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The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization

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East-West Center
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List of Acronyms

AGAM	Angkatan Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Forces of the Free Aceh Movement); renamed TNA in July 2002
ASNLF	Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front; more commonly known as GAM
Brimob	Brigade Mobil; paramilitary mobile police
COHA	Cessation of Hostilities Agreement; concluded on December 9, 2002; collapsed on May 18, 2003
DOM	Daerah Operasi Militer (Military Operations Zone); not a legal status
EMOI	ExxonMobil Oil Indonesia
FARMIDIA	Aceh Student Front for Reform
FMIA	Front Mujahidin Islam Aceh
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement); established by Hasan di Tiro in 1976
HDC	Henry Dunant Center; Geneva-based NGO established in November 1998 to develop dialogue and devise sustainable solutions to humanitarian problems
Inpres	Instruksi Presiden (presidential instruction)
JI	Jemaah Islamiyya

JSC	Joint Security Committee
Kodam	Kommando Daerah Militer (Regional Military Command); part of Indonesia's territorial structure
Kopassus	Kommando Pasukan Khusus (Army Special Forces)
MP-GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka Majles Pemerintahan (Free Aceh Movement Government Council); splinter group from GAM established during DOM and based in Europe and Malaysia; no significant support base on the ground
NAD	Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam; official name of the province of Aceh since the 2002 special autonomy legislation came into force; also refers to the special autonomy package as a whole (when GAM says it rejects NAD it is not referring to the name but autonomy)
NKRI	Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia)
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid
Opslihkam	Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan; security recovery operation launched in May 2001 on the basis of Presidential Instruction 4 issued on April 11, 2001
OXFAM	British humanitarian aid organization
Pemda	Pemerintahan Daerah (regional government)
Polri	Polisi Republik Indonesia (Indonesian National Police); until 1999 part of Angkatan Bersenjata Republic Indonesia (ABRI)
RIA	Republik Islam Aceh
SGI	Satuan Gabungan Intelijen (combined intelligence unit); mainly composed of Kopassus
SIRA	Aceh Referendum Information Center
SMUR	Student Solidarity for the People
TNA	Tentara Negara Aceh (Aceh State Military); official name for GAM's military forces since the July 2002 Stavanger Declaration (previously AGAM)
TNI	Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Military); official name of the Indonesian military after the armed forces were split into TNI and police as part of military reform in 1999

Executive Summary

The province of Aceh is located on the northern tip of the island of Sumatra in the Indonesian archipelago. Since 1976 it has been wracked by conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka; GAM), which is seeking to establish an independent state, and the Indonesian security forces seeking to crush this bid. At the heart of the conflict are center/periphery relations and profound Acehnese alienation from Jakarta. These problems date back to promises made by Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, to give Aceh special status in recognition of its contribution to the struggle for Indonesian independence. The promises were broken almost immediately. Acehnese efforts to safeguard their strong regional and ethnic identity—derived from Aceh's strict adherence to Islam and its history of having been an independent sultanate until the Dutch invasion in 1873—presented too much of a challenge to Sukarno's "secular" Indonesian nation-building project. They were also an obstacle to the highly centralized developmentalist ideology of his successor, President Suharto. Political grievances were further underscored by perceptions of economic exploitation since the mid-1970s and Jakarta's security approach to deal with the insurgency rather than addressing the reasons for the widespread alienation from Jakarta.

This paper looks at the Acehnese conflict since 1976—specifically, the GAM insurgent movement. It presents a detailed ideological and organizational map of this national liberation movement in order to increase our

understanding of its history, motivations, and organizational dynamics. Consequently this paper analyzes GAM's ideology, aims, internal structure, recruitment, financing, weapons procurement, and military capacity. Further, it discusses the inspiration GAM has drawn from East Timor's successful struggle for independence—with respect to its attitude toward negotiations as well as its broad political-military strategy—and seeks to explain the dynamics and ultimately the collapse of the peace process between GAM and the Indonesian government.

Although this paper looks at the history and evolution of GAM since 1976, the primary focus is on the recent past. The fall of Suharto not only allowed the Indonesian government to explore avenues other than force to resolve the Aceh conflict but also presented GAM with the opportunity to modify its strategy and transform itself into a genuinely popular movement. In fact, since 1998 the Aceh conflict has escalated as GAM poses a more serious challenge to the Indonesian state. The insurgents have been able to increase their active membership fivefold, expand from their traditional stronghold areas into the rest of Aceh, and successfully control between 70 and 80 percent of the province including local government through their shadow civil service structure. GAM has grown from a small, armed organization with an intellectual vanguard into a popular resistance movement.

This transformation of GAM was the result of three key factors: first, the impact of Indonesia's counterinsurgency operations from 1989 to 1998 (conventionally, albeit incorrectly, referred to as a military operations zone); second, Jakarta's failure to ensure the implementation of special autonomy since January 2002 (coupled with the ineffectiveness and corruption of the provincial government); and third, the opportunity provided by the peace process from January 2000 to May 2003. The first two factors created powerful motives for the Acehnese population to join GAM: together they combined the desire to extract revenge for the brutality of the security forces with the alienation caused by the lack of significant change in the everyday life of the average Acehnese despite post-Suharto decentralization and democratization. The third factor created the space for GAM to broaden its strategy of guerrilla warfare on the ground to include political elements—most importantly internationalization. It also provided GAM with legitimacy and a platform from which to advocate independence. And finally, the absence of Indonesian military pressure during the 2000-2001 Humanitarian Pause and the 2002-2003 Cessation

of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) enabled GAM to introduce a number of organizational changes, recruit, train, and rearm, all of which strengthened its military capacity.

The key to understanding GAM in the post-Suharto era and the movement's decisions, maneuvers, and statements during the three years of intermittent dialogue can be found in the exiled leadership's strategy of internationalization. Above all, this strategy shows that for GAM the negotiations were not a way to find common ground with Jakarta but a means to compel the international community to pressure Jakarta into ceding independence. For GAM the dialogue was about gaining world attention and support from the United States, the United Nations, and the European Union. Alongside deep-seated suspicion of Indonesian intentions and cease-fire violations by both sides, which created a destructive dynamic on the ground, this strategy of internationalization reveals why GAM did not opt for a symbolic act of disarmament during the COHA period and why it did not embrace regional autonomy tactically. Instead it increased both its membership and its arsenal during each cease-fire and used every opportunity to tell the people of Aceh that independence was imminent. Further underscored by the exiled leadership's belief that Indonesia is a failed state about to implode, internationalization goes a long way toward explaining why GAM refused to accept autonomy and refused to lay down its arms. This, among other issues, caused the peace process to collapse on May 18, 2003.

The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization

The province of Aceh, which today has a population of 4.4 million, is located on the northern tip of the island of Sumatra. While an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia since its inception, Aceh has set itself apart from the rest of the country by its strict adherence to Islam, its history of having been an independent sultanate until the Dutch invasion in 1873, and a strong Acehnese regional, ethnic, and arguably national identity. Acehnese efforts to safeguard this identity sat at odds with the Jakarta government's policies from the beginning. They presented a challenge to the "secular" Indonesian nation-building project under President Sukarno (1945-67) and an obstacle to the highly centralized developmentalist ideology of President Suharto (1965-98). As a result, Aceh/Jakarta relations have been fraught with tension throughout most of Indonesia's existence. In the eyes of the Acehnese this tension was caused by the government's repeatedly reneging on promises of special status; in the eyes of Jakarta it was the result of Aceh's "rebellious nature."

Unhappy center/periphery relations were at the heart of two major insurgencies in Aceh. The first, known as the Darul Islam rebellion (Sjamsuddin 1985; Van Dijk 1981), erupted in 1953 under the leadership of Daud Beureueh—triggered by the incorporation of Aceh into the province of North Sumatra in January 1951 as well as differences over the role of Islam in the state. In 1959 (although some elements continued to fight until 1962) this conflict was brought to an end through a negotiat-

ed agreement that conferred upon Aceh special status (*daerah istimewa*). This status gave the province autonomy in matters of religion, customary law (*adat*), and education. The second insurgency, started in 1976 with the establishment of the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka; GAM) under the leadership of Hasan di Tiro. Like the Darul Islam rebellion, it was triggered by unhappy center/periphery relations—namely the removal of special status in all but name. But unlike Beureueh, who wanted to transform all Indonesia into an Islamic state rather than secede from it, di Tiro sought Acehnese independence.

This paper looks at the conflict since 1976—specifically the GAM insurgent movement—and presents a detailed ideological and organizational map of this Acehnese national liberation movement in order to increase our understanding of its history, motivations, and organizational dynamics. Consequently this paper analyzes GAM's ideology, aims, internal structure, recruitment, financing, weapons procurement, and military capacity. Further, it discusses the inspiration GAM has drawn from East Timor's successful struggle for independence—with respect to its attitude toward the negotiations as well as its broad political-military strategy—and seeks to explain the dynamics and ultimately the collapse of the peace process between GAM and the Indonesian government.

Although this paper looks at the history and evolution of GAM since 1976, the primary focus is on the recent past. The fall of Suharto not only allowed the Indonesian government to explore avenues other than force to resolve the Aceh conflict but also presented GAM with the opportunity to modify its strategy and transform itself into a genuinely popular movement. In fact, since 1998 the Aceh conflict has escalated as GAM poses an ever greater challenge to the Indonesian state. By May 2003 the insurgents had increased their active membership fivefold, expanded from their traditional stronghold areas into the rest of Aceh, and successfully controlled between 70 and 80 percent of the province including local government through their shadow civil service structure. GAM had grown from a small, armed organization with an intellectual vanguard into a popular resistance movement.

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GAM: A Short History

In October 1976, GAM was established as the Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF) by Hasan di Tiro, descendant of a prominent Acehnese *ulama* family of Muslim clergy and grandson of Teungku Cik di Tiro, hero of the anticolonial struggle against the Dutch. From 1950 until October 1976, Hasan di Tiro resided in the United States, first as a student and then as a businessman. In fact, di Tiro was a member of the Indonesian delegation to the United Nations in New York until the Darul Islam rebellion erupted in 1953 and di Tiro decided to support Daud Beureueh. In 1976, he returned to Aceh in order to fulfill what he believed was his family's historical obligation—namely to fight for Acehnese independence.[1]

Since GAM's establishment, the conflict in Aceh has undergone three distinct phases. During the first phase, from 1976 to 1979, GAM was a small, tightly knit, ideologically driven organization of 70 men led by a well-educated elite comprising doctors, engineers, academics, and businessmen. By the end of 1979, Indonesian counterinsurgency operations had all but crushed GAM. Its leaders were either in exile, imprisoned, or dead; its followers were dispersed and pushed underground.

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In 1989, after hundreds of its guerrillas had undergone training in Libya since 1986, GAM started to reemerge in Aceh. GAM consolidated its command structures in Greater Aceh, Pidie, North Aceh, and East Aceh (Barber 2000: 30-31), and the "Libyan graduates" trained hundreds more guerrillas on the ground. In 1990 Indonesia launched its Jaring Merah (Red Net) counterinsurgency operations to deal with the renewed challenge. The whole period from 1989 until 1998 became known as DOM and was characterized by heavy-handed military reprisals against villages believed to provide logistical help or sanctuary to the insurgents. Amnesty International (1993) described the Indonesian military strategy as "shock therapy." Others called it a systematic "campaign of terror designed to strike fear in the population and make them withdraw their support from GAM" (Kell 1995: 74). Amnesty International reported:

> In an effort to undercut the civilian support base of the guerrilla resistance, Indonesian forces carried out armed raids and house-to-house

> searches in suspected rebel areas. The houses of villagers suspected of providing shelter or support to the rebels were burned to the ground. The wives or daughters of some suspected rebels were detained as hostages and some were raped. Anyone suspected of contact with Aceh Merdeka was vulnerable to arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, "disappearance" or summary execution. [1993: 6]

Villagers were placed under tight control and some were relocated. Militias were established to "provide a 'fence of legs' in the sweeping operations of guerrilla strongholds" (Barber 2000: 33). During the first four years of the operation scores of guerrillas and civilians were killed, tortured, and disappeared. Kidnap victims spoke of being forced to bury people shot by the military; women related accounts of sexual assault and rape (Barber 2000: 33, 38).

By the end of DOM between 1,258 (HRW 2001: 8) and 2,000 (Amnesty International 1993: 8) had been killed and 3,439 tortured (Barber 2000: 47). Human Rights Watch put the number of disappeared at 500 while the Aceh regional assembly estimated it at between 1,000 and 5,000 and the NGO Forum Aceh believed the number to be as high as 39,000 (HRW 2001: 8). Some 625 cases of rape and torture of women were recorded.[2] An estimated 16,375 children had been orphaned[3] and 3,000 women widowed. After DOM some 7,000 cases of human rights violations were documented,[4] and at least twelve mass graves were investigated.[5] Only five cases were selected for prosecution; only one was tried.

By 1991, GAM had been virtually wiped out in Aceh. Three factors, however, ensured the organization's survival. First, its leadership was safe in exile where it continued to make its case for independence. Second, a significant number of GAM members including military commanders found safe haven in neighboring Malaysia where GAM continued to exist as an insurgent movement among the refugees and supported by the Acehnese diaspora (Barber 2000: 34). And third, the DOM experience gave rise to a whole new generation of GAM. Almost every Acehnese family in Pidie, North Aceh, and East Aceh was represented among the victims, and when after the fall of Suharto nothing was done to address Acehnese demands for justice, this ensured that GAM not only reemerged but was transformed into a genuinely popular movement in the third and current phase from 1998 onward.

Ideology and Aims

GAM's ideology is one of national liberation aimed at freeing Aceh from "all political control of the foreign regime of Jakarta" (ASNLF 1976). GAM sees its struggle as the continuation of the anticolonial uprising that erupted in response to the 1873 Dutch invasion and subsequent occupation of the sovereign Sultanate of Aceh. Contrary to official Indonesian historiography, GAM maintains that Aceh did not voluntarily join the Republic of Indonesia in 1945 but was incorporated illegally. GAM's reasoning is twofold. First, Aceh was an internationally recognized independent state as exemplified by the 1819 treaty between the sultan of Aceh and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland or the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty. Sovereignty should therefore have been returned to the Sultanate of Aceh rather than the Republic of Indonesia (di Tiro 1980: 11). Accordingly di Tiro (1995: 2) argues that:

> Aceh has nothing to do with Javanese "Indonesia." The Netherlands declared war against the Kingdom of Aceh, not against "Indonesia" which did not exist in 1873; and "Indonesia" still did not exist when the Netherlands was defeated and withdrew from Aceh in March 1942. And when the Netherlands illegally transferred sovereignty to "Indonesia" on December 27, 1949 she had no presence in Aceh.

Second, the people of Aceh were not consulted on the incorporation of Aceh into Indonesia and thus their right to self-determination was violated (di Tiro 1995: 12-13). These premises are reflected in GAM's redeclaration of independence on December 4, 1976, which declared as illegal the transfer of sovereignty "by the old, Dutch colonialists to the new, Javanese colonialists" (ASNLF 1976).

GAM's aim as stated on its webpage in 2002 is to ensure "the survival of the people of Aceh-Sumatra as a nation; the survival of their political, social, cultural and religious heritage which are being destroyed by the Javanese colonialists" and to reopen "the question of decolonization of the Dutch East Indies alias 'Indonesia.'"[6] While the overall aim of GAM is an independent Acehnese state and GAM's ideology is above all one of national liberation, it comprises a number of ideological subcurrents and characteristics. Some of these have remained constant since 1976; some have changed or, arguably, have moderated; some are new additions. The most important themes in the first category are Acehnese ethnic nationalism and Islam; in the second, anticapitalism and anti-Westernism; in the third, human rights and democracy (Schulze 2003: 247).

