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Preachers, pirates and peace-building: Examining non-violent hegemonic masculinities in Aceh

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ABSTRACT

With respect to research on violent conflict, violent masculinities and masculinities linked to military or military-style organizations have received considerable attention. Such forms of violent masculinity are often seen as hegemonic. Based on our research in Aceh, Indonesia, we suggest that the conflation of hegemonic forms of masculinity with militarization and violence overlooks the many ways in which civilian men use political mechanisms of hegemonic masculinity to create consent while remaining explicitly non-violent and thus contribute to non-violent ways of managing conflict. Drawing on vignettes of Acehnese men's experiences, we identify three strategies of conflict prevention and management to achieve relative hegemony in non-violent ways: strategic appeasement, creating safe spaces and transforming militarized masculinities. The ways in which these men participate in peace-building contribute to reducing violence, yet do not necessarily challenge hegemonic masculinities. Our case study of conflict-related masculinities in Aceh paints a nuanced picture of what comes to be seen as hegemonic in a given society at a given point in time and what can be contested. We demonstrate the importance of understanding conflict management through an approach that includes non-violent forms of masculinities and focuses on hegemonic masculinity as a political mechanism of consent creation.

KEYWORDS Aceh; Indonesia; hegemonic masculinities; peace-building; conflict; gender

Introduction

The links between conflict, peace and masculinities/femininities have been analyzed a great deal. In the relevant literature, the focus is often on a particular and narrow reading of hegemonic masculinities, which is problematic as it conflates these with violent and/or military/militarized masculinities¹ and involvement in conflict (Moran, 2010; Myrttinen, Khattab, & Naujoks, 2016; Pankhurst, 2012). This is also reflected in policy and programming in post-conflict settings. Thus, for example, Disarmament, Demobilisation and

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Reintegration (DDR) programs of the United Nations often provide resources mostly for disarmed (male) combatants and Security Sector Reform (SSR) programs tend to focus on reforming violent masculinities (Kunz, 2014; Moran, 2010). Non-combatant masculinities have so far not received much attention in research (Myrtilinen et al., 2016). When the literature does focus on peaceful, non-violent masculinities, it is mostly in the form of studying the participation of high-level, elite men in formal peace talks and peace-building initiatives (Millar, 2017). What have so far not received much attention are the various non-violent and peaceful forms of masculinity that are involved in everyday prevention and management of conflict and active peace-building. According to Pankhurst, specifying varied types of masculinities that emerge in times of both war and peace is particularly crucial: "We need to understand more about men who do not resort to violence, even when they have all the life experiences that would lead us to expect them to do so" (Pankhurst, 2012, p. 312). Non-violent masculinities are often embodied by men who have not been interviewed by researchers and have not received much attention by policy-makers. As one Liberian non-combatant man said in an interview: "We are truly the forgotten men" (Non-combatant Liberian man, interviewed in Moran, 2010, p. 268).

Our article aims to contribute to the literature on conflict, peace and masculinities/femininities by exploring civilian non-violent and peaceful masculinities in the context of conflict and peace-building in Aceh, Indonesia. We question the often-assumed relationship that equates militarized masculinities with hegemonic masculine status in times of conflict. As we argue, many of the civilian men in the villages we interviewed were able to negotiate, obtain or retain intermediate positions of power between the general populace and armed actors by drawing on political mechanisms of hegemonic masculinity that created consent while remaining explicitly non-violent.

We draw on 26 in-depth interviews and five focus group discussions carried out during 2015–2016 in Idi Rayeuk district in Aceh.² The data were collected in four villages in the sub-district Idi Rayeuk and four villages in East Aceh. The respondents included heads of villages, religious leaders, cultural leaders, business persons, 'ordinary' men and women and ex-members of *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM, which literally means Free Aceh Movement), the guerrilla movement which fought a war of independence against the Indonesian State. This sub-district was chosen because it was considered one of the most affected areas during the Aceh conflict. The region was also considered a GAM stronghold as it had the second highest concentration of GAM members, after North Aceh. In one incident, GAM had declared taking over power from the Indonesian military for about 14 hours (Tempo, 2003). Its high concentration in East Aceh drove the Indonesian military to implement stricter security measures, which resulted in frequent firefights between the Indonesian military (ABRI/TNI)³ and GAM in a number of villages.

The article starts with a review of the theoretical literature on hegemonic masculinities that inspires our analytical framework. Section two provides an overview of conflict and masculinities in Aceh, before moving on to an analysis of various forms of masculinities and their links to conflict and peace-building in section three, in order to assess their potentially hegemonic status. Drawing on vignettes of the experiences of the various men we interviewed, we identified three strategies of conflict prevention and management mobilized to achieve relative hegemony in non-violent ways: strategic appeasement, creating safe spaces and transforming militarized masculinities. We show how various groups of men in Aceh, who would be considered to inhabit a social context often related to hegemonic social positions, draw upon non-violent performances of masculinity.

Conflict, peace and hegemonic masculinities

The concept of 'hegemonic masculinities' emerged in the late 1980s and has become increasingly popular in the study of peace and conflict. As defined by Connell, hegemonic masculinities

can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 1995, p. 77).

