

Conflict Resolution In Regional Elections In South Aceh Regency

Jamai Suni¹

¹Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri, Jakarta, Indonesia



Abstract – The implementation of regional elections in Indonesia has experienced various kinds of conflicts and riots. South Aceh is a district that directly celebrates the regional election democracy celebration. In South Aceh Regency, a number of general elections, both legislative and regional head elections, were not free from conflict and violence. The high level of sentiment and division among community members before and after the 2018 regional elections. The handling and anticipation of potential conflicts carried out by the South Aceh Regency regional government in the 2018 regional elections was still not optimal.

This study used a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Data collection was done by field observations, in-depth interviews and literature study. While the informant conducted in a purposive determination. The data is processed and analyzed according to qualitative research stage.

The conflicts that occurred during the post-conflict local elections in South Aceh Regency occurred due to distrust and hostility between different groups in society, incompatible positions and different views on conflict by the parties experiencing the conflict, conflicts that were rooted in basic human needs, both physically, mentally and socially unfulfilled, identity that is threatened, often rooted in the loss of something or suffering in the past that has not been resolved, incompatibility in ways of communicating between different cultures between society and the central government or regional government, as well as problems -problems of injustice, inequality that emerge as social, cultural and economic problems in the community of South Aceh Regency. Therefore, resolution needs to be carried out so that the conflict in South Aceh Regency can be resolved, including through the peace keeping (maintaining peace), peace building (building peace) and peace making (making peace) models. There are new findings that can be made in conflict resolution efforts in South Aceh Regency through the juridical aspect.

Keywords – Conflict Resolution, Regional Head Election.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in Indonesia are a critical element in the practice of democracy at the local level, where regional leaders are elected to advance development and public welfare. Since the post-independence era to early 21st-century legislative reforms, Pilkada has undergone significant evolution, particularly since the enactment of Law No. 32 of 2004 on Regional Government. This law changed the mechanism of electing regional heads from being elected by the Regional Representative Council (DPRD) to direct election by the people, giving a more direct and strong voice to the community in the political process.

Simultaneous Pilkada, planned in several stages until national implementation in 2027, is an effort to synchronize elections in various regions within a single period. This aims to improve efficiency and reduce political costs. However, the implementation of simultaneous Pilkada is not without challenges, including socio-political conflicts arising from competition among political elites and candidate supporters. Pilkada as a distribution of power for public benefit becomes a vital aspect in ensuring the principles of democracy in a constitutional state. Various problems often encountered in the organization of Pilkada result in delays in realizing a democratic election. These problems include money politics, black campaigns, professionalism and netralities of Pilkada organizers, politicization of bureaucracy, the quality and capabilities of Pilkada participants from political parties or individuals, public participation, and horizontal conflicts.

In the context of South Aceh, Pilkada is not only a democratic arena but also a reflection of more complex socio-political dynamics. The 2018 Pilkada in South Aceh, participated by seven pairs of candidates, the pairs in the election were: Tenku Husen Yusuf S.Pd.I – DR Mustafa, M.Si.; H Azwir, S.Sos. – Tgk. Amran; Drs. Zulkarnaini, M.Si. – M. Jasa; Darman, S.P, MM – Baital Makmur, S.E; HT Sama Indra, S.H – Drs. H. Harmaini, M.Si.; H. Mirwan, M.S, S.E – Zirhan, S.P.; and H. Karman BA, S.E – Afdhal Yasin. The election was won by the pair numbered 2, Azwir and Tengku Amran, who received 46,667 votes, or 35.85% of the votes.¹ Pilkada in Aceh South Regency demonstrated a low voter turnout and significant political rivalry. This scenario reflects the lack of enthusiasm among voters in South Aceh, many of whom are organized by candidates or their success teams, despite some showing personal initiative to support their preferred candidates. This contrastingly low voter participation, despite the presence of four independent candidate pairs, signifies a growing interest among South Aceh's community to participate in Pilkada. Apart from low voter participation, political conflicts in South Aceh also stem from the region's long history of conflict. This situation is exacerbated by acts of violence, such as shootings and arson of party posts, reflecting deep socio-political tensions. These conflicts are often related to polarization among supporters of various candidates and between the community and government institutions.²

The role of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in Aceh's politics post-Helsinki MoU is also significant. After the peace agreement, competition among former GAM elites in the context of the 2012 gubernatorial and vice-gubernatorial elections showed that the transition from armed conflict to democratic politics is not a smooth process. The formation of local political parties as a result of political compromise marks an effort to strengthen peace and development in Aceh.

In general, Pilkada in Indonesia is often hindered by issues such as money politics, black campaigns, and bureaucratization. Conflicts within Pilkada often stem from social injustice, poverty, and ethnic or religious differences. Conflict resolution in this context requires a comprehensive and context-sensitive approach.