Acehnese Ethnic Nationalism

The Acehnese nationalist construct advanced by GAM is ethnic rather than civic. It is defined through blood ties, religion, and *suku* (ethnic group) affiliation. Accordingly, a true Acehnese is a person whose family has resided in Aceh over several generations, is Muslim, and is a member of one of Aceh's nine *suku*: Aceh, Alas, Gayo, Singkil, Tamiang, Kluet, Anek Jamee, Bulolehee, and Simeuleu.

Acehnese identity is asserted through the Acehnese language, culture, and history. Not surprisingly one of di Tiro's first—and highly symbolic—acts following the redeclaration of independence was the creation of an Acehnese calendar that effectively erased Indonesian national and non-Muslim religious holidays, replacing them with ones commemorating Acehnese historical events such as Teungku Cik di Tiro Day, Cut Nyak Dien and Teuku Umar Day, and Iskandar Muda Day (di Tiro 1982: 53). But above all, Acehneseness is defined against the "other"—Indonesian nationalism.

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Indonesia is seen as a purely artificial entity—no more than a Javanese colonial empire enslaving the different peoples of the archipelago whose only common denominator was that they had all been colonized by the Dutch (di Tiro 1982: 47). It is a "nonsensical Javanese fabrication" (di Tiro 1995: 4) that was forced upon all non-Javanese peoples. "Indonesia," says Hasan di Tiro, "is a nation that never was" (1995: 4) as opposed to Aceh whose authenticity is proved by a history of statehood dating back several centuries, although not in a modern territorial nation-state sense (Aspinall 2002b: 14).

Islam

Islam has always been an integral part of GAM's ideology but mainly as a reflection of Acehnese identity and culture rather than Islamist political aspirations. It must be pointed out, however, that GAM has allowed for different emphases on Islam within its ranks. In the 1970s, 1980s, and to lesser extent the 1990s, GAM's vision of an independent Aceh was articulated as the revival of the Sultanate of Aceh, "re-establishing the historic Islamic State" (di Tiro 1982: 136). With the Stavanger Declaration of July 2002 this was changed to the establishment of a democratic system. At the same time, the leadership in Sweden made few if any references to Islam

throughout the whole period while at the village level, in particular, GAM has relied heavily on the mosque network (HRW 1999: 2) and has often presented its struggle in Islamist terms "involving the condemnation of the impious behavior of the rulers, promises of restitution of Syariah law and an Islamic base to an independent Aceh" (Aspinall 2002b: 22). In some instances, individual GAM commanders have enforced their interpretation of Syariah, mainly with respect to women wearing the *jilbab* (scarf), in their own fiefdoms.[7] The majority of GAM commanders, however, have not followed this route.

GAM's ambiguity on Islam is partially explained by the way in which Islam as a religion and culture is inextricably intertwined with Acehnese identity and heritage. GAM as a popular movement cannot but reflect this. Moreover, GAM bases its claim for independence on the fact that Aceh was an independent state before colonization by the Dutch. Thus it follows that in arguing for a return to this status GAM until very recently has also argued for the Islamic sultanate as the indigenous model to emulate. In addition, Islam has served as a unifying element for the different *suku* and as another way of differentiating devout Aceh from syncretistic Java. And finally, Islam's message of justice and equality has appealed to a population trapped in conflict. At a more functional level, GAM's ambiguity has kept internal challenges under control in an era where many Muslim as opposed to Islamist national liberation movements have split over the role of religion. By providing space for individual GAM commanders to selectively enforce Syariah in areas under their authority—for either personal convictions or social control—the GAM leadership has been able to keep most of the rank and file united in their opposition to Jakarta (Schulze 2003: 249).

From Anticapitalism to Human Rights and Democracy

While the Acehnese nationalist strand of GAM's ideology has remained consistently strong and the Islamic strand has remained consistently ambiguous, a shift can be detected in the movement's attitude toward the West—in particular the United States. For the first fifteen years, GAM's ideology contained an anticapitalist and anti-imperialist element, although this element was never as prominent as the nationalist component. In fact it could be argued that the expressions of anticapitalism, anti-imperialism, and anti-Westernism in the 1970s and 1980s—as well as the supportive expressions on human rights and democracy since the late 1980s—are a

reflection of the environment GAM was functioning in and adjusting to. They are also part and parcel of the assertion of GAM's popular Acehnese nationalism (Aspinall 2002a: 10).

Criticism was aimed not only at foreign corporations exploiting Aceh's resources but also more broadly at U.S. support for the Suharto government. In his diary in June 1977, for instance, di Tiro lamented that "our country has been laid bare by the Javanese colonialists at the feet of the multinationals to be raped" (1982: 77). In May 1978, he wrote: "U.S. policy is to insure that colonialist regime in power against our just interest, in order that American companies like Mobil Oil Corporation can buy and sell us in the international market" (p. 178). GAM's opposition to the foreign exploitation of Aceh's natural resources has remained. It is no longer expressed in anticapitalist and anti-U.S. terms, however, but through the language of human rights. Since the end of DOM, GAM has repeatedly charged ExxonMobil with collaboration in the human rights abuses perpetrated by the Indonesian security forces against the Acehnese people. It has also sought diligently to document continuing abuses. And within the West's human rights mood of the 1990s, GAM saw international as well as domestic human rights organizations as its greatest allies since they highlighted Indonesia's inability to govern Aceh without the use or threat of force.

This change in GAM was the result of a number of mutually reinforcing developments on a global, Indonesian, and Acehnese level. Globally, the ideological environment changed with the end of the Cold War—and, consequently, national liberation movements, which had been bound in a fraternity of Third World revolutionism, radical socialism, and anti-Westernism, needed to adapt. With it came the sheer recognition that in a unipolar world GAM's only real chance at obtaining independence was through international (mainly U.S. and UN) support to pressure Indonesia. In Indonesia itself, the changed environment with the fall of Suharto and the process of democratization further underscored the earlier global changes. Nothing illustrated this more clearly than East Timor's successful bid for independence, which showed GAM that human rights, democracy, and referendum could be powerful tools of national liberation. In fact, human rights because of their "universality" came to present the clearest challenge to the sovereignty of the nation-state (Aspinall 2002a: 8).

And on an Acehnese level, the DOM experience of extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, torture, and rape overshadowed everything. The

consequent focus of the Acehnese population on issues of justice was naturally taken up by GAM, which saw itself as the voice of the Acehnese people. This position was reinforced by the post-Suharto proliferation of nongovernmental organizations with human rights, democracy, and referendum agendas that broadened the Acehnese independence movement beyond GAM and broadened the argument for independence from "unfinished decolonization process" and "illegal transfer of sovereignty" to Jakarta having lost "the moral right to govern." Thus, on the one hand, GAM had gained new allies but, on the other, was forced to accommodate their aspirations. This is most obviously reflected in GAM's July 2002 Stavanger Declaration, which formally articulated the movement's vision of an independent Aceh as a democracy rather than as a return to the sultanate—albeit reserving the right of the Acehnese people to determine the final nature of the state upon achieving independence.

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Organizational Structure

GAM's organizational structure is divided into the top leadership in exile and the midlevel leadership, troops, members, and support base in Aceh. As GAM sees itself as the sole legitimate representative of the Acehnese people it has sought to establish governmental institutions. The first cabinet, set up by Hasan di Tiro during his time in Aceh from 1976 to 1979, was composed as follows:

Teungku Hasan di Tiro: *wali negara*, defense minister, and supreme commander
Dr. Muchtar Hasbi: vice-president; minister of internal affairs
Tengku Muhamad Usman Lampoih Awe: minister of finance
Tengku Haji Iljas Leube: minister of justice
Dr. Husaini M. Hasan: minister of education and information
Dr. Zaini Abdullah: minister of health
Dr. Zubir Mahmud: minister of social affairs
Dr. Asnawi Ali: minister of public works and industry
Amir Ishak: minister of communications
Amir Rashid Mahmud: minister of trade
Malik Mahmud: minister of state

From 1979 onward the cabinet ceased to function as a unit as some of its members were killed (such as Muchtar Hasbi), others were arrested, and yet others sought refuge overeas (such as di Tiro, Zaini Abdullah, Malik Mahmud, and Husaini Hasan)—and even they eventually factionalized with Husaini Hasan's establishment of Majelis Pemerintahan GAM (MP-GAM). This split effectively left di Tiro, Zaini Abdullah, and Malik Mahmud as the government-in-exile. With the July 2002 Stavanger Declaration, Zaini Abdullah was promoted to foreign minister and Malik Mahmud to prime minister.

Civilian Structure

GAM in Aceh is divided into a civilian government and military structure, the latter technically subordinate to the former. In practice, however, decisions on the ground are dictated by the realities of the conflict and thus military imperatives. The organization's civilian administrative system is modeled on Aceh's historical structures of governance dating back to the time when Aceh was an independent sultanate. These structures—or more accurately GAM's interpretation of them—were reestablished by di Tiro in August 1977 as a way of asserting Aceh's separate identity (di Tiro 1982: 93). The highest position, historically that of the sultan, has been occupied by Hasan di Tiro himself since 1976. The GAM leader has preferred the title of *wali negara*, however, which he sees as denoting a guardianship role—leaving it up to the people of Aceh to decide the system of governance after independence. The largest administrative unit below the *wali negara* is the province (*nanggroë*), which is headed by a governor (*ulèë nanggroë*), assisted by a province military commander (*panglima nanggroë*). The *nanggroë* consists of several districts (*sagoë*) headed by district heads (*ulèë sagoë*) assisted by the district military commander (*panglima sagoë*). Each *sagoë* is made up of several subdistricts (*mukim*), which are headed by a community leader (*imum*). Each *mukim*, in turn, comprises several villages headed by a village chief (*geutjhik*) who is assisted by a deputy (*waki*) and counseled by four elders (*tuha puët*). The village is the lowest unit of administration (di Tiro 1982: 93-94).

In July 2002, at a meeting in Stavanger, Norway, GAM initiated a number of changes with respect to its civilian government, military, and vision of an independent Aceh. Although some of these changes amounted to no more than renaming existing structures, others constituted policy shifts or indeed new policies. In this context GAM's civilian adminis-

trative structure was changed as follows: GAM's leadership in Sweden became the State of Aceh government-in-exile. The highest administrative level became the region (*wilayah*), which is headed by a governor assisted by the regional military commander (*panglima wilayah*) and the regional police chief (*ulèë béntara*). There are seventeen *wilayah*:

1. Langkat
2. Teumiëng
3. Peureulak
4. Pasè
5. Batèë Iliëk
6. Pidië
7. Atjeh Rajek
8. Meureuhôm Daya
9. Meulabôh
10. Linge
11. Alas
12. Lhok Tapak Tuan
13. Blang Pidië
14. Simeulue
15. Pulo Le
16. Sabang
17. Tiro

Each *wilayah* is composed of four districts (*daerah*), each comprising several *sagoë*. The lowest administrative unit remains the village.

At all administrative levels GAM has been carrying out functions from tax collecting and licensing to the issuing of birth and marriage certificates. Sympathizers point to these functions as civilian administration tasks not unlike those of a real state; critics call them racketeering and robbery (ICG 2000: 3). As the representative of an independent Aceh with a government-in-exile, GAM believes it has "the right to impose taxation on our own people which is in accordance with international law."[8]

Military Structure

GAM's civilian structure is shadowed by the parallel structure of the Forces of the Free Aceh Movement (Angkatan Gerakan Aceh Merdeka; AGAM), renamed the Army of the State of Aceh (Tentara Negara Aceh; TNA) with the Stavanger Declaration. The TNA is under the overall command of the commander (*panglima* TNA), a position currently held by Muzzakir Manaf. Under his command are the seventeen *panglima wilayah* at the regional level, who in turn are responsible for four *panglima daerah* at the district level. Below the *panglima daerah* are the *panglima sagoë*. The troops under the latter's command are believed to be organized in cells. It is at this level where the TNA's command structure is highly factionalized and the troops are the most undisciplined. In fact, actions carried out for

hard-line ideological reasons or indeed for purely economic gain of individuals, cells, or factions are sometimes at odds with directives of the top leadership.

Contact between the exiled leadership and the GAM guerrillas in Aceh is maintained by telephone. According to Peureulak (East Aceh) spokesman Ishak Daud, GAM in the field regularly reports to the GAM leaders in Sweden "on the latest developments in the war. So far there is no significant problem in communications. . . . Every day our commander, Muzzakir Manaf, makes contact with GAM's political wing in Sweden. And the instruction is clear."[9]

While the TNA's chain of command appears to be linear from Sweden to the panglima TNA to the troops in the field, the fact that GAM has an exiled leadership in overall command of operations on the ground has allowed for the emergence of a bypass mechanism creating a somewhat triangular relationship. This means that the leadership in Sweden, mainly in the form of Malik Mahmud, is not only communicating with the *panglima* TNA-*negara* but at the same time with the seventeen *panglima* TNA-*wilayah* and vice versa. This direct contact with the field has not only kept Sweden up to date with the situation on the ground but has also ensured that a strike against the *panglima* TNA-*negara* does not cut Sweden off from Aceh. This mechanism proved its usefulness with the death of *panglima* AGAM Abdullah Syafi'i on January 22, 2002. As GAM's former minister of state Malik Mahmud has pointed out:

> Abdullah Syafi'i was a great loss, but it won't influence our military capacity because we are in constant and direct contact with the area commanders. So we give direct orders to the area commanders, not via Abdullah Syafi'i. His death won't disrupt operations. Because all commanders are different, I used to get reports directly from them and also from Abdullah Syafi'i. So it was triangular contact. So if there was a problem in the field and they couldn't inform Abdullah Syafi'i, we could.[10]

While undoubtedly a necessary safety device, this structure has also blurred the chain of command, which in turn has undermined coordination, discipline, and control. This has been further complicated by the fact that the Sweden leadership issues only general directives or parameters to the *panglima* AGAM/TNA. According to Tiro Central Command field commander, Amri bin Abdul Wahab,[11] orders are given by Malik Mahmud

to the *panglima* AGAM/TNA, then discussed with the *panglima wilayah*, who in turn discusses them with the field commanders (*komandan lapangan*) and operational commanders (*komandan operasi*). The actual decisions on strategy and tactics are made at the field commander level.[12]

The Growth of GAM: Territory and Membership

When GAM was established in 1976 its membership and support base were limited. While there was already considerable alienation among the Acehnese and possibly sympathy for GAM's cause, this did not translate into mass active participation. One of the reasons for this state of affairs was the relatively secular nature of GAM (Barber 2000: 30). According to Hasan di Tiro, only 70 men joined him in the mountains. These men as well as popular support—vital logistically for the survival of the guerrillas—came mainly from the district of Pidie and particularly from the village of Tiro. Their shared background was rural, from *suku* Aceh, and most were motivated by loyalty to the di Tiro family and disillusionment with Jakarta. Some members, such as Husaini Hasan, had close family members who had been killed by the Indonesian security forces. Many of the upper-level leaders had a university education—di Tiro, Dr. Husaini Hasan, Dr. Zaini Abdullah, Dr. Zubir Mahmud, and Dr. Muchtar Hasbi—or had been businessmen while many of the midlevel leaders and troops had fought in the 1953-59 Darul Islam rebellion.