In part due to its popularization and widespread use in various contexts, the term "hegemonic masculinities" has received its fair share of criticism (Beasley, 2008; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Demetriou, 2001; Duncanson, 2015; Myrntinen, 2005). Importantly, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 308) caution against the use of this concept as a fixed and trans-historical model, and they note the need to see hegemonic masculinities as being "work in progress," as it is in a constant state of re-definition and re-negotiation. They also highlight the need to understand better the multiplicities of hegemonic masculinities at different times in different parts of the world and varied societal settings. Thus, hegemonic masculinity is not fixed: whether or not a form of masculinity is considered hegemonic depends on the frame of reference in any given situation and time, and is open to contestation. Hegemonic masculinities are plural; they can be found anywhere, and do not apply homogenously to certain categories. Importantly, Beasley (2008, p. 99) suggests that we need to "de-massify" hegemonic masculinities to allow for more nuanced analyses, through the use of the concepts of supra- and sub-hegemonic, that is, examine attributes that are linked to dominant masculinity more globally and those which have more currency at the local (or sub-cultural) level but might not be as valid more broadly.

Another critique has challenged the popular tendency in the literature to adopt a particular, narrow reading of hegemonic masculinities that conflate these with violent and/or militarized masculinities, and their involvement in conflict (Duncanson, 2015; Moran, 2010; Myrntinen et al., 2016; Pankhurst, 2012). Despite such common conflation of hegemonic masculinity with violence and/or militarization, forms of masculinity that are not based on either of these can also be hegemonic. In fact, if one takes Connell's original Gramscian notion of hegemony seriously as a starting point, then the use of coercive violence would be an indication that hegemony has failed. Indeed, Connell (1995) herself points out: "it is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence that is the mark of hegemony" (p. 77), although this does not necessarily preclude the use of violence, for example, in the domestic sphere. Hegemonic masculinities, as Demetriou (2001) and Duncanson (2015), amongst others, point out, are also dynamic and adapting to changing power dynamics, incorporating and co-opting seeming challenges and challengers to stabilize an updated version of patriarchy. The objective of studying hegemonic masculinities is then to analyze the frames of reference that determine whether a particular form of masculinity becomes hegemonic in a given context and the political implications of its specific form.

Another critique concerns the use of this term in an imprecise manner as referring to various elements (Beasley, 2008, p. 88). The term 'hegemonic masculinities' is used in varied ways and sometimes confusingly to refer to a "*political mechanism* [...] to ensure popular or mass consent to particular forms of rule", as "a descriptive word referring to *dominant* (most powerful and/or most widespread) versions of manhood," and "as an empirical reference specifically to *actual groups of men*" (emphasis in original). Thus, the term has been used to refer to an ideal-type of masculinity as well as the lives of actual men and the political implications of their performance of masculinity.

Beasley's critique is also of relevance when it comes to issues regarding masculinities, conflict and peace. Thus, much of the discourse on this tends to simply take for granted that violent forms of masculinity are hegemonic in all three meanings outlined by Beasley: actual groups of violent/militarized men, those who display violent forms of masculinity, and those who use and perform this form of masculinity to enforce consent. This has also been reflected in policy and programming in post-conflict settings. Thus, for example, the 'Gender-based Violence and Masculinities Project' in Aceh is aimed at engaging boys and men in the prevention of violence against women.⁴ Moreover, civilian men are often positioned as objects of analysis, rather than active subjects with embodied masculinities. Peaceful masculinities have so far not received much attention, nor has the question of whether violent and/or militarized masculinities indeed are hegemonic or whether we can find peaceful hegemonic masculinities that are embodied more so by civilians. In her study of peacebuilding projects in former

Yugoslavia, which to varying degrees involved elements of changing dominant male gender norms, Schroer-Hippel (2017) has argued that these projects were successful because they did not question hegemonic masculinities *per se*. Rather, she argues, they were able to offer more peaceful alternatives to the ways of being men by leaving certain aspects unquestioned, offering them a local frame of reference they could relate to, even as they questioned other aspects of masculinity. Thus, for example, projects aimed at questioning the link between compulsory military service and masculinity did not question other aspects of life linked to dominant local notions of what it 'means to be a man' such as heterosexuality or owning hunting weapons. Similarly, as we see below, certain men in Aceh were able to reject the pressure to join armed groups or subscribe to violent methods of resolving conflicts by drawing implicitly or explicitly on other aspects locally associated with hegemonic masculinity.

Our case study of masculinities in Aceh linked to the three decades-long conflict paints a more nuanced picture of men's relations to violence and what comes to be seen as hegemonic in a given society at a given point in time. Our research shows that during and after the conflict, many men sought to avoid violence and used their influence for peace-building or, in more fraught circumstances, to manage the behavior of (potentially) violent armed actors. We examine how and with what effect men from various groups used non-violent performances of hegemonic masculinity for conflict prevention and management and continued to do so. For this purpose, we will draw mostly on Beasley's first meaning of the term—that is, a "*political mechanism* [...] to ensure popular or mass consent to particular forms of rule" (Beasley, 2008, p. 88)—to investigate which political mechanisms were used by particular groups of men to build popular consent for particular forms of rule that promoted conflict de-escalation and peace-building in the context of Aceh.

