

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19 Former GAM Sagoe commander of Lam No, Aceh Jaya, interview with the author, Aceh Jaya, April 2016.
20 Munawar Liza Zaenal, former GAM negotiator, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
21 Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015,
Most of the former commanders of the GAM, in particular the higher ranked and mid-level regional and district commanders, came from peasant and petty trader family and local village backgrounds. They joined the GAM-TNA, as explained by Tengku Sarjani, a former high ranked commander of Pidie district, to ‘fulfil their families duties’ to continue the previous insurgency struggle, the Darul Islam rebellion’. Some of their parents and grandparents were veterans of this earlier rebel movement in Aceh. A few of these commanders came from urban middle-class families where one or both parents worked as lower-level civil servants in Banda Aceh. Some of the commanders, especially the higher and middle-level commanders, had undergone military training in Libya in the mid-1980s. Others were trained in Aceh, while some underwent no military training at all; yet were still, due to their bravery and skills in war tactics, able to become lower level commanders (village or Sagoe commanders). However, the majority of commanders in the higher ranks (Panglima Wilayah or regional commanders and Panglima Daerah, districts commanders) graduated from Libya.

At the bottom of the hierarchy were all the male and female foot soldiers. This level also included the male civilian GAM supporters or young villagers (pemuda gampong) who acted as informants. Alongside male and female soldiers, there were also male civilian GAM supporters, mostly boys recruited by regional, district or Sagoe commanders from their villages. Their duties during the conflict were to assist the soldiers with intelligence information, carrying walkie-talkie radios and sometimes spying on ‘the enemy’ (Indonesian army operations) in their gampong (villages).

The troops serving at the bottom of the organisational command structure were positioned below the Panglima Sagoe or village commanders (see Schulze 2004, 12). These included the women’s military wing, the Pasukan Inong Balee, which was established late, in

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22 T Sarjani, former GAM regional commander for Pidie, interview with the author, Pidie, January 2015.
23 In 1985-1986, the civilian exiled leaders, in particular Hasan Di Tiro and Malik Mahmud, had successfully sent hundreds of male youth gampong from several villages in Pidie, North Aceh to undertake military training in Tripoli, Libya. This happened as Hasan Di Tiro successfully lobbied Libyan President, Muammar Gadhafi to support sectionist Islamist movements over the world (for details see Schulze 2003 and 2004).
24 T Sarjani, a former GAM regional commander, stated he was sent by his father to join the military training in Libya in 1986 for about one year. He said that most of his colleagues who underwent military training in Libya were positioned as regional GAM commanders by the supreme commander at the time, T Abdullah Syafei. Interview with the author, Pidie, January 2015.
25 Former GAM district commander of Passe, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
Most of the male GAM soldiers interviewed were from lower class families: peasantry and lower level civil servant families on the east coast of Aceh Province. As with the commanders, some of their male relatives were members of the former Darul Islam Rebellion. The social origins of the female soldiers under the Pasukan Inong Balee were similar to those of their male counterparts.

In the fieldwork, none of the interviewees, neither the rank and file nor the regional ex-commanders, knew the total number of GAM combatants. Some ex-commanders said that the total number – male and female – was around 40,000, including the supporters. Others claimed there were even more. Women soldiers were said to have numbered between 800 and 1,000. According to some female ex-soldiers however, this figure is an underestimate; they put the number of female ex-soldiers at 3,000 for the whole of Aceh.

**The making of military bonding**

As the military group was established to fight the Indonesian security forces in the battle zone, the militaristic organisational structure had to be strong. According to one former ex-soldier, the GAM’s war took the form of guerrilla warfare, in that its armed capacity (numbers of artillery, weapons and soldiers) was asymmetrical to that of the army of the Indonesian state (see Schulze 2006a, 226-230). Nevertheless, the command structure was upheld strongly in the military group, and functioned as a military ideology that valued order based on hierarchy of military rank. To quote one of the higher ranked military commanders, ‘a significant attribute of the GAM-TNA was the chain of command or perintah’. According to him,

> there is nothing that the soldiers normally do unless they order their smaller unit or their subordinates to execute duties, or they are ordered by their

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26 Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.
27 Former GAM soldier, Banda Aceh, October 2014; Abu Razak, Banda Aceh, January 2015; and T Sarjani, Pidie, January 2015. All interviews with the author.
28 Former GAM operational commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
29 Former GAM female soldier, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, October 2014.
30 Former GAM soldier from Batee Ilik, District of Biruen Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016. For more details of the GAM’s guerrilla warfare strategy, see Schulze 2006a, 226-230.
31 Abu Razak, former GAM vice commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
higher rank or top-level leadership. Thus, to pass an order [memerintah] or to receive an order [diperintah] was an important feature of the GAM-TNA. 

Accordingly, this command structure was strongly implicated in the soldiers’ identity as a GAM military group or as tentra GAM (GAM soldiers). The command structure was accompanied by militaristic slogans, such as ‘udep beusare, mate beusajan’ (life and death together) and di bawah satu komando (under one command), which further strengthened their military bonding. These slogans were acknowledged to have been vital for creating and maintaining a sense of belonging among the commanders, and between them and their male and female rank and file. 

As in other wars, military bonding creates the ‘loyalty’ that is essential for robust trust and ‘comradeship’ among warriors to survive and achieve victory in war (Agostino 1998, 68).

The military commanders stressed the importance of this bonding and unity between themselves and the rank and file in enabling their greater authority and control over war-related matters, such as strategy, in the field. As Abu Razak, a former GAM vice-supreme commander said, ‘as part of the GAM military force, we [the commanders] coordinated, communicated and helped each other during the war and maintained unity among us and the troops under the command of our supreme commander, Muzakir Manaf. That was how we operated, as a military force. We stuck together through the military chain of command structure’. 

However, military bonding also sparked differences between those in the military (the commanders) as orang yang di dalam (insiders), and the exiled leaders overseas as orang yang di luar (outsiders). One of the former GAM commanders said: ‘I saw that the field commanders had more authority, especially for war-related matters than the civilian exiled leaders who most of the time dealt with international matters as orang yang di luar’. 

32 idem.  
33 T Sarjani, former GAM regional commander of Pidie district, interview with the author, Pidie, January 2015.  
Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.  
34 Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, 18 April 2016.  
35 Idem.
Another ex-commander confirmed that, although the civilian exiled leaders were responsible for the general political direction of the GAM, on the ground in Aceh – in particular in dealing with the Indonesian army – strategy and tactics were made by the Panglima through the military chain of command. Thus the commanders in the field had autonomy to deal with their territory, literally the war in Aceh. A high ranking former GAM commander for Pidie district, T Sarjani, explained that ‘compared to the civilian exiled leadership (orang yang diluar), the [military] commanders knew better the situation in the field during the war as they were the men who were doing the fighting [orang berperang]. So the war tactics were developed by the commanders in the field, not by the exiled leaders’.\(^{36}\) He went on to explain that ‘although I had autonomy in my territory, as a regional commander I had to follow the instructions from my supreme commander, Muzakir Manaf. We did not have any dispute with our supreme commander of GAM-TNA’.\(^{37}\) In a similar vein, Abu Razak stressed that:

the commanders in the TNA were more knowledgeable about their territory and well trained as commanders. They were chosen from our best-armed people. Those in exile were also our leaders but we were tentra [soldiers]. We were different. The commanders of the TNA were more in control over the situation, especially in dealing with our enemy, the Indonesian soldiers, than those leaders who lived overseas.\(^{38}\)

Different family and educational backgrounds contributed further to the divisions between the civilian exiled leaders and the military commanders’ group. As previously explained, most of the former came from middle class families and had either studied overseas (notably Hasan Di Tiro) or – like Zaini Abdullah and Husaini Hasan – had studied in universities in Medan, North Sumatera and Banda Aceh. In contrast, the commanders mostly had not completed high school, and some were even illiterate, but because of the skills they gained from the military training in Libya, they considered themselves to be the GAM military commanders.\(^{39}\)

\(^{36}\) T Sarjani, former GAM regional commander of Pidie district, interview with the author, Pidie, January 2015.
\(^{37}\) Idem.
\(^{38}\) Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
\(^{39}\) A group of three male GAM soldiers, interview with the author, Bireun, November 2014.
Acehnese nationalism during the armed struggle

Beside being influenced by the militaristic and hierarchical nature of the GAM organisational structure, the military bonding established during the war was also shaped by the ideological construction of Acehnese nationalism. Acehnese nationalism was central to the GAM ideology, and crucial in garnering wide civilian population support and hence legitimation of the political goal of independence for Aceh. The initial ideological construction of Acehnese nationalism had a profound impact on the esprit de corps or sense of comradeship within and across military ranks in the GAM. However, this nationalism was highly gendered.

Enloe (1989, 45) and Davis (1993, 623) each point out that nationalisms entail claims not only to a shared past, but also to a common future. Similarly, nationalisms construct both a sense of unity or ‘we-ness’ and of otherness (Enloe 1989, 61, Nagel 1998, 248). However, nationalisms are also gendered; ‘most women’s past experiences and strategies for the future are not made the basis of the nationalism they are urged to support. Rather, nationalism typically has sprung from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation, and masculinised hope’ (Enloe 1989, 44 and 46, see also Wieringa 2003). Thus, nationalism can provide seeds for confining women and their femininity to secondary status, as reproducers of traditional roles such as nurturing children and supporting husbands for nationalist honour (Nagel 1998: 253).

In the construction of Acehnese nationalism, Hasan Di Tiro’s role was central. He was the GAM intellectual in the conflict era who constructed the idea of Acehnese as a nation; the other GAM elites were supporters and followers of his idea. The idea of Acehnese nationalism constructed by Hasan Di Tiro drew on elements of a shared history; however, some of the elements of this historical past were also reconceived by him as a GAM political ideology to forge a separate Acehnese national identity, as the basis for the

40 As noted by other scholars, the GAM ideology shifted over time to adjust to its global and domestic political environment (Schulze, 2003, 2004, Thalang 2009, Sindre 2010). The GAM ideology shifted from nationalism to democracy in adjusting to the political environment as a result of the reformacy era in 1998. Nevertheless, this does not mean the GAM abandoned Acehnese nationalism; since this ideology was consistent with their claims to Acehnese independence (Schulze 2003, 246).

41 For a discussion of gender, nationalism and sexual politics in relation to Suharto’s New Order regime, see Wieringa 2003.
common destiny of an independent state of Aceh. The shared history of Acehnese nationalism constructed by Hasan Di Tiro consisted of three significant elements: the construction of the idea of an Acehnese nation, the glory of the Sultan, and Islam (Aspinall 2003, 18-23, Schulze 2004, 6-7).

Hasan Di Tiro specifically linked Acehnese nationalism to a certain set of ideas about the Acehnese nation or, in Acehnese terms, bangsa Aceh (Aceh nation) (Aspinall 2003; Schulze 2003, and 2004). The construction of the idea of an Acehnese nation was defined by the blood ties of a suku (ethnic group) (Schulze 2004, 7). This is seen in Hasan Di Tiro’s memoirs where he dwelt on the blood of the ancestors (blood denoting supreme sacrifice): ‘… memorise your history! It has been written, not by ink over the papers, but by your forefather's blood over every inch of our beautiful valleys and breath-taking heights’ (Tiro 1981, 69 in Aspinall 2003 18-19). In contrast, Hasan Di Tiro constructed the otherness of the Indonesian state as ‘Javanese colonialist’ and emphasised its cruelty: ‘the Javanese who have stolen our properties…have robbed us from our livelihood, … have abused the education of our children, … have exiled our leaders, … have put our people in chains of tyranny, poverty and neglect’ (Tiro 1976 in Schulze 2003, 246). This idea of the Acehnese nation was intended by Hasan Di Tiro to serve the future GAM political objective of forging a distinctive Acehnese national identity that is incompatible with that of Indonesia’s.

Besides seeking to establish a distinct national identity, the construction of the idea of a distinctive Acehnese nation also encouraged bonding as a military group, by setting up a binary logic between ‘us’ (the oppressed Acehnese) and ‘them’ (the Javanese oppressors), and accordingly between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ in relation to the conflict. This distinction between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ was profound as a tool of the GAM insurgency movement’s political objectives; however, it was always presented as the good men who protected the nation from the evil men who stole the nation’s resources. Thus, Acehnese nationalism entailed an ideal of manhood that appealed to the commanders and the male and female foot soldiers, which also impacted on their bonding as a group of GAM combatants. As a former GAM Sagoe Commander of Tengkup, Aceh Besar said:

We combatants never forgot the teachings of Hasan Di Tiro that we got in the jungle. The teaching, as understood by us, was not only about the history of
the great Sultan, it also transformed into a military doctrine that spurred our sense of Acehnese nationalism, our feelings about being *ke-acehan* (Acehnese). He emphasised we are *kaum laki-laki* or men of *bangsa* Aceh (Aceh nation) who need to go out to fight for our dignity, that had been undermined by the Javanese.42

The elite cultivated an image of the ideal national leader of the past as being personified in the Sultan.43 When Hasan Di Tiro first established the ASNLF (later GAM) and declared Aceh sovereign, he linked this to the act of the Sultan in making the 1819 treaty between Aceh and Britain in which Aceh was recognised as an independent state (Aspinall, 2003, 15-16 and Reid 2004, 302-303). Thus, Hasan Di Tiro claimed that the sovereignty of Aceh was established before Indonesia gained its independence from the Dutch in 1945. He stated that, as Aceh was not subsequently defeated by and did not surrender to the Dutch, the inclusion of Aceh into the Indonesian republic had no legal basis (Schulze 2004, 6). In his teachings in the early 1970s, he called for the Acehnese to value their ancestors and linked this to the establishment of a future independent Aceh:

> For several generations, the Acehnese had forgotten this glorious day [in 1819] altogether as if erased from their memories. What a shame. They did not know anything about it until I celebrated it for the first time in many generations, in New York, in 1973. My speech …was meant to be a clarion call for the Acehnese to rise again to honour their dead heroes and to take their place again among the free sovereign peoples of the world (cited in Reid 2004, 307).

This representation of Acehnese history led Hasan Di Tiro to assert that the best form of government for Aceh in the future was a sultanate – by which means he later positioned himself as the future head of state (*Wali Negara*) (Al Chaidar 1999, 148, Aspinall 2003, 28, footnote 12). The Sultan was not only cast as the ideal national leader, but also as the ideal man. Hasan Di Tiro not only claimed to have inherited from his grandfather the mandate to one day lead the Acenese, he sought as well to portray himself as similar to the

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42 Former GAM *Sagoe* Commander of Tengkup, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
43 In the Sultan Iskandar Muda period (1607-1636), Aceh gained political eminence in that the Sultan was able to control trade through the ports of Aceh and thereby exact tolls (Siegel 1969, 4).
Sultan in character.\(^4^4\) In other words, Hasan Di Tiro – and more broadly the GAM elite – strategically linked the ideal man, embodied historically to the Sultan, to the conformation of the man who should head Aceh in the future.

Islam played a vital role in the GAM struggle in that it was also constructed as an Acehnese Muslim revolt against the tyranny of the Javanese coloniser, and the independence struggle was portrayed by the leaders of the GAM as a reflection of jihad (holy war) (Aspinall 2007a, 253). The GAM leadership also cited the histories of relevant Islamic struggles led by the ulama (Islamic scholars), notably the holy war (perang sabil) against the Dutch and the Darul Islam resistance to the Sukarno regime era (Aspinal 2007a, 253-254). Thus, Islam was important in spurring men to be willing to sacrifice for the nation through death, according to the spirit of jihad or holy war. To spur men to be willing to sacrifice their lives, the spirit of jihad was instilled in them by, for example, the requirement that, in front of their commanders, the troops swear on the Qur’an to establish their commitment to the war. Upon doing so, they acquired a different status: they were now truly GAM combatants. Repeatedly, the former GAM combatants interviewed stated that they were instructed by their commanders to declare the seven oaths of the GAM combatant.\(^4^5\) Further, they stated this was effective in nurturing their full preparedness to fight and sacrifice their lives for the GAM cause.

Hasan Di Tiro did not target his brand of Acehnese nationalism directly to men alone. Nevertheless, men and women were expected to make different sacrifices for the nation, based on this ideological construct being pervaded by a binary logic of masculinity, functioning ‘as a resource for thought’, to value more highly masculine characteristics over feminine ones that are considered the opposite (Hutchings 2008, 30). Having this binary logic built into the ideology of Acehnese nationalism as a foundation of the GAM

\(^4^4\) According to Sulaiman (2000: 16 and 27), Hasan Di Tiro claimed that his grandfather, Tgk Chiek Di Tiro M Saman, had been given a mandate from the last Sultan (Sultan Mahmud Daud Syah) (1885-1891) to lead a revolt against the Dutch and to govern Aceh, and this mandate had been conveyed to his descendants. Based on this claim, Hasan Di Tiro later positioned himself in the GAM structure as Wali Negara (head of the state).

\(^4^5\)The seven oaths of GAM combatants are as follows: establish the God sovereignty (Islam); save and protect the Aceh nation (bangsa Aceh); teach the Acehnese and give them employment; sacrifice soul, blood, thought, and property for the Free Aceh Movement (GAM); uphold ‘the aksi makuta alam’ or state code; establish the star and moon flag as the GAM’s flag; develop diplomatic relations; and never receive any command, except from our nation (bangsa sendiri) and our leaders (pimpinan sendiri). Former GAM operational commander of Tengkup, Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
struggle had the effect of obscuring and devaluing women’s contribution to the military struggle and, in particular, meant they were denied recognition as combatants. This ideological definition has had implications for how, subsequently, many men have viewed women’s roles, contributions and sacrifice as different from – and less valuable than – those of their male comrades. Given how gendered the term ‘combatant’ is as used by the GAM ex-commanders, I apply ‘combatant’ not to the actual roles men and women performed during the conflict, but instead use it strictly as the ex-commanders do to denote those who, in their view, made the bravest, most valuable contribution to the conflict and thereby the cause of the GAM.

In summary, the hierarchical and militaristic nature of the GAM, and the construction of an idea of Acehnese nationalism – which stresses the importance of the sense of belonging to the bangsa Aceh (the nation) as one people and the spirit of jihad – was crucial for forging militaristic bonding between the commanders and male and female GAM soldiers. All of these elements were implicated in evaluations of men and women’s contributions and status during the armed conflict, through the recruitment process, military training, roles and tasks undertaken during the war, risks involved in undergoing those roles and tasks, and soldiers’ feelings of sacrifice for the nation.

Men’s roles, women’s roles and their status during the war

Recruitment, training, roles and tasks, risks, places and feelings of sacrifice for the nation during the conflict were all highly gendered. From the perspectives of the ex-commanders and male rank and file soldiers, the GAM-TNA (the Army of the State of Aceh) was properly a realm of men, and not of women. Men were the most targeted recruits of the GAM-TNA. A former advisor of the GAM military insurgency of Aceh Besar stresses the hyper-masculine culture of the GAM military institution. In his words:

If you asked what the GAM-TNA was, I could say that the GAM-TNA was designed primarily to fight the war, in Acehnese prang [war]. It was set up for a guerrilla war. The TNA was a very strict organisation. We needed young men who were brave and physically strong to bear guns and mentally disciplined to accept the chain of command structure. TNA was not a place for gay men [bencong]. I repeat, it was very strict, the military training was hard, even harder than that for the Kopasus
Some of the former commanders explained how they mostly sought to recruit male youth from their *gampong*. A former Passe District Commander explained:

During my tenure as a commander of Passe district, I was responsible for recruiting the *pemuda gampong* (young villagers) during the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement [CoHA] in 2002.\(^{47}\) It was not difficult to have new recruits from the Aceh villages where the DOM \[Daerah Operasi Militer/Military Operation Area\] was heavily engaged.\(^{48}\) They were mainly sons of our previous GAM soldiers who had died in battle. The *pemuda gampong* were easily approached in the *warung kopi* [coffee shops], *meunasah* [mosques] or sometimes they gathered in the *pos ronda* [small places used for community watch in villages].

We shared a story about the greatness of Aceh’s history, the cruelty of the Indonesian army, and the people who fought and died in *syahid* [martyr]. Sometimes we recruited men from among our relatives [cousins and nephews] who were granted permission to enter the GAM-TNA by their parents. Or sometimes also we recruited criminals that sought protection from the GAM-TNA. To avoid being captured by the Indonesian police, they ran to us and wanted to join as *tentra* [soldiers]. It was our duty to foster them to become soldiers of the GAM.\(^{49}\)

From the ex-commanders’ point of view, women soldiers were recruited for several reasons. First, in an emergency situation, when there was a shortage of men fighters, the GAM needed reserve soldiers and so women would replace men and perform as soldiers of the GAM. Second, the women’s recruitment was undertaken to appease the

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\(^{46}\) Former GAM military adviser for Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.

\(^{47}\) During the conflict, in 2002 Indonesian Government offered the GAM a local autonomy scheme as part of an initial agreement to end the conflict, but it collapsed in May 2003 as both parties could not reach agreement (Schulze 2003 263-265). GAM used this opportunity to recruit more soldiers from *gampong* and to expand its territory to other parts of Aceh Province, such as Central Aceh District, Bener Meriah District etc. (Schulze 2004, 17-18).

\(^{48}\) DOM, was the state security operation conducted by the Indonesian Army during the Suharto era, between 1989 and 1998, to crush the GAM insurgency movement (Schulze 2006a, 244-245).

\(^{49}\) Former GAM district commander for Passe, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
international audience, and for purposes of propaganda. The GAM long-term goal was to establish a modern state with a modern army; so it needed both men and women soldiers. As part of this process, the GAM supreme commander instructed every Sagoe (sub-district level or kecamatan) across Aceh Province to recruit at least 7-10 women. At the time of their recruitment, the women were between 15-22 years old, with most being still of school age.

The recruitment of women soldiers was done via existing GAM networks, either through relatives of the ex-commanders or male rank and file, or through village networks involving their friends or respected male elders; whom the Acehnese called keuchik (village head). For example, a female ex-soldier from a lower class peasant family in Blang Bintang sub-district of Aceh Besar was recruited through a locally respected village man, who was also acting as a GAM commander of Aceh Besar in her gampong. She maintained that she joined the GAM-TNA as she wanted to defend Aceh and free Acehnese women from Indonesian military oppression. According to her, ‘women should be brave and participate as soldiers to defend Aceh, as Acehnese men fighters do’. When asked how she was recruited, she responded:

Yes, Ayah Muni [Father Muni] asked me to join the GAM-TNA in Aceh Besar as, when he looked at my body, he commented that I am fit to be a GAM women soldier. I considered myself to be a tom-boy, my hair was short, my skin was dark and I wore a cap wherever I went. I was 16 years old and Ayah Muni asked permission from my father and mother and, after I convinced them, they agreed as Ayah Muni promised to bring me back once the training for the women was over. I went to the GAM camp with Ayah Muni and I was really happy as I saw many men were holding guns, but they showed respect to the women who were joining the armed soldiers.
A group of two female ex-soldiers from a gampong in Lam Glupang, Aceh Besar, joined the GAM as teenagers, when 17 and 18 years old. They also became involved in the GAM in pursuit of their intention to contribute to the struggle for the independence of Aceh. Their recruitment in the TNA was facilitated by their uncle who was also an acting senior GAM regional commander in Aceh Besar, T. Tanjura, also called Abu Sofyan. The experiences of other female ex-soldiers interviewed were more or less similar in that they were also recruited through GAM village networks.

The mode of the military training applied to men was seen by male foot soldiers as requiring attributes associated with manliness that simply could not apply to the women. A former operational commander of Teungkup, Aceh Besar, said that ‘jumping from the truck while it was running at around 60 km per hour, firing heavy automatic guns and climbing walls were a number of the tasks expected of male soldiers that were not comparable with the military training designed for women soldiers’. Similarly, Abu Razak, a former vice-supreme commander, said that ‘the military training for men was longer than women’s military training. Men’s military training ran for approximately six months whereas women for only three months. The training for men was targeted to make men ready for combat and living under harsh situations during the war. It was designed differently for women whose roles were mostly not about going to fight but doing intelligence and other support jobs in the gampong’. The military training scheme for women was set up differently in some regions in Aceh. However, in contrast to what the male ex-soldiers state above, the women interviewed reported the military training they underwent was not much different from that of the men’s. They emphasised the military training provided to them was very important for their pride as women soldiers. As a female GAM ex-soldier in Pidie Jaya District, said:

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55 A group of two former GAM female soldiers from Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, May 2016.
56 Former GAM operational commander from Tengkup, Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, May 2016.
57 Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
58 According to a group of two former GAM female soldiers, there were two big camps that concentrated on military training for women. The first training camp was in GimGim, Pidie District, in 1999, and the second in Sirron, Aceh Besar, in 2000-2001.
I was very pleased to be a women soldier as I could hold a gun like a man soldier who carries a gun in his hand. I never forgot it in my entire life. It was really amazing. As a woman, I could jump from the truck, creep in the bush and run while I was holding a gun. It was brave of me and I was excited that I could do it. I was a GAM soldier.\textsuperscript{59}

This women soldier did not participate subsequently in fighting during the war, but she was involved in service roles such as spying and logistics. Nevertheless, the training experience contributed to her sense that she had indeed qualified as a soldier. Most of the women ex-soldiers had been through similar training programs, however, there were some who said they never held guns but were taught how to line up and march the same as men soldiers. In these cases their training lasted just several weeks.\textsuperscript{60}

In times of conflict, gender roles tend to be disrupted, especially for young, unmarried women (Sylvester 2012, 493 and 498). But, as Toktas (2002, 34) also explains, ‘[w]hile gender roles may change during war’, men and women ‘maintain their status relatively’. Women may take on ‘male’ roles during the war, however, that does not mean they are accorded the same attributes as men or attain equal status with men. Lucas (1988, 172) observed in her study of the role of women in the Algerian Liberation Front Struggle that it was problematic to define who a fighter was during that war because, at the very least, men who did support roles such as carrying food to the mountains (with the high risk of being shot to die), were still recognised as fighters. But women exposed to the same level of risk by doing the same tasks, were seen to be ‘helping’ the men in their ‘traditional and nurturing’ roles. Similarly MacKenzie’s (2009) research into the Sierra Leone war revealed that, whenever the men were involved in support roles in the war – such as ‘porters, cleaners, domestic helps, or messengers’ – they were acknowledged to be soldiers. In contrast, when women did such activities they were not recognised as soldiers (MacKenzie 2009, 256). In short, it was being male that counted in qualifying as ‘a real combatant’, not the actual roles or tasks performed.

\textsuperscript{59} Former GAM female soldier, Lam Putu, District of Pidie Jaya, interview with the author, Pidie Jaya, November 2014.
\textsuperscript{60} A group of three former GAM female soldiers from Lam Putu, District of Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Aceh Besar, December 2014.
Most of male rank and file soldiers took a variety of roles during the war, ranging from fighting on the battlefield to doing some supporting, non-combat tasks such as intelligence services, informant and logistics delivery. Those who were involved in fighting maintained that a combat position was the core task of a GAM soldier. The ultimate test of being brave as soldiers was the moment of attack wherein every combatant should be prepared to fight in the battle, if necessary to death. In this context, an aspect of killing was important in defining who a GAM combatant was. This was because killing was perceived to require qualities of bravery and physical strength that are seen to be exclusively masculine and therefore entailed in men. A former GAM combatant for the Passe District, North Aceh, explained that, ‘once you became a combatant then you would face two things, killing or being killed. That was what I was told by my commanders when I first joined the GAM-TNA. We had to always be ready to deal with the enemy; the enemy would crush us or we crushed them’.62

Although not all men fought in the battle zone in Aceh, male soldiers were still considered to be in the mainstream of the GAM armed insurgency movement. Men who also did non-combat tasks were often still recognised as combatants. As a Sagoe commander in Lam no, Aceh Jaya district states,

A male in a non-combat position whose daily operation was dealing with spreading intelligence information in the gampong (village) was considered a GAM combatant. Others who did not fight, but helped the GAM to spy on the enemy, including those men who drove a van or small truck to deliver a whole lot of logistics from the local market to the GAM camps were still classified as GAM combatants.63

The quote above indicates that, whatever men did during the war, even if they performed similar ‘support’ roles to the women, they were still considered to be combatants. The women on the other hand were considered by the men to be non-combatants.

61 Former GAM soldier from Batee ilik District of Biruen, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
62 Former GAM male soldier from North Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
63 Former GAM Sagoe commander of Lam no District Aceh Jaya, interview with the author, Aceh Jaya, May 2016.
A Sagoe commander for Montasik sub-district for Aceh Besar, who had never been through military training with the GAM-TNA, nevertheless claimed that he and his group were considered mentally capable of undertaking the special roles given to the regional commander in Aceh Besar – to attack, ambush, kill and steal ammunition, guns and Indonesian military uniforms. He stated he was elected to become a Sagoe commander on account of his inherent bravery. He said:

I and my group - around 18 of us - never went through military training. Ah, for what purpose was the military training if the men who were trained were still cowards? I was like the Acehnese boys who are born like ducks, who have never been taught how to swim, but are in fact able to swim.  

Hence some men by virtue of their sex were considered 'natural' combatants. Whether trained or not, the qualities of a soldier were associated with men and men alone. The former regional commander then went on to cite instances of his own military prowess:

The bravery and toughness of the GAM-TNA soldiers in undertaking their roles during the war were tested. I myself, unfortunately, killed my own subordinates in one moment of an attack. I had no choice as our identity as the GAM was known by the enemy. So I climbed a wall and fired at whoever was in front of me. Eventually, we found three of our dead and several Indonesian soldiers.

Importantly, he claimed that ‘the situation we encountered during the war was not experienced by women soldiers as they were different. They were not suited to the guerrilla war and did not have the capacity to do battle like we [men] did’.  

Women’s roles in the nationalist struggle have been defined according to a masculinist logic that confines women to supportive, symbolic and traditional roles (Nagel 1998: 253).

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64 Former GAM Sagoe commander of Montasik, Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, May 2016.
65 Former GAM Sagoe commander of Montasik, Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, May 2016.
66 Idem.
As a *Sagoe* commander of Pidie said, ‘we needed brave men who mastered the tactics of guerrilla warfare, defeated the enemy, and treated weapons in their hands as if they were their own soul and body. This main attribute or character of the core soldiers who did fighting was lacking in women soldiers’. 67

Some female foot soldiers accepted and adhered to the differences in the division of labour and militaristic hierarchy they experienced in GAM. This meant they were not *treated* the same as their male soldier counterparts. They were never permitted to go to the battle zones and they could never be appointed as a GAM military commander. However, some of the former women soldiers interviewed in the study expressed different views regarding their roles in GAM, as elaborated further below.

After their training, the women soldiers’ roles tended to be varied. Some were assigned to be trainers of new recruits, both male and female. The others stayed in the *gampong* in support roles, helping men soldiers or their commanders to deliver secret intelligence information or delivering supplies. Some others married male soldiers and became camp followers, accompanying their husbands in the jungle as they moved from camp to camp. 68 But others were not given any tasks by their commanders and were sent back to their families and returned to school or helped their parents.

Women soldiers were institutionally part of the GAM military force, but according to some ex-commanders and former male soldiers, most days they stayed in the *gampong,* only occasionally doing supporting jobs such as message delivery or spying when asked to by their commanders. A regional commander for West Aceh maintained that ‘after being given military training, the women were dispersed and returned to their families in *gampong.* They just did their support jobs in the *gampong,* as needed by the regional commander’. 69 Or ‘if the women stayed with us in the camps, they followed their married husbands to accompany them as the camp followers’. 70 Thus, during the war, both commanders and male rank and file soldiers equated the women with families, either as a

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67 Former GAM *Sagoe* commander of Pidie district, interview with the author, Pidie, May 2016.  
68 Former GAM *Sagoe* commander of Nagan Raya District, West Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.  
69 Idem.  
70 Idem.
camp follower, a housewife supporting their husband (a male combatant) in the jungle, or as supporters of the male soldiers by staying with their families while doing active roles as a spy or intelligence agent in the gampong (village).

Although some of the women interviewed had risked their lives doing dangerous tasks, significantly none of the tasks undertaken by the women was seen by their male counterparts to have involved attributes of masculinity - bravery, strengths and violence. A former female GAM soldier from Aceh Besar told the researcher that she was captured by the Indonesian army and was enslaved for several months, doing household things like cooking, washing and cleaning at the Indonesian soldiers’ camp near her gampong. She was only released by the Indonesian army because they could not prove that she was a member of the GAM. Nevertheless, she had undertaken a dangerous job in managing to steal medicine from the Indonesian soldiers’ camp and successfully delivering it to the male GAM soldiers who patrolled in her gampong.71 The same happened to another former GAM female soldier from the same district. By riding a motorbike, she was successful in transporting hand grenades and some cash in her bag from Banda Aceh to Aceh Besar and delivering them to her commander once she arrived.72 The women reported that neither the risk involved nor their bravery was recognised by either of their commanders or their male comrades.

In fact, the women expressed the view that they felt there was no difference between male and female soldiers, as both had faced the same risks of being killed by the enemy. Some of the women ex-soldiers in Lam Lepung, Aceh Besar District, expressed this position: ‘If men had a chance to be captured, tortured and killed by the enemy, the women would experience the same things and worse, with some having been captured and raped, tortured and jailed’.73 What is more, the commanders relied on the women soldiers for their own survival. A former female soldier for Aceh Besar maintained that a couple months before she was arrested by the Indonesian Police, she managed to hide her commander along with three male GAM soldiers in a neighbour’s house in her gampong. In her words:

71 Former GAM female soldier from Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
72 Former GAM female soldier from Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
73 A group of three former GAM female soldiers from Lam Putu, District of Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Aceh Besar, December 2014.
During the war, commanders and male soldiers were seen as active GAM combatants, but remember they could not survive unless we women soldiers helped them to do so. T Sukri was our commander in Aceh Besar. One day he visited my cousin’s house, along with three GAM male soldiers. I really felt it was unsafe for them to stay in my cousin’s house and I felt unsafe too. I talked to nearby neighbours and asked for help so T Sukri and the three GAM soldiers could spend a night in his house. The neighbour agreed to provide temporary shelter, just for that night.