Previous studies relevant to conflict resolution in regional head elections highlight various approaches and strategies in facing and resolving conflicts. Ikhsan Darmawan, in his study, focused on the Pilkada of Yogyakarta City and Jepara Regency, using conciliation and arbitration methods to resolve disputes between political parties and the Election Commission as well as internal conflicts among political parties. Meanwhile, Sahadi Humaedi and colleagues studied the Pilkada of Cimahi City, identifying conflicts mainly arising from administrative violations but not escalating into open conflicts due to high legal awareness. Bambang Wahyudi's research offers a broader perspective by exploring conflict transformation in Aceh post-Helsinki MoU, recommending integration between peacebuilding and conflict transformation across various sectors such as economy, education, and politics. Mohammad Najib, in his study, emphasizes the crucial role of religion in resolving Pilkada conflicts in Indonesia, underlining the importance of religion-based political education, conflict intervention, and social monitoring. These studies provide a deeper understanding of the complexity and diversity of strategies in handling local political conflicts, particularly in conflict-prone areas like South Aceh.

Research on Pilkada in South Aceh focuses on identifying and analyzing unresolved conflict resolutions and finding solutions to these issues. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how political conflicts arise and how they can be resolved in ways that strengthen democracy and social justice. The limitation of this research involves examining conflict resolution patterns, principles used, and their impact on the community in the organization of Pilkada, hoping to contribute to more effective and inclusive democratic practices in Indonesia.

II. RESEARCH QUESTION

The central question this research addresses is: How can conflict resolution strategies be optimized during the Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in South Aceh to effectively address the challenges of life-threatening conflicts, high community sentiment and division, intervention by the Free Aceh Movement in political contests, suboptimal government responses, and low political participation by the community?

¹ Taufik Zass, "Hasil Pleno KIP Aceh Selatan, Pasangan AZAM Unggul Dengan Perolehan 46.667 Suara," *Aceh.Tribunnews.Com*, last modified 2018, accessed June 20, 2022, <https://aceh.tribunnews.com/2018/07/04/hasil-pleno-kip-aceh-selatan-pasangan-azam-unggul-dengan-perolehan-46667-suara>.

² BBC News, "Penembakan Di Aceh Diduga Terkait 'Politik,'" *Bbc.Com*, last modified 2014, accessed June 20, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2014/03/140303_penembakan_caleg_aceh.

This question aims to explore effective strategies for conflict resolution in the context of South Aceh's regional elections, focusing on understanding the root causes of conflicts, the principles and patterns used in resolving these conflicts, and the impact of these resolutions on the community and the election process.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is a way to determine the scientific level of research results and aims to strengthen existing truths while understanding phenomena or events in society. This aligns with Moh. Nazir's view that research is a systematic process over a long period using scientific methods and applicable rules. Implementing scientific methodology in research requires a design or model appropriate to the depth and breadth of the study.

In this study, the qualitative research method is used. Qualitative research aims to present the social world and perspectives within it in terms of concepts, behaviors, perceptions, and human issues.³ It involves deep and thorough understanding (*verstehen*), often using participant-observation where the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection. Qualitative research, also known as case study research, emphasizes natural or interpretive inquiry, acknowledging the emergence of multiple truths in data. The qualitative approach emphasizes epistemological methods for reformulating and reconceptualizing development planning, aiming for prosperous village societies within the framework of regional autonomy.

The descriptive approach is also used, which investigates the status of human groups, objects, conditions, thought systems, or events. The conceptual framework of the study considers political science and the various factors causing conflicts according to Fisher et al., including public relations, negotiation principles, human needs, identity, intercultural misunderstandings, and social transformation.⁴ Galtung's three conflict resolution models—peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and peacemaking—are also explored.

Research informants included individuals, institutions, or groups directly involved with the regional elections in South Aceh. Sample selection is based on purposive sampling, which is based on various considerations such as authority, involvement in regional elections, and expertise in relevant fields.⁵ The data required for this study include primary sources from informants and secondary sources such as books, documents, and other reliable sources of information.

Data collection techniques include non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The analysis follows Miles and Huberman's model of data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Validity is tested through source triangulation, comparing and checking the credibility of information obtained through different methods in qualitative research.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The history of governance in Aceh has been characterized by various conflicts between Aceh and the Central Government, influencing the social dynamics in Acehnese society. These conflicts stem from differences in political and religious views, leading to the formation of distinct groups. Since the era of Sultan Iskandar Muda, Aceh has associated religion with patriotism, territorial expansion, and control over important ports. The internal conflict between the *uleebalang* (traditional leaders) and the *mukim* (religious scholar groups) originated from differences in customs and Islamic law.