Gender dimensions in the Aceh conflict

Conflict and violence have occurred continuously in Aceh under the various regimes in control of the Indonesian archipelago, from the Dutch colonial forces (before Indonesian independence in 1945) to the so-called Old Order under President Sukarno (1945–1968) and through President Suharto's New Order (1968–1998) and the Reform period (from 1998 until the 2004 tsunami and subsequent Helsinki Accord 2005) (Shaw, 2008). Shortly after Indonesian independence, the politics of Aceh had been dominated by calls for its own independence from the Unitary Republic of Indonesia, demands that led to repeated armed insurrections. Since the 1970s, the independence movement led by Hasan di Tiro became the basis for the formation of the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* or GAM), which waged an armed

struggle against the central government from 1976 until 2005 (Zuhri, 2015). In the political arrangement that ended the conflict, the province remains part of Indonesia with wide-ranging political autonomy and a political scene largely dominated by former GAM members.

Acehnese demands for independence first from the Netherlands and then Indonesia were fuelled by a range of issues, including the historical legacies of the Sultanate of Aceh and subsequent wars of independence, socio-economic grievances, political differences, and perceived differences in the understanding of Islam in Aceh and the rest of Indonesia (Schulze, 2003; Shaw, 2008). The latter point was highlighted in our interviews with a former GAM member (Interview with SB, March 2016) and echoes the findings of Hastings (1997), Schulze (2003), and Siegel (2000) who highlight the role of an Acehnese understanding of local practices of Islam as different and more 'pure' than 'Javanese' practices in Acehnese nationalist discourses.⁵

Acehnese nationalism can be traced back to the colonial period and has particular gendered dynamics. Conflict and violence in Aceh were not only undertaken by men, but also by women from various social classes. During the colonial era, it was mostly the upper-class women who took an active part in the physical conflict, most notably Cut Nya Dien and Cut Mutia. During the GAM insurgency, it was also women from the lower classes who became involved as combatants with GAM, the Inong Balee (Schulze, 2006). Names such as Cut Nya Dien and Cut Mutia frequently served as symbols of women's active leadership during the conflict, and in GAM women would frequently refer to these leaders to justify their own position as women combatants, explaining that they had done so out of a desire to become like the arms-bearing heroines of Acehnese history, as stated by a former member of Inong Balee below (personal communication, February 12, 2016):

- Interviewer: You wanted it (to join Inong balee) yourself?
 Respondent: Yes. We wanted it. Maybe, on the one hand, we were curious what it was like to be a soldier. Because we wanted to be like Cut Nyak Dhien?
 Interviewer: Everyone wanted to be like you?
 Respondent: Because we saw that Aceh then, at the time, in 1990. We saw the conditions in Aceh. How we were treated. During the emergency period.
 Respondent: Especially since sometimes our family would disappear. ... There was a lot of torture. So we were like, what to do? We wanted to go there (to fight), to see, to defend justice. Because we saw our families, we just saw the women. Me, I had family involved in *rumoh gedong* (the house where GAM members were tortured during the conflict). Beaten there, until his/her hip shattered; he/she survived; his/her sibling didn't.

The earlier presence of upper-class women warriors, such as Cut Nyak Dhien, during the colonial period, which gave inspiration to the the Inong

Balee to become soldiers, indicated that gender roles were dynamically linked to different social classes, although only a small minority of Acehese women participated in the armed struggle as combatants. The involvement of women combatants fighting for Aceh's independence often led to paradox, challenging local understandings of Islam that relegated women to subordinate positions and discouraged them from entering the public sphere (Duriesmith, 2015). Inong Balee had different roles during the conflict. Apart from being armed combatants, this included constructing explosive devices and participating in logistical support. However, their role as women combatants did not necessarily modify the ways in which women were perceived. They were still seen as accessories instead of real combatants, even though GAM propaganda highlighted that women were also fighting.

The Aceh conflict also impacted relationships between civilian men and women. When Aceh was declared a Military Operations Area in 2003, the gender dynamics in Aceh were affected, similar to other conflict situations, with women having to take up some of the public and breadwinning roles of men, as males 'of fighting age' were targeted by both ABRI/TNI and GAM, which imposed restrictions on their mobility. Given that men were often the targets of violence, they were unable to carry out their everyday activities in the public sphere, so women took over. Women also worked actively to promote peace, both at the provincial and local (village) level. However, in the Helsinki peace talks in 2005, only one woman was involved as an advisor on the GAM side, while all of the official negotiators were men. After the end of the conflict, societal discourses stressed the return of women to the domestic sphere (Jauhola, 2011). Many of them were no longer permitted to work or be involved in activism; this was based on an understanding of Islamic *sharia* norms that required women to remain in the private sphere except when men were unable to do so owing to emergency situations. However, numerous local women's rights activists and local women's rights organizations have been actively disputing these dynamics (Großmann, 2015).

During the conflict years, Aceh was a society marked by coercion and violence, undertaken mostly by men in uniform. It was mainly male members of both the Indonesian military and GAM, for example, who exercised power over the Acehese population, in particular, persons they considered part of, or supporting, the opposite side. In practice it was mostly civilians who stood to suffer from these performances of militarized masculinities. While most of this violence was intended to occur between ABRI/TNI and GAM, it was often civilian men and women, especially those from the lowest economic classes, who were targets of violence, for example, at checkpoints as they did not speak Indonesian. This lack of fluency in Indonesian often led to misunderstandings that resulted in beatings or other forms of violence at the hands of the Indonesian military. GAM members also exercised their

coercive power over the civilian populations, often when people demanded money to support their movement (Siapno, 2016).