In the morning, three Indonesian soldiers, along with a big herding dog, were suddenly in front of my cousin’s house and banging on the door, asking where I was. I was very nervous when they came and showed a photograph of me with black head scarf marching in my Pasukan Inong Balee. But at the time, lucky me, I was not wearing a head scarf so they could not recognise me clearly. I said that I don’t know who the girl they were looking for was and my cousin also convinced the Indonesian soldiers that we did not know who she is. I felt my heart drop and my mind was on T Sukri and the three men in the neighbour’s house. Oh my goodness, if the soldiers knew, they would kill T Sukri along with the three male GAM soldiers. At last, all of us were safe. I briefly packed my belongings and told T Sukri and the other three men to quickly move to the safest area.\footnote{Former GAM female soldier, Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.}

In short, while the men always foregrounded the differences in the war-time roles of the \textit{orang yang berprang} (combatants) and the \textit{orang yang tidak berprang} (non-combatants), the women emphasised the similarities between the men and the women in terms of the danger of being killed by the enemy. This was felt particularly when the women had risked their lives to ensure the survival of male combatants.

A group of female ex-soldiers from Pidie Jaya district interviewed in the study expressed their resulting disappointment with their commanders and male comrades. The leader of the group, who was a former female trainer in Tepin Raya, Pidie Jaya District, said that:
It was fine for us if the commanders claimed that we as women soldiers did only support tasks in the *gampong* while men were fighting in the war. But how could they survive in the jungle without us? They would have died of starvation. We as women soldiers risked our lives in passing Indonesian military posts and checkpoints to deliver ready-made food to the GAM camps. In this situation, it was possible for us to have been captured by the Indonesian army. But, thanks to Allah Almighty, we were spared.

They should never underestimate the women’s contributions during the war. If the men had a chance to die, I think the women did too. What was different? Holding the guns in the jungle and delivering food to the camp while being stared at by the enemy. Both risked being killed by the Indonesian army.\(^75\)

Significantly, the male soldiers interviewed highlighted also their preparedness to risk being killed, but in so doing they tended to talk with less bravado in admitting their resulting fears. That which made them brave in the face of fear was their sense of sacrificing their lives for the nation. As a male GAM soldier from Bireun District said:

> for me, being a devoted GAM soldier, carrying a gun and being involved in the fighting were not enough. Could you imagine how many GAM soldiers at the time of battle ran away when they saw the enemy as they were scared to death. If your feeling of sacrifice for the nation was strong in your heart, you would never be scared of your enemy. You would not even be scared dying on the battlefield.\(^76\)

Another male GAM soldier said:

> … during my time at the battlefront, I saw my comrade next to me get shot and be about to die. I was really shocked, as it was the first time I saw someone dying. I wanted to save him and run away from the battle. But I remembered that I was a

\(^{75}\) Former GAM female soldier from district of Pidie, interview with the author, Pidie, November 2014.
\(^{76}\) Former GAM male soldier from Batailik District of Bireun, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, December 2014.
GAM soldier and I had promised to myself and to my nation that I would never stop fighting until I died myself.77

In the case of women ex-soldiers, the feeling of sacrifice for the bangsa Aceh (the Aceh nation) was also felt. The women believe that they also sacrificed themselves for the nation. The pain and hardship they endured were never forgotten by them. As a former female GAM soldier said:

During the war, I was captured, tortured and jailed for a year. But I felt no regret. Because I remembered our great commander, T Abdullah Syafei78. He said to me during my inauguration ceremony as a GAM soldier that we should never forget the blood of our fathers who fought and defended this land, we should not forget them. “Remember, the struggle begins for you as the rencong (Acehnese traditional weapon) is now in your hand.” I realised after he said that tears came up from my eyes and I really felt like a GAM soldier who is ready to devote their life for Aceh. I felt really ready for whatever it takes.79

The same feeling of sacrifice for the nation was also experienced by a former GAM female soldier from Aceh Besar. She was also captured during the war but subsequently released as the police could not prove that she was a GAM member. She felt so proud at being a GAM soldier who risked her life by smuggling ammunition and small arms. In her words:

During the armed struggle, I was captured by police officers in Banda Aceh during a raid but thank goodness I was released as they did not have sufficient evidence to prove that I was in the GAM. That was difficult as I had to stay three nights behind bars. But I was really glad that I could do something for my people. I will never forget the tasks I did. I was successful in delivering ammunition and two hands guns I concealed in fruit and vegetable baskets. I was proud being a soldier of the GAM.80

77 Former GAM male soldier from Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
78 T Abdullah Syafei was a former GAM supreme commander who died during the war in 2002. He was replaced by Muzakir Manaf in the same year (see Schulze 2004, 15).
79 Former GAM female soldier from Lam Putu, District of Pidie Jaya, Aceh, interview with the author, Pidie Jaya, November 2014, emphasis added.
80 Former GAM female soldier for Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
The women’s feelings of sacrifice for the Acehnese nation were not recognised by their commanders and male counterparts. When asked about how the women contributed to the war, most of the ex-commanders interviewed recognised the importance of the women’s involvement in GAM as supporting soldiers in the gampong, but they did not acknowledge the dangers involved in the tasks that the women undertook. This happened because the war itself, as a place of struggle, was never detached from the masculinist logic that strongly upheld men and masculinity over women and femininity. Through the masculinisation of sacrifice, women’s sacrifice was always devalued and unseen.

Masculinist logic entails the logic of contrast and difference, by which women soldiers were perceived by their commanders and male comrades to be different from men in their recruitment, training, roles, and feeling of sacrifice. But the logic also entailed contradictions.

As already explained, central to the military bonding was the sense of having participated in battle. Significantly, the commanders always declared they were orang yang berprang (combatants), but according to rank and file troops, this was not always the case. An ex-combatant from Batee ilik District of Bireun explained bluntly:

…”what Acehnese people in general heard about the GAM commanders during the war was not the same as what we the troops experienced in reality. People might imagine that the commanders fought on the front line, leading their troops into the battle zone, like T Umar our great Acehnese hero did during the Dutch war. But this was not the case in the GAM-TNA. In fact, we never knew our chief commanders during the war as their identities were concealed and they were under extra protection from their special troops. But I knew what they mostly did during the war. They were just involved in secret negotiations with the Indonesian army. You know, in fact, the commanders fooled the GAM soldiers. The chief commanders did not fight, but it was us, the troops who fought on the battlefield.81

A binary masculinist logic applied also to perceptions of the differences between the gampong (villages) and the hills, and the connections between the gampong and women.

81 Former GAM soldier from Batee ilik District, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
As a Sagoe commander for Sakti, Pidie District, said: ‘Yes, we needed the women to do non-combat tasks like logistics in the gampong, collecting intelligence information to support the men. That’s it. Indeed the women helped to do these things in the gampong. We [men] were different, especially those of us who did combat (beprang) and mostly stayed in the mountains and fought in the battle zone’. In fact, however, the differences were not always as great as he imagined; as some men interviewed reported spending quite a lot of time in their village, as they could not stay far away from their families. For example, a former GAM Sagoe commander told the story of how he moved back and forth to the nearby mountain in Sagoe Pidie Jaya to see his family and relatives.

During the war I was still 18. My area was in Tepin Raya, at the back of my village (gampong). It was surrounded by hills in which the tentra (soldiers) of the GAM were staying. It did not bother me that I could spend sometimes a week with my parents at home. The people in the gampong already knew that I was tentra GAM but they respected me and never disclosed my identity to the Indonesian army who patrolled in my gampong. Could you imagine, I even drank coffee and enjoyed a cigarette in a coffee shop without any fear of being captured by the Indonesian soldiers. I could not stay away from my family and my people in the gampong.

One of the GAM former Sagoe commanders even reported he had descended from the hills to celebrate his wedding ceremony during the war. A former Sagoe Commander in Aceh Besar, he revealed that he had managed to marry his girlfriend in his gampong while he was on duty. He said:

The war was ridiculous in the sense that it was scary but I had fun as well. I was a GAM commander in my Sagoe here in Aceh Besar. I remembered that the fasting month of Ramadhan was close and I was 24 when I decided to marry my girlfriend in the gampong. I approached her family and also my family, sometimes going back and forth from the gampong to the hills. Thank goodness the wedding succeeded and my girlfriend was very happy.

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82 Former GAM sagoe commander Sakti, Pidie District, interview with the author, Pidie, November 2014.
83 Former GAM sagoe commander Tepin Raya, District of Pidie Jaya, interview with the author, Pidie Jaya, November 2014.
84 Former GAM Sagoe commander Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh. April 2016.
All these examples indicate how the binary masculinist logic runs up against the facts as well as shaping them. What the ex-commanders said was that they and the male soldiers were always performing the core tasks as *orang berprang* (combatants) during the war while the women soldiers stayed in the *gampong* as *orang yang tidak berprang* (non-combatants). Yet, as we have seen from the quotes above, in fact the commanders did not necessarily perform significant combatant roles, and male combatants also spent time in their *gampong* with their families; while both the commanders and male rank and file relied on women soldiers to survive, such as by being protected from the Indonesian army’s raids by the women.

In summary, through their recruitment, training, roles and tasks, and associated risks and feeling of sacrifice, both male and female soldiers strengthened their sense of pride, belonging, unity, commitment to the GAM as a military force. The women’s contribution and status tended to be devalued and unseen by the GAM men; nevertheless it is clear that they experienced similar dangers and feelings of sacrifice during the conflict as their male counterparts. However, the bonds established between the commanders and their rank and file soldiers in the GAM were not entirely derived from the experiences of battle. These bonds were not completed unless fused with political economy aspects of the relationships between the commanders and their troops. This is explained below.

**The ex-commanders’ capacity to mobilise economic resources to rank and file soldiers**

The war in Aceh caused loss of civilian and soldier lives and destroyed public infrastructures, such as schools, bridges and houses. But for the GAM-TNA, armed conflict was not just a matter of defeating the Indonesian TNI and the police forces, rather it entailed material dimensions as a pivotal facet of surviving economically (Schulze 2004; Aspinall 2009; Sindre 2010). Besides operating as a guerrilla movement, the GAM TNA also functioned as a money-making institution, through collecting illegal taxes from local companies, civil servants and small traders, and other criminal activities such as protection rackets, drug dealers and illegal logging. (Aspinall 2009, 6-7). Regional commanders were in a position to distribute some of these resources to their soldiers. Hence, they took on gendered ‘father-figure’ roles (in the soldiers’ terms *Bapak*). Thus, the GAM military
functioned as an important supporter of the men’s positions as the main breadwinners of their households.85

A Sagoe commander for Nagan Raya, West Aceh, was able to manage funds through taxing the local people (pajak naggroe). The money he collected with his group was used to purchase weaponry, as well as to support the troops’ daily needs and even, on occasions, for cash payments to his troops.86 In his words:

In the armed conflict era, my rank was a Sagoe commander of Naga Raya, West Aceh. You can ask the Nagan Raya people you meet who I was. I was very famous at the time. I had around 150 foot soldiers under my command. They were all very loyal to me and did not want to make trouble with me. I was very tough and strict with my soldiers. To survive economically, I collected taxes from people close to our camp in Nagan Raya. It was a decision of our central command that we were allowed to tax the local people. The money that we collected from the locals was used to support our combat needs, such as buying guns and ammunition. But I could manage also to support my troops’ daily expenses for food, cigarettes, coffee. Furthermore, in particular, the moment when the fundraising reached its highest peak, I also could support my troops with cash payments. At that time I managed to transfer around 200 million rupiahs to support the operational budget of our supreme commander [Muzakir Manaf] as well.87

For young village men and women, it was honourable and patriotic if they joined the GAM military group, but as well, becoming a GAM soldier held the promise of better economic outcomes for them. For the men, involvement in the GAM offered the chance to fulfill their breadwinner role in that they could bring money home to their families.88 As mentioned by a male ex-soldier from Passe District North Aceh, ‘any means to survive economically, such as selling drugs (marijuana), buying ammunition and guns from the TNI, taxing businesses, civil servants and petty traders were normal during the war, even

85 During my interviews with the women ex-soldiers, none said they had received any of these resources.
86 Former GAM Sagoe commander of Nagan Raya West Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.
87 Idem.
88 A group of three former GAM soldiers from district of Bireun, interview with the author, Bireun, November 2014.
selling *babi* [pigs], was *halal* [legal]'.

A former GAM soldier for Passe District, North Aceh often received a weekly salary to support his living costs from the TNA.

I was involved in the TNA as a GAM soldier in Passe District, North Aceh, where the business area was located. PT Arun Gas was our targeted company. Through taxing this company we got money. Every week, besides food, a cigarette given by my commander, I also received money as my weekly salary. As I was still young and single, the money I got I used to support my daily expenses and I could even support my parents in the *gampong*. 90

During the war, the GAM commanders also promised to deliver future economic prosperity and employment for its members. As a former GAM soldier for Bate ilik, District Birueun said in an interview, we were told ‘once Aceh gained independence from the Indonesia, every Aceh man would not find it difficult to find employment as jobs would be plentiful as Aceh would be rich, Aceh could build factories in the name of GAM-TNA. Even GAM members who were unemployed were told that the Aceh state would be able to support their welfare needs’. 91

In the case of the women soldiers, because they were mostly recruited at a younger age (between 16-22 years) as reserve soldiers, and they were designated to do supporting jobs in *gampong* (villages), the women’s economic needs were perceived differently from those of their male comrades by their commanders. The women soldiers’ economic survival depended on their families, especially their fathers. Hence, the women soldiers did not receive the cash payments that some male rank and file soldiers did during the conflict. But their commanders also promised them economic benefits in the future. The women reported they were told they would be rewarded with work in an office, or as women police officers and gain a monthly salary once the GAM won the war and established a modern state in Aceh. For example, two women former soldiers in Tengkup,

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89 Former GAM soldier for Passe District, North Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
90 Idem.
91 Former GAM soldier from Bata ilik District, Bireeun, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
Aceh Besar, told the story of how their commander promised them a job once Aceh had gained independence.

For me entering the GAM-TNA was fun. My commanders said to me, women soldiers who joined the GAM would be recruited into the Aceh State Women Police Force. Once the GAM gains independence and became a state, the GAM would provide an office job, monthly salary for the women soldiers. I was really interested in what the commanders said and hoped that I would go to an office and bring my salary home for my family.92

In short, during the conflict era, the commanders’ capacity to mobilise the economic resources to fulfil their rank and file soldiers’ economic expectations was of benefit to the male soldiers and, as a result, built up the male soldiers’ social identity and bonding as a group of ‘warriors’ or GAM men combatants. However, the women soldiers did not receive any financial benefits; they were only promised some future employment.

Conclusion

The hierarchical, militaristic command structure of the GAM, the ideological construction of the Acehnese nationalism, and the commanders’ capacity to organise and distribute economic resources to their troops were all crucial factors in generating military bonding and a resulting sense of unity between the commanders and their male and female foot soldiers of the GAM-TNA. However, as this chapter has shown, these processes were all highly gendered.

The binary logic of masculinity worked in two respects. One, it shapes the roles and tasks that men and women undertook in the GAM, such that the women tended to perform non-combatant roles, ones that did not require their participation in direct fighting. Importantly, the division of roles and tasks was gendered, but not strictly so; as men also avoided combatant roles in some instances for a variety of reasons. Thus, two, the binary of gender difference worked most strongly in relation to the perceived contributions of men and women with respect to judgements about their bravery, suffering and sacrifice –

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92 Former GAM female soldier from Tengkup, Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Aceh Besar, November 2014.
all attributes considered to be necessarily masculine. This masculinisation of roles and
sacrifice rendered the women soldiers invisible, in the sense that their risks in being
involved in the GAM and their resultant contributions during the war were undervalued by
both the commanders and male rank and file. The contradictions involved were revealed
starkly when considering how the gender differences in roles, tasks and locations were in
fact not as great as claimed by the commanders. Indeed, as shown in this chapter,
commanders themselves were not always involved in combat; they often went back and
forth to their gampong to visit and be with their families and, most importantly, sometimes
relied on women soldiers for survival.

All of these elements of military bonding forged in GAM during the conflict stage were
important for the ex-commanders, both in providing a given context and an ideological
power resource for the re-establishment of gendered power relations in the peace-building
and demiliarisation processes. These matters are the subject of the following chapter.
Chapter 4

Peacebuilding, Demilitarisation and Reintegration of the GAM Ex-Soldiers in the Post-Conflict Period

Introduction

This chapter elaborates on the post-conflict peace agreement process and how unintended consequences of key elements of the demilitarisation package enabled a process of remilitarisation by the GAM ex-commanders. Importantly, the peace process was designed to address security concerns. These security concerns were clearly stated in the MOU Helsinki but were also reflected in the international peacebuilding template that was applied – disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). In the UN’s terms, DDR seeks to ‘deal with the post-conflict security problem that arises when ex-combatants are left without a livelihood or support networks, other than their former comrades, during the vital transition period from conflict to peace development’ (cited in Barron 2007, 6). The security objective here was to avoid the former GAM soldiers relapsing into armed conflict. However, in this chapter, I argue that the 2005 Helsinki MOU decision to demilitarise Aceh through the handover of GAM weapons, the disbandment of its military organisation and reabsorption of former soldiers into civilian life has resulted in an unintended process of remilitarisation.

In this study, remilitarisation does not refer to the re-establishment of a robust military presence of the kind that Aceh experienced during the protracted conflict. Rather, remilitarisation refers to the ‘step-by-step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend on for its well-being on militaristic ideas’ (Enloe 2000, 3). Remilitarisation, in the specific context of post-conflict Aceh, has centred on the reapplication of a set of militaristic ideas or ideology that is highly gendered – emphasising strong comradeship, the special, superior status of combatants, a hierarchical military-type command structure and, critically, hegemonic militarised masculinities, all of which well suited the interests of the GAM ex-commanders’ group. Despite the demobilisation of the GAM military forces, these ideas remained intact in the post-conflict environment as an important ideological resource for
the reconstitution of the ex-commanders’ power and authority, as reflected in how the KPA or the Aceh Transition Commission operates as a new GAM organisation. As the peace process provided more political and economic opportunities to the GAM leadership, remilitarisation functioned as a plausible means and also a strategic ideological construction to enable the GAM ex-commanders to contest access to political institutions and economic power resources. This ideological construction was critical for the GAM ex-commanders, as it provided a pathway to gain support and legitimacy to access political and economic power resources.

This process of remilitarisation has resulted in inequality of access to economic resources. Through the KPA, the ex-commanders have become a new local political and economic elite with access to political office and the associated ability to accumulate economic resources. By contrast, most male and female rank and file ex-soldiers have experienced economic hardship. This has caused new conflicts to erupt within the KPA and among rank and file ex-soldiers. As a result of the grading system imposed in the KPA, some male rank and file retained military status as ‘combatants’ but were unrecognised and were excluded from access to economic resources and the elite ex-commanders’ business projects. Hence some excluded male ex-soldiers have articulated their grievances through another kind of collective violence, including criminal activities such as kidnapping, killing and illegal drugs dealing. Meanwhile, no female ex-soldier has received any formal reintegration funds; and this has caused some to express disappointment and anger over their abandonment by ex-commanders. Again, it will be argued that gender processes valuing men and masculinity associated with guns, including the retained military status and the material aspect of men’s breadwinner status that spread unequally among male ex-soldiers, are key sources of new inequalities and conflict in the period since the peace agreement was negotiated.

To explain how peacebuilding and demilitarisation operated in post-conflict Aceh, the chapter begins by elaborating on key elements of the formal demilitarisation process:

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93 WHO defines violence as ‘the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development, or deprivation’. Collective violence refers to ‘violence committed by larger groups of individuals and can be subdivided into social, political and economic violence’ (http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en).
disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, and how they failed. Subsequently, the chapter explains how the reintegration of the GAM ex-soldiers works under the reconstituted GAM military command structure.

**Keys facets of demilitarisation in Aceh**

Whereas peacekeeping refers to military interventions to end armed conflict or to control agreement processes between conflicting parties (Jenkins 2013, 20), peacebuilding ‘involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacity at all levels for conflict management and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development’ (UN 2012, 1). The World Bank (1998, 4) conceptualised the same measures as ‘reconstruction’, defined as: ‘to facilitate the transition to sustainable peace after hostilities have ceased and to support economic and social development’. Accordingly, ‘it is useful to see peacebuilding as a broader policy framework that strengthens the synergy among the related efforts of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, recovery and development, as part of a collective and sustained effort to build lasting peace’ (UN 2012, 1). One aspect of the peacebuilding processes that focuses on the security issues is these days widely known as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) (Porto et al. 2008, 9). Though DDR can cover more comprehensive efforts such as civil society and good governance arrangements, and convert human, financial and productive resources from military to civilian purposes, it focuses strongly on the traditional security dimensions of peacebuilding (Porto et al. 2008, 12-14, Lamb 2000). 94 Hence in this study, the term demilitarisation or DDR refers to an aspect of the official traditional security dimension of peacebuilding.

Aceh’s peacebuilding was implemented under the 2005 Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MOU Helsinki). It is a peace agreement aiming at concluding the 30 years armed conflict. It was signed by the Indonesian government and the GAM on 15 August 2005, having been subject to international mediation led by Martti Ahtisaari, a former Finish President. The MOU Helsinki peace arrangement was facilitated by the Crisis Management Initiative, an international NGO which focuses on international diplomacy and conflict resolution established and was headed by Martti Ahtisaari himself, and

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94 ‘Traditional security’ refers to ‘security based up on (primarily military) power’; It focuses on state and military as the referent (Newman 2001, 240).
funded by the European Union (Aspinall 2005, Braud and Grevi 2005, Schulze, 2007). Nevertheless, the MOU Helsinki was based mostly on an international template that was then commonly arranged when UN security forces engaged in peacebuilding operations (Barron 2007, 6-7).

As an agreed package of peacebuilding, the MOU Helsinki was comprehensive, since it covered many areas of reconstruction; ranging from security, international monitoring and human rights to social, political and economic governance (MOU Helsinki, 2005). In other words, the MOU Helsinki adopted broad and comprehensive strategies to recover and rebuild Aceh, including both security aspects and social, political and economic issues. Under the security clause, the MOU Helsinki covered the three basic technical elements of demilitarisation or DDR (clause 4 MOU Helsinki 2005).

To implement the demilitarisation process, the MOU mandated the establishment of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM). The AMM is an international third party responsible for monitoring the process of the demilitarisation package, which included the disarmament of the GAM weapons, redeployment of non-organic TNI and the police, demobilisation of the GAM organisation, and the reintegration of former GAM soldiers (Clause 5 MOU Helsinki 2005 and see Schulze 2007, 7).95 The AMM also functioned to oversee the human rights situation as well as legislative reform, ruling on the dispute mechanisms in amnesty cases, including investigating violations of the agreement (Clause 5, MOU Helsinki 2005). The AMM had to complete its tasks between September 2005 and December 2006 (Schulze 2007, 1).

The AMM head was directly accountable to the Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union, Javier Solana (Schulze 2007, 8). In performing its tasks, the AMM was assisted by the EU and another five ASEAN countries: Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Singapore (clause 5 MOU Helsinki 2005; Schulze 2007). In implementing the demilitarisation process, besides AMM involvement which acted as the third party, the MOU also stated the role of the Indonesian government and the GAM. In the process, each established new institutions for this purpose. The Indonesian government set up the

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95 The term non-organic refers to ‘centrally as opposed to locally recruited and deployed (organic) military and police forces’ (Schulze 2007, 14).
BRA (Badan Reintegrasi Aceh or the Aceh Reintegration Board) whilst the GAM established a Council, the Majelis, and the KPA, the Aceh Transition Commission. The priority part of the demilitarisation process, to be implemented immediately, was the creation of a peaceful environment through disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of the GAM military soldiers.

**a. Disarmament**

The first key element of demilitarisation was the disarmament phase. As agreed by both parties to the MOU, the number of GAM weapons to be collected and destroyed by the AMM team was 840; and this process was to be finished by the end of December 2006 (MOU Helsinki 2005). Disarmament took four phases to be complete. In the initial stage, in September 2005, the team collected 279 GAM weapons, including 300 rounds of ammunition and a grenade launcher (Schulze 2007, 12). However, of 279 guns, only 243 were accepted by the AMM.96 The second phase was implemented one month later and resulted in a further 291 weapons being obtained from the GAM ex-soldiers, 233 of which were eligible to be accepted by the AMM. In the third stage, the number of weapons collected was 222, whereas in the final stage in December 2005, the AMM accepted 142 arms. This brought the total to 840 weapons being successfully publicly dismantled and destroyed, exactly in accordance with the number stipulated in the MOU’s clause 4.3 (Schulze 2007, 14).

In the disarming phase, both the Indonesian government and the GAM adhered to the peace agreement, even though the 840 guns was known to be less than the number of weapons in the GAM’s possession. In fact, by sticking to the letter of the MOU, both parties had allowed for many guns to remain. After the 2004 tsunami, the TNI estimated that the GAM had an arsenal of 1,400 weapons (Schulze 2007, 14).97 Regarding this, Iskandar Hasan, Chief Regional Police of Aceh Province, maintained that in 2012 there were approximately between 800 and 1,000 illegal weapons still in circulation around

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96 As stated by Schulze (2007, 12), ‘in order to qualify for acceptance, weapons had to have a steel barrel, a steel chamber and be capable of firing lethal ordnance’. Commonly in disarmament processes, after guns are handed in to the international agency combatants can register to receive reintegration funds. However, in Aceh, this practice was not followed as a criterion for reintegration fund eligibility (see ICG 2005a).

97 It is not known if weapons were lost during the tsunami and, if they were, how many.
Aceh (Viva 2012). Another source claimed that more than 5,000 firearms remained in Aceh at that time (The Jakarta Post 2012). Indeed, as stated in the AMM monitoring report, shooting incidents occurred when the team was transporting the guns to the collection areas (Schulze 2007, 13).

Although the peace agreement had been in operation for a decade when fieldwork for this thesis was conducted, several male rank and file ex-soldiers and low level former commanders retained their weapons. For instance, a group of male rank and file soldiers interviewed in Biruen District kept the guns in secret spots in their villages. One of them said: ‘Yes, the MOU peace agreement has concluded the armed conflict with the Indonesian state, but if our future economic condition never improves, remember, guns that we planted will never decay. They still can be used to fight with the Indonesian state or when our commander instructs to raise them again, we are ready’. 98

Further research is needed to answer the question as to why the GAM male soldiers still kept their guns, but from the interviews, it is likely there were at least two reasons. First, as just mentioned, some interviewees spoke of the need to be prepared for possible future conflict – and hence of an ongoing need to be armed. With regard to this point, as a former GAM operational commander stated, both the TNI and GAM knew how to buy and sell weapons:

    No one can guarantee the armed conflict in Aceh was over. We did not know. … Although now it has been ten years since the MOU was signed and guns have been handed over to the AMM, in fact, GAM ex-soldiers still possess guns. They know how to get access to more weapons as well, either through the black market somewhere along the sea borders or they buy from TNI.99

This former GAM commander is sceptical that the armed conflict has ended forever, and moreover believes that both the TNI and the GAM are the main ‘players’ that could still trigger another armed conflict in Aceh. In this context, he further stated there were economic interests involved:

98 A group of three former GAM male ex-soldiers from Bireun District, interview with the author, Bireun, November 2014.
99 Former GAM operational commander for Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.
During the war, both the TNI and GAM used guns to kill each other. But guns were also used by both parties to increase their economic means. For the TNI, with their low wages, they sold guns to GAM to augment their incomes. Whilst, for the GAM, guns were used to collect money through intimidating people, kidnapping etcetera. Look, both of them never escaped from guns. I think in the post-conflict era, there is continuity. Guns can still be used both by the TNI to keep their business and also guns can be used by former GAM soldiers to survive economically by committing crimes. If this is the case [refers to guns circulations triggered by the TNI and the GAM], who knows whether the guns can be used again to provoke another armed conflict in Aceh.\textsuperscript{100}

The second reason why former GAM male soldiers still retained their weapons was that they wanted guns for their own protection. The former commander continued to say that:

\textit{Look! we cannot deny that in the post-conflict situation some ex-soldiers have fallen into crimes involving guns. You can see how some criminal activities such as robbery and kidnapping have involved ex-combatants. Even when some GAM ex-soldiers have disputes with each other, for instance about borrowing money, they use guns to solve their problem. Hence, for the GAM ex-soldiers guns are important for their personal protection.}

The researcher: Are you still keeping guns?

The former commander: If you want to see them, I can bring you to my home. I still keep around 12 guns with me at home in my village.

The researcher: I trust you.\textsuperscript{101}

In another post-conflict region, in South Africa, Maringira (2015, 75) observed that the construction of the male identity of combatants was associated with the possession of guns

\textsuperscript{100} Idem.
\textsuperscript{101} Idem.
and the ability to use them. Similarly, in her observations of the DDR program in Columbia, Theidon (2009, 3-5), concluded that the program has sustained the images and practice of militarised masculinity that resulted in the maintenance of the social structure and ideology that linked guns, violence and men’s aggressiveness in post-conflict Columbia.

In the immediate post-conflict environment, many Acehnese experienced gun-related cases of violence and crime committed by the GAM ex-soldiers, indicating the failures of the formal disarmament program (Scarpello 2008, Barron 2009, Anderson 2013). This shows that, whilst conventional conflict did cease, other forms of violent conflict have remained and emerged. Demilitarisation, in the form of disarmament or the decommissioning of the GAM firearms, was little more than the symbolic success of the peace agreement; and ongoing gun possession has triggered other conflicts in the form of threats, violence, and crime committed by militarised ex-soldiers. This is an element of remilitarisation in the civilian context, and is an important dimension of the ideological construction of militarised masculinities.

**b. Demobilisation**

The second crucial key element of the DDR process was demobilisation. It involved the reduction in the number of both security forces of the Indonesia state – the TNI and the Police – via their withdrawal from Aceh, and the disbandment of GAM’s military wing.

In 2003, the total number of Indonesian military and police forces deployed to conduct the military campaign in Aceh to combat the separatist rebel movement was estimated at about 58,000 (Schulze 2006a, 247). Whereas during the conflict the Indonesian military and police were engaged in counterinsurgency, in the post-conflict period their core task was to maintain peace, law and order in Aceh. The redeployment process was divided into four stages, and was conducted between September and December 2005 (MOU Helsinki 2005). In that period, a total of 5,791 police and 25,890 military troops were withdrawn from Aceh (Schulze 2007, 15). To maintain security and law and order after the armed conflict, the total number of troops and police remaining in post-conflict Aceh was 23,800, composed of 14,000 troops and 9,100 police (MOU Helsinki 2005).
details in the MOU as to how this number of police and troops was to be re-deployed to maintain law and order in post-conflict Aceh.

Besides monitoring the redeployment of the TNI security forces, the AMM had to oversee the demobilisation of the GAM’s armed military wing, the TNA. However, details of the process of the GAM demobilisation were not clearly stated in the MOU. The MOU only put the number of the GAM military troops to be demobilised at 3,000 soldiers (Clause 4.2). According to my interview with the vice supreme commander, this number did not represent the total number of GAM troops, which he claimed was a lot more, at over 40,000 soldiers male and female soldiers for the whole of Aceh.102

The AMM’s role was to monitor the GAM demobilisation – the actual dismantling process was implemented by the GAM itself. To comply with the MOU, by the end of 2005, GAM had officially announced that they had disbanded both their exiled cabinet and its domestic structure, including its military wing, and formed a civilian organisation named the Majelis (Council) and the KPA (Brightwaite et al. 2010).

In October 2005, the GAM’s exiled leadership group, led by Malik Mahmud (former GAM Prime Minister), Zakaria Saman (former GAM Defence Minister), Zaini Abdullah (former GAM Health Minister), and Muhammad Usman Lampo Awe (former GAM Finance Minister), set up the Majelis to replace its exiled cabinet. The Majelis established the GAM’s organisational basis for securing its new political directions, following the mandate of the Helsinki agreement to build Aceh’s future democracy. This ranged from establishing a new GAM political party (later called the Aceh Party), to creating a new body for its ex-soldiers, allocating funds for the reintegration of ex-soldiers, and setting up the Wali Negara or Wali Nanggroe (head of state) office (ICG 2006b, 2-3). 103 The Majelis also had another immediate task: to work cooperatively with the AMM, the Indonesian government and the Aceh provincial government to implement the Helsinki mandate for the reintegration of the GAM ex-soldiers (ICG 2006b, 2).

102 Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.

103 As mentioned in Chapter 3, the term Wali Negara or Wali Nanggroe [head of state] was the title used by Hasan Di Tiro to claim himself as head of the state. The MOU Helsinki allowed Aceh to retain the symbolic use of the title through the establishment of the Wali Nanggroe office with its ceremonial attributes and entitlements (see MOU Helsinki clause 1.1 on Law on governing Aceh).
However, in the post-conflict era, the Majelis took on additional roles in accessing and allocating political and economic resources. For example, the leader of the Majelis, Malik Mahmud, became head of Wali Nanggroe office; Zaini Abdullah successfully won the provincial gubernatorial election in 2012; and Zakaria Saman became a founder of GAM’s Aceh Party. In addition, the Majelis has had the ability to influence the initial reconstruction process under the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Board (the Badan Rekonstruksi dan Rehabilitasi Aceh or the BRR) and the Aceh Reintegration Board (The BRA, Badan Reintegrasi Aceh). In the early stages of tsunami reconstruction, the GAM Majelis also placed the former negotiator, T Kamaruzzaman, in the post of general secretary of the BRR board. The other GAM figures in charge in the BRR were the former exiled Prime Minister, Malik Mahmud, former GAM Finance Minister, Muhammad Lampoh Awe, and former GAM supreme commander, Muzakir Manaf (Aspinall 2009, 14). In this managerial position these men gained monthly salary funds of around 25-30 million rupiahs (US$200-3.200), considered huge in local terms, ‘while rarely, if ever, coming into the office’ (Aspinall 2009, 14). While getting large incomes or gaji buta (blind salary), they also had access to business opportunities (as discussed later in the chapter).