After the leadership was forced into exile, GAM embarked upon two phases of geographic expansion—in 1986-89 and 1999-2000—that brought increasing members. The first phase started when Libya agreed to provide paramilitary training for GAM guerrillas. From 1986 onward GAM recruited on the ground, mainly in the rural areas, and sent these new guerrillas overseas for training. Malik Mahmud recalls how volunteers flocked to the movement during this time: "His Highness [Hasan di Tiro] used to get letters from poor farmers who wanted to send their son as a gift for Aceh. For us to teach him to be a good Acehnese soldier. It was very touching. I'd just cry when I read such a letter."[13] Pasè (North Aceh) commander Sofyan Dawod and Peureulak (East Aceh) spokesman Ishak Daud joined GAM during this period. Their reasons for joining and their experience since exemplify this particular GAM generation. Sofyan Dawod joined in 1986. Although he did not train in Libya himself, he did not train in Aceh either. He joined "because of the situation in Aceh, which was already the same as during DOM," and because there already had

been victims in his family since 1977. His father, a first-generation GAM activist, was shot dead by the Indonesian military. Two of his brothers suffered the same fate in the early 1990s.[14] Sofyan proved to be a capable soldier. In 1999 he became the GAM spokesman for Pasè and then the spokesman for all of GAM after the death of Ismail Shahputra. In March 2002, he became the military commander for Pasè, replacing Muzzakir Manaf who had taken over as AGAM/TNA commander following the death of Abdullah Syafi'i.

Like Sofyan Dawod, Ishak Daud joined GAM in 1986. At the time he was living in Singapore. He underwent paramilitary training "in several foreign countries."[15] In March 1990, he was arrested by the Indonesian security forces following an attack on a village sentry post in which two soldiers and two children were killed. He made off with 21 rifles before being captured. His detention, however, was brief, for he escaped to Malaysia. In 1996, he was deported and handed over to the Indonesian police. It was another two years before he was brought to trial and sentenced to twenty years in prison. Yet only a year later he was released under the amnesty granted by President Habibie.[16] And shortly thereafter he returned to being one of GAM's key spokesmen. If anything, this experience confirmed why he had joined the independence movement in the first place: "GAM commander Muzzakir Manaf and I were born during di Tiro's dream and we are among thousands of people who have witnessed the Indonesian military's repression of Aceh over the last three decades."[17]

With the return of the Libyan-trained guerrillas, GAM embarked upon its first phase of territorial expansion into Greater Aceh, North Aceh, and East Aceh. Recruitment in these areas was easy. Most of the population shared the same ethnic background—*suku* Aceh—and these districts were undergoing rapid urbanization and industrialization placing the population at the frontier of both modernity and economic inequality. New members were recruited not only on the basis of shared identity but also because Aceh's vast resources were being exploited in front of their eyes while they themselves remained poor. The new recruits included merchants and farmers whose existence was economically threatened. But above all GAM drew from "the ranks of unemployed young men, primarily from rural areas, with limited educational backgrounds" (Barber 2000:

With the return of the Libyan-trained guerrillas, GAM embarked upon its first phase of territorial expansion

31). Once Indonesian counterinsurgency operations got under way, additional members joined GAM—motivated by revenge or the desire to fight against the brutal treatment of the population by the security forces.

Tiro field commander Amri bin Abdul Wahab formally joined GAM toward the end of DOM in 1997. He had already supported the cause of Aceh Merdeka since the mid-1980s and had been involved through his family—in particular his uncle, who had been in Libya. Among his friends there were some who had been shot, as well, and when he joined he did so with full support from everyone. From 1998 until 2000 Amri was in the jungle as a guerrilla fighter. In 2001 he was made field commander when Abdullah Syafi'i was still AGAM commander and Muzzakir was his deputy. Amri's motivation was ideological: "I realized Dutch colonialism was the worst kind. Countries colonized by the English received institutions and education. But the fact that Aceh has had no development since is not because of the Dutch but because of Indonesian neocolonialism."[18]

The second phase of geographic expansion started in 1999 with GAM's push into the remaining districts of Aceh. The end of DOM and the revelation of the full extent of human rights abuses perpetrated during this period resulted in a further increase of GAM membership from the area of the first expansion. Again the primary motivation was revenge and the quest for justice. This impulse transformed GAM into a genuinely popular movement in these traditional areas. Most notably it added its first female guerrillas, known as "*Inong bale*." Many of these women joined because they saw their families brutalized during DOM—GAM says "they are DOM widows and the daughters of martyrs."[19] Others were motivated specifically by the violence against women at the hands of the mobile police (Brimob), and the TNI, violence that included rape, sexual abuse, and humiliation. More critical voices, however, claim that GAM has been actively targeting women for recruitment in order to regain control over a society that lost a significant part of its male population during DOM—occasionally leaving all-female villages ("widows' villages") behind.

These new members from the traditional areas reinforced the relatively homogeneous GAM. The movement's push into the rest of Aceh, however, had the opposite effect. It resulted not only in ethnic diversification beyond *suku* Aceh but also in the dilution of what had been a politically and ideologically motivated guerrilla organization with economically motivated recruits who clearly saw the advantages of the GAM label in their quest for easy money.[20] GAM found it more difficult to get capable

recruits in the new districts, however, for a nationalism constructed around *suku* Aceh did not hold the same appeal for other *suku*. These districts had not seen the economic disparities evident in the greater Lhokseumawe area, and they had been largely spared by Indonesia's counterinsurgency operations. There is some anecdotal evidence that GAM tried to forcibly recruit in these districts by ordering villages to provide one or two volunteers.[21] GAM has also had to rely far more on intimidation in order to maintain its position there.[22] Although GAM needed to establish a presence in these new areas to shore up its claim to speak for all the people of Aceh, ultimately the price of expansion—namely *premanisasi* (criminalization) of parts of the organization—has been high.

In addition to territorial expansion GAM also recruited during the two cease-fires. During the first cease-fire, recruits were drawn from both traditional and new territories and helped to consolidate GAM's position. Recruitment during the COHA phase from December 9, 2002, until May 18, 2003, reemphasized the traditional areas—either in recognition of the negative repercussions or because a saturation point had been reached in the new territories. According to university teaching staff in the Darussalam area of Banda Aceh, GAM was also heavily targeting students for recruitment. While GAM denies having actively recruited during the COHA[23] it does admit to an increase in its membership. GAM negotiator Amni bin Marzuki explained as follows:

> There are three reasons for the growth of GAM. First, people see GAM as strong and want to join. Second, there is the prospect of a military operation and this has raised Acehnese nationalism in society and the people want to defend their society. Third, there is the distrust of Jakarta, which, of course, goes back to before NAD [special autonomy]. But the people wanted to give Jakarta another chance to give Aceh real autonomy and welfare. But there have been no changes and the Acehnese people have not benefited at all—only Pemda (the regional government) and TNI (the Indonesian military) are benefiting.[24]

According to Marzuki, the desire to join GAM because it was strong accounted for a surge in membership in its rural areas. But it was disillusionment with the Nanggroë Aceh Darusalam (NAD) special autonomy law (see Aspinall and Crouch 2003 for details) that increased support for GAM among the urban population, which had traditionally been pro-Jakarta. Marzuki elaborated: "The new members come from the villages

Table 1

District	GAM Membership in August 2002	GAM Membership in April 2003
Aceh Besar	231	323
Pidie	649	2,365
North Aceh	1,157	1,331
East Aceh	939	826
West Aceh	426	472
South Aceh	130	89
Central Aceh	92	86
Southeast Aceh	25	25

but also from the cities. The urban population used to think they were untouched, but not now when there is no electricity, no water, and credit is not working. They are disappointed."[25]

This account of an increase in GAM's membership from Aceh Besar and Pidie is further supported by Indonesian intelligence data. While these data must, of course, be treated with caution, the comparison of data gathered by the combined intelligence unit, *satuan gabungan intelijen* (SGI) on GAM from August 2002 versus April 2003 confirms the trend already outlined by GAM (see Table 1). While the exact numbers may or may not be accurate,[26] they show the largest increase to have been in GAM's stronghold of Pidie. Recruits from this area are more likely than not to come from families that are socially and historically tied to di Tiro, suffered during DOM, and have other family members who are already active in GAM. In this sense they are ideal recruits. Motivated by a combination of ideology and revenge, they are less susceptible to being "turned" or infiltrated by Indonesian intelligence.

Beyond direct recruitment GAM has also formed close working relationships with some NGOs—particularly those with an independence or referendum agenda. Most notable among these are the Aceh Referendum Information Center (SIRA), the Aceh Student Front for Reform (FARMIDIA), and Student Solidarity for the People (SMUR). While these organizations have objected to GAM's use of force, they broadly

share the same ideology. SIRA, for instance, established on February 4, 1999, believes that "Aceh is not part of the Indonesian Unity Nation [*sic*], but the Dutch colonial government has illegally relinquished Aceh to another party, that is Indonesia." Thus "the only best solution" is "freedom and sovereignty for Aceh" (SIRA 1999: 1-2).

While GAM has clearly benefited from the attention drawn to the Aceh conflict by national and international NGOs, it has also become the subject of criticism by the NGO community at large and emerging Acehnese civil society. In fact, GAM's leadership in Aceh is not undisputed. As Richard Barber points out:

> GAM clearly has a prominent role in the Aceh self-determination movement with strong community support in many districts of Aceh. However, there is no consensus, as such, recognising GAM as the leader of the Acehnese masses. One of the key factors behind this is the relatively closed, undemocratic political structure of the organisation. Membership of the armed wing has long been accessible but political leadership has been strictly controlled by the exiled elite of the liberation group. As such, Aceh Merdeka cannot be seen as representative, but rather one element of the Acehnese movement for self-determination. [2000: 63]

Factionalization and Splinter Groups

There has been much speculation about the extent of factionalization within GAM. During the negotiations of 2000-2003, the different voices from GAM on the ground not only raised the question of who to talk to but also raised hopes that this factionalization could be exploited to Jakarta's advantage. At the same time, the talks also showed that while AGAM/TNA field commanders had operational freedom, the key political decisions were being made by the exiled leadership in Sweden. And none of the leaders on the ground were prepared to challenge Hasan di Tiro, Zaini Abdullah, or Malik Mahmud. This exiled leadership as a whole has pursued an uncompromising stance, displaying neither the wish nor the need for accommodation. At the same time, however, they have supported a strategy of dialogue in parallel with guerrilla warfare.

While Hasan di Tiro has consistently dismissed Indonesia and treated the negotiations purely as a means for reaching out to the international community, both Malik Mahmud and Zaini Abdullah have vacillated

between rejecting autonomy and accepting "decolonization" as a step-by-step process without, however, defining what this process entails. To what extent might the GAM leadership have been more compromising if a different type of autonomy had been on offer? This is an interesting question. GAM did not participate in shaping the autonomy legislation since it saw autonomy as a "Jakarta project" rather than an integral part of the negotiations. Another interesting question: to what extent is the dispersed nature of the leadership responsible for its unwillingness or inability to compromise? It is difficult to see what di Tiro, Mahmud, and Abdullah could gain by accepting autonomy. Certainly it is unlikely they would feel safe enough to return to Aceh to take up seats in a local "power-sharing" government that for all intents and purposes would legitimize the Indonesian position.

to what extent is the dispersed nature of the leadership responsible for its unwillingness or inability to compromise?

At the field commander level, not surprisingly, most have favored military action—often to the extent that they believe in the liberation of Aceh by force. Abdullah Syafi'i, for example, dismissed the idea of a referendum in 1999 on account of the Javanese being colonialists who had no right to hold a referendum. Dialogue he rejected as the "wrong way to go about politics. We only want to speak to our friends in the international community" (Johanson 1999). Syafi'i's view, however, was not shared by Pasè commander Sofyan Dawod, who saw definite benefits for GAM in pursuing negotiations and concluding agreements with Indonesia:

> We agreed to it [COHA] because we saw advantages for us. There would be a demilitarization process that would reduce the TNI and peace zones that would restrict TNI and Polri's movement. The cease-fire allowed us to come out of the jungle and engage with society to spread our ideas. The next step is all-inclusive dialogue to bring in the people and then elections for a government of Aceh.[27]

Whether the top leaders in exile are more hard-line than the midlevel leaders in Aceh has been a matter of debate. When asked in February 2002 whether GAM would ever accept autonomy, chief negotiator Zaini Abdullah responded by saying that "the Acehnese people don't accept it, so how can we?"[28] Along similar lines it has been argued that ideological hard-liners on the ground are less compromising than those in exile—and

while "GAM in the field will do anything for Hassan di Tiro, . . . what they won't do is surrender even if he asks them to surrender."[29] Following the May 2003 Tokyo talks, however, the Henry Dunant Center (HDC) maintained that GAM on the ground had become far more willing to accept an interim solution and said that a potential agreement had foundered on the exiled leadership. This assessment of GAM parallels with that of similar national liberation movements where the exiled leadership and the diaspora community tend to advance inflexible positions while their compatriots on the ground are more willing to enter into messy compromises.

While at the ideological level the lines between hard-liners and moderates are somewhat a reflection of the situation in the negotiations or on the ground—and positions are far too fluid to properly label them factions—clearer faultlines are visible at the territorial level. The division of Aceh into seventeen *wilayah* has allowed field commanders to carve out their own fiefdoms, allowed some commanders to become warlords, and allowed those less effective to let their troops run wild. Based on leadership personality, loyalty, and income generation capacity, seven or eight virtually autonomous AGAM/TNA have emerged. Edward Aspinall observes: "Most field commanders seem to be aligned with the Hassan di Tiro leadership. But some rural armed groups have only a loose affiliation with the organisation. Others are simply gangsters who claim GAM credentials in order to extort money from the unfortunate locals" (2000: 7).

Some internal differences, however, have resulted in splinter groups. GAM has undergone several splits "with incessant squabbling among the major groups in exile" (Aspinall 2000: 7). The main breakaway group is Majles Pemerintahan GAM (MP-GAM), led by Secretary-General Teuku Don Zulfahri, who had been living in Malaysia since 1981 until his assassination in June 2000. Since then it has been led by former GAM cabinet minister Husaini Hasan together with former di Tiro associate Daud Paneuk and the latter's son Yusuf Daud. Like di Tiro, Husaini Hasan is based in Sweden.

Although the split in GAM leadership dates back to 1987, it was never made public as both parties wanted to safeguard the struggle. Only when Husaini Hasan allied himself with Zulfahri in Malaysia did it become public (Barber 2000: 114). Open conflict between the two emerged in 1999 when the 76-year-old di Tiro's health suddenly declined, raising the issue of succession. Indeed a power struggle emerged between Zaini Abdullah

and Daud Paneuk, who wanted to smooth the path for his son.[30] According to *Inside Indonesia*: "The split became public on 30 April 1999, when di Tiro 'expelled' Husaini Hasan and his associates Daud Paneuk and Mahmud Muhammad."[31] It then escalated into a war of press releases in November 1999, when Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid asserted he had held telephone conversations with GAM that turned out to have been with MP-GAM. The power struggle abated with the killing of Zulfahri on June 1, 2000, which MP-GAM attributes to GAM (Hasan 2000) and GAM to the Indonesian military (Barber 2000: 115).

Although the conflict between GAM and MP-GAM was above all a power struggle, there are certain ideological differences between the two factions. MP-GAM—in particular Zulfahri and his associates in Malaysia—saw itself as more Islamic: "One of its spokespersons portrayed di Tiro and his European GAM as secular, alienated from Acehnese life by his long absence, too scared to return home or even address the world media, and therefore no longer genuinely Acehnese" (Hasan 2000). GAM, however, insists that the difference with MP-GAM was not a question of Islam but collaboration with the Indonesian military.

Splits have also occurred on the ground in Aceh. These have been less in the form of power struggles than ideological quarrels resulting in the formation of two very small Islamist splinter groups—both of which were formed during DOM, had no real support base, and since the death of their leader Fauzi Hasbi have effectively ceased to exist. Nevertheless it is worth taking a brief look at them. The key group here was the Front Mujahidin Islam Aceh (FMIA), whose main grievance was GAM's secular nationalist ideology. This agenda prompted Hasbi to form his own organization in order to return to Daud Beureueh's Islamic agenda. Under the pseudonym of Abu Jihad, Fauzi Hasbi published a number of booklets in which he criticized GAM for its tactics of "intimidation and terror" and "prolonging the conflict for its own interests." He accused GAM of having succumbed to arrogance with the result of "not caring about the society of Aceh" and not "fighting for the interests of the Islamic *umma* in Aceh" as well as having strayed from the "framework of devotion to Allah" and "the path of Syariah" (Abu Jihad 2000: 2-5). In an attempt to discredit di Tiro, Abu Jihad even asserted that di Tiro had "married a woman of Jewish-Swedish descent" (Abu Jihad 2001: 17).

