

The Role of Women and Peace Building: A Case Study of Inong Bale in Aceh

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Abstract

In the spiral of conflict and violence, women tend to be the most vulnerable parties to become victims of conflict. Women are one of the parties most affected by the war, this is because women are often victims of violence and injustice due to gender discrimination and pre-existing social strata. Inong Balee is one of the wings of the GAM struggle which is considered by the central government as part of the separatist movement in the Aceh conflict era. Inong Balee has an important role in GAM as well as to complement GAM's struggle during the Aceh conflict. In the case of Inong Bale, the application of the post-conflict bottom-up women's movement model could be the most appropriate approach in the transition process. With the cooperation of all relevant parties.

Keywords

Peace; conflict; the role of women



I. Introduction

The world is increasingly being hit by various violence and escalation of conflict, both on a domestic (intrastate) and interstate (interstate) scale, making peace efforts seem to never cease to be a task that must be fought for. Palestine still faces Israeli blockade and occupation (Farr, 2011), Syrian refugees continue to seek protection for their basic right to survive (Rygiel et al., 2016), and the Rohingya people almost experience the same reality, rejected by their own homeland (Farzana, 2015; Imran et al., 2014). Other cases like the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria (Weeraratne, 2017), rampant rape cases in India (Raj & McDougal, 2014), as well as radicalism and acts of violence in Indonesia also provide a picture of the reality of conflicts around the world that are increasingly threatening harmonious life.

In the spiral of conflict and violence, women tend to be the most vulnerable parties to become victims of conflict (Charli Carpenter, 2005). Women are one of the parties most affected by the war, this is because women are often victims of violence and injustice due to gender discrimination and pre-existing social strata. (Chinkin & Charlesworth, 2006);(Davies & True, 2015)). However, this does not necessarily close the opportunity for women to take part in the formation of peace during war. Society provides a narrow space and there is even no room for women to take part in the vortex of conflict other than being victims, even though women actually have the potential to become initiators and maintain peace at the community level. (Kent, 2014; Kirby & Shepherd, 2016). The stories and activism of women from conflict zones are increasing and are evidence that they are actively contributing as agents of peace, such as Yousafzai in Pakistan for girls' education rights. (Niam, 2021). Leymah Gbowee who leads the women's movement for peace in Liberia (Prasch, 2015)Tawakkol Karman for women's rights in Yemen (Benomar, 2013; KARMAN, 2018)Rachel Corrie for Palestine, and more (Abdulhadi et al., 2010) .

Regarding women in terms of peacebuilding or peacebuilding, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security has been released as a legal blueprint to protect women's rights. This resolution is the starting point for the world's recognition of

the violence and gender imbalance that has been afflicting women (Cohn, 2008; Pratt & Richter-Devroe, 2011). This resolution was set to increase the number of women in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts, ensuring women's participation in decision-making processes, and adopting a gender perspective in peace agreements. It is very important to recognize the needs and position of women because women are often the most disadvantaged from the peace benefits caused by gender unequal policies.

In Indonesia, women also play an important role during times of conflict, as has happened to Inong Balee in Aceh (Barter, 2015; Srimulyani, 2016). Inong Balee is one of the wings of the GAM struggle which is considered by the central government as part of the separatist movement in the Aceh conflict era (Husin, 2020; Rahmawati, 2019). Inong Balee has an important role in GAM as well as to complement GAM's struggle during the Aceh conflict (Husin, 2020; Rahmawati, 2019). The Inong Balee movement is part of GAM's mission of struggle, aiming to separate itself from the Republic of Indonesia to reshape Neugara Aceh (State of Aceh). Inong Balee's fighting spirit was inspired by the Acehese women's movement in the past, the fighting spirit of Cut Meutia, Cut Nyak Dhien, Admiral Keumalahayati and Sulthanah Safiatuddin, some of the Acehese women's figures fought without being accompanied by their beloved husbands, because they had already been martyred (Husin, 2020; Rahmawati, 2019).