Based on a decision made by the Majelis, in December 2005 the KPA was established and headed by Muzakir Manaf, the last former GAM supreme military commander (Panglima GAM). The structure of this new institution exactly mirrored the hierarchical structure of the GAM military organisation in the conflict period (see Figure 3.1: The GAM Organisational Structure in Chapter 3). Based on this military command structure, the KPA has the same hierarchical pattern; where the Panglima Pusat, Muzakir Manaf, is responsible for overseeing the 17 Panglima Wilayah (regional commanders), and every Panglima Wilayah controls four or five districts; while, in turn, each Panglima Daerah (district commanders) control six to seven Panglima Sagoe (village commanders). The two top levels of Panglima Pusat and Wilayah (province and district) were filled by high ranking GAM military men, and the rest were occupied by lower ranked ex-soldiers. Women soldiers who were organised under the Pasukan Inong Balee was also part of the

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104 A former BRR staffer said that the GAM exiled elite and former GAM higher rank commanders usually come to the office of BRR just to grab their salary without performing any significant job related to their positions. A former BRR staff, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
KPA organisational structure. In this structure, no women ex-soldiers hold retained military status as *Panglima*, rather they are categorised as women soldiers.

The hierarchical chain of command structure that was in place in the KPA allowed the re-formalization of former GAM military titles and ranks. This was done by placing the elite male field commanders at the top rank as *Panglima*, while the mass –the rank and file – were at the bottom as ex-troops. In interviews with some formerly highly ranked commanders, there is no clear explanation regarding roles and responsibilities for membership of the KPA in terms of who does what, yet the ex-commanders claimed that their male and female foot soldiers were automatically absorbed into the KPA organisation.\(^{105}\)

When first established, the KPA was declared by Muzakir Manaf to be a civilian organisation tasked with assisting the reintegration scheme (ICG 2006b, 2). Yet in the post-conflict situation, the KPA operates as a key body that has been able to preserve the military ideology and retained military status of former GAM ‘combatants’. The KPA is the place where their collectivity as comrades with combat experience can be maintained. Although the war is over, the rank and title position of GAM soldiers, either as *Panglima Wilayah, Daerah or Sagoe*, still attach to ex-soldiers in the KPA. Social mobilisation in this hierarchy is possible; as the previous lower rank and file ex-soldiers can be promoted to a higher rank as *Panglima Sagoe* in their villages. In short, whilst the GAM as a rebel organisation group had been disbanded with the demobilisation mandated by the MOU Helsinki, its military ideology, as well as its militarised status, remains intact.

Nowadays the KPA also functions as an organisation for the GAM ex-commanders to consolidate, control, and mobilise their former troops for political or economic purposes in the new civilian context. The post-conflict economic resources that flowed after peacebuilding in the form of reintegration funds, tsunami reconstruction projects, special autonomy budget, and other sources of funding such as revenue sharing and local government revenues, have been the main economic bases that provided a significant glue to re-tighten the social bonding among the GAM elite ex-commanders and rank and file

\(^{105}\) Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, Januari 2015 and T Sarjani, former GAM regional commander for Pidie District, interview with the author, Pidie, Januari 2015.
ex-soldiers. Through the KPA, former GAM ex-soldiers can gain access to contracting businesses, jobs and social networks with the local government officials and parliaments. Finally, it is through the KPA itself that the GAM elite commanders have played out and invested in their social status as elite ex-commanders, which has been important in maintaining their access to power and resources in the post-conflict situation.

Through the KPA, some ex-commanders have become new local bosses with huge economic assets, and have gained political offices such as vice governor, members of local parliaments and heads of local districts. Ex-commanders such as Abu Razak, for example, have the power to access local government projects and thus become rich with plenty of assets including land, restaurants and other businesses.106 Darwis Jeunib, an ex-commander in Bireun District, also has a large share of local government projects in that area, making him one of the richest people in Bireun with a luxury house and cars.107

Muzakir Manaf, the head of the KPA and former GAM supreme commander, owned the PT Pulau Gadeng business group and won a large contract for tsunami reconstruction including building houses for tsunami victims, ex-combatants and conflict victims, and rebuilding of the Cunda Bridge in Lhokseumawe (Aditjondro 2007b). PT Pulau Gadeng was also undertaking the upgrading of the Malahayati Port, including supplying 150 tonnes of cranes at the port (Aditjondro 2007a). Another ex-commanders’ business activity during tsunami reconstruction involved T. Sarjani Abdullah, the Panglima Wilayah who serves as the Bupati of Pidie District. He claimed to have successfully established PT Halimun Megah Raya around 2007; although it collapsed in around 2010. In his words:

I built a corporation which I named PT Halimun Meugah Raya. It was a really big and bona fide company in this district. We owned an office; we had professional staff that ran the company. We were running a construction business, supplying building materials such as sand and stone to the reconstruction of Pidie District. I also successfully managed export-import permissions from the central government to do international business - such as importing heavy construction vehicles,

106Idem and a former secretary of Aceh province, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, December 2014.
107A group of three former GAM male soldiers from Bireun District, interview with the author, Bireun, November 2014.
electronic devices, textile industry and shoes. I enlarged my networks to my business colleagues in Batam, Sabang and Singapore. I bought some construction vehicles from Singapore. It was important to have a connection with other domestic and international companies to boost our capital. However, since we faced problems with [a lack of] capital we had to close our business in 2010. Unfortunately, it ran for only 4 years.\textsuperscript{108}

\textit{A Panglima Daerah} (district commander) in Bireun, also runs a business project. He built a small scale local sand mining company and became a successful supplier for a construction business in that area. In a conversation with him, he said that ‘after peace came to Aceh, I become a businessman, running a small sand mining company in this area [Bireun District]. I needed to help my former subordinates to support their livelihoods and economic difficulties’.\textsuperscript{109}

The tsunami reconstruction also created job opportunities for GAM rank and file ex-soldiers. The GAM ex-commanders mobilised their ex-soldiers to be involved in the BRR and also in some of their industries. Aspinall (2009) has said that a significant number of GAM ex-soldiers were employed as security guards and project team evaluators in the BRR. Some who had at least a high school degree were hired as staff in this body.\textsuperscript{110} There are no exact figures as to how many male and female ex-soldiers have been employed in the BRR, however it is estimated that between 2007 and 2008, the number of former GAM soldiers (mostly males) employed in this reconstruction body was around 500 people, or 10-20\% of total staff (Aspinall 2009).\textsuperscript{111}

Besides injecting former GAM rank and file soldiers into the BRR, some ex-commanders employed their subordinates to do the low-level jobs such as drivers. T Sarjani claimed he employed his male troops to help them with their economic hardships. He said that:

\textsuperscript{108} Sarjani Abdullah, former regional commander in Pidie District, interview with the author, Pidie, January 2015.
\textsuperscript{109} Former GAM district commander of Batee ilik, interview with the author, Bireun District, November 2014.
\textsuperscript{110} Former GAM soldier for Passe District, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
\textsuperscript{111} There is no precise data on the number of male and female ex-soldiers employed, yet mostly men ex-combatants were hired in the BRR. A former BRR staff, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, December 2014.
When we ran the Halimun Megah Raya Corporation we bought a truck to deliver sand to the contracting business people in Pidie. To operate our business project, I have employed my former soldiers as drivers to deliver stone and sand to the contractors. They have no education certificate or degree so they only worked as drivers.112

During the boom era for construction businesses in Aceh after the tsunami disaster, former rank and file ex-soldiers demanded informal and illegal sources of income, which they called *Pajak Nanggroe* or state taxes, in the era where the GAM had vast control over resources (Aspinall, 2009). According to a/the Sagoe commander in Pidie, *Pajak Nanggroe* was an important source of funding. In his words: ‘still today we ask the same kind of practice *[Pajak Nanggroe]* targeted to the local business people here. The money we got from them we used it for our own expenses; we used it also for feeding the neediest in this village such as the orphans, widows and the conflict victims. They deserved the money to support themselves.’113

Through the militaristic KPA structure, the business opportunities drawn from the local government projects are also able to be accessed by the Regional Commanders (*Panglima Wilayah*), District Commanders (*Panglima Daerah*) and Village Commanders (*Panglima Sagoe*), through the GAM-affiliated head of district or *Bupati* (Aspinall 2009, 11-17; Aditjondro 2007b, 5-10; Anderson 2013, 33-39). Most ex-operational commanders, including *Sagoe* level, who stay in touch with their ex-commanders are operating business projects.114

The opportunities to become local businessmen were enjoyed by some of the male ex-soldiers interviewed for this study, especially those who have close relations with their ex-commanders. For instance, at the time of the research, a group of two male rank and file ex-soldiers from Passe District were working with their ex-commander, helping him to find small-scale contracting business opportunities in local government departments where

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112 T Sarjani, former GAM regional ex-commander in Pidie District, interview with the author, Pidie, January 2015.
113 idem
114 Former GAM District commander for Passe district, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
contracts were worth below 200 million rupiahs, such as buying office equipment. Others who do not participate in business are employed as security guards in local government offices, including in Wilayatul Hisbah or the Shariah police and the forest police. Still other former GAM male soldiers who have fallen into unemployment are simply knocking on government office doors to ask for money, or they have returned to their old practice of applying an informal and illegal tax or security fee to business people who undertake local government infrastructure projects.

Through the KPA, the ex-commanders can be nominated as local candidates in the local parliaments (representing the GAM mainstream political party, Aceh Party or Partai Aceh). Members of parliament are powerful in that, under the Law of Governing Aceh (11/2006) they are able to approve, revise or reject local government budget allocations. This is happening in the context of the decentralisation of power wherein local parliaments have become more powerful institutions in Indonesia and have more access to funds for distribution and procurement. Usually, the GAM ex-commanders have a strong interest in the allocation of infrastructure budgets and aspiration budgets to boost their economic interests. In Aceh, the best scenario for GAM ex-commanders is to select GAM candidates prior to local elections for seats in the provincial or district parliaments, to smooth access to the budget allocation, especially for enlarging their business opportunities. In terms of job opportunities for former GAM rank and file soldiers, it is common in the Aceh parliament –especially in provincial parliament – to see that many male rank and file ex-soldiers are again hired as security guards for individual members of

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115 A group of two former GAM soldier for Passe district, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, December 2014.
116 A group of three former GAM soldiers from Bireun District, interviewed with the author, Bireun, November 2014.
117 An aspiration budget refers to a budget allocation for each member of the provincial parliament, amounting to 10 billion rupiah per year. This amount of money is intended to accelerate local development in regions where the members of provincial parliament come from. Provincial government official, interview with the author, Banda Aceh December 2014. Also, conversation with government official in Banda Aceh December 2014, office of BKPP Badan Kepegawaian dan Pendidikan dan Pelatihan Aceh, Personnel and Training Agency of Aceh Province.
118 The people they appoint are not always former GAM personnel. The ex-commanders can assign persons who are loyal to the GAM ex-commanders. The head of provincial parliament, T Muhtaruddin, for example, is not an ex-combatant or the GAM civil activist, yet one official said that he is loyal to Muzakir Manaf (head of the KPA), and as a result, he was elected as the top level decision maker in the office of Aceh provincial parliament.
local parliament. Some even work as personal security guards for their former commanders.\textsuperscript{119}

In this context, demobilisation of the GAM military insurgency group in post-conflict Aceh has been not just a formal technical matter as mandated by MOU Helsinki. It represents a broad political economy project that serves the interests of the GAM elite ex-commanders to nurture their political and economic power in the post-conflict era.

By contrast, the GAM civilian elite who formerly acted as civilian GAM governors, \textit{Bintara}, and other civilian GAM negotiators were dismissed after the MOU was signed. They had no clear-cut organisational grouping after the demobilisation process, but the majority of them were absorbed into the Irwandi group, particularly after he became a Governor of Aceh in 2006. Irwandi was a former Helsinki negotiator and GAM propagandist. After the war, he was appointed by the \textit{Majelis} to become the GAM representative in the AMM in 2005-2006. Irwandi also successfully built alliances with the other GAM negotiators in the peace process, such as Nur Djuli, Nasrudin Bin Ahmed, Amri bin Ahmad Marzuki, Munawar Liza, Kamaruzzaman and others. In mid-2006, he also allied with the GAM-affiliated civil society organisation (SIRA, \textit{Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh}, Central Information for Aceh Referendum) - led by Muhamad Nazar - to establish an independence party to compete in the first governor’s election at the end of that year. During his campaign, Irwandi developed his support basis with most GAM commanders in the KPA and also with the rank and file ex-soldiers. Irwandi also successfully established a coalition with civil society groups such as SMUR (\textit{Solidaritas Mahasiswa untuk rakyat}, Student Solidarity for People). For his achievements, in 2006 Irwandi was the first member of the GAM civilian elite in history to sit as the governor of Aceh.

c. \textit{Reintegration of former GAM soldiers}

After the former GAM soldiers were disarmed, and the armed organisation was disbanded, the next phase was to reintegrate GAM ex-soldiers into civilian life. The planned

\textsuperscript{119} Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh January 2015.
demilitarisation of post-conflict of Aceh would not be considered complete without this. MOU Helsinki (2005) aimed at facilitating this process by providing socio-economic assistance in the form of reintegration funds, suitable farming land, employment and social security. The MOU even stated that the former GAM soldiers had a right to seek employment in the Indonesian security forces, the TNI and the police. Apart from the AMM, the agreement mandated the establishment of an authority to administer the reintegration scheme (the BRA), and also a Joint Claims Settlement Commission (JCSC) to resolve unmet claims (MOU Helsinki 2005). It was stated in the MOU that the government of Indonesia makes all of these provisions, including allocating the reintegration funds, although the amount was not stipulated. The AMM’s role was just to monitor the program’s implementation (MOU Helsinki 2005).

Initially, before the establishment of the BRA, the scheme was delivered by the Indonesian government, the Aceh provincial government and international agencies (the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration). However, the present study focuses on how the government of Indonesia channelled its funds to the provincial government to deliver the reintegration program, as the Indonesian government was the main party responsible for implementing the MOU Helsinki. The government scheme was broken down into several stages.

As agreed by both parties, the Indonesian government and the GAM, in October 2005 the first tranche of the reintegration fund from the government of Indonesia (1 million rupiahs per ex-soldier per month for six months) was distributed to GAM regional ex-commanders (Schulze 2007, 17; ICG 2006a, 9). At this stage, no list of the names of 3,000 GAM ex-

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120 According to women activists, the JCSC was not ever established, and will never exist, because both Indonesian and GAM soldiers had violated the human rights during the war. Faridah, a woman activist, interview with the author, Pidie, October 2014, also Munawar Liza, former GAM negotiator, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.

121 Overall the Indonesian government had allocated Rp. 2.03 trillion in reintegration funds between 2006 and 2011, and the Aceh government had planned additional reintegration funds of Rp. 400 billion (2008-2011) (Avoinus, 2013). The IOM (International Organisation for Migration) contributed 15.85 billion (10 million per ex-soldier). The World Bank through its community driven project provided around US $ 20.4 million for reintegration schemes (Barron et al 2013). In regards to the reintegration process, socio-economic assistance in the form of financial assistance, training and health services for ex-soldiers, political prisoners and conflict victims was also provided by some international agencies, such as the World Bank, the IOM (with funding from The EU and Japan), the UNDP and USAID (Barron 2007).

122 In the interview with BRA Deputy of Finance, Dr Ishlahudin, he said that this amount of money was decided by the Governor of Aceh and the representative of the Indonesian government. Dr. Ishlahudin, BRA staffer, interview with the author, Banda Aceh November 2014.
soldiers who would receive the fund was provided by the KPA to the local government. The money, in fact, was disbursed by the ex-commanders widely to a larger number of the GAM people that, in addition to ex-soldiers, included GAM civilian supporters (*pemuda gampong*), widows and orphans (ICG 2006a, 10). Since the regional ex-commanders claimed that they had more than 3,000 soldiers, in practice every ex-soldier only received between Rp. 175,000 and Rp. 200,000 (Schulze 2007, 17; ICG 2006a, 10). In late October 2005, another Rp. 1 million for every ex-soldier was released by the Aceh Governor (as a representative of the Indonesian government) to the local *Bupati* (head of district) as the second reintegration package.123 The money was again delivered to the GAM ex-commanders, but this time by the *Bupati* (head of district) in 15 locations across Aceh province. The third reintegration fund in January 2006 was also sent to the local GAM ex-commanders for distribution.

In February 2006, some four months after funds were initially disbursed, the BRA was set up to administer the continuing disbursement of the socio-economic assistance elements of the reintegration package, including housing for conflict victims, land and job training. The BRA was not a provincial government department (*dinas*) but an ad-hoc body with specific authorities and tasks that was responsible to the Governor of Aceh. It operated in every district across Aceh Province for almost seven years from 2006 to 2012 (Avonius 2013, 4). After the BRA closed its operations in January 2012, its functions were reorganised by the Governor of Aceh into a new body, BP2A (*Badan Penguatan Perdamaian Aceh* or the Aceh Peace Board) (*Serambi Indonesia* 2013).

Within the total budget transfer from the central government of 2.03 trillion rupiahs, and the additional provincial budget of 37.8 billion rupiahs (Avonius, 2013, 8), in 2006 the BRA set up a sum of 25 million rupiahs for each ex-soldier (Schulze 2007, Braithwaite, et al., 2010). According to the BRA’s former Deputy of Finance, Dr Islahuddin, this amount was targeted to the list of 3,000 soldiers. In contrast to the approach used for the previous reintegration fund disbursement, the method of delivery was to be ‘by name, by address’. In his words:

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123 There was no clear explanation as to why the second tranche of the reintegration was delivered to the head of regency or *Bupati* instead of being paid directly to the GAM commanders.
The BRA would not distribute the money unless the GAM ex-commanders provided the names and addresses of 3,000 of their soldiers. Because the money was to be disbursed through the local banks, the banks required the Indonesia National Identity Card or at least a letter of recommendation from the local geuchik (village head) stating the name and address of the persons. At last, the GAM ex-commanders provided the names and addresses they gained from the local geucik [head of villages].

He then explained that the money was delivered successfully to individual ex-soldiers, though he was also aware that the GAM ex-commanders again took control of distributing the money to a larger number of former GAM soldiers, again exceeding the 3,000-strong list provided by the GAM ex-commanders.

Yarmen, a former member of the BRA staff, maintained that ‘the sum of 25 million was a package given to ex-soldiers which involved 15 million for starting businesses and 10 million to buy land. So instead of the government giving them land, we gave them money in order for them to buy land themselves in their villages’. Yarmen further said that Zakaria Saman (former GAM exiled leader and GAM Defence Minister during the conflict), who was acting as the interim GAM leader in the AMM, was aware of this arrangement and spoke about it publicly during a symbolic ceremony in Banda Aceh in 2006.

Besides assisting the former GAM soldiers, the BRA also delivered funds to another 6,500 former ex-militia, called the anti-separatist front or PETA (Pembela Tanah Air), that were formed by the TNI during the counter-insurgency period in Aceh. In this case, each ex-

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124 Dr. Islahudin Daud, former BRA finance deputy, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, October 2014.
125 Idem.
126 Yarmen Dinamika also said that until the present, former GAM soldiers still complain they did not receive allocations of land directly, as promised by the provincial government. Yarmen Dinamika, former BRA staff, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014, Serambi Indonesia office.
127 Idem.
militia received 10 million rupiahs. The assistance also targeted around 33,000 conflict victims in the form of housing, microcredit and financial compensation.

Disbursements of the reintegration funds to the GAM female ex-soldiers

During the disbursement of the reintegration funds, there were no GAM women ex-soldiers’ names on the list provided by the GAM ex-commanders (Schulze 2007, 17, see also Meghdadi 2009; Siapno 2009; Jauhola 2010; Lee-Koo 2012; Uning, undated; Marhaban 2012, Myrttinen 2012). The 3,000 demobilised GAM ex-soldiers mentioned on the list were all men. When asked why the women were not listed, two reasons were provided. One former GAM regional commander, T Sarjani, said that ‘male rank and file ex-soldiers were the priority on the list of the reintegration beneficiaries as they bear the burden of feeding their families. The women do not. Most of the women were already married and it was the responsibility of their husband to feed them and take care of their livelihoods’. However, another male rank and file soldier said that ‘female ex-soldiers were not registered on the list as they were not GAM “combatants”. All on the list were men who were involved in fighting and most of the day stayed in the hills, whilst women only performed support functions in gampong (villages), such as logistic delivery and being informants which were not core combat roles’.

Most female ex-soldiers interviewed for the study did not know what the reintegration funds were for exactly or how they had been delivered. Some did receive money but the amount varied from village to village. Some said they received money from their ex-commanders but did not clearly understand where the money had come from. A group of three female ex-soldiers in Pidie Jaya district received around 1.5 million rupiahs each from their commanders, yet they did not know whether the money was from the reintegration fund and targeted at them or not. In contrast, a group of three women ex-

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128 It is claimed that the sum of money given to the ex-militias was as a result of the Indonesian military (Provincial District Command) intervening to include them as reintegration beneficiaries, in a meeting between the AMM, the BRA and the GAM representative in Banda Aceh. The GAM representatives had rejected this proposal, but the money was eventually delivered to this group. Yarmen Dinamika, former member of the BRA staff, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
129 Idem.
130 T Sarjani, former GAM regional commander for Pidie District, interview with the author, Pidie, January 2015.
131 Former GAM soldier from Passe District, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.
132 A group of three former GAM female soldiers in Pidie Jaya District, interview with the author, Pidi Jaya, October 2014.
soldiers in Lamlepung village, Aceh Besar District did not receive any money from the reintegration funds. A female ex-soldier who had been arrested in Pidie in 2003 and then jailed in Banda Aceh for 2 years, only received 100 thousand rupiahs, which she said was ‘just enough to buy her underwear’. She was very angry and disappointed with her district commander. In her words:

Why did you bring us to the mountain? You just don’t care. Where are your responsibilities to the female ex-soldiers? In the jungle, our status was the same. Men would die and also women would die. Why did you treat us differently from those men? With anger, I returned the money to the ex-commander but he just stayed quiet.

Two former BRA staffers, Yarmen and Dr Islahuddin Daud, maintained that since the GAM provided a list of 3,000 of ex-soldiers which comprised entirely men, female ex-soldiers were left out of the program, but the BRA tried to accommodate the women ex-soldiers’ economic needs in other ways. As the GAM women ex-soldiers were considered by the BRA to be the victims of conflict, women ex-soldiers would not receive assistance from the reintegration program. At the time that the reintegration package was being managed primarily by the BRA, many local NGOs and women activists criticized the BRA for not having gender sensitivity in the reintegration program. The BRA then attempted to include women ex-soldiers in different programs, such as the conflict victim scheme. However, none of the women ex-soldiers I interviewed received any share of funds from the conflict victim scheme. What they understand is that the scheme was targeted at ordinary people whose properties were burnt or damaged during the war.

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133 A group of three former GAM female soldiers in Lamlepung Aceh Besar, interview with the author, December 2014.
134 Former GAM female soldier in Pidi Jaya district, interview with the author, Pidi Jaya, October 2014.
135 Idem.
136 Yarmen Dinamika and Dr Islahuddin, former BRA staff, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
137 Former GAM female soldier from Pidie District, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
How the reintegration of the GAM ex-soldiers worked

Although the official technical process of reintegration of the GAM ex-soldiers was delivered through institutional offices led by the BRA, the post-conflict reintegration of GAM ex-soldiers was in fact managed under the KPA’s hierarchical and military-style command structure. Accordingly, the formal aspects of the reintegration program in fact operated under a militaristic ideology and institution led by the GAM ex-commanders. As such, an ideology that values a strong hierarchical command structure and compliance to the leadership command underpinned how the reintegration worked. According to one source, the chief GAM ex-military commanders strongly influenced how the reintegration operated. As a consequence, reintegration funds were distributed unevenly to the GAM ex-soldiers and in turn, this created dissatisfaction and resentment among male and female ex-soldiers.

Under the peace process, former GAM soldiers were supposed to lose their military status and become civilians through the reintegration program. Yet the post-conflict reintegration program in fact facilitated the re-constitution of their militarised status as ‘combatants’. Thus, reintegration has not simply been a means of accessing and controlling resources by the KPA, it has been a mechanism for status re-consolidation in relation to who are ‘the insiders’ and ‘the outsiders’ of the former GAM male soldiers’ group. Through the reconstitution of male combatant status, the KPA has been able to strengthen its organising power and capacity to make larger political and economic gains.

From the outset, the reintegration process did not set any criteria to define who the eligible GAM combatants were; nor did the ex-commanders in charge of disbursing the funds set clear criteria for qualification as a combatant. As reintegration delivery relied on the GAM command structure, it was the ex-commanders themselves who established a de-facto grading system to determine who deserved the reintegration benefits more than others. The grading system was used to disburse reintegration funds to a larger number of former GAM soldiers than the 3,000 initially planned. A well-known ex-regional commander in Pidie district stated that:

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138 Former GAM military adviser, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, May 2016.
The total number of our troops was 4,000 but the trusted soldiers who accompanied me in the mountains were around 500 in number. The money allocated by the BRA was for 345 soldiers so it was not enough. I had to manage the money by grading the soldiers into categories. Grade one was those who received full training, fought in the battle and stayed on the mountain until the MOU was signed. They received 12 million. Grade two was the ex-soldiers who were trained and fought but escaped to safer places such as Medan or Jakarta during a military operation in 2003. They gained 7 million each. Grade three was those who were fully trained and fought but then never showed up in the mountains until peace came. We gave them 4 million. Grade four was former soldiers who were half trained but they did not fight in the battle. They were those who supported us by doing intelligence service and logistic. They received 1.5 million. The last, grade five, was those who were never trained and did not fight but helped with information as spies. We gave them 500 thousand.

For women ex-soldiers, as they did not fight, the money they received was based on their contribution as intelligence or logistic supporters. Some fell into the grade four and some others did not get anything as they just stayed in gampong doing nothing.\textsuperscript{139}

The ex-commanders I interviewed were not able to explain why they established the grading system. Although it was created, the money that was disbursed by the GAM ex-commanders varied across Aceh regions and depended on the regional ex-commanders’ discretion to decide a block of money to be disbursed to their troops. In Passe, North Aceh, for instance, the funds were distributed to more than 4,000 GAM soldiers, including GAM supporters – civilians who help the GAM troops by serving mainly as intelligence and logistic suppliers. In this case, each received no more that Rp. 350,000 (US$35).\textsuperscript{140} In South Aceh, the number of former GAM soldiers exceeded 2,500 and, as a consequence, each received Rp. 300,000; some other former GAM soldiers in nearby areas received Rp. 50,000, and many received nothing (ICG 2006a).

Based on the grading system above, the first group received the highest retained military status of ‘true GAM ex-combatants’ (the loyalists). These were the GAM fighters who

\textsuperscript{139} T Sarjani, former GAM regional commander in Pidie district, interview with the author, Pidie, January 2015.
\textsuperscript{140} Former GAM Passe commander, interview with the autor, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
spent most of their time in the jungle, had experienced military training, and fought on the battlefield until the MOU was signed in August 2005. In my interviews, none of the ex-commanders mentioned the exact number of this group. Yet they all admitted this group of soldiers had benefited more from the reintegration package and had greater access to contracting business.\textsuperscript{141} These were the ex-soldiers who successfully joined the inner circle group of their commanders – other sources called them ‘the KPA Meodong’ (see ICG 2006b, Anderson 2013). Ex-commanders within the Muzakir Manaf group generally had access to political offices and economic resources. They might have dual and even triple roles, as for example a local political party leader, a businessman and also a bureaucrat. Accordingly, the troops who were loyal to them and work with them could have more than one status or role linked to these functions and positions; they could be part of the KPA structure as Panglima Daerah or Panglima Sagoe, a member of Aceh Party, and also worked as contractors and businessmen. Having been able to manage to hide in the mountains, protecting the commanders till the peace agreement came out, this group has been rewarded with more access to contract business through the KPA clientelistic networks.\textsuperscript{142}

The second group was the former GAM male soldiers who joined military training for at least 3-6 months, fought in the battle, but then fled to a safer place during the Indonesian counterinsurgency era between 2003-2004 or when their ammunition ran short. This group is often known by the ex-commanders and rank and file ex-soldiers as ‘the escapees’. Others refer to them as ‘KPA Hijrah’ (see ICG 2006b, Anderson 2013). There is no clear number of these available, but according to my interview sources, they included the GAM male soldiers who joined military training but never showed up in the mountains, as well as those who were captured during military operations, those who escaped from the camps, and those who put down their guns and joined the GAM civilian movement; mostly in The Aceh Referendum Information Centre (SIRA).\textsuperscript{143} This group, despite their ‘escapee’ status, remained loyal to their commanders, and managed to return to the jungle

\textsuperscript{141}In my interview with some male ex-soldiers in Banda Aceh, November 2014, the group was composed mostly those of young recruiters in 2002. Even some of them never joined the military training, including ideological training, but they participated in combat from 2002 until MOU was signed. Some ex-soldiers told the researcher that some ‘crooks’ joined the GAM and successfully performed as combat troops as they were brave and brutal (they GAM chan toy).

\textsuperscript{142} Former GAM Sagoe commander in Pidie, interview with the author, Pidie November 2014.

\textsuperscript{143} SIRA was established in 1999 in response to the East Timor independence through referendum. It was directed to be a civilian and non-violence group, composed of intellectual urban middle class members led by Muhammad Nazar (Islamic Scholar) (Sindre 2010).
after the tsunami. Some ex-soldiers who were categorised in this stratum gained fewer reintegration funds than their comrades who closed to the ex-commanders (the first group of ex-soldiers above), and some even received nothing. Yet they were still recognised as ‘GAM combatants’, as long as they showed loyalty to their former supreme commander (Muzakir Manaf) and joined the KPA. As a result, after the conflict some received access to small businesses; but mostly in the village areas, and some were provided with chances to be involved in larger government-awarded contracts. Others felt obliged to look for charity or petty funds by knocking on official government doors (in particular, seeking their GAM leaders). There are different dynamics within this group of ex-soldiers. Some show loyalty to their ex-commanders. Despite being relatively neglected in not having the same access to business opportunities as the aforementioned privileged group, they still join the KPA group. Some retain positions as Panglima Sagoe (village commanders) in their villages. However, there is also some resentment towards those in the first group – the ex-commanders and the ‘true GAM combatant’ loyalists closest to the ex-commanders – due to perceptions by those in the second group that they did not benefit equally or fairly from reintegration and the subsequent elite business opportunities.

The remainder of the GAM ex-soldiers comprise those excluded from the above two groups. They are not part of the KPA. Instead, these ex-soldiers have established alternative organisations after the MOU Helsinki. There are two separate ex-soldiers groups which fall into the category of ‘the excluded’. The first group calls themselves Tim Relawan Aceh (the Aceh Voluntary Team). The other excluded ex-soldiers are the former GAM soldiers who had deserted or surrendered during the conflict to the Indonesian Army and had joined TNI affiliated group, called Forum Komunikasi Anak Bangsa (FORKAB) or Communication Forum for the Nation’s Children (ICG 2009). This is the lowest-ranking level of the GAM ex-soldiers. They feel entirely excluded from the reintegration packages and the opportunities associated with the ex-commanders’ businesses. Although they are not a part of the KPA, they consider themselves to be GAM ex-soldiers.

In the case of women ex-soldiers under the military wing of the GAM movement, the Pasukan Inong Balee, those interviewed felt that they have been discriminated against and excluded from the peacebuilding and reintegration scheme. Amid the male ex-soldiers’

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144 For an elaboration of how these groups challenge the ex-commanders in the KPA, see Chapter 6.
euphoria with business, wealth and political power, none of the women appears to be involved in the elite’s businesses, political positions and bureaucracy. Their exclusion and the fact that they were marginalised by their ex-commanders will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

_GAM male rank and file grievances_

As a result of the grading system applied to the male rank and file, and the unfair distribution of reintegration funds, the GAM ex-soldiers have a range of grievances. Some expressed this in the form of disillusionment, and some through violence.

Some ex-soldiers I interviewed, in particular those classified by their ex-commanders (using the grading system) as GAM escapees, were very disappointed with how their ex-commanders treated them during reintegration fund disbursement. Some said they only received enough of the reintegration funds to pay for a cigarette (uang rokok); or received nothing at all. One male rank and file ex-soldier from the district of Biruhen expressed extreme disillusionment about the ex-commanders during his interview. He said ‘the commanders are living in mansion house while their troops live in hardship even staying in “cow cages” (kandang lembu)’. He added:

I don’t know why our leaders are holding power but they don’t care about we ex-soldiers. They ignore us. They are only close to their people who are their relatives, who did not fight in the war, or those whom they trust. …. They abandon those of us who fought in the war as combatants and instead get close to their relatives. This is nepotism. They only think how to fill up their own stomachs. The GAM ex-commanders have betrayed our children. But one day our children will raise their weapons again. Let's see, in 10-15 years to come, they will be in armed conflict again. This is ridiculous. The business projects have never trickled down to the troops.146

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145 Former GAM soldier for Batee ilik, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, December 2014.
146 Former GAM operational commander for Tengkup district of Aceh Besar, interview with the author, in Banda Aceh, December 2014.
Another GAM escapee and a former GAM soldier in Tengkup Sagoe, Aceh Besar, expressed his grievances over what he had experienced in the post-conflict era. He was an operational commander in Tengkup Sagoe, Aceh Besar, but was captured in 2002 and jailed for more than two months during a military operation in there. He received nothing from the reintegration fund. In his words:

I joined the movement in 1996 and was really committed to the struggle for Aceh Independence. I joined the military training in the mountain. I managed and led a strategic attack on the police post in Darussalam and killed many Indonesia soldiers - at least 18 of them died. So I was a wanted person in this area as I was operational commander in Sagoe. One day, when I was preparing for my wedding in the month of May 2002, I was surrounded by Indonesia soldiers and captured and put in jail in Banda Aceh. I was tortured, my head was hit by a big stone and my nails were pulled out. I was badly beaten for three days. They never stopped beating me. I was held for 2 months and 17 days.