In addition to FMIA there was a small group using the name of Republik Islam Aceh (RIA), also led by Hasbi, which became the subject

of some controversy. The original RIA appeared in the context of the Darul Islam rebellion. The RIA was one of the six Sumatran states comprising the United Republic of Indonesia (Republik Persatuan Indonesia; RPI) in 1960—"a coalition of losers" of Darul Islam and Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia (PRRI) that, although Aceh was granted special autonomy status in 1959, continued the struggle against the secular-nationalist government in Jakarta until 1962 (Van Dijk 1981: 337-8). According to Abu Jihad, di Tiro briefly used this name before he adopted ASNLF/GAM (Abu Jihad 2001: 15). And, finally, a GAM splinter group claimed this name during DOM.

According to GAM, RIA overlapped to a large degree with FMIA—in particular sharing key leadership personalities such as Fauzi Hasbi, whom GAM sees as a traitor who was "turned" by Kopassus after his capture in 1979. GAM believes that RIA and FMIA, as well as MP-GAM, are all products of Indonesian intelligence apparatus with the specific purpose of discrediting GAM by making it look fanatical and fundamentalist. GAM further alleges that Fauzi Hasbi was directly responsible for the killing of his older brother, GAM minister Dr. Muchtar Hasbi, in 1980 by betraying him to Kopassus (ICG 2002: 9).

RIA and FMIA were propelled into the international spotlight after it was alleged that Hasbi had contact with *Al-Qaeda* operatives. On December 15, 1999, he is said to have met Omar al-Faruq in Aceh and to have spoken on the phone with Ayman Zawaheri when the latter went to Aceh in June 2000 (ICG 2002: 10-11). It has also been claimed that Hasbi was linked to Jemaah Islamiyya (JI) through Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, whom he met in Malaysia, and Agus Dwikarna, whom he had visited shortly before Dwikarna's trip to Mindanao in March 2002 (ICG 2002: 10-11). The Singaporean government, moreover, has alleged that not just Hasbi but GAM was linked: "Through a long-standing agreement, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM), a group active in Indonesia's Aceh province, sent its recruits to MILF's Camp Abu Bakar for guerrilla warfare training. JI was also known to have its own camp within Camp Abu Bakar" (Government of Singapore 2003: 4).

GAM alone has political and military authority on the ground, leaving Jakarta with little choice in terms of a negotiating partner.

Returning to the issue of the splintering of GAM, the key element

with respect to both the conflict in Aceh and the dialogue process is the link with the Acehnese population on the ground. Here it is obvious that since neither MP-GAM, RIA, nor FMIA has a significant indigenous support base, all three can be dismissed as serious challengers to the official GAM leadership in Sweden. GAM alone has political and military authority on the ground, leaving Jakarta with little choice in terms of a negotiating partner.

Financing the Struggle

Ascertaining the source of GAM's funds is no easy task. While there is an abundance of allegations that GAM has demanded money, verification is difficult. The situation is further complicated by two facts: thugs posing as GAM have on many occasions abused the situation, and Indonesian intelligence has from time to time produced fake GAM documents as part of the government's policy of criminalization (Sukma 2004). At the same time, GAM has never denied that it levies "taxes" on Aceh's population or receives donations—although it rejects involvement in crime, drugs, and kidnapping for ransom. Outside observers believe that GAM, like every other armed national movement, has been compelled to engage in criminal activities to support its arms purchases and, moreover, has attracted members who are more interested in economic gains than ideological aims.

GAM has three main sources of revenue: "taxation"; foreign donations; and crime, drugs, and kidnapping. With respect to the first source, GAM levies an Aceh state tax (*pajak nanggroë*) on all elements of society. According to senior GAM negotiator Sofyan Ibrahim Tiba, *pajak nanggroë* has been collected since GAM was established by di Tiro and, furthermore, it is based on Islam: "In Islam if there is a struggle there is *infaq*. But now that Aceh is no longer struggling for an Islamic state it is called *pajak nanggroë*. It was changed from *infaq* to *pajak nanggroë* with the Humanitarian Pause in 2000. But it has only recently become an issue because the Indonesian government has made it an issue."[32] Allegations that GAM targeted humanitarian aid funds, which flooded into Aceh with the beginning of the peace process, are difficult to prove—especially in light of the widespread corruption at local government level. Yet there is no doubt—and no denial by GAM—that taxes were demanded and collected. In March 2000, GAM was believed to be skimming an estimated 20 percent off the development funds allocated by Jakarta from most of Aceh's villages.[33] It has also been claimed that GAM during the early peri-

od of the Humanitarian Pause in 2000 was able to siphon off 50 to 75 percent from some humanitarian assistance programs.[34] The targeting of humanitarian aid funds repeated itself during the COHA pact concluded in December 2002, when local partners of international NGOs were presented with tax demands of 15 to 30 percent. In fact, pressure increased to such an extent that the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (OCHA) felt compelled to complain to the dialogue facilitator, the HDC.

GAM believes it has the right to tax all parts of Acehnese society. And AGAM/TNA Pasè commander Sofyan Dawod does not think the majority of the population minds: "The Indonesian government has the right to tax and so does GAM. But the Acehnese do not object to our taxes while they do object to paying taxes to Indonesia because that money is then used to send troops and kill them while we use the tax to defend them."[35] According to Dawod, the level of taxation depends on the project or the salary. There are two bases for taxation: the profit (which he claims is around 2.5 percent), and the value of the project. Additional contributions are sought for holidays—*hari raya*—which Dawod claims are used for Acehnese orphans. ExxonMobil, for instance, was asked for a special Idul Adha "holiday allowance" of Rp 250 million. According to Dawod, farmers and teachers do not pay taxes "but we do ask for a voluntary contribution of one day's earning per month. We also ask for donations from Aceh's wealthy to help society, to cover state functions and expenses, and also to buy weapons."[36]

GAM has especially targeted merchants in Aceh Besar (many of whom are ethnic Chinese), contractors in the Lhokseumawe industrial area, Javanese migrants in the coffee plantations of Central Aceh, and civil servants. The Chinese are seen as "soft targets" because they are comparatively wealthy and will go to great lengths to stay out of the conflict; contractors, civil servants, and the Javanese are seen as "legitimate targets" since they either work for the Indonesian regional government or are seen as potential collaborators with the security forces. In Langsa, East Aceh, for instance, taxation started in 1999 after GAM had strengthened its base there. Businesses, teachers and civil servants were asked to pay 10 percent—often accompanied by intimidation and threat.[37] In Kecamatan Peudada, Bireuen, primary and secondary school teachers were asked for a monthly contribution of Rp 40,000 while heads of schools pay Rp 50,000. In West Aceh, civil servants pay Rp 50,000 a month.

The hardest-hit area, however, has been the Lhokseumawe industrial complex in North Aceh—home to Indonesian and foreign businesses such as PT Arun, ExxonMobil, PT Asean Aceh Fertilizer, and Iskandar Muda Fertilizer as well as a large number of local and some foreign contractors. This area is under GAM's Samudra Pasè finance section, which includes a special subsection for vital projects. The importance of the industrial complex to GAM can be seen by the fact that Lhoksukon alone has three "tax collectors." According to ExxonMobil Oil Indonesia (EMOI) public affairs manager Bill Cummings, EMOI operations had been reasonably secure until 1999. From mid-1999, the company experienced not only an increase in general violence against its workforce and facilities but also an increase in extortion attempts by people claiming to be GAM. GAM tax collectors with mobile phone numbers were identified in faxed letters, and some communications asked EMOI to pay certain taxes to GAM. As Cummings explained: "These letters, supposedly from GAM, ask for money. We have never knowingly paid money to GAM. However, we do not know the political affiliations of the over 3,000 Acehnese workers involved in EMOI's business operations in Aceh."[38]

The suspicion that GAM is either "inside" or has access to "inside information" is echoed by foreign and local contractors alike. One foreign contractor, who did not want to be named, related how GAM demanded 5 percent of his profits. Often these demands came by text message to his mobile phone. Though he changed his number twice, within two weeks GAM had his new number. GAM seemed to be fully aware of his travel schedule as well. He never once got a "tax demand" when he was in Jakarta or overseas. But as soon as he landed in Lhokseumawe, GAM would be in touch. He further said that while he himself was only asked for 5 percent his local third-party contractors were being issued with demands of up to 20 percent. And while he was able to stay in the protected industrial compound and thus had the luxury of not paying the "taxes," his local staff did not. Moreover, GAM seemed to know exactly when salaries were paid, the amount of the salary, and which third parties had been awarded contracts.[39] In fact, several local contractors spoke about a GAM list. Once a contractor had made it onto the list, they said, there was no escaping short of leaving Aceh forever.

According to the *Jakarta Post*, GAM generally demands around 10 percent of the contract value from local contractors.[40] One such contractor in Gedung Blangpria near Lhokseumawe explained:

> I have been asked several times for money by GAM. From contractors they demand 12 percent of the contract value. Most people here don't agree with GAM, but they are afraid because they have guns. If you are asked for money and you don't give it, you will be shot a day later—especially if you are a government employee. Or you get kidnapped and they ask the family for money. Sometimes they ask you specifically to donate money to buy a weapon. It all depends on your economic status.[41]

Villages in the vicinity of the Lhokseumawe industrial complex have been harder hit by GAM's village tax, too, presumably under the assumption that they benefit through either employment or developmental assistance. After the signing of the COHA pact, every village was asked for Rp 35 million to buy weapons[42]—in contrast to other villages in GAM's traditional stronghold area (which were asked for Rp 10 million) and those in new areas such as South Aceh (Rp 9 million).[43] In these newly acquired territories GAM has often resorted to force in order to extract money. The residents of Manggamat in South Aceh, for instance, alleged that they were the victims of a GAM crackdown on June 5, 2001. According to Effendi, the head of Sarah Baru village, "the villagers were intimidated and forced to pay money to GAM. Those who were unable to pay money were tortured to death and their bodies buried."[44] Providing an overall picture Indonesian military intelligence estimates from April 2003 claimed that GAM received a monthly "tax revenue" of Rp 230 million from Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar, and Sabang, Rp 10 million from Pidie, Rp 36 million from East Aceh and Tamiang, Rp 682 million from Central Aceh, Rp 77 million from West Aceh, and Rp 70 million from South Aceh and Aceh Singkil.[45]

The second key source of funding for GAM is foreign donations, primarily from Acehnese expatriates. The largest amount of this money probably originates from Malaysia. It is estimated that in Kuala Lumpur alone at least 5,000 Acehnese provide GAM with regular donations.[46] The third source is funds generated from criminal activity—mainly drug trafficking and kidnapping for ransom. GAM has been actively involved in the cultivation and trade of marijuana. An estimated 30 percent of all of Southeast Asia's marijuana is believed to originate in Aceh. It is difficult to guess GAM's share of this trade, however, especially given the large number of other players ranging from members of the army and police to local thugs

and criminal syndicates from Medan, North Sumatra. The picture is further complicated by the fact that there is a degree of cooperation between these players: while at one level GAM, TNI, and the police are enemies, at another level some of their members are business partners. What is certain, though, is that the largest share of marijuana is sold within Indonesia, mainly in other parts of Sumatra and Java. It is equally clear that GAM's involvement in drug trafficking is directly linked to the arms/drugs nexus both regionally and domestically. Marijuana is sold to obtain weapons not only from Cambodia and Thailand but also from individuals in the Indonesian security forces, Indonesia's arms manufacturer Pindad, Jakarta's black market, and even as far away as West Timor and East Timor, where arms from former pro-Jakarta militias are still widely available.[47]

Kidnapping has been another means for raising funds. During 2001 and 2002, GAM kidnappings increased to such an extent that security consultants in Jakarta, brought in to negotiate the release of hostages from large corporations in the Lhokseumawe industrial complex, feared that GAM was undergoing a process of criminalization similar to that of Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines. They point to data such as those gathered by ExxonMobil, according to which between May 1999 and March 2001 more than 50 company vehicles were hijacked by GAM or people claiming to be GAM.[48] The GAM leadership in Sweden denies that its members carry out kidnappings for ransom, and it is almost certainly not the case that kidnappings were centrally endorsed from exile. More likely they are the product of warlordism and the result of local decision making. Beyond doubt the economically driven recruits who joined GAM in 1999 have been a key element. People posing as GAM cannot be ruled out either. Hostage negotiators and Acehnese civil leaders who have intervened in kidnapping cases maintain they were talking to the real GAM. This assertion is supported by evidence that senior GAM commanders, recognizing the detrimental impact of criminalization, have ordered executions for "criminal misbehavior" within the ranks.

While some of the kidnappings were ideologically motivated—such as the detention of students believed to be TNI informers, young women dating Indonesian soldiers,[49] journalists accused of biased reporting, and village heads in need of "reeducation"—other kidnappings were for ransom with the targets being either local legislators, businessmen, or oil workers.[50] In early 2001, for instance, GAM kidnapped a senior executive of PT Arun and demanded $500,000 for his release. In late August 2001,

six Indonesian crew members from the *Ocean Silver* were abducted by GAM, which then demanded $33,000 for their release.[51] Sofyan Dawod denied GAM responsibility. In April 2002, three oil workers contracted to Pertamina were kidnapped. One was released the following day; for the other two GAM demanded a ransom of Rp 200 million.[52] (On May 17 they were released without ransom.) On June 27, 2002, nine Indonesian athletes were abducted.[53] On July 2, 2002, it was reported that nine crewmen servicing the offshore oil industry had been kidnapped from their ship the *Pelangi Frontier*.[54] (Both athletes and oil workers were freed as part of a group of eighteen civilians released by GAM on July 5.) When demonstrators in Central Aceh attacked the office of the Joint Security Committee in March 2003 they not only protested against GAM taxation but also demanded that GAM return Rp 500 million taken for the release of a local businessman.[55]

Kidnappings have not abated with the declaration of martial law—indeed they may even have increased. The most prominent hostages include two RCTI television crew, two wives of Indonesian air force officers, thirty-nine village heads, Langsa city councilor Budiman Samaun, and numerous teachers. That many of these have been abducted for ransom may be an indication of logistical difficulties or financial problems owing to a lost tax base. But it may simply be a reflection of criminal elements within GAM or groups abusing the GAM label for personal gain. Certainly this explanation holds true for the sudden surge of "GAM" piracy in the Malacca Straits—activities that do not really fit GAM's modus operandi.

Kidnappings have not abated with the declaration of martial law—indeed they may even have increased.

GAM as a Military Force

In order to assess GAM as a military force, the organization's strength, weapons, and strategy need to be considered. One of the most problematic aspects of assessing GAM as a military force is the fact that the exact numbers of membership and guns are not known. While a variety of estimates are available, they vary greatly from source to source and have become an integral part of the political game. Generally speaking, GAM's figures about its own membership tend be somewhat inflated in order to impart popularity and strength whereas TNI's estimates tend to be on the

low side in order to portray the movement as a fringe phenomenon. It is against this background that all data should be considered.