In between the Indonesian military and GAM were the Acehnese civilians, who were not a homogenous group. First of all, there were those who considered themselves neutral but tended to have a more positive view of the Indonesian military and its position. A few of them would display photographs of family members who were in the military in an effort to prevent GAM from harming them, although this backfired sometimes and some civilians were threatened because their families were in the Indonesian military. The second type were those who tended to have a more positive disposition towards GAM. For instance, a religious leader from one of the villages in the district we studied emphasized the close interaction between society and GAM: "Yes, GAM and the society are just like the fish and the pond. Although GAM brings the gun and go to the forest, they always come back to see their family in the society" (interview with TR, religious leader, on March 15, 2016). Meanwhile, there were civilians as well who showed no preference for either side, for fear that one would be violent against them if they supported the other.

Rural society in Aceh is mostly organized along three lines of governance. These include the village chiefs (*Keuchik*), *adat* cultural figures (*Tuhapeut*) and religious figures (*Tengku*). The most important roles are filled largely by men. Some men mobilize relative positions of power drawing on notions of masculinity for protection and peacebuilding, both during and after the conflict. They drew authority not so much from physical prowess but from the respect accorded to them by the positions they occupied, their social capital, charisma and actions. There were situations in which the village chiefs or *adat* figures, drawing on positions of masculine-coded power, would be respected by the Indonesian military or GAM, and as a result were occasionally able to mitigate the effects of conflict or prevent it. The activities of the *keuchiks*, and *tengkus* were personal choices and not all them acted in the same way. Yet, their position in society as respected figures gave them the social capital to challenge the military.

Post-conflict, the cessation of hostilities, coupled with the disbanding of the GAM and a drawdown of Indonesian military forces has led to a reconfiguration of power and masculinities. Some former GAM members, in particular from the upper echelons, have become political leaders or successful businessmen. Many lower-ranking members and former women combatants have been side-lined from gaining economic, social and political power (Aspinall, 2009; Myrntinen, 2011). New discourses around gender equality and roles have emerged through both external and local actors, while some have embraced these as being compatible with Islam, so as to continue more egalitarian Acehnese traditions, others have rejected them as being the opposite (Duriesmith, 2015; Großmann, 2015; Jauhola, 2011).

Based on our research, we identified at least three main types of masculinities with some degree of dominance in society during the conflict. The first type relates to the Indonesian armed forces. The ABRI/TNI and the national police occupied a dominant position during the Aceh conflict.⁶ The civilian populace of Aceh generally referred to these forces as the '(state) apparatus,' deliberately sent by the government of Indonesia to control certain strategic locations in Aceh. In most villages, security posts were used to defend the area from GAM insurgents and to control the population. The ABRI/TNI and Police consisted of armed men who controlled many aspects of the Acehnese people's day-to-day lives. Military personnel were appointed as administrators at various levels. This structural domination involved thousands of military personnel from many different parts of Indonesia, including other parts of Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and locally recruited Acehnese, particularly during the Military Operations Area period (1990-1998). During the Suharto years, in particular, military masculinities were publicly celebrated and viewed as examples to aspire to. As numerous researchers of military and militarized masculinities have noted, although there is no one way of performing masculinities in the military, this applies to the ABRI, TNI and POLRI as well (Barrett, 1996; Basham, 2013; Belkin, 2012; Duncanson, 2015; Mäki-Rahkola & Myrntinen, 2014; Tidy, 2014; Titunik, 2008).

The second type is the insurgent form of masculinity. This was associated with GAM, whose members mostly positioned themselves as freedom fighters struggling for Aceh's independence. In many ways, GAM mirrored the TNI and its militarized masculinities. It had a command system and military structure that more or less paralleled that of the Indonesian military. Though the organization named itself a military, a few former GAM members have described themselves as being 'brigands on land and pirates at sea,' as both the ground and naval forces of the movement participated in illicit activities, including extortion, kidnapping, piracy, smuggling and alleged involvement in the narcotics trade (McGeown, 2003; Raymond, 2010; Schulze, 2003/2005). They were tasked with providing for the numerous guerrillas fighting in the mountains. Both types of militarized masculinities were prevalent and powerful during the conflict in Aceh, albeit being performed and embodied by a minority of the men present at the time. Both were locked in a struggle for legitimacy and used violence in their functioning, seeking to perform militarized manliness through control and by defining the symbols of war and conflict.

The third form of masculinity was a mostly non-violent form, oriented towards efforts to de-escalate and reduce violence in the public sphere. Here, non-violent refers to non-participation in the conflict through overtly physical and violent means, which did not necessarily preclude violence in other spheres, such as the domestic context. This form of masculinity was most commonly embodied by civilians at the grassroots level who attempted

to build bridges between GAM and the Indonesian Military and/or spaces for their communities to escape violence. Such attempts at managing conflict were undertaken in a variety of ways by individuals occupying different positions within their community: village chiefs, youth leaders, and religious leaders.

Below, we examine vignettes from the experiences of various men who in different ways mostly displayed this latter form of non-violent masculinity during the conflict, with the exception of one former member of a GAM naval unit, who was seeking to re-cast his masculinity post-conflict. They drew on displays of hegemonic masculinity and the social capital emanating from local expectations, such as being respected in the community and/or among peers because of one's deeds, by being devout Muslims, or because of their bravery, decision-making power and charismatic leadership. We examine here the various strategies of hegemonic masculinity that were being deployed.