With the help of a human rights journalist, I was released and fled to Jakarta until 2005. I got nothing from the reintegration fund, not even a single rupiah. I don’t want to ask for money. I was a soldier and I still commit to Hasan Tiro’s struggle for independence of Aceh. I don’t want to be involved in the ex-commanders’ business projects. Let God know what they have done. God will punish them with illness. Look, I was a former operational commander but I got no house. I still live with my parents in law. But I am proud to have been a GAM soldier.147

Other ex-soldiers’ grievances have been expressed in various kinds of violence and crimes. These are committed in particular by male rank and file whose military status was ignored by their ex-commanders, as well as the deserters and those who surrendered; the excluded ex-soldiers. The violence carried out by this group of ex-soldiers has taken the form of kidnappings, intimidations, killings and robberies (Jones 2008, 72). In 2007, for instance, there was a range of violent acts committed by Badruddin and his armed men, a group of ex-soldiers in North Aceh, Sawang (Anderson 2013). The Badruddin group did not gain any share from the reintegration and reconstruction benefits. They were excluded

147 Idem.
from the reintegration scheme as they were not considered to be ‘GAM combatants’ by their ex-commanders. Badruddin and his men were accused by the KPA in North Aceh of not being ‘real GAM combatants’ as they had surrendered to the Indonesian army before the Helsinki agreement (Anderson 2013). The kidnapping of a World Bank consultant, Adrian Morel, and the extortions of staff from the NGO CARDI (or Consortium for Assistance and Recovery toward Development in Indonesia) in 2008 were linked to the Badruddin group (Anderson 2013).

In an interview, a member of the Aceh parliament from East Aceh (Aceh Timur) region in the GAM mainstream political party (PA, Partai Aceh or Aceh Party), stated that most GAM ex-soldiers living in East Aceh were dissatisfied with the amount of reintegration money they received. As a result, many have fallen into crime, including robbery and kidnapping. He maintained that the kidnapping of British expert Malcolm Primrose in 2013 in East Aceh was due to the ex-soldiers’ resentment over the unresolved reintegration problems.148 Although he did not mention the name of the ex-soldier(s) who committed this crime, in the local media it was reported to be Nurdin Bin Ismail (also known as Din Minimi or Abu Minimi) and his armed group (Sumatera Post 2014a). It was also stated that the group committed the kidnapping as a result of their discontentment over their welfare outcomes post-conflict, along with the fact that they wanted to put pressure on their GAM leaders (Serambi Indonesia 2014a).

The GAM ex-commanders did not acknowledge that Din Minimi was a GAM ex-combatant, as the latter was not on the list of KPA members in East Aceh.149 Yet voices from the ground troops maintained that Din Minimi was a GAM combatant, and that he had participated in operational battles in the district of Pidie. For example, he was reportedly involved in a GAM attack on an Indonesian police post, along with other GAM troops, in that district.150 More recently, Din Minimi and his armed group were charged

148 Usman Al Parlaki, member of Aceh province parliament, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, December 2014.
150 Former GAM Sagoe commander for Pidie, interview with the author, Pidie, November 2014.
with the kidnapping and the killing of two Indonesian soldiers (from the TNI group) and have become wanted persons (Serambi Indonesia 2015c).\(^{151}\)

Din Minimi and his armed men have maintained that they did not feel that the peace reintegration had had a positive impact on their welfare outcomes (Nur Djuli 2014; Serambi Indonesia 2014b). Both the Abu Minimi and Badruddin men have accused the KPA of failing to fulfill the Helsinki mandate to help the economic livelihoods of the GAM former foot soldiers. (Details of Din Minimi’s protest to his ex-commanders will be explained later in Chapter Six, in the section which considers the responses of the excluded rank and file ex-soldiers as a form of protest masculinity). These groups had limited or no opportunities to access material resources via the elite ex-commanders’ businesses. Hence, they have continued the old illegal fundraising activities that the GAM insurgency undertook during the war to support themselves (Aspinall 2009; Anderson 2013). The Badruddin group have also raised funds through extortion and kidnapping (Anderson 2013); while the Din Minimi group have generated their income through robbery and marijuana cultivation (Sumatera Post 2014b).

This thesis offers a new angle on the above events. Here, I argue that it is not merely economic concerns that have led to this gun-related violence and crime. Importantly, these acts are related to the ex-soldiers’ perceptions that their masculine identity as militarised ex-combatants was being challenged or ignored by their ex-commanders. Having been graded by the ex-commanders at a low retained soldier’ status meant not only that they received little access to political and economic resources; it also represented a devaluation of their status as men (and family breadwinners). This was even worse for the male ex-soldiers who were totally excluded (such as the ex-soldiers who were captured during the war and then surrendered to the Indonesian military).

In the eyes of some male ex-soldiers interviewed, their status as GAM ex-combatants not only generated pride in being recognised as a former GAM fighter, it also entailed dimensions of masculine ideology; specifically men’s breadwinner status. Being ex-combatants continues to carry the prestige of being men with honour (high retained

\(^{151}\) In 2017, this group surrendered to the Indonesia Police but were granted amnesty by the Indonesian government and released from jail.
military status and material gains). Being GAM ex-combatants means being able to access public money through maintaining clientelistic businesses, and opportunities to have a job and to secure funds for one’s family. For those with a diminished status with the group of ex-combatants, there is a concurrent diminished status as male breadwinners. As two excluded ex-soldiers from Batalik district of Bireun explained to the researcher, their retained status as GAM combatants was important for them not only with respect to their pride as GAM combatants who fought in the battlefield, but also because their combatant status was crucial for improving their economic circumstances, particularly as heads of households. However, for both these ex-soldiers their status has been considered by their ex-commanders to be not a ‘true combatant’, and consequently they have never received access to the contracting businesses controlled by the ex-commanders in the KPA. This has meant that their male breadwinner status has been eroded. One of them stated:

During the war, I was involved in GAM in 2000. I was given military training and fought on the battlefield. In 2003, when Indonesia applied its military insurgency operation, I was captured and surrendered to the Indonesian soldiers. I knew that after the conflict ended, ex-soldiers were graded by the KPA [refers to their ex-commanders]. When the KPA was established in the end of 2005, I came to the KPA but I did not meet my commander. I went home after that and until now I never got any reintegration money. Thereafter I realised that I never considered by the ex-commanders as a GAM ‘combatant’. I was very angry. I was a GAM combatant, I fought on the battlefront. Anyway, I cannot close my eyes to the fact that business people in Aceh frequently come and see ex-combatants for doing business. But I understand who I am [refers to his consciousness that he was not classified as a ‘GAM combatant’]. Even now, ex-combatants who are close to the ex-commanders in the KPA can access money from government officials through contracting businesses. It's hurting. While others GAM soldiers can do business to feed their wives and kids, I cannot do the same. To fulfil my responsibility as a head of a household, I just go from Biruen to Banda Aceh to seek job opportunities from friends and close relatives to help my economic circumstances.\footnote{Former GAM soldier from Batalik District of Bireun, interview with the author, Bireun, November 2014.}
In Aceh’s post-conflict stage, a particular form of masculinity is associated with men and guns. The military ideology that was accepted during the war justified the use of violence; even killing the enemy (Maringira 2015). The soldiers were trained and raised to be combatants and GAM killing machines (Anderson 2013). Therefore, for GAM ex-soldiers, violence is now their reference as well as their expression. Violence is both their reality and their performance as militarised ex-combatants. The kidnappings and killings committed by some of the GAM male ex-combatants in the post-conflict setting mirror this normalisation of violence. When their masculinity as an armed soldier is threatened by rival groups of men, then violence is seen to be a way out of their problems.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained the peacebuilding process and, in particular, keys facets of the demilitarisation process, comprising the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of the GAM ex-soldiers. It has been shown that demilitarisation has failed insofar as it has led to remilitarisation of a different kind, through the reconstitution of both the GAM military ideology and hierarchical command structure. Remilitarisation provided both a context and new power resources for the GAM ex-commanders to re-organise and re-consolidate their political and economic power in new civilian rules. Through the establishment of the KPA, the ex-commanders have been able to appropriate political and economic resources, both for their own personal wealth and to benefit their groups more broadly, particularly their loyal ex-combatants. Nevertheless, because economic resources in the KPA were unequally distributed among the ex-commanders and the male and female rank and file soldiers, conflict and resentment have been created, especially among the excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers. This was heightened by the grading system set up by the ex-commanders in the KPA, through which some male rank and file ex-soldiers’ status as ‘combatants’ went unrecognised, most notably in the case of those who escaped from the battlefield or who surrendered to the Indonesian soldiers. As the grading system was followed by unfair economic distributions to these ex-soldiers, it eroded their economic circumstances, particularly their male breadwinner status as the heads of their household. As a result of this, some excluded GAM ex-soldiers have expressed their grievances through displays of anger and disappointment, while some others have gone further to articulate their grievances through violence involving guns.
Subsequently, peacebuilding and demilitarisation have provided considerable space for the GAM ex-commanders to further secure their political and economic power through the establishment of their political party, the PA or *Partai Aceh* (the Aceh Party). These new political spaces have allowed the ex-commanders to continue to manoeuvre their dominant position over the other civilian GAM elites – their political rival groups – through the reconstitution of a hegemonic masculinity and a militaristic ideology that is explained in the next chapter.
Chapter 5

Hegemonic Power and Masculine Hierarchies in Post-conflict Aceh

Introduction

Following the implementation of the Helsinki peace agreement, the GAM ex-commanders continued to manoeuvre to position themselves as apart from and superior to other GAM groups, particularly during provincial electoral contestations between 2006 and 2014. This manoeuvring involved both the ex-commanders’ struggle to garner support from their former rank and file soldiers, and to marginalise politically and economically the civilian GAM leadership who threatened their hegemonic position. In each case, both non-violent and violent means were used.

To garner the voter support base to win local elections, the GAM ex-commanders continued to assert a militaristic form of hegemonic masculinity that promoted the ‘warrior hero’ as the most honoured way to be a man and a leader (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). As we have seen, the ‘warrior hero’ was part and parcel of the militaristic masculine identity that the GAM military group forged for itself during the conflict era. In the subsequent post-conflict era, this ideal of manliness was re-invoked to encourage former troops to join the GAM ex-commanders’ new political organisations under the leadership of the Muzakir Manaf group. Whilst the ex-commanders tended to claim the warrior hero status for themselves as worthy leaders, it was also used to elevate the status of all the GAM ‘combatants’ who had fought on the battlefield, setting such combatants apart from others who did not, so as to forge unity within the KPA.

In addition to invoking the warrior hero, the ex-commanders also re-invoked their status as ‘father-figurers’ and, hence, providers or guardians of their male rank and file soldiers’ economic wellbeing. The ideal of the good father/provider spoke to the needs of the male rank and file in fulfilling their head of household and breadwinner roles. Thus, whereas the warrior hero ideal invoked in part a sense of fraternal binding, the father/provider ideal more often sparked dependency relations in contexts where many male former soldiers found it difficult to provide for themselves and their families in the post-conflict era.
unaided. Moreover, because power and wealth were distributed unequally among and between ex-commanders and the male rank and file, the father-figure roles exercised by the ex-commanders caused levels of resentment among male rank and file, in particular among those not regarded as ‘true combatants’ who as a result received limited economic resources. This was amplified after the tsunami reconstruction and aid projects dried up in 2011, causing a loss of employment opportunities for the excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers. This caused them to feel diminished as men in relation to their perceived traditional roles and the hegemonic masculinity ideal. Their resulting ‘crises in masculinity’ have seen them express anger and disappointment towards the ex-commanders, and have led some of them to commit violent crimes.

Meanwhile, the ex-commanders manoeuvred to ideologically marginalise the GAM male civilian leadership group by undermining their status as men who are fitted for national leadership. This involved strategies of labelling the civilian GAM leadership as ‘civilians’ who are of a lower status than combatants; and even of emasculating the leaders as ‘traitors’ of the GAM struggle. This ideological construction was backed by practices to limit the civilian leaders' access to economic resources and weaken them through acts of intimidation and violence.

To explain how hegemonic masculinity worked to reposition the GAM ex-commanders in a new political context, this chapter has three sections. The first section elaborates on the new local political and fiscal arrangements arising from the peace agreement. The second section explains the local elite competitions for political office and the establishment of the GAM political parties. Finally, the third section investigates how hegemonic masculinity has been reconstituted in post-conflict Aceh period.

The new local political and fiscal arrangements

The GAM ex-commanders’ manoeuvres to position themselves as a new local elite occurred in the context of the peace process, which provided many opportunities and spaces for them to organise their political and economic power. Not only did the peace process allow the GAM ex-commanders to take part in provincial executive and legislative elections, and to establish a local political party to do so, it also opened up more economic opportunities for them in the form of larger budget transfers from the
central government to the Aceh provincial government, and greater shares in the state revenues from local natural resources (Aspinall 2009; Tornquist 2010; Sindre 2010, 2016; Strange and Patock 2010; Thorburn 2012). However, whilst I argue that this changed context was important, alone it does not adequately explain why and how the ex-commanders exerted power to accumulate wealth. To properly explain this it is necessary to refer also to the context of gender relations and, specifically, to masculine hierarchies that the ex-commanders’ manipulated to secure their political power and authority.

The MOU had introduced ‘free and fair’ local elections for both executive and legislative offices, and allowed the establishment of political parties to nominate candidates to stand for such offices (Clause 1.2. MOU Helsinki 2005). The MOU also set out the new local fiscal arrangements. According to the MOU, Aceh will secure 70% of the local revenue from current and future hydrocarbon deposits and other natural resources in the province (Thorburn 2012, 86-87). Furthermore, beginning in 2008, as stipulated in the Law of Government of Aceh, to boost the local economy, Aceh will also receive a 2% share of the national budget (DAU) for 15 years and then 1% for another 5 years until 2027 (Thorburn 2012). Total central government transfers from these allocations allowed Aceh’s revenue to increase from 1.2 trillion to 9.8 trillion between 1999 and 2009 (Aspinall 2009), and further increased to 10.65 trillion in 2013 (The Aceh Province Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

The ex-commanders’ struggle to position themselves as a dominant group was also never isolated from the contextual background of electoral political contestation – the new political environment encountered by the ex-commanders’ group. The introduction of elections pushed the ex-commanders’ group to develop their understanding of the new political competition between groups and hence to establish their own political strategies and manoeuvre to exert their power over the other, civilian GAM leadership – their political rivals. This was exemplified by the establishment of a new GAM ex-commanders’ mainstream political party, the PA or Partai Aceh, that gave them a new political vehicle through which to run prominent political candidates. These series of events contributed to the political maturation of the ex-commanders in the local political contests. As a result, the two provincial executive elections in 2006 and 2012, and the two provincial legislative elections in 2009 and 2014, marked the victory of the GAM ex-commanders’ group (the KPA group) over the other, civilian GAM leadership.
The majority of the ex-commanders from the KPA group interviewed considered that the political and fiscal scheme was appropriate compensation for the requirement that they lay down their guns, dismantle their military institution, and put aside their demands for Aceh’s independence. This generally held view was reflected in their statements that Aceh deserved to gain what they called the ‘Jakarta promise’ to be given more political and fiscal autonomy. Although some of the GAM ex-commanders considered that the peace deal package was not commensurate with their and their families’ enormous sacrifices during the war, they at least perceived that this time ‘Jakarta’ would fulfil its promise to give them opportunities to establish a GAM political party and thereby participate in the local electoral contests. For example, in one ex-commander’s words:

The Indonesian [government] promised to grant Aceh special autonomy, as Indonesia’s mahar [dowry] for Aceh independence, but this mahar was not compatible with our losses during the war. Nevertheless, the agreement has reflected the Indonesian government’s commitment and responsibility to develop the future Aceh by giving the GAM more chances to be integrated into the Indonesian political system. You can see me as an example of a former GAM commander who has been integrated into the Indonesian government system as the head of a district or Bupati in this area.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{153} Sarjani Abdullah, former regional commander in Pidie District, interview with the author, Pidie, January 2015
Although the political and fiscal arrangements provisioned by the peace process generally appealed to the GAM ex-commanders, among the male rank and file ex-soldiers a range of different point of views were expressed in the interviews. On the one hand, similar to their ex-commanders, accepting points of view arose among some of the former GAM male rank and file soldiers, specifically those closest to their ex-commanders. They saw that the scheme provided by the peace process was the ultimate answer to conclude the GAM insurgency movement, as it delivered promising political and economic outcomes for the military group’s future roles. For example, a rank and file ex-soldier said in an interview that: ‘Yes, we did not gain the independence of Aceh that we fought for, but it is clear now who will rule in the future Aceh’, referring to the former male ex-soldiers’ confidence in the GAM military group’s roles in Aceh politics into the future. This loyal rank and file soldier’s statement mirrors the ex-combatant group’s confidence in having a stake in the local political power, signifying their role in the war. This ex-soldier supported the peace agreement, largely because he saw it provided opportunities for the commanders and therefore for himself.

In contrast, the disgruntled male rank and file, in particular those categorised as ‘escapees’, expressed more doubts that the agreement would hold and deliver ongoing peace. A former GAM rank and file ex-soldier from Aceh Besar said that:

For me, the peace negotiations that resulted in the regional autonomy package of political and economic provisions for Aceh understood that Aceh had already been absorbed into the political interests of Jakarta [the Indonesian government]. By accepting the package, Aceh surrendered to Jakarta politics and our leaders [the GAM elite involved in negotiations] agreed to the Jakarta deal. I doubted this agreement would last long since Jakarta has downplayed the agreements they promised in the past. Once Jakarta breaks its new promise, armed conflict will rise again in Aceh. This is the cycle that we learn from the history of the Aceh conflict - it erupts every 15 to 20 years.

154 Former GAM soldier for Passe District North Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
155 Former rank and file soldier for Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
Another disappointed male rank and file ex-soldier expressed the view that the scheme was nothing more than a reflection of the GAM ‘elite project’ to make the political and economic package a ‘peace industry’ and hence enrich themselves. He said that:

The peace agreement equates to an ‘elite project’ to nurture their [the ex-commanders’] wealth. Look at what the GAM elite have gained now [referring to the head of Majelis, Malik Mahmud and his supreme commander, Muzakir Manaf]. They have become rich with the power and wealth they got from the peace package. But, then you look at what the rank and file got from it – it is nothing compared to their gains. You can see most rank and file are living in hardship and poverty. The rich continue to become richer and the poor continue to become poorer. That is what the peace agreement looks like in Aceh.156

The different points of view among the male rank and files regarding the regional autonomy package are a consequence of their ex-commanders’ strategic capacity to select who are included and excluded in the KPA group and therefore who benefits from associated distributions of the material benefits – as explained in the previous chapter.

Contending GAM elites and the establishment of the GAM political parties

At the time of the first provincial governor election in 2006, the new GAM local political parties – as mandated by the MOU – were not yet established. Thus, to participate, the GAM elites needed to either align with an already established national political party or run as independent candidates.157 In the preparations for this election, conflict escalated between the Majelis, the KPA and the civilian negotiator group over the decision as to who would be the GAM candidate.

The Majelis – led by the GAM exiled figures, Malik Mahmud (former GAM Prime Minister), Zakaria Saman (former GAM Defence Minister), Zaini Abdullah (former GAM Health Minister) and Usman Lampo Aweh (former GAM Finance Minister) – promoted Zaini Abdullah’s brother, Hasbi Abdullah (a former civilian GAM supporter), to run as the

156 Former rank and file soldier for Bata Ilik District of Bireun, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
157 Law of Governing Aceh, No 11/2006, Article 67, stated that independent candidates are allowed to contest for local political office.
governor candidate, alongside Humam Hamid, the non-GAM intellectual from the existing national party, the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP). The PPP had a strong Islamic base in Aceh during the Suharto period (ICG 2006b, 4-8, and ICG 2007, 2). The decision to include someone from this Jakarta-based party as the vice governor candidate was made by the head of the Majelis, Malik Mahmud, replicating the civilian leadership’s previous authority to impose decisions from the top of the GAM hierarchy to its subordinates, leaving no room for negotiation.

The Majelis decision to include a non-GAM ally heightened conflict among the GAM elite groups. As a challenge to the authority of the Majelis, the civilian GAM negotiators’ group proposed a different candidate, Nasiruddin Bin Ahmed (a former GAM negotiator). However, as Nasiruddin stood aside, the civilian GAM leadership proposed another candidate, Irwandi Yusuf, (a former GAM propagandist, Helsinki negotiator and GAM representative in the AMM in 2005-2006). At first the KPA group stayed neutral, but then later publicly announced that it had originally promoted Irwandi as its candidate, coupled with Muhammad Nazar as vice governor (former student activist in SIRA). This reflected the strategy of the GAM ex-commanders in the KPA group to compete with the Majelis by making an alliance with the civilian GAM leaders’ candidates (see ICG 2006b). The ex-commanders’ interests in forming an alliance with Irwandi were particularly linked to how the KPA could access economic resources through the awarding of more business contracts to the KPA. In one ex-soldier’s words: ‘Irwandi was chosen as the Aceh governor candidate by the KPA, but remember, he had to promise to work to make it easier for the KPA to access contracting business projects in Dinas-dinas [the government departments]. If not, we would pull out and replace him with the other candidate’. 158

The governor election was won by Irwandi who obtained 38.2% of votes, marking the defeat of the Majelis group who received only 16.6% (see ICG 2006b, Supriadi and Hwan 2006). The 23 district head elections, held in parallel with the governor election in Banda Aceh in December 2006, also saw the victory of the KPA group: 10 out of 23 elected heads of districts and a local mayor were all winning KPA candidates (Stange and Patock 2010, 96). After the governor election, Irwandi experienced further conflict with the top Majelis

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158 Former GAM soldier for Batalik District, interview with the author, Banda Aceh November 2014 and April 2016.
leadership – in particular with Malik Mahmud and Zakaria Saman, who claimed Irwandi’s candidacy in the 2006 governor election reflected his betrayal of the Majelis, the top GAM leadership (see ICG 2006b).

Despite these tensions among the civilian GAM leadership, two years later, in 2008, Malik Mahmud and Irwandi, together with Muzakir Manaf, the former GAM supreme commander, established the Partai Aceh (Aceh Party or the PA) (ICG 2008, 2-3). Although the PA was initially set up by the Majelis group, in its daily operation it was firmly controlled by the former GAM commanders’ group, the KPA, and headed by Muzakir Manaf (ICG 2009, 2). Although the PA was highly controlled by the ex-commanders in the KPA group, its membership was a mix of the former GAM soldiers and also civilian intellectuals from the former student movement SIRA or SMUR – a non-GAM group. In the 2009 provincial legislative election, the PA won the largest number of seats of any party, 33 out of the 69 seats in the Aceh Provincial Parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Aceh, DPRA). In the 2010 district legislative election, the PA also gained the largest number of seats; 237 out of 645 (Palmer 2010, 291). This marked another political success for the KPA group. As a result, the ex-commanders’ group in the KPA gained great influence over the decision-making processes in the parliament, both in the formulation of new legislation and in blocking, invalidating or agreeing with local provincial budget proposals.

The rift between Malik Mahmud (the head of the Majelis) and now-Governor Irwandi escalated again in 2010. Irwandi had not fully fulfilled the KPA group’s interests in accessing contracting business, as many of the awarded contracts had gone to his own group. Instead of choosing Irwandi to run again as the governor candidate for the 2012 election, Malik Mahmud selected Zaini Abdullah, alongside the KPA leader, Muzakir Manaf. In supporting Malik Mahmud’s decision, the KPA leader Muzakir Manaf stated that he expected Irwandi to withdraw from the contest, and that then the KPA would nominate only one preferred candidate – Zaini Abdullah – alongside himself (ICG 2011, 3). The decision was a bitter blow for Irwandi. He then decided to run as an independent candidate.

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159 Fourteen parties contested the 2009 local parliamentary election (see IPAC 2014a and IPAC 2014b, Appendix 2). Although ‘intimidation was widespread’, the vast majority of voters said they had not been pressured to vote a particular way. Moreover, a study found that ‘many voters expressed the view that the former rebels had earned their chance to govern’ (Refugee Review Tribunal Australian 2009, 13).

160 Former GAM Sagoe commander in Biruen district, interview with the author, Bireun, November 2014.
The KPA’s decision to nominate Zaini Abdullah and Muzakir Manaf as governor and vice governor candidates signalled a change in the political strategy of the ex-commanders; to forge a new alliance with the Majelis and overthrow their old civilian ally. The result of the poll demonstrated triumph for the KPA group, with their candidates winning office with 56% of the vote. In contrast, the Irwandi group won only 29% of the vote (see IFES 2012 and IPAC 2014b).

Following Irwandi’s defeat in the 2012 governor election, he and his men detached from the mainstream GAM political party, the PA, and established a new GAM political party, the PNA or the Partai National Aceh/Aceh National Party, which they claimed to be more democratic, inclusive and embodying of civic nationalism for a better future Aceh. The PNA comprised a mixed group of the civilian GAM elite (former GAM negotiators), the former student movement groups (SIRA and SMUR), and several former GAM regional commanders who had been expelled from the KPA military hierarchy due to their closeness to Irwandi. The 2014 provincial legislative election indicated the successful outcome for the ex-commanders’ party, the PA, as it gained 29 out of 81 seats or 36% of the total seats in the provincial parliament. The PNA gained only 4% of seats – 3 out of the 81 seats (IPAC 2014b).

In 2014, internal competition among the GAM elite escalated again, when conflicts arose between the former GAM supreme commander and now Vice Governor Muzakir Manaf (of the KPA), and Governor Zaini Abdullah (of the Majelis) over access to economic resources. By this time, the KPA group controlled institutional political governance, in particular the provincial parliament in Aceh. As a result of the KPA’s electoral campaign strategy, the former GAM supreme commander, Muzakir Manaf, sat side-by-side with the civilian exiled leader, Dr Zaini Abdullah, as joint representatives of the mainstream ex-combatants’ party, the PA. Yet by the end of 2014, when this research was conducted, the alliance between these two men had already ended and they were competing with each other for access to and control over local resources and political power. At that stage, the former GAM military group controlled the Provincial Aceh Parliament, which has strategic decision-making

161 Former GAM military spokesperson and PNA leader, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, December 2014.
162 Head of forum LSM Aceh or the Aceh Civil Society forum, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, October 2014.
powers regarding political and resources matters. On the other hand, the civilian GAM exile leaders dominated the provincial bureaucracy, most notably with respect to promoting top level civil servants and accessing the provincial budget. However, the civilian exiled leaders failed to achieve a social and political base among the former GAM soldiers. It was the military group – Muzakir Manaf’s group – that came to control the rank and file ex-soldiers. Under the KPA and the PA, Muzakir Manaf gained enormous support from ex-soldiers. Importantly, hegemonic masculinity worked as a strategy for the ex-commanders to position themselves as a dominant group over the other GAM elite groups, as the next section explains.

**Hegemonic masculinity in the post-conflict period**

To recap, hegemonic masculinity is an ideal image of manhood – a desired and most honoured form of manliness constructed under particular circumstances (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). It is not a simple description of men’s characteristics or traits, but rather their practical relationships with respect to the ideal, that is central to understanding how hegemonic masculinity works (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 841). In other words, this ideal version of manhood cannot be embodied automatically in men, even by the most powerful of men, as men must instead position themselves in relation to that ideal. Hegemonic masculinity can be said to be established when there is conformity between a ‘cultural ideal and institutional power’ collectively; and hegemonic masculinity serves as ‘a currently accepted strategy’ of domination in the prevailing patriarchal order (see Connell 1995, 77). Securing hegemonic masculinity requires policing other men, in addition to the exclusion of women (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 844).

In the post-conflict political power contestation in Aceh, hegemonic masculinity – as constructed by the ex-commanders – has been manifested in a particular form of militarised masculine imagery; that of a GAM commander as a warrior hero (*pejuang*). As Abu Razak, a GAM vice commander, said:

> The warrior hero or *pejuang* Aceh is an *imuem* [a leader in Islamic terms] who never left the battlefield but lead the group until the war’s end. The solidity of the soldiers depends on their commandership. Commanders know best how to handle their
subordinates in the group. Maintaining a *jamaah* [a group in Islamic terms] is important for the solidity of the group.163

Abu Razak continued:

I was the vice central commander after the *Mualem* [Muzakir Manaf]. I stayed on the mountain with my 120 trusted foot soldiers. After the MOU was signed in August 2005, I went down from the hill along with my soldiers. Until now, I never escaped from *jamaah*. Although the war has been concluded, Acehnese must always remember and never forget their warrior or *pejuang* who fought on the battlefield.164

This quote indicates that the former GAM military commander portrayed himself as an exemplar of the ideal man: a man of honour, possessing military leadership qualities, combat experience and loyalty to the military group. This ideal expressed by the ex-commander does not exactly describe his military characteristics. After the GAM military institution was disbanded, the ex-commanders no longer had wartime combat responsibilities, but nevertheless continued to refer to these duties and associated wartime leadership qualities in themselves, as a way to differentiate themselves from their rivals. It is their attachment to and promulgation of this ideal that enables the ex-commanders assert and achieve their dominant position over the civilian GAM leadership, and thereafter take up local authority and leadership positions. In the post-conflict situation, the warrior hero or the *pejuang* functions as a template for the selection of ‘who fits the ideal’ in ruling Aceh – who is most suited to rule Aceh – and has thus been crucial in the ex-commanders gaining support from the rank and file ex-soldiers.

In the 2006 political contestation, the image of ‘warrior hero’ or *pejuang* proved effective as the KPA’s political campaign. When the KPA promoted their civilian ally as a candidate, it used the template of the ‘warrior hero’ to portray publicly that the Irwandi-Nazar candidates reflected the ‘genuine GAM who sacrificed most in the struggle’, in contrast to their rivals, Hasbi Abdullah and Humam Hamid, who were represented as being not part of the GAM struggle (see ICG 2006b). Subsequently, the ideal of the warrior hero has gained momentum

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163 Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
164 Idem.
in post-conflict Aceh, in particular since the ex-commanders’ political roles have matured after their supreme commander, Muzakir Manaf, was elected vice governor of Aceh. The following election speech to members of the public by a former regional GAM commander in Biruen district, which appeared in the local Aceh media, indicates how strongly the idea of the ex-commanders as warrior heroes who deserve to rule Aceh was used, during the PA’s promotion of its candidates. He maintains that:

Muzakir Manaf (Mualem) and Khalili [ex-combatants from Biruen District] come from the same 'stomach', that is the struggle! Today, everyone who was involved on the battlefield knows, Mualem and Khalili are ex-fighters who sacrificed for the nation in the field [Aceh], not those who spent their time abroad [referring to the exiled leader: Zaini Abdullah]. Remember that during the war we were in hardship and happiness together. Therefore, I am with Mualem and Khalili. (Modus Aceh 2016a).

Further, during my fieldwork observations in Aceh, particularly in 2014 and 2016, I observed how the term pejuang (‘warrior hero’) featured extensively in electoral banners, pamphlets and posters persuading the local Acehnese people to vote for the GAM ex-commanders. On one occasion, in the course of an interview with an ex-commander in Biruen District, I saw an election banner which included a picture of the ex-commander dressed in full military uniform with hat. As well, pejuang appeared in songs written for the ex-commanders’ campaigns, again urging voters to support them because of their combat record.\(^{165}\)

Garnering support for electoral contests entails attracting and influencing the voting choices of male and female rank and file ex-soldiers. To achieve the necessary bonding and loyalty with their former troops, the ex-commanders have also resorted to the ideal of the ‘warrior hero’ (pejuang). To make this a unifying ideal – rather than one than only applies to the qualities of an elite – in this regard the ex-commanders also used the GAM military slogan of ‘udeb beusare mate beusajan’ (life and death together), previously applied during the conflict and redeployed in the KPA. Former GAM commanders (specifically, formerly top level Panglima field commanders) interviewed in this research regularly invoked this slogan to express the emotional attachment involved in maintaining the social bonding and

\(^{165}\) See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teeUqyE8AkU
comradeship under the Muzakir Manaf group.\textsuperscript{166} In an interview, a former GAM regional commander stated that, ‘to reorganise the former troops, the role of the slogan of ‘\textit{udep beusare, mate beusajan}’ is still crucial. The former GAM soldiers are familiar with and loyal to the spirit contained in this slogan and, with this military doctrine, consider they are obligated to follow the orders of their commanders.’\textsuperscript{167} Another, higher ranked ex-commander stated that ‘in the aftermath of the armed conflict, former GAM soldiers still comply with this doctrine. They look to their former commanders for information regarding the peace agreement and the social and economic implications for the GAM troops. By evoking this slogan, unity between the commanders and the rank and file is made easier.’\textsuperscript{168}

A Refugee Review Tribunal Australia (2009, 12) report on the results of the 2009 elections in Aceh states that: ‘[p]lacards printed in Acehnese language appealed to “loyalty”. Some were menacing – “live together or die together”, according to one sign.’ In short, the report continues, PA activists ‘took a with-us-or-against-us approach to other Acehnese parties, calling some of them “traitors”’.

The slogan ‘\textit{udeb beusare mate beusajan}’, applied in the KPA setting, resonated with the loyal ex-soldiers. From their perspective, this slogan helped to reunite the soldiers and the commanders after the armed conflict concluded. A former GAM soldier and loyalist said that:

\begin{quote}
In the post-conflict situation, where all components of the GAM military group [the commanders and soldiers] have been merged under the KPA, the first thing the former GAM soldiers do is to go and find their immediate commander in their command structure in the KPA. It important. Because as combatants, through hardship and pleasure, they spent most of their time with their immediate commander. They stuck together within their commander’s group in the jungle. Hence, since the armed conflict ended and the KPA was established, I found that the slogan of ‘\textit{udep besare mate besajan}’ is like \textit{rujuk} (reuniting) between the soldiers and the commander. I was in the same camp with Muzakir Manaf and after the conflict, I rushed to find him in the KPA.\textsuperscript{169}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{166} T Sarjani, former GAM regional Commander for Pidie District, interview with the author, Pidie, January 2015.
\textsuperscript{167} Idem.
\textsuperscript{168} Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.
\textsuperscript{169} Former GAM rank and file soldier for North Aceh, interview with the author, November 2014.
Even among the ex-soldiers who were labelled ‘escapees’, some found that the slogan ‘udeb buesaree mate beusajan’, has driven them to seek out their former commanders after the establishment of the KPA. In one escapee soldier’s words:

When I was freed from jail during the conflict in 2004, I escaped to Jakarta for a year but later I returned to the hills to come and see my commander and my comrades, exactly a week before the MOU was signed in 2005. After the conflict, the GAM military organisation was indeed disbanded as a result of the MOU, but the spirit as GAM combatants has never disappeared in my mind. Marwah [pride] as combatants must be maintained. As a GAM combatant, I experienced the same fate, life and death, udeb besaree mate beusajan on the battlefield with my former comrades and my commander in the group. The spirit as combatant, pushed me to stick to the Muzakir Manaf group in the KPA. Many times Muzakir Manaf still calls me when he needs me. I support him as our leader in the KPA.170

By espousing the slogan ‘udeb beusare mate beusajan’, the ex-commanders in the KPA secured broad support from GAM former soldiers; something very important for the development of their power networks through the KPA. For the same purposes of generating support, the ex-commanders also promoted the ideal of the good ‘father-figure’ – as explained below.

