Limits of Imagined Community. The Role of Internal and External Factors in Shaping Acehnese Nationalism

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Summary

Acehnese nationalism is a unique phenomenon. Despite the piety of the region, it is expressed in secular terms. The religion is an important part of Acehnese identity, but the modern Acehnese nationalism was based on ideas of the right to self-determination and sovereignty. For this reason, the thesis argue that the process of imaging a nation by the Acehnese was strengthen by the internal (domestic, within Indonesia) and external (international) factors influencing on-going conflict. The analysis of Acehnese nationalism is done using two methods. First, Benedict Anderson theory of imagined communities explains and defines what is Acehnese nationalism and nation. Secondly, this analysis is supported by an additional examination of internal and external dimension, what clarifies the process of shaping Acehnese nationalism. Moreover, the thesis formulates arguments on sub-state and separatist nationalism.

Key words

Aceh, the Acehnese, Acehnese nationalism, GAM, Indonesia, imagined community, religion, nationalism

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Contents

List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASNLF	Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
CoHa	Cessation of Hostilities Agreement
DOM	*Daerah Operasi Militer*; Military Operation Zone
GAM	*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*; Free Aceh Movement
HDC	Henri Dunat Centre
LOGA	the Law on Governing of Aceh
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MUI	*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*; Indonesian Ulama Council
NAD	*Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam*; State of Aceh, Abode of Peace
PUSA	*Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh*; All-Aceh Association of Ulama
SIRA	*Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh*; the Aceh Referendum Information Center
TNA	*Tentara Nasional Aceh*; the Armed Forces of the State of Aceh
TNI	*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*; Indonesian Armed Forces
VOC	*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*; Dutch East India Company

1. Introduction

More than 30 years of ongoing conflict made the people of Aceh patient. Through all three decades they were waiting for peace or 'just' for a miracle that will finish the strife happening in their province. But the miracle had not come. Instead of waiting for it, the Acehnese "took the law into their hands." Disappointed with Indonesian common-project Acehnese people or mainly Acehnese leaders – as an excluded community – formed their own nationalism and started fighting for independence. By the time conflict was rising and becoming more violent, and as Indonesia faced multi-dimensional changes in 1998, probability for resolving it decreased. The province was hit by the Tsunami caused by the Indian Ocean Earthquake on December 26, 2004 providing a great opportunity for international mediators to intervene in Indonesian internal affairs and to settle the conflict. In this way this "self-determination" crisis seems to come to an end – thanks to the watchful international observers and monitoring mission.

This description looks very accurate and clear, but what has been always omitted in studies and descriptions of the conflict in Aceh – and is missing above - is its character and shape. The most interesting thing about the Acehnese nationalism is that it is expressed in secular terms (self-determination, secessionist movement), not as an Islamic movement. On the one hand, it seems apparent that Acehnese nationalism was not based on the religion, as it does not constitute a point of difference between the Acehnese and the rest of Indonesia. However, the religion is an important part of Acehnese identity and it proved to unite the Acehnese during the struggle with the Dutch. Yet, the modern Acehnese

nationalism was based on ideas of the right to self-determination, sovereignty and decolonization.

Having in mind those exceptional characteristics of Aceh, the main research question of the thesis is – why the Acehnese separatist movement emerged as the Acehnese nationalism? This leads to another hesitation – does the existence of Acehnese, nationalist movement prove the existence of Acehnese nation? Finally, it is possible to ask whether Acehnese nationalist movement could be equalled to Acehnese nationalism. Hence, one of the reasons behind this research is to examine the Acehnese nationalism and its characteristic features with a special emphasis on its secular dimension.

It is possible to analyze the Acehnese nationalism using one of the theories of nationalism, like the Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities. However, this analysis might not explain all complexities of the Acehnese national movement, like its secular dimension and the role of religion. For this reason, the thesis will argue that the process of imaging a nation by the Acehnese was strengthen by the internal (domestic, within Indonesia) and external (international) factors influencing on-going conflict. In that sense, Anderson's theory could explain and define what is Acehnese nationalism and nation. However, this analysis should be supported by an additional examination of internal and external dimension, which will clarify the process of shaping Acehnese nationalism.

In other words, the Benedict Anderson's theory can describe what Acehnese nationalism is and whether it really exists. But it cannot provide an explanation how this nationalism came into being as a secular one. To understand better what happened around Acehnese nationalism it is necessary to look at internal and external factors that due to their importance strongly influence the process of creating a nation. Here, Anderson's theory cannot show the involvement of other actors, because the application of the concept

for secessionist movement is limited. Anderson saw the possibility of the development of sub-state nationalisms, but he claimed that they will reproduce past models of nationalism. In that sense, Acehnese nationalism can be explained through the lenses of Anderson's theory but only on the level where Acehnese nationalism correspond to past types of nationalisms. It that sense, Anderson's theory could be seen as having certain limits. Consequently, the theory needs to be supplemented by a study of internal and external factors, which will be singled out on the basis of prior study of Acehnese nationalism using Anderson's theory. This means that internal and external factors will not replace the concept of imagined community but rather strengthen it. This will support the hypothesis that Acehnese nationalism has unique characteristics because the process of imagining Aceh nation was strongly influenced by Indonesian and international actors. It is possible to argue that all nationalisms are shaped by external factors. However, the case of Aceh will show that there is a great need to analyze those factors separately, because only this method will explain the complex character of Acehnese nationalism, like its secular shape.

Moreover, the thesis will also try to formulate general arguments on nationalist movements. In that sense, the thesis will argue that scholars studying contemporary separatist movements should pay an attention to the influence of internal and external factors. The pure analysis done through the lenses of great theories of nationalism will not show the involvement of other actors in the process of forming sub-state nationalism as such theories were usually created before the rise of separatist movements. This might lead in turn to misrepresentations of such movements, as it was in the case of Acehnese nationalist movement when it was equalled to fundamentalist Islamic groups. The complex situation faced by separatists cannot be narrowed to the spread of nationalism's concept.

Tragic history of the Acehnese shows that the resolution of self-determination conflicts should not be based on the violence. In fact, the aggression perpetuated by the

long presence of military in the region might reinforce nationalistic ideologies instead of providing the long-standing answer to the problem. International community keeps on saying “no more.” However, after Yugoslavia, Ruanda and Aceh “no more” means just nothing. In particular, it does not mean - “no more mass killings in Aceh.” What means that the topic is important, because only the correct understanding and interpretation of a conflict – also by international actors - can result in its long-lasting peace. Falsifications of the grievances expressed by the people might prolong the disagreement. Also, the possibility of the future employment of arguments in studies on other national movements proves the significance of the subject.

1.1. Working Definitions

Before the analysis of Acehnese nationalism and nationalist movement it is important to clarify how they will be understood. In particular, terms connected with Aceh and definitions of nationalism should be explained.

First of all, it is important to mention that there exist many different spellings of the word *Aceh*. The most popular *Aceh* will be used here for the sake of consistency. However, the older English usages were *Achin* and then *Acheh*. The Dutch called the province *Atjeh*, and under this name the province entered the independent Indonesia. But in 1974 Indonesia changed the spelling, and the Dutch *tj* was replaced by *c*. Since that time, it is possible to speak about *Aceh*. However, the Acehnese national movement used the older spelling *Acheh* rejecting Bahasa Indonesia as the language of the province. Therefore, in the original quotations different spellings of the word *Aceh* could appear.

Who are then the Acehnese that live within the province? On the one hand, the Acehnese could be understood as the largest ethnic group living within the province of

Aceh in Indonesia. However, the thesis will mostly subscribe to another meaning of the term. Under the definition promoted by the Acehnese national movement, the Acehnese are understood in clearly cultural and historical terms. To be an Acehnese does not mean that the person must exclusively belong to Acehnese ethnic groups. Rather, "a true Acehnese is a person whose family has resided in Aceh over several generations, is a Muslim, and is a member of one of Aceh's nine *suku*[1] [ethnic group]." In that sense, Acehnese identity is acquired through the participation in the culture. The thesis will use this understanding of the Acehnese, as a cultural artifact, also because this meaning it is used worldwide by scholars and commentators. In some cases the Acehnese will be equalled to ethnic understanding of the term, what will be underlined.

Similarly, Acehnese nationalism will be a cultural expression, rather than an ideology. Many researchers on Aceh, like Anthony Reid, Jacques Bertrand, Edward Aspinall, William Nessen, Kirsten E. Schulze, Aleksius Jemadu, Michelle Ann Miller and others use the term 'nationalism' to describe the Acehnese movement that emerged in 1970s. More important question is whether Acehnese nationalism should be equaled to activities of the Aceh Free Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM[2]). The thesis will sometimes use those two terms – *Acehnese nationalism* and *Acehnese national movement* interchangeably, because GAM is seen as the most evident institutional expression of Acehnese nationalism. However, at the same time one of goals of the thesis will be to show that the Acehnese nationalism should be understood more broadly and limiting it only to activities of GAM could delegitimize the reason of Acehnese nationalism. Here, the analysis of internal and external factor will provide an answer to the problem.

[1] Kirsten E. Schulze, "The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization," *Policy Studies* 2, East West Center Washington, 2004, 7.
[2] GAM is known also as he Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF).

1.2. Structure

The thesis constitutes of four main chapters that will resemble the flow of the main argument. The second chapter will present a current state of knowledge on Indonesia and Aceh in order to make readers familiar with the problem. In particular it will acquaint readers with the conflict in Aceh, presenting roots of the conflict and its history. In that sense, it will be a foundation for the two-fold analysis of Acehnese nationalism: one using Anderson's theory, second – analyzing the influence of internal and external factors on the current shape of Acehnese nationalism. The second chapter will also clarify definitions of separatist – secular and Islamic - movements.

The third chapter will elucidate on the theoretical framework. First, the chapter will introduce Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism, together with Anderson's definition of the nation. Secondly, it will point out the most important parts of the theory. The chapter will also present limitations of the theory. The analysis of Acehnese nationalism presented in the fourth chapter will subscribe to this structure. Hence, the study will be based on four parts: definition of a nation provided by Benedict Anderson; typology of nationalism; nation-building policies; and politics of ethnicity.

Finally, the fifth chapter will constitute the central part of the thesis. Benedict Anderson's theory accommodates domestic and international influence within its framework. But, as it was already mentioned, there is a special need to distinguish this dimension and to analyze it separately. Most of separatist movements are influenced by the domestic politics and national narratives of their mother-countries. In the same time, future of every single separatist organization is strongly connected with opinions and activities of international community. This truth is even more visible when country tries to bargain and get certain privileges – for example from international organizations – by playing the card

of minorities. Therefore, it is not possible to analyze only external factors, as in many cases they are related to internal ones. This dimension is very important for separatist movements, which operate on two levels – national (within Indonesia) and international. Here, the analysis will be based on four factors: two internal – Indonesian politics and nationalism, the role of the religion; and two external – structure of international relations and global discourses on human rights. The analysis of each factor will subscribe to the prior analysis of Acehnese nationalism and it will show how Benedict Anderson's theory could be strengthened. In that sense, the fifth chapter together with a fourth one will explain the ways in which the process of imagining Aceh nation was influenced by Indonesian and international actors.

2. Acehnese Nationalism in a Broader View

Whenever the word ‘Aceh’ is pronounced, people immediately think about another one: Indonesia. In this way, two – sometimes different, sometimes very similar – stories of Aceh and Indonesia interfere with each other, making it harder for scholars to study just one side of the coin. For this and many reasons, it is impossible to look only at the problems and affairs of Indonesia, without taking into account the Acehnese perspective. Hence, the main aim of the first chapter is to introduce readers into the most important aspects of the conflict in Aceh.

The chapter will present the general background of the problem, and clarify many significant dates, definitions and issues “behind the stage.” First of all, history of Indonesia and Aceh will be briefly presented. Also, the Acehnese struggle will be compared with other separatist movements in the World. Finally, readers will be acquainted with roots and periods of the conflict in Acehnese province.

2.1. History of Indonesia and Aceh

Indonesia is a country with great diverse culture, history and tradition. First of all, it is the forth most populous country with a population of 237 million people, what makes it the biggest Muslim country in the World. Yet, despite the latter fact, Islam - cannot serve as unifying force, because of too many variations of it spread over 17,000 the Greater Sunda Islands. Indonesia, the biggest archipelago country, is also known for its diverse society.

More than 300 ethnic groups exist in the country, speaking more than 700 different languages. Indonesia has many characteristics starting with “the biggest” and “the most.”

Indonesia is also the leader of Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and its strategic maritime location makes it one of the significant states in the wider region. The borders of the country are hard to protect and one of the main problems of Indonesia is piracy in the world-known straits: Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok. Nowadays, Indonesia advertises itself with a catchphrase *Unity in Diversity*, which is also a national motto. Probably making everybody believe in this slogan is an only possible way for country which borders compromise rules of colonialism. At the same time, however, it will be hard to say that the modern Indonesia started just as the colonialism was over.

Pre-colonial history of lands that today come within Indonesian borders was marked by the existence of various kingdoms: Malay, Hindu or Buddhist. From 13th century onwards it was still a collection of many different regions and sultanates. At the same time, due to arrival of many Muslim traders, populations of smaller pre-Indonesian states started to adopt Islam. It was a slow process, during which the new religion mixed with already existing cultural and religious influences. First Europeans arrived in Indonesia as early as in the 16th century. At first, it was the Portuguese who had a great commercial interest in Indonesia. But, overall the Indonesia is known for being a Dutch colony.

The Dutch presence was noticeable from the 1602 - the year, when Dutch East India Company, known as VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*), was established. In the beginning of 19th century, after the bankruptcy of VOC, the Dutch East Indies were formed. At first, they only compromised territories of the prior company, but the hegemony was soon expanded. The Aceh was one of the last provinces that recognized the Dutch rule. In 1914, when after 30 years of on-going resistance, the Acehnese sultanate

was finally incorporated into the Dutch Indies[1]. Up to this moment, as Anthony Reid argued: "Aceh's economic, political and cultural linkages were to the Indian Ocean and the Malayan Peninsula, not to the Java[2]." For those reasons, the history of Aceh till the First World War differs from the nationalized and standardized version of Indonesian 'story'[3].

At the present time, Aceh is known as the Indonesian province, located on the northern end of Sumatra Island. Located 1,700 kilometres from Jakarta, the Acehnese province is covered mainly by forests[4]. It is also a home for 4 million people, 98% of whom are Muslim. At the same time, Aceh's diversity could be compared with Indonesian. The four main ethnic groups of Aceh are Acehnese, Gayonese (indigenous people), Alas, Tamiang; together with smaller communities of Ulu Singkil, Kluet, Aneuk Jamee, Bulolehee and Simeulu. The Acehnese is the strongest and the most visible group, representing 90% of the population. Most of the people living in the province speak Bahasa Indonesia, but many prefer to use their own local languages.

The Acehnese are far descendants of Malay immigrants, known to arrive in the area more than 3,000 years ago. Soon "they developed their distinct language and culture, first as part of the creation of Hindu political entities in the region[5]." However, from 12th and 13th century spread of the Islam in the broader province led to the establishment of the Sultanate of Aceh. It was a strong independent state, by the 16th century it became the most

[1] At the same time, it was never totally dominated by the Dutch, and the Netherlands attempts to conquer Aceh were observed up to the Second World War. About Atjeh (Aceh) War with the Dutch: Wilfred T. Neill, *Twentieth-century Indonesia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 293-294.

[2] Anthony Reid, "War, Peace and the Burden of History in Aceh," *Asian Ethnicity* 3, Vol. 5 (2004), 301.

[3] *Ibidem*, 301.