With this background, this paper aims to analyze the substance of the overall meaning of peace and create a basic understanding of peace itself, especially through cases that have been proven to involve women in peacebuilding. Furthermore, feminism and gender perspectives are also used to support the analysis to explain the gender paradox in the context of peace and people's daily lives.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Gender and Feminism

Because among the general public the term "gender" still has multiple interpretations, many tend to be ambiguous or lack understanding of the true meaning of gender (Hauge, 2020). Gender is not only about women's rights and the defense of women. Gender contextual ambiguity also occurs when the term gender is misinterpreted with the terms "sex" and "feminism" (Jenkins, 2016).

Gender is socially shaped to distinguish the identities of men and women whose construction then has serious consequences for social roles in both the public and private sectors (Ashe & Harland, 2014; Hagen, 2016). Gender also consists of collective attributes and behaviors that are culturally designed to distinguish the social roles of men and women. Thus, gender is culturally and socially constructed to influence the lives of men and women (Ashe & Harland, 2014; Hagen, 2016). Men are labeled masculine, strong, rationalistic, tough and so on, while women tend to be feminine, emotional, and gentle (Jenkins, 2016). The labels are construction and changeable/dynamic, not patented. This is different from sex (sex) which is defined to distinguish male and female genitalia according to their biological function (Buckley-Zistel, 2013; Orgeret, 2016). Sex is natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal. Sex character is given and cannot be changed in terms of its biological function (Carter, 2016; Orgeret, 2016).

Meanwhile, feminism can be defined as the whole idea and movement to defend women's rights related to justice and gender equality carried out by women and/or men activists (Jauhola, 2016). The concept of feminism talks about, for, and to women. It has certain constituents, namely women and a certain goal, namely liberation (Jauhola, 2016;

Orgeret, 2016). Feminism exists as a form of protest against male domination and aims to foster a life of peace, harmony, and equality by mutual cooperation between men and women for a better world.

2.2 Galtung's Theory of Peace

The renowned peace studies expert Johan Galtung became one of the foundations for the formation of a theoretical framework on the meaning of peace. Galtung stated that peace is the absence or reduction of all kinds of violence as well as a form of creative and nonviolent conflict transformation (“peace is the absence/reduction of violence of all kinds, and then peace is nonviolent and creative conflict transformation”)(Galtung, 2017). He then introduced two concepts of peace, namely negative peace and positive peace which can be described as follows:

a. Negative Peace

The basic understanding of negative peace is the absence of war and the absence of direct violence (Bhatia, 2021; Taufik, 2020). This concept is commonly used to describe conditions after the end of the World War era(Guilherme, 2017). Negative peace also tends to be similar to the concept of a balance of power which believes that war will not occur – which means peace will be created – when the power between countries is equal.(Bhatia, 2021). Galtung also mentions that negative peace, like a ceasefire, is an intellectually simplified category that lends itself to the description of negation (violence versus its absence).(Sharp, 2020). Furthermore, negative peace is also present as a marker of the absence of direct violence that injures and harms the community. That is why the negative peace area tends to address the issue of how to reduce violence(Penu & Essaw, 2019). Negative peace is the initial stage of the means of peace.

b. Positive Peace

Positive peace provides a deeper meaning of peace (beyond negative peace), defined as the absence of all forms of violence including direct, cultural, and structural violence. Positive peace requires cooperation, harmony and mutual understanding between people(Galtung, 2017).

Galtung divides positive peace into 3 typologies: Direct positive peace, in the form of verbal and physical virtues and is intended for all basic needs, survival, welfare, freedom, and identity; Structural positive peace, namely freedom from all forms of repression (pressure/restraint/oppression) and equality from exploitation which is strengthened by dialogue, integration, solidarity, and participation as a negation of penetration, segmentation, fragmentation, and marginalization; Cultural positive peace is the replacement of the legitimacy of violence by the legitimacy of peace. In the concept of inner space, this means being open to the existence of various human tendencies and abilities (Galtung, 2017).

2.3 Literature Review

The end of the World War era is not a sign that peace has achieved its goals. Peace studies still have a long way to go to be actualized in daily life activities (Lambourne & Rodriguez Carreon, 2016). Since peace is an ongoing process and requires continuity for its continuation, the meaning of peace does not only mean the absence of war, but must transcend to the presence of a harmonious life. (Klem, 2018). Peace scholars and activists have their own perspectives on defining peace and offer ideas on how to create it (Nilsson & González Marín, 2020).