Post-Indonesian independence, Aceh faced tensions between nationalist, secular, and Islamic factions. Daud Beureuh, an Acehnese leader, initially supported Indonesian independence but later demanded the implementation of Islamic Sharia and governmental autonomy in Aceh. The DI/TII (Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia) rebellion in Aceh ceased in 1959, granting Aceh the status of a Special Region with autonomy in customs, religion, and education. The conflict between Aceh and the central government is complex, encompassing economic and political aspects. The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) emerged as a continuation of DI/TII in Aceh, demanding Aceh's independence from Indonesia. Hasan Tiro, the founder of GAM, advocated for

³ Mohammad Nazir, *Metode Penelitian* (Jakarta: Ghalia Indonesia, 2011).

⁴ Fisher, Simon. et al. *Mengelola Konflik; keterampilan & strategi untuk bertindak*, Cetakan Pertama, Alih Bahasa S.N.Kartikasari,dkk. The British Council, Indonesia, Jakarta. 2001. 8-9.

⁵ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2011).

Aceh's agenda in international forums, including the UN. Led by Hasan Tiro, GAM did not adopt an Islamic ideology but emphasized Aceh's political identity.⁶

The vertical conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Republic of Indonesia (RI) occurred in three stages: 1976-1979, 1989-1998, and 1999-2005. In the first stage, GAM was limited to the local elite in Pidie. In the second stage, the central government responded with a repressive approach, sending a large military force to Aceh. The third stage was marked by the resurgence of GAM and the military response from the central government. This conflict led to socio-economic changes, with people switching professions and living under military surveillance. The Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), interpreted into the Aceh Government Law (UUPA), was intended as a long-term peace solution, but some of its contents did not align with the Helsinki MoU. Ten years post-Helsinki MoU, Aceh still faced conflicts between GAM and the Indonesian Government.

An interview with Mr. Kamarsyah, the Deputy Regent of South Aceh from 2013-2018, revealed that the conflict in Aceh did not just occur in 1976 but had existed since the 1950s. The solution to this conflict requires time and patience. The Helsinki MoU, which includes various agreements such as the establishment of the Wali Nanggroe Institution and the recognition of Aceh's special rights, was hoped to be a step towards positive peace in Aceh. However, the conflict in Aceh has shifted from vertical to horizontal, indicating that the Helsinki MoU has not fully succeeded in creating sustainable positive peace in Aceh. The Helsinki MoU did not impact the formation of sustainable positive peace in Aceh, as its interpretation into UUPA has reduced Aceh's authority to self-govern autonomously and reaffirmed the Indonesian Government's dominance over Aceh.⁷

Optimizing Conflict Handling in South Aceh District Elections

The Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in South Aceh are an essential process in the implementation of democracy at the local level. Pilkada allows the people to directly elect their regional head and deputy, playing a crucial role in decision-making and influencing the pace of governance. Government Regulation No. 6 of 2005 emphasizes that the election of regional heads is an implementation of people's sovereignty, based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. This process is a significant step in deepening democracy, involving the participation of civil society, politics, and bureaucracy.⁸

The General Election Commission (KPU) and the Independent Election Commission (KIP) in Aceh are responsible for conducting elections. They coordinate, organize, control, and monitor all stages of the election process, including updating voter data and handling election violations or disputes. KPU/KIP also plays a role in socializing the election process to the public and determining the election participants.

The 2018 South Aceh regional election garnered special attention. Incumbent Regent Teuku Sama Indra ran alongside Harmaini, while incumbent Deputy Regent Kamarsyah did not run. Seven pairs of candidates participated. The pair H Azwir-Tgk. Amran won the election with the most votes. However, this election process had allegations of fraud and problems, including vote-buying and invalid voter data.

The conflicts that emerged in this election reflect frictions between supporters of the candidates. The high public participation demonstrates the importance of the regional election in the democratic process. However, such conflicts need to be well-managed to avoid disturbing the integrity of the electoral process.

The background of the conflicts in the South Aceh regional election aligns with what was described by Simon Fisher (2001), who outlined theories of the causes of conflicts in society. Based on the theories presented by Simon Fisher, the following can be summarized:

A. The Dimension of Community Relations Theory

Simon Fisher outlines a theory of societal conflict emphasizing polarization, distrust, and hostility among groups in society. The conflict in Aceh, which has been ongoing since the 17th century, reflects similar dynamics. This conflict is not just between

⁶ Isma Sawitri, Amran Zamzami, dkk., (Panitia Peduli Aceh), Simak dan Selamatkan Aceh, (Jakarta: PT Bina Rena Perwira, 1998), h. 15.