Strength

When GAM was established in 1976 it comprised only 70 guerrilla fighters. It has since grown considerably—today claiming an active guerrilla army of 30,000 and a reserve of almost the whole population of Aceh: "The number of locally trained is about 30,000 including a few hundred women. It's not our policy to commit them to too much. We have thousands of young boys which are our reserve. The spirit is there but they are underage. So we give them a little bit of training and keep them for the future."[56] Of these 30,000, according to di Tiro an estimated 5,000 GAM guerrillas were trained in Libya between 1986 and 1989.[57] The number offered by Malik Mahmud, around 1,500 Acehnese, is somewhat lower.[58] Observers believe that 700 to 800 had gone to Libya (ICG 2001: 3), while Indonesian military intelligence claims that 583 members of GAM are "Libyan graduates." GAM's overall membership increased from the original 70 in 1976 to several hundred in the late 1980s. In 1999-2000, GAM increased again to an estimated 3,000 and during the COHA phase to an estimated 5,500.

GAM claims that the training by Libya was the only formal outside training it received. According to the testimony of a Libyan-trained GAM guerrilla under detention in 1991, GAM volunteers traveled to Singapore via Malaysia and then the Libyan government would provide tickets to Tripoli, sometimes via Pakistan, Athens, or Holland. "The training lasted for seven months and involved not only the use of weapons but also ideological instruction from Hasan di Tiro" (Asia Watch 1991: 6). This is confirmed by Malik Mahmud: "The Teungku moved to Tripoli to be close to our people. He was there for all the young recruits. During that time he used to lecture about the political future of Aceh. He taught them history, politics, and our ideals. During the daytime they learned about guerrilla warfare from the Libyans. One course lasted for about a year and usually had 500 people. They were from their late teens up to the age of 30."[59]

GAM fighters in Libya underwent guerrilla warfare training similar to that of other organizations at the time such as various left-wing Palestinian factions who were provided with "training in artillery, explosives, and aviation" (Sayigh 1997: 485-6). The ideological component, however, differed—focusing on Acehnese history and identity rather than Arab

nationalist ideology. Also unlike the Palestinians, GAM did not receive funding or arms, as it was not part of the broad Arab socialist revolutionary project in the Middle East. At the end of each course there was a graduation ceremony in Tripoli at which "Libyan officials like [President Muammar] Gadhafi were present."[60] GAM sees the Libyan training as a formative experience in that it provided the movement with skills to educate the population at large, based on di Tiro's speeches, and to train new recruits in Aceh "Libyan style." The return of the Libyan graduates also triggered a reorganization of the movement, an improvement in its guerrilla tactics, and a fine-tuning of its strategy. Part of this reorganization included the establishment of GAM's new "para-commandos," which were divided into three groups: those responsible for education and awareness, those responsible for diplomacy, and those responsible for military operations.[61]

Despite its new military capacity GAM was hard hit by Indonesia's counterinsurgency operations and the movement was almost crushed by 1992. A number of GAM commanders had fled to Malaysia in 1991, however, and regularly moved between their foreign base and Aceh to supervise the movement and to some extent operations on the ground—thus keeping GAM alive. In fact, GAM's operational command was almost fully transferred to Malaysia where it remained until 1998 (Barber 2000: 42). According to experienced observers, AGAM/TNA members despite their Libyan training generally display little military prowess or discipline (ICG 2001: 7-8). AGAM/TNA has, however, been able to overcome its lack of firepower and training somewhat through its extensive network of informers with good communications able to provide intelligence and early warning of the movements of the TNI and the police. And, employing squad and platoon-sized groups (10-30 people), it has also relied on regular ambushes of convoys, raids on military posts and complexes, and attacks on individual police and soldiers (ICG 2001: 7-8).

If the return of the Libyan graduates prompted one process of reorganization, the death of Abdullah Syafi'i in January 2002 triggered another. GAM now focused on improving AGAM's operational capacity—especially in light of the casualties inflicted upon its lower command structure by Indonesia's Security Recovery Operation (Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan; Opslihkam), launched in April 2001. Syafi'i was succeeded by his deputy, 37-year-old Muzzakir Manaf from Blang Jruen, Tanoh Abee, North Aceh, who was also AGAM's Pasè commander. Unlike Syafi'i,

Table 2

District	Weapons Held in August 2002	Weapons Held in April 2003
Aceh Besar	94	209
Pidie	266	420
North Aceh	706	889
East Aceh	410	346
West Aceh	182	113
South Aceh	76	74
Central Aceh	83	79
Southeast Aceh	5	4

Manaf had undergone guerrilla training in Libya, which, according to AGAM, included training as a MIG-17 and helicopter pilot.[62] He adopted a different, arguably more strategic, approach to the conflict. In response to the security forces' strategy of targeting the AGAM command structure, he introduced a four-month training program for a newly established unit comprising both regulars and auxiliaries. The estimated 1,000 elite commandos were split into twelve "rapid reaction" groups (McCullough 2002).

Arms

The fighting capacity of GAM is a lot smaller than its membership suggests. In 2001, most observers estimated that AGAM/TNA had between 1,000 and 1,500 modern firearms, a few grenade launchers, even fewer rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and perhaps one or two 60-mm mortars (ICG 2001: 7). These weapons, moreover, were unevenly spread over GAM's territory, showing the heaviest arms concentration in the traditional GAM areas of Pidie, North Aceh, and East Aceh. Indonesian intelligence in August 2002 and April 2003 offered the estimates presented in Table 2. Irrespective of the exact numbers, it is clear that GAM's arsenal had grown both in terms of quality and quantity since the 2000 Humanitarian Pause as a result of the organization's expansion, extortion, taxation, and takeover of local government including access to local government budgets. Between May 2, 2001, and December 9, 2002, some

824 GAM weapons were captured by TNI in Aceh: 498 standard and 326 *rakitan* (home-made).[63] Several hundred more were intercepted at sea, leaving it open to speculation as to how many weapons successfully reached their destination. According to Indonesian military intelligence, GAM increased its arsenal during the COHA phase to 2,134 weapons.[64] In November 2003, Malik Mahmud claimed that GAM had spent more than $10 million on weapons for the struggle.[65]

GAM's weapons are a mixture of *rakitan* and standard firearms. The home-made weapons include bombs made out of commercial explosives used for fishing or matériel stolen from the Lhokseumawe industrial complex, which, according to the TNI, includes several thousand sticks of TNT and 750 detonators.[66] Indeed in October 2000 there was a break-in at the explosives storage facility operated by ExxonMobil. Some detonators were taken along with a large number of boxes containing secondary explosive charges conventionally used to perforate drill pipes. GAM claims it has also experimented with mosquito repellent to make crude explosives and has used mechanical as well as electronic triggers, including cell phones.

Standard firearms are obtained from both domestic and foreign sources. Domestically, arms are either captured, stolen, or purchased from the TNI and the police (ICG 2001: 8). In fact, the Indonesian security forces represent the largest source of GAM weapons (HRW 2001: 5). Internationally, weapons are widely available from Cambodia, one of the primary sources of illegal small arms in Southeast Asia, using Thailand as the main conduit or transfer area. Consignments are either "smuggled overland via Chantaburi province in the east, or by sea from Kampong Saom in the south, moved through Thailand and transferred to 'shipping agents' who arrange final or onward delivery" (Chalk 2001). Shipments to Indonesia are often moved through the Malaysian provinces of Kelantan, Sarawak, and Sabah.

GAM has been able to tap into this arms network. Weapons are smuggled by expatriate supporters in Malaysia and Singapore or ordered directly from arms dealers operating in these areas. In 1999, Indonesian intelligence sources suspected that the Thai Muslim separatist Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO) was helping supply GAM with AK-47 assault rifles "through the Thai-Malaysian border area to points along the northern Sumatra coast—from Tanjung Balai, south of Medan, to Padang on the Indian Ocean coast."[67] In May 2001, Thai police intercepted an arms shipment intended for Aceh consisting of 15,500 bullets, 16 kilo-

grams of TNT explosive, 60 grenades, and 48 landmines packed in wooden boxes.[68] In July 2002, Thai police seized a boat carrying arms on its way to Aceh. The weapons consisted of 68 AK-47s, 5 RPD machine guns, 221 chains of AK-47 bullets, and 67 boxes of AK-47 bullets.[69] Moreover, this was the second weapons seizure within a month. In the first one Thai police found 6 rocket-propelled grenades, 2 M-67 grenades, and about 600 AK-47 bullets.[70] While accurate numbers are difficult to obtain, these seizures as well as weapons captured provide a glimpse into GAM's arsenal.

Strategy, Tactics, and Targets

GAM's strategy is one of guerrilla warfare, making use of its superior knowledge of the terrain and the population to counterbalance its lack of real military capacity. In many ways AGAM/TNA has had the operational advantage of being able to fight elusively and choosing the place and time of engagement. The aim of GAM's strategy is to make Aceh ungovernable in order to make Indonesia pay the highest price possible for retention of this territory. As one GAM operational commander explained: "When they advance, we retreat; when they leave, we return. When they grow tired or weak or careless, we attack."[71] Another guerrilla fighter added: "We don't have to win the war, we only have to stop them from winning."[72] GAM's operations have focused on five distinct targets in Aceh: Indonesian political structures; the state education system; the economy; the Javanese; and the Indonesian security forces.

"We don't have to win the war, we only have to stop them from winning."

The Indonesian Political Structures. GAM aims at paralyzing the local government structure. This goal is achieved through the intimidation of civil servants at all levels and the recruitment of as many as possible into GAM's parallel civilian government. Tiro field commander Amri bin Abdul Wahab saw the parallel government as one of the central elements of GAM's strategy:

> GAM's strategy is guerrilla warfare as in East Timor or Vietnam. But at a tactical level there are differences. The crucial element is how to establish a GAM government so we can exercise control and society does not have to deal with the Indonesian structure. That strengthens our relationship with society and we can spread our ideology.[73]

In April 2003 he estimated that about 70 percent of Acehnese society used GAM's civil government offices as opposed to Indonesian ones.

> Before the GAM government, society had to deal with Indonesia's civil service. But now they don't go there anymore to get documents for the sale or purchase of land. And in religious aspects like marriage, people used to go to the Office of Religious Affairs but now they go the Hakim Negara Aceh [State of Aceh Court]. They want to be married by a *kadi* [religious judge] and not by an official of the Department of Religion. This shows the success of GAM as a government.[74]

Along similar lines, GAM minister of state Malik Mahmud stated in February 2002:

> In two years [since the end of DOM] we have taken over 60 to 80 percent of the administration of the Indonesian government in Aceh. We make use of Indonesian officials. We know they have a job with Indonesia, but now we are in power in Aceh and we want them to change so what you see is positive. They just change sides and now work for Negara Aceh.[75]

In June 2001, independent observers estimated that 80 percent of Aceh's villages were under GAM control or influence (ICG 2001: 5). This assessment was shared by Colonel Endang Suwarya, who estimated that just before Opslihkam was launched in May 2001 some 3,500 out of 5,000 village heads were under GAM control or influence (Schulze 2001: 30). Two months into the operation, he believed that only 50 percent of Banda Aceh and virtually none of Greater Aceh still had a functioning administration.[76]

While GAM has targeted civil servants as part of the system, particular attention has been paid to politicians who support autonomy or Jakarta. These include members of the Acehnese Legislative Assembly, especially those who criticize GAM,[77] the governor's (Javanese) wife Marlinda whom GAM accused of lobbying for a military solution,[78] and above all Governor Abdullah Puteh whom GAM sees as Jakarta's lackey, blames for the death of Abdullah Syafi'i, and holds responsible for the reestablishment of the regional military command (Kodam).[79] GAM went so far as to state that with these acts "we fear that Abdullah Puteh has lost his civilian rights in the war."[80]

The State Education System. GAM has also systematically targeted the state education system, although it must be said that it is not the only party responsible for the large number of school burnings as well as the intimidation and killing of teaching staff. The Indonesian mobile police (Brimob) and the TNI have been known to burn schools and houses—to avenge the killing of their members, out of frustration over not finding the insurgents, in anger at villagers not cooperating, or simply to lay the blame on GAM. Similarly, contractors may have contributed to the torching of education facilities as a precursor for obtaining lucrative rebuilding contracts. It is in this context that the following numbers need to be placed.

Between 1998 and 2002 some 60 teachers were killed and 200 others physically assaulted.[81] Human rights activists in Aceh believe the true numbers are even higher. According to the Human Rights Forum (PB HAM), in 2002 alone 50 teachers were confirmed murdered—accompanied by the burning of educational facilities. Between the beginning of DOM in 1989 and June 2002, some 527 schools, 89 official houses for teachers, and 33 official houses for principals were burned down.[82] In May-June 2002 alone, 27 schools were destroyed. In the first two days of the military emergency in May 2003 an estimated 185 schools went up in flames; by the next day the number had risen to 248.[83] By the first week of June the total was 448,[84] a number that has risen to over 500 since.

While there is considerable doubt that GAM was responsible for all these burnings, clearly GAM was responsible for some of them. The underlying motivations are primarily ideological and to a lesser extent practical. According to GAM, the Indonesian education system actively destroyed Acehnese history and culture while promoting "the glorification of Javanese history."[85] As long ago as the late 1970s, di Tiro recorded in his diary: "For the last 35 years they have used our schools and the mass media to destroy every aspect of our nationality, culture, polity and national consciousness" (di Tiro 1982: 29). One way of countering this trend was the tailoring of school curricula in GAM strongholds to include a local view of history.[86] Another way was the burning of the schools so "that they were not used to turn Acehnese children into Indonesians" (ICG 2003). Burning down the schools has forced the children into the rural Islamic boarding schools (*dayah*), most of which are under GAM control. In May 1999, in fact, GAM held a number of meetings in local mosques in the district of Bandar Dua where its representatives specifically stated that "public schools are not needed any more because the traditional Muslim

schools offer sufficient education to the people."[87]

GAM's battle against the state education system is over Aceh's past and the hearts and minds of the next generation. The destruction of state schools is a direct attack on a curriculum which teaches that Aceh joined the Republic of Indonesia voluntarily and has been an integral part of the state ever since. At a more practical level, GAM has targeted schools because the Indonesian security forces have used school buildings at night as shelter for troops on patrol. In the context of military emergency, the need to destroy the schools became even more acute in order to prevent them "from being used as billets for troops" and "from housing the displaced so that the humanitarian problem got more international attention" (ICG 2003).

The Economy. Closely connected with the dismantling of Indonesia's political and educational structures has been the targeting of those sectors of the economy from which Indonesia and particularly the security forces benefit. GAM's focus here has been on the domestic and foreign corporations in the Lhokseumawe industrial complex, whose workers have been living under the threat of intimidation, kidnapping, or death since the early days of GAM. For instance, a 1977 GAM leaflet called upon foreign workers of Mobil and Bechtel to leave because these two firms had made themselves "co-conspirators" with the "Javanese colonialist thieves" and GAM could not "guarantee the safety of your life and limbs" (di Tiro 1982: 108).

More direct action—such as destroying Aceh's industrial infrastructure—has also been part of GAM's strategy. In August 1977, di Tiro wrote about the "actions taken by our forces in Kuala Simpang, Langsa and Pangkalan Susu regions to close down foreign oil companies and to prevent them from further stealing our oil and gas" (di Tiro 1982: 78). In December 1978, he wrote: "The NLF (GAM) forces in East Aceh, Pasè Province, attacked the enemy troops near the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) complex in Paja Bakong area in accordance with our policy to protect our gas resources from being stolen by the Javanese invaders and their foreign accomplices" (di Tiro 1982: 208).