[4] "In the late 1990s, the World Bank and the Indonesian government estimated that 69 per cent (3.9 million hectares) of Aceh's total land area was forest. Since then, deforestation in Aceh is estimated to have reached 270,000 hectares per year)." Lesley McCulloch, "Aceh: Then and Now," Minority Rights Groups International, 2005, 10.

[5] "World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous People. Indonesia: Acehnese," Minority Rights Groups International. http://www.minorityrights.org/4441/indonesia/acehnese.html.

powerful in the Malacca Straits area. Aceh was known for its pepper production[6] – "in the period 1800-70 [it] (…) provided about half of the world supply, [what] gave it strong trade links to Turkey, India, England, America, France and Italy." What is more, in 1819 Aceh signed a treaty of mutual defence with the British[7]. Also, because the British were not keen to fulfil their obligations once the Dutch started to dominate all Sumatra, the sultanate proposed similar treaty to the US.

The whole problem with the Acehnese past is that it has a power to hinder future relations with the rest of the current Indonesia, despite the fact than none of Acehnese perceived the issue in this way. As Anthony Reid pointed out, quite rightly: "in the nineteenth century Aceh saw itself more the way Burma, Vietnam or Siam did, as a traditionally independent state with a multiple options for alliances, than the way the princelings around the Java Sea did in being more or less stuck with the Dutch[8]."

Things, however, changed radically in the 1920-1930s, when national Indonesian movement was formed. The concept of independent Indonesian state was adopted by the Acehnese, and the province supported rebellions and resistance against the Dutch in the name of a new common Indonesia. It was mostly young, reformist Islam-educated and Japanese-influenced generation of the Acehnese that started to identify themselves as a part of new nation. They saw the Aceh as one of many diverse parts of Indonesia, which will make the country richer and more valuable. They also appreciated Sukarno, the upcoming father of Indonesian nation and dreamed about new Indonesia as a Muslim state.

In that sense, it is not a surprise that after Indonesia declared independence in 1945 the Acehnese supported the Revolution against the Dutch[9]. Benedict Andersons explains this assistance to the Indonesian national movement: "During the whole history of the

[6] Aceh was also an important trading centre for gold, tin, sandalwood and spices.
[7] Known as the Treaty of Aceh.
[8] Reid, "War, Peace," 304.
[9] Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 101, footnote 23.

independence movement from the late colonial period, no Acehnese I know of ever had aspirations for an 'Independent Aceh'. During the Revolution, Aceh was the only province where the Dutch did not dare come back. But, far from taking the chance to declare an Independent Aceh, the Acehnese made, on a fully voluntary basis (…), huge contributions to the revolutionary cause in terms both of manpower and economic-financial resources[10]." However, after the Netherlands recognized Indonesia in 1949 as an independent country, common Indonesian and Acehnese path branched. Many Acehnese felt betrayed, as Indonesia did not turn to be an Islamic state, the centralization of the powers in Jakarta became a fact and in the end the Aceh lost control over its own affairs.

Consequently, it is possible to speak about two different versions of Indonesian history after the year 1949. On the one hand, there is a history of a new nation that portrays the issues from a state level[11]. On another hand, there is story of Acehnese struggle and fight against Jakarta, which is also – in a sense – a part of Indonesian burden and past. Having in the mind only the former, scholars usually distinguish three important periods of independent Indonesian history[12]. First, the Sukarno era, till the 1965, called the period of the "guided democracy." Then, the military dictatorship of Suharto lasting 32 years – known as the New Order, or ironically Dry-Rot Order[13] – that finished in 1998. The last period, *reformasi* started in 1999, with a goal of establishing a multiparty democracy. Years 1997-1999 are well-known not only because of political transition. Indonesia

[10] Benedict Anderson, "Indonesian Nationalism Today and in the Future," *Indonesi*a 67 (April 1999), 4.
[11] More about the character of Indonesian nationalism after 1945/49 see: Michael Leifer, "The changing temper of Indonesian nationalism," in *Asian nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 153-169.
[12] Theodore Friend, *Indonesian Destines* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).
[13] Dry-Rot Order is a term invented by Benedict Anderson, wordplay in Indonesian. "The Irish-American scholar Benedict Anderson, in a 1999 address in Jakarta, bemoans the turpitude of what he calls Suharto's "dry-rot order" (the epithet was a play on the strongman's New Order administration, a piece of self-invented rhetoric designed to contrast with Sukarno's "old order")." Stephen Fitzpatrick, "A nation judges Suharto," The Australian, February 02, 2008. http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23145955-28737,00.html.

suffered the most from an economic crisis that hit all South-East Asia. And it is the time when East-Timor became an independent state. Timor quickly turns into a model for other separatists movements in Indonesia[14].

Understanding Aceh is impossible without understanding Indonesian problems and successes. History of Aceh could be seen as separate of Indonesia, taking into consideration its past and the 30 years of the conflict with Jakarta. At the same time, Aceh was one of the birthplaces of the Malay-language Islamic culture - a base of independent Indonesia. The Acehnese also fought bravely with other Indonesians during the anti-Dutch struggle. But the bitter war with the Dutch was just the first of many that Acehnese people were to face in upcoming 20th century. Hence, in contrast to the most part of Indonesia, the year 1949 did not bring peace to Aceh.

2.2. Between Separatism and Muslim Resistance

The first rebellion that expressed Acehnese resentment of Indonesian rule was the *Darul Islam*[15] rebellion of 1953. It lasted till 1962, several other regions joined Aceh, but the main goal of it – to make Indonesia an Islamic state, was never achieved. At the same time, 1953 rebellion led by revolutionary *ulama* Teungku Daud Beureu'eh, was not a movement "for an independent Aceh, but for the Negara Islam Indonesia for which (…) Aceh had fought in the revolution." It showed that the Acehnese had their vision of a new nation, different that Indonesian government, and that this vision was never fulfilled.

[14] Theodore Friend, *Indonesian Destines* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 477.
[15] *Darul Islam* means the House of Islam.

The *Darul Islam* was the first signal, prophesying future problems in relations between Jakarta and Banda Aceh[16]. More important is, however, the conflict in Aceh that started in 1976. It changed over the time, to reach the level of self-determination, separatist, or – as it is sometimes called – nationalist movement. Hence, the most interesting thing about the Acehnese struggle is that it was expressed in secular terms (self-determination, secessionist movement), not as Islamic movement. Edward Aspinall explained it: "The province of Aceh in Indonesia presents something of an anomaly. For reasons of history and sociology, it would appear that Aceh should be a major centre for the militant Islamist groups which have recently proliferated in Indonesia. The territory has a well-established reputation for the piety if its inhabitants and a long history of Islamic militancy. Yet the major oppositional force in Aceh in recent years has been nationalism of an essentially secular type[17]."

At the same time, prior to looking at the conflict in Aceh and asking: why it has those special features and why it is so different from other movements – what will be the aim of following chapters, it is important to clarify what are those 'other movements.' First, the issue of separatism, together with the status of the right to self-determination, needs to be tackled. Secondly, certain attention should be devoted to Muslim separatism movements

Separatism is usually driven by many, intertwining factors, like: geographical position, ethnic and religious differences, conflicting historical narratives, or unequal distribution of resources. According to "A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy" just between year 1991 and 1995 about

[16] Banda Aceh is a capital of the Acehnese province.
[17] Edward Aspinall, "From Islamism to nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia," *Nations and Nationalism* 13, Vol. 2 (2007), 245.

seventeen new separatist conflicts were observed[18]. What is more striking is that "twenty-five armed self-determination conflicts were ongoing as of early 2005[19]." Results of such movements vary from one case to another. Some of them resulted in new states created, with example of Kosovo in Europe as the freshness one. Second part of separatism conflicts have led to granting autonomy – territorial, cultural, or personal - within existing states.

What is more, the separatist movements could be seen as a greater danger for a parental state, when the driving force behind them is an ideology of nationalism. Glorious past, aspirations of having own state, and nationalistic demands had already proven to have a great power to unite people. Consequently, many separatist movements justify their agenda pointing at the right to self-determination. They carry on saying 'we are different nation; we have a right to secede." But, as many scholars argued the right to secede cannot be derived from the principle of self-determination[20]. For example, whereas many claimed that secession is the best remedy for problems of separatism, Donald L. Horowitz pointed out that it "is almost never an answer to such problems and that is it likely to make them worse[21]." Words of Hurst Hannum could be seen as supporting this point of view: "International law does not prohibit secession, whether voluntary or violent, but it has neither recognized nor identified even tentatively the conditions that might give rise to such a right in the future[22]." Nonetheless, Hannum saw two possibilities when the secession could supported – when massive violations of human rights are happening, or

[18] Deepa Khosla, "Self-Determination Movements and Their Outcomes," in "Peace and Conflict 2005. A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy," Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr (CIDCM: University of Maryland, 2005), 23.
[19] Khosla, "Self-Determination Movements," 21.
[20] The problem is also connected with process of redefinition of the two principles: uti possidetis and already mentioned - self-determination. For more information see: Donald L. Horowitz, "The Cracked Foundations of the Right to Secede," *Journal of Democracy* 2, Vol. 14 (April 2003), 5-17; Hurst Hannum, "The Specter of Secession," *Foreign Affairs* 2, Vol. 77 (March/April 1998), 13-18.
[21] Horowitz, "The Cracked Foundations," 5.
[22] Hannum, "The spectre of Secession," 14.

when rational demands of separatist groups (like self-government or minority rights) were rejected by a national government[23].

Researchers working on "A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts" are more optimistic distinguishing more possible – than just secession - outcomes of self-determination conflicts. For them, principle of self-determination could be also fulfilled on an internal level. In that sense, the settlement acknowledging collective rights provides a group with autonomy, better access to decision-making and usually results in devolution of central powers. Also, in contrast to many opinions, Deepa Khosla did not perceive self-government as a step towards secession. Hence, "the greatest risk in autonomy is not eventual break-up of the state, rather it is that spoilers may block full implementation, thereby dragging out the conflict and wasting resources that might otherwise be used to strengthen autonomous institutions[24]."

Another aspect of separatist movements is the level of international attention. When it is high and the conflict attracts notice of external actors, the probability for its resolution is greater. This means, that the publicity of conflict usually encourages open-minded people from both sides, who wish to find a constructive and realistic solution to the problem. At the same time, lack of international attention could lead to escalation of hostilities between separatist groups and parental states. Many self-determination movements are aware of this and look for external support that could bring greater transparency to the conflict.

The conflict in Aceh attracted international attention. There were two attempts to resolve it pursued by external actors. First of them, resulted in series of negotiations happening between year 2000 and 2003. Second, a successful one started in 2004. After the Tsunami of December 2004 it gained ever more international support what resulted in

[23] Hannum, "The spectre of Secession," 16-17.
[24] Khosla, "Self-Determination Movements," 25.

the Helsinki Peace Agreement signed by both sides in August 2005. What is important here is that the Acehnese struggle attracted external actors as a self-determination, separatist movement, not as an Islamic, religious movement. Apparently, because the most of the population in Indonesia is also Muslim, the religion seems not be a characteristic that can distinguish Acehnese from the rest. However, at the same time, Aceh is known as a homeland for devout Muslims[25], and Indonesian state – as being secular. Those facts, which will be discussed later, make the picture more complicated. Thus, it is useful to see the alternative to secular movements. The analysis of Muslim separatism will also show whether the Aceh case is really so far away from religious movements.

Edward Aspinall pointed out that "most studies of the relationship between Islam and secessionist nationalism focus on places where Muslim minorities seek to break away from majority non-Muslim states[26]." In that sense, same aspects of Islamic ideology could predispose Muslim minorities towards separatism. However, as Aspinall stressed it, the same ideology could also undermine secessionist claims. Consequently, the argument, that all Muslim minorities with try to become independent from their parental states, is based on wrong assumptions. Any kind of religiosity could be useful for framing of grievances, but it is unlikely to be the main cause of conflict. For example, during the *Darul Islam* Revolt in Aceh religion was justification for rebellion, but it did not promote separatist claims. Rather, "the eventual spread of the secessionist idea was accompanied by a shift away from explicitly Islamic ideology[27]."

In addition to the first situation, when Islam could be one of the factors fuelling conflict, it could also come later as an external factor. Ethno-nationalist conflicts led by Muslim minorities could change into more religious one due to global changes, like spread

[25] David Levinson, *Ethnic Groups Worldwide. A Ready Reference Handbook* (Arizona: Oryx Press, 1998), 227.
[26] Aspinall, "From Islamism," 246.
[27] *Ibidem*, 261.

of radical Islamist ideologies. Here, a religion is used as a way to achieve political goals. Muslim resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines provides a useful example. Joseph Chinyong Liow[28] argued that both cases could be seen as a religious struggle, but at the same time they are more a reflection of political context. What rather happen is a different reinterpretation of old conflicts after international changes, like post-9/11 events. Liow claims that "conflicts [not previously seen as] religious, are today understood as defined by Muslim radicalism, militancy, and international terrorism[29]." Besides, movements in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines use the religion "to animate nationalism by providing meaning and intelligibility along with the foundations for statehood for Muslim minorities[30]."

In that sense, the minority religious nationalism could acquire a religious characteristic leading to the fusion of political and religious identities. Consequently, the failure of secular nationalism in both cases resulted in self-determination movements expressed in religious terms. In contrast, the Acehnese – as Muslims in Thailand – were also excluded from national politics, but this did not lead to greater Islamization of the conflict. Rather, the Acehnese struggle moved in totally different direction, from religiosity to secularization.

Looking at the salience of Islam as a driving force in conflict, Joseph Liow based his study on three important questions: how and why has Islam gained greater importance in the ongoing conflicts in southern Thailand and southern Philippines; have the complexion and objectives changed fundamentally as a result; and – from a academic perspective - what is the significance of this move, and what does it tell of the conflicts' trajectories? Similar questions should be used in the study of the Acehnese resistance,

[28] Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Muslim Resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion, Ideology, and Politics," *Policy Studies* 24, East West Center Washington, 2006.
[29] *Ibidem*, 2.
[30] *Ibidem*, 3.

changing just the first inquiry: how and why has secular nationalism gained greater importance in the conflict in Aceh?

2.3. The Conflict in Aceh – Roots and Levels

Indonesia, as the country of 'the most' and 'the biggest number of', has also another 'great' characteristic. It is a place of many internal conflicts. Two of them, conflict in East Timor and in Aceh seemed to come to the end. In another four provinces – Moluccas, West Papua (West Irian), West and Central Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi – hostilities and disagreements are still present. All of the conflicts have similar sources: failure of nation-building process in Indonesia, unequal redistribution of resources, ethnic and religious differences, centralization, oppressive security policy, human rights abuses and transmigration policies of Suharto era.

The most threatening for Indonesia have been up till now[31] two conflicts: in Aceh and West Papua. Both of them are on the list of armed self-determination conflicts[32]. Both could be also characterized by strong separatist claims, experiences with special autonomy granted by Jakarta, peripheral location and clearly marked territorial boundaries – a base for a new state. But despite those similarities, conflicts in Aceh and in West Papua have different reasons, stories and aims behind their struggle. Here, for the purposes of the study, attention will be concentrated on the former.

The Acehnese resistance is - as many other examples - a very complex conflict. It has various motives and goals, which interfered with each other. Different problems were

[31] After the independence of East Timor.
[32] Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr, "Peace and Conflict 2005. A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy" (CIDCM: University of Maryland, 2005), 86.

also stressed in different time periods, and the emphasis on certain aspects varies from one researcher to another one. At the same time, however, the basic facts should be invoked.