⁷ Suadi Zainal, Transformasi Konflik Aceh dan Relasi SosialPolitik di Era Desentralisasi, MASYARAKAT: Jurnal Sosiologi, Vol. 21, No. 1, Januari 2016:81-108.

⁸ Siti Zuhro, 2012, Memahami Demokrasi Lokal: Pilkada, Tantangan Dan Prospeknya, Jurnal Pemilu dan Demokrasi, hal. 31

the central government and the Aceh region, but also among groups within Aceh, including between Islamic and secular factions, each with differing views on governance. This conflict has manifested in various forms, including civil war.⁹

Aceh's history records significant internal struggles, like the *Cumbok* war, a conflict between the *uleebalang* (traditional leaders) and religious scholars, marking the end of *uleebalang* feudalism in Aceh. These conflicts continued into the era of Indonesian independence, with debates over Aceh's decision to join Indonesia, highlighting tensions among different factions in Acehnese society.

According to Khairunis Absyir, the Chairperson of the South Aceh Independent Election Commission (KIP), the conflict in South Aceh is not driven by community struggle but rather by political interests. This indicates that although the people of South Aceh desire peace, political friction and community participation in the political process remain primary sources of conflict. In conclusion, the conflict in Aceh has deep historical roots and continues to be influential to this day, especially in the context of local politics and regional head elections.

B. Dimensions of Negotiation Theory Principles

According to the principle negotiation theory presented by Simon Fisher, conflicts arise due to misaligned positions and differing views on the conflict among the involved parties. The conflicts that occurred both before and after the regional elections in South Aceh can be attributed to differences in perspectives and interests among individuals, community leaders, or fighters in South Aceh, leading them to align with local parties that match their hopes.

This is evident from the involvement of several key fighters in parties participating in the democratic process in South Aceh. Additionally, the long history of conflict in Aceh has been shaped by two prominent streams of thought: those based on religion (Islam) and those that are secular or non-religious. These differences have led to societal divisions along ideological lines. From a post-independence political perspective, significant forces emerged, namely religious scholars associated with PUSA and the *ulebalang* (traditional leaders). These contrasts inevitably led to conflicts in Aceh.¹⁰

Therefore, these differing viewpoints will always be at the root of conflict issues in every area of Aceh, including South Aceh. This situation will continue unless the community becomes aware or is made aware that there are greater goals to strive for, such as welfare and equal opportunities for welfare advancement for the progress of the South Aceh community.

C. The Dimension of Human Needs Theory

In this dimension, Fisher explains that conflicts arising in society are caused by the struggle for basic human needs, such as unmet physical, mental, and social needs in the competition. Regional elections (Pilkada) are a form of implementing democracy in an area to determine local leaders who align with the hopes and aspirations of the community.

However, in reality, regional elections in certain areas have become a means for people to secure their needs. This can lead to conflicts, both among individuals and among groups in society, as they strive to meet their needs.

D. Dimensions of Identity Theory

Aceh Province, with a population of approximately 4.4 million, is a province of Indonesia known for its relatively abundant natural resources, especially petroleum and natural gas. This province was recognized as a region where the Dutch never had full control during the colonial period. Rebellions led by religious scholars helped the area maintain its identity (During the colonial era, the independence struggle was led by figures from the religious scholars, such as Teuku Cik Di Tiro and Daud Beureuh).¹¹

Historical elements have significantly influenced the formation of Aceh's identity. The first historical element refers to the golden age under Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636) and Sultan Iskandar Thani (1636-1641), where the premodern Sultanate expanded its power beyond the Strait of Malacca and established significant economic and political relations with other kingdoms in China, India, and the Middle East. The second historical element is the collection of sufferings from foreign intrusions,

⁹ Hany Nurpratiwi, *Dinamika Konflik Dan Perdamaian Aceh*, Jambura History and Culture Journal, Vol. 1 Issue 2, Julis 2019, ISSN: 2654-6388.

¹⁰ Ibid. Hany Nurpratiwi

¹¹ Hadiwinata, Bob Sugeng, dkk. 2010. *TRANSFORMASI GERAKAN ACEH MERDEKA*, Dari Kotak Peluru ke Kotak Suara, Sebuah Kisah Sukses Program Transformasi Kombatan di Aceh, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

especially during the Dutch occupation in the 18th century. Stories of heroic struggles by leaders such as Teuku Cik Di Tiro, Teuku Umar, and Cut Nyak Dien have been passed down to subsequent generations. For many youths in the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), these stories justified their resistance against foreign forces, especially the "Javanese colonizers." Tiro was notably successful in igniting hatred against foreign intruders who plundered Aceh's wealth.