Studies on Inong Balee have attracted the attention of previous researchers. From a political and gender perspective, it examines how the involvement of Inong Balee troops in the post-peace social, economic and political fields, how gender relations with peacebuilding, how they access resources, involvement in decision-making, whether they become creative and reliable agencies after peace(Rahmawati et al., 2018), efforts to control the existence of women (Inong Balee) in the setting of political drama (masculine political power) The relationship between forms of masculinity with militarization and violence(Kunz et al., 2018), post-peace identity negotiations, from ethnic nationalism to Indonesian nationalism(Rahmawati et al., 2018).

Another study in the perspective of public policy, explains the role and policies of the Aceh Party in fighting for the welfare of former Inong Balee troops(Hasyim, 2018). In the communication study, it is also studied about how "self-disclosure", the integration process, interaction and communication patterns of the Inong Balee troops after the Aceh peace(Lisa Musfirah, 2015). The historical study also reveals about Inong Balee's behavior during the DOM (Military Operations Area) in Aceh. Inong Balee's involvement in the Aceh conflict was influenced by the historical narrative of the triumph of the Aceh sultanate, GAM ideological education, military education, experiences of violence and GAM encouragement.(Akob & Nuryanti, 2019).

III. Research Method

The research method used in this research is the literature review method. Literature study is research conducted by researchers by collecting a number of books, magazines relating to the problem and research objectives. The book is considered a source of data to be processed and analyzed as many historians, literature and language experts do. The research he did was by reviewing and comparing library sources to obtain theoretical data. The data sources in this research are articles related to Inong Balee.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1 Woman as Peace Agents

Feminist activism has heavily promoted gender justice to end conflict and bring peace. Feminists realize that gender blindness actually triggers gender-based violence against women, especially during times of increasingly severe conflict(Ashe & Harland, 2014). Victimization of women will only be taken for granted because of the lack of awareness of women's protection. As a subject of feminism(Disler et al., 2019), women often cross subversive areas first to gain access to equality(Enloe, 2014). Feminism considers the consequences of differences in gender roles in the public and domestic spheres as important points because they will affect women's voices in the midst of the roar of masculinity domination.(Ashe & Harland, 2014)

However, the feminist movement step by step has proven to be able to break the odd boundaries of gender, and then encourage women to increase their participation in the public sphere. To make women visible in the context of peace, women must be part of peace talks (Reardon & Snauwaert, 2011). Narrative evidence that continues to emerge from various women's figures and movements around the world shows that women are potential actors to become agents of peace(Hauge, 2020). Thus, these achievements will spread feminist optimism that women cannot be denied from the peace decision-making process(Buckley-Zistel, 2013).

4.2 Realizing a Gender Perspective in Peace Building

The adoption of a gender perspective into the peace process is urgently needed because the gender perspective is so far the only perspective that can balance the position of women and provide many possibilities for women to have their rights recognized in the post-conflict context.(Buckley-Zistel, 2013). Conflict has placed women and children as the most vulnerable, burdened and victimized directly, both biologically/sexually, politically and economically. Women seem to be neglected in times of conflict because their voices are simply denied(ZAKIYAH et al., 2017).

(Ashe, 2019) argues that in every stage of the peace process, women are very important to be included in order to avoid the replication of structural injustices. Listening to women's voices about their conflict experiences will provide an opportunity to understand what women really need after the conflict(Buckley-Zistel, 2013). If women are neglected in peace talks, the peace agreement will contain gender-blind agreement points between the parties to the conflict, unless negotiators have the gender sensitivity and awareness to adopt them into the peace agreement.(Gregory et al., 2016; Weber, 2021).

The lack of women's involvement in peace talks may not be solely because women are victims of conflict, but because of the lack of women's figures as political leaders in society which makes women invisible as potential actors for formal peace negotiations.(O'Reilly, 2016; Weber, 2021). This is a fact of a structural patriarchal system that places women in the worst conditions during conflict or even post-conflict. This is why women's testimonies are such a basic resource that women's voices must be heard as part of the important considerations for a just peace. Like men, it doesn't matter whether women have had a positive impact on the peace process or not, they have the right to participate.