Graham Brown is his study "Horizontal Inequalities, Ethnic Separatism, and Violent Conflict: The Case of Aceh, Indonesia" listed three main pre-conditions for ethnic conflict, that also have an important influence in the case of Aceh. Those are geographical position that might strengthen marginalization; ethnic difference; and local historical experiences. Secondly, Brown pointed out factors that were deciding for the dynamics of the conflicts: distinctive and separate identity of the Acehnese (historical and cultural factor) and the exploitation of Acehnese natural resources (economic factor)[33]. Similar argumentation is brought by Patrick Barron and Samuel Clark in their report on centre-periphery relations in Aceh. They distinguished three common explanations for Acehnese marginalization: natural resources extraction, state-perpetuated violence and the role of an Acehnese identity[34].

Hence, most of the studies stress economical and cultural explanations for the conflict. Gas and oil were discovered in the province in the 1960s-70s, but the revenues from their extraction were distributed in a very unequal way. This eventually led to the rise of local grievances in Aceh[35]. Besides, Prangtip Daorueng claims that in Aceh multinational investments are a great source of discontent because they strongly relate to the financial interests of Indonesian security forces (TNI)[36]. The biggest investor in Aceh – the US transnational ExxonMobil, operating from 1968 – hired soldiers and police, what in

[33] Graham Brown, "Horizontal Inequalities, Ethnic Separatism, and Violent Conflict: The Case of Aceh, Indonesia," Human Development Report 2005, Occasional Paper, UNDP.
[34] Patrick Barron and Samuel Clark, "Decentralizing Inequality? Center-Periphery Relations, Local Governance, and Conflict in Aceh," *Social Development Papers – Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction*, Paper No. 39, December 2006, 5-6.
[35] More on the issue see: Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1995), 13-28.
[36] Prangtip Daorueng, "Identity Crisis and Indonesia's Prospects for National Unity: The Case of Aceh," in "The Asian Face of Globalisation: Reconstructing Identities, Institutions and Resources. The Papers of the 2001 Fellows," The Nippon Foundation Fellowship for Asian Public Intellectuals, http://www.api-fellowships.org/body/international_ws_proceedings/year1.pdf, 139.

longer run turned to the establishment of so called 'military businesses' in Aceh[37]. What is more, the investments did not bring development to Aceh, as companies tended to hire people from Java and other islands (transmigration policies) and the income went to the centre of Indonesia.

Injustice, created both by economic policy and presence of security forces were never addressed. For example, during the military operation DOM (Daerah Operasi Militer, 1989-1998) about 7,000 civilians were killed in Aceh[38]. But, after the fall of Suharto abuses committed during his period were not investigated. The military solution of the Aceh conflict was also preferred by all Indonesian presidents of the *reformasi* period[39], excluding the last one - Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Since 1998 six military operations were conducted in Aceh, including martial law and state of civil emergency.

The conflict in Aceh has also its roots in the failure of the nation-building process in Indonesia. Prangtip Daorueng distinguished two main weakness of Indonesian nationalism[40]. Firstly, it is based on invented state philosophy Pancasila[41] (meaning five principles) what makes its ill-defined. Secondly, the national ideology was created by political elites in Java, and it does not reflect issues important for other regions and provinces.

At the same time, the Acehnese traditional identity was not a part of problem from the beginning. The Acehnese was willing to die for Indonesia, and it was rather a long-

[37] The best analysis of connections between military and investors in Ach, also about illegal activities of TNI like logging and drugs economy could be found in McCulloch, "Aceh: Then and Now."
[38] During the 30 years of the conflict about 15.000 people were killed in Aceh.
[39] Presidents of Indonesia succeeding Suharto: Jusuf Habibie 05.1998-10.1999(vice-president in the time of Suharto, appointed by him); Abdurrahman Wahid 10.1999-07.2001; Megawati Sukarnoputri 07.2001-10.2004 (the daughter of Indonesia's first president Sukarno); Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono 10.2004 – incumbent.
[40] Daorueng, "Identity Crisis," 138.
[41] On Pancasila see Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: democracy, Islam, and the ideology of tolerance* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 10-22.

lasting separatist conflict that forged this unique identity[42]. As a result, the Acehnese self-perception cannot be used by Indonesian government as an excuse. However, because this identity became more significant than Indonesian national identity, now it could not be ignored by Jakarta-based leaders. Self-identification problems, different historical narratives and failure of Indonesian nationalism provide an important explanation for the transformation of the Acehnese movement into national one.

Last, but not the least, different levels and periods of the conflict in Aceh need to be single out. During the *Darul Islam* Revolt in Aceh the province was granted a special region status[43], but it in reality meant a little and diminished as Suharto dictatorship started. Later, in 1976, Hasan di Tiro established Aceh Free Movement – the main opposition organization of the Acehnese. On 4 December 1976, Tiro declared Aceh's independence from Indonesia, calling it a new colonizer.

In this way, the conflict in Aceh started in 1976 and four important periods of it could be distinguished. The first phase of low-intensity lasted from 1976 till 1979, resulted in Indonesian counter-operation and emigration of GAM leaders to Sweden. Second one, as Kirsten E. Schulze named it, is the re-emergence of the conflict[44]. After GAM para-military organization TNA (*Tentara Nasional Aceh*, The Armed Forces of the State of Aceh) received training and support from Libya and Iran in the period 1986-89, the group renewed its activities in 1989. This period finished in the same year as Suharto resigned, the operation DOM ended and new perspectives for the peaceful settlement emerged.

The third phase of the conflict 1998-2005 was marked by both high-level hostilities and attempts to resolve the conflict. The most important negotiations at this time period started in January 2000, led by Swiss Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (Henri Dunat

[42] *Ibidem*, 137
[43] The Special Status – *Daerah Istimewa* – was granted to Aceh in 1959.
[44] Kirsten E. Schulze, "Between Conflict and Peace: Tsunami Aid and Reconstruction in Aceh," London School of Economics, London, November 2005, 3.

Centre, HDC) resulted in December 2002 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA). Also, Jakarta tried to resolve the problem using legal framework of cultural autonomy. In 1999 law on the Implementation of the Specialty of the Special Province of Aceh[45] was enacted. Two years later, law on Special Autonomy for The Special Province of Aceh as Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam[46] was passed by Parliament. However, in May 2003 the peace process collapsed. Indonesian government proclaimed martial law - about 50 thousands soldiers of Indonesian Army (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, TNI) solders entered the province, GAM leaders were arrested. Soon Aceh was isolated from the rest of the World.

A metaphorical light at the end of the tunnel appeared after the new presidential elections in October 2004. Negotiations between GAM and Indonesian government resumed, but now under the supervision of the former Finnish president, Martti Ahtisaari and his organization Crisis Management Initiative. However, on December 26, 2004 the province was hit by the Tsunami caused by the Indian Ocean Earthquake, what provided a great opportunity for international mediators to intervene in Indonesian internal affairs and to settle the conflict under the name of post-tsunami reconstruction. The negotiations were hastened and already in August 2005 the Helsinki Peace Agreement – known as the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) – was signed between Indonesian and GAM. Also, according to the MoU a new Law on the Governing of Aceh was supposed to be promulgated and to enter into force not later than 31 March 2006. The Law on the Governing of Aceh (LOGA) was finally passed by Parliament on 11 July 2006, but it did not always follow the principles of the MoU. Those developments marked the end of third,

[45] Bernhard May, "Law on the Governing of Aceh – A Brief Review and Assessment," www.geocities.com/bouviersmith/bin/May-governing_aceh.ppt, slide 2.
[46] *Ibidem*, slide 3.

and the beginning of the forth phase – the level of the new agreement still being in the implementation process.

The conflict in Aceh evolved slowly from the level of militant politics and local rebellions through high-level hostilities to reach the phase of so called 'talk-fight'[47]. Those changes were partly a result of GAM strategies and goals, partly – an outcome of different international and national circumstances. In 2005 the conflict reached the level of uncontested, peace agreement. Hopefully, it will move soon into the phase of a fully implemented settlement bringing long-lasting peace to Aceh. Yet, the conflict still will be one of the most complex cases of self-determination movements. During 30 years of its duration, Acehnese identity quickly became one of the sources of the disagreement between two sides. But whether this identity is a national one is also the matter in dispute; and one of main aims of the thesis is to resolve this controversy.

[47] Different ten phases of conflicts: conventional politics, militant politics, low-level hostilities, high-level hostilities, talk-fight, cessation of open hostilities, contested agreement, uncontested agreement, implemented agreement, and independence. Khosla, "Self-Determination Movements," 22-23.

3. Theoretical Framework

The main goal of this chapter is to prepare the theoretical ground for the detailed analysis of Acehnese nationalist movement. In the first part of the chapter, Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism will be presented. This part will focus on the main features of Anderson's theory like: definition of the nation, typology of nationalism, nation-building policies. However, at the same time, Anderson theoretical overview of nationalisms in Southeast Asia will be outlined. In the second part, the chapter will explain the main line of an academic critique on Anderson's theory of nationalism.

3.1. Benedict Anderson's Theory of Nationalism

Benedict Anderson is one of the most famous theorists of nationalism. Together with other scholars of this discipline like Ernst Gellner, Eric Hobsbawn, John Breuilly, Anthony D. Smith and Elie Kedourie he proved to a very influential author. Being interested mainly in Southeast Asia, he published his first book on nationalism - *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* in 1983. The book soon became very 'popular' like the concept presented in it. Anderson was intrigued by the fact that "since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in national terms, (…) and, in doing so, has grounded itself firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the pre-Revolutionary fact." The direct impetus to write came from the case of late 1970s wars between Vietnam, Cambodia and China.

Starting from this point, Anderson wanted to conceptualize present forms of nations. He found that sources of present nations are mainly cultural and thus, he saw "nationality and nationalism (…) [as] cultural artefacts of a particular kind[1]." His famous definition of nations states that nation "is an imagined political community, and imagined both inherently limited and sovereign[2]." Anderson saw a nation as imagined, because its member will never meet and they have to imagine their comrades and their community. A nation is also limited, having boundaries where other nations start. It is sovereign, because the concept was born in the age of Enlightenment destroying the hierarchical dynastic realm, and making all nations free. What is also important is that all nations constitute communities, where fellow-members are linked together by invisible 'love for their nation', all ready to die for it. A nation could be also seen as a person, struggling to discover childhood memories that – like myths of golden past – are so hard to remain in the same form. Each human life, however, has a beginning and an end, whereas it is hard to identify a birth and a death of a particular nation.

Benedict Anderson saw roots of modern nations in a past existence of religious communities and dynastic realms. By this he meant that the concept of nation replaced sacral cultures and kingdoms. He claimed that the replacement of sacred languages with vernaculars led partly to the disappearance of religious communities. Because of its vanishing, the religion could not longer help people understand the fatality. In that sense, nations had 'spiritual' reasons to come into being: they offered people secular understanding of destiny, they link immemorial past and bright future providing possibility of re-generation and continuity[3]. It is interesting to observe that by stressing the pre-modern character of religion Anderson rejected the possibility of a future use of religion by nationalist movements.

[1] Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism. A Critical Introduction* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2000), 143.
[2] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, 6.
[3] *Ibidem*, 11-12.

Apart from that, Anderson distinguished developments that helped people imagine their nations. There occurred a huge change in conceptions of time from a medieval simultaneity of past, present and future into an idea of 'homogenous, empty time' where the time is measured by clock and calendar[4]. It was strengthen by an invention of a book, coming out not in Latin, but in vernacular languages. The print-capitalism with its one-day best-sellers – newspapers – made it easier for people to think about their fellows. Hence, "these print-languages laid the bases for national consciousnesses[5]." In that sense, as Anderson argued nations were socio-political forms based on the idea of progress.

Within Anderson's theory of imagined communities, it is possible to single out three important conceptions. The whole theory is not limited to them, but as they will be important in the following analysis of Acehnese nationalism, it is important to define them clearly. Those are: typology of nationalist movement; nation-building policies (as ways to imagine a nation); nationalism in Southeast Asia.

3.1.1. Typology of Nationalist Movements

Starting with the first issue, Anderson presented in his book a historical study of different nationalisms. The study could be seen as a specific typology of nationalist movements. However, at the same time, the list does not cover all possible types of nationalisms. Rather, Benedict Anderson developed his own catalogue built on the theory of imagined communities. Typology is grounded in historical events and includes 'Creole nationalism', 'popular nationalism' with its variation – 'linguistic nationalism', 'official nationalism', 'anti-colonial nationalism' and 'long-distance nationalism'. Even though

[4] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 22-32. The conception of 'homogenous, empty time' Anderson borrowed from Walter Benjamin.
[5] Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 148. More: Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 37-46.

Anderson did not list sub-state nationalism, he presented some characteristics of it – the issue that will be touched later.

Anderson saw the very beginning of nationalism in Latin America, in so called 'Creole nationalism'. Apart from their history, Creole forms of nationalism exist till those days. It comes into being when settler populations from parental state feeling alienated from metropolis move towards political independence, as it was in the case of a rather young Taiwanese or Singaporean nationalisms[6]. Following 'Creole nationalism' and its successes in the Americas, it was a popular, European nationalism of 19 ct. that took over. Thought as an anti-imperialist movement, this 'popular nationalism' soon changed into linguistic one. 'Linguistic nationalism' included the fight against the rule of big languages, as it was in the case of Czech, Polish, Ukrainian or Norwegian nationalisms. Thus, it was based on an assumption that each true nation was marked off by its peculiar language and literary culture, in contrast to 'Creole nationalism' characterized by the fact that many different nations share the same language. After and in reaction to, what Anderson stressed developed an 'official nationalism' – "a means for combing naturalization with retention of dynastic power, in particular over the huge polyglot domains[7]," like 'Russification'. This kind of nationalism emanated from the state, not from the people, with major effort of stretching short skin of nation over the old empire.

The previous 20ct. shaped three new forms of nationalism. First, it was a combination of popular and official nationalism, applied for example by Sun Yat-sen in China. Secondly, the World experienced a huge wave, called by Anderson 'a last wave', of 'anti-colonial nationalism'. Inspired by earlier events, this wave happened also due to Janus-faced politics of official nationalisms, applied by metropoles in their colonies. Here, Anderson saw three important factors that led to rise of nationalism in colonies: increased physical mobility within

[6] Anderson, "Western Nationalism and Eastern Nationalism," *New Left Review* 9 (2001), 34.
[7] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 86.

colonies; existence of well-educated bilingual cadres; and expansion of a modern-style education. Particularly, the last made it possible for natives to meet, talk and exchange ideas. In that sense, metropoles created the first generations of educated natives that studied maps of the colony as "a territorially specific imagined reality which was every day confirmed by (…) their classmates." Third form of 20 ct. nationalism is a 'long-distance nationalism', created by causes like globalization, migrations, Internet and media. This means that nationalism could be no longer depended on territorial location in a home country.

Benedict Anderson worked on his theory before the end of Cold War and the rise of separatist movements that happened in the 1990s. Hence, his concept mostly does not touch upon the issue of sub-state nationalism. However, at the same time Anderson was conscious about the developments and he made useful comments about minority nationalism. First of all, he observed that "the new states of the post-World War II period have their own character, which nonetheless is incomprehensible except in terms of the succession of models we have been considering[8]." In that sense, Anderson saw the possibility of other nationalisms' emergence on the stage, but with the limitations that they will employ previous models. This applies to 'anti-colonial nationalism', 'long-distance nationalism' and separatist one that are based on 'verified in practice' models.