The ‘father-figure’ position, or in Indonesian terms Bapakism, evokes literally ‘the relationship between a father (Bapak) and his children (anak buah)’ (Brown 1994, 117, see also Baker 2013). In this personal bond, the anak buah has no or little access to power and resources other than through their dependence upon the Bapak, who provides protection and economic support. In exchange, the dependents offer loyalty and support to the Bapak. By employing this ideological imagery of the Bapak (father), the ex-commanders have justified an unequal, dependency relationship with their male rank and file – in which they claim, both that it is important to secure their former soldiers’ economic livelihoods, and that it is important to prevent them from relapsing into criminal activities.

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170 Former GAM rank and file soldier for Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
It is important to note that in the post-conflict period, the father-figure imagery is no longer directed at the ex-commanders’ role in safeguarding the rank and file from harmful attack or threats from an enemy (as a military commander might). Rather, it is expressed in how best they perform their roles as father figures or Bapak who provide economic assistance to their ‘children’ (for whom they are posited to be responsible). As previously discussed, during the armed conflict the GAM commanders enjoyed economic gains from the war. At the same time they could also exercise their ‘father-figure’ or guardianship roles and meet the economic expectations of their male and female GAM soldiers, without too much difficulty; through such activities as protection rackets involving local businesses; illegal logging; dealing drugs; and illegal taxing of local petty traders; all of which were occurred during the conflict. Post-conflict, the ex-commanders continue to undertake similar activities, and continue to meet the economic expectations of the rank and file through the provision of money and jobs, including by co-opting local government budgets through contracts and businesses which they distribute to their loyal rank and file ex-soldiers.171

Many times during interviews for this research, ex-commanders have said that they have an ‘extended social responsibility’ or obligation to protect the livelihoods of their rank and file ex-soldiers, and those of their families, and the widows, children and orphans of former GAM soldiers.172 As one former GAM Sagoe commander stated:

I am a former commander here in my district, Nagan Raya. I have a responsibility to provide for my ex-soldiers’ economic needs. Every time when they are sick, or get married, or their children are going to school, they need cash. To whom do they go to fulfil their needs? They always find me. How poor they are. It is a pity, but as their ex-commander, I need to address their economic problems.173

171 In this context, the high status of commanders intersects with their privileged status as politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen. T. Sarjani and Muchlish Basyah are two prominent GAM commanders who maintain multiple functions as heads of KPA, Aceh party leaders, head of districts (Bupati), and businessmen who run (own? hold?) huge assets (PT Halimun Meugah Raya). This pattern extends to the privileged ex-troops who are close to the commanders, with respect to accessing and controlling the flow of business contracts from dinas-dinas in the provincial and district governments in Aceh.


173 Former GAM Sagoe commander Naga Raya, West Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.
In another interview, Abu Razak, the former GAM vice supreme commander, stated:

As their former commander, I know that the reintegration package delivered to the troops was not sufficient to meet their economic needs, including those of their families. The land provision for former GAM soldiers promised by the MOU was vital to support their economic livelihoods but it has not materialised up until now. I fear this will trigger the anger and disappointment of male ex-soldiers and this will result in violent crimes. But to overcome this problem, I have employed some of them as my security guides, and others as drivers; some others I gave cash to, just enough to buy cigarettes. I am not able to give them money every day. But it is the responsibility of the ex-commanders to address their economic wellbeing.174

In addition to having economic obligations, the ex-commanders pointed to their obligations to uphold the MOU by pacifying their male rank and file soldiers; so that the latter do not resort to using their guns. They consider this issue to be a ‘security alert’ which, when required, needs an immediate response from the ex-commanders, in order to safeguard the MOU Helsinki; otherwise male rank and file ex-soldiers may destroy the peace-building process. The former GAM Sagoe commander for Nagan Raya, West Aceh, says that:

The primary function of the commander is to “tame” the rank and file from a relapse into criminal activity. As for the commanders who know exactly the nature and personality of their foot soldiers, it is the commanders’ responsibility to look after their troops, secure and protect them from falling into violence.175

The father-figure status of the ex-commanders appealed very much to the perceived breadwinner roles of both the ‘included’ and ‘excluded’ ex-soldiers. In the case of the former, some felt that the ex-commanders were fulfilling their roles as Bapak by integrating them into their business networks. In this situation, the ex-soldiers’ need to uphold their breadwinner status is linked also to their status as men. Their breadwinner status reflects the existing gender order in Aceh, which dictates that men’s primary responsibility is to secure the financial wellbeing of their families via the public sphere, while women are responsible for

174 Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.
175 Former GAM Sagoe commander Naga Raya, West Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.
taking care of the domestic sphere (Nowak and Caufield 2008). Thus, for the ex-soldiers, a proper man is a good breadwinner for his family. As one loyalist ex-soldier said:

Good men should be responsible to seek money and feed their wife and kids. They have to make sure that they are not starving and their children can go to school. Look, after the conflict, I got married, and now I have a wife and child. I need to be responsible for their wellbeing. Thank goodness that my commander is aware of my situation. With the help of my commander, I can establish a small-scale contract business to supply office equipment to the provincial government departments in Banda Aceh.176

The efforts of male ex-soldiers to seek and maintain patronage networks from their ex-commanders, in order to support their livelihoods, is a manifestation not merely of their material needs, but also of their need to fulfil gender roles and expectations. As successful contractors or businessmen, they are also seen to be successful men. The privileged male ex-soldiers see themselves in these terms. A former GAM soldier for Passe district who stayed in the same camp with his commander (Piranha Camp led by Muzakir Manaf) has explained how he gained wealth through his commander. He stated ‘in the beginning of the post-conflict reconstruction, with the help of my ex-commanders, I become a businessman. I felt I was a successful man who had double jobs. I worked for the BRR as an ex-soldier representative and, at the same time, I also was doing contracting business with my ex-commander. From the business, I could earn more than 300 million rupiahs. This business definitely helped to fulfil my responsibility as a head of household. I used that money to buy a house in Lhokseumawe and feed my wife and children’.177

As a result of the strategy of espousing the ideal of the ex-commanders as Bapak, the majority of male rank and file ex-soldiers interviewed, in particular those who benefited from the economic benefits that trickled down from the ex-commanders’ business projects, supported the ex-commanders’ candidacies in the electoral contestation; on the basis that the ex-commanders ‘deserve to rule Aceh’. By referring back to the war situation, although they lived in hardship in having to move frequently from camp to camp and fight in the battlefield,

176 Former GAM soldier for Passe District North Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
177 Former GAM soldier for Passe District North Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh November 2014 and April 2016.
they stressed that it was their ex-commanders who cared for their economic circumstances. Conversely, the other candidates (from the civilian elite GAM groups) escaped from the battlefield and were perceived not to care about the economic circumstances of former GAM combatants. Instead, the exiled leaders were perceived to have enriched themselves while living in exile.178

However, the Bapak or father-figure roles which the ex-commanders have espoused for themselves have created expectations which have also led to resentments over resulting inequalities in economic distributions; especially among the excluded ex-soldiers whose military status was eroded by the ex-commanders. For these disgruntled ex-soldiers, their breadwinner status is also important for their status as men. Lacking the capacity to hold the same high standards of breadwinner as their more privileged colleagues, in the interviews for this research they often expressed feelings of inferiority, anger and bitterness towards their former commanders and some of the male loyalists. A disgruntled male ex-soldier in Banda Aceh told the researcher that:

I was involved in GAM along with my brother in early 2002. In one battlefield, my brother was shot dead, but I was saved. With the help of my friends, by using a small boat, I escaped to Penang, Malaysia for 3 years. I returned to Aceh in 2005 after MOU Helsinki was signed. I sought my ex-commander in the KPA, hoping that I could gain economic assistance from him. But I got nothing. Can you imagine? How can I respect the ex-commanders in the KPA, while they do not care about me? The ex-commanders only care about those ex-soldiers who are close to them. If you have a close connection with the ex-commanders, or at least their family members or village relatives, you will be awarded contract business and then you will get rich. But I don’t want to beg as a beggar to them.

May Allah punish those who are living a luxury life above the suffering of others. Do they think that they [the ex-commanders and the loyalist soldiers] are the only men who have stomachs, wives and children? I am a man and I am head of a household. I also need money to support my family. Anyway, as a man, I have to stay firm and be

178 A group of male ex-soldiers from Biruen District, interview with the author, Bireun, November 2014.
strong. With these hardships, I sell fruits to the market in order for me and my family to survive economically.\textsuperscript{179}

In this case, the excluded ex-soldier feels angry and bitter. He hoped that his ex-commander would care about his welfare and fulfil his economic expectation, but he received nothing. Importantly, he identifies concerns about his resultant diminished status as a breadwinner.

In another interview, two excluded male ex-soldiers in Banda Aceh likewise expressed bitterness about their economic situation after the conflict. They said that ‘the other comrades who are closest to the ex-commanders have been given access to the ex-commanders’ business projects, yet in the meantime there is little that we can do. We are instead forced to seek petty money by knocking on our leaders’ doors or asking for money from the pejabat [officials] in the dinas-dinas [local government departments]’\textsuperscript{180}. They confirmed that ‘the commanders alongside their inner circles are going home with ‘bungkusan’ [money] to give to their wives and kids while we are coming home empty-handed to our families.’\textsuperscript{181} As their social, economic and political circumstances have depended on the hierarchical KPA system, all that they perceive that they can do is to show their loyalty to their ex-commanders, in the hope of receiving small material rewards in the future. As such, they have not entirely given up hope.

Meanwhile, the ex-soldiers who were not recognised at all and therefore totally excluded from the KPA because they were not considered ‘true combatants’, have also experienced degradation in their status as men and as breadwinners. In one of many examples, a particular senior rank and file ex-soldier from West Aceh who is no longer identified as a real ex-combatant cannot access any jobs or other material benefits as a result. He has lost status as a man as well. He condemns the KPA and Muzakir Manaf group as criminals who rob the Acehnese people’s money, and maintains he has never accepted the peace agreement. Hence, he refuses any political relationship with the KPA group. In his words:

\textsuperscript{179} Former GAM soldier from East Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh December 2014.
\textsuperscript{180} A group of two former GAM soldiers from Batalik District, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
\textsuperscript{181} Idem.
I was involved in GAM in the 1990s. My roles were to disseminate the GAM intelligence information to my district level in West Aceh. But in 2000, I was captured and I surrendered to the Indonesian soldiers. After the peace agreement in 2005, I got nothing. I never got any money, jobs, or contract business from the KPA. Nothing! I never go to the ex-commanders in the KPA to beg for any of these. I know this is hard for me as a man with a wife and 3 kids. I am nothing compared to their luxury life [referring to the ex-commanders and their loyalists]. But as a man, I need money and a job to feed my family, but what can I do? I am not part of the Muzakir Manaf group. … Although Muzakir Manaf and his group now have become rich due to the contract business they got from the government money, they got it through unlawful ways by intimidating local government officers to award the contracts to them. It is criminal and cruel. They steal public money. I don’t want to make any deal with those criminals. For me, there is no peace agreement, as long as there are still lots of GAM ex-soldiers living in starvation.182

As indicated by these criticisms of the ex-commanders, former rank and file soldiers were not only excluded by the ex-commanders in the KPA, some have also excluded themselves, on the basis that they are not part of the ex-commanders’ group. Although hegemonic masculinity implies ‘a large measure of consent’ (Connell 1987, 185), it does not have to mean total domination, in that it can involve everyday contestation and be open to challenge and change (Connell 1987, 184 and 2005, 853). In the case of the relationships between the excluded soldiers and the former commanders, militaristic hegemonic masculinity itself has not usually been challenged; rather, it is the denial of access to the higher-status positions for themselves that many excluded male rank and file do not accept. It is for this reason, with its associated implications for their roles and identities as men and breadwinners, that they feel angry and resent their ex-commanders in the KPA.

The harsh situation facing the excluded male rank and file soldiers has been amplified by the poor general economic outlook for Aceh, especially after the tsunami and reconstruction projects decreased in 2011. As indicated by a report from The Asia Foundation, by 2011-2012 aid donors’ spending to support tsunami reconstruction had reduced by 40% from its peak, and the post-conflict program had fallen by 20% (Barron et al. 2013). With the

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182 Former GAM soldier from West Aceh, interview with the author, Banda Aceh December 2014.
reduction in tsunami reconstruction and post-conflict reintegration funds, the Aceh economy came to depend largely on central government transfers. This had a strong negative effect on the economic situation of the male rank and file ex-soldiers’ group. Most of the employment opportunities that had been available through the peace and reconstruction projects had disappeared, along with the opportunities within the temporary projects run by the international NGOs operating in Aceh. This erosion of the economic condition has further threatened the breadwinner status of these excluded ex-soldiers as men. For example, one excluded male rank and file ex-soldier in this position stated bitterly:

During the conflict, I escaped to Medan [North Sumatera capital city] and returned to Aceh after the MOU was signed in 2005. When I returned back to my commander in Batalilak District of Bireun and met with him, he gave me around 150 rupiahs, that was enough to buy lunch and a pack of cigarettes. With that amount of money, I could not bring anything home to give to my wife and children. I am fed up with him but I need to find a job. Who cares about me and my family? The ex-commanders? No. They feed their own stomachs and their own family. Anyway, as a man, a job is important to keep my family [wife and kids] alive. When the tsunami construction projects were booming, I was working as casual daily labour in Banda Aceh from 2006 to 2012. However, since the projects have diminished and many NGOs have left Aceh, jobs are difficult to find. As a man, I feel nothing without a job. How can I survive economically without a job? It is hard for me as a head of household --I need to find work to feed my wife and kids. Now I am back and forth to Banda Aceh seeking job opportunities.183

This situation has induced a ‘crisis of masculinity’ among some of the male rank and file ex-soldiers. This term refers to economic changes at both the individual and societal level that affect the gender order in ways that negatively impact on men’s sense of themselves as men (Morgan 2006, 109-115). In some men, this insecurity and loss of identity can cause them to respond aggressively and resort to violence as a way to shore up their masculinity (Morgan 2006, 114-115). While some male rank and file ex-soldiers express forms of disappointment and verbal anger, others have responded more aggressively, by committing violent crimes (see Chapter 6).

183 Former GAM soldier from Bireun District, interview with the author, Biruen, November 2014.
In addition to the ex-commanders’ successful attempts to garner support by espousing both the slogan of ‘udep besare mate besajan’ and father-figure imagery for their political candidates, they have acted to marginalise the other, civilian GAM leaders through non-violent and violent means, as explained below.

**The marginalisation of the civilian GAM leadership**

To legitimate and sustain their power, the ex-commanders group needed to ideologically re-cast the civilian GAM leadership as lesser men – in terms of ‘marginal masculinities’ (Connell 1995). This was done by labelling the civilian leadership group as ‘civilian’ and emasculating or rendering effeminate the civilian leaders as ‘traitors’. This strategy has been assisted by practices to limit the civilian elite’s access to economic resources, and weakening them by resorting to intimidation and even killings.

The political labelling strategy of the ex-commanders is rooted again in the armed struggle. As we have seen, during the conflict period the GAM organisational structure included the military group and the civilian group. This structure led to stronger militaristic bonding in the GAM military group compared to the civilian one, which strengthened the former group’s superior militarised identity as GAM combatants against the civilian ones. This pattern has proved significant in the post-conflict era; being reused by the ex-commanders’ group in contests for local political office. This shows how gender difference and the prevalence of a militarised masculinity was strongly institutionalised and became an ‘organising principle’ of the GAM (Bevan and MacKenzie 2012, 513). This had the significant effect of discouraging alternative masculinities.

In 2014, several GAM male ex-soldiers interviewed for this research continued to state that the *Majelis* or *Tuhapuet* group (the exiled elite men in Sweden) are not part of the military group; instead they are civilian GAM as they lived overseas and did not fight on the battlefield. They are categorised by the ex-soldiers as intellectuals or academics, *tidak berperang*, who did not go to war.\(^\text{184}\)\footnote{Former GAM soldier for Passe District, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.} They are also characterised as weak, old men in
comparison to the commanders' group who are young, brave men with combat experience.\footnote{185}{Idem.}

In an interview, a former GAM male soldier said that:

Yes, Abu \textit{doto} Zaini was our leader, our old guard, but he never fought in the war. He was just an academic who spent most of his life in Sweden doing diplomatic work. On the other hand, Muzakir Manaf is our great commander who spent his life in the field, in the Aceh jungle and fought in bloody battles with the enemy. Let’s give the leadership position to the younger. He deserves to be the leader of the future Aceh.\footnote{186}{Idem.}

The same labelling was experienced by the Irwandi group that was dissolved into the PNA group. A civilian GAM negotiator told the researcher that the KPA had accused him of being a civilian GAM who did not ever hold guns or fight on the battlefield.\footnote{187}{Munawar Liza, former GAM negotiator and former GAM Ambassador for the US, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, May 2016.} In his words: ‘Look, who was Munawar Liza? They [the KPA] said that I was not a combatant as I did not bear arms. Now you look at me and you will see I am a man, but in their eyes, I am not a man, as I did not go to the jungle and fight’.\footnote{188}{Idem.}

During the war, traitors – or in Acehnese ‘\textit{cuak}’ – were condemned by the GAM. Being a traitor was considered a fundamental form of betrayal to the Aceh nation during the GAM insurgency. In the GAM military group, there was very strict discipline and tough military sanctions imposed on combatants who violated the military code of conduct by, for example, leaking intelligence information about the GAM’s existence to the Indonesian military. Against this background, the top leader of the PNA group, Irwandi Yusuf, was labelled as a traitor (\textit{penghianat}). During his tenure as Aceh governor (2006-2012), not only was he accused of being more loyal to 'Jakarta', he was said to have betrayed ‘Aceh’ by stepping out and establishing a new GAM political party, the PNA. What Irwandi had done was considered by the KPA to be 'out of the path of the GAM struggle for the nation' (\textit{keluar garis perjuangan}).\footnote{189}{Irwandi Yusuf, former GAM negotiator and former Aceh Governor, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.} In his words:
Look what they have done to me; they have just neglected me. I was accused of being a traitor of Aceh by ‘selling Aceh to the Javanese’ [the Indonesian government]. It was a bitter thing in my life and I was really angry with them. They negated me as a former leader of Aceh. I was seen as a man without dignity in front of them. They are just greedy [rakus] and they will take power by whatever it takes and by all means. They are cruel and crooked. All they have in their heads are power and money.190

In one conversation, an official in Banda Aceh said the KPA group had even mocked Irwandi by stating that *Irwandi menjijikan dan lebih haram dari babi* (Irwandi is ridiculous and more forbidden than a pig).191 Another Irwandi/PNA group member who experienced emasculation is T Muksalimina. Following his resignation from the position of head of KPA District Aceh Besar, he was labelled a ‘traitor’ of the GAM by the KPA (Al Mubarak 2012). The emasculation of men in the civilian GAM elite has been a strategic tactic to marginalise them, by portraying them as a national leadership group that lacks dignity in comparison to the ex-commanders’ higher status and power standing in local politics.

Controlling access to economic opportunities has been one of the objectives of the elite GAM competition, as the resulting wealth and material power helps them to secure political support from the people, as an elite group. Accordingly, strictly limiting their rivals’ access to economic resources to limit their popular support base was also a strategy of the ex-commanders. As Irwandi Yusuf said ‘the primary goal of the KPA candidates, Zikir [the single name for both Zaini Abdullah and Muzakir Manaf], was how to defeat Irwandi. This situation was purposively designed by the KPA to block any economic resource relations going to the Irwandi group. They wanted to assure that there was no single Irwandi group in a strategic position in the bureaucracy’.192 This happened to the ex-District commander of Passe District, who, due to his support for Irwandi, was expelled by Muzakir Manaf, his commander in the KPA. This former GAM District commander said, ‘I was not responsible anymore with the reintegration funding distribution for former GAM soldiers, as I was not in the KPA anymore. In this situation, I am not Panglima Daerah (district commander) anymore. I am just an ordinary person who just came back to my society. But I support

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190 Idem.
191 Provincial government official, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, October 2014.
192 Irwandi Yusuf, former GAM negotiator and former Aceh Governor, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
Irwandi as he is a good man’. Although this former GAM commander has remained close to the former governor Irwandi Yusuf, his sacking means he is in no position to assist him in accessing resources.

As well, the war in Aceh has left a legacy with respect to the use and pursuit of violence as a means to confront an enemy or opponent. During the conflict, excessive violence became a war tactic to terrorise the enemy. For example, the Indonesian army used extreme violence, such as cutting off the heads of GAM soldiers, raping women, and mutilating the bodies of combatants and civilians, as a strategy to scare the GAM rebel movement (Human Right Watch 2001). Similarly, on the GAM combatant side, violence was used to make the enemy – the Indonesian military forces – afraid. GAM soldiers were very experienced in the use of violence, as they were trained to kill, abuse, torture and terrorise the enemy. A former GAM male rank and file soldier in Bireun district told the researcher that during the war, he had kidnapped an Indonesian policeman and cut off his penis to show how brave and brutal he was, and to express his retaliation against the violence committed by the Indonesian army.

In the post-conflict situation in Aceh, violence has been associated with the practices of militarised hegemonic masculinity used by the KPA group of ex-commanders to defeat political elite rivals. For instance, with respect to electoral violence, when the military men (Muzakir Manaf) and the exiled GAM leader (Zaini Abdullah) joined together in 2012 to run as governor and vice-governor candidates, there were several violent incidents involving killing, kidnapping and intimidation of their opponents; directed particularly at their main rivals, the PNA/the Irwandi group (The Jakarta Post 2012). Further, during the PNA political campaigns, some of the representatives of the PNA group were intimidated and kidnapped. Even Irwandi was publicly assaulted in 2012 by some ex-combatants from the KPA group during the official inauguration of Zaini Abdullah-Muzakir Manaf as governor and vice governor of Aceh (Serambi Indonesia 2012).

In an interview Irwandi said that during the 2014 local legislative elections, most of his candidates from his new political party (the PNA) – both male and female – again

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193 Former GAM District commander for Passe District, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
194 Former GAM soldier for Biruen district, interview with the author, Bireun, November 2014.
experienced intimidation; many were terrorised and some were even murdered. In this instance, he stressed that the violence was used to weaken the PNA group and to show the KPA’s domination in the new civilian context. In his words, 'the political contestation among legislative candidates in the 2014 election was not fair anymore since the KPA used violence to intimidate the PNA candidates, some experienced torture and even some were killed by KPA suspects'.

Another clear example of how violence was used to weaken rivals was the killing of the Batalik former middle-ranking commander (Cage), amid the GAM elite split during the 2012 local executive election. Cage was a District Commander (Panglima Daerah) who was loyal to former Aceh Governor Irwandi; and not the PA, which was backed by the former GAM supreme commander, Muzakir Manaf. Although the assassination of Cage has been brought to court and the perpetrator has been jailed, the practice of killing to target male ex-soldier’ rivals reflects how the militarised hegemonic masculinity has been sustained by the ruling ex-military group under the KPA. Cage was an example of a disgruntled ex-commander who strongly opposed the KPA, mocking the violence they committed against the Irwandi group. In an interview, a member of the civilian GAM elite from the PNA group stated that ‘even though it is hard to prove and bring the mastermind who controlled Cage’s killing to court, I am sure that the ex-commanders in the KPA were involved in this killing’.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained how GAM ex-commanders have re-established their dominant position over the other GAM groups in the new electoral political contestation, via the reconstruction of a militarised hegemonic masculinity. The GAM ex-commanders have reasserted this ideal both to gain support from the loyalist male rank and file ex-soldiers, and to marginalise the civilian leadership and the excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers. To gain support, ex-commanders have employed the idea of ‘warrior hero’ (pejuang), and have contrasted it to all others – the men and women who did not go to the battlefield. This ideal is profoundly resonant to reforge unity, fraternal bonding and shared militaristic identity among

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195 Irwandi Yusuf, former GAM negotiator and former Aceh Governor, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
196 Idem.
197 Former GAM soldier for Biruen district, interview with the author, Bireun, November 2014.
198 Munawar Liza, a former GAM negotiator, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
the ex-commanders and their ex-foot soldiers. In addition to the ideal ‘warrior hero’, the ex-commanders have also reconstructed their ‘father figure’ position as economic providers. This father figure role is significant to fulfil the breadwinner status expectations of the former loyal male foot soldiers. However, this ideal has in fact led to dependency relations and resentment; particularly among those who are not regarded as ‘true’ combatants. Meanwhile, to marginalise the civilian leadership, the ex-commanders have reused the same strategy that they used to undermine their status as men fit for national leadership during the conflict era; by re-labelling the civilian elite as ‘civilian’ and stereotyping them as ‘traitors’ of the nation. This marginalisation is supported by blocking the access of the civilian elite to economic resources, and weakening them through violence, threat and killing.

However, the militarised hegemonic masculinity asserted by the ex-commanders in the KPA had some unexpected political consequences. Not only were the GAM elites, both the civilian and the military groups, split through conflict in unexpected ways; in addition several ex-commanders who had been expelled from the KPA and PA then joined the civilian GAM elite, in particular the Irwandi group in the PNA. Many rank and file ex-soldiers who had been expelled from the KPA group became further marginalised and excluded from the distribution of economic resources. Some civilian GAM who were members of the PNA experienced tortured and intimidation, and some were killed, reportedly by those from within the KPA group.

The exercise of militarised hegemonic masculinity by the ex-commanders has triggered various responses by the civilian GAM elite, in particular from the Irwandi/PNA group. This has included the excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers’ protests, using both non-violent and violent means, and directed at their ex-commanders. This political phenomenon is explained in the next chapter.
Chapter 6

Responses of the Civilian Leadership and the Male Rank and File to Their Marginalisation

Introduction

As we have seen, in part through the exercise of a militarised hegemonic masculinity, the ex-commanders have positioned themselves as a dominant group over other former GAM groups in new local electoral contests in post-conflict Aceh. Between the years 2012 and 2014, this manoeuvre by the ex-commanders triggered reactions from their political rivals (who make up the PNA/Irwandi group) and from the excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers. However, these two groups, the civilian elite and the excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers, have reacted to their marginalisation in different ways. On the one hand, the Irwandi group has challenged the militaristic ideology of the ex-commanders by explicitly forging an alternative, civic nationalism to legitimise their claims to power and build a political platform for an alternative future for Aceh; one that involves a more radical break with the past, especially in relation to the links between violence and power. On the other hand, although some rank and file have also pursued non-violent means, other rank and file group have sought to challenge the ex-commanders on their own terms, through the use of violence.

The Irwandi group’s access to power and resources has been blocked by the ex-commanders, and the group has experienced violence, threat and intimidation. However, this group also holds status as a civilian GAM leadership whose members have benefited from higher education and possess leadership skills and experience in running government offices. Through their new political party, the PNA, the Irwandi group has sought to legitimate their political authority as befitting a civilian democracy. This group has argued that instead of militaristic rules, contemporary post-conflict Aceh should be governed by civic rules. Accordingly, for the civilian group, an ideal ruler is one who values civic democracy, non-violence, intellectuality, professionalism and Islam. Nevertheless, the civic ideals promoted by this civilian elite group are also highly gendered. As an ideological construction, their ideal of manliness with respect to the fit and proper men for political rule, devalues femininities associated with reproduction. The effect of this is that women are not considered to fit the ideal of the political representative.
Meanwhile, the excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers manifest their masculine protests through violent and non-violent means. The violence perpetuated by the Abu Minimi or Din Minimi group involves continuing to commit crimes that include kidnapping, extortion and murder. The violence committed by this armed group is not simply a legacy of being GAM combatants, rather it is also an active ideological construction to legitimate the group’s dissatisfaction with their harsh economic circumstances and their diminished status as male breadwinners. The other disgruntled male ex-soldiers who were expelled from the KPA, in particular those who were not recognised as ‘true combatants’, protest their dissatisfaction by establishing alternative organisations, separate from the KPA. To support the social, economic and political expectations of GAM ex-fighters, they have formed new organisations such as the FORKAB (Forum Komunikasi Anak Bangsa or Communication Forum for Children of the Nation) and the TRA (Tim Relawan Aceh or the Aceh Voluntary Team). This manifestation of masculine protests is, they claim, a consequence of their exclusion from the retained military status, the failure to recognise their sacrifice to the nation, their limited access to the post-conflict economic resource distributions and their difficult economic situation.

To elaborate on these developments, this chapter is organised into two sections. The first section explains the expressions of masculinities of the PNA group in relation to civic nationalism ideology, democracy, leadership qualities and Islam. This includes how this civic form of masculinity has resonated with the excluded middle-ranked ex-commanders, and later has encouraged them to join with the civilian leadership in the PNA group. The second section discusses the different forms of protest masculinities demonstrated by the Abu Minimi group, the FORKAB group, and the TRA group as articulations of their resistance to the ex-commanders in the KPA group.

The Abu Minimi or Din Minimi group are the two alternative names for a single group of excluded former GAM soldiers from East Aceh, who protest against the ex-commanders in the KPA. This group has been mentioned in Chapter 4 in highlighting the ex-soldiers’ grievances about the unfair distribution of reintegration funds by the ex-commanders in the KPA. This chapter will elaborate more on how and why this group articulates their protest to their ex-commanders in the KPA, through interviews with the leader of the group, Abu Minimi or Din Minimi.
The reactions of the Irwandi/PNA group

After their major defeats in the 2012 governor and 2014 provincial and district legislative elections, Irwandi and his men focused on building their political base through the vehicle of a new political machine, the PNA or the Aceh National Party. Irwandi’s men comprise some former civilian GAM negotiators, two urban middle-class student movement groups (SMUR and SIRA), and some of the middle-ranked ex-commanders expelled from the KPA. Among this diverse group of men, Irwandi’s inner circle were former civilian negotiators and middle-ranked commanders, such as Nur Djuli, Munawar Liza, Abdul Manaf, Amni Bin Ahmad Marzuki, Sofyan Dawood, Muharram and T Muksalmina. These men had mostly gained economic rewards distributed by Irwandi during his governorship (2006-2012), in the form of key positions in the bureaucracy, local parliament, business contracts and jobs. When the PNA was established in 2011, most of the former GAM negotiators and the middle-rank ex-commanders closest to Irwandi joined immediately.

As explained in Chapter 5, the ex-commanders’ claims to a superior right to govern Aceh drew on the symbolism of an ideal warrior hero or pejuang. The PNA group recognised this to be a key means by which the ex-commanders gained supporters from among male and female GAM rank and file ex-soldiers and legitimated their use of violence, threats and intimidation against rival political candidates. Unable to compete on this terrain, the Irwandi group sought to regroup after the 2012 election. Key to this was their promulgation of a civic form of nationalism to directly counteract the militaristic ideology of the ex-commanders’ group. Using the ex-commanders’ militaristic masculinity as its counterpoint, the civilian elite inverted the negative marker of ‘civilian’ to assert the positive values of those who strongly uphold democracy, have intellectual capacity and abide by Islamic principles. Hence this civic form of nationalism became a new strategy for the civilian elite to challenge the legitimacy of the ex-commanders’ militaristic hegemonic masculinity politically.

Within a civic vision of nationalism, the nation ‘refers to all citizens of a state, who are perceived as forming a community, irrespective of any differences in their place of origin, racial or ethnic backgrounds, on the basis of their shared pride in the institutions of the homeland’ (Brown 2000, 37). Although civic nationalism is linked to the institutions of the
state, it can in practice nevertheless sit side by side with traditional values which contribute to a sense of pride and belonging to a homeland. As Brown states (2000, 34):

Civic nationalism thus portrays itself as a voluntaristic political community formed by the recognition that the self-interest of each citizen is promoted by commitment to the common good. But these [civic] images of the open, voluntaristic community based on rational choice coexist with less rational ideas of ‘love of country’, loyalty and self-sacrifice which have their origin in religious ideas of the sacred soil of the ancestors.

Thus, as a result of their electoral loss, the civilian elite sought a new alternative source of political legitimacy that combined the idea of modern civic rule with Islam as the national religion, not in terms of the practice of the Shariah law but in relation to the Islamic moral practice embedded in the Acehnese identity. Beside emphasising the importance of forging national unity through this civic ideal, the group has also been concerned to generate a new alternative vision about how socio-economic development should be delivered under a civilian government.

The Irwandi group’s new political strategy was called halal pilkada (halal election). As a means to justify their authority, the idea of halal pilkada has a number of interlocking elements. In this instance, the term halal is not meant to characterise the category of lawful or unlawful conduct in accordance with the Islamic Shariah law but rather in relation to existing civilian law that is in line with non-violent Islam. In an election campaign in 2016, Irwandi stood up before his supporters in East Aceh to stress that halal pilkada is an election without violation, killing, intimidation, terror and bribery (Acehkita 2016). Irwandi’s political campaign on halal pilkada also appeared in banners, pamphlets and social media – such as Facebook and Twitter – urging people to vote for the candidate who wins the hearts of Acehnese people without any intimidation and coercion. In Irwandi words:

As you know, some of my people in the PNA have been terrorised and intimidated by perpetrators in the last pilkada [2012 and 2014 elections]. Some of them were even killed. We did not want to do the same things as they did to us. We wanted the halal
pilkada in Aceh. This is the way we love Aceh as a nation. …. Killing, terror and intimidation are banned in Islam; this practice is haram [forbidden].

In rejecting violence, other interviewees from the civilian elite also explicitly contrasted their perceived ‘rational’ and educated attitudes in running the government office with the ex-commanders’ warrior hero or pejuang imagery, which they claimed to be violent, ‘irrational’ and representing ‘fools’ attitudes’. As a former GAM negotiator said:

The KPA resort to violent means to achieve their objectives … as they have no resources other than violence and money. I, Irwandi and Om Nur [referring to Nur Djuli, a former GAM negotiator] are rational persons. We don’t want to display what they have shown to us and the people. We use different ways. We were properly educated to accomplish our jobs as GAM diplomats and negotiators. As civilian leaders, we want to show our intellectual capacity to educate our people, to teach our young generation in order for them to pass good things to our children in the future. We don’t copy what they [the KPA group] did. They are unreasonable. Can you imagine? They just get used to buying a certificate of formal education without being aware how to run the office professionally.