The politically and socially powerful performances of masculinities co-existed not only with other non-violent, more subordinate, and in part marginalized ways of being men, such as of those involved in certain sub-cultures (e.g., punks), substance users, homosexuals and men who have sex with men (Jauhola, 2011), but also those who left to work as migrant laborers in other parts of Indonesia or Malaysia, or the often invisibilized 'regular' civilian men who were neither leaders nor combatants, but sought to make the best of the difficult situation for themselves and their families.

Plurality of non-violent masculinities

This section focuses not only on the practices civilian men used in the conflict and post-conflict period in Aceh, drawing on their positions of relative power and on the characteristics linked to expectations of Acehnese masculinity, such as bravery, decision-making, Islamic piety, strictness and straightforwardness, but also on their capacity for negotiating compromises. We identify three strategies of conflict prevention and management that were mobilized to achieve relative hegemony in non-violent ways: strategic appeasement, creating safe spaces, and transforming militarized masculinities.

Strategic appeasement

In village A, located near the city of Idi Rayeuk, in East Aceh Regency, several of the leaders, such as the village chief (*Keuchik*), R, and a religious leader, Tengku AH, used their respective positions of relative power for peace-building purposes. During the conflict, a large number of security posts were established in the village that hindered daily activities. In response to this, the village chief at the time, the late *Keuchik* R, reminded residents of the need to have identity

cards on them at all times, particularly the identity card used during the military state of emergency in Aceh (*KTP Merah Putih*—Red and White Identity Card). He also established communications with the Indonesian military, particularly those stationed in his district (*kecamatan*). *Keuchik* R slept at the security posts, taking turns with another resident, MA, to show that the people of the village were willing to cooperate with the Indonesian military.

During the conflict in Aceh, this village became a common destination for persons seeking protection. Many women moved here because they felt safer in the village, with some opening their own businesses and becoming successful in the village. As a result of this migration, the village became—and remains—one of the most populous ones in the region. In fact, a focus group discussion (FGD) with the community on March 22, 2016 revealed that the population increased threefold. One of the refugees explains:

There's no problem whatsoever. There are a lot of Javanese, people from Padang, and others who rent homes here. There's no problem. Everything is good. There were GAM people who came here, but they never caused any trouble. It happens that our village was a priority because it's in the centre of the city. So why were things safe during the conflict? Because the *keuchik* was good. He protected everyone. Because he was firm with the security forces and GAM ... especially for the people of this village there was a guarantee, meaning that "the people, I'll lead them." There were those who came here from the outside because they saw there were no problems here. From 1990 to 2003 a lot of people came here. It was different from other villages. Maybe their *keuchiks* had ties with GAM. Us, our *keuchik* was truly strict. He was my age. He led us for two terms (interview with a refugee, March 22, 2016).

At the FGD with fifteen villagers—men and women in village A—all participants said that *Keuchik* R had a central role in ensuring that the village remained safer than others in the surrounding region during the conflict. His efforts can be considered to be the implementation of a strategy in which he negotiated with, and to an extent appeased Indonesian military commanders. One informant stated that *Keuchik* R had even sold his home so that he could bribe the Indonesian military commanders and thus prevent violence. He would often free residents from the Indonesian military if they were detained as suspected GAM members, as stated by a villager, M, in one FGD:

He'd often enter the village; even at 3 in the morning he'd wake up to check us. If, for instance, someone was taken by the security forces, such as the children, he'd even wake up at 4. So our *keuchik* didn't take any sides. One foot in the Indonesian military, one in GAM. That's why people were safe. But to the other point there wasn't anything. In fact, in other villages there were *keuchiks* who were taken and beaten, but ours wasn't. Like when the city of Idie was burned, it was not far from us. Only a few hundred meters. But our *keuchik* could overcome it, bridge it (personal communication, March 22, 2016).

The strategy of negotiation, appeasement and bribery required voluntary subordination to the rules of more powerful men, in this case, the ABRI/TNI (or more specifically the military commanders) and GAM. This strategy went against dominant narratives of hegemonic masculinity in the region, whereby men were expected to submit only to authorities seen as locally legitimate and therefore they uncompromisingly resisted outside forces seen as illegitimate.⁷ *Keuchik* R was unlike most other *keuchiks*, who either joined the armed resistance (such as *Keuchik* L, who was killed in the fourteen hours of firefights in Idi Rayeuk in 2003) or refused to make any compromises for their own safety. Responses of other informants who had joined GAM highlighted a more common route of conforming to expectations by 'proving' their masculinity by taking up arms and becoming insurgents (interviews with former GAM members in various villages, March 21, 2016). However, *Keuchik* R chose a different approach for protecting 'his people,' one that did not involve direct participation in violent conflict as a combatant.