For instance, Anderson observed that French-settler nationalism in Quebec has features of Creole nationalism. Moreover, he saw this type of nationalism as spreading and still very much alive[9]. Here, he pointed to the example of Northern Ireland question. He also found out that sub-state nationalisms could be connected with the problem of 'official nationalism' that uses minorities as the subject of national discourse. Minorities are to "appear in their most colourful traditional costumes, and indeed make a splendid sight[10]." They

[8] *Ibidem*, 113.
[9] Anderson, "Western Nationalism," 34.
[10] *Ibidem*, 39.

manifest the Past of the majoritarian nation, at the same being deprived from their right to nationalism. Moreover, he noted that when the minority language is suppressed there is a high possibility of separation or secession. This was the case of Old Pakistan and emergence of Bangladesh "that looks very similar to earlier linguistic nationalisms in Greece, Norway and Old Czechoslovakia." Finally, examples of 'popular nationalism' were also sub-state nationalisms because they symbolized liberation from a state. This means that even though Anderson does not make explicit comments about separatist movements, his theory could be used for an analysis of Acehnese nationalism. In that sense, the Aceh case might follow any type of the nationalism as Anderson saw the possibility for models' replication. However, at the same time, because Anderson is not explicit about sub-state nationalism, his theory might prove to be useful in explaining what is Aceh nation but it might not reveal all features of its contemporary shape.

3.1.2. Nation-building Policies

Nation-building policies, like Benedict Anderson described them are usually a part of an 'official nationalism' and its propaganda. Some of those policies only inspire people to imagine their nation, other impose certain values and feelings. For example, as mentioned above, development of vernaculars making them print-languages together with the spread of technologies of communications made it easier to build a nation. Especially, a language that unified people into one nation played a huge role. First of all, because it is hard to give the date for the birth of any language, languages appear to be most primordial, thus deeply rooted in contemporary societies[11]. Secondly, languages reincarnate themselves in the forms of poetry and anthems. The latter provide nations with endless occasions of simultaneity and

[11] *Ibidem*, 144-145.

'unisonality', term coined by Anderson to describe the sound nation[12]. Hence, the language is the best medium to imagine a nation.

Besides that, Anderson presented three ways in which a colonial state imagined its dominium and prepared a ground for new anti-colonial nationalism. These institutions were: the census, the map, and the museum. For example, the map of the colony delimited territorially where particular groups, like Javanese or Acehnese, started and ended. In this way it coincided with the census, which systematically quantified ethnic-racial differences within the colony[13]. The map was also displayed on posters, seals, book covers and hotel walls. Hence, "instantly recognizable, everywhere visible, the logo-map penetrated deep into the popular imagination, forming a powerful emblem for the anti-colonial nationalism being born[14]." The museum and the politics of archaeology behind it had similar functions, making it possible to imagine both history and power of a nation.

3.1.3. Nationalism in Southeast Asia

Benedict Anderson developed his conceptions on anti-colonial nationalism, and in particular on nationalisms in Southeast Asia in a publication *The spectre of comparisons: nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the world* published in 1998. Here, Anderson analyzed and compare how the universal grammar of nationalism could work after decolonization in the era of mass migrations and globalization. In particular, it is interesting to see how Anderson approached existing Southeast Asian concepts of national majorities and minorities.

[12] *Ibidem*, 145.
[13] In this way, members of future nations imagined their comrades through the map. They also named ethnic groups after maps even if those maps did not reflect true divisions and differences between ethnic groups. For example, populations of West New Papua started to be called by the Indonesian population as 'Irianese'. More about the problem: *Ibidem*, 176-178.
[14] *Ibidem*, 175.

In fact, as Anderson argued, minorities came into existence with majorities very recently - also in the Southeast Asia. "The Europeans were quite naturally the first to think in there majority-minority terms, (…) [and for this reason they] sought quite early to build "majority coalitions" around themselves, against groups they feared could seriously compete with them in majority terms[15]." In this way, the Europeans looked for minorities, like Christians or the Chinese to share with them the power. Hence, many minorities still have to carry an artificial burden of being a minority just because of colonial ethnic politics[16]. Apart from the politics of ethnicity having their roots in modern times, those politics understand ethnicity as "intricately tied to the deeper forces of religion and class[17]."

Basing on history of Southeast Asia, Benedict Anderson divided minorities present in the region into three main types. First, he distinguished so called alien minorities, like the Chinese. Secondly, there are ethno-linguistic groups of sufficient demographic size that – because of their economic and political development – could play a role in national-level coalition politics[18]. The last category comprised of groups small in numbers, placed in remote regions and insignificant for the majority. The problem faced by them is that whereas they wish to be left alone, the outside world will not them leave be. Anderson explained it: "they may sit on valuable mineral or forest resources coveted by the outside; (…) and they may be unlucky enough to live on sensitive borders between rival nations and rival world blocks[19]." What is more, Anderson observed that in order to survive those minorities have to enter ethnic majority politics and costs of this direction – 'going ethnic' – should not be underestimated. Also, those minorities have to learn how to behave as ethnic groups. But, paradoxically they

[15] Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (London: Verso, 1998), 320.
[16] More: *Ibidem*, 320-322.
[17] *Ibidem*, 328.
[18] Anderson noted that „the greater the number (Indonesia) of players, the wider the possibilities for flexible coalition politics; the fewer (Malaysia, Burma), the greater the likelihood of asymmetric rigidities." *Ibidem*, 329.
[19] *Ibidem*, 330.

do not see themselves in this way. Usually they are not even ethnic groups in the full sense of the word. Hence, new ethnic – reified - identities may appear on the state-level. If suppressed they can change easily into national ones, what for some cases Anderson quite rightly predicted.

3.2. Limitations of *Imagined Communities*

Quickly after the publication of Anderson's book the concept of imagined communities became very 'popular'. Benedict Anderson was aware of this influence and in the newest edition of *Imagined Communities* there is an added chapter about the phenomenon. However, despite this success many established scholars, like Breuilly, Greenfeld or Chatterjee raised objections to Anderson's theory. It is possible to identify four main points of the critique on *Imagined Communities*: the concept is culturally reductionist; Anderon's arguments on religion and nation do not work for all cases; it misinterprets character of anti-colonial nationalism; and it does not explain present rise in the number of separatist movements.

Starting with the first issue, it was Breuilly that criticized Anderson for "underestimating the political dimension of nationalism, and more specifically, for exaggerating the importance of cultural nationalism in nineteenth Europe[20]." As Breuilly argued in some cases of nationalisms political dimensions played the greater role. For example, because anti-colonial movements had to work within established colonial boundaries their agenda was usually political than cultural in character. Moreover, Anderson's theory does not explain why people take arguments about nation seriously. It does not show how the belief in imagined community – usually shared at the beginning by a small number of

[20] John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the state* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 71-72. Quoted after Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 152.

people – could influence everybody in society claimed to be national[21]. What does it matter that a nation is an imagined community?[22] Benedict Anderson did not explain how the concept is reproduced within existing structures of power. Hence, Don Mitchell stated: "The question is not what common imagination *exists*, but what common imagination is *forged*[23]."

Secondly, it is difficult to relate the rise of nationalism with a general decline of the religiosity. The latter is not always entirely replaced by the former, what was observed in countries like Poland, Ireland, Israel or Iran. Greenfeld also claimed that "nationalism was able to develop and become established with the support of religion[24]." Hence, in same cases religion could became the part of the national martyr and it could be a base of golden past myths. On the other hand, religion might also peacefully coexist with nationalism. It might be a part of national identity still not being stronger than powerful ideology of nationalism.

Third point of critique was raised by Partha Chatterjee, who wrote: "If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have to left? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. (…) Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized[25]." To prove his argument, Chatterjee argued that – in contrast to Anderon's arguments - the most of national movements in Asia and America are in fact based on a difference with European forms of nationalism. For Chatterjee it is apparent that anti-colonial nationalism does not have to imitate official, linguistic or popular versions of nationalism, created in Europe and the Americas. Basing on the case of India, he showed that for a nation it is possible to become

[21] *Ibidem*, 72. Quoted after Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 152.
[22] Euan Hague, "Benedict Anderson," Key Thinkers on Space and Place, Sage Publications, http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/9613_020037ch1and2.pdf, 20.
[23] Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 269 (original emphasis). Quoted in *Ibidem*, 20.
[24] Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 153.
[25] Partha Chatterjee, "Whose Imagined Community," in *Nations and Nationalism. A Reader*, Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman, editors (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005) 239.

sovereign well before the decolonization. Hence, Partha Chatterjee argued that anti-colonial nationalism in India divided the world of social institutions into two domains: the material and the spiritual. The former was reserved for the 'outside world', meaning for the West. The latter was an 'inner domain', where culture and society preserved in their traditional versions. Paraphrasing Chatterjee words, the spiritual domain is the place where the nation is brought into being as an imagined community. "In this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power." In that sense, the scholarship of Partha Chatterjee added very important aspect to Anderson's theory showing that nationalism-projects in Asia and Africa could be the most creative ones as their goals are not to copy Western political movements.

The final critique is connected with preceding arguments. Benedict Anderson's theory does not pay attention to the post-Cold War era when separatist and self-determination movements rise in power and in the number. However, as it was already mentioned, Anderson made comments about the character of separatist movement pointing to the example of Bangladesh or Quebec. On the other hand, his observations on sub-state nationalism are imprecise and could be confronted with Chatterjee's critique. In this situation, Anderson's account leaves some questions without answers. Why some groups adopted language of nationalism not adopting at the same time goals of nationalism? Why those groups emerged as political movements? And why language of nationalism was for them more powerful than idiom of human rights, indignity, race or religion? Consequently, these and other inquires will be challenged on the example of Aceh.

4. Imagined Community of Aceh

The previous chapter presented main arguments of Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism. At the same, it should be noted, that despite academic interest in nationalism, there is still a little consensus on the issue. Anderson's definition of nationalism defines this social phenomenon from one – amongst many other - perspectives. In this way, nationalism cannot be reduced to a single meaning. This was even observed by Benedict Anderson, who wrote that "in contrast to the immense influence that nationalism has exerted on the modern world, plausible theory about it is conspicuously meagre[1]."

This chapter will look at the current capacity of Anderson's theory in application for secessionist and post-colonial movements, on the example of Aceh. There are two reasons why Anderson's theory should be used here. The theory of imagined communities is still very influential despite its limitations. Secondly, Benedict Anderson is a scholar well-known for his interest in Southeast Asia and Indonesia. Hence, the case of Acehnese nationalism is a useful case to assess theory's value for studies of secessionist and nationalist movements.

The subject of analysis, as it was already mentioned in the introduction, will be the development of a modern nationalism in Aceh after the year 1976 with special interest in the post-1989 phases of the conflict in the province[2]. Specifically, the chapter will examine elements of Anderson's theory outlined in a prior part of the thesis: definition of nation, typology of nationalism, nation-building policies and characteristics of nationalism in Southeast Asia. In this way, the paper will argue that Benedict Anderson theory can

[1] Anderson *Imagined Communities*, 3.
[2] About phases of the conflict in Aceh see Chapter 2.3.

explain and define what Aceh nation is. But it fails to explain the complexity of the process that constructed this nationalism. In other words, Anderson's concept might be useful in describing a secular character of Aceh nationalism without showing how exactly Acehnese movement reached this secessionist shape.

4.1. Nationalism as a Response

On a general level of Benedict Anderson's theory it seems quite logical that Acehnese movement transformed into a national one with the main goal of independence. As Anderson argued, after religious communities and dynastic realms, it was a nationalism that emerged as a new social phenomenon. It should be treated not as an ideology, but as a kinship, comradeship or an experience similar to religion. Hence, after the existence of Sultanate of Aceh and the *Darul Islam* revolt after the Second World War, it should be quite natural that Acehnese community took form of national movement.

Anderson noted that there are two paradoxes associated with nationalism that still irritate theorists interested in this academic field: the formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations; and the 'political' power of nationalisms vs. their philosophical poverty[3]. Given the strength and popularity of the idea, it should be also not a surprise that feelings of Acehnese transformed from religious into national in their character. But it is not as apparent as it might seem. Anderson's theory could explain the general logic of changes, but at the same time this logic cannot work in every case. What is even more, it cannot point all reasons and factors that encouraged the Acehnese to frame their aspiration in the idiom of a modern nation.

[3] Anderson *Imagined Communities*, 5.

For Anderson nation is an imagined political community, both limited and sovereign. How then this definition works for the case of Aceh? Starting with the first aspect – nation as an 'imagined' community, it should be observed that Aceh fulfils this criterion. Here, Acehnese elites played an important role in the process of imagination. The history of Aceh as a regional power shows that as early as in 19ct. the sense of national identity could have occurred at the elite level. For example, Chanintira Na Thalang argued: "The Acehnese elite had considered Aceh as a nation prior to 1873. Diplomats were sent out to negotiate and ensure Aceh's sovereignty. Such tasks could not have been carried without an awareness of the nation they claimed to represent[4]." However, there is a lack of evidence that any kind of support for Acehnese nationalism existed on the mass level. As Edward Aspinall observed that "the sultanate [of Aceh] was a loosely organized polity, which did not constitute a territorial nation-state in the modern state[5]."

A modern Acehnese nationalism came into being in 1976 together with the establishment of GAM. The organization was set up by Hasan di Tiro, "a prominent businessman and former representative of the *Darul Islam* rebellion at the United Nations[6]," also a descendant of a family of former Acehnese sultans. However, at the beginning GAM and its vision of Aceh nation were not very popular amongst ordinary Acehnese. The movement was created by elites – intellectuals, businessmen and officials – whose goals differed from problems spoiling others. Hence, also here – as in the past – leaders imagined the nation and constructed the basis of a modern Acehnese nationalism. On the other hand, "though Acehnese nationalism emerged only in modern times (…), this is not to imply that a sense of identity, kinship and belonging is any less real. False

[4] Chanintira Na Thalang, "The fluidity of nationalistic and ethnic aspirations in Aceh," *Nations and Nationalism* 2, Vol. 15 (2009), 324.
[5] Edward Aspinall, "Sovereignty, the Successor State, and Universal Human Rights: History and the International Structuring of Acehnese Nationalism," *Indonesia* 73 (April 2002), 3.
[6] Na Thalang, "The fluidity of nationalistic," 329.

consciousness alone cannot explain why many Acehnese were willing to die for their nation[7]."

There was – and still is - a visible bond between the Acehnese, based on ethnic identity, forged by resistance against the Dutch, the Japanese and later against Indonesian government. This identification enabled people to imagine themselves as a part of one community, called later a nation. But, the Anderson's theory emphasizing just one side of the coin – the process of imagining in the era of print-capitalism, falls shortly in explaining the role of religion in the formation of Acehnese national identity.

Chanintira Na Thalang observed that Acehnese protonationalism was deeply rooted in religion. During the war with the Dutch – called the Holy War[8] - this motivation manifested itself in a popular poem *Perang Sabil*. Written in 1881 in Acehnese language by Islamic scholar Chick Pantee Kulut urged the Acehnese to fight in the name of Allah. But Prangtip Daorueng argued "the spirit of *Perang Sabil* is still a powerful inspiration for most Acehnese today. Different people reproduced the message of the poem in many different forms[9]." Also, during the conflict that erupted in 1976, it inspired people to fight for an independent Aceh.

Perang Sabil has its religious character just as the religion is an important part of Acehnese identity. At the same time, the song could be used for the goals of nationalism – written in vernacular language, the Acehnese opposed to the Indonesian, can unite people and help them imagine their nation. In that case, because of a simple rejection of the religion, Anderson's theory cannot explain all complexities of Acehnese nationalism[10].