In promoting non-violent means, the group relates the halal pilkada to Islam that supports peace and talks about the qualities of proper leadership. As one member of the civilian elite said:

A man should be an Imeum [a religious leader in Islamic terms]. That’s what Islam teaches us. But an Imeum is not just an Imeum. To be an Imeum has certain conditions, knowledge, understanding and respect the others. The same things happen when you lead the government office. You don’t just sit and rule people as a governor without any knowledge of how to respect the people and to run the office.

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200 Irwandi Yusuf, a former GAM negotiator, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
201 Munawar Liza Zaenal, former GAM negotiator, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
202 Idem.
He added that: ‘Islam and our Ulama [Islamic scholars] never taught us to be violent towards people. For what reasons have they [the KPA] committed violence? Violence never solves any problem; especially in peacetime, it creates another problem instead.’\(^{203}\)

Beside rejecting violence, the group linked *halal pilkada* to the institutionalisation of democratic government principles for the sake of socio-economic development in the public good – governing for the future prosperity of all. Irwandi said ‘let us succeed with the *halal pilkada* because in a lawful way this would give birth to a leader for the sake of people’s prosperity’ (Portal Satu 2016). In this context, another member of the elite in the PNA in Lhokseumawe city supported this ideal by maintaining that:

> The militaristic and hierarchical pattern applied in the KPA and the PA are not relevant anymore for the Acehnese people’s demand for peace, democracy and prosperity. The militaristic style of leadership, which strongly emphasises the chain of command, is suited only to wartime […] During peace time, our enemies have changed, they manifest in different forms, such as when the people lack education and they live in poverty. Thus we need to solve these problems by establishing a good civilian democratic government instead of the militaristic government. The *halal pilkada* promoted by Irwandi reflects the need to change the militaristic style of leadership of the KPA group.\(^{204}\)

In one civilian negotiator’s words, ‘instead of making the people scared and fearful of their own security, such as when they are forced to vote for a candidate or a local political party, GAM leaders need to educate and free them from intimidation and terror. Let's help the people of Aceh make their own choices freely in *halal* ways’.\(^{205}\)

The two aspects of political legitimacy promoted by the Irwandi group are highly gendered in that it is *men* – not women – who are seen to have these qualities by virtue of their sex. Under a system of patriarchy, men need to justify their unequal access and right to power and resources with other men – in this instance by means of legitimating their masculine qualities as rational, intellectual, professional, and in possession of technical expertise. These qualities

\(^{203}\) Idem.

\(^{204}\) Amni Bin Ahmad Marzuki, former GAM negotiator, interview with the author, Lhokseumawe, April 2016.

\(^{205}\) Munawar Liza Zaenal, former GAM negotiator, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
are perceived to be masculine and therefore lacking in women. Hence, the civic nationalism articulated in the slogan of *halal pilkada* advocated by the Irwandi group entails masculine politics. Although the civilian elite articulates a different ideal of masculinity that is not shared with the ex-commanders’ warrior hero image, this is not intended to make any dramatic change in the gender order. Nevertheless, at the very least it has opened the possibility for men to uphold a form of masculinity that is less violent, less offensive and more open to democracy.

The Irwandi’s concept of a civic form of nationalism is never isolated from patronage relations. The idea has appealed to the group of middle-rank ex-commanders who were expelled from the KPA. Immediately the PNA was established, Irwandi declared to the Acehnese public that 12 regional ex-commanders had left the KPA and joined the PNA (*Kompas* 2012). This shift in the ex-commanders’ political alliances occurred not only because the 12 regional ex-commanders had enjoyed economic benefits previously distributed by Irwandi during his tenure as the Governor Aceh, but also because, importantly, their inclusion in the civilian leadership had pushed these former middle-ranked commanders to experience a new mode of ruling that they prefer. In an interview, a former GAM commander for Aceh Besar, who also is acting as a head of the PNA, T Muksalmina, said that: ‘The split in GAM – in particular between top commanders in the KPA and some of the regional ex-commanders – was a learning experience for the former GAM middle rank commanders to understand how democracy has allowed them to be different from their top commanders.’

This former GAM commander emphasised that the change from the military practice of civilian democracy can be done by starting to accept all ethnic groups in society, and trying to avoid exclusiveness. In his words:

> The peace agreement has marked the reintegration of all elements of Acehnese people into the Indonesian Republic. As ex-combatants, we are one of the elements of a civilian population. In fact, we are not combatants anymore, we are civilians instead. The GAM commanders need to be aware that they are part of the Indonesian state. Their mindset and way of life should change. Aceh does not belong to one group exclusively. Aceh belongs to the Acehnese people. This party [the PNA] is set up not for the individual

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206 T Muksalimina, a former GAM regional commander for Aceh Besar and the PNA leader, interview with the author, Banda Aceh April 2016.
group but for all Acehnese who stay inside and outside Aceh. We accept people not because they are Acehnese. If they [the KPA group] called the PNA a Nasrani (Christian) Party, that is fine, we encourage also the Javanese, even the Jews are welcome to enter and join our political party.\textsuperscript{207}

This quote indicates that this former commander favours democratic citizenship, and sees the need to drop any exclusive claims to group favouritism and any violent means to achieve immediate and narrow personal interests over wealth and power. Male ex-soldiers are encouraged to stop provoking violence and creating fear in society, as they are not combatants anymore but rather civilians – and Indonesian citizens.

It is important to note that the Irwandi group’s promotion of civic nationalism has not shaken the militaristic ideology of the ex-commanders in the KPA. This is because militarism became deeply entrenched and institutionalised in the GAM military during the conflict, and has remained embedded in the KPA in the post-conflict era. Importantly, the ex-commanders also have stronger social bases than the Irwandi group, as reflected in the wider political support the ex-commanders’ continue to receive from GAM ex-soldiers through the KPA and the PA as their political vehicles.

Knowing that their power was challenged by the Irwandi group, the ex-commanders continued to try to weaken the civilian leadership by publicly stating in the media that, during his tenure as governor, Irwandi corruptly obtained government money to enrich himself and his group. The ex-commanders’ group also continued to undermine the Irwandi group’s political party by mocking the PNA as a cover for the Aceh Nashrani (Christian) party. This has been a strategy of the KPA to boost an identity group difference by associating their own political party, the PA, with the majority Acehnese identity (Muslim), while identifying the PNA with a minority group in Aceh (Christian). As quoted in the local media, Muzakir Manaf, a former GAM supreme commander and in the top leadership of the KPA and the PA, stated: ‘Let everyone know how the Aceh Party is, it is not like the PNA, the PNA is not the Aceh National Party, but the Aceh Christian Party’ (\textit{Corong Indonesia} 2014).

\textsuperscript{207} Idem.
The response of the excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers

As explained in Chapter Two, ‘protest masculinity’ is an exaggerated claim to masculine power (an ideal of manhood) that is articulated by men as a response to their perceived lack of power (Connell 1995, 111). It is ‘a marginalised masculinity, which picks up themes of hegemonic masculinity in the society at large but reworks them in the context of poverty’ (1995, 114). Accordingly, protest masculinity is ‘a tense, freaky façade, around a claim to power where there are no real resources of power’ (Connell 1995, 111).

In the case of the excluded male rank and file, their protest masculinity resulted from the tension created by poverty and the levels of violence they encountered in their everyday lives. The disaffected former rank and file soldiers assert their equal rights to the power resources of the ex-commanders in the KPA; both their equal status as military men and fair access to the economic resources. This assertion is unrealistic because, no matter how much the male rank and file ex-soldiers may claim that they are entitled to equal power resources alongside their ex-commanders, they are in fact powerless in relation to the ex-commanders, who have enormous power resources, in material, institutional and ideological terms. The display of the protest masculinity means that all the excluded rank and file ex-soldiers can do is attempt to challenge the socio-economic bases of the ex-commanders’ hegemonic power on the ideological terrain.

Unlike the civilian elite, the disaffected male rank and file ex-soldiers are not interested in contesting political power; hence they have responded to their eroded livelihoods either by continuing to enact violent crimes, or by establishing an alternative organisation outside the KPA. In the former category is the Abu Minimi group, and in the latter are the FORKAB and the TRA groups. Their anger towards the ex-commanders is a reflection of their diminished status as male breadwinners, expressed through violent and non-violent means. While the Abu Minimi group’s actions are more in the nature of gang violence, the other two are not. Both the FORKAB’s and the TRA’s protest masculinity is reflected in the formal organisations established by them. Nevertheless, they also claimed in interviews that they would resort to violence if they needed to do so.
a. The Abu Minimi group

Din Minimi, also widely known as the Abu Minimi group, continues to claim that they are GAM ‘combatants’ and ‘the sons of the martyrs’ – the GAM soldiers who died in syahid (martyr) during the armed conflict. The group also maintain that they deserve to receive material benefits from the peace agreement. As a result of their situation, the Abu Minimi group have publicly declared ‘war’ on the elite ex-commanders in the KPA and PA (Serambi Indonesia 2014c). For the excluded male ex-soldiers in the Abu Minimi group, fulfilling their breadwinner status by making close connections with the ex-commanders is impossible, since they have been expelled from the KPA and denied retained military status as GAM combatants; and are not recognised by the ex-commanders. Din Minimi, the leader of the Abu Minimi group, has responded to this situation by committing crimes in the name of economic justice for the sons of the GAM martyrs, the GAM orphans and the widows of GAM soldiers.

As explained in Chapter 4, the Badruddin and Din Minimi groups were two excluded groups of rank and file ex-soldiers who were annoyed with the economic reintegration package delivered by the ex-commanders in the KPA. Both groups have committed violent crimes involving guns. However, in the process, in 2008 Badruddin was killed (along with his wife and children); it is suspected by an armed group from the KPA (Anderson 2013). This murder of the leader of the group reduced the group’s activities. Nevertheless, the Din Minimi group has managed to hide in the mountains in the East Aceh area, and has continued to challenge the ex-commanders’ group by organising crimes such as kidnapping, extortion and terror, targeting the KPA. To obtain exact information about how and why the Din Minimi group has emerged and used violence as a reflection of the group’s protest against the ex-commanders, the researcher managed to interview the leader of the group, Nurdin Bin Ismail, also called Abu Minimi or Din Minimi, in his village, Julok, East Aceh, in May 2016. His experience illuminates how protest masculinity articulated from his own economic deprivation and loss of masculine breadwinner status – which are part of the foundations of his commander’s power.

Abu Minimi claimed that his father was involved in the early establishment of the GAM military group in 1976, and his two brothers also joined the GAM in 1990. He was involved as a GAM soldier since 1997, particularly as a troop guard of Abu Sanusi (a former GAM
regional commander for East Aceh). But in 2003 he was captured in an Indonesian army raid in the hinterland of East Aceh, jailed for two years and then released in 2005, exactly two weeks before the MOU Helsinki was signed. After the MOU was signed, he joined the KPA in 2006, but left the organisation in the same year. In his words:

I left the KPA because I was not considered to be true GAM; they said I was a traitor of the GAM. If the KPA people claim that they sacrifice for the nation, I am doubtful. Now I am asking … who have really sacrificed for the nation? My father, and also my two brothers, died in the struggle and I did not know where they [the Indonesian army] buried them. Until now, I don’t know.

Fine, I was not proud being in the KPA. The KPA did nothing for me. The ex-commanders in the KPA don’t care about the GAM ex-soldiers, the orphans, the widows of the GAM and the poor. Who defends their rights? The ex-commanders? Nonsense. Now, I am asking you [pointing to the researcher] who was the real traitor of the GAM? Me or them?

Thereafter, there was no way for Abu Minimi to reconcile with the ex-commanders to enable access to the economic resources of the KPA. Rather he sought another route to survive economically, by doing labouring work with a friend, as a forklift driver in a road project in East Aceh for a couple of years. After he left that job, he moved to Pekan Baru City (Riau Province) to work as a casual labourer on another road project, returning home to East Aceh in 2011. Abu Minimi was then unemployed for three years, with continuing commitments to feed his wife and three children. Frustrated with his challenging economic situation, and disappointed and angry about the ex-commanders’ luxurious life style, he and several other ex-soldiers established an armed group (much like a gangster group) in their village in Julok, East Aceh, and were involved in criminal activities such as kidnapping, extortion and killing.

Initially, this group comprised several unemployed young men (who claimed to be the sons of the GAM martyrs); but soon grew to include more than 40 members. The Abu Minimi

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208 The term troop guard or *pasukan pengawal* emerged during the interview with Abu Minimi. He mentioned that, during the conflict, he and several GAM male soldiers were selected to guard the regional commander of East Aceh, Abu Sanusi.
209 Abu Minimi, former GAM rank and file soldier, interview with the author, East Aceh, May 2016.
210 Idem.
group have managed to hide in the East Aceh hinterland and move among various camps between East Aceh and North Aceh. To improve their economic situation, Abu Minimi and his group frequently extort money from marijuana drug dealers (toke ganja). On one occasion the group also kidnapped a middle-rank ex-commander from the East Aceh KPA office and demanded and received a kidnapping ransom from the East Aceh KPA group to secure his release (Serambi Indonesia 2015a). Other criminal activities perpetrated by this group included hijacking cars and burning heavy road equipment (bulldozers) (Serambi Indonesia 2015b).

When asked why he and his group undertook this sort of criminal activity, Abu Minimi said:

> It is not only the ex-commanders who have bellies, wives and children. Ex-soldiers also have stomachs, a wife and children who must be fed. Look I have done something for Muzakir Manaf [the former Supreme GAM commander]. I have given him ‘a soft cushion’ [political support] to sit on the chair as a Vice Governor of Aceh. It's good, ha! But I demand justice. Do they think that they are the only ones who have followers? I can do anything because I am a former GAM, I have got the weapons and I have my own loyal subordinates as well.211

Abu Minimi’s use of words conveys the ways in which he and his group have sought to attach themselves to the militarised hegemonic masculinity of the ex-commanders in the KPA group. He claimed that he deserved to position himself vis-à-vis that manhood ideal, and also identified himself as a leader of his own group, who also has the capacity to pursue gun violence. This reflects how protest masculinity entails an exaggerated claim to an ideological base of the hegemonic masculinity of the ex-commanders. However, due to their lack of power resources, Abu Minimi has had to take a different path to achieve the ideal. His resort to violence and militaristic legitimacy is shaped by his relative powerlessness and poverty.

Beside expressing anger towards the ex-commanders in the KPA, Abu Minimi also explained how wretched were the economic conditions for himself and his group, as they suffered poverty and hunger in his village. He said that:

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211 Idem.
After the peace agreement, the economic conditions were very hard. While I was hiding in the hills along with my group, my wife had to take care of my three children and also my mother who was getting old. To survive the economic hardship, my wife had to work for petty money by labouring as a rubber hatcher in a rubber plantation here in our village. Meanwhile, our people were eating dust. Can you imagine how hard it is to live in this village?\(^{212}\)

Abu Minimi claimed that the crimes his group committed were intended to shake the elite ex-commanders in the KPA, whom Abu Minimi and his followers consider to be the real criminals who steal the Acehnese people’s money.

Abu Minimi and his men’s use of violent means was not directed intentionally at generating a new political movement to oppose the ex-commanders’ political machines, either the KPA or the PA. Further, Abu Minimi has no intention to build any mass movement to politically counter the ex-commanders’ existing supporter base; nor does he seek to politically align with the civilian elite group in the PNA. In the interview he stated:

I don’t have any appetite to form any political movement to counter the KPA or the PA. I don’t want to make any commitment with the Irwandi group either. But I carry the same label they [the KPA] threw at Irwandi.

The researcher: What was that?

Abu Minimi: They said that we were ‘traitors’.\(^{213}\)

Abu Minimi perceived that an ideal man is one who is able to economically support his family and also support the poor in his village. In his words:

If they [the ex-commanders] are ‘gentlemen’, if they are really manly, they should care for the economic conditions of the sons of the GAM martyrs, the orphans, the ineung balee (widows of the GAM soldiers). But the elite [the ex-commanders] have

\(^{212}\) Idem.

\(^{213}\) Idem.
neglected them. Instead, they have enriched themselves. I am a man, I am a ‘gentleman’. Though I was accused of being a criminal, I support my family and I support the poor in this village, I really care for them.  

Connell (1995, 118) argues that protest masculinity ends up in ‘a cul-de-sac’ because, whilst it is an active response to a situation that builds on an ethic of solidarity, derived from the experiences of economic marginalisation and exploitation, it is economically less powerful. Hence it is ‘a solidarity that divides the group’ from the rest of the rank and file; it is ‘a divided consciousness … not to a new political direction’ (Connell 1995, 117-118). In the case of post-conflict Aceh, Abu Minimi and his excluded rank and file ex-soldiers have missed out on the economic distributions and employment opportunities provided by the ex-commanders in the KPA. If they had accepted this state of affairs, they would have been seen to have accepted the justice of their economic deprivation. Alternatively, if they wanted to challenge this, without having equal or sufficient power resources, all they could do was to resort to ‘hit and run’ criminal violence. Through committing to this latter option, they have sought to convey to the Acehnese public that they are resisting their ex-commanders’ power and wealth and seeking an answer to their economic deprivation through these alternative, violent means.

In his recent observations in the case of Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Duriesmith (2014) maintains that the practice of brutal violence – such as rape, sexual torture and killing of civilians – committed by the group of socially excluded and disenfranchised youth in the RUF embodied protest masculinity against the existing patronage ruling caste in the country. He found that the brutal violence committed by the group was linked to their failure to attain the ideal of manhood (such as through their admission to ‘secret society, marriage and position in the community’), due to their lack of access to cultural and economic resources. Similar to the pattern of protest masculinity articulated by the Abu Minimi group, this group of excluded youth in Sierra Leone did not intend to generate a mass political movement. The group solidarity that they forged inside the RUF (‘eternal combat, total devotion to the RUF, emotional detachment, revolt against existing power structures, combatants’ economic entitlement’) made them distinctive from other groups. Thus, the

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214 Abu Minimi, former GAM rank and file soldier, interview with the author, East Aceh, May 2016.
215 Connell refers here to working class men.
The FORKAB group or *Forum Komunikasi Anak Bangsa* (Communication Forum for Children of the Nation) is a group of former GAM soldiers who surrendered during the war to the Indonesians, and have subsequently pursued a different trajectory of resistance towards the ex-commanders in the KPA group. Instead of organising criminal activities, this group established an alternative organisation separate from the KPA. This group is made up of excluded GAM ex-soldiers who were expelled from the KPA. They established FORKAB in 2006, after the MOU was signed in 2005, and their group still exists. Although the group first emerged as a formal mass organisation which was permitted under existing law, it has since developed into a group of organised vigilantes who are frustrated with their economic hardships and displeased with the hegemonic power of the ex-commanders’ group in the KPA. The FORKAB group has publicly condemned the violent criminal acts perpetrated by the Abu Minimi group, and in general the group is more selective in their use of violence as a means of resistance. Violence is used by this group, but not frequently; and only if they consider it absolutely necessary. To gain exact information regarding how the group articulates their protest to the ex-commanders in the KPA, the researcher has interviewed the head of FORKAB, Polem Muda.

As with the Abu Minimi group, poverty and violence during the 1990s influenced Polem Muda to turn to earning a living through involvement with drug dealers. During an interview in the offices of FORKAB in Banda Aceh, Polem Muda said that during the war he was proud of being GAM soldier, but he was also disappointed with what the ex-commanders did
in manipulating the money he had collected from involvement in dangerous and illegal businesses in West Aceh. When he joined the GAM in 1999, he said that he used to support financially the GAM struggle in his village in Blang Pidie District, West Aceh. He was involved as a treasurer in GAM, and his main task was to collect money from the drug dealer businessmen in his area. In his words:

I was involved in the mafia, a sort of marijuana drug dealer working with the toke ganja to earn a living. Luckily I was never caught by the police officers as I really knew the trick when we ‘played business’ with them. I was a bad man, we robbed the bank, robbed the government offices. We used the money for our own spending and also we gave the money to the GAM commanders in Blang Pidie who said they would use it to buy weapons.

But I saw that the GAM commanders were unfair. They enriched themselves from the money we gave. I gave them almost 2 billion rupiahs, which was almost enough to buy 30 weapons. But I saw they only bought a few weapons, some sort of FN 1, M 16 and AK 47 automatic weapons. Where was the rest of the money? I was sure they ate the money. Oh! They thought that the job of the rank and file was to support the ex-commanders’ wealth. No way. I quit the GAM after that.216

Disappointed with what he saw in GAM, Polem Muda left the organisation and surrendered to the Indonesian army in Blang Pidie area in 2003. He said that: ‘It was a bitter side of the struggle. I left GAM and thereafter I, along with almost a hundred of the GAM soldiers, surrendered to the Indonesian Army. I was not a coward but I saw injustice in the GAM’.217 Subsequently unemployed for a couple years he then joined the mass organisation established in 2006 by Muhammad Lado, also a former GAM soldier who had surrendered to the Indonesians from West Aceh. Initially, Polem Muda was one of the deputies in FORKAB, but later, in 2003, he was elected leader. When interviewed in 2016, he claimed to have almost 13,000 members – all GAM ex-soldiers who had surrendered across Aceh provinces. Their first fight was to claim reintegration money from the BRA. They were successful, but Polem Muda said that the money given by the BRA was not enough to disburse among

216 Polem Muda, head of FORKAB, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, May 2016.
217 Idem.
13,000 people. The number of people was too great for the amount of funds available. But he said that he could manage to deliver the money to the FORKAB group.

Frustrated with the excessive wealth accumulation of the ex-commanders in the KPA, Polem Muda and his group have continued to wage what he calls ‘a fight for justice’. During an interview with him, he continuously mocked Muzakir Manaf as selfish and greedy, a man who only cares for his eight wives and neglects the former GAM rank and file and their families. He said the group’s consciousness as a ‘real’ pejuang grew as their perceptions strengthened that the ex-commanders were little more than a group of criminals who manipulated the struggle for the nation by using public funds to enrich themselves. In Polem Muda’s words: ‘Our struggle is not to enrich ourselves as they are doing. We were considered to be not combatants by them. It means that our rights as combatants were seized by the KPA. Thus, we fight for our rights and justice as combatants’.218

In expressing their protest masculinity, this group always identifies with the militaristic masculinity of the warrior hero of the ex-commanders’ group, by claiming that they are ‘the real warrior’ or ‘pejuang’ instead. Polem Muda mocked the militaristic masculinity of the ex-commanders by saying that: ‘they are not the real warrior heroes, they are nothing more than the ‘vagina warriors’ who are always more interested in searching for young women to be married as their wives. We must fight for our justice as GAM combatants’.219

Some members of FORKAB have been kidnapped, tortured and killed by persons suspected to be from the KPA. This happened during FORKAB’s 2006-2007 campaign to establish their rights to access reintegration funds. Polem Muda has stated that the killers ‘will pay the price, soul is paid by soul. We are fighting back. We are brave men and they are cowards.’220 After the killings, his group confronted the KPA with armed weapons, including ammunition and bombs to which his group had access. However, Polem Muda was adamant that his group has never committed crimes such as robbery and murder: ‘We are just involved in gang fighting, duels of sorts, with the members of the KPA group’.221

218 Idem.
219 Idem.
220 Idem.
221 Idem.
Timor Leste, Myrttinen (2012, 104) argues that ‘violence has become a normalised tool, especially for men, for seeking redress to real and perceived grievances in both the private and the public sphere but also for challenging or conforming social power structures’. He explains that his interviewees thus regarded violence ‘with ambivalence’ – ‘they accepted it as a part of life’ but also ‘condemned [it] as unacceptable’. Similarly in the case of post-conflict Aceh, male rank and file ex-soldiers’ attitudes toward violence reflected both its prevalence and their ambiguity as to its legitimacy. For instance, on the one hand the FORKAB group has publicly condemned the criminal violence perpetrated by Abu Minimi, yet on the other hand, when the group was challenged by the fact that its members were being kidnapped and killed by suspected persons from the KPA group, the leader of FORKAB, Polem Muda, stated that his group would also if necessary resort to violence as a means of retaliation. In this case, violence is rejected as a normal tool of redress but is considered acceptable as a defence.

In terms of ‘defending the nation’ – the language that is used by the KPA during their political campaigns – the ex-commanders consistently claim to be the ones who are loyal to the GAM struggle for the nation. The FORKAB group considers these claims to be ‘fake,’ and believes that the ex-commanders have fooled the GAM rank and file ex-soldiers by manipulating the struggle for wealth accumulation. This group has challenged the ex-commanders’ notion of sacrifice for the nation, by showing their loyalty not only to Aceh but, importantly, also to the Indonesian state. ‘Loyalty to Aceh means loyalty to Indonesia as well.’222 In Polem Muda’s words: ‘We are Indonesian people. We fight for those who revolt against our country. We are ‘white and red people’ [referring to the red and white Indonesian flag]. We are the warrior heroes of our nation, Indonesia. Our soul is our guarantee. This is how we defend the nation [Indonesia].’223

When asked whether the group would ever consider forging a political alliance with the civilian GAM elite, to strengthen their political position vis-a-vis the ex-commanders in the KPA, Polem Muda said that he has no such contract or commitment to align politically with the PNA; but that he personally supports Irwandi Yusuf as both of them have been labelled traitors by the KPA. In his words: ‘We are of the same faith. Irwandi has been accused by the

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222 Idem.
223 Idem.
KPA as a traitor of the nation, and so have I. I personally support him. Irwandi is a good man. He has proven to support the poor, the rank and file ex-soldiers, the orphans and the GAM widows through his popular program, JKA (Jaminan Kesehatan Aceh/Acehnese Health Insurance) and free education and scholarships for conflict victims.\(^\text{224}\)

For the FORKAB group, they have done something important in challenging the foundations of the hegemonic power of the ex-commanders’ group, but in the eyes of the ex-commanders, the group is considered weak and lacking a large social base by which to challenge the KPA group. In the ex-commanders’ view, the FORKAB group only consists of the GAM ‘sakit hati’ (disappointed rank and file).\(^\text{225}\) They consider this group not to be a significant threat to the KPA and PA in political contestations in Aceh. Accordingly, the ex-commanders continue to label this group as not ‘real GAM combatants’ nor a Muzakir Manaf group. In one ex-commander’s words: ‘They are not GAM combatants anymore since they surrendered to the Indonesian army. If you want to know, GAM combatants are only under the Muzakir Manaf group. The others are not.’\(^\text{226}\)

c. The TRA group (Tim Relawan Aceh)

Different from both the Abu Minimi and FORKAB groups, the TRA group is not a criminal gang, nor is it a group of GAM soldiers who during the conflict had surrendered to the Indonesian military. Instead, the TRA is a group of excluded senior male soldiers who were involved in the early establishment of the GAM in the 1970s and 1980s but were neglected by the ex-commanders in the KPA. This group also demands justice in the form of a more equal distribution of the resources that the KPA has gained through the peace agreement. In comparison to the FORKAB group, which was founded in 2006, the TRA is relatively new; established in 2012. This group has challenged the KPA by developing an alternative mass organisation separate from the ex-commanders’ organisation. This group promotes themselves as the Voluntary Aceh Team, and membership has reached about 3,200 people across Aceh province. The TRA’s priority is to disseminate the MOU Helsinki to the whole of Aceh society. One of the leaders of the TRA said that: ‘If the people are aware and understand what are the points agreed in the MOU by both parties [the Indonesian

\(^{224}\) Polem Muda, head of FORKAB, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, May 2016.

\(^{225}\) Former GAM Sagoe Commander, interview with the author, Lamno, Aceh Jaya, May 2016.

\(^{226}\) Idem.
government and GAM], the people can monitor how both parties are obligated to put the MOU Helsinki into practice, so the ceasefire can be transformed into a better future for all Acehnese’.  

Amid their economic deprivation, this group of angry ex-soldiers claims that the ex-commanders are ‘the oppressors of the poor people, suckers of the blood of the poor people’ . They assert that the TRA was established ‘to fight against any form of discrimination and intimidation experienced by ex-soldiers’. According to one of the leaders of this group, ‘the TRA still possess weapons, guns, but they don’t want to use them unless they really need to them’. To explore this group of excluded and disfranchised rank and file ex-soldiers in more depth, the researcher managed to interview Sulaiman, a member of the TRA group in Aceh Besar.

Sulaiman was recruited as a GAM soldier in 1980. His job in the GAM was involved with intelligence. As part of this job, he moved back and forth between his camp, located on a hill near his gampong (village), and other sites around Aceh Besar district. In 2000, while undertaking intelligence work in gampong in Aceh Besar, he was captured by the Indonesian army and jailed for four years. While he was in jail, his wife came to the detention centre in Banda Aceh and told him she had been raped by Indonesian soldiers during the conflict. His wife also told him that their house had been burned, but their two children were saved and had been sent to his wife’s relatives in Banda Aceh. After his release from jail in 2004, he was caught in the tsunami later the same year, and was injured but survived. His wife and one of his children were killed, swept away by one of the large waves. After the MOU Helsinki was signed, Sulaiman married another Acehnese woman. In 2006, he joined the KPA, hoping to receive a portion of the reintegration funds; but left the KPA soon after observing what he considered to be an unfair allocation to him. He became aware that only those with close connections to the ex-commanders received any meaningful reintegration funds. In his words:

I was tired of moving from camp to camp during the GAM struggle, but after the peace deal there was no improvement in the economic situation of the GAM soldiers. I was a

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227 Head of the TRA group, interview with the author, North Aceh, May 2016.
228 Idem.
229 Idem.
230 Idem.
warrior [pejuang]. I was involved in the war as a GAM soldier. After peace came, I joined the KPA but I got nothing. The ex-commanders in KPA are always selfish, they always think about their own position. I quit the KPA.\textsuperscript{231}

Sulaiman’s troubles continue. After he left the KPA he worked for petty money as a casual daily labourer from 2006 to 2010. In late 2010, he became involved in an argument with a friend while working, and ended up in a physical fight. Arrested, he was sent to jail for a year.

Sulaiman first became involved with the TRA in 2012, joining and become head of the TRA branch in Aceh Besar. In his words, ‘Murdani [the top leader of TRA] and several friends of mine who were involved in the GAM approached me one night and explained to me about the TRA. I was interested in joining the group as I saw that this group promised justice for the ex-soldiers’.\textsuperscript{232} Since joining the TRA, Sulaiman and his colleagues have continued to demand justice by organising rallies in Banda Aceh calling for the realisation of the MOU for the GAM ex-soldiers and civilian conflict victims. He said that ‘for me, joining the TRA means to struggle. As well, we need to show the Acehnese public that the peace agreement has not been fulfilled yet by both parties, including the elite GAM, and in particular the KPA and the PA as a reflection of the GAM. But unfortunately the KPA responded to our demands by directing violence, terror and intimidation towards us’.\textsuperscript{233} Sulaiman further said, ‘look, our group was accused of being a deviant sect. They [the KPA] intimidate us physically, five of our men were injured and hospitalised. We don’t accept this. We demand justice’.\textsuperscript{234}

Like the FORKAB group, Sulaiman and the other TRA leaders have not made any commitment to ally politically with the PNA group, despite being well aware that the PNA leader, Irwandi Yusuf, and his group have also experienced violence, intimidation and terror. Instead, he TRA extends an informal sympathy towards Irwandi rather than to their ex-commanders. Thus, the TRA group mirrors the excluded rank and file’s protests about their lack of access to the economic benefits of the peace agreement. Some of the ex-commanders in the KPA continue to claim, as they did for the FORKAB group, that the TRA is not a ‘real’

\textsuperscript{231} T Sulaiman, member of the TRA group, interview with the author, Aceh Besar, April 2016.
\textsuperscript{232} Idem.
\textsuperscript{233} Idem.
\textsuperscript{234} Idem.
GAM combatants group. They perceive them to be merely an ordinary mass organisation. In one ex-commander's words, ‘the TRA members are not “true” GAM combatants. Their leader is not a GAM commander either. So they do not belong to the Muzakir Manaf group’.  

Conclusion

This chapter has explained how the civilian GAM elite, made up of the Irwandi/PNA group and excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers, have, in different ways, sought to respond to and challenge the ex-commanders’ political legitimacy and claims to political power and wealth in the post-conflict era. Electoral defeat and associated political violence precipitated the Irwandi group’s departure from the KPA and their establishment of a new, different political direction; through the ideological construction of civic nationalism that advocates adherence to civic law, rejection of violence, and institutionalisation of democracy and prosperity for all. This was with the intention of presenting an alternative political grouping and approach to government. In contrast, the male rank and file ex-soldiers’ exclusion from potential livelihood sources and opportunities has led them to vent their economic grievances against the ex-commanders in the KPA group, through the use of violent and non-violent means. While the Abu Minimi group have reacted by carrying out violent crimes, other ex-soldiers in the FORKAB and the TRA groups have conducted their protests by establishing new, alternative organizations outside the KPA. These political reactions from the excluded ex-soldiers’ groups, although varied, all reflect a form of protest masculinity, cast against the foundations of the hegemonic masculinity of the ex-commanders. This protest masculinity denotes ‘a response to powerlessness, a claim to gendered position of power’ (Connell 1995, 111). This means that amid their harsh economic circumstances, the disaffected male ex-soldiers have emphasised their claims to the power resources of the ex-commanders: including an equal status as GAM military men, and a fair access to economic resource distribution.