More recently GAM has targeted the vulnerable oil and gas production facilities and pipelines operated by EMOI in Aceh. In March 2001, EMOI was forced to close production from the four onshore gas fields it operates and to evacuate workers after a general deterioration in the security situation, which came to a head in the latter half of February.[88] On

May 6, 2001, while EMOI was closed down, AGAM severed a 16-inch condensate pipeline; on May 20, it interrupted the 20-mile, 42-inch underground gas pipeline between the Arun Field and the PT Arun LNG plant, thus rendering a restart of production impossible (ICG 2001: 9). GAM is also believed to have been responsible for firing at aircraft transporting ExxonMobil workers, for hijacking the company's vehicles, and for burning buses and planting landmines along roads to blow them up.[89]

Bill Cummings, EMOI public affairs manager in Jakarta, described the security situation as follows:

> Starting in May 1999 there was a general increase in brigandry in our area of operations. Between May 1999 and the onshore shutdown in March 2001, acts of vandalism increased and over 50 vehicles were hijacked from public roads. In 2000, two chartered airplanes carrying ExxonMobil workers were hit by ground fire. In one case in March 2000, a gunman on the back of a motorcycle fired at the plane as it was taxiing to the terminal in Point A, the Arun Field control center, wounding two passengers. Through a news story in a local newspaper a few days later, GAM claimed responsibility for the attack. Also in 2000, there was an increase in small arms fire directed at the facilities. GAM occasionally acknowledged responsibility to local reporters for some of the attacks, but we have no firsthand knowledge of who was responsible. In the weeks leading up to the onshore shutdown in 2001, our personnel were targeted. There were several incidents where unknown gunmen fired on our chartered buses and vans carrying workers. In a couple of cases buses were emptied of occupants and burned.[90]

GAM's grievance with foreign companies is twofold: first, they are seen as exploiting Aceh's resources; second, they are perceived as collaborating with the Indonesian military, which has been securing their premises. Thus GAM regards these corporations as legitimate targets. As GAM spokesman Isnander al-Pasè explained in 2002: "The general principle is that the government of the State of Aceh prohibits all activities that lead to the exploration of its natural resources by foreign powers, especially if such exploration is the source of revenue for the enemy Indonesia. The Hague and Geneva Laws recognize the right of warring parties to eliminate those economic facilities of the enemy that can be used to strengthen the muscle of the military."[91] On a subsequent occasion, when asked specifically about ExxonMobil, he stated: "ExxonMobil is a legitimate tar-

get in war. Why? Because it helps the opponent's military and now Exxon is housing a military base within its complex. And the people living next to Exxon tell us that they do not get anything from Exxon while Exxon takes our oil."[92] GAM believes that ExxonMobil's facilities have been used not only as a military base "but also as torture camps,"[93] particularly during DOM, and that the TNI troops based at ExxonMobil have since continued to carry out "massive military operations" against the surrounding villages in the North Aceh subdistricts of Tanah Luas, Matang Kuli, and Meurah Mulia.[94]

The Javanese. One of the most controversial objectives of GAM's guerrilla strategy has been the systematic attempt to cleanse Aceh of all Javanese presence. While GAM has repeatedly denied that it specifically targets Javanese, the evidence on the ground is to the contrary. GAM equates Indonesia with Javanese neocolonialism. In mid-1990, GAM went on an offensive against Javanese settlers and transmigrants in North Aceh (Barber 2000: 32). According to Amnesty International reports at the time, the pattern of GAM violence changed from targeting the security forces to attacking noncombatants as well. By the end of June some 30 civilians had been killed and thousands of Javanese transmigrants had been intimidated into leaving their homes (Amnesty International 1993: 5).

This scenario repeated itself after the end of DOM. In September 1999, the *Jakarta Post* reported that thousands of Javanese transmigrants were fleeing North Aceh following harassment by GAM including terrorization, extortion, and arson.[95] Ahead of GAM's anniversary on December 4, 1999, more Javanese settlers and transmigrants began to flee Aceh amid fears of violence (Barber 2000: 101). The Central Java transmigration office said that since July that year some 1,006 Javanese had returned with their families from Aceh. Between 2000 and 2002 an estimated 50,000 migrants were terrorized into leaving their homes in North, East, and Central Aceh. Many of these had been in Aceh for generations—especially those in Central Aceh who were brought there during the Dutch period to work on the coffee plantations. Others came as part of Suharto's transmigration program in the 1980s and 1990s.

GAM sees the Javanese migrants as colonial settlers who are demographically shoring up Jakarta's claim to Aceh as well as potential collaborators with the Indonesian security forces. In April 2001, in fact, following Presidential Instruction 4 initiating a security recovery operation, AGAM field commanders called on the Javanese transmigrants to leave:

"These people can be forced to become military informers. The military can even turn them into militiamen."[96] Two months later, in June 2001, violence in the ethnically mixed Aceh-Gayo-Javanese areas of Central Aceh reached unprecedented levels with clashes between GAM and local village defense groups (*kelompok sipil bersenjata*) killing an estimated 64 people over a two-week period, of whom 50 were Javanese, and resulting in the burning of perhaps a thousand houses. The level of violence is further reflected in OXFAM's June 2001 data on internally displaced persons, which set the numbers for Central Aceh at 10,361, of which 5,758 alone came from the ethnically mixed subdistrict of Bandar.[97]

GAM sees the Javanese migrants as colonial settlers who are demographically shoring up Jakarta's claim to Aceh

The Indonesian Security Forces. Since its establishment GAM has targeted both the Indonesian military and police as "occupation forces." While between 1976 and 1979 GAM's attacks were sporadic and not particularly effective, in 1989, after GAM's return from Libya, they had become better organized and forced the Indonesian security forces onto the defensive (Barber 2000: 32).

After 1998, GAM attacks on the security forces rose again. According to police figures, 53 policemen were killed from July to December 1999 and many more were injured. The police spokesman, Inspector-General Didi Widayadi, stated that the casualties between March 12 and April 12, 2001, included 33 military personnel and 36 police killed as well as 128 military personnel and 132 police injured.[98] According to the TNI, between June 2000 and April 2001 some 50 soldiers were killed while 206 were injured and 8 were listed as missing.[99]

Hasan di Tiro described a range of GAM tactics in the late 1970s: "attacking the enemy posts that are obnoxious to us" (di Tiro 1982: 162), ambushing troops, planting bombs and launching grenades near military installations, executing off-duty security personnel, disrupting "enemy communication lines," and intercepting and destroying Indonesian military vehicles. While GAM's capacity has since increased, its tactics have changed little. As Amni bin Marzuki and Kamaruzzaman explained in December 2001:

> Our operations are defensive, but this includes preemptive attack. If we have information that a post is going to be attacked, we attack first.

> We mainly resort to ambush and hit-and-run. We can't fight a frontal war. They have better equipment and more ammunition. We only have some Kalashnikovs and M-16s but we have to use ammunition from Pindad.
>
> From a military perspective there is no way for us to defeat them or for them to defeat us. We want to tie down as many of their troops as possible in Aceh. We want them to spend more money on this operation. We want to exhaust them financially.[100]

The East Timor Blueprint

Since East Timor's successful bid for independence in 1999, its struggle has served as an inspiration for a variety of separatist organizations in Indonesia—including GAM. GAM has used East Timor as a blueprint but also as a key element in its public relations strategy, calculating that the international sympathy for East Timor could be transferred to Aceh. Playing upon the East Timor scenario, GAM first incorporated the idea of referendum into its political vocabulary. It also called for international peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. At the same time the organization stepped up its activities in order to provoke the Indonesian security forces into a violent overreaction. GAM's calculations were simple. Its enemy's greatest weakness has been the lack of discipline and lack of professionalism that so tarnished the TNI's image in East Timor and left Aceh traumatized as a result of DOM. (See Sukma 2004 for a full analysis.) Turning Indonesia's weakness to its advantage, GAM sought to destabilize the general situation in Aceh to such an extent, by consciously carrying out attacks in highly populated areas, that a security response became unavoidable. Predicting that the pursuant security operation would inflict massive casualties on the civilian population, GAM aimed to raise the level of violence so that the international community would feel compelled to intervene and thereby deliver independence. At the same time, violence by the security forces would drive the civilian population into GAM's camp and alienate Aceh even further from Jakarta—confirming independence as the only viable solution and demonstrating the validity of GAM's narrative of the conflict.

GAM has used East Timor as a blueprint but also as a key element in its public relations strategy

Along similar lines, GAM contributed significantly to the creation of

a refugee population, which, in turn, it politicized. In the prelude to the June 1999 general elections, for instance, GAM "organized" the flight of villagers from Bandar Dua, Pidie, North Aceh, and East Aceh. As one observer noted: "GAM hoped that its exodus operation would attract the attention of the world and that its cause of an independent Aceh would be received."[101] In 2001, there were repeated reports that GAM had encouraged people to leave their villages and asked refugees to stay in camps rather than move in with relatives. In these camps they were visible and accessible to the foreign media and open to GAM propaganda. There is also evidence that some refugees were paid by GAM to leave their villages.

To draw the comparison with East Timor, GAM has been highlighting past and present human rights abuses. A June 2001 press release, for example, states that the "Indonesian government has been committing gross human rights violations in Aceh, in a degree much worse than they did in East Timor."[102] GAM also cultivated relations with human rights organizations—in particular, foreign NGOs. In fact, with the 2002 Stavanger Declaration GAM adopted an official foreign policy aimed at building "cooperation with friendly and neutral NGOs worldwide."

Further efforts in drawing parallels with East Timor are evident in the emphasis on the existence of civil defense organizations, generally referred to as militias, in an effort to invoke images of the militia destruction of Dili in the wake of the 1999 referendum. In June 2001, for instance, GAM explained:

> The Indonesian authorities were "very successful in establishing pro-Indonesia (pro-integration) militias in East Timor and [in using] them against [the] East Timorese freedom movement. Similar attempts [have] been made by [the] Indonesian government in Aceh by means of recruiting and arming indigenous Acehnese to form pro-Indonesia militias, but [with] little success. However, [the] Indonesian military has recruited several hundreds of militias among Javanese transmigrants and [has] used them as combat aides."[103]

GAM negotiator Amni bin Marzuki, along similar lines, claimed that militias were recruited in 1998 and included Acehnese and Javanese transmigrants:

> Some were trained in Medan and some in Central Aceh, and they were paid Rp 250,000 per operation on top of a salary of Rp 400,000 per

> month. The militias are intimidating Acehnese. They started burning the houses of Acehnese—and we burned their houses in return.[104]

In March 2003, GAM blamed the demonstrations against the Joint Security Committee (JSC) and destruction of its offices on TNI-sponsored militias:

> The demonstration carried out by a few dozen people against the JSC in Sigli was definitely masterminded by the TNI. . . . The demonstration carried out by a score of people in Bireuen also presented the marks of TNI's handiwork. The same with the mass riots perpetrated in Takengon (Central Aceh) and in Langsa (East Aceh) last week; they all pointed to the TNI's created militias.[105]

There is no doubt that these civil defense organizations, or *perlawanan rakyat* (*wanra*), have existed in Central Aceh since 1999 and that new ones have recently emerged during the COHA phase and the current military emergency. They were initially set up in response to GAM's targeting of the mixed Javanese-Gayo villages for purposes of extortion and ethnic cleansing. Since the beginning of martial law the TNI has repeatedly called on the civilian population to help hunt for GAM and has encouraged the formation of such civilian defense organizations in all villages within the framework of its military doctrine of total defense or *pertahanan semesta* (*hanta*).

While in some villages people have received rudimentary paramilitary training, they have not, however, received standard firearms. Instead they use traditional weapons such as bamboo sticks, daggers, knives, and machetes. This differentiates them somewhat from the militias in East Timor in 1999—which had no legitimate defense reasons, were recruited and trained by the military, were composed of *preman* (thugs) and criminal elements often "imported" from Jakarta, and were equipped with standard firearms. Another difference is that in East Timor the main purpose of the militias was to lend Indonesia legitimacy for its presence: militia violence shored up Jakarta's claim of a Timorese society wracked by civil war in which Indonesia was invited to intervene. In Aceh the main function of the *wanra* is helping to secure the rural areas, relieving the military of routine security duties such as guarding the villages at night, building sandbag barricades, and patrolling the area.[106] The TNI also sees them as a vital source of information and local knowledge. The villagers are familiar with

the terrain and generally tend to know who the GAM supporters in their areas are.

The Peace Process

GAM and the Indonesian government under President Abdurrahman Wahid entered into a negotiating process in January 2000 aimed at finding an end to the conflict in Aceh. While the Indonesian government saw this dialogue as an alternative to its previous reliance on the security approach to manage the violence in the province, GAM saw it as yet another tool in its struggle for independence. This process was facilitated by a Swiss-based NGO, the Henry Dunant Center (HDC), through its head office in Geneva as well as a local office in Banda Aceh. Although there were numerous staff, delegates, and committees in Aceh, the actual negotiating took place outside of Indonesia at the insistence of the exiled GAM leadership, which feared it might be arrested or killed if it entered Indonesia but, more importantly, because internationalization was central to its political strategy.

The first result of the negotiations was the Humanitarian Pause of May 12, 2000, which was a cease-fire accompanied by the establishment of two joint committees—one on humanitarian action and one on security modalities—and a monitoring team. While its implementation lacked commitment from both sides and indeed violence actually escalated, the Humanitarian Pause was extended until January 15, 2001, as a Moratorium on Violence and then as Peace Through Dialogue. The negotiations broke down in all but name in July 2001 when the Indonesian government froze the Security Modalities Committee and GAM's negotiators in Banda Aceh were arrested and jailed.

Talks resumed again in February 2002—now under a Megawati government. A new element, foreign "wise men," was added, most notably retired U.S. Marine general Anthony Zinni and former Thai foreign minister Surin Pitsuan. At the same time, Indonesian security operations were stepped up following an ultimatum by the coordinating minister for security and political affairs, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, on August 19 demanding that GAM accept special autonomy. Throughout October, the TNI encircled GAM troops in several North Aceh locations, and in November it laid siege to the village of Cut Trieng. To this stick, however, a carrot was added in the form of the economic rehabilitation of Aceh by the United States, European Union, Japan, and the World Bank should

another agreement be reached. On December 9, 2002, the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) was concluded.

The COHA pact called for the cantonment or storage of GAM weapons, the relocation and reformulation of the role of the Indonesian security forces, and the establishment of peace zones. It also set up a Joint Security Commission under the leadership of Thai Major General Thanongsak Tuwinan, including 50 Thai and Filipino soldiers to work alongside 50 GAM and 50 TNI. The first signs of trouble came when GAM failed to meet the February deadline for the cantonment of its arms—followed by the TNI's refusal to relocate and then the paralyzing of the JSC through TNI-inspired systematic attacks on all its offices outside of Banda Aceh. By April the COHA pact was dead in all but name. Efforts to resuscitate it at a meeting in Tokyo on May 18, 2003, collapsed when GAM refused to agree to Indonesia's demands of recognizing NKRI, accepting NAD, and relinquishing its struggle. On the following day, May 19, the Indonesian government placed Aceh under martial law and launched an integrated operation (Operasi Terpadu).

The main achievement of the peace process was the two cease-fires. Yet neither of the cease-fires was fully adhered to by either side. In fact, throughout the peace process GAM and Indonesia officially and unofficially carried out military operations against each other in parallel with the talks—not only to increase their leverage at the negotiating table but also because there were elements on both sides who continued to believe in a military solution as well as elements who were not interested in any settlement that would harm their business interests. Overall, then, the peace process saw more failures than achievements. It has even been argued that the Acehnese would have been better off without the talks, as they polarized the people through their zero-sum structure. Civil society did not have a voice of its own but was only involved in the dialogue as appointees by GAM or Jakarta to the various committees. People were forced to choose sides with the result of eroding the middle ground. The process also failed to build confidence and trust between the two negotiating parties. But above all it failed to bridge the gap between GAM's position of "nothing but independence" and

But above all it failed to bridge the gap between GAM's position of "nothing but independence" and Indonesia's position of "anything but independence."

Indonesia's position of "anything but independence." (See Aspinall and Crouch 2003 for a full analysis.)