The Acehnese form a nation; it is imagined as a horizontal comradeship, based on an ethnic identification. It is also imagined as limited, because it see itself as separated

[7] *Ibidem*, 333.
[8] Also known as The Aceh War (as mentioned in chapter 2), or The Dutch Colonial War in Aceh (DCWA).
[9] Daorueng, "Identity Crisis," 137.
[10] See Chapter 3.1.

from the rest of Indonesia, also from other Indonesian provinces. It is also sovereign, because GAM leaders freely decided to sign Helsinki Peace Agreement in the year 2005, which granted Aceh certain level of self-governance. Hence, the Acehnese – as minority - could realize their right to self-determination on the internal level within Indonesia. Even before the peace accords, GAM leaders saw the Aceh as a sovereign nation that should have a state of its own. In this sense the Acehnese were wrongly colonized by the Javanese and now as 'the people' - under the protection of international law - should have a right to determine their political future. The problem is the best illustrated by the words of the "Declaration of Independence of Acheh – Sumatra" from 4th December 1976:

> "To The peoples Of The World: We, the people of Acheh, Sumatra, exercising our right of self-determination, and protecting our historic right of eminent domain to our fatherland, do hereby declare ourselves free and independent from all political control of the foreign regime of Jakarta and the alien people of the island of Java. (…) Our fatherland, Acheh, Sumatra, had always been a free and independent sovereign State since the world begun[11]."

In general, Anderson's concept of nationalism works for Aceh even though it cannot reveal all details about Acehnese identity, like the role of religion. Hence, if Acehnese nationalism is a real cultural artefact – seen through the lenses of Benedict Anderson's theory, what kind of nationalism it is? Anderson himself defined Acehnese movement as a result of Indonesian New Order policies. For him the Acehnese were excluded emotionally from an imagined community called Indonesia, and what should be done now by Indonesians is to re-invite Acehnese[12]. Despite the problematic assumptions about 're-invitation' in the latter sentence, the former one could serve as a reliable description.

[11] "The Declaration of Independence of Acheh – Sumatra," Acheh, Sumatra, December 4, 1976, http://acehnet.tripod.com/declare.htm.
[12] Anderson, "Indonesian Nationalism Today," 4.

A similar argument could be found in Edward Aspinall's article: "contemporary Acehnese nationalism is primarily reactive in character. Not only did it emerge in response to the depredations of the Indonesian state, but the particular construction of Acehnese national identity promoted by GAM and similar nationalist groups was itself produced by a process of interaction with, and explicit differentiation from, official Indonesian representations of Indonesian national identity[13]." The same is claimed by Chanintira na Thalang who observed that Acehnese elites developed the bases for a national pride by a simple process of contrasting a long history of Aceh with a new Indonesian identity[14].

Referring to the presented typology of nationalist movements, it is possible to say that the 'popular nationalism' seems to be the most apparent category for Aceh. But does Acehnese movement fit it? Acehnese struggle was imagined as 'popular nationalism', liberation from Javanese occupation and in this way it fits the label. However, as in other cases of post-Cold War secessionist movements, this will not show how those groups differ from cases of 19 ct. 'popular nationalism.' Acehnese 'popular' nationalism was imagined by elites, it did not started as a rank-and-file initiative. Also this will not reveal how other factors – like Indonesian nationalism and international actors influenced Acehnese nationalism. In this way, built on a difference and resistance, Acehnese nationalism could be seen as a variation of 'Creole nationalism'. The Acehnese were alienated from metropolis, they had their own history and experiences. At the same time this looks challenging, because the movement was never supported by settlers from Java and other islands living now in Aceh. It is also not a problem to say that Acehnese nationalism is – similar to Indonesian one – a form of 'official nationalism'. Since the year 1976 Acehnese nationalism has presented the past of Aceh in a much more ideological, political and fragmentary way that it was before.

[13] Aspinall, "Sovereignty, the Successor State," 5.
[14] Na Thalang, "The fluidity of nationalistic," 331.

Was it created as an 'anti-colonial nationalism'? Partly yes, because the Aceh shares the similar history with Indonesia, meaning being colonized by the Netherlands. The Acehnese fought with Indonesian for an Indonesian separate state, to drive out the colonizer. But the separate Acehnese nationalism did not emerge at that time. Hence, calling Acehnese nationalism an anti-colonial one, it is necessary to admit that Indonesia was a colonizer. Here facts are different. The Acehnese wholeheartedly became a part of a new republic of Indonesia while maintaining their distinct identity. The declaration from October 15, 1945 by four prominent *ulama* from Aceh could support this argument:

> "Every segment of the population has united in obedience, to stand behind the great leader Ir Soekarno, to await whatever commands (…). It is our firm conviction that this struggle is a sacred struggle which is called a *Perang Sabil*[15]."

In this way, Acehnese nationalism was not a response to a foreign invasion. Rather it was a response to the state's policies like unfulfilled promises of autonomy and a harsh centralization forced on Aceh together with a narrowly interpreted Indonesian nationalism. The main point here is that is it hard to categorize Acehnese nationalism under one label. However, looking at Anderson's observations on sub-state nationalism, this is not a surprise. Acehnese nationalism has elements of popular, official and Creole forms of nationalism with the very strong elements of the last one. What is even more, as a secessionist movement of post-Cold War era it has elements of long-distance nationalism. Aspinall pointed out that: "The arguments about Aceh's historical and legal rights to independence were largely developed by Hasan di Tiro and other nationalist leaders while in exile. Their views reflect the romanticism typical of what Anderson calls

[15] Reid, "War, Peace," 305.

the long-distance nationalism, as well as the frustrations of those seeking international recognition and support[16]."

Problems with the classification of Acehnese nationalism under types provided within Anderson's theory show that critique presented by Partha Chatterjee is relevant. The history of decolonization in Asia and Africa is too complex to classify it under one 'anti-colonial nationalism.' Also, according to Chatterjee distinction between the material and the spiritual domains, it seems apparent that Acehnese nation was a sovereign even under the Dutch rule. It was the spiritual domain of culture and religion, where the Acehnese imagined their nation. United by a common goal, they freely decided to resist the Dutch colonization and freely joined Indonesian independence movement. Hence, as Anderson argued, what is paradoxical about nationalism, it that despite its universal popularity, the concept will be permanently manifested in different ways by different national groups.

Nevertheless, Anderson's concept – due to its simplicity – cannot explain why Acehnese nationalism did not arise during the Revolution with the Dutch, when Indonesian national movement came into being. It may present some reasons, but still the theory could not point out all factors behind the transformation of Acehnese identity.

4.2.Nation-building Policies in Aceh

The second important element of Benedict Anderson's theory is the concept of different ways of imagining a nation. Nation-building policies could form a strategic part of 'official nationalism'; they might be also an outcome of historical events such as the rise of print-capitalism and a widespread use of vernacular languages.

[16] Aspinall, "Sovereignty, the Successor State," 15.

Language is probably the most helpful agent in the development of a particular nationalism. As already mentioned, a primordial character of vernaculars gives them special status enabling their future employment through poetry, literature and anthems. It this way, nation-building policies using a language as a medium of nationalism appear to perform the role of banal nationalism, the concept formulated by Michael Billig[17].

In the case of Aceh, Acehnese language is also a very important way of imaging Acehnese nation. First, the present discourse of nationalism stresses its long history and a true origin, in contrast to relatively new Indonesian language, based on Malay. Hasan di Tiro stressed the distinctiveness of Acehnese language and culture comparing to Indonesian achievements:

> "'Indonesia" is merely a new label, in a totally foreign nomenclature, which has nothing to do with our own history, language, culture, or interests; it was a new label considered useful by the Dutch to replace the despicable "Dutch East Indies", in an attempt to unite administration of their ill-gotten, far-flung colonies[18]."

On the other hand, Anthony Reid observed that the Acehnese appear to have written in Malay as far back as they were able to write, and only from 17 ct. there begin to be evidence of writing in Acehnese[19]. However, this does not hinder the power of Acehnese. *Perang Sabil*, a popular poem-song written in the time of the war with the Dutch, has its undying influence to unite the Acehnese through the language they known the best. For example, "in November 1999, the poem was read in front of a mass gathering (…). The gathering, with participants numbering close to a million, was to demand a referendum for the independence of Aceh[20]." Also, many on-line articles on Aceh conflict starts with

17 Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London : Sage Publications, 1995).
18 "The Declaration of Independence of Acheh."
19 Reid, "War, Peace," 303.
20 Daorueng, "Identity Crisis," 138.

a romantic quote in Acehnese applied because - according to authors – it "describes the feeling of the Acehnese very well these days[21]."

The power of language in the case of Aceh is strengthen not only by the print-capitalism, but by the popularity of the Internet, where Hasan di Tiro's writings are available. At the same time, Elizabeth Drexler found out that many histories on Acehnese nationalism – about a glorious past of Aceh and colonization by the Javanese – were repeated primarily by word of mouth. But, she also claims the printed publications by GAM started to circulate just after the military operation DOM and "most people said they did have or see documents supporting separation during DOM[22]."

Another means of the influence were the 'thousand year old' flag of Aceh and a new calendar issued by di Tiro that "marked ten holidays during the year designed to remind Acehnese of their heroes[23]." Luckily for GAM leaders, Aceh has a rich history and they did not have to go to great lengths to illustrate the golden past of a sovereign Aceh.

In addition to a vernacular, Benedict Anderson pointed out three distinctive ways of imaging the nation that were used by metropolis to unite its colonies. Those were: a map, census, and museum. They laid a foundation for Indonesian nationalism, however later they proved to be also central in the development of Acehnese nationalism. Here, a map and census were not so important concepts like an idea of museum. But still, some geographical categories used by Acehnese need to be defined.

Aceh is known as a 'Verandah of Mecca' (*Serambi Mecca*), a name supposedly given to it by the Arabs in 14th ct. The Acehnese also refer to their land as *Tanoh Meutuah* (the Blessed Land), claiming Aceh was the first place in the Southeast Asia where Islam entered the region. The Acehnese also call their country *Tanoh Lhee Sagoe* (the Triangle

[21] M. N. Djuli, "Aceh for beginners or The Process of Ethnic Dilution in Aceh," http://acehnet.tripod.com/begin.htm.
[22] Drexler, *Aceh, Indonesia*, 69.
[23] Reid, "War, Peace," 307.

Land) – the name that represent the geographical shape of Aceh. In this way, a strategic location of Aceh on Sumatra is also expressed by national myths and histories.

An idea of museum will be of no use without exhibits inside the building portraying the great history of a particular nation and displaying unique national treasures. Thus, the provincial museum in Banda Aceh could be influential because of objects inside it, especially because of a small painting of a plane flying over a landscape of paddy fields. Prangtip Daorueng observed that the painting is not of high artistic value and an outsider might wonder why it is displayed in the museum[24]. The picture, however, presents a part of Acehnese history which in different time was differently narrated.

The plane on the painting is the one that Aceh initially donated to Indonesia in 1948 and later in 1978 gave to the theme park in Jakarta "The Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park (called Mini, established in 1970s by Mrs. Suharto). When in 1948 President Sukarno visited Banda Aceh, Acehnese merchants asked him what they could donate to the new Indonesian nation. Sukarno told them that:

> "I suggest that you (…) buy an airplane, the best if it is a Dakota, and I will not mind if you gentlemen want to name it yourselves. The regions that I have visited are already capable of buying an airplane for their region[25]."

The collected money enabled merchants to buy two planes, one of then was donated to Indonesia in the name of the people of Aceh (*rakyat Aceh*). Hence, when asked in 1970s what they contribute to the park presenting cultural inheritance of Indonesia, the Acehnese pointed at the plane as the symbol of their participation in the Indonesian nation-building project. But the narration around the plane changed. After the eruption of separatist claims, the Acehnese see the plan as a sign of the injustice done to Aceh by the 'ungrateful' Javanese: violated promises to make Aceh a province, the massive human

[24] Daorueng, "Identity Crisis," 134.
[25] *Perjundjungan Presiden Soekarno ke Atjeh*, 1948, 45. Quoted after Drexler, *Aceh, Indonesia*, 52.

rights abuses and the rejection of Acehnese identity as a valuable part of Indonesian nationalism[26].

Exhibits, museums, usage of language and poetry, flags and anthems – all those help people to imagine their nation. However, as Breully argued Benedict Anderson's theory concentrating only on cultural aspects of nation-building policies, omits their political agenda. For example, it does not explain how political organizations in power, like GAM, could influence and change discourses of nationalism according to their goals.

In 1948 Hasan di Tiro wrote a pamphlet called *The Atjeh War 1973-1927*, in which di Tiro wanted "to bring the strengths of Acehnese history into Indonesian national culture in much the same way Soekarno did when soliciting the donation of the Dakota[27]." Yet, writing in 1960s and 1970s, di Tiro's version of the relationship between Acehnese independence and Indonesian nationalism changed dramatically. In 1968, Hasan di Tiro argued that Aceh has been a subject to colonization since 1911, the death of the last king, and that the last colonization was done by the Javanese. What is important is that in 1948 di Tiro labelled the present administration as Indonesian and national one, but just twenty years he started to name the government as a Javanese colonialist one.

The political goals of nationalism can change. Hence, the narratives around it also have to be transformed and reinterpreted. Hasan di Tiro needed to unite the people for the cause of an independent Aceh, but at the same time he did not want to rely on negative experiences, like human rights abuses or disappointment with Indonesia. Elizabeth Drexler argued that in this situation "Tiro cannot point to the plane, or to living memories of specific historical events; he must call upon an imagined history through distant ancestors and vanished kingdoms[28]." However, Anderson's theory cannot show how this process of

[26] Drexler, *Aceh, Indonesia*, 60.
[27] *Ibidem*, 70.
[28] *Ibidem*, 74.

re-writing history was used for political goals. It also fails shortly in explaining how nation-building polices based only on culture could continue after the Tsunami and how the imagination will be forged after the Helsinki Agreement. But most importantly, the concept does not make it clear why the process of re-writing history has happened in Aceh.

4.3. Between Ethnicity and Reality

The last part of the analysis of Acehnese nationalism will concentrate on issues connected with the region of Southeast Asia. As was already mentioned, Benedict Anderson argued that the concept of national minority came into existence in Southeast Asia together with the issue of national majorities forming new states. Anderson also distinguished different types of minorities present in the region, claiming that some of those groups were forced to transform their identities in order to take part in majoritarian – usually ethnic – politics.

Similar problems could be observed in the case of Aceh. Here, it is possible to distinguish two levels of analysis: first of the Acehnese as a minority within Indonesia; and second – minorities present in the province of Aceh. Before the conflict with Jakarta, the Acehnese had never seen themselves through the idiom of national minority. In fact, as Anderson argued this perception came together with the end of decolonization. On the other hand – looking at the previous argument of Partha Chatterjee - it seems that normative framing of those issues in a majoritarian perspective could only reinforce the problem. Hence, if Anderson argued that the concept of national minority arrived in Asia recently as a new idea, he should not have reproduced it.

John Bowen, for example, looked at Indonesian issues from a different perspective of normative pluralism. First of all, he observed that after the fall of Suharto regime more individuals and groups started to formulate claims to self-governance. Such groups usually

argued to represent 'the people' bound together by a set of norms and values[29]. Sometimes such foundations were based on religious norms. However, in most cases those groups referred to norms of *adat*, which means local norms, practices and values. In particular, *adat* norms could be understood as social values, law-like codes, cultural trappings of wedding ceremonies, cuisine, also a way of governing resources and resolving disputes. As Bowen claimed, groups applied a concept of '*adat* community' because it gave them a legitimacy to act in the name of society. The most important is, however, that "these political self-conceptions and claims do not always involve a general notion of prior residence or even minority status – Javanese organizations claim the importance of *adat* norms as well[30]."

Adat norms, together with concepts of 'ethnic community', 'national minority' or religion were used by various groups in Indonesia as political instruments in public debates. Nevertheless, it is necessary to be conscious that the reality could be different. Especially, in a country like Indonesia where 300 different ethnic groups and indigenous peoples are dispersed through the archipelago it is hard to speak about 'national minorities' in the international – 'westernized' – sense of the word.