This history gave rise to separatist conflicts and the emergence of GAM as an effort to oppose the government, as a form of disappointment with the government's treatment. The emergence of GAM aligns with Simon Fisher's theory in identity conflict, suggesting that conflicts are more often caused by threatened identities or stem from unresolved past losses and sufferings.

E. The Dimension of Intercultural Misunderstanding Theory

According to Simon Fisher, conflicts are caused by mismatches in communication methods across different cultures. Based on the author's observations, the underlying causes of conflicts in Aceh in general are miscommunications between groups within Aceh itself and between the people of Aceh and the central government, as represented by Acehnese leaders (Government of Aceh). This has led to disappointment resulting in separatist movements and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM).

This also applies to the conflicts in the 2018 South Aceh regional election. The conflict arose from misunderstandings related to communication between supporters of the election candidates in South Aceh in 2018. Additionally, there was dissatisfaction with decisions made by the Independent Election Commission (KIP) of South Aceh in 2018.

F. The Dimension of Social Transformation Theory

In the process of conducting the regional election in South Aceh, there were identified instances of fraud and problems during the election process. The suspected election fraud in South Aceh included: First, the mobilization of military and police/BRIMOB forces to South Aceh approximately two weeks before the vote. Second, attempts at intimidation, slander, and insults directed at the petitioners, their supporters, and sympathizers. Third, the involvement of many people in distributing money (money politics) with the intention of gaining community support.

Moreover, another issue was the inaccuracy of voter data before the 2018 election, which seemed unresolved by the Ministry of Home Affairs in cooperation with the General Election Commission. The demand for accurate voter data validation in the elections of South Aceh, Sawalunto City, and Tabalong Regency was a form of pressure on election organizers and related stakeholders to prepare as well as possible for the election, prioritizing independence and professionalism.

This aligns with Simon Fisher's explanation that conflicts are caused by the presence of inequality and injustice in social, economic, political, and cultural life.

Conflict Resolution in South Aceh District Elections

The 2018 South Aceh election faced conflict due to conflicts of interest and mismatches between expectations and reality, triggering a mobilization of conflict opinions. Since the 17th century, Aceh has experienced prolonged conflicts, including civil wars between Islamic and secular groups. These conflicts, including the shooting of Faisal, a PNA candidate, in 2014 marked continuing political tensions.¹²

The 2008 and 2013 South Aceh regional elections conflicts involved tensions between groups of fighters and candidates, often leading to political arrogance. Community involvement in politics, although aimed at peace, often became a source of conflict.

The government plays a crucial role in addressing these conflicts. With functions in service, development, and empowerment, the government strives to create a prosperous and independent society. The evolution of the government system in Aceh, from the era of independence to the status of a Special Region, demonstrates an evolution in handling conflicts and injustices.

Conflict resolution in South Aceh involves various strategies, including multi-layered security and socialization of peaceful election slogans. The government and related agencies collaborate to prevent conflict escalation, maintaining stability and unity.

¹² <https://www.ajnn.net/news/kronologis-penembakan-caleg-pna-di-aceh-selatan/index.html>.

The conflict in South Aceh results from historical and political tensions, requiring a comprehensive approach that includes peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and peacemaking, as per Johan Galtung's theory. Galtung offers three models of conflict resolution: peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and peacemaking. The peacekeeping model, which involves security and military forces, needs to be applied to mitigate conflict and prevent its spread to other groups. Peacebuilding is a strategy or effort that attempts to restore the destructive state caused by violence in conflicts by building bridges of communication between the conflicting parties. Peacebuilding emphasizes the quality of interaction rather than quantity. Peacemaking is the effort of negotiation between groups with differing interests.¹³ Two methods can be chosen at the negotiation stage, namely through Violence and Law or conventional approaches. The conflict resolution delivered by Galtung is more suitable for conflict conditions that occurred in the regional elections in South Aceh Regency.

Peacemaking Model in South Aceh Regional Election Conflict

Peacemaking, as explained by Johan Galtung, is a constructive conflict resolution approach involving reconciliation between disputing parties. This approach emphasizes the process of exchange and mutual respect for values among the parties involved in the conflict. When direct negotiations between the conflicting parties fail to resolve the conflict, the role of a neutral third party becomes crucial. This third party's role is to help overcome misunderstandings and guide both sides towards a quicker resolution, while maintaining sovereignty and autonomy.

In the context of the 2018 South Aceh regional election, although there were conflicts, there was no significant escalation, and conflicts were successfully resolved within the legal framework. This peaceful condition can be attributed to the important role of candidates and their instructions to supporters to act persuasively and not emotionally, creating healthy competition and a conducive situation. Conflict management in South Aceh was largely due to the significant involvement of former combatants as candidates, demonstrating their integration and role in society. This involvement helped create a more conducive atmosphere for the election, reducing the likelihood of major conflicts and positively impacting community political participation.

