



Peace Communication of The Aceh Party: Integration of Local Wisdom Based on Religious Values

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Abstract

This study examines the peaceful communication practiced by the Aceh Party (PA) in integrating local wisdom grounded in religious values. Beyond its political role, PA acts as a mediator in promoting peace, reconciliation, social cohesion, and democratic consolidation in Aceh. The research focuses on PA's communication strategies, both direct and media-mediated, in the eastern coastal region of Aceh. Adopting a descriptive qualitative approach with a constructivist-interpretive phenomenological paradigm, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions, and literature review. Findings reveal that PA develops a narrative of peaceful communication rooted in traditions such as peumulia jamee, musyawarah Mukim, meuseraya, peusijuek, and peumat jaroe, reflecting dialogical, inclusive, responsive, and adaptive practices based on akhlak al-karimah, ukhuwah, amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, and rahmatan lil 'alamin. Local wisdom functions both as a conflict-resolution mechanism and a collective educational medium. Challenges such as pragmatism, symbolism, exclusivism, and patronage may distance PA from Islamic-based local wisdom. The study proposes an integrative model of peace communication, offering insights for sustainable, inclusive peace and political stability.

Keywords: Peaceful Communication, Aceh Party, Local Wisdom, Islamic Values, Social Cohesion

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INTRODUCTION

Human communication, grounded in knowledge, is fundamentally based on principles such as peace, harmony, happiness, spiritual well-being, and togetherness, fostering a civilization rooted in humanity (Monia, 2023). It strengthens social cohesion and social capital, while promoting positive, creative, and innovative behaviors. Peaceful communication emphasizes values of harmony, dialogue, tolerance, and well-being, while avoiding conflict and hate speech. Communication is a lifelong phenomenon, central to human existence as social, political, and cultural beings (Elmi et al., 2024). Through communication, humans interpret themselves and their environment, understand contextual dynamics, and adapt to changing circumstances. This principle also applies to political communication, particularly in peacebuilding. Islam emphasizes the importance of peace, justice, and dialogue in all aspects of life, including politics (Karimullah, 2024). Peaceful political communication involves not only information exchange between leaders and the public but also ethical governance guided by Islamic values. In post-conflict Aceh, peaceful communication in politics is vital for sustaining peace, ensuring sociopolitical stability, preventing new violence, strengthening local democracy, and consolidating social cohesion (Kirani, 2023).

Aceh has a long history of armed conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government. The 2005 Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding marked a critical turning point in transforming Aceh from a conflict zone to a site of peace, inclusive governance, and democratic consolidation. One key pillar of sustaining peace in Aceh is the integration of Islamic values with local wisdom in political communication. The Aceh Party (PA) emerged as the political manifestation of former GAM combatants, holding strong historical legitimacy. However, PA's political endurance cannot rely solely on its past legacy. It must implement ethical, dialogical politics grounded in Islamic values and Acehese local wisdom, which have historically functioned as mechanisms for conflict resolution. Peaceful political communication is essential to prevent the reproduction of violence and to adapt to electoral democracy and political digitalization.

According to Prof. Saiful Akmal (2025), the establishment of PA underscores the need for strategic, wise, and peace-oriented communication, integrating dialogue, deliberation, local wisdom, and Islamic teachings (Rasyid et al., 2023). PA functions not only as a platform for political participation but also as a symbol of conflict transformation toward sustainable peace. Structurally, PA possesses a strong grassroots network extending to mukim and gampong levels, facilitating political mobilization, and demonstrating organizational strength through its capacity to field candidates across Aceh. Charismatic leaders such as Muzakir Manaf remain central to maintaining base loyalty. PA's political journey, reflected in legislative and regional elections from 2009 to 2024, demonstrates its dominance and legitimization as the main political representative of former GAM combatants. In the 2024 regional elections, PA maintained a significant presence across nearly all districts, highlighting its sustained relevance in the post-Helsinki political landscape. Yet, internal challenges including reliance on charismatic figures, limited leadership regeneration, internal fragmentation, and reduced public trust due to past governance performance pose risks to its consolidation.

Dr. Akmal (2025) notes that opportunities such as the 2024 regional elections could serve as platforms for consolidating PA's political position at provincial and national levels, leveraging strategic coalitions with national parties and emphasizing Aceh's Islamic, cultural, and local identity. Dr. Taufik Abdullah (2025) highlights that, despite PA's historical, symbolic, and structural strengths, internal weaknesses and emerging political dynamics present serious