In this sense, the portrayal of Acehnese struggle by international media as a liberation movement by the 'Acehnese people' could be seen as misunderstanding. But, at the same this rhetoric of minorities and majorities was evoked by GAM. Hasan di Tiro used this international language on purpose to show that the Acehnese as minority are occupied and colonized by the Javanese, the biggest ethnic group in Indonesia. For di Tiro there existed no Indonesians, just the Javanese. It is not surprise that such a narrative

[29] John Bowen, "Normative Pluralism in Indonesia: Regions, Religions, and Ethnicities," in *Multiculturalism in Asia*, Will Kymlicka and Baogang He, editors, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 155.
[30] *Ibidem*, 157.

resulted in deliberate killings of Javanese migrants in Aceh done by GAM para-military organization TNA.

On the level of the province, the picture of GAM as acting in the name of the Acehnese is also not accurate. The central, southeast, and southern districts are composed of non-Acehnese people, like Gayo (Gayonese) and Alas communities. Chanintira na Thalang pointed out that divisions between those groups and the Acehnese started to intensify during the period of DOM, when the former began to felt alienated by the policies of GAM. Such animosities were easily exploited by the military and as a result the support for GOLKAR in Aceh, the main party during the Suharto's era, was the strongest in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities. This fosters Anderson's argument about ethnicized politics in the region[31].

In the beginning of *reformasi* era there were made plans to split Aceh into two provinces to hinder actions of Acehnese movement, but they did not gain needed support. Also, non-Acehnese people of Aceh repeatedly urged Jakarta to recognize them as a distinct province[32]. After the Tsunami, those calls to break up the Aceh province into two or three other provinces have renewed[33]. The Helsinki Agreement stated that the existing boundaries of Aceh will stay unchanged, but at the same time it did not provide any incentives or special rights provided for other ethnic groups. Hence, at this moment much will depend on how new political elites will incorporate non-Acehnese in the wider process of democratization.

[31] See Chapter 2.2.
[32] Bowen, "Normative Pluralism in Indonesia," 160.
[33] This problem still existes: "The campaign to create two new provinces within Aceh is heating up, although there is no chance of a division before the elections [April 2009 parliamentary elections]. But in two districts leading the campaign, Bener Meriah and Central Aceh, there is real concern about possible violence between ex-militia and GAM, especially if local candidates deliberately fuel anti-GAM sentiment." "Indonesia: Pre-Election Anxieties in Aceh," International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 81, September 9, 2008. http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5664.

Acehnese nationalism is clearly ethnic; it was created as such and later presented in international categories of 'minorities'. Bowden, quite rightly, observed that "in this case referring to the residents of Aceh as an 'Acehnese people' sides with Acehnese nationalists against those other residents of the province who see their interests as intertwined with the Indonesian state and threaten by the prospect of an independent Aceh[34]." Still, the question remains – what shape will take Acehnese nationalism in the post-Tsunami period? Will the Acehnese be haunted by the concept of 'minority' now being a non-dominated majority in their province and enjoying self-governance rights? In that sense, the function of a new post-Tsunami Acehnese nationalism will be depended on its ability to be inclusive enough. Even before the Helsinki Agreement, many Acehnese separated themselves from the goals of GAM while generally supporting the concept of Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh). Therefore, elites need to remember that the conflict is over and now they – instead of Jakarta – will be examined, judged and given a mark at the end.

The problem leads to a very interesting concept of fluidity of ethnic and national aspiration in Aceh, introduced by Chanintira na Thalang. In an article on the topic, she showed that it is possible to understand Acehnese nationalism as fluctuating because the ideological bases for nationalism are constantly shifting. Chanintira na Thalang noted that Acehnese nationalist elites due to their selective use together with a deliberate avoidance of various historical points also contributed to this fluctuations[35]. However, she made it clear that: "despite the fluctuations of nationalist goals and the changes in the selection of history to form the basis of the construction of nationalism at a particular time, a strong sense of Acehnese identity and pride in its historical past still remains a constant[36]."

[34] Bowen, "Normative Pluralism in Indonesia," 160.
[35] Na Thalang, "The fluidity of nationalistic," 336.
[36] *Ibidem*, 337.

* * *

The analysis of Acehnese nationalism reveals strengths and weaknesses of Benedict Anderson's approach. Generally, while his theory applied to Aceh shows what it is the content of Acehnese nationalism it does not show how Acehnese nationalism was filled with this content. It shows that Acehnese nationalism is secular, but it does provide an answer why it is secular. Specifically, it is possible to identify a few problems. Before doing it, it is important to clarify what Anderson's theory is able to explain.

Firstly, the analysis provides a clear definition of Acehnese nation and nationalism. Secondly, it points to connections between Acehnese and Indonesian nationalisms and shows nation-building politics of GAM – the use of language and museum. It reveals changes within Acehnese national discourses (in example – the narration about the plane). Finally, it is possible to observe a reifying character of Acehnese nationalism in a version pursed by GAM. What is interesting, this also shows that GAM itself used an international language of 'national minority'.

At the same time, this analysis cannot explain how particular elements of Acehnese nationalism were created. First, it does not say anything about the religion and its importance for the Acehnese. Then, despite showing connections between Indonesia and Aceh, it does not show how and what parts of Acehnese nationalism were influenced by Indonesian nationalism. Simply it does not explain the character of the connection. Thirdly, it does not reveal political goals of GAM and links between it and international community. For example, how it happened that GAM knows the 'international language' of minorities? As a final point, it does not provide answer whether there are another actors involved in the creation of Acehnese nationalism.

Concluding, Benedict Anderson's theory is a useful for analysis of Acehnese nationalism because it explains why the Acehnese can be equalled with the term 'national community'. Besides it shows how leaders and elite employed the concept of nationalism. However, the weaknesses of Anderson's approach might lead to the reification of Acehnese nationalism through the only one known GAM version. Hence, it is important to supplement Anderson's concept looking at internal and external factors that influenced Acehnese nationalism. This will also explain how Acehnese nationalism came to exist in its current version of a national movement. In this situation, Anderson's theory is a good starting point for an examination of separatist movement, but it needs to be developed looking at political realities around the nationalism that came to exist.

5. Shaping Acehnese Nationalism

In the prior chapter Acehnese nationalism was analyzed using the Benedict Anderson's theory. It showed that the concept of an imagined community can explain many important characteristics of Acehnese national movement, as the employment of a language for political purposes, or the process of an ethnicization. This proves that while Benedict Anderson's theory can explain the content of Acehnese nationalism, it cannot explain how Acehnese nationalism was filled with this content. In particular, it cannot explain why Acehnese nationalism is expressed in secular terms.

Consequently, to understand the shape of Acehnese nationalism it is necessary to look both at internal and external factors. This analysis will explain how Acehnese nationalism came into being, what will strengthen the Anderson's analysis of the content of Acehnese nationalism. In this way, this chapter will argue that the current shape of Acehnese national movement is a result of internal and external factors influencing on-going conflict in Aceh. This means that while Anderson's theory is helpful to understand the case of Aceh, it does not take into account all features of sub-state nationalism. Yet, this kind of nationalism involves the true process of constructing a nation. However, in the case of self-determination movements the process of imagining is strongly influenced both by a parental state and international community. Hence, a detailed analysis of those factors could supplement the concept of imagined community and make it valuable for an examination of sub-state nationalisms.

At the same time, it should be noted that the analysis of external and internal factors is useful as long as it is based on prior study of sub-state nationalism using

Anderson's theory. Replacing the theory with internal and external factors will not explain how Acehnese nationalism is a self-determination movement, because it is in fact the theory that point out those factors. The prior chapter shows what questions are left without answer and identifies internal and external factors. In this way, this chapter supplements a previous one and helps explain problems that are beyond the scope of Anderson's theory.

5.1. Means of Influence

Jacques Bertrand argued that violent ethnic conflict is often generated during periods of change. Also, nationalism - together with factors like discrimination, disadvantage and political mobilization – could lead to the conflict. For Bertrand an ethnic violence could be also seen as a defensive and offensive response to changing opportunity structures. In that sense, nations because of their dichotomy of exclusion and inclusion could provide a base for an ethnic conflict. His historical institutionalist approach can explain "why violent conflict is often generated during periods of change. When institutions are weaken during transition periods, allocations of power and resources become open from competition. More fundamentally, ethnic groups can renegotiate the concept of the nation that underlies institutional structures, perpetuates an uneven distribution of power and resources, or specifies terms of inclusion that disadvantage them[1]."

Bertrand introduced the concept of "critical junctures" that help explaining the rise of ethnic violence, pointing on power institutions and past compromises, negotiations or repressions[2]. At the same time, he observed that most of scholars rejected the argument that mere group – ethnic or national – identity could lead to the conflict. Hence, it is

[1] Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, 10.
[2] *Ibidem*, figure 1, 22.

important to look at the factors associated with a parental state that might triggered the conflict or that just influence the strategies of ethnic groups. In the case of Aceh, such factors – called internal ones, are connected with the place of Aceh within Indonesian and also with Indonesian realities. Thus, Acehnese nationalism was influenced by internal factors like Indonesian nationalism and politics, the religious factor, discourses around Indonesian history and Indonesian economy. Two first ones will be analyzed here as the most important ones that deeply shaped current Acehnese nationalism. Also, they are chosen because they correspond to weaknesses of Anderson's theory.

The analysis done in the previous chapter defined what Acehnese nationalism is and pointed existing connections between Indonesia and Aceh. However, it did not explain the character of those links. Also, it did not say about the role of religion in creating Acehnese nationalism. In this way, examination of those internal factors can help explain how Acehnese nationalism gained its current shape, not only why it is possible to call Acehnese community a national one. For those reasons, this chapter will argue that Indonesian politics and the change of regime, together with the place of religion within Indonesia influenced the evolution of Acehnese movement into a national one.

On the international level, it is necessary to point out that nowadays many domestic conflicts could easily change into worldwide-known affairs. K. M. de Silva and R. J. May addressed the issue in a publication *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict*. Ralph R. Premdas, analyzing theoretical bases of internationalization[3], argued that links between internal and external environment surrounding the conflict are usually economic, ethnic and moral in character. Especially, the last one – moral and ethnic link could draw international attention, what in turn might lead to international intervention in the case of human rights abuses. Premdas observed that "ethnic strife, as a variant of warfare,

[3] Ralph R. Premdas, „The internationalization of ethnic conflict," in *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict*, K. M. de Silva and R. J. May, editors (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991), 10-25.

inevitably generates its share of victims. Where minorities are involved, as they are always in ethnic conflicts, special attention is drawn internationally to the conflict[4]."

Acehnese nationalism is not an exception here. The discourse of nationalism was utilized by GAM as an internationally tested successful concept. Also, various international actors intervened in the conflict, mostly transnational actors like INGOs or IGOs. It should also be remembered that the Memorandum of Understanding was signed under international supervision, and the text of it is accessible for everyone in the world having an access to the Internet. For those reasons, Acehnese nationalism should be analyzed also as an outcome of international dynamics and forces. In particular, two important external factors need to be addressed: structure of international relations (IR) and international discourses on human rights. As in the case of internal factors, chosen external ones are based on weakness of Anderson's theory.

Examination of Acehnese nationalism in a prior chapter showed that Acehnese leaders knew the 'internal language' of minorities and nationalism. On the other hand, it did not explain links between the Acehnese and international community. Similarly, it limits Acehnese nationalism to the actions of GAM. In that sense, the analysis of external factors can help explain connections between the Acehnese and outer world, what in turn will show why and how Acehnese nationalism is expressed in secular terms. It will also clarify how international community influenced not only GAM but also other Acehnese.

Finally, a following analysis of internal and external factors supplements Anderson's theory because it takes into consideration political goals of separatist movements and global processes happening after the end of Cold War.

[4] Premdas, „The internationalization," 14.

5.2. Internal Factors

5.2.1. Indonesian Politics and Nationalism

In their latest works William Nessen, Edward Aspinall and M. Isa Sulaiman[5] called readers' attention to a very visible feature of all studies on Aceh. Most of those examinations subscribe to so called 'orthodox view' on Aceh stressing discontinuity of its history. For Nessen this view is based on two arguments: "first, large numbers if Acehnese have only recently supported independence; second, that popularity is largely the product of historical contingencies, unnecessary repression and other "mistakes" by Indonesian government[6]." Also, three above mentioned authors observed that the most frequently emphasized source of conflict in Aceh is the New Order. This perspective – visible in many general overviews of Aceh - could provide the lack of legitimacy for Acehnese nationalists. The problem arises because many look at the New Order as something that suddenly appeared. Thus, Acehnese nationalism also happened all of sudden.

Applying Bertrand model of critical junctures makes it possible to see that the New Order is not a product of a magic and mystification. It is a part of Indonesian history, and the ground for it was prepared well before the year 1966. In this way, Acehnese nationalism also did not take place out of nothing. Acehnese nationalism is not a product of just New Order. Yet, Dry Rot Order was an important factor for its development, but the movement was supported before the fall of Suharto. It is important to distinguish here

[5] William Nessen, "Sentiments Made Visible: The Rise and Reason of Aceh's National Liberation Movement," in *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, Anthony Reid, editor (Seattle: Singapore University Press, with University of Washington Press, 2006), 177-198; Edward Aspinall, "Violence and Identity Formation in Aceh under Indonesian rule," in *Verandah of Violence*, Anthony Reid, 149-176; M. Isa Sulaiman, "From Autonomy to Periphery: A Critical Evaluation of the Acehnese Nationalist Movement," in *Verandah of Violence*, Anthony Reid, 121-148.

[6] Nessen, "Sentiments Made Visible," 177.

between the visible support by masses and the hidden sentiment that could have not been expressed before 1998. In that sense, it was not a New Order itself that caused Acehnese nationalism, but rather the critical turning point in history that helped the Acehnese to articulate their will. Thus, more important was what happened before the New Order and what did not happened after it, than just the New Order which was the burden for all Indonesians, not only the Acehnese.

The construction of Indonesian nationalism realized through politics played an important role in shaping Acehnese nationalism in its current version of secular, self-determination movement. What should be remembered is that this influence was taking place from the beginning of Aceh in Indonesia, not just in years 1966-1998. Some of the authors like Sulaiman, a historian from Aceh[7], developed the argument, arguing that Indonesian nationalism was an important factor for the construction of Acehnese identity even before the independence of Indonesia. Sulaiman wrote: "The suffering of Aceh from economic and political exploitation was not solely caused by the New Order government but had been going on ever since the colonial government integrated the Sultanate into the new national political environment with its centre in Jakarta at the turn of twentieth century. This made the region a production base for the national and global economy[8]."

Coming back to contemporary times, Nessen and Aspinall compared two Acehnese struggles: the *Darul Islam* revolt from the 1950s and a current post-Suharto conflict. First of all, Aspinall observed that the state violence in both periods was of the same level of greatness. For example, in 1995 a series of massacres happened in Aceh, known as Pulot Leupung-Cot Jeumpa killings, what – despite the religious character of the revolt, strengthen ethnic bonds between the Acehnese. One of the responses to the killings was the

[7] M. Isa Sulaiman was one of the most reliable of Aceh's historians. He died tragically in 2004 as a victim of Tsunami. The book *Verandah of Violence* is dedicated to him and all of Aceh's victims.
[8] M. Isa Sulaiman, "From Autonomy to Periphery," 139.

establishment of the *Front Pemuda Aceh* (Acehnese Youth Front), which organized public gatherings and conferences not only in Aceh, but also in Jakarta, Medan and Bandung.