To further ensure peace and security during the election, various initiatives were undertaken. One such initiative was a coffee morning organized by the local police, attended by officials, candidates, and other stakeholders. This meeting aimed to build communication and emphasize the importance of maintaining peace and security throughout the election process.

This event emphasized the need for candidates to maintain peace, the distribution of support among communities, and the commitment of security forces to ensure a conducive environment. It also highlighted the role of individuals in maintaining security and the neutrality of security forces in the election process.

These efforts align with the conflict resolution strategies of Cai and Fink (2002), which include integration, understanding, domination, avoidance, and compromise styles. These strategies range from open communication and joint problem-solving to avoiding confrontation and seeking mutually acceptable outcomes.

Through this peacemaking approach, the 2018 South Aceh election was marked by a peaceful democratic process. The involvement of the government, security apparatus, election organizers, and the community played a crucial role in ensuring a peaceful election, demonstrating effective conflict management and resolution.

Peacekeeping Model in South Aceh District Election Conflict

Peacekeeping, according to Johan Galtung, is an approach in conflict resolution that aims to separate conflicting parties. This is done by establishing boundaries to prevent direct contact between the conflicting parties, thus avoiding conflicts that lead to violence. Galtung also emphasizes the importance of a long-term process in resolving conflicts, changing contradictory assumptions, and strengthening elements that connect the disputing parties to achieve positive peace. This effort involves a third party that plays a role in ensuring that peacemaking efforts proceed effectively, with the aim of "maintaining peace," which means

¹³ Johan Galtung, Peace, war and defense: essay in peace research; vol 2, Ejlers, Copenhagen, 1976.

preserving the absence of direct violence. This method provides time for peacemaking and peacebuilding to occur parallel to peacekeeping.¹⁴

In the 2018 South Aceh regional election, the election proceeded smoothly and peacefully, without any significant conflict escalation. The conflicts that did occur were successfully handled by the government and relevant parties through legal means. This success was partly due to intensive socialization with the community, especially in areas considered prone to conflict. One crucial effort was the dissemination of information and guidance by government and security officials, along with the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), to create a cool and peaceful atmosphere during the election.

Conflicts leading up to the regional election, such as the burning of flags and the targeting of some party members by local parties, were successfully mitigated by the government and related parties through mediation and socialization. These preventive actions demonstrate the importance of preventing larger and more widespread conflicts.

The government and community efforts in promoting the peaceful election slogan of 2018 also played a significant role. This slogan was spread through religious leaders, traditional leaders, the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), academics, NGOs, mass media, and election candidates, aiming to create a peaceful atmosphere in the election. The Acehnese community, which integrates religion and customs into their behavior, tends to respect and respond positively to peace calls from these figures. The efforts of the government and security forces in managing the 2018 South Aceh regional election are commendable for successfully suppressing conflict. According to Fisher, conflict is an unavoidable reality of life that occurs when community goals are not aligned. However, conflicts can be resolved without violence and result in a better situation for all parties. Peacekeeping involves monitoring and enforcing agreements and legalizing violence if necessary. It involves overseeing the respect of agreements by previously conflicting parties and the implementation of agreed-upon self-development activities.

The 2018 South Aceh regional election demonstrates that with the right approach, conflicts can be managed and directed towards peace. Through cooperation between the government, security forces, election organizers, and the community, a peaceful atmosphere was created, allowing for a fair and safe election. The peacekeeping approach, as described by Galtung, proved effective in this context, promoting the constructive resolution of conflicts and preventing violence.

Peace Making Model

Peacebuilding is the process of implementing changes or reconstructing social, political, and economic systems to achieve lasting peace. Through the peacebuilding process, it is hoped that negative peace (the absence of violence) will transform into positive peace, where society experiences social justice, economic welfare, and effective political representation. Galtung states in this concept that negative peace achieves peace through physical violence, but only positive peace can achieve true peace and peacebuilding. As he expressed:

“The mechanism that peace is based on should be built into the structure and be present there as reservoir for the system itself to draw upon. But it is structure, a frequent and likely one; and the power monopoly the big power may undoubtedly serve to reduce, even eliminate intra-bloc wars. Likewise, indicates a growing understanding of the various forms of people-to-people contact, their impact, their possibilities, and their limitations. Attempts are made to reconcile the tensions between structural and social-psychological approaches, and similarly, the contradictions between conflict resolution and social justice. Finally, directions for future research that address the impact, the effectiveness, and the possibilities for creating an infrastructure for a sustainable just peace.”¹⁵

Galtung explains that peacebuilding achieves positive peace by creating structures and institutions of peace based on justice, equality, and cooperation, thereby permanently addressing the underlying causes of conflict and preventing them from resorting to violence. John Galtung also states that peacebuilding is a process of peace formation that focuses on the practical implementation of peaceful social change through political, social, and economic reconstruction and development.