The strategy of appeasement was not only used by men in powerful positions, but also by 'ordinary' citizens. For example, a man who acted as an agent for peace during situations of conflict and violence in Aceh was S, a male youth leader in village B. At the age of 32, S had gained social capital through his reputation for courage and leadership; he earned the respect of members of both the TNI and GAM, giving him access to and greater bargaining power vis-à-vis both groups. He was reputedly a leader as he took the initiative to speak, especially to the head of the military district. His power to speak up was respected by the people of his village. If there was a situation where people had to confront the military, he was the one who was chosen as mediator. Apart from having access to the military, he also had access to local GAM leaders, which was a virtually impossible feat. During the conflict, (young) men usually moved to other places, because they were targets of violence by the TNI who suspected them of supporting GAM, and by the GAM who pressured them to join the movement. Young men from higher social classes left for urban centers elsewhere in Indonesia to continue their studies, while many lower-class men migrated to other parts of Indonesia or Malaysia to work as blue-collar workers. However, unlike most of his friends, S preferred to stay in his village, taking the risk of being physically threatened by the TNI and the GAM. His bravery earned him respect in his village. His reputation for bravery as a youth in his village made him reluctant to move to other safer places during the conflict:

The village chiefs, during the conflict, none of them stayed in the villages. Some ran to Malaysia. The only ones left were those who could hang on. In this *pangoe* (area), it was just me who held on. But yeah, we had to sit neutrally between the two forces; otherwise we'd end up victims too (interview with S, youth leader, March 16, 2016).

Once, S explicitly asked the Indonesian military for permission to escort home the wife of a GAM member, who could no longer bear to live in the forests. Although his request was granted, he was beaten by other members of the military after he took her out of hiding. S explained as follows:

At the time, the wives of GAM members were leaving the forests, and a GAM member contacted me and asked me, "Please get my wife out of the forest. She's suffering. Try and ensure that nothing undesirable happens." I had to confirm with the regional military commander (DARAMIL or Komandan Rayon Militer) and the SGI or Satuan Gabungan Inteligen (military intelligence). "There's a wife of a GAM member who wants to leave the forests. There mustn't be any torture, examinations, or daily reports. I'll take responsibility." The DARAMIL said, "Alright, it's up to you Bapak [respectful term for older men in Indonesian]." So I took her down. At the time, the commander wasn't a normal SGI member. His man processed me and said "Amazing, it was so easy to bring a GAM member's wife down without reporting to us." Yet I'd already confirmed things with the commander. I was beaten for it, once (interview with S, youth leader, March 16, 2016).

Our analysis suggests that strategic appeasement is mobilized as a political mechanism of hegemonic masculinity by various men to prevent and resolve conflict. This goes against the common interpretation that portrays the strategies of hegemonic masculinity in conflict situations as mostly violent. Using the concept of hegemonic masculinity to refer to political mechanisms, allows us to read this differently and to show how peaceful performances of masculinity can be hegemonic and how hegemonic masculinity mobilizes consent for ruling without the need for violence. Yet, this also shows that violence might occur in other ways: men mobilizing the political mechanism of strategic appeasement may experience violence themselves.

Creating safe spaces

A second, similar strategy used in the context of Aceh involved mobilizing religion and status by religious leaders to create safe spaces for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. An example of this was of a *tengku* (religious leader) AH, who in village A played a role similar to that of *Keuchik* R discussed earlier. He built up good relations with the Indonesian military commanders at the provincial, district, and village level. Several times he succeeded in freeing suspected GAM members from detention, something made possible by his close relations with Indonesian military commanders. However, unlike the *keuchik*, who used a predominantly pragmatic and economic approach—bribing Indonesian military officers to free people or reduce the level of violence—the *tengku* protected the residents of the village by using his position as a respected religious leader, a strategic position of power in Aceh, in order to create safe spaces.

Tengku AH had a mosque in front of his house which was often used for prayers. During the conflict, he approached the Indonesian military commanders to propose the creation of a space where the young men, whom the Indonesian military wanted to control, gathered. Almost every night men would gather at *Tengku* AH's home, both for devotional reasons and to meet their friends. Social gatherings other than religious ones were strictly forbidden during the conflict. *Tengku* AH's house was used as a safe space by the men of the village during the conflict. Later, when the situation changed, such meetings or group prayers became rarer (interview with M, March 14, 2016). *Tengku* AH used his home as a collective space. However, this gathering of people was also used by the Indonesian military as a place of social control to observe the young men and to check on the members of GAM. Thus, his house became a space for resistance, negotiation, and mediation.

This strategy of hegemonic masculinity mobilized various forms of social capital, such as religion, to create safe spaces in order to prevent or diffuse conflict. *Teungku* AH drew authority from the social context within Aceh, which placed religious leaders in positions of greater influence than cultural or administrative leaders. Yet, this position of authority and its acceptance by other members of society did not come automatically with the position, but had to be earned. This was thus a political mechanism to achieve relative hegemony in non-violent ways. Yet, similar to what we have seen in the first strategy, this one was also accompanied by some other forms of social control: surveillance of GAM members, reflecting the complexity at work in the mechanisms of hegemonic masculinity.

Transforming militarized masculinities

The third strategy of utilizing particular aspects of hegemonic masculinity we examine here was exemplified in the practices of a group of youths led by MK, who gathered many of his colleagues in a social organization named Ormas Raya (Organisasi Massa Rakyat Aceh; Organization for the People of Aceh) to preserve peace in Aceh. Ormas Raya was also an organization for people who were disappointed with the actions of the GAM leadership post-Helsinki, who they considered had lived in luxury following the signing of the peace accord, while the rank-and-file members of GAM were economically sidelined. This disappointment was partly channeled into the predominantly social and cultural activities of Ormas Raya, as one member noted:

Regarding your question about what we do to keep the peace ... me, personally, it's from having one heart, for if we don't share one heart we can never create something. ... I was pleased and happy when GAM combatants conducted their activities during the struggle. I was happy. Why? Because we shared one vision, one heart. ... People were even willing to die for their nation and their religion. So, Aceh in the period since the signing of the Helsinki Accord, we were happy,

even though we didn't quite understand the meaning of peace. We just signed. But as time passed—a month, two months, even a year, we can see 'Why is it like this? Why is it not like what we'd hoped for?' ... So, with the establishment of Ormas Raya, Insya'allah the people of Aceh can be united with one heart. This is because the goal of Ormas Raya, first, is to build a sense of shared purpose and camaraderie. Insya'allah this camaraderie and compromise, Insya'allah, can be developed and created, as you asked earlier, Ibu, There can be beauty and peace in Aceh; no more conflict (interview with a member of Ormas Raya, former GAM Marine, March 21, 2016).