In this context, the Irwandi/PNA group has attracted to its membership many former GAM ex-district and regional commanders and rank and file ex-soldiers, who have also been marginalised. This has aided in the building of coalitions between the civilian elite group and

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235 Former GAM Sagoe Commander from Pidie Jaya, interview with the author, Pidie Jaya, April 2016.
the excluded middle-ranking ex-commanders group. The ideology of civic nationalism as invoked by the PNA group strongly entails a masculine politics: one which underscores the value of democracy and inclusive civil society in ways that open potential opportunities and spaces for the excluded middle-ranked ex-commanders, expelled from the KPA group, to join with the civilian elite in the PNA group. This political coalition is potentially also important for opening opportunities and spaces for women, particularly women ex-soldiers, as a breakthrough to challenge their discrimination as well as their economic deprivation. Details of how such changes have come about will be described in the next chapter, along with a fuller explanation of the struggles of the female ex-soldiers' group.
Chapter 7

Women Ex-Soldiers’ Perspectives and Experiences in Post-Conflict Political Power Contests

Introduction

To compete for local leadership positions in post-conflict Aceh, and to legitimise their authority over civilian elite rivals in the new electoral contests, the ex-commanders not only required support from their male rank and file ex-soldiers, they also looked for support from the female ex-soldiers. Hence, despite not being recognised as ‘true GAM soldiers’, women ex-soldiers have been included in the KPA and in the other ex-commanders’ affiliated organisations. The women’s inclusion in these ex-commanders’ institutions has been important, both to forge a group of devoted female followers and to sustain the glorification of the warrior hero ideal. This ideal was also crucial for the women ex-soldiers, particularly to underline their status as women warriors of the GAM who dedicated themselves to the struggle for the nation. To fulfil the economic expectations of the women, the incorporation of female loyalists into the ex-commander organisations was accompanied by the extension of some material benefits to them. However, the inequalities associated with this process triggered grievances among other female ex-soldiers, who had not been close to the ex-commanders and consequently did not receive any benefits.

While including loyal female ex-soldiers within the KPA, the ex-commanders have drawn attention to the gender differences via an ‘emphasised’ form of femininity that tends to uphold and normalise dominant masculinities (Howson 2006, 68). In cultivating a group of loyal female followers in the KPA, the ex-commanders saw these women as embodying a particular set of gender-appropriate attributes – or at least, held expectations about the attributes which the female ex-soldiers should hold. Despite these expectations, even the most loyal of the women interviewed have expressed various degrees of ambivalence and resentment in relation to their portrayal as ‘women warriors’ and their lack of access to resources in comparison to their male comrades. In this, the truly excluded women ex-soldiers have become the most antagonistic and resistant, although they express these sentiments in different ways. Whilst one group of excluded women ex-soldiers has
demonstrated their anger and disappointment by leaving the KPA, another group has done so by not only departing from the KPA, but by joining the political opposition; the civilian elite in the PNA group. Although the former group is aware of their ‘proper’, gender normative status as dependents of their husbands or natal families, in the post-conflict era they maintain that their own access to economic rewards is also important, to enable them to contribute to their household’s income. The latter group goes further: not only do they recognise the unfair economic distribution, they also perceive that their retained military status in the KPA has been devalued relative to that of their male comrades, as illustrated by being labeled ‘passive soldiers’. Many of this group have also experienced being politically labelled as ‘traitors’, once they departed from the KPA. The women who left the KPA and joined the civilian elite in the PNA have reported feeling more appreciated in the PNA, and claim that within the PNA they have been presented with more opportunities to improve their socioeconomic circumstances as women, through better access to further education and job opportunities.

This chapter is organised into four sections. The first section explains how the warrior hero ideal was further secured by maintaining women ex-soldiers’ inclusion from the KPA and the ex-commanders’ other patronage organisations. The second and third sections elaborate, first on the experiences and perspectives of the loyal female followers, and then on those of the disaffected women ex-soldiers in these ex-commander institutions. The last section explains how the disgruntled women ex-soldiers reacted to their socioeconomic discrimination in the KPA, and moved to challenge the ex-commanders’ authority by forging political alliances with the civilian elite in the PNA group.

**How is the warrior hero ideal connected to women ex-soldiers?**

Chapter 2 explained Connell’s concept of ‘emphasised femininity’ (1987) and Howson’s concept of ‘ambivalent femininity’ (2006). Here, this chapter briefly recaps on both terms, to highlight their utility in explaining the social relations between the ex-commanders and women ex-soldiers in the post-conflict context. As Connell has said, hegemonic masculinity is always constructed not only in relation to men and masculinity, but also necessarily in relation to women and femininity (Connell 1987, 183). However, as with masculinity, femininity is not singular; and whereas emphasised femininity ‘is defined around compliance with this subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men’, other modes of femininity practiced by women can involve non-compliance and resistance, or
a combination of compliance and non-compliance (Connell 1987, 183-184). Again, emphasised femininity does not refer to the actual traits of particular women, but denotes the ideological representation of certain ascribed qualities and practices of women in general – such as domestic nurturance, childbearing and rearing – that serve to maintain men’s dominance and prevent the cultural articulation of other forms of femininity (Connell 1987, 185).

Drawing from Connell (1987), Howson uses the term ‘ambivalent femininity’ for the form of femininity practiced by women who ‘neither accept nor reject’ hegemonic masculinity and it subordinate positioning of women (2006, 68). In this context, ambivalent femininity practised by women is intended to question the ‘normalcy’ of the subordination of femininities to masculinities (Howson 2006, 68). Thus, emphasised femininity in the study refers to certain ascribed characteristics and practices of women ex-soldiers that the ex-commanders hold to – and to which some women ex-soldiers indeed also conform. Ambivalent femininity refers to the practices of women ex-soldiers that entail a vacillating mix of compliance and non-compliance towards the ideological constructions of emphasised femininity and hegemonic masculinity. However, in this case, the ambivalence of the women ex-soldiers also arises from their actual uncertain status during the conflict.

As we have seen, during the war the ideal warrior hero image – rooted in the GAM military organisation – appealed to both male and female rank and file. This imagery heightened their sense of the need for, and hence the importance of, significant personal sacrifice for the nation; and accordingly strengthened their adherence to the hierarchical military command structure. Nevertheless, the women ex-soldiers also experienced gender divisions of labour that required them to accept different roles and status from the claimed superior combat roles and status of not only their commanders but most of their male comrades. Following the conflict, although on the one hand the women’s experiences and contributions were devalued in GAM because they were seen by the ex-commanders to have not performed combat roles, on the other hand the women themselves did express pride in their identity and contributions as GAM soldiers. After the war, especially as the KPA was established by the GAM elite, the ideal warrior hero image asserted by the ex-commanders still resonated also with the women ex-soldiers. Indeed, some of the women joined the KPA, as they said this offered a new place in which to have their military identity as former GAM soldiers recognised and even
celebrated, as well as being a place where they thought they might improve their economic circumstances.

However, for the ex-commanders’ the women ex-soldiers’ integration into the KPA reflected the continuation of binary gender distinctions; the ex-commanders drew on and expected the women to conform to a specific form of emphasised femininity, particularly in relation to highlighting the women’s ‘support roles’ in soldiering. Thus, the inclusion of women in the KPA has generally seen the reinforcement and validation of the ex-commanders’ militarised hegemonic masculinity and the women’s ongoing marginalisation. This means that the women ex-soldiers’ participation in the KPA is perceived by the ex-commanders to be valuable only as loyal followers of the ex-commanders.

When the KPA was first established at the end of 2005, there was no formal decision made to include women ex-soldiers. However, according to the former GAM vice supreme commander and now KPA deputy, Abu Razak, it was taken for granted that the women would be a part of the KPA from the beginning. He stated that:

The KPA organisational structure is the same as the TNA structure during the conflict. The Ineung Balee [the women troops] were part of the TNA structure. So in the KPA, women ex-soldiers are included in the structure. The women were part of the struggle for the nation. Although their roles were different from those of the male soldiers, the women were involved in the war as they did spy on the enemy soldiers and helped us to deliver logistics from gampong to our camps. They were our devoted Ineung Balee soldiers. Some of them had married male soldiers and accompanied their husbands, moving from camp to camp during the war.236

Abu Razak further asserted that the KPA is still aware of and maintains contact with the female ex-soldiers in gampong through the KPA structure. He said that ‘through the KPA networks, ranging from district to village level, the KPA is able to detect the existence of women ex-soldiers, except those who fled and never returned to their former villages or married and now live outside Aceh province’.237 In similar vein, a vice regional commander for Aceh Besar stated that ‘like their male soldiers, the women were included in the KPA.

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236 Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.
237 Idem.
They were our *Ineung Balee* soldiers. They are meritorious to the GAM struggle as *women soldiers*. Once they were involved in the KPA, the women complied with the chain of command structure that applied in the KPA. It was the obligation of the *Sagoe* commanders to collect data on the women in *gampong* and also the obligation of the women to come and see the *Sagoe* level commanders in their villages and report their existence’.238

Both these two quotations indicate that, despite being excluded from the reintegration process, women ex-soldiers were recognised in the KPA for their devoted roles in the war, their ongoing loyalty and, hence, the obligations of the ex-commanders to keep track of them. However, the women were also seen by the ex-commanders to have different qualities as soldiers, and thus to have performed different tasks from those of their male comrades. Instead of identifying the women in inclusive terms –simply as soldiers – both former commanders always only referred to them as *Inueng Balee* or *women soldiers*. In acknowledging the women’s devotion to GAM, the ex-commanders claimed that they have opened space for the women to be included in the KPA. Nevertheless, as explained in Chapter 4, the hierarchy of the KPA is exclusively men. The ex-commanders admitted that the women were confined to the KPA’s affiliated organisations, principally the *Pasukan Ineung Balee* and *Putro Aceh*, and to KPA activities such as the *Milad* (the yearly event to celebrate the birth and struggle of GAM).239 In the case of the *Milad*, women ex-soldiers received direct invitations. Abu Razak said that:

> Every year, once the KPA holds ‘the Milad of the GAM’ [the GAM anniversary] exactly on every 4th of December, so we as their ex-commanders are able to see some familiar faces. To remember our struggle, we also invite the women ex-soldiers to every Milad of the GAM to get together and honour our struggle for the nation.240

The *Milad* is sacred to the GAM. It is held ritually, not only to remember the birth of the struggle but, crucially, for the *heroic* remembrance and celebration of the great warrior

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238 Pak Cek, former GAM vice regional commander for Aceh Besar District, interview with the author, May 2016.
239 In the interview, Abu Razak did not explain when and how the *Pasukan Ineung Balee* was established, but he did say it was deliberately given a name similar to that of the women soldiers’ wing under the GAM during the conflict era.
240 Idem.
heroes who fought for the nation. These heroes include the GAM soldiers who fought on the battlefield during the war and died in Syahid (martyr). A former GAM regional commander stressed the importance of the Milad for the KPA, as a crucial event that highlights the emotional attachment of the male and female soldiers’ struggle for the nation. On this occasion, he said, both men and women can feel and recall how they have sacrificed for the nation. In his words, ‘in the Milad, we praise and glorify those of the GAM commanders and soldiers, men and women who greatly contributed to the war, those who already died and also those who are still alive until the present time’. 241

From the ex-commanders’ statements about the glorification of the warrior hero through Milad, it can be seen that not only men but also women ex-soldiers are praised for their sacrifice and contributions to the war. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 3, women soldiers’ sacrifice and contributions to the war are viewed through highly gendered lenses. The women were seen to have made sacrifices, but their sacrifices were considered to be in a different class from that of their male comrades. In particular, the women’s sacrifices were not viewed in terms of them being willing to kill and be killed by the enemy. Accordingly, the glorification of the heroic event is linked in fact to the men, and especially the commanders who have positioned themselves as the warrior heroes par excellence, who led on the battlefield during the war. The memorial event of the Milad, held annually and ritually in KPA, is thus crucial to reinforce and sustain the militarised masculine identity of the ex-commanders as the greatest contributors to the war and, at the same time, for the ex-commanders to emphasise the feminine ideal of the women ex-soldiers as loyal women soldiers.

In the ex-commanders’ perspectives, women ex-soldiers are expected not only to support the KPA but also the ex-commanders’ main political party, the PA. In their interviews, the ex-commanders have asserted that when the PA was established in 2008, some of the women ex-soldiers were involved in helping in the candidates’ campaigns. For instance, Abu Razak claimed that he involved women ex-soldiers in the campaign team for T Sarjani, a former regional commander, for the district election in Pidie. He stated that:

241 T Sarjani, former GAM regional commander for Pidie District, interview with the author, Pidie, Januari 2015.
Off course we don’t need particular women ex-soldiers who have professional skills as jurkam [public speakers] to speak in public in the political campaigns of the PA or to be assigned particularly to help us win seats for the PA in upcoming Pilkada in Aceh [provincial and district legislative elections]. We know precisely that it is not in the capacity of the women to do that job as they are constrained by their family responsibilities, and they have limited required skills and educational backgrounds. But we need the women to support the KPA and PA as they were part of our people. They are our inong balee corps. Our urinueng, daughters and sisters who were involved in the GAM armed insurgency movement. We let them enjoy peace and freedom by supporting the PA. In this, we have involved 12 women ex-soldiers in our campaign team. They not only help us in spreading the PA flags in villages, they also helped us to gain many voters in gampong, as they could persuade their family, relatives and people in gampong to choose the PA and its candidates in district elections.242

To undertake such electoral work, the women have been largely channelled into their own organisations established by the KPA, principally into the Putro Aceh, a women’s mass organisation created by the ex-commanders to support the ex-commanders’ candidates in the local elections. This organisation’s members are a mix of ex-commanders’ wives, widows of GAM soldiers, and the women ex-soldiers themselves. By virtue of its existence as an affiliate organisation, Putro Aceh is used to emphasise the distinct, support roles of women in the KPA; although it is also used as a vehicle to distribute economic resources to the women ex-soldiers. The Putro Aceh is led by Maryati, the wife of the former supreme commander, Muzakir Manaf. Abu Razak further explained during interview:

The researcher: What kind of activities are there, in the Putro Aceh for instance, to accommodate the women ex-soldiers?

Abu Razak: Many. Let say, for example, reciting the holy book of Quran to support their religious and social gatherings with other women – our [the ex-commanders] wives, widows and other ordinary women

242 Abu Razak, former GAM vice supreme commander, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, January 2015.
from *gampong*. And another form of activity is *arisan*, a sort of self-help microfinance and social gathering organised by the women.

The researcher: Is that enough for them?

Abu Razak: Although the KPA could not accommodate all the women ex-soldiers’ social and economic needs, at the very least we have shared our commitment to care for their economic livelihoods by encouraging the local district KPAs across Aceh to accommodate the women, at least during *megang* [traditional Acehnese meat-eating celebration before *Ramadhan* and *Hari Raya Idul Fitri*].

The other, more substantive means by which to spread economic benefits is by improving the women ex-soldiers’ access to employment in the BP2A (*Badan Penguatan Perdamaian Aceh*, The Aceh Peace Board). In doing this, the ex-commanders have viewed the women as family dependents who nevertheless contribute to their household’s income, and need assistance to do so. Abu Razak said ‘although I know that women ex-soldiers who married are dependent on their husbands, we need to care about their economic circumstances as well. Hence, I have employed some women ex-soldiers in the BP2A as they also need support for their incomes’. In this context, the position of the women in the KPA – and is sub-organisations – is still connected to the interests of the ex-commanders in assisting with the economic needs of the women.

In short, the ex-commanders consider that, through the above efforts, they have created a loyal group of female followers to support their interests in contesting for the local power. As such, the ex-commanders have considered that the women ex-soldiers embody an emphasised femininity that compliments and is in compliance with the ex-commander’s hegemonic masculinity, both as leaders of the GAM ex-soldiers in the KPA and the PA, and as economic patrons in addressing the women’s economic expectations.

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243 Idem.
244 The Aceh Peace Board was established in 2013 by the Governor of Aceh to replace the BRA; the Governor dismissed the latter’s operation in the same year (for details, see chapter 4).
245 Idem.
Loyal women ex-soldiers’ perspectives and experiences in the KPA

According to the loyalist women soldiers interviewed, they have shown compliance with the hegemonic masculinity of the ex-commanders, but they also expressed ambivalence and resentment towards their ex-commanders in relation to how they are portrayed as women soldiers and their unequal access to economic resource distributions, compared to their male comrades. On the one hand, the women said they perceived that the KPA is a place for them to be recognised and celebrated as GAM soldiers who made sacrifices for the nation. Also, they said they saw the KPA as a place for them to seek the ex-commanders’ help to improve their economic welfare outcomes, through various petty material rewards and employment opportunities. In these respects, the loyal women have been concerned to cooperate with the ex-commanders. But on the other hand, the women also said they resent the unequal distribution of economic resources between them and their male comrades, in part tracing this to their ambivalent status as recognised, ‘proper’ soldiers. Thus, even though the women remain loyal to the ex-commanders in the KPA, this loyalty is in part linked to their hopes that the ex-commanders will eventually assist in addressing their livelihood needs.

To understand how the warrior hero ideal promoted by the ex-commanders in the KPA has connected with the women ex-soldiers, the researcher managed to interview Ami, a leader of the women ex-soldiers in Banda Aceh. In the interview, Ami claimed she had been placed in charge of the women ex-soldiers’ organisation, the Pasukan Ineung Balee, by the head of the KPA, Muzakir Manaf himself. However, the interview with her also illuminates how gender processes which the women ex-soldiers experienced in the GAM during the conflict have shaped both their own identities as ‘soldiers’ and their ex-commanders’ perceptions of them as women soldiers. During the post-conflict era, Ami said that still identified as a GAM soldier and was proud of it. But she made it clear also that she had continually faced the other, ascribed identity of ‘women soldiers’, whose tasks and roles were seen as limited to support functions and therefore different from those of her male comrades. This ascribed identity influenced Ami’s acceptance of the gender inequalities she faced in the post-conflict period. Importantly, as her economic needs increased during the peace period, she said her

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246 Ami is a pseudonym for a female ex-soldier from Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
attachment to the former commanders in the KPA also changed, in becoming more ambivalent.

According to Ami, the heroic dream of becoming a new Cut Nyak Din (a women national hero who led fighting against the Dutch in the nineteenth century) led her to become involved in the GAM while still young – at 16 years of age, in 1999. She said that ‘the inspiration of the heroine of the Acehnese women who fought for the nation during the Dutch colonial period, made me unafraid to join the GAM soldiers’. She stated further that,

I quit high school at an early age, decided to join GAM and underwent two months of military training in Pidie District in the same year. Along with some one hundred female colleagues in my group, I was brought by GAM male soldiers, who operated in the district, to the mountain of Pidie to receive military training. I was trained as a soldier, wearing a uniform, firing weapons, and jumping from a truck while holding a gun. 247

Ami’s memories and experiences as a soldier of the GAM have never diminished. She told the researcher that although she experienced hardship when she joined the GAM – as she had to be away from her parents – she was very proud to be a GAM soldier. To quote her: ‘please don’t call me a widow of the GAM as some have mocked us as the wives of the GAM. I am a soldier. I am an Inueng Balee warrior’. 248

It is interesting to note that what made Ami joined the KPA was the feeling of military bonding that arises with a sense of loyalty to the GAM’s hierarchical command structure. Instead of now identifying herself as an ordinary woman in gampong, Ami said she still sees herself as a soldier who complies with the commands of the top commanders. She said that ‘after the peace agreement, as a soldier of the GAM, no one forces me to abandon my status as a GAM soldier’. 249 But she also expects some assistance from the ex-commanders. Ami explained, when she heard that the KPA had been established by the elite, her militarised identity as a soldier led her to find her former commander and ask him for recognition of her contribution to the conflict. That is, she joined the KPA to find her commander and male

247 Ami, a former GAM female soldier from Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
248 Idem.
249 Idem.
comrades, and to establish what outcomes, if any, from the peace agreement were available for the women ex-soldiers.

Ami did not provide an information as to when the *Pasukan Ineung Balee* was first established, but she did claim that Muzakir Manaf mandated her to organise the female ex-soldiers under the KPA in 2009, after the PA was established. There have been no criteria for formal membership and, according to her, membership numbers have not been stable, as some of the women have dispersed, moving away to other places over time – especially those who have married and whose husbands have taken them out of Aceh. Nevertheless, Ami still continued to express the view that the *Pasukan Ineung Balee* will accommodate the women ex-soldiers’ socioeconomic needs and expectations.

Ami’s perspectives on and experiences of the strong gender division of labour in the GAM during the conflict have shaped her attitudes towards her perceived identity as a ‘women soldier’ who never fought on the battlefield. This has had implications for her perceptions of the differences between herself and her former male comrades, who have had more access to resources in the post-conflict situation. Whilst she said she accepts the gender differences in soldiering roles, she rejected the idea that this is linked to differential access to economic resources and that women are simply economic dependents without earning capacities and needs. In her words:

> I realise that we, the women ex-soldiers, could not participate in the same way as the men did during the war [referring to combat roles]. But after the conflict, we cannot always let the men [the loyal male ex-soldiers who were involved in the ex-commanders’ businesses] do business while the women stay at home. It is not fair. If the men need jobs, the women need the jobs as well. I have to survive economically. My husband and I earn a living through selling fried rice and cake. Until now I do not have my own house, I just rent yearly. I have to do something.

Beside having to face the reality of her different status and treatment as a women soldier, Ami also encountered economic hardships. In 2009, she had just married her second husband and was living in Banda Aceh, but expected the ex-commanders to attend to her economic

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250 Idem.
circumstances. She said this was prominent in her mind when she joined the KPA. When the ex-commanders did not assist Ami as she hoped, she explained that her feelings towards her commanders became more ambivalent. However, while she expressed opposition to the inequalities of economic distributions between men and women in the KPA, she also stated that she needs to continue to cooperate with the ex-commanders to try to improve her economic circumstances. In her words: ‘I am tired of seeing the unfair economic distribution to women ex-soldiers. It is always men [male ex-soldiers] who are given access to contracting businesses with the ex-commanders in the KPA, not women ex-soldiers. If only I could survive on my own money, I would never ask for something to support my livelihood from the ex-commanders in the KPA.’ Because Ami’s need for assistance is ongoing, she has not entirely given up on her former commanders, and she states she still engages with them. By accepting the ex-commanders’ father-figure and economic patron roles, she has been somewhat absorbed into the ex-commanders’ practices in maintaining their wealth and power.

Due to Ami’s intensive efforts for the KPA, her ex-commanders occasionally distribute small amounts of money to her. Also, with the help of her former commanders, she has been taken on as a temporary employee in the BP2A, along with 13 other women ex-soldiers who trained with her. In this position, she receives monthly payments of at least 1.8 million rupiahs (equal to 180 AUS dollars).

Ami’s experiences in the KPA are similar to those of the other loyalist women ex-soldiers interviewed for this research, who also remain close to the ex-commanders. The majority of these loyalists, in the three regions of Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar and District of Pidie, had joined the KPA. In doing so, they said they accepted the legitimacy of the militarised hegemonic masculinity of the ex-commanders in the KPA. Moreover, the majority of them agreed that they have conformed to the ex-commanders’ expectations and interests in

251 Idem.
252 Five women ex-soldiers interviewed in the research were among the 13 women ex-soldiers who also gained temporary contract jobs. They said that ‘a regional ex-commander of Aceh Besar, Bang Pen, was the one who recommended us to apply for jobs and then we are accepted’. The five were connected through KPA networks and channelled into the BP2A, which was headed by former GAM propagandist, Ustad Maemun Ramli. Interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
253 Ami, a former female GAM soldier from Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
retaining them as loyal female followers or, in ex-commanders’ words, as ‘our urineung (our women), ‘Inueng Balee’.

In summary, it is clear that the ex-commanders exert their power through the inclusion of the women ex-soldiers in the KPA, the PA, and the other patronage institutions, mainly the Pasukan Ineung Balee and Putro Aceh. In these institutions, the women confirmed are mobilised to serve the ex-commanders’ political machine by gaining as many votes for the ex-commanders’ candidates as they can from their families, relatives and people in gampong. Importantly, there are no women ex-soldiers sitting in the GAM political party as representatives of the women ex-soldiers; nor have any ever been proposed as candidates. The ex-commanders consider that the women are constrained – by their family responsibilities, lack of skills and limited education – from undertaking such political positions themselves. Thus, the inclusion of the women in the KPA in fact reflects their disguised marginalisation. Women ex-soldiers are included to validate both the ex-commanders’ perceived capacity and their higher status as leaders of the KPA and the PA; but only under the terms of an emphasised femininity, in which women are positioned as the ex-commanders’ loyal supporters and helpers. Once the women cooperate in this way, they are rewarded with some of the material benefits spread by the ex-commanders through their patronage institutions. Accordingly, their needs are attended to by the ex-commanders only to further the latters’ interests in local politics.

Baaz and Stern (2012) observed a similar trajectory of women ex-soldiers’ inclusion in the Congolese National Armed Forces (FARDC) in the post-conflict Democratic Republic of Congo. Their research reveals that women soldiers encountered contradictory gender discourses in their involvement in the military force. In this institution, women soldiers each forged two militarised identities: as ‘soldiers’ and as ‘women soldiers’. This distinction caused confusion as to their military identities and status in the post-conflict period. On the one hand, as ‘soldiers’ the women experienced military training; and further, experienced combat roles including fighting and killing. Not only have these experiences enabled the women to identify themselves as ‘fearless soldiers’– ostensibly equal to men soldiers –; their experiences also disrupted the common gender assumption that women are predominantly victims of and not participants in war. On the other hand, the women experienced feminisation of their roles in the military; as necessarily being ‘women soldiers’ who did, for
example, intelligence work as a ‘sexual temptress’. Because of these roles, the women felt inferior and subordinate to their male comrades.

Similarly, based on her interviews with women ex-soldiers in post-conflict Sierra Leone, MacKenzie (2009) maintains that women ex-soldiers in that country have experienced multiple active roles as soldiers, ranging from participating in military training and bearing arms to being involved in combat roles during the war alongside their male comrades. However, mainstream post-conflict discourse and a DDR policy program in Sierra Leone has ‘securitised’ men as soldiers, and ‘de-securitised’ women as ‘passive victims of the war’; in that the women’s actual active roles and contributions during the war were not acknowledged in the DDR program. Here, the stereotype of women as victims of war has obscured their actual roles as soldiers. This confusion over the real status of the women has contributed to the small number of the women willing to participate in the DDR process in that country.

**Women ex-soldiers’ grievances against the ex-commanders (the perspectives of the non-loyalist women groups)**

In Aceh, the women ex-soldiers’ inclusion in the KPA took place in an environment of patronage. Accordingly, only those women who were relatively close to the ex-commanders have been involved in the activities of the KPA, the PA and the Putro Aceh. That means that the other women ex-soldiers, who were not close to the ex-commanders, were left out. This has triggered resentment among the disaffected women ex-soldiers; however, they have articulated ambivalent femininity in different ways. Some of the women refuse any involvement in the KPA or related institutions, yet they have not taken any steps to counter the ex-commanders. In contrast, some other women ex-soldiers, in particular those who were previously involved in the student movement (SIRA and SMUR), have expressed their grievances openly to the ex-commanders in the KPA.

Among the first group of disaffected women, their ambivalent femininity is expressed in their mixed feelings of compliance and non-compliance with the hegemonic power of the ex-commanders. The women stated that they are still proud of their identity as GAM soldiers, but they are very disappointed with the ex-commanders in the KPA – so much so that they expressed hatred towards the ex-commanders and explained this was why they have left the KPA. Yet, these women still made statements to the effect that they expect the ex-
commanders to be aware of their economic conditions someday. As former women soldiers, they said they still regard themselves as extraordinary Acehnese women who have made a valuable contribution to the struggle for the nation. Their sense of sacrifice and feelings of belonging as GAM soldiers are still intact. In the interviews, the women in this group accepted they were going to be largely dependent economically on their husbands and families but, as their economic needs had increased after the conflict, they also had expected the ex-commanders – who now have some positions in government – to acknowledge their economic needs. But their lack of personal access to the ex-commanders has hindered their capacity to find the assistance they want through the KPA. The women in this group revealed they also experience considerable poverty, have limited educational backgrounds and, accordingly, limited access to the wider political groups. They feel all they can do is to express their bitterness about their economic circumstances in the post-conflict era, and their resentment toward the ex-commanders’ unfair distribution of economic resources.

In the case of the second disaffected group of women ex-soldiers, they were strongly of the view that their military status has been eroded by being labelled just ‘passive soldiers’. Thus, they said they have sought to resist the ex-commanders, by quitting the KPA and joining the civilian elite in the PNA group. As consequence of these women’s departure from the KPA, they were no longer recognised as ‘true GAM soldiers’ by the ex-commanders, and hence were labelled as ‘traitors’. Despite this, the women still show some lingering respect for the command hierarchy; as they said they remain close to their more immediate, middle-ranked commanders who were also expelled from the KPA and have merged subsequently with the civilian elite in the PNA group.

a. The angry women ex-soldiers group

To understand how the women ex-soldiers have articulated their ambivalent femininity, the researcher interviewed some women ex-soldiers who had rejected the KPA in Pidie Jaya District and Aceh Besar. One female ex-soldier interviewee from Pidie Jaya District had joined GAM in 2000. She revealed her involvement was inspired by the stories told by elderly people in her gampong about the struggle of the GAM to end the Indonesian military oppression. When GAM representatives actively approached people in her gampong, she said she decided to join. She underwent military training for almost two months and was then asked by her commander in Pidie Jaya District to spy on Indonesian soldiers in her gampong.
Lung Putu. She said she was very proud of being in the GAM, collecting and gathering intelligence information. According to her, as the situation in her gampong was not conducive for her to stay, she fled to a safer place and lived with her relatives in Medan in North Sumatera for three years. In 2003, immediately after celebrating Hari Raya Idul Fitri (holiday), she recounted she went home for a family visit but was captured at her house and sent to an Indonesian army camp. There she was interrogated and was badly tortured for three days, then later jailed for two years. She explained she was released after the MOU was signed in 2005, but the local police officers in Pidie Jaya District also demanded a ransom in the form of 25 grams of gold from her parents. It was hard for her parents, who were economically poor, to fulfil this demand of the officers. She said there were no means to do so unless they borrowed money from their neighbours in the gampong. This they did, and she was released and sent home after her parents delivered the ransom.

After the conflict, along with her female comrades, she stated that she was omitted from access to the reintegration funds. However, she also said she was aware that some of her former GAM colleagues in neighbouring villages received some payouts from their commanders. She did not know why she had been treated differently from her former male and female comrades, but expressed anger about it. Knowing also that the ex-commanders had become local contractors, she recounted she approached one of her former commanders for economic assistance. The ex-commander promised to distribute a sum of money from the construction project that he owned in Pidie Jaya District. She insisted on going back and forth to see the commander and to ask when he would fulfil his promise to distribute some money to her; but eventually she gave up. Since then, she said she has not contacted any ex-commanders in the KPA. In her words:

I was never scared of being hungry in my economic circumstances. I was a GAM soldier. I went through a lot of hardship and pain when I was tortured and jailed during the GAM struggle. I was proud of being a soldier. If they [the ex-commanders] do not care about women ex-soldiers, it is not my problem. It is their problem. But I was disappointed that women were recruited into the GAM but then
neglected after that. I was treated like a bullet that comes out from the gun without caring where it goes.254

To survive economically, this woman said she now lives with her parents in the gampong. According to her, she sells cakes in the market while helping with household duties at home alongside her two sisters. Nevertheless, she stated her memories and her experience in the GAM as a soldier never leave her. She is still proud of being a soldier, and still hopes the ex-commanders will take care of her economic situation.

Three other female ex-soldier interviewees also expressed the same hopes as the women ex-soldier interviewed above. All from Lam Lepung village in Aceh Besar district, they revealed they had received nothing from their ex-commanders, ‘not even se-botol syrup [a bottle of cordial]’.255 They all experienced feelings of exclusion from the KPA. In the words of one:

While in the jungle, we shared our struggle for Aceh independence and were prized by them [GAM commanders]. We followed and obeyed every instruction directed to us during the military training, until we had to move from the camp as it had been surrounded by Indonesian soldiers. We women were trying to save ourselves; we fled from the camp by crossing rivers. Though we suffered injuries to our feet, we needed to escape from that ambush. But, now, after the conflict, the ex-commanders in the KPA never look at us. They are not human. If they do not want to share and care for women, that is fine, but please do not throw us away like rubbish. We are human too.256

Among this group of female ex-soldiers, those were are married said they now depend on their husbands to survive economically; those who are divorced or single said they rely on their fathers. They all expressed the view they have faced economic hardship during the peace, and they believe that the economic rewards dispersed by the commanders would be of help to them. But because they did not receive any material rewards from the KPA, they vented anger at their ex-commanders, saying they have never contacted them in the KPA. Yet, as with the previous women ex-soldiers, these three women talk of themselves as being

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254 Former GAM female soldier for Pidie Jaya District, interview with the author, Pidie Jaya District, November 2014.
255 A group of former GAM female soldiers for Aceh Besar District, interview with the author, Aceh Besar, December 2014.
256 Idem.
GAM soldiers who risked death for the GAM movement. From what they said, their identity as soldiers is still clear in their minds. They are still waiting and hoping that someday the ex-commanders will fulfil the promise to improve their welfare outcomes.

As Luna, Van Der Haar and Hilhorst (2017) recently observed about women’s livelihoods in Nepal, during that country’s conflict era traditional gender roles were disrupted as women ex-soldiers participated in the Maoist armed insurgency movement; a perceived role and place traditionally reserved for men. However, this gender role change experienced by the women ex-soldiers was not carried over into the women’s everyday lives in the post-conflict context. Their lack of required skills, education and access to wider social, political and economic networks after the conflict has caused most of Nepal’s women ex-soldiers to suffer severe livelihood challenges. They have eventually ended up in the domestic economy, dependent on their husbands, families and peer networks in their villages to survive economically. There are parallels here with the experiences described above of the disaffected woman ex-soldier interviewed from Aceh, and her three excluded female comrades. As explained, these women resented the unequal distribution of economic resources to former GAM soldiers; however, due to their poverty, lack of education and political access, their resentment did not develop into active political resistance against the ex-commanders in the KPA. In contrast, another group of women ex-soldiers from Aceh have responded to their concerns in political terms, as described below.

b. The disgruntled women ex-soldiers group

The ambivalent feminity of another group of women ex-soldiers in Aceh is reflected in the ways in which their mixed feelings of compliance, cooperation and resistance are being channelled into the goal of achieving gender equality with regard to their status and access to economic resources in the post-agreement period. On the one hand, these women stated that they object to their ex-commanders’ unequal distribution of resources, the negative labelling of their status as ‘passive soldiers’ and accusations that they are ‘traitors’ of the GAM. On the other hand, they still expressed respect for the military command hierarchy to the extent that they maintain relations with their more immediate ex-commanders, in order to further interact and cooperate with the male civilian elite in the PNA group, whom they said they believe can bring about changes in the women ex-soldiers’ situations. According to these women, there is no room for women to voice their concerns in the KPA. Instead, they consider that they have
found a new space in which to improve both their status recognition as women ex-soldiers and their economic circumstances, not with their ex-commanders in the KPA, but with the civilian elite in the PNA group.