GAM's overall attitude toward the dialogue throws light on how the movement contributed to the impasses and ultimately the breakdown of the process—though it needs to be borne in mind that GAM's behavior was not the only factor. From the beginning the exiled leadership was supportive if not enthusiastic. Certainly the peace process fulfilled a number of its needs and served a number of aims. It provided the movement with legitimacy as the voice of the Acehnese people—recognized by Jakarta, by the international community, but also by the Acehnese population. GAM's status was supported by the structure of the process itself in which GAM and the Indonesian government were the only two parties to the negotiations. Before discussing GAM's strategy of internationalization, it is useful to take a closer look at the views of some of its negotiators and commanders regarding the Indonesian government, autonomy, and the cessation of hostilities and disarmament.

Indonesia

The belief that Jakarta is not sincere was a constant theme in GAM statements and pronouncements from the beginning of the dialogue in 2000. Frequently cited "proof of insincerity" included Indonesia's failure to designate members for working committees, security forces violations during the Humanitarian Pause, delays and postponements of meetings, the arrest of GAM negotiators, continued security forces operations, repeated threats to crush the rebels by Army Chief of Staff Ryamizard Ryacudu, the TNI siege of GAM forces at Cut Trieng in the prelude to the COHA, and generally nonimplementation of agreements.

In 2001, after the high expectations raised by the Humanitarian Pause, GAM/Indonesian relations plummeted. GAM believed the peace process was on the verge of collapse after Inpres 4 was issued in April 2001. The subsequent launching of Opslihkam and the arrest of the GAM negotiators in July 2001 were seen by GAM as a clear sign of Indonesia's lack of commitment to the peace process. GAM negotiator Amni bin Marzuki, one of those arrested, expressed his anger and disillusionment when he said: "At the June [2001] Geneva meeting it was agreed to solve the conflict in a democratic way and to set up a body to deal with this. GAM already had its members selected, but the Indonesian government never sent any. And then the GAM negotiators were arrested. We don't want to

be part of a bullshit dialogue."[107]

During 2002 there were repeated attempts to bring the peace process back on track—with Indonesia focused on getting GAM to accept autonomy and GAM, which had taken some serious hits in the field, focused on getting Indonesia to end Opslihkam. On December 7, 2002, GAM and Jakarta agreed to a cessation of hostilities that lasted until May 19, 2003, when Aceh was placed under martial law. Although the level of violence during the COHA decreased significantly, the level of distrust remained. This is reflected in GAM's numerous press releases. On January 29, 2003, for instance, GAM stated: "We, ASNLF (GAM), feel that the Indonesian side is still not sincere in carrying out the clauses of the Agreement."[108]

Suspicion of the Indonesian military was particularly high as GAM believed that the military had its own agenda and would carry it out either as part of a calculated game of duplicity or as a reflection of civil/military power struggles. In this context GAM on February 7 accused the Indonesian military of "launching a massive covert operation in Aceh by spreading operators and provocateurs in many places, including the mobilization of trained transmigrants."[109] This charge was reiterated in its statement of February 14:

> What we have been seeing in fact is the intensification of its military operations including those of intelligence. The decisions taken at the joint meeting of the TNI-Polri commanders in Lhokseumawe on 5-6 February 2003 clearly constitute serious violations of the COH Agreement. Among the decisions taken in said meeting are to shoot on sight TNA members, to reconduct sweeping operations in villages, to disperse by force any socialisation program of the COHA not sponsored by the GoI, and the liquidation and disappearance whenever necessary of the Chairman of the SIRA Presidium, Muhammad Nazar and the very popular young political activist, Kautsar Abu Yus.[110]

Similarly a February 27 TNA press release outlined Indonesia's insincerity and the threat to the peace process as follows: "Various limited military operations have started to be carried out again; cases of illegal detentions and mysterious murders are again on the increase. Arrests of pro-democracy/human rights activists with drummed up charges, as well as assassinations of GAM members, have been directed from Jakarta."[111]

In addition to statements about Jakarta's lack of sincerity, the high level of distrust was also reflected in GAM's repeated accusations that the

Indonesian security forces had violated the agreement. For instance, Amri Abdul Wahab claimed that dozens of soldiers had raided a GAM base in Linge, Central Aceh, killing one and wounding five others.[112] On March 3, GAM accused TNI of being behind the attack of the offices of the JSC monitors in Central Aceh. According to GAM spokesman Sofyan Dawod, "this incident was the work of the militias trained by the Indonesian military. Their aim is to expel international monitors from Central Aceh so no one can see what the military is doing."[113]

When the COHA was on the verge of collapse in April 2003, GAM placed the blame firmly on Indonesia: "The process for a peaceful solution of the Aceh conflict is in critical condition. This is purely caused by the manoeuvres carried out by the Indonesian Government through its security forces, the TNI and POLRI, because it does not want to have civil society involved in the efforts to find a solution to the conflict given that it believes a vast majority of the Acehnese are pro-independence."[114]

Autonomy

From an Indonesian perspective, much of the dialogue has revolved around getting GAM to accept autonomy as the compromise between full independence and full integration. While GAM agreed to use the autonomy legislation of Nanggroë Aceh Darussalam (NAD) as a starting point, it also reiterated repeatedly that this could not be equated to accepting NAD and that GAM had not given up its aim of independence. In a press release on February 4, 2002, a month after NAD had come into effect, GAM stated that "agreeing to use the so-called NAD law as a starting point for discussion" did not "imply that GAM or the Acehnese have accepted it as a form of provincial government." It was a mere "platform for exploring *other* political solutions for the future of Aceh."[115] By other political solutions GAM was clearly referring to independence. This was confirmed by Malik Mahmud on February 22, 2002: "The negotiations are within the framework of NKRI. But we have different interpretations of what that means. Our aim is still independence. We don't talk about autonomy. For us it's a decolonization process."[116]

This point was again stressed when the COHA was concluded. GAM made it very clear that it had not given up its quest for independence. No political concessions had been made; the agreement was no more than a cease-fire. The ASNLF press release following the signing of the agreement left no doubt about this: "What we are signing today is an accord to end

hostilities and all acts of violence. . . . It is certainly not about GAM accepting NAD or abandoning its sacred struggle for national independence."[117] Last-minute efforts to avert the total collapse of the COHA in a meeting held on May 17, 2003, in Tokyo confirmed this position: despite (or perhaps because of) Indonesia's imminent military operation in Aceh, GAM was unprepared to state that it accepted NAD.

Cease-fires and Disarmament

The beginning of negotiations in January 2000 was not an indication that the conflict was over. It was not even a sign that the war was being fought by other means. In fact, for both Indonesia and GAM the dialogue represented an additional element in their overall strategy. This goes a long way toward explaining why so many of the cease-fires, including the Humanitarian Pause and the COHA, did not hold.

For GAM, reserving the right to continue the armed struggle in parallel with the dialogue served a number of purposes. First, the threat or use of force was a way for GAM to gain leverage in the negotiations. Without the violence Jakarta would never have agreed to sit down at the same table with GAM. Second, GAM felt it needed its weapons to continue protecting the Acehnese people from the Indonesian security forces. Third, if the negotiations were aimed at getting support from the international community rather than Indonesia, there was no real incompatibility in continuing violence against Indonesian targets. And fourth, dialogue and armed struggle were all just tactics in the overall independence strategy. Just as the dialogue could be used to internationalize the conflict, so too could an escalation of violence on the ground. As Malik Mahmud pointed out: "We have to continue with the negotiations and with the armed struggle. Armed struggle, referendum, negotiations—we'll see which one but we'll never give up our right to independence."[118]

Just as the dialogue could be used to internationalize the conflict, so too could an escalation of violence on the ground.

GAM's actions during the Humanitarian Pause as well as the COHA illustrate the tactical use of cease-fires. During the pause, GAM recruited, trained, expanded, and consolidated its position. When questioned about this in June 2001, GAM negotiator Sofyan Ibrahim Tiba stated: "For GAM the Humanitarian Pause and the Moratorium were an advantage. Jakarta accuses us of using it to get new members. It's true—but we don't

use it for attacks, just to recruit new members and to retrain our troops. It's not a violation of the rules. The rules don't say GAM is not allowed to train its soldiers."[119] As it did during the Humanitarian Pause, GAM also used the COHA to consolidate and then expand its military capacity. A month after signing the COHA pact, GAM appointed new TNA commanders for some *wilayah*. GAM described this move as "necessary in order to assure and to heighten discipline."[120] Weapons, too, continued to flood into Aceh—showing that agreeing to store their arms was purely tactical. Only one and a half months after the agreement was signed Thai police intercepted a machine gun, ten assault rifles, and ammunition destined for Aceh.[121] According to the Indonesian army chief, General Ryamizard Ryacudu, "this peace has allowed them to increase from 3,000 to 5,000 and to bring in more weapons. They used to have 1,600 and now they have 2,150—M-16s, AKs, and RPG-7s."[122]

The belief that Indonesia was not sincere further complicated the issue of disarmament as many grassroots commanders believed that arms were still required to protect the community. This position is reflected in Sofyan Dawod's emphasis that GAM will not hand over any weapons to anyone.[123] GAM also emphasized repeatedly that "not using weapons" was not the same as "not possessing weapons" or indeed "surrender."[124] Similarly, Sofyan Ibrahim Tiba stated that "GAM still wants to possess weapons until the whole Aceh process is resolved," that "GAM is only prepared not to use the weapons," and that "we will cease using them, and we want HDC to make sure that our weapons are not confiscated."[125] The TNA was particularly concerned with the latter issue and consequently demanded that "there must be an agreement that the weapons that they have laid down must not be seized by the military."[126] Moreover, GAM stressed reciprocity: before GAM could start placing its weapons beyond use, the government should relocate its armed forces and reformulate Brimob.[127] On occasion this reciprocity went beyond the stipulations of the COHA—such as Tiba's demand that the "TNI use their weapons only in their barracks"[128] and GAM negotiator Kamaruzzaman's interpretation of the TNI's relocation as the complete withdrawal of nonorganic forces: "Organic TNI can stay but the nonorganic TNI has to be withdrawn from Aceh because only organic TNI perform a normal function. We cannot start to store weapons if we are not sure that they will withdraw."[129]

Given GAM's distrust of Indonesia, its belief that the TNI was conducting military operations since the signing of the COHA, and its over-

all view that the importance of the peace process lay in what the international community rather than Indonesia could offer, it is not surprising that the disarmament phase never even began. Nor is it surprising that once open conflict broke out again in May 2003, Sofyan Dawod on behalf of the TNA stated that "the Aceh nation answers the call for war in the name of the sacred faith to protect Aceh sovereignty"[130] and Malik Mahmud, on behalf of the exiled leadership said that GAM would go on fighting forever: "We have been fighting Indonesia for 27 years. . . . We are confident that we will be able to resist them. We have to claim back what they have stolen from us. They are the robbers and we have to demand back our property that they have taken—with interest."[131]

GAM's Strategy of Internationalization

The key factor in understanding GAM's attitudes, decisions, and overall position with respect to the negotiations is that GAM saw the peace process as central to its political strategy of internationalization and viewed internationalization as the only way to achieve independence. Thus the dialogue was used to gain international legitimacy and obtain outside support for its struggle. It therefore represented a continuation of efforts during the 1990s to lobby the UN—efforts that included Hasan di Tiro's submissions to the Forty-fourth Session of the UN Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on August 23, 1991, and his submission to the Forty-eighth Session of the Human Rights Commission on January 29, 1992.

From the beginning GAM's participation in the dialogue was motivated less by what GAM could receive from Indonesia than by what it could receive from the international community. GAM displayed little interest in the Indonesian delegation and its position. On occasion it used the dialogue to voice its contempt toward Indonesia on the one hand while courting the international community on the other. In his opening statement at the HDC-facilitated talks in January 2000 in Geneva, for instance, di Tiro stated:

> The establishment of an independent "Indonesia" in 1949 was a perfidy that denied the Acehnese their freedom. . . . This so-called "Indonesia" is a nonsense and Aceh should never have been subjected to the rule of those idiots. . . . At this opportunity, therefore, along with the U.S. Government, we urge the EU communities to condemn the Netherlands for failing to exercise her responsibilities towards

> Acehnese independence. . . . Finally, I respectfully request the U.S. Government and members of the EU to review their policies towards "Indonesia" and to help Aceh gain back its rightful independence. [di Tiro 2000]

According to GAM, the international community has a moral obligation to support Acehnese self-determination because it colluded in the illegal transfer of sovereignty. As di Tiro stated in 1995: "The western colonial powers responsible for setting up 'Indonesia' in the first place, have a moral, political and legal obligation to effect an internationally supervised election" (di Tiro 1995: 7). Not surprisingly, GAM today believes that internationalization of the conflict will ultimately result in an East Timor-like solution. Only the international community—in particular the United States and UN—can put pressure on Jakarta and deliver independence. As GAM negotiator Amni bin Marzuki explained in June 2001, international pressure was crucial in getting Indonesia to the negotiating table and "thanks to international pressure on the Indonesian government they agreed in Geneva to a moratorium on violence and now there is peace through dialogue."[132] When the dialogue process started to stall, GAM press releases appealed for more international involvement: "To end the conflict and continue with the dialogue process, we expect a neutral and human rights concerned country to act as mediator, or HDC to be given more power."[133]

The United States, in particular, captured GAM's imagination. In the same press release GAM stated that it was "very encouraged by the U.S. Senators' statements discouraging [the] military approach by [the] Indonesian government in Aceh."[134] Similarly, Amni bin Marzuki pointed out: "What we need is international support. . . . We can internationalize our cause to reach the U.S. Senate."[135] In February 2002, GAM minister of state Malik Mahmud said that when the Americans ask Jakarta "to do something they have to do it because they depend on the Americans."[136] Hasan di Tiro went even further: "We don't expect to get anything from Indonesia. But we hope to get something from the U.S. and UN. I depend on the UN and the U.S. and EU. . . . We will get everything. I am not interested in the Indonesians—I am not interested in them—absolutely not."[137]

When the "wise men" joined the dialogue process, GAM singled out the American, retired Marine general Anthony Zinni, and Thailand's for-

mer foreign minister, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan. While each of the wise men was participating in a purely personal capacity, GAM's January 2002 press statement makes it clear that this was not GAM's interpretation: "As is well known, General Zinni is President Bush's special mediator for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while Dr. Pitsuwan is former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. The latter's participation was at the special request of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan."[138] In February 2002, di Tiro elaborated further: "Zinni is the representative of the U.S. in these talks. The wise men support Acehnese independence, and the members of the UN will follow."[139]

Not surprisingly, internationalization became the key element of GAM's negotiating strategy.

Not surprisingly, internationalization became the key element of GAM's negotiating strategy. Senior GAM negotiator Sofyan Ibrahim Tiba explained this strategy as follows:

> It is based on three pillars: first the Acehnese people, second the Indonesians, and third the international community. If the Indonesians want to give us our freedom, the conflict is over. But at the moment we have only the first pillar and the third. The second is based on the theory of cancer. If you don't cut it out it will spread. But the majority of the Indonesians don't see it yet. Regarding the third—we give information to the international community about the situation here. The dialogue is part of this, too. Everything needs to be conducted outside of Aceh and Indonesia! If all three elements work, then the struggle for an independent Aceh will be a success. The second pillar is the most difficult. We need to get the Acehnese people to influence the Indonesians and the international community to pressure Jakarta.[140]

For GAM the mere initiation of official negotiations already constituted a victory because negotiations were tantamount to recognition by Jakarta. The fact that the meetings took place outside of Indonesia further provided the movement with domestic and international legitimacy, casting it in the role of the sole legitimate representative of the Acehnese people. Dialogue in Geneva was also a way to raise international awareness and draw in foreign players—underscoring GAM's aim and encouraging the Western world in particular to put pressure on Indonesia. The location of the negotiations in Switzerland, the HDC as facilitator, and the inclusion

of the foreign wise men—all aided GAM's strategy, as did the COHA. The latter, in particular, sanctioned foreign intervention through the international monitors, which Malik Mahmud likened to UN presence on the grounds that "the operation had UN backing because individual governments sending monitors would not support it otherwise."[141] UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's statement welcoming the COHA, the international commitment to resolving the conflict in Aceh peacefully, and the development assistance pledged at the Tokyo conference further underlined GAM's strategy of drawing in the international community.