Although most of the members of Ormas Raya were former GAM, many men who were not also joined the organization. These included teachers, students, former Indonesian soldiers, merchants, and farmers. There were also several former *keuchik* in the organization. Of the former GAM members in Ormas Raya's membership, several were GAM marines. According to a testimony of one such individual, they were predominantly tasked with piracy in the Strait of Malacca, including kidnapping of ship crews for ransom, and extortion, kidnapping and robbery on land. The proceeds of their actions were used to fund GAM activities (see also Aspinall, 2009; Schulze; 2003; 2005).

MA, the founder of the organization, explained that they did not receive funding from other organizations, their treasury included only members' dues. Their activities were mostly focused on empowerment, particularly of the children of middle- to lower-class men, both former GAM members and the general populace. Their main goal was to improve human resources development in the region, such as to improve the skills of the former GAM members. To preserve the still-fragile peace, Ormas Raya has conducted demonstrations. One was held on 15 August 2015; members formed a convoy in commemoration of ten years of peace in Aceh and the 70th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia (Redaski, 2015).

Although they stress their peacefulness, such groups can still be said to have the potential for violence, particularly because of the persistence of economic disparity between them and those in the GAM leadership. Ormas Raya has in the past used pressure tactics similar to other male-dominated pressure groups in Indonesia, seeking to leverage their potential for violence by organizing displays of power, such as motorbike parades, in the hope of thereby convincing more powerful men to bring them on board as a constituency to be reckoned with or, perhaps, at least one worth buying off (Wilson, 2015). Their social standing as former, mostly low-ranking combatants, in particular those who engaged in criminal activities such as extortion and piracy for the benefit of the struggle, may place them in an ambivalent position in the eyes of the broader populace: on the one hand, potential heroes of the resistance, on the other, strongmen with a history of predatory behavior.

However, through their continuous efforts, such as those described above, they contributed to reduce the potential for further conflict. Economic growth,

improved quality of life, and greater access to education for their children can further reduce the potential for violence. Ormas Raya work collectively to shed earlier practices and ideas of violent masculinities associated with GAM. Ex-combatants who used to deal with guns and military operations have transformed their activities into cultural and social activities.⁸ They also undertook charity activities, especially to help former members with financial problems. For instance, they gave scholarships to the children of former GAM members. Such collective action is necessary, as members' positions in the lower socioeconomic rungs do not give them the means needed to negotiate with the leaders of Aceh. Through their activities, they have transformed militarized masculinities into non-violent ones, while still drawing on hegemonic notions of masculinity, such as political decision making and providing economic support.

Conclusion

We began this article with a questioning of dominant narratives of what hegemonic masculinities are in times of violent conflict, whether they indeed are necessarily the ones embodied by armed men, as often assumed. While in such situations civilians directly face the controlling power of armed men on both sides, the degree to which these militarized enactments of masculinities are hegemonic is debatable. Taking a Gramscian approach to hegemony and focusing on hegemonic masculinity as a political mechanism, we suggest that the need to resort to violence places the hegemonic status of militarized masculinities in question. In terms of groups of men wielding actual power, men in uniform and with guns may have temporarily been the most powerful at the local level. Yet, they were subordinates, acting under the orders of others in more powerful positions.

More importantly, our study finds that there are various mechanisms of non-violent masculinities that can be hegemonic in particular contexts. Three of the four men we portrayed here—a village leader, a religious leader and a youth leader—used non-violent means and their positions as locally pre-eminent men to manage conflict, drawing on aspects of locally dominant hegemonic expectations of masculinity. The fourth, a former GAM member previously engaged in piracy, draws on similar notions as well as his erstwhile combatant status to push for socio-political change. In the case of the three strategies used by the four men discussed here, individuals and groups of men have mobilized their positions of relative, localized power (associated with leadership, Islamic piety, bravery, being economic providers and the ability to achieve compromises) to negotiate better outcomes for others who placed their faith in them, be it during the conflict period or, as in the latter most case, after the end of the conflict. These men managed to obtain the support of fellow citizens, be they civilians or former combatants,

and thereby created legitimacy and power, associated with a Gramscian understanding of hegemony.

They could perhaps be seen as “sub-hegemonic” masculinities to use the term introduced by Beasley (2008, p. 99). None of the vignettes portray ordinary men as all had achieved positions of a certain status in society. Yet merely being a *keuchik*, *tengku*, a previously brave youth or a former GAM fighter did not suffice on its own; they all needed to ‘prove’ themselves through actions and perform masculinity in a way that added reputational capital to the social capital that came with their positions in society. They had to negotiate with others, be it the TNI, GAM or the new leadership of an autonomous Aceh. And, in some cases, their relative hegemonic status also had drawbacks in the form of violence turning against them, or their safe spaces being instrumentalized as sites of social control.