Military behaviour in contemporary Aceh took form of more institutionalized, involving many illegal activities, but at the same time "it does appear that there was a significant escalation in scale and ferocity by the 1990s[9]." Deliberate display of corpses, their mutilation and targeting civilian activist soon became a norm. As in 1950s, the violence led to the rise of public movement. One of the most important organizations established in that time, was SIRA (*Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh*, the Aceh Referendum Information Center) created in 1999 with the referendum goal. Huge referendum rallies happened in 1999 and 2000, but they did not gain the support of other Indonesian organizations. Aspinall observed that initially students and Acehnese youth did not think about an independent Aceh as their main aspiration. But the massacres committed by military in 1999[10], when a new government promised to apply a new approach to the Aceh problem, "completed their transition from human rights activists to hardened Acehnese nationalist[11]." Aspinall pointed out that the violence reinforced existing nationalist ideologies, both in the case of Aceh and Indonesia.

The year of 1998 was like a critical juncture for the Acehnese, the sentiment and GAM went 'public'. However, as Nessen observed this independence sentiment was already visible in Aceh from the end of 1980s. In this way, the DOM and state violence introduced in 1989 should not be seen as a factor providing GAM with a greater support. Rather, Nessen argued, the repression of New Order was a response to a growing national sentiment in Aceh[12]. The popularity of GAM at that time was overwhelming.

[9] Aspinall, "Violence and Identity Formation," 165.
[10] Like „Simpang KKA" massacre in North Aceh in May 1999, and massacre in Beutong Ateuh in Central Aceh in July 1999.
[11] Aspinall, "Violence and Identity Formation," 169.
[12] Nessen, "Sentiments Made Visible," 190-191.

Crushed by DOM and violence, independence movement re-emerged with the end of Suharto dictatorship in two versions: GAM struggle and civil society organizations[13]. But this great opportunity for a final resolution of "the Problem of Indonesia in Aceh" (*Masalah Indonesia di Aceh*) failed. For Bertrand it is clear that the escalation of conflict happened due to the inability of a new government to respond to Acehnese claims for justice[14]. In that way, it was a failed democratization of the early *reformasi* period that strengthened ethnonationalist demands. Aleksius Jemadu observed also, that the new nation-building policy in Aceh was full of inconsistencies and paradoxes[15]. For example, despite the fact that President B. J. Habibie apologized the Acehnese for the violence of the DOM era and promised to introduce new development projects, it was during his presidency that the one of the most brutal killings of the Acehnese took place[16]. Abdurrahman Wahid's policy was not better in that sense. He wanted to resolve the conflict peacefully, but he failed to make the military subservient to his policies and to prevent TNI from using violence in Aceh. President Megawati Sukarnoputri, concerned with a territorially integration, did not want to "win hearts and minds" of the Acehnese and perceived TNI as her natural ally[17].

For those reasons, uneasy and difficult relationships between the President, the government and the military marked the Indonesian policy towards Aceh in the post-Suharto era. It generated a mass support for an independence movement; the new military operations and "wrong" democratization in Aceh led to the rise of nationalist demands. What is also important is that the Indonesian side did not make use of the power of

[13] Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, 174.
[14] "Demonstrators demanded a withdrawal of soldiers from the region and investigation into human rights abuses committed by the armed forces over the past decade." *Ibidem*, 174.
[15] Aleksius Jemadu, "Democratisation and the Dilemma of Nation-building in Post-Suharto Indonesia: the case of Aceh," *Asian Ethnicity* 3, Vol. 5 (2004), 322.
[16] It was already mentioned massacre in Beutong Ateuh in Central Aceh of 23 July 1999, when 57 students and their teacher were killed.
[17] Jemadu, "Democratisation and the Dilemma of Nation-building," 326.

Acehnese civil society, serving as alternative to GAM guerrilla fighting. When systematic repression started in 2000, GAM survived much better that the referendum movement. By the end of next year, it was the only organization representing demands of Acehnese nation ready to negotiate with Indonesia, even if for many common Acehnese GAM and TNI were evils of the same kind.

Another problem was the redeployment of Acehnese struggle by Indonesian nationalism. State-sponsored productions, like film *The Dutch Colonial War in Acheh* presented the Acehnese as violent by their nature. Drexler wrote that: "the notion that Acehnese people fanatically pursue revenge, which justified (…) military repression during DOM, continued after the TNI's public apology for its "excesses," constituting a continuing treat to the unity of the nation[18]." Drexler argued that partly due to this discourse the common Indonesians were unaware of the human rights abuses happening in Aceh. Interesting comment offers Arno Waizenegger: "A year before the tsunami, 50% of Indonesians supported some form of military intervention in Aceh. Following the tsunami, Indonesian television reports were full of tears and prayers, with the leading TV news channel covering the tsunami calamity for 40 days around the clock under the title "Indonesia is Weeping[19]."

5.2.2. The Role of Religion

Why Acehnese nationalism developed into a secular, self-determination movement instead of religious struggle? The answer seems to be very clear - the religion could not serve as a marker of difference between the Acehnese and the Indonesian. This is of great

[18] Drexler, *Aceh, Indonesia*, 64.
[19] Arno Waizenegger, "Armed Separatism and the 2004 Tsunami in Aceh," *Canada Asia Commentary* 43 (February 2007), 5.

importance, comparing for example the conflict in Aceh with Muslim minorities' movements like Islamist resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines[20]. But, the closer examination of Acehnese movement could easily show that the issue is not so evident. In this way, the examination of religion as an internal factor will strengthen Anderson's theory that cannot explain the importance of Islam for Acehnese nationalism. The concept of imagined community was useful in describing the secular shape of it, but it did not present the process of 'secularization' what will be done here.

Talking about Acehnese nationalism, it is possible to analyze the religious factor at three different levels. First of all, there is the religion as a factor influencing the development of Acehnese national movement, including the changing position of religious leaders within Aceh and Indonesia. Secondly, religion was used by Indonesian government as a mean to hinder actions of GAM and the Acehnese. Finally, the religion was a characteristic important for a media portrayal of Acehnese nationalism.

Starting with the first issue, it is necessary to recall events connected with the *Darul Islam* rebellion. This resistance movement aiming at establishment of Indonesian Islamic State (*Negara Islam Indonesia*) was lead by Acehnese *ulama*, supreme leaders of Aceh. Well before the 1953, the *ulama* shared the power with the *uleebalang* (Aceh territorial chief). However, from the beginning of Dutch presence in Aceh, the two leaderships were separated by colonial administration. The *uleebalang* were appointed regional administrators, what marginalized the *ulama*. The latter radicalized, formed a resistance movement and organized themselves through PUSA (*Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh*, All-Aceh Association of Ulama) established in 1939. At the same time, the PUSA *ulama* were not hostile to the emerging idea of Indonesia[21]. Hence, during the Revolution with the Dutch, the *ulama* supported the resistance and supported Indonesian Islamic organizations,

[20] More see Chapter 2.2.
[21] Aspinall, "From Islamism to nationalism," 249.

like a modernist party *Masjumi*. Also, with the beginning of Indonesia, "the *uleebalang* lost their legitimacy as they were viewed as a left over institution from the colonial period, a group no longer representing the general interest[22]." The *ulama* soon became the natural leaders of Aceh.

In this situation, it is not a surprise that *Darul Islam* was organized by the *ulama*, who wanted to increased the role of religion and to strengthen the autonomy of Aceh. As already mentioned in previous chapters, the religion was – and still is – a very important part of Acehnese identity. But the *ulama* happened to constitute Aceh's leadership of 1950s not only because of special features of Acehnese common identification. The transformation of power structures together with decolonization processes also helped the *ulama*. Making an argument about the moment of GAM establishment, Aspinall observed: "A chief factor which delayed the emergence of separate national sentiment was Islam. When Acehnese leaders filled the empty concept of 'Indonesia', they did so with Islam[23]."

The concept of 'delayed nationalism' works well until the question is asked – why then GAM was not created by the *ulama*? In fact, the new struggle could not have been organized by religious leaders. After the decline of *Darul Islam*, many of the *ulama* of Aceh joined the Indonesian Ulama Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI), the government sponsored body that in turn supported all government policies. In this way, the *ulama* were denied political access, suffered from the lack of leadership what led to the dispersion of their power[24]. Shaw and Aspinall claimed this marginalization of the *ulama* during New Order[25] – similar to the marginalization of the the *uleebalang* during 1940s

[22] Robert Shaw, „Aceh's Struggle for Independence: Considering the Role of Islam in Separatist Conflict," *al Nakhlah*, The Fletcher School Online Journal on Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization, Fall 2008, 3.
[23] Aspinall, "From Islamism to nationalism," 250.
[24] Shaw, „Aceh's Struggle for Independence," 4-5.
[25] About the issue and the rise of 'technocrats' within Aceh see: Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion*, 28-51.

and 1950s – together with growing pro-independence sentiment created GAM as a political organization.

The organization adopted the language of nationalism instead of religion, as it was seen as the best option to channel Acehnese grievances. However, Islam always constituted an important part of GAM members' identity, including Hasan di Tiro, who previously supported *Darul Islam*. Also, many grass-root leaders expressed their views through the idiom of Islam when they addressed their rural supporters[26] and described their struggle as a religious duty comparing it with the War with the Dutch. It is also possible to say that GAM's goals would have been fatally undermined if it had declared itself a secular organization[27]. For example, in 1999 GAM used the mosque network to spread information. More importantly, for members of Acehnese national movement religion was a part of their culture. They did not have to fight for it, it organized their lives. Thus, their struggle was expressed in secular terms.

Despite the fact that GAM had not declared openly its secular character, simultaneously it distanced itself from other Islamic movements. In 1980s while GAM was looking for an outside help and training, Libya and Iran offered their support. Leaders of GAM chose Libya's offer, not because it was much better, but just because Iran conditioned their proposition on GAM assuming Islamic character[28]. After the 11 September 2001 attacks, GAM leaders were quick to condemn them and disavow any sympathy for advocates of global *jihad*[29]. In the same vein, GAM prevented militant *jihadist* groups from their establishment in Aceh after the year 2001. Currently, when after the Tsunami two Islamist groups (*Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia*, MMI and the *Front Pembala Islam*, FPI) appeared in Aceh to provide humanitarian relief, GAM leaders

[26] Aspinall, "From Islamism to nationalism," 253.
[27] Shaw, „Aceh's Struggle for Independence," 7.
[28] *Ibidem*, 7.
[29] Aspinall, "From Islamism to nationalism," 254.

opposed this. SIRA as a voice of civil society issued its own statement that said: "Laskar Mujahidin and FPI's presence would steer the conflict in Aceh into a religious one[30]."

The conflict was not seen by the Acehnese as a religious one, but the Indonesian side went to great lengths to present conflict in this way. Here comes the second function of the religion, when it was used by Indonesian government as a way to resolve a conflict. First, as it was already mentioned Indonesian nationalism presented the Acehnese struggle with the Dutch as a fanatic, religious and violent one. The bravery and rebelliousness of the Acehnese was a part of their culture, having foundation in a religion.

In this way, the Indonesian government argued that the current conflict is also about the religion. Hence, to present GAM as grouping Islamic separatist rebels the Indonesian side pursued a dual-track strategy. On the one hand, military officers operating in Aceh condemned activities of GAM presenting it as the organization embracing and promoting secularism. At the same time, military tried to Islamized the image of TNI in Aceh by painting Arabic prayers on vehicles or repairing prayer-halls[31]. On the other hand, to resolve the conflict the government introduced two autonomy packages[32] that included implementation of *Shari'a* law. Especially, the latter one, the NAD law from 2001 granted the Aceh the right to establish its own Islamic legal system. However, the Acehnese responded to this with a great critique. Hasan di Tiro said that the Acehnese struggle had nothing to do with *Shari'ah* law, and that this move does not resolve the conflict. SIRA described the offer as a trick to portray Islam in Aceh as fundamentalist one[33]. Also, the

[30] Yang Razali Kassim, "Gam, Islam and the Future of Aceh," *IDSS Commentaries* 07/2005, Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies NTU, Singapore, 1.
[31] Aspinall, "From Islamism to nationalism," 257.
[32] The Law No.44/1999 of the Specialty of the Special Province of Aceh and the Law No.18/2001 on Special Autonomy for The Special Province of Aceh as Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (that changed the Aceh name to NAD - 'State of Aceh, Abode of Peace').
[33] Michelle Ann Miller, "The Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Law: A Serious Response to Acehnese Separatism?" *Asian Ethnicity* 3, Vol. 5 (2004), 343.

appearing flaws in the process of its implementation[34] created "a political image of *Shari'ah* that was based more on the perpetuation of violence than on the attainment of social justice[35]." On the other hand, it is interesting to observe that LOGA strengthen the process of *Shari'ah* implementation at the same time guaranteeing the freedom of religion in the province[36].

Edward Aspinall pointed out that "the obvious irony was that the government responded to the crisis of the 1990s with a package (autonomy with *shari'a*) which precisely fulfilled the demands made by *Darul Islam* in the 1950s, without taking account of the subsequent ideological shifts[37]." This responds with the third function of the religion in the conflict. The Indonesian reaction and the implementation of *Shari'ah* created many misunderstandings in the external picture of the Acehnese conflict. Especially, it created the perception that religion played the most important role in GAM's fight for independence[38]. Robert Shaw observed that the media like *The Associated Press* or *The Financial Times* labeled the group as "Islamic separatist rebels" and "Aceh's Islamic Militants[39]." This presentation of the conflict in Aceh, together with the growing Islamophobia prevented GAM from the accurate presentation of their grievances and partly discredited it[40].

[34] *Ibidem*, 344-345.
[35] *Ibidem*, 345.
[36] Bernhard May, "Law on the Governing of Aceh – A Brief Review and Assessment," www.geocities.com/bouviersmith/bin/May-governing_aceh.ppt, slide 65-66.
[37] Aspinall, "From Islamism to nationalism," 257.
[38] Shaw, „Aceh's Struggle for Independence," 10.
[39] *Ibidem*, 10.
[40] *Ibidem*, 10-11.

5.3. External Factors

5.3.1. Structure of International Relations

Nationalist movements are Janus-faced not only because they both look back to a mythical past and forward to a prosperous future. It is also because "they look both inward, toward the collectivity that comprises the nation, and outward, toward the community of nations which they aspire to join[41]. In this way, all nationalisms and especially those formed as a secessionist movement should be seen as a product of interaction between nationalist groups and external world. The same applied to Aceh, which was formed under the pressure of changes, happening both in Indonesia and in the world.

The current form of Acehnese nationalism was deeply influenced by the structure of international relations, in particular after the end of the Cold War. First of all, the 1990s changes brought the rise of separatist movements and the dissolution of multiethnic states like Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Secondly, together with the increase in number of self-determination conflict, the world observed growing influence of international organizations like IGOs and INGOs. The latter one led to the development of many local NGOs, strengthening grass-root activities. At the same time, many local organizations remained connected to the transnational structures, what enabled them to lobby in better ways and to gain international attention. Finally, secessionist movement quickly learned than in order to be successful they need to attract international actors rather than control the territory to which they lay claim. Thus, they made use of new existing mechanisms of global politics.

In the case of Aceh, it is possible to observe two main outcomes of the 1990s international relations' influence on Acehnese nationalism. Soon after the end of Cold War

[41] Aspinall, "Sovereignty, the Successor State," 23.

era leaders of GAM changed their anti-imperialist tone to the language of "humanitarian intervention" and "international law." Secondly, they pursued a strategy of internationalization seeing the international actors as the most reliable ones.

The key to the problem lies in an old international disagreement on the right to self-determination, a most important feature of modern nation-states. There is a great number of definitions explaining what means "self", who are "the people" to which the right applies and how the right is linked to the concept of statehood. More problematically, the right to self-determination, understood sometimes as equal to the right to secession[42] coincides with the principle of territorial integrity of states – *uti possidetis*. During the process of decolonization, the people were inhabitants of colonies. However, at the same time they were to exercise their right to self-determination only within the existing boundaries of colonies.