In the process of conducting the 2018 South Aceh regional election, with a peacebuilding approach, based on field research results. With the occurrence of small-scale conflicts that did not escalate to threaten security or disrupt the conduct of the

¹⁴ Johan Galtung dalam Hugh Miall, et al. Resolusi damai konflik kontemporer: menyelesaikan, mencegah, melola dan mengubah konflik bersumber politik, sosial, agama dan ras, Rajawali Press, Jakarta, 2002,

¹⁵ Johan Galtung, Peace, war and defense: essay in peace research; vol 2, Ejlers, Copenhagen, 1976. hal. 283

regional election in South Aceh, and proceeded in a conducive, safe, and smooth manner. This was possible due to the efforts made by various parties to conduct a safe and peaceful election.

Certainly, achieving this is not easy. Peacebuilding is a strategy or effort that attempts to restore the destructive state caused by violence in conflicts by building bridges of communication between the conflicting parties. Peacebuilding emphasizes the quality of interaction rather than quantity. Five essential aspects to consider in peacebuilding stages are:

- a. Interactions occur between parties with equal status.
- b. A supportive social environment.
- c. The communication involved is intimate (not casual).
- d. Both parties should be pleased with the communication process.
- e. There is a common goal to be achieved.

All five of these aspects were successfully implemented by the government, security apparatus, election organizers, and the community. In the 2018 South Aceh regional election, potential conflict-prone areas across the 18 districts were minimized, ensuring that conflicts did not disrupt stability in these districts.

The lack of significant impact from conflicts during the 2018 South Aceh regional election allows the conclusion that the successful conduct of the election was a result of efforts by the government, security forces, election organizers, and the community to create a safe and peaceful electoral process.

There are concerns about the resurgence of conflict in Aceh, partly due to unmet expectations among former fighters regarding promised land rights, as stipulated in the MoU. The current situation among these fighters is self-enrichment, which could potentially lead to social and economic jealousy, reigniting conflict. The central government's actions towards the former GAM (Free Aceh Movement) should accommodate their expectations, particularly the GAM leaders, through appropriate policies that offer a win-win solution to prevent the re-emergence of larger conflicts. This clearly requires a long time. Additionally, when considering the characteristics of the Acehnese, there are several other behaviors inherent in their personality that shape their character. Among these characteristics/traits are:

a. Love for Peace

Fundamentally, the Aceh community is peace-loving, as advised by the Islamic religion they follow. This spirit of peace is explicitly expressed through greetings of "assalamualaikum" when an Acehnese meets friends or even strangers. When an Acehnese man or woman meets an old friend, a rarely seen relative, or respected individuals, they follow the greeting with a handshake. Likewise, when visiting someone's house, even if it's a relative's or a friend's, they greet the occupants with "assalamualaikum" before entering. If the greeting isn't answered after three attempts, it means the occupants are either away or resting, and the visitor will leave to avoid slander.

b. *Tueng Bila*

The peace-loving spirit in the Acehnese leads them to detest any form of betrayal or hostility. Thus, the Acehnese recognize only loyal friends who share feelings and sufferings, not those who are fair-weather friends or backstabbers. For such friends, an Acehnese is willing to sacrifice anything, even their dignity or life. In Acehnese view, defeat or exclusion from society is highly negative and shameful. If an Acehnese feels defeated or ostracized, they would leave their village and settle in a new community where they are unknown, to regain respect.

c. Generosity

A notable characteristic generally found in the Aceh community is generosity. This trait is easily identifiable in their daily life and deeply ingrained in their culture, as expressed in the saying: "In social life, Acehnese do not overly consider material gain to build harmonious social interactions with others, both within and outside their community."

d. Honoring Guests

Honoring guests is a fundamental attitude of the Aceh community. This is evident in how they treat guests. Whenever there is a visitor, the host offers drinks, and if the visit coincides with mealtime, the guest is 'forced' to join. For long-staying guests, hosts strive to serve better food. If they have livestock like chickens or ducks, they'll slaughter one or two for the meal. Those without livestock might buy appropriate food, sometimes even on credit.

e. Respecting Elders and Seniors

The Aceh people generally show great respect and obedience to elders, including teachers, especially religious teachers (teungku beut). Respect and love for parents are instilled in various ways and socialized through wisdom and advice for children to act according to their parents' values.