challenges. To remain relevant, PA must modernize its peaceful communication strategies, strengthen cadre development, increase transparency, and engage younger generations through adaptive, digitalized, and inclusive communication approaches. This research focuses on PA's peaceful communication practices, revealing how the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom strengthens social cohesion, reconciliation, transformation, and public trust. While prior studies have examined Aceh's political conflict transformation, few have analyzed how local, religion-based political communication is articulated by a regional party. Traditions such as *peumulia jamee*, *musyawarah mukim-gampong*, *peusijuek*, *meusyeraya*, *peumat jaroe*, and *khanduri* significantly contribute to social cohesion and political consensus. From an Islamic perspective, principles such as *qaulan sadida*, *qaulan baligha*, and *qaulan ma'rufa* guide ethical and healthy political communication. This study adopts a holistic, multidimensional approach, integrating local wisdom, culture, religion, and digital communication to understand how PA builds sociopolitical cohesion in Aceh. It aims to enrich the theory of peace-oriented political communication and provide practical insights into models, patterns, and strategies of PA's peaceful communication.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach within a constructivist-interpretive phenomenological paradigm (DEWI, 2022). The research subjects include administrators and supporters of the Aceh Party (PA), religious and customary leaders, academics, activists, media figures, community leaders, and the general public in the eastern coastal region of Aceh (Aceh Timur, Aceh Utara, Lhokseumawe, Bireun, Pidie Jaya, and Pidie). Data were collected through multiple techniques, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis (DEWI, 2022).

Data analysis followed an interactive process involving data reduction, data presentation, and verification (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Triangulation was employed to ensure validity by comparing findings across different sources and methods (Cheong et al., 2023). The study's contributions are grounded in academic reasoning and rigorous scientific methodology, drawing from both field research and literature review (Rustamana et al., 2024). This integrated approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the practices, strategies, and dynamics of peaceful communication implemented by PA within the sociopolitical context of post-conflict Aceh.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines how the Aceh Party (PA) implements peaceful communication by integrating local wisdom grounded in Islamic values, analyzing the models and forms that can strengthen social cohesion, peace, and political stability in Aceh (Rahman et al., 2024). Peaceful communication, particularly when integrating religiously based local wisdom, is a crucial element in post-conflict reconciliation in Aceh. Previous studies have emphasized the role of political communication in maintaining political stability and peace in post-conflict regions such as Aceh (Hasan et al., 2022). However, these studies remain fragmented and have rarely integrated local wisdom, Islamic values, and Acehnese local identity into a comprehensive theoretical and practical framework.



Aceh Party as a Vehicle of Peaceful Transformation

Following the 2005 Helsinki MoU, Aceh experienced significant socio-political restructuring. Former combatants were reintegrated into society, with many participating actively in Gampong governance and civil organizations. The shift in power structures and the granting of special autonomy provided space for local parties to shape regional policies (Agustus et al., 2025). Local democratization and elections became crucial opportunities for transforming armed forces into legitimate political actors. The findings indicate that PA embodies this peaceful transformation in the socio-political context of post-Helsinki Aceh. The 15 August 2005 MoU marked a historic milestone in Indonesia’s political history, transitioning Aceh from nearly three decades of armed conflict to reconciliation, democratization, and development. A key manifestation of this transformation is the establishment of PA as a local party representing former Free Aceh Movement (GAM) combatants. PA functions not only as a political vehicle but also as a symbol of the ongoing transformation from conflict to sustainable peace (Maya et al., 2024). The prolonged conflict in Aceh can be summarized in a chronological timeline of GAM activities, based on credible historical documents, research, and archives, including Aspinall (2005), Kingsbury (2006), Schulze (2004), and Law No. 11 of 2006 on Aceh Governance.

Table 1. Timeline of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM)

Period / Year	Key Events
1976	Declaration of GAM by Hasan Tiro at Mount Halimon, Pidie.
1976–1979	Early resistance phase; bases in Pidie, North Aceh, and Aceh Besar. Hasan Tiro went into exile in Sweden.
1989–1998	GAM resurgence with support from Libya; intensified armed conflict; implementation of Military Operations (DOM) from 1989–1998.
1999–2004	Reform era: public sympathy increased. Negotiations with HDC (CoHA 2002) failed. State of emergency declared in 2003.
2004	Aceh Tsunami on 26 December paved the way for reconciliation and international pressure.
2005	15 August 2005: Helsinki MoU signed. GAM disarmed, local political parties permitted, UUPA No. 11/2006 enacted.
2006–2012	Ex-GAM members entered formal politics. Aceh Party became dominant in DPRA, DPRK, and executive positions (Governor, Regent/Mayor).
2014–2025	Political fragmentation among ex-GAM. GAM symbols remain strong as Aceh’s political identity to this day.

Prof. Saiful Akmal, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, stated that:

The Helsinki MoU not only ended armed hostilities but also established new governance mechanisms through the Aceh Governance Law (UUPA), the establishment of local political parties, reintegration programs for former combatants, and involvement of international missions to monitor the implementation of peace. Following the agreement, the Aceh peace narrative evolved from post-conflict euphoria toward a more complex dynamic (Interview, 22 May 2025).