The configuration of the ambivalent femininity of these women is historically linked to the gender consciousness-raising that a group of female ex-soldiers experienced during their interactions with a local Acehnese women activists’ organisation (Perempuan Merdeka, liberated women) and members of the student movement under SIRA (Sentral Information Referendum Aceh) and SMUR (Solidaritas Mahasiswa untuk Rakyat, Student Solidarity for People) in 1999. The women said this historical interaction has impacted on their awareness of civilian democratic ideology, in addition to gender equality. Ideologically aware that, as women, they could do more than just be former women soldiers, two female ex-soldiers from Aceh Besar who were interviewed for this research have gone beyond their colleagues in wanting women to achieve broader goals; such as better education, and interactions with the student movement organisations. As one of them said:

I was aware of my potential as a woman who could do more than what women soldiers were usually directed to do in the GAM insurgency. When I was assigned by my commanders to spy on the student movement during the referendum in 1999, in particular on Perempuan Merdeka – a local women’s activist organisation under SMUR – I wanted to know what they were doing, as the women university students were demanding the independence of Aceh by way of a political referendum. In fact, my interaction with educated men and women in the student movement made me curious to understand more about the bigger share that women could do if Aceh was freed and became an independent state. The students said to me that, if I was still acting as ‘a hill person’ [referring to women soldiers in the GAM], I would be foolish and would gain nothing. As a result, I could not do anything anymore, except and follow what my commanders said. If I went beyond just being a woman soldier, and studied computers or continued my education, I could do more than just deliver logistics. I could move on and become a teacher or work in an office someday.257

257Former GAM female soldier for Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
This woman’s interactions with the civilian educated women and men in the women’s activist organisation and the student movement did trigger her to pursue further education. She revealed she went on to obtain her senior high school certificate and a computer course certificate in Banda Aceh. After the peace agreement was signed in 2005 and KPA was established to deliver the reintegration package, she became critical of her comrades. She questioned the ex-commanders as to why she had gained less and was called a ‘passive soldier’. In her words:

This was ridiculous and humiliating as I received money, Rp. 1. Million rupiahs, [approximately 100 Australian dollars], but I did not know where the money came from. In the top corner of the envelope, I saw the words tentara tidak aktif [passive soldiers]. I was very sad and felt hurt. This really insulted the women. We never demanded anything in our struggle as women soldiers, we helped men to hide and conceal their identity as GAM soldiers. They set the women apart and undervalued our contributions to the GAM struggle.258

She said she asked her commanders in the KPA to publicly recognise the women ex-soldiers’ contributions. She stated that, ‘until now, there is no explicit public acknowledgement, either local or national public recognition, of their status as former GAM women soldiers. They are never recognized formally’.259 She went further in expressing the view that:

In the peace agreement process, the KPA never explicitly and publicly referred to the existence of the Pasukan Inong Balee or the women GAM troops. We as women soldiers of the GAM had disappeared, but the men re-emerged as GAM ex-combatants. If you see the organizational structure of the KPA, you will never find any women. All of them are men.260

Although one of the other women ex-soldiers, Ami, claimed that she had gained a mandate to form the Pasukan Inueng Balee from the head of the KPA, Muzakir Manaf (see above), this female former soldier maintained the organisation was established informally and assigned only to those who were close to the ex-commanders in the KPA. She added:

258 Idem.  
259 Idem.  
260 Idem.
If the commanders rightly claimed that they have accommodated women ex-soldiers, it is only partly true as they have accommodated only those women ex-soldiers who are close to them and the number is very small, around 13 women ex-soldiers. Until now, there is no formal letter, endorsed by the provincial parliament in the post-conflict agreement, that the governor or the vice governor of Aceh have formally accommodated the women ex-soldiers. It is ironic as both of them were GAM people. How could they claim that they have served the women, when our number is around 3,000 women ex-soldiers in the whole of Aceh? I was very sad when they said that we are ‘passive soldiers’. We were not passive; we were active in supporting the GAM movement.261

Another women ex-soldier from the same area revealed she had shared similar experiences when she joined the women activists and civilian student movement in 1999. This woman said that, ‘as women ex-soldiers, we reject the idea that we were used as ‘reserve soldiers’. The women ex-soldiers should be treated equally to the men. Women’s rights should be implemented in Aceh’.262 Neither of the two women felt that the KPA was the place for them to improve either their status or their economic welfare outcomes. After initially joining and being in the KPA for couple years (2005-2007), they said they both left the organisation. To quote them, ‘we are not in the KPA anymore. We quit and detached from the ex-commanders in the KPA’.263 Yet both the women made clear they still consider themselves to be GAM ex-soldiers who devoted their efforts to the struggle for the nation. For them, their militarised identity as women ex-soldiers has not disappeared. They remain proud of being soldiers of the GAM.

As explained above, both of these women ex-soldiers were connected to a women’s activist organisation and civilian student movement during the conflict. During the post-conflict period, most of the student movement groups of SIRA and SMUR was also connected to Irwandi group. Therefore, the women’s departure from the KPA in 2007 was not complete until they had met with the civilian negotiator, Nurdjuly, one of the Irwandi Yusuf’s colleagues. They said their interactions with Nurdjuly led them to connect to the civic

261 Idem.
262 Former GAM female soldier for Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
263 Idem.
democracy ideal promoted by Irwandi group. In their view, this ideal provides the room not only for men, but also for women to speak up about their rights as civilians, and their aspirations to participate fully in building a future democracy for Aceh. In this context, they have seen that the civic ideology has provided a promising outlet to channel their aspirations, both as women ex-soldiers and as women civilians. In the words of the second woman ex-soldier:

Om Noor, [Nurdjuly], as we called him, is a very nice person and democratic. He never asked where we come from, although we were GAM soldiers, military people. Om Noor said that, as long as we have the capacity to collaborate in helping his work in the BRA [Badan Reintegrasi Aceh, Aceh Reintegration Board], that is fine. I worked for Om Noor for two years until I was kicked out by the new head of BRA in 2012. But, I still maintain my relationship with Om Noor. He made us open and broaden our mind to discuss and channel our aspirations. Om Noor taught us civic ideology and his vision is for an open space for women.264

Also with the help of Nurdjuly, in 2007 the second woman said she was employed as a staff member in Genesis, an international NGO that operated in Aceh. However, the two women’s connections to the civilian GAM elite would not have occurred, had not their immediate commanders played a part by introducing them to the civilian elite. Both women said neither of them were known to Nurdjuly until their immediate ex-commanders, T Muksalmina and T Tanjura, directed them to him. One of the women said that, ‘T Tanjura and T Muksalmina, who are now in the PNA with Irwandi Yusuf, are our former commanders. We stayed close to them. That’s why I could meet with Nurdjuly, a former head of BRA’.265 Whilst both of them have departed from the KPA and have shifted to the PNA group, they said they still respect the military hierarchy by maintaining relations with their immediate middle-ranked ex-commanders who have also joined the PNA.

When the political elite contestation between the military and the civilian elite group heightened, particularly during the governor election in 2012 (see Chapter 5), both these women were further accused by the ex-commanders in the KPA of stepping outside of the

264 Former GAM female soldier for Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014
265 Idem.
path of the struggle. In short, they were accused of being ‘traitors’ of the GAM because they joined with the Irwandi group in the PNA. To quote one:

Could you imagine? As we joined the PNA, we were accused of being traitors. They said we are not women ex-soldiers of the GAM. That was hurtful. Where was their awareness? We were a part of the GAM; we underwent military training. How come they did this to us?266

Both of the women expressed anger at the way the KPA group has treated them. They said they want to change gender relations with their male combatants and, broadly, they wish to have equal gender opportunity for women ex-soldiers in Aceh.

In the jungle, women ex-soldiers were treated as ‘housemaids’, helping men to cook and wash their clothes and hiding them if they were identified by the enemy. Now nothing is different, nothing has changed; they treat the women ex-soldiers as ‘housemaids’ as well as expecting them to help the ex-commanders glorify themselves in the upcoming local elections. We do not want this to happen. We need change. Therefore, our demand to the ex-commanders is that we need formal, public recognition that we are women soldiers or the Pasukan Inong Balee. Second, we need equal treatment, among the women ex-soldiers and with the male ex-soldiers. Third, we need the political space to express our political aspirations as women.267

Since the establishment of the PNA by Irwandi Yusuf in 2012, both of these women, along with other women ex-soldiers in several areas in Aceh Besar, Lokhsmaeweh and West Aceh, are now active in the PNA group. Their numbers are still small compared with the number of loyalist female followers of the ex-commanders in the KPA.268 However, this pattern of women ex-soldiers’ flight from the mainstream KPA institution marks a new trajectory for gender change in the post-conflict situation, particularly in their continuing struggle to challenge socio-economic discrimination in the KPA.

266 Idem.
267 Former GAM female soldier for Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
268 Asiah Uziah a female activist of the PNA group, mentioned that the number of women ex-soldiers who departed from the KPA and joined with the PNA is still very small, at less than 20. Interview with the author, Banda Aceh, April 2016.
Nevertheless, the way in which the women articulate their grievances and struggle is never detached from masculine politics. Former, principally middle-ranked ex-commanders in the PNA group are all men who practice alternative masculinities which, politically, value civic democracy and civil society. These values are gendered nevertheless. The interests of the women ex-soldiers above may fit with the goals and interests of this male civilian elite in the PNA group, especially in achieving civilian democracy and an inclusive development strategy to propel socio-economic prosperity for future Aceh. But the women’s stated objectives to pursue such change were not realised until they were approached personally by their former middle-ranked commanders who had been expelled from the KPA. Thus, the women’s struggle to achieve equal opportunities in resource distribution and status recognition as women ex-soldiers in the post-conflict era is shaped by the broader pursuit of ideological and material interests by male civilian elites in the PNA group, in their contestation with the ex-commanders in the KPA group. The women’s struggle also cannot be isolated from the patronage relationships embedded in GAM, which shape the pattern of social relations between men and women within the GAM.

The women ex-soldiers are aware of their limitations, as they possess unequal power resources in relation to elite men in the PNA. Accordingly, it can be said the women ex-soldiers have formed an informal clientelistic alliance with the PNA (Hutchison et al. 2014, 135-137). An informal clientelistic political alliance is one in which the weaker group depend on personal relationships with the stronger ally for access to resources and protection (Hutchison et al. 2014, 137). Given the unequal power relations involved, the weaker party is strongly motivated to ‘appear to be ideologically on the same page’ as their more powerful ally – which means their ongoing support can be instrumental and contingent (Hutchison et al. 2014, 135).

This type of alliance is well fitted to the patronage environment that exists in the GAM. The informal clientelist nature of the political alliance between some women ex-soldiers and the elite in the PNA group manifests in how the women’s former middle-ranked commanders have channelled the women ex-soldiers to work for Nurdjuly, a former civilian GAM negotiator. To develop the capacities of the women in the PNA, both women interviewees described above revealed they have joined several other women activists in being included in a study of the post-conflict reintegration of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) ex-
combatants in the Philippines. The women stated that this was a big opportunity for them to understand more about the comparative situation of women ex-soldiers in the MNLF, and to improve the situation of women ex-soldiers in Aceh in the future. The women noted also that, recently, Irwandi Yusuf’s wife, Darwati A Gani, a member of the Aceh parliament representing the PNA party, has offered socio-economic opportunities for women by funding activities such as seminars and workshops on women’s issues. These have included the women ex-soldiers. In addition, through the PNA’s female activists’ wing, Srikandi Aceh, the PNA has established a monthly meeting and discussion of human right issues, including those confronting women ex-soldiers. In such ways, trust building between the women and men has developed, not only by spreading economic resources to the women ex-soldiers in the form of jobs, but also by accommodating the women’ interests to achieve better education and future gender equality with men.

The women’s stated efforts to forge a new political alliance with men in the PNA group has done little to dent the hegemonic power of the ex-commanders. Nevertheless, the nature of the female ex-soldiers’ informal clientelist alliance has marked a turning point in gender power relations affecting their lives. The men in the PNA have provided greater room for the women to recognise and voice their political agency as women. It is difficult to determine whether this type of alliance reflects a full commitment by both parties to bring about ongoing reform towards gender equality. Nonetheless, this informal clientelistic political alliance between women and men with different and diverse socio-political and economic backgrounds has potentially sown the seeds of gender equality and better social, political and economic conditions for women ex-soldiers’ lives in the post-conflict Aceh.

**Conclusion**

The chapter has explained the nature of relationships between the ex-commanders and the women ex-soldiers in the context of ongoing political power contestations. As we have seen, the reconstitution of the militarised hegemonic masculinity of the ex-commanders in the KPA is also related to the reconfiguration of the emphasised femininity and ambivalent femininity of the women ex-soldiers. In relation to the making of emphasised femininity, the ex-commanders have presumed that, by continuing to espouse the women ex-soldiers’ status as

269 Nurdjuly, former GAM negotiator, interview with the author, Banda Aceh. April 2016.
270 Former GAM female soldier for Aceh Besar, interview with the author, Banda Aceh, November 2014.
women soldiers, and accompany this with the spread of some economic rewards to the women involved, the ex-commanders have secured a loyal group of female followers. However, there are various degrees of compliance shown by the women, given many express ambivalence towards their ex-commanders and their positions of power, based on their disappointment with the ex-commanders regarding their unequal access to economic resources and status as soldiers.

In the case of the disgruntled women ex-soldiers who have distanced themselves from the KPA, they combine ambivalence with outright rejection. While some have reacted simply by expressing anger and disillusionment towards the ex-commanders, others have manifested their disappointment by departing from the KPA and establishing a political alliance with men in the PNA group, albeit of an informal and clientelistic nature. This group of excluded women ex-soldiers have found that the civilian elite, and the civic ideology it espouses, have opened opportunities and spaces for them to take steps to fulfil their political agency as women. The women’s efforts to establish a political alliance with the men in the PNA group cannot disrupt the strong gender hierarchy in the KPA. Yet the political trajectory of the women’s departure and resistance to their ex-commanders marks something of a turning point for disaffected women ex-soldiers to challenge existing gender relations, and thereby move towards securing a better future for women in the post-conflict situation.
Chapter 8

Conclusion

On 4th December 2015, at the annual memorial event of Milad to celebrate the 39th anniversary of the GAM struggle in Banda Aceh, Darwis Jeunib, a prominent high ranking GAM ex-commander announced to all those gathered at the event: ‘we must choose the leaders of the future Aceh from the commanders who experienced great hardship in the jungle. Remember, do not ever vote for leaders whose lives were spent full of happiness, outside the country, and so never felt the bitterness that the people of Aceh experienced’ (Lintas Nasional, 2015). Jeunib’s words conveyed two clear messages; particularly as he possesses great power locally as a GAM ex-commander and is also a leader of a political party and a local businessman. The first message is that the ex-commanders suffered greatly, along with and alongside the Acehnese people, during the conflict. The second message is that there is a sharp social distinction to be made between those who fought for the nation and those who did not, and that this distinction should form the basis for judging who deserves to govern Aceh in the future. Most importantly, in relation to the argument of this thesis, the ex-commander’s words denote the gendered practice of the militarised hegemonic masculinity of the GAM ex-commanders in casting themselves as the embodiment of the ideal ‘warrior hero’. This ideal has become an important ideological power resource for the ex-commanders to secure, legitimate and sustain their political authority and leadership over the other, civilian GAM elite group – and thus establish their emergence as a new local political elite in post-conflict Aceh.

The thesis focuses on the political economy of local power contestation after the peace agreement in Aceh; specifically, the rise of the new local elite in subsequent provincial and district electoral contests between 2006 and 2014. The scholarship on these local political developments in post-conflict Aceh has applied both patrimonial political economy and institutional democracy approaches. The former offers important insights into the role of patronage in the Indonesian political economy, and how this has shaped the ex-commanders’ interests in and means of securing political office and appropriating economic resources (Aditjondro 2007a and 2007b; Aspinall 2009; Prasetyo and Aditjondro 2010; Palmer 2010; Stange and Patock 2010; Hillman 2012; and Sindre 2010 and 2016). In contrast, the latter
approach highlights the significance of institutional democracy, in the form of new laws, regulations and other significant institution building, in underpinning the GAM ex-commanders’ capacity to wield local power in post-conflict Aceh (Tornquist 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Miller 2012; Ansori 2012). However, neither approach has considered how gender relations have been important in shaping the competition between local elite men over wealth and power, and their relations with subordinates and other civilians. There has also been a number of studies of the reintegration of the GAM ex-soldiers in post-conflict Aceh, documented and published by both academics and activists (Meghdadi 2009; Siapno 2009; Jauhola 2010; Lee-Koo 2012; Uning undated; Marhaban 2012; Myrttinen 2012). However, to date such studies have focused on women’s roles in the peace process, including the women ex-soldiers’ marginalisation; but have not examined gender relations and masculinist politics.

The significant contribution that this thesis thus makes is to highlight the processes and practices of remilitarisation in post-conflict Aceh, in particular the ex-commanders’ retained status as military commanders in the new, civilian context. This has been achieved by adopting a feminist political economy (FPE) approach, which understands gender as a social structure and practice, and is therefore concerned with the ideological and material dimensions of power in political and economic contestations, between and within groups. Remilitarisation is indicated in the thesis by a range of ongoing practices. As shown in Chapter 4, after the demilitarisation process, various new, post-conflict organisations have flourished. These new organisations are characterised by strong hierarchical command structures, along military lines. The clear examples of this phenomenon have been the establishment of a new militarised organisation, the KPA, headed by the ex-commanders, and new rank and file soldiers’ organisations, such as the FORKAB and the TRA, with similar command structures to the KPA. Another practice denoting remilitarisation is the circulation of guns, in the hands of ex-commanders and male rank and file ex-soldiers, and the resulting perpetuation of criminal violence in the form of kidnapping, torture, and killings.

This remilitarisation has been highly gendered. This thesis has analysed this, through the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ – understood to refer a particular ideal of manhood, which represents the ‘most honoured way of being a man’ under particular circumstances (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). The hegemonic masculinity practiced by the ex-commanders has taken the form of the ‘warrior hero’ ideal of manhood that is rooted historically in the GAM military insurgency struggle. During the insurgency, this ideal was
used to forge military bonding among the commanders and, particularly, between them and their male and female rank and file soldiers. As shown in Chapter 5, in the post-conflict era this ideological construction has been reproduced by the ex-commanders in the KPA, to continue to position themselves as the exemplars of that military and national ideal and, on these terms, to compete in and secure victories in electoral contests for local political power. The ex-commanders drew on the warrior hero ideal, specifically to garner support from rank and file ex-soldiers as voters by re-forging fraternal and military bonding. To achieve this unifying ideal, the ex-commanders have employed the slogan ‘udeb beusare mate beusajan’ (life and death together) as an ideological tool for maintaining ‘loyalty’ and the spirit of comradship between the ex-commanders and their rank and file ex-soldiers. During their political campaigns, the ex-commanders urged their rank and file to re-unite in the KPA under the Muzakir Manaf group by using this slogan. In addition, to strengthen the military bonding, the ex-commanders also have used some military terms to encourage their rank and file soldiers to join the KPA and then vote for their chief commander, such as ‘back to barracks and let our chief commander, Mualem, win’, ‘back to the regiment’ and ‘welcome home our brothers’ (Modus Aceh 2016b and Seulawahnews 2016). Meanwhile, to marginalise the civilian elite as their political rivals, the ex-commanders have downgraded the civilian leadership by demeaning their contribution to the war and their status as men. As such, the ex-commanders also employed the warrior hero ideal to endeavor to entrench the gendered binaries of ‘combatant’ versus ‘civilian’, and ‘warrior’ versus ‘traitor’ to reinforce social divisions and hierarchies.

To influence the political choices and actions of the rank and file ex-soldiers, the ex-commanders also positioned and promoted themselves as ‘father figures’ in their role as the economic benefactors of the rank and file ex-soldiers. Not only has this ideal of the responsible, caring father appealed to the male rank and file ex-soldiers’ breadwinner status and responsibilities within their households, it has conversely also been a key source of resentment and conflict among the excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers, particularly those who have not been regarded and treated as ‘true’ combatants. As explained in Chapter 5, during the war, ‘traitors’ or ‘cuak’ referred to the ones who betrayed the Acehnese country and nation by committing treason. This practice was condemned in GAM military division and hence it was considered that offenders deserved to be punished. In the post-conflict political contest, the ex-commanders have re-used these terms to politically label their rivals, in particular the civilian elite in the PNA group, as ‘traitors’ of the Acehnese nation. For
example, in political campaigning in Banda Aceh, an ex-commander from the KPA group urged those present not to vote for ‘those who have betrayed the GAM struggle for the nation’ – meaning ‘don’t vote for the civilian leadership group’ (Beritakini, 2017). In the case of the civilian elite, the ex-commanders’ strategy of labelling them as ‘traitors’ was backed by also limiting their access to economic resources, and weakening them through threats and actual use of violence, intimidation, threats and killing.

As explained in Chapter 6, the ex-commanders’ power manoeuvres have triggered a range of responses. In the case of the civilian elite, they have sought to counter the ex-commanders’ militaristic ideology by promoting civic nationalism and developing policy alternatives for the future development of Aceh. In the cases of male rank and file ex-soldiers, they have pursued both non-violent means, in establishing alternative organisations to the KPA, and violent crimes. The most extreme and violent responses of the excluded male rank and file ex-soldiers have been analysed in terms of their enactment of a form of ‘protest masculinity’. As noted by Connell (2002c, 94), ‘the relationship of men to hegemonic masculinity is often fraught, the enactment partial, contested, and capable of shifting into violence’ (2002c, 94). The disenfranchised men, endangered by poverty, have attempted to challenge the economic power bases of the hegemonic masculinity of the ex-commanders through exaggerated claims to power, whilst in fact lacking the resources to succeed. In the case of the female ex-combatants, the ex-commanders have sought their loyalty and electoral support by including them in the KPA, via affiliate organisations, such as Putro Aceh and the Pasukan Ineung Balee (see Chapter 7). In this way, the ex-commanders have sought to enhance their militarised hegemonic masculinity by cultivating the ‘emphasised femininity’ of women ex-soldiers. However, in achieving their dominant position, the ex-commanders have been challenged by a group of disgruntled women ex-soldiers, who have felt dissatisfied with their eroded military status and the unequal distribution of rehabilitation funds and later economic resources and jobs. Whilst some of the women’s responses denote a form of ‘ambivalent femininity’, a number have pursued greater resistance by departing from the mainstream ex-commander institution, the KPA, and joining the civilian elite in the PNA group (see Chapter 7).

In summary, this thesis has examined masculine politics in post-conflict Aceh as a way to explain the rise of the GAM ex-commanders as a local political and economic elite. The evidence for this is drawn from interviews in the field with a range of people; some being key
figures – such as Abu Razak, a former GAM vice supreme commander, and T Sarjani, the former GAM regional commander for Pidie District – who were not easy to locate. However, it is also clear that thesis is limited to the study of the rise of a local political elite in a specific time period, between 2006 and 2014. To obtain further information on the development of aspects that could influence the political positions of the GAM ex-commanders in the local political contestation, further up-dates on the current political situation in Aceh are needed.

To date, there have been three significant political developments in Aceh. The first is that civic nationalism continues to be promoted through the halal Pilkada slogan of the civilian GAM elite, under the Irwandi/PNA group. Accordingly, the Irwandi/PNA group has continued to manoeuvre to oppose the ex-commanders’ group by campaigning lawfully and peacefully in the 2017 direct provincial and district executive elections. As a result, they made some headway in winning the 2017 executive provincial election and so successfully returning Irwandi to sit as governor of Aceh. The second development is that political competition, particularly in the recent 2017 provincial and district executive elections, has seen some of the formerly exiled civilian GAM elites leave the ex-commanders’ political party, Partai Aceh (Aceh Party), to run as independent candidates. Also, among the ex-commanders within the KPA there has been further internal conflict, as indicated by the fact that some regional ex-commanders, who were disappointed with the unfair manner of political and economic resource distributions by the KPA, have shifted to the Irwandi/PNA group. The ex-regional commanders’ shift to the Irwandi/PNA group has undermined the hegemonic power of the ex-commanders in the KPA under the leadership of Muzakir Manaf group, but they nevertheless retain control of seats in the parliament.

Finally, since 2014, Aceh has seen further imposition of Sharia law. The Sharia law has been expanded to regulate Islamic practices particularly in relation to banning of women from working, attending entertainment events late at night, and from sitting astride on motors bikes with a driver of the opposite sex (ABC News 2015, Newsgrid 2015). Women activists have reported in media that the implementation of this new Sharia law has had detrimental effects on women’s rights and increased gender-based violence, particularly for female victims, in both public and the private spheres (Newsgrid 2015). Gender relations remain fundamental to these developments. However, further research is needed to provide an update on the implications of these changes for the ex-commanders’ rendering of militarised hegemonic masculinity as a power resource, and the effectiveness of their opponents’ responses from
opponents this have previously engendered. To broaden the geographical area of masculine politics studies in the region, future case study research should extend to gender dynamics in national and local level power contestations in other conflict areas across Indonesian provinces, such as Papua, Ambon (Moluccas), and Poso (Central Sulawesi). This future research is important as the content of masculinities are variable at the local level, but connects also to national level masculinities.
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Appendix One

Methods

Data collection for this thesis centred on face-to-face interviews with a range of people who were involved in the armed conflict in Aceh and or the subsequent combatant reintegration program. The interviews were mainly conducted on a one-off basis with one individual (sometimes more than once); however there were also some group interviews, with a small number of people (2-3) at the same time (Flick 2011, 3). Both interview types were guided by semi-structured questions that aimed to elicit the general perspectives and experiences of the research participants: the ex-commanders, the civilian elite, and men and women ex-soldiers in the GAM and the subsequent reintegration program, focusing on the nature of gendered social relations among them during both the conflict and post-conflict periods. As explained by Flick (2011, 4), interview research is mostly concerned to establish ‘the individual experience of the participant’, because this ‘is seen as relevant for understanding the experience of people in a similar situation’ (Flick 2011, 4). In this case, ‘a similar situation’ applied to the different categories of research participants, determined in particular by military rank and gender. Accordingly, the interviews were used to ascertain the shared experiences of certain categories of participants, yet without also failing to be open to the variant individual experiences and perspectives within each category of participants, based on other factors.

Research participants were selected to ensure adequate coverage of the two main variables of rank and gender. In the case of the ex-commanders, I selected individuals from all ranks, as per the GAM organisational structure (see Chapter 3): a supreme commander (Panglima), regional commanders (Panglima Wilayah), district commanders (Panglima Daerah), and village commanders (Panglima Sagoe). These commanders, particularly the supreme commander, vice supreme commander271, and some regional and district commanders, have transitioned into leadership positions in post-conflict Aceh as top government officials, members of parliament and or political party leaders. The exact number of ex-commanders is not known, but according to a former vice-supreme commander interviewed in the study,

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271 The vice supreme commander position does not appear in the GAM military organisational structure diagram in Chapter 3, but in practice this rank existed. The same applies to the GAM operational commander; although this rank is not in the formal organisational structure, it was mentioned by some of the ex-commanders interviewed.
there were 17 regional commanders who each oversaw four or five district commanders. In addition, there were more village commanders under district commanders’ supervision. In total I interviewed 11 ex-commanders, selecting from the top ranking, through the middle ranked to the lower ranked commanders at the village level.

The civilian elite comprised of the Tiro cabinet, the GAM peace agreement negotiators and civilian administrators (see Chapter 3). They have transitioned also into post-conflict positions as provincial and district government officials, members of parliament and or political party leaders. For the study, I interviewed two of the exiled leaders and six Helsinki peace negotiators. Finally, is not known also how many former GAM troops, both male and female, there are (see Chapter 3). However, for the study, I had 21 male and 22 female ex-soldier participants. All had been actively involved in the GAM during the conflict and had experiences of the reintegration program delivered by the Indonesian Government in the post-conflict stage. Whereas the ex-commanders and civilian elite were all interviewed individually, with the former soldiers (male and female), public officials, NGO people and women activists, both individual and small group interviews were conducted.

In contacting participants, several methods were pursued. Being prominent public figures, the contact details of ex-commanders are readily available on websites and or in printed documents. Accordingly, initially I sent out formal letters requesting an interview to their offices, but rarely gained a response. Subsequently, I therefore approached the ex-commanders through local NGOs, such as the Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies (CPCRS), a research centre concerned with peace and conflict resolution in Aceh. In some cases, the CPCRS also helped to arrange the interview with an ex-commander. In other cases, I applied the ‘snowballing technique’ by which participants recommended possible other participants they knew in their social networks to the researcher. This latter method was especially successful as, once an ex-commander agreed to be interviewed, it was easier for me to gain others on the basis of their recommendations. The time and place of interview was determined by the ex-commanders. Some interviews were conducted in their offices while others took place in their houses or in local coffee shops.

The civilian elite’s contact details were also often publically available on websites and in printed documents. However, again it was not easy to access them in a ‘cold’ manner this way. In their cases, I was assisted in approaching them personally by the former student
movement organisation, Sentra Information Referendum Aceh (SIRA) and Solidaritas Mahasiswa untuk Rakyat (Student Solidarity for People, SMUR). Alternatively, I obtained the contact details of members of the civilian elite via local journalists, researchers at the local university, local lawyers, and or World Bank officers who knew them. The time and place of the interviews with individuals from the civilian elite were again determined by them – mostly in their houses, offices and or local coffee shops. The CPRCS and local women activists and NGOs concerned with women ex-soldiers, such as Liga Inong Aceh (Aceh Women League) and Flower Aceh, facilitated interviews with the male and female ex-soldiers. Women activists concerned with women ex-soldiers’ issues in Pidie and Pidie Jaya district were especially helpful in facilitating discussions with the women ex-soldiers in the Pasukan Inong balee (women ex-soldiers troop). The snowballing technique was useful particularly when the leader of the women ex-soldiers’ organisation was interviewed and agreed to provide the contact details of other potential women ex-soldier participants. In the case of disgruntled male ex-soldiers in remote areas of north and east Aceh, I was assisted by local journalists and lawyers.

In the case of the male ex-soldiers, the time and place of interviews was determined by them. Most occurred in local coffee shops whilst the rest were conducted in a Meunasah/mosque and or in their houses in their villages across Aceh. To access the latter participants, I needed to travel and stay in the local community. Here, Islamic culture and traditions are very strongly valued. While in the local community, I therefore took care to respect local values and religious practices, such as prayer time. As well, on some occasions I visited the local village head (keuchik) to explain my presence in his village before conducting any interviews. This is normal and accepted practice in rural Aceh. All interviews with female ex-soldiers were determined by them. These interview took place in their houses or in coffee shops in their nearby village. In Aceh, women must be accompanied by another person when conversing with another man who is not a family member. The persons who accompanied the women were selected by the women participants themselves – either their husband, another relative or another woman. The 10 remaining participants were recruited from public officials (who were involved in the reintegration program but were not members of the GAM), and some NGO people and women activists who were also involved in the program. As previously noted, a number of these individuals also assisted in providing an introduction to members of the civilian elite and to rank and file ex-soldiers. Interviews with this group mostly took place in their offices or coffee shops.
The interviews revealed a strong sense of unity and comradeship among the once GAM commanders, particularly during the conflict stage, but also thereafter within and through the KPA. Individual interviews did also expose some different points of views among the ex-commanders, particularly in relation to the unequal material effects of the post-conflict reintegration program between the top-level commanders and their inner circle of middle and lower ranked ex-commanders and other middle ranked individuals. However, these generally served to underline the particular power and authority of the most senior ex-commanders – and none of the differences exposed significant variations with respect to militarised masculinities.

I found the evidence for the ex-commanders’ practices of militarised masculinity in their utterances, but also often in their various demeanours during the interviews. In some cases, the interviewees (particularly the middle and lower rank ex-commanders and male foot soldiers) engaged in certain bodily postures and gestures to show off their muscles and make fierce facial expressions. One of the village ex-commanders sought to show off the guns in his possession by placing them on the table during the interview. I interpreted each of these actions as displays of militarised masculinity as all were done to show strength in relation to the individual’s preparedness and capacity to use force (Bevan and MacKenzie 2012).

Some male and female soldiers often expressed considerable depths of feeling about their post-conflict circumstances and experiences, particularly in relation to their reintegration program outcomes and their perceived unfair treatment by their former commanders, by becoming quite angry. For instance, during one interview, a female rank and file ex-soldier in Pidie Jaya District cursed her ex-commander in a loud voice using crude language and by hitting the table. In these situations, I was not under any threat, so sought to neither aggravate nor downplay their anger by continuing to converse with them in a measured and respectful manner. At the end of the interview, I purposefully engaged in further ‘small talk’ to enable participants to leave in a calmer state. No participants became so upset that they needed further assistance.

In relation to other ethical issues in research, when a disgruntled male rank and file ex-soldier revealed any controversial information regarding his ex-commanders’ involvement during the war – such as the ex-commanders’ involvement in secret negotiations with the Indonesian
army and the fact that the ex-commanders did not actually fight in the battle zone – I disclosed none of this when interviewing the ex-commanders and was careful to show respect to both sides.

As previously stated, interviews can establish ‘the individual experience of the participant’, as a way to determine ‘the experience of people in a similar situation’ (Flick 2011, 4). A challenge for the researcher lies in distinguishing between what are individual and idiosyncratic experiences and what are part of a broader, more general pattern. This can be addressed through repetition and or ‘triangulation’. Triangulation in social research can take a number of forms, centred on the use of mixed or multiple methods, investigators, theories and or data sources (Carter et al. 2014). The idea is that confirming findings in one or all of these ways will enhance the ‘trustworthiness’ of the findings – and hence their validity (Carter et al, 2014, 546). This study undertook verification through the use of multiple data sources – achieved through the selection of a number of individuals from each of the main participant categories. Accordingly, I determined the ‘convergence of the data enhanced trustworthiness of findings’ (Carter et al. 2014, 546). In the subsequent analyses of the interview data, I selected certain interviews to illustrate certain commonalities in a category of participants’ experiences. These were then used as evidence for the argument in the thesis.