f. Love for Virtue (Concept of Right-Left)

The Acehnese believe that goodness in the afterlife is earned by good deeds in this world. There are only two paths in the afterlife: the right path for the virtuous and the left for the wicked. Even at the moment of judgment (yaumul hisab), people are divided into two groups: those receiving their record with the right hand (ashabul yamin) and the left hand (ashabul syimal), representing goodness and evil.

g. *Manok Agam Saboh* Trait

Besides positive traits, the Aceh community also has negative characteristics, like egocentrism. In Acehnese terminology, this trait is often referred to as "*manok agam saboh*" (a lone rooster in a community, always maintaining its existence and not allowing another rooster to rise). Socially, this is evident when an Acehnese attains a certain status, keen on preserving it and not allowing others to challenge their 'seat.' In such positions, they only network upwards and don't foster lower-level leadership, tending to be status quo and not transformative.

h. Prone to Suspicion

Another common trait among many Acehnese is being suspicious of others or new things. The roots of this trait can be traced to the complex central-regional relations, particularly between Aceh and Jakarta, which have not always been harmonious. The collective memory of the Acehnese is filled with instances of Jakarta's betrayals, like President Soekarno's unfulfilled promises to Aceh during his 1948 visit. He asked for Aceh's active role against the Dutch, promising self-governance under Islamic law post-independence, a promise never fulfilled, even abolishing Aceh's autonomy.

Considering the above matters as a form of local wisdom that requires attention from both the central and local governments, the process of resolution through peacebuilding is expected to proceed accordingly. This research aligns with Galtung's views that the peacebuilding process is a long-term endeavor involving identifying and resolving the root causes of conflict, transforming contradictory assumptions, and strengthening elements that integrate conflicting parties into a new peaceful formation for lasting positive peace. The length of time required for peacebuilding implementation often depends on the community's objectives. This is reinforced by Fisher (2001:126-138), who states that post-conflict development must be comprehensive, impacting all aspects of post-conflict reconstruction, which should focus on physical, social, and psychological aspects. Physically, damages caused by conflict need to be repaired first, followed by psychological reconstruction within individuals affected by the conflict. Fisher (2001:132) also highlights three essential elements to consider when rebuilding a community suffering from conflict violence: truth, mercy, and justice. Fisher believes that by balancing these elements, reconciliation can be pursued, forming the foundation for peacebuilding.

The government's efforts to date also align with Ball's (2001:723) suggestions for implementing peacebuilding in community life, including:

- a. ensuring adequate security levels for the community;
- b. strengthening government capacity to perform its fundamental tasks in providing security and welfare for its citizens;

- c. assisting in physical and psychological recovery;
- d. supporting household economic growth to avoid societal disparities;
- e. aiding community recovery through social and economic infrastructure rehabilitation projects;
- f. rehabilitating vital infrastructure to revive the economy and essential state facilities;
- g. clearing landmines from major transportation routes, densely populated areas, and other critical places;
- h. stabilizing the national currency and rehabilitating financial institutions;
- i. encouraging national reconciliation;
- j. prioritizing communities and regions affected by conflict. Another crucial point is the active role of the community, especially those involved in conflicts, to achieve lasting peace.

The peaceful election in South Aceh in 2018 was facilitated by the role of various parties involved in the event. The government executed its function through policies issued by the Election Commission (KIP) related to the conduct of the 2018 regional election. The peaceful election campaign slogan, involving various community leaders from traditional, religious, academic, NGO, mass media circles, and the candidates themselves, succeeded in creating a well-ordered, safe, peaceful, and smooth election, as hoped.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted regarding the South Aceh regional election in 2018, it can be concluded that socio-political conflicts remain a significant issue in the election process in South Aceh. These conflicts are caused by several factors, such as mistrust and hostility between groups in society, differing views on conflict, unmet basic needs, threats to identity, and difficulties in intercultural communication.

Issues of injustice and inequality also emerged as social, cultural, and economic problems in South Aceh. To address these conflicts, three models of conflict resolution can be implemented: peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and peacemaking. Each model plays a different role in mitigating conflict and building peace.

The conflict resolution recommended by Galtung is suitable for the situation in the South Aceh election. Additionally, based on field findings, several recommendations have been proposed to the government to prevent conflict in Aceh. First, there is a need to realize the unmet rights as stipulated in the peace MoU, through policy implementation by the central and local governments. Second, continuous peace education should be conducted for all communities in Aceh, especially in remote areas, to enhance their understanding of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Third, various community leaders, including religious scholars, traditional leaders, NGOs, mass media, academics, and former combatants, should be involved in a joint effort to create peace and security, aiming to create conducive conditions and promote progress for Aceh.

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