What we have shown here is that the concept of hegemonic masculinities should not be equated automatically with participation in organized physical violence. Hegemonic masculinities are re-negotiated constantly in relation to other masculinities, both in conflict and in peacetime, but these processes are perhaps thrown into sharper relief in times of conflict. In the end, what is seen as hegemonic lies perhaps mostly in the eyes of those who submit to this authority voluntarily. During the conflict, unarmed women and men placed their trust and lives in the hands of men like S, *Keuchik* R, and *Tengku* AH, but after the conflict, it was MA who gained the confidence and support of a large group of people.

Contrary to studies that conflate hegemonic masculinities with violence, all men portrayed in this article used their positions of authority in non-violent ways for conflict prevention and diffusion. Echoing Schroer-Hippel's (2017) findings from former Yugoslavia, these efforts were perhaps successful because of their association with certain aspects of hegemonic masculinities and did not question local gender norms across the board, particularly regarding the prevalent norm of men occupying positions of civil, customary and religious authority in Acehnese society. Yet, they did have the potential to challenge notions of hegemonic masculinities as being linked to the use of violence and showed the importance of understanding conflict management through an approach that included non-violent forms of masculinities and focused on interrogating hegemonic masculinity as a political mechanism of consent creation. The four men portrayed here used their positions in society to save lives, manage conflict and promote peaceful change. They were able to do so because of their positions in society *as men*, but also due to personal qualities that were seen as compatible with local expectations of respectable masculinity, such as Islamic piety, bravery and charisma. They drew on repertoires and ways of engagement that were seen as acceptable in Aceh and were available primarily or exclusively to men. Therefore, their

approaches contributed to stabilized men's dominant position, while also challenging the conflation of hegemonic masculinities with violence.

Notes

1. The terms 'military masculinities' and 'militarized masculinities' have at times been used interchangeably, but while there is some overlap, military masculinities refer to ways of being a male inside military or military-style organizations (e.g., guerrilla groups, militia), whereas militarized masculinities refer to ways of being a civilian or military man or boy which have undergone a process of militarization.
2. We would like to thank our respondents for spending time on interviews. We use pseudonyms to refer to all respondents to guarantee anonymity. We would also like to thank the local researchers who helped us conduct the interviews. The names of the villages have been anonymised as well, to ensure privacy.
3. The military was named Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia—ABRI until 1999, when it was re-named the Tentara Nasional Indonesia—TNI, following the separation of the police force from the military.
4. See: <http://www.partners4prevention.org/news/research-violence-against-women-and-masculinities-being-conducted-aceh>
5. The term 'Javanese' is often used in Aceh and other non-Javanese areas of Indonesia as a catch-all term to denote anything linked to the central government or Indonesia at large, e.g., referring to 'imported' cultural practices, transmigrants or the military, whether or not these actually originate from Java or are reflective of its cultures.
6. The police, Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia, was not separated from the armed forces until 1999. The police paramilitary Mobile Brigade (Brigade Mobil—BRIMOB) took an active part in combat operations.
7. Not all outside influences have been resisted in Aceh, with Islam being a prime example of one which has been embraced whole-heartedly. Also, throughout history, the Acehnese have not only resisted outside forces, but have inevitably also actively and passively collaborated with these.
8. For another case study on ex-combatants as social activists, see (Friðriksdóttir, 2018).

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ABSTRACT IN INDONESIAN

Dengan merujuk pada riset-riset terkait konflik kekerasan, terlihat bahwa riset mengenai maskulinitas kekerasan dan maskulinitas terkait militer atau organisasi dengan gaya militer telah banyak mendapatkan perhatian. Bentuk-bentuk maskulinitas kekerasan seringkali bersifat hegemonik. Berdasarkan riset kami di Aceh, Indonesia, kami berpendapat bahwa keterkaitan antara bentuk-bentuk maskulinitas dengan militerisasi dan kekerasan memperlihatkan berbagai cara dimana para lelaki Aceh dari kalangan biasa atau sipil menggunakan mekanisme politik maskulinitas hegemonik dengan sadar meskipun secara eksplisit bersifat nir kekerasan sehingga berkontribusi pada pengelolaan konflik dengan cara nir kekerasan pula. Dengan menggunakan cerita-cerita pengalaman dari para lelaki Aceh, kami mengidentifikasi tiga strategi pencegahan dan pengelolaan konflik untuk mendapatkan cara-cara nir kekerasan yang cukup hegemonik: usaha

peredaan konflik secara strategis, penciptaan ruang-ruang aman dan transformasi terhadap maskulinitas yang bersifat militeristik. Cara para lelaki berpartisipasi di dalam pembangunan perdamaian berperan dalam mengurangi konflik tanpa perlu menolak maskulinitas hegemonik. Studi kasus kami terhadap maskulinitas terkait konflik di Aceh memberikan gambaran seperti apa maskulinitas hegemonik pada masyarakat tersebut pada waktu tertentu beserta kontestasi-kontestasinya. Kami menunjukkan pentingnya pemahaman akan pengelolaan konflik lewat pendekatan nir kekerasan dan berfokus pada maskulinitas hegemonik sebagai mekanisme politik secara sadar.

KEYWORDS Aceh; Indonesia; maskulinitas hegemonik; pembangunan perdamaian; konflik; gender