It has been proven in many conflict cases that conflict does not end with the signing of peace treaties alone, but peacebuilding and peacekeeping require a strong commitment to lifelong dynamic changes related to strengthening peace itself. These ongoing processes will be effective if all elements of peace are involved together with the gender-wise principle. The goal of adopting Gender principles is increasingly important for developing priorities such as "Gender integration, process orientation, empowerment, participation, ownership and control, inclusivity, overcoming structural barriers, holistic approach, giving voice and being heard, macro analysis, equality and diversity,(Ashe, 2019).

In UN Security Council Resolution Number 1325 it is stated that "reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace. and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution". Thus, it is clear that women should be involved during the peace process because their conflict experiences are different and their voices should be heard to prevent potential post-conflict injustice(Weber, 2021).

4.3 Case Study: The Forgotten Story of Inong Bale in the Aceh Peace Agreement

The Aceh conflict occurred due to community resistance through the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) against the Indonesian National Army (TNI) as the vanguard of the government of the Republic of Indonesia. This conflict was triggered by an imbalance between the prosperity and development of the center (Jakarta) and the regions (Aceh).(Rahmawati, 2019). GAM seeks independence and freedom and is willing to secede from the Republic of Indonesia. Thousands of violent victims fell as a result of this conflict(Husin, 2020; Rahmawati et al., 2018).

In the context of the Aceh conflict, there are not a few Acehese women's groups who act as female combatants/guerrillas to support GAM's military actions, one of which is Inong Bale who has an important contribution to peace in Aceh.(Husin, 2020; Rahmawati et al., 2018). Inong Bale was formed from a group of Acehese women from various backgrounds who were motivated to join GAM(Husin, 2020; Rahmawati et al., 2018). Freedom and revenge are their main reasons for fighting. Many of them were wives who had lost their husbands who had been killed by the TNI. That's what lies behind their title as "Inong Bale" which means "widow warrior".

Nearly two decades have passed since the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was agreed and signed between the Government of Indonesia (RI) and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) on August 15, 2005, facilitated by the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI).(Rahmawati, 2019). However, this peace agreement forgot the role of a female combatant named Inong Bale. The most challenging phase in peace is reintegration due to the complexity and long-term process, unfortunately the MoU does not place gender-based sensitivity as part of peace agreement decision-making(Hasyim, 2018; Lisa Musfirah, 2015). The reintegration program policy begins with gender inequality towards female ex-combatants who are not clearly stated as beneficiaries of the reintegration program(Lisa Musfirah, 2015). The MoU does not accommodate and recognize the role of female combatants in the context of the Aceh conflict(Hasyim, 2018)

An unequal peace policy like this proves that women are the most disadvantaged and Inong Bale's experience uniquely demonstrates their double burden in conflict. Even though the ceasefire and peace signing have taken place, they have not received justice and are still experiencing social and economic challenges. However, peacebuilding must be strengthened in daily life in Aceh. As stated in the opening of the MoU that peace in Aceh brings dignity to all, the women's movement scheme is highly recommended as a tool to assist the reintegration process of female ex-combatants.

As victims of conflict, women are often the worst victims, both physically and mentally. This fact also happened to Inong Bale, they still have to suffer and struggle in the post-conflict era. The peace agreement has not brought justice for them at all because they are not recognized as one of the beneficiaries in the peace policy. The women's movement is believed to be the right tool to support them in their search for real peace and justice in the post-conflict era

4.4 Challenges for Sustainable Peacebuilding

In conflict situations, Inong Bale is not only involved as an actor or perpetrator, but they are also victims. Double burdens (double burden) are often experienced by women in patriarchal conflict systems (Synder in et al(Sandone, 2009), they are placed in a disadvantaged situation both physically and mentally. This reality makes them suffer long agony and distances them from normal life.

Inong Bale plays an important contribution in their struggle which is unique because of their ability to perform multiple tasks or functions flexibly at once. They not only face great risks as combatants during the conflict, but can also perform several tasks that GAM soldiers cannot do such as acting as spies by gathering information about the TNI that is useful for GAM to develop attack strategies, provide logistics, medical assistance. , and gun guards. But when they failed, the TNI would kidnap them and take them to prison. Not infrequently they were tortured, raped, and killed by members of the TNI.

There are at least four main reasons that motivated them to finally decide to join GAM as Inong Bale. First, they have a passion for fighting for freedom and justice for the people of Aceh because they are tired of conflict and poverty. Second, most of them want

to take revenge on the TNI who killed and kidnapped their families. Third, they are victims of physical and sexual violence perpetrated by the TNI. Fourth, most of them were recruited by GAM members in their villages.