Acehnese national movement responded and applied this rhetoric, making use of existing ambiguities over the right to self-determination. First of all, the Indonesian government was pictured as a "Javanese colonial government" or "neo-colonial Indonesian government," second more preferred by student activists[43]. In this way, GAM wanted to appeal to the international community using the idiom of decolonization. One of GAM spokespersons, Ishak Daud, recapitulated the issue as follows:

> "As a colonized nation, [the Acehnese] are granted right by the UN to resist the colonialist by all means, including by using arms. Because the colonialism is viewed as an international crime…. We requested that all civilized nations, particularly the members of the UN, obey UN resolutions. Because therein it is said that all member nations of the UN are obliged to finish off the colonialists. They also prohibit anyone whatsoever from using violence against those nations which are struggling for their freedom[44]."

[42] More on the right to secession and the problem see Chapter 2.2.
[43] Aspinall, "Sovereignty, the Successor State," 10.
[44] "GAM Serang Konvoi Reo di Aceh Timur," *Serambi Indonesia*, May 15, 2001. Quoted after Aspinall, "Sovereignty, the Successor State," 11.

However, the employed idiom of colonization did not work so well for the Acehnese. Thus, GAM decided to strengthen it by reference to sovereign Sultanate of Aceh and its past. Responding to international treaties signed by Sultan of Aceh like 1819 Treaty of Aceh, leaders of GAM tried to show that long before the establishment of present international system Aceh was a part of its previous version. In fact, GAM argued that the Aceh was a legitimate sovereign actor in the 19 ct. what means that its incorporation into the Dutch East Indies was never valid. Now the only way for Aceh is to secede from Indonesia. Only this step can invalidate illegal annexation of Aceh and give the Acehnese back their sovereignty. The Acehnese tried to use opportunities provided for them by international law. But the successor state idea had also many problematic assumptions[45].

Hasan di Tiro was educated abroad; he had many international connections and knew that the Western support, especially from the UN and the US was needed if they wanted to win[46]. Also, the case of East Timor encouraged GAM as they wanted the same international help as the East Timorese were able to gain. Yet, as Aspinall observed that the situation of East Timor comparing to Aceh was completely different[47].

The second major impact of international relations on Acehnese nationalism was that due to the structure of global system GAM "viewed internationalization as the only way to achieve independence[48]." GAM leaders thought that only external actors could press Indonesia and support their struggle[49]. Hasan di Tiro explained it:

> "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 Indonesians – I am not interested in them – absolutely not[50]."

[45] More about the problem see Chapter 4.
[46] Aspinall, "Sovereignty, the Successor State," 10.
[47] *Ibidem*, 17.
[48] Schulze, "The Free Aceh Movement," 51.
[49] *Ibidem*, 51-54.
[50] Kirsten E. Schulze's interview with Hasan di Tiro, February 22, 2002. Quoted after Schulze, "The Free Aceh Movement," 52.

This presentation of issue made it harder for GAM to negotiate directly with the Indonesian government. But the lobbying had some effects and all of the peace negotiations were carried out by international actors: from 2000 to 2003 facilitated by the Henry Dunant Center (HDC), a Swiss NGO; and from 2004 to 2005 – by Martti Ahtisaari and his organization Crisis Management Initiative (CMI)[51]. The result of last post-Tsunami negotiations – Helsinki Peace Accords, known as the Memorandum of Understanding was implemented under international supervision (Aceh Monitoring Mission led by EU).

Martti Ahtisaari brought the peace to Aceh, but he did not provide the Acehnese independence. Why? William Nessen argued - before the year 2005 – that international community presented the dismissive attitude towards claims of the Acehnese. Hence, in the eyes of international actors, what the Acehnese needed was "some justice, economic fairness, and peace[52]." Nessen developed the argument and claimed that: "In Aceh, despite an overwhelming desire for independence and an unending roll-call of Indonesian brutality, foreign governments, NGOs, policy analysts and others have all sought to convince the Acehnese to accept Indonesian rule. No one - except the Acehnese themselves - proposes independence as a solution[53]."

At the same time it is also necessary to mention that GAM strategy of internationalization was not only a tactical trick. It made the Acehnese aware of the power of international institutions, influencing also their identity. International developments – together with opening of Indonesia after 1998 - changed also Acehnese civil society and provide them with new opportunities of co-operation and contact.

[51] See also Chapter 2.3.
[52] William Nessen, "Why not independence? Challenging the myths about Aceh's national liberation movement," *Asian Tribune*, Published on February 02, 2005. http://www.asiantribune.com/oldsite/show_article.php?id=2170
[53] *Ibidem.*

5.3.2. Global Discourses on Human Rights

Global changes have also their impact on civil society in Aceh. Like it was already mentioned, many student groups developed after the year 1998 with SIRA as the best known. However, the character and goals of those groups that also claimed to represent the will of the Acehnese were different that those presented by GAM. Most of NGOs did not formally support the idea of self-determination and independence. Rather they were initially influenced by international discourses on human rights.

First of all, *reformasi* period was the time of fast proliferation of NGOs, including international ones in Aceh. Inspired by East Timor blueprint many of them look for the support of human rights organizations. International organizations were a useful tool, because they were able to document abuses and massacres that happened in Aceh during New Order and that was to happen soon after 1998. Human rights NGOs "have played an important role in the Aceh conflict, with their reports on human rights abuses regularly translated into Indonesian and circulated widely in the territory[54]." Also, such reports were important for GAM lobbying through the UN institutions and the U.S. Congress. As an example it is possible to mention 2005 report of Minority Rights Group International "Aceh: Then and Now" prepared by Lesley McCulloch, portraying abuses and activities of the military in Aceh.

Secondly, discourse on human rights was another opportunity for Acehnese nationalists to claim their right to secession. Pointing at wide-spread human rights abuses in Aceh, Acehnese activists argued that Indonesia lost its moral right to govern over Aceh. The argument was clearly ethnical. The subsequent discoveries of mass graves in Aceh were called by the Acehnese an "ethnic cleansing" and "extreme racial discrimination."

[54] Aspinall, "Sovereignty, the Successor State," 21.

SIRA pointed at the referendum with the option of full independence as an only reliable democratic way to decide over human rights abuses in Aceh:

> "The Acehnese people as a part of universal citizens must have freedom and total support for self-governed governance and self-determination. This Acehnese future good-will is backed by the fact that is in the era of Aceh's integration into Indonesia, Aceh suffer from injustice, human rights violations, environment exploitation, and colonization[55]."

This language did not subscribe to concepts of Indonesia as colonizer developed by Hasan di Tiro. Yet, it was a valid foundation for Acehnese claims over the right to secession. As Hurst Hannum observed, massive violations of human rights give the group the right to secede, although it not an international legal norm[56]. "It is important to remember, however, that such exceptions are based primarily on the need to alleviate human suffering, not on the acceptance of the impossible equation of one nation to one state[57]."

Those events show clearly that apart from a partisan character of GAM struggle, the Acehnese organized themselves in a civil society, understanding a nation not only as an inheritance, but as a project for a future. And that they did so under the international influence of transnational actors. In that sense, it might be useful to recall Kymlicka's argument on the character of nationalist politics: "States have typically justified stripping minorities of their traditional self-government by arguing that these minorities were 'backward' and that their traditions of government and law were 'uncivilized'. (…) [However,] when nationalist leaders say that their traditions of law and self-government should be respected, they are really saying that their nation is capable of exercising the

[55] "For Peace and Democracy, Acehnese Consistently Fight for Referendum in spite of Having Intimidation," Press Release, Statement by Aceh Referendum Information Centre (ARIC/SIRA) http://acehnet.tripod.com/sira.htm.
[56] See Chapter 2.2.
[57] Hannum, "The spectre of Secession," 16.

right to decide on issues of law and government. They do not mean that they wish to exercise these national rights in an 'authentically traditional' way[58]."

In that sense, the international community had a great impact on Acehnese nationalist leaders. They, together with civil society, adopted the language of human rights, international politics and multiculturalism in order to be recognized on the global arena. At the same time, the same language influenced them, their perception and future of Aceh.

The changes that occurred in Aceh after the Tsunami are a good example of this. Due to Tsunami many international workers arrived in Aceh, which – according to Indonesian propaganda – was seen as a place of fanatic Muslims and of great danger. Yet, many activists are still working in Aceh together with the Acehnese. However, at the same the policies of big INGOs coming to the Aceh after the Tsunami undermined local capacity and in extreme cases led to the collapse of many Indonesian NGOs. Secondly, problems and demands of many groups, like women, minority groups and indigenous people were not taken into account. Hence, it is important to say that the problems faced by the Acehnese might be resolved only when the Acehnese are included in the process, when they initiate and form the process. Also, at this moment it is hard to predict how the post-Tsunami presence of international NGOs promoting minority rights will shape current Acehnese nationalism. Will it promote multiculturalism between different ethnic groups in Aceh and inclusion, or maybe it will lead to more nationalistic demands?

The words of Anthony Reid, who delivered a speech on the opening of Aceh Cultural Institute in 2005, could be seen as an answer to all hesitations over the present nature of Acehnese nationalism:

[58] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys. Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 145.

> "It is astonishing to see what a cosmopolitan city Banda Aceh has become since the tsunami, with thousands of people from all over the world joining in the reconstruction efforts. (…)
>
> As far as I can see Acehnese have reacted very well to this remarkable influx of diverse people, of all nationalities and religions, despite fears in some quarters that Aceh was a homogeneous and closed society which would have problems adjusting. For those who know the long term history of Aceh and its place in the world, this should not be surprising. It has in fact been the genius of Aceh to be able to maintain a high degree of both cosmopolitanism and a strong sense of the importance and uniqueness of its own culture. (…)
>
> As Aceh now rebuilds itself after the tsunami, I believe there is a distinct possibility to utilize this moment of cosmopolitanism to help rebuild its Acehnese-ness, and vice-versa. The large number of outsiders now in Aceh may be considered a cultural threat, in one sense. But as the Balinese know very well, foreigners want to appreciate what is unique in the society they visit, not what is just like the McDonalds back home[59]."

[59] Anthony Reid, "The Cosmopolitanism and uniqueness of Aceh," Lecture, 4 June 2005, http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/Aceh-project/AnthonyReidLecture-Jun2005-Aceh.pdf, 1-3.

6. Conclusions

Nationalism has its strength and weakness. Both as ideology and cultural artefact, the concept could be easily transplanted and adjusted to different environments. What is more, it can still, after so many years of the existence astonish people and make them asking – why there is secular nationalism in Aceh while the Acehnese are 'fanatic Muslims'? A good point to single out: despite its relative poverty, nationalism makes people thinking. They start to look at things differently. After a closer examination they can even find out that 'obvious' things are not so 'obvious'.

In this way, the thesis proved to tackle an important topic. It showed how communities are able to acquire national identity still maintaining its attachment to the religion. The Acehnese form a nation, their nation has unique characteristics in the sense that it is impossible to describe it only in few words, or only through the lenses of one theory. Acehnese nationalism was created under special circumstances – both on the Indonesian and global level, what is reflected in its present shape. The Acehnese are sovereign and of free will, now internally exercising their right to self-determination.

The thesis argued that the process of imaging a nation by the Acehnese was strengthen by the internal (domestic, within Indonesia) and external (international) factors influencing on-going conflict. The argument was proven in the analysis of Acehnese nationalism using the theory of imagined communities that was later supplemented by an additional examination of internal and external factors. Whereas Anderson's theory was useful in describing Acehnese nationalism, subsequent study of factors explained clearly how Acehnese nationalism gained its current shape. Chosen factors did not come out of

sudden; they were singled out on the basis of weaknesses of Anderson's theory. Thus, a separate analysis of each factor supplemented corresponding part of the prior study.

The analysis of Indonesian politics strengthened the argument on the reactive nature of Acehnese nationalism showing what is the character of this connection, how it evolved and how it influenced the process of imagining Aceh nation. Secondly, the analysis of the religious factor helped understand why it is possible that the Acehnese form a secular nation at the same time preserving their religious identity. This was not explained by Anderson's theory, which, however was a good point to start, because it defined clearly what Aceh nation is – its boundaries, nation-building policies and why it cannot correspond to a one distinctive type of Anderson's nationalisms.

The subsequent analysis of external, international factors strengthen Anderson's concept in different ways. The fourth chapter pointed at the employment of 'international language' of minorities and nationalism by the leader of GAM. But, at the same time, it did not explain how the Acehnese happened to be familiar with subtleties of international law. Hence, the analysis of the structure of international relations and its impact made it clear how the Acehnese were influenced by external actors. It showed how important the outer world was for the process of imagining a nation in Aceh. In this way, the structure of international relations could be seen as a variable influencing the secular shape of Acehnese nationalism.

The later analysis of discourses on human rights as the second external factor supported the argument that limiting Acehnese nationalism to GAM will in fact reify the nation. Aceh nation was imagined not only thanks to activities of Acehnese Free Movement, nor was it only a project of elites. Acehnese nationalism was created by the Acehnese – civil society in Aceh, students and common people who were eager to express their grievances when possible. In that sense, while Anderson's theory explained Acehnese

nationalism and its content, the examination of internal and external factors clarified how Acehnese nationalism was filled with this content. The thesis had to be based on two foundations because Acehnese nationalism was a result both of imagining a nation by the Acehnese and of exterior actors' influence.

The picture of Acehnese nationalism emerging from the analysis shows how diverse could be nationalism. First of all, Acehnese nationalism should be understood broadly in its Indonesian context. Only this will show, that the Acehnese in fact supported national struggle even before the end of Suharto era. It is also possible to say, that the Acehnese started to form a national community earlier, for example during *Darul Islam* revolt when ethnic bonds between them were strengthen. Acehnese nationalism is expressed in secular terms, but at the same time national identity finds its power in religion. This duality of Aceh nation was then exploited by the Indonesian government, which portrayed the Acehnese nationalism as an Islamic militant one.

The strength of Acehnese nationalism lies in its connections with the outer world. The Acehnese were deeply inspired not only by ideas of nationalism, but also by discourses of human rights, self-determination, minority rights and decolonization. This particularly shows that it is hard to understand the logic of sub-state nationalism without looking at the activity of international community. Generally, the analysis of Acehnese nationalism shows how Acehnese separatist movement came to be imagined in secular terms of Acehnese nationalism. In this sense, the thesis proved the Janus-faced nature of sub-state nationalism: it could be imagined between the people, in the community, but it obtains the final shape under the pressure coming from a parental state and international community. Consequently, the thesis showed the limitations of the theory of imagined communities together with the possibility of its strengthening. It also demonstrated that sub-state nationalism may not always follow previous models of nationalism. In reality,

a separatist movement might take ‘the best parts’ from all different types of nationalism in order to fulfil its political goals.

On a more general level, the thesis illustrated the argument that the pure group identity cannot be seen a cause of conflict. In contrast, it could be the disagreement that might reinforce and reify this identity. In that sense, it is important to remember another feature of nationalism: fluidity. Because nationalism is imagined as a project for future, it can change and accustom to new realities. This however does not make a national identity less real. Nations are able to exist regardless of what can be written about them.

The hypothesis stated in the introduction was proven, what shows that the current shape of new types of nationalism cannot be explained using only a one approach. At the same time, it is impossible to predict now in which direction Acehnese nationalism will evolve. Internationalization and the spread of multiculturalism might offer the Acehnese many incentives, thus transforming their identity into more inclusive one. At the end of the day however it is not important how exclusive or inclusive one is. What is important is the hope that the saying “no more mass killings in Aceh” will become a binding one.

Appendix 1. Maps of the Region

Picture 1. The province of Aceh within Indonesia

Source: Wikipedia Commons. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IndonesiaAceh.png (accessed May 25, 2009).

Picture 2. The province of Aceh

Source: http://www.abc.net.au/news/indepth/aceh/map_aceh2.htm (accessed May 25, 2009).

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