On the ground, GAM used the space created by the peace zones to tell the Acehnese population not only that independence was imminent but that GAM's aspirations had the backing of the UN. By March GAM's misinformation campaign had reached such heights that the head of OCHA, Michael Elmquist, issued a public statement: "We are deeply concerned to read statements by the spokesperson of GAM implying that GAM is expecting the United Nations to assist them in their quest for independence."[142] Even though Elmquist reiterated that the UN fully supported the territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia, this did not make much of an impression on GAM. In April 2003, when the COHA had already collapsed in all but name, GAM negotiator Amni bin Marzuki reemphasized the importance of the international dimension: "What is important is the international context. Even without the COHA we still have Tokyo. The Thai commander, the Thai army, and the Philippine army all know what happened in Takengon."[143] (This is a reference to the TNI's involvement in the systematic dismantling of the JSC monitoring mechanism.)

After the Tokyo talks collapsed on May 18, the official GAM statement released by Malik Mahmud expressed its "deepest gratitude to the international community . . . for their tireless efforts towards realizing peace in Aceh," condemned "the Indonesian government in the strongest terms for destroying all prospects for peace," and appealed "to the United Nations for its immediate involvement in the resolution of the Aceh conflict and for an international fact-finding mission to be sent to Aceh to investigate the crimes against humanity that have been and are being committed in Aceh."[144]

Conclusion

This paper has shown how GAM was the product of Acehnese alienation

from the central government in Jakarta and the belief that only independence will afford Aceh full cultural and religious freedom as well as economic equality. GAM managed to survive several counterinsurgency operations through its guerrilla strategy, which allowed it to draw on the people for support and benefit from its superior knowledge of the terrain. This strategy was further supported by the safe haven found by the movement's political leadership in Sweden since 1979 and by its operational command structure in Malaysia between 1991 and 1998. After the fall of Suharto, GAM evolved into a mass movement. This was the cumulative and combined result of Jakarta's heavy-handed security approach to Aceh, its failure to develop the province, and its inability to provide accountable and effective governance.

Post-Suharto attempts to resolve the conflict by means other than force created a window of opportunity for negotiations, which GAM embraced in order to broaden its support base and increase its military capacity in Aceh. GAM also saw the peace process as a way to legitimize itself internationally. In fact, GAM's strategy of internationalization clearly illustrates how the dialogue became part and parcel of the insurgents' strategy for liberating Aceh. It also goes a long way toward explaining why GAM did not start with the cantonment of weapons and was not interested in accepting autonomy even if this meant the collapse of the peace process. This, however, is not the only reason for the organization's reluctance to sign an interim agreement. Additional factors include the history of Aceh's relations with Jakarta, characterized by broken promises, and the history of GAM's relations with Indonesia, a zero-sum conflict. That the special autonomy granted Aceh in 2002 has not really been implemented and that security operations continued throughout much of the negotiations only confirmed to GAM that Indonesia has not changed.

In the sense that internationalization rather than compromise was GAM's aim, the movement was successful.

At the same time, GAM saw the peace process going very much in its favor. Its demands for talks outside of Indonesia were fulfilled and the increasing involvement of foreign "advisers" was seen as beneficial to GAM's agenda. And despite the collapse of the peace process, foreign interest in the conflict has remained as well as the commitment to post-conflict reconstruction. In the sense that internationalization rather than

compromise was GAM's aim, the movement was successful. Whether this will lead to ultimate independence, however, is debatable.

Another factor underlining GAM's lack of interest in an interim agreement was the belief that Indonesia is on the verge of collapse. Time is on GAM's side; all the movement needs to do is sit back and wait. And last, but certainly not least, is the dispersed nature of the leadership-in-exile, which further militates against compromise because the issue of Aceh's sovereignty is approached from a position of principle and absolutes as exemplified by Hasan di Tiro's position that the status of Aceh is nonnegotiable. Practical incentives are few and far between. Why should di Tiro, Malik Mahmud, or Zaini Abdullah take the risk of returning to Aceh in order to become mere figureheads in a regional government under a system they fundamentally distrust and deplore? Moreover, the people of Aceh, who could pressure GAM into an agreement, remain as alienated from Jakarta as ever. In fact, the post-Suharto growth of GAM shows that significant sections of Acehnese society, like GAM, believe that Indonesia has nothing of substance to offer. So long as this is the prevailing public mood, GAM has no reason to moderate its position.

Endnotes

This paper draws upon research conducted in Aceh, Jakarta, and Stockholm between March 2001 and October 2003. Some of this material has already been used for earlier publications, most notably Schulze (2003).

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8. Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front (TNA), Military Information Center, press release, January 29, 2003.
9. Ishak Daud interview in *Jakarta Post*, October 9, 2003.
10. Interview with Malik Mahmud, February 22, 2002.
11. Soon after the declaration of martial law in Aceh on May 19, 2003, Amri bin Abdul Wahab surrendered to the Indonesian security forces. TNI claims his surrender was the result of having realized his true loyalty to Indonesia. GAM claims he surrendered because he stole money from GAM and was afraid of the punishment.
12. Interview with Amri bin Abdul Wahab, April 22, 2003.
13. Interview with Malik Mahmud, February 22, 2002.
14. Interview with Sofyan Dawod, April 19, 2003.
15. Ishak Daud interview in *Jakarta Post*, October 9, 2003.

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20. Confidential interview with humanitarian aid worker, June 25, 2001.
21. Confidential interview with humanitarian aid worker, June 29, 2001.
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24. Interview with Amni bin Marzuki, April 18, 2003.
25. Ibid.
26. Data from SGI, Lhokseumawe, August 2002 and April 2003.
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35. Interview with Sofyan Dawod, April 19, 2003.
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38. Interview with Bill Cummings, March 19, 2003.
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Project Information

The Dynamics and Management of Internal Conflicts in Asia
Project Rationale, Purpose and Outline

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Rationale

Internal conflicts have been a prominent feature of the Asian political landscape since 1945. Asia has witnessed numerous civil wars, armed insurgencies, coups d'etat, regional rebellions, and revolutions. Many have been protracted; several have far reaching domestic and international consequences. The civil war in Pakistan led to the break up of that country in 1971; separatist struggles challenge the political and territorial integrity of China, India, Indonesia, Burma, the Philippines, Thailand, and Sri Lanka; political uprisings in Thailand (1973 and 1991), the Philippines (1986), South Korea (1986), Taiwan, Bangladesh (1991), and Indonesia (1998) resulted in dramatic political change in those countries; although the political uprisings in Burma (1988) and China (1989) were suppressed, the political systems in these countries as well as in Vietnam continue to confront problems of political legitimacy that could become acute; and radical Islam poses serious challenges to stability in Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and India. In all, millions of people have been killed in the internal conflicts, and tens of millions have been displaced. And the involvement of external powers in a competitive manner (especially during the Cold War) in several of these conflicts had negative consequences for domestic and regional security.

Internal conflicts in Asia (as elsewhere) can be traced to three issues—national identity, political legitimacy (the title to rule), and distributive justice—that are often interconnected. With the bankruptcy of the socialist model and the transitions to democracy in several countries, the number of internal conflicts over the legitimacy of political system has declined in Asia. However, political legitimacy of certain governments continues to be contested from time to time and the legitimacy of the remaining communist and authoritarian systems are likely to confront challenges in due course. The project deals with internal conflicts arising from the process of

constructing national identity with specific focus on conflicts rooted in the relationship of minority communities to the nation-state. Here too many Asian states have made considerable progress in constructing national communities but several states including some major ones still confront serious problems that have degenerated into violent conflict. By affecting the political and territorial integrity of the state as well as the physical, cultural, economic, and political security of individuals and groups, these conflicts have great potential to affect domestic and international stability.

Purpose

The project investigates the dynamics and management of five key internal conflicts in Asia—Aceh and Papua in Indonesia, the Moro conflict in southern Philippines, and the conflicts pertaining to Tibet and Xinjiang in China. Specifically it investigates the following:

1. Why (on what basis), how (in what form), and when does group differentiation and political consciousness emerge?
2. What are the specific issues of contention in such conflicts? Are these of the instrumental or cognitive type? If both, what is the relationship between them? Have the issues of contention altered over time? Are the conflicts likely to undergo further redefinition?
3. When, why, and under what circumstances can such contentions lead to violent conflict? Under what circumstances have they not led to violent conflict?
4. How can the conflicts be managed, settled, and eventually resolved? What are policy choices? Do options such as national self-determination, autonomy, federalism, electoral design, and consociationalism exhaust the list of choices available to meet the aspirations of minority communities? Are there innovative ways of thinking about identity and sovereignty that can meet the aspirations of the minority communities without creating new sovereign nation-states?
5. What is the role of the regional and international communities in the protection of minority communities?
6. How and when does a policy choice become relevant?

Design

A study group has been organized for each of the five conflicts investigated in the study. With a principal researcher each, the study groups comprise practitioners and scholars from the respective Asian countries includ-

ing the region or province that is the focus of the conflict, the United States, and Australia. For composition of study groups please see the participants list.

All five study-groups met jointly for the first time in Washington, D.C. from September 29 through October 3, 2002. Over a period of four days, participants engaged in intensive discussion of a wide range of issues pertaining to the five conflicts investigated in the project. In addition to identifying key issues for research and publication, the meeting facilitated the development of cross country perspectives and interaction among scholars who had not previously worked together. Based on discussion at the meeting five research monograph length studies (one per conflict) and twenty policy papers (four per conflict) were commissioned.

Study groups met separately for the second meeting. The Aceh and Papua study group meetings were held in Bali on June 16-17, the Southern Philippines study group met in Manila on June 23, and the Tibet and Xinjiang study groups were held in Honolulu from August 20 through 22, 2003. These meetings reviewed recent developments relating to the conflicts, critically reviewed the first drafts of the policy papers prepared for the project, reviewed the book proposals by the principal researchers, and identified new topics for research.

The third meeting of all study groups has been scheduled from February 28 through March 2, 2004 in Washington D.C.

Publications

The project will result in five research monographs (book length studies) and about twenty policy papers.

Research Monographs. To be authored by the principal researchers, these monographs present a book-length study of the key issues pertaining to each of the five conflicts. Subject to satisfactory peer review, the monographs will appear in the East-West Center Washington series *Asian Security, and the East-West Center series Contemporary Issues in the Asia Pacific*, both published by the Stanford University Press.

Policy Papers. The policy papers provide a detailed study of particular aspects of each conflict. Subject to satisfactory peer review, these 10,000 to 25,000-word essays will be published in the EWC Washington *Policy Studies* series, and be circulated widely to key personnel and institutions in the policy and intellectual communities and the media in the respective

Asian countries, United States, and other relevant countries.

Public Forums

To engage the informed public and to disseminate the findings of the project to a wide audience, public forums have been organized in conjunction with study group meetings.

Two public forums were organized in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with the first study group meeting. The first forum, cosponsored by the United States-Indonesia Society, discussed the Aceh and Papua conflicts. The second forum, cosponsored by the United States Institute of Peace, the Asia Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center, and the Sigur Center of the George Washington University, discussed the Tibet and Xinjiang conflicts.

Public forums were also organized in Jakarta and Manila in conjunction with the second study group meetings. The Jakarta public forum on Aceh and Papua, cosponsored by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta, and the Southern Philippines public forum cosponsored by the Policy Center of the Asian Institute of Management, attracted persons from government, media, think tanks, activist groups, diplomatic community and the public.

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Background of the Aceh Conflict

Aceh is the site of one of Asia's longest-running internal conflicts. Since 1976, Indonesian sovereignty over the territory has been contested by an armed insurgency led by the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM). A range of local grievances—especially those concerning allocation of natural resource revenues and human rights abuses—have contributed to the conflict.

Aceh, with an estimated population of about 4.2 million, is Indonesia's westernmost province. Almost all Acehnese are Muslims, and they have a reputation for Islamic piety. Most of the population is employed in agriculture, though Aceh is also rich in natural resources, especially natural gas and oil. ExxonMobil Indonesia, which operates in the Arun gasfields, is a major contributor to national revenues.

Unlike East Timor, which had been a Portuguese colony, but like other parts of Indonesia, Aceh was part of the Dutch East Indies prior to World War II. It came into the Dutch colonial empire relatively late, however. For centuries the Acehnese sultanate had been a powerful Islamic state, reaching its apogee during the seventeenth century. The Dutch launched an assault in 1873, but only managed to subdue the territory (arguably never completely) after three decades of bitter warfare.

Aceh's leaders, many of whom were *ulama* (religious scholars), mostly supported the struggle for Indonesian independence in 1945-49. Many, however, soon became disillusioned with the central government. In 1953 they launched a revolt as part of the Darul Islam (Abode of Islam) movement which joined several regional Islamic rebellions in a struggle to form an Indonesian Islamic state. The rebellion in Aceh was eventually resolved by negotiations leading to the province's nominal recognition as a "special territory."

The current separatist conflict began in 1976 when Hasan di Tiro, a supporter of Darul Islam living in the United States, returned to Aceh to form GAM and make a "redeclaration" of Acehnese independence. Initially the movement was small and Indonesian security forces soon defeated it. In 1989, a more serious outbreak of rebellion by GAM resulted in a brutal counterinsurgency operation claiming several thousand civilian lives.

In late 1998, following the resignation of President Suharto and the collapse of his authoritarian regime, conflict erupted on an even greater

scale. A large student-led protest movement called for a referendum on independence similar to that granted in 1999 for East Timor. The GAM insurgency reemerged—greatly expanding the range of its operations and attacking security forces and other targets. By mid-1999, large parts of the territory were under the movement's control.

The Indonesian government responded with a mix of concessions and military action. Negotiations between the government and GAM produced two cease-fires, in June 2000 and December 2002, although neither held. In 2001, the national parliament passed a Special Autonomy Law giving Aceh considerable authority to manage its own affairs and a greater share of its natural resource revenues. Security operations continued, however, and the death toll in fighting and among civilians was considerable. Eventually, in May 2003, the peace process broke down, a "military emergency" was declared, and security forces launched a large-scale offensive.

● Provincial Capital

● Other Towns

District Boundaries

Note: Simeulue, Sabang, Lhokseumawe, and Langsa all have district status.

Note: Map boundaries and locations are approximate. Geographic features and their names do not imply official endorsement or recognition by the UN.

Policy Studies

A Publication of the East-West Center Washington

Editor: *Dr. Muthiah Alagappa*

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About this Issue

This paper looks at the Aceh conflict since 1976 and more specifically the insurgent Free Aceh Movement—GAM. It aims to provide a detailed ideological and organizational "map" of this organization in order to increase the understanding of its history, motivations, and organizational dynamics. Consequently this paper analyses GAM's ideology, aims, internal structure, recruitment, financing, weapons procurement, and its military capacity. The focus of this study is on the recent past as the fall of Suharto not only allowed the Indonesian government to explore avenues other than force to resolve the Aceh conflict, but also provided GAM with the opportunity to make some changes to its strategy and to transform itself into a genuinely popular movement. It will be argued here that the key to understanding GAM in the post-Suharto era and the movement's decisions, maneuvers and statements during the three years of intermittent dialogue can be found in the exiled leadership's strategy of internationalization. This strategy shows that for GAM the negotiations, above all, were not a way to find common ground with Jakarta but a means to compel the international community to pressure the Indonesian government into ceding independence.

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