On the other hand, Inong Bale suffered greatly as a victim of the conflict. Conflict has made women victims in many ways. Physically they were brutally tortured by members of the military and hundreds of them were sexually abused. Women are often raped as an act of war (Frödin, 2008). The Multi Stakeholder Review (2009) reported that there were around 3,800 female ex-combatants and most of them had experienced sexual harassment mainly because of their affiliation with GAM.

Nevertheless, in general the Acehnese acknowledge that peace is a very significant achievement in their history that should be grateful for. They can move on with their lives, free to move and travel at any time. Security is back to normal, there are no more besieged soldiers and public infrastructure is built for a better social and economic life. Several female ex-combatants turned to new jobs such as small traders, tailors, administrative staff, and so on. Indeed they are in better and more conducive living conditions than before.

Successful post-conflict peacebuilding requires a long-term process. Thus, it is a bit risky to declare successful implementation of peace agreements in a short time because the reintegration process itself takes at least five years after the end of the conflict. In addition, the reinsertion or re-adaptation process brings a deeper understanding of peace building, when everyone can mingle with ex-combatants in all aspects of life.

As stated in the opening of the MoU, peace in Aceh should be achieved with dignity for all. This is what must be understood and then followed up with concrete actions. Because one of the parties has not been accommodated, peace in Aceh has not really been achieved comprehensively. If left unchecked, the sustainability of peace building in Aceh will be very fragile because disappointment can escalate into hatred and pessimism about peace itself. This means that gender-wise character is an important component to be included in the peace agreement process.

Therefore, the women's movement became an alternative to help Inong Bale enter their new life after the conflict and help them to get rights and justice for the benefits of peace. The emergence of the Aceh Inong League (LINA) led by Shadia Marhaban which focuses on empowering female ex-combatants to enter the peace transition process. As part of a social movement, the women's movement specifically encourages mobilization based on the affirmation of women as constituents and organizational strategies (Lisa Musfirah, 2015). Adopting the bottom-up approach to the women's movement (bottom-up approach), LINA plays their efforts from the grassroots level of female ex-combatants to try to mobilize resources among potential parties. (Hasyim, 2018).

Different from other women's organizations in Aceh, LINA prefers education over an economic-based orientation as their way to empower female ex-combatants. They managed to hold political and democratic training in 13 districts in Aceh. This program is considered the most successful program in educating female ex-combatants. They teach comprehensively about MoUs, democracy, politics, gender, and women's involvement in public roles. Politics can restore the essence of women from conflict violence. This program is tailored to the needs of reintegration, for example on how to change the perspective of female ex-combatants from war to peace in terms of livelihoods.

However, post-conflict women's movements such as LINA cannot survive if they stand alone without the support and consolidation of other related parties. Because the lack of recognition of female ex-combatants is exacerbated by the social system that applies patriarchal domination, they only institutionalize male domination which legitimizes their actions and makes women as objects. (Galtung, 2017). Sustainable peace building will be

threatened if discrimination still occurs in many aspects. Therefore, broad recognition is needed because this is a basic part that must be faced by all women and the people of Aceh. As long as segregation and discrimination against female ex-combatants persist, the foundations of peace building will also remain fragile. On the other hand, if it is well recognized, the consolidation between the women's movement and all related parties will move forward. These two steps will encourage women's empowerment along with the movement, because there is no longer exclusivity or even friction in their movement.

V. Conclusion

Inong Bale's story deserves to be recorded because of their struggles and involvement as part of the long road to peace. It provides rich lessons on the role of women in conflict areas. They also wisely participate in building peace. This reality should be an important consideration in the peace agreement. Ideally, all relevant parties should support and accommodate the needs of women ex-combatants. It is difficult for them to stay afloat with their limitations. Society, government, and other organizations are very valuable parties to support their movement. So in truth, peace building is a continuous process that must be continuously maintained in daily life. In the case of Inong Bale, the application of the post-conflict bottom-up women's movement model can be the most appropriate approach in the transition process. With the cooperation of all relevant parties, this can be an alternative way to achieve justice for female ex-combatants and true peace for all that is also gender-friendly.

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