In this context, Munawar Liza Zainal (Warzen), a member of the GAM negotiating team in Helsinki 2005, argued that:

The peace achieved in Aceh represents the result of a long and costly struggle that must not be wasted. One key meaning of Aceh's peace is that the sacrifices of previous generations were significant. Their struggle preserved Acehnese identity as ethical Muslims with dignity, honor, and social standing. The conflict from 1976 to 2005 claimed lives, property, and affected all sectors of Acehnese society. The peace agreement signed in Helsinki emphasized a dignified resolution for all, as stated in its opening paragraph (Podcast Serambi Spotlight, 13 August 2025).

He further noted that, as of 2025—20 years after the MoU—the sense of peace has somewhat diminished. The MoU granted Aceh broad autonomy, including control over natural resources, with only six areas remaining under central government authority. However, implementation has not been fully optimal. The main challenge lies in the misalignment between the commitments in the MoU and their execution (Interview, 13 August 2025).

Zainal also highlighted three groups prioritized by the MoU:

3,000 former GAM combatants, political prisoners, and civilian conflict victims. According to the agreement, they are entitled to adequate agricultural land, employment, and social security, but these provisions have not been fully realized. He emphasized the need to evaluate Aceh's two decades of peace by revisiting the 2005 agreements and correcting gaps (Interview, 13 August 2025).

Dr. Taufik Abdullah, former activist and political science academic at Universitas Malikussaleh, emphasized that:

The establishment of a local political party was a fundamental aspect of post-MoU peace. Interestingly, GAM, as a signatory of the Helsinki MoU alongside the Indonesian government, facilitated the creation of the local political party now known as the Aceh Party (PA). The party was enthusiastically received, particularly among former GAM members, as a means of consolidating a complete and sustainable peace in line with the MoU. However, PA's political journey since its first participation in the 2009 elections through 2024 has experienced fluctuations. Some observers note that these fluctuations were influenced by communication patterns characterized by dominance, arrogance, and occasionally coercive or dogmatic tactics (Interview, 10 May 2025).

Dr. Naidi Faisal, Political Science lecturer at Universitas Malikussaleh and former member of the Aceh Provincial Election Supervisory Committee (Panwaslih), viewed PA as a political representative of most former GAM combatants. He emphasized the need to strengthen substantive peace-oriented communication. In line with prior studies (Aspinall, 2009; Faisal, 2023; Kingsbury, 2006; Miller, 2009; M. Sulaiman, 2016), PA is not merely a vehicle for expressing political aspirations but also a foundation for rebuilding trust eroded during the conflict, bridging differences, and ensuring that political decisions serve the Acehnese people and sustain peace.

The reinforcement of peace communication and narratives must become an ideological awareness of PA, crucial for mitigating potential conflicts, managing public expectations, and integrating former GAM fighters into democratic political systems (Interview, 8 May 2025).



Prof. Suadi, Professor of Conflict and Peace Sociology at Universitas Malikussaleh, emphasized, in line with Aspinall (2009) and Kingsbury (2006), that key areas requiring continuous attention in Aceh include effective implementation of autonomy, strengthened control over resources, equitable distribution of natural resource revenues, and local budget and regulatory policies prioritizing Acehnese interests.

Dr. Teuku Kemal Fasya, an Acehnese anthropologist, noted that local political parties are an integral part of the roadmap for the peace process outlined in the Helsinki MoU (15 August 2005).

The legal existence of local political parties in Aceh was no longer contested after the enactment of Law No. 11 of 2006 on Aceh Governance and Government Regulation No. 20 of 2007 on Local Political Parties in Aceh, which explicitly provided a legal basis for their establishment. The presence of local political parties, including PA, is part of the peace roadmap in Aceh, as outlined in the Helsinki agreement (Interview, 2 July 2025).

Local political parties in Aceh also signify the development of democracy in Indonesia, particularly in providing broader political participation for citizens. Through local parties, citizens can articulate their political aspirations more directly and contextually. Nonetheless, in practice, gaps remain between public expectations and the performance of local political parties, with some citizens feeling that their aspirations are not fully accommodated despite local parties' participation in governance. Prof. M. Nazaruddin, an Acehnese sociologist, analyzed that PA's survival until 2025 is due to its combination of historical legitimacy, strong social networks, and political communication grounded in local wisdom within a relatively favorable political structure. However, the party's continued dominance depends on its capacity to adapt to new socio-political dynamics in Aceh.

PA's dominance stems not only from political machinery but also from a combination of symbolic capital, cultural identity, resource control, and opponents' weaknesses. Yet, reliance on past struggle narratives can be a double-edged sword. Younger Acehnese, increasingly critical regarding transparency, good governance, and public participation, may challenge PA's hegemony if the party fails to transform (Interview, 27 May 2025).

Since controlling the executive and legislative branches (2009–2012), PA gained significant access to political and economic resources, enabling it to consolidate power through patronage, distribution of development projects, and bureaucratic influence. This patronage system fostered loyalty among local officials and regional business networks. As a representation of peaceful transformation, PA allowed former combatants, previously involved in conflict, to legally pursue the aspirations of the people through democratic mechanisms. This reflects the concept of conflict transformation, wherein conflict is not merely ended through ceasefire but transformed into opportunities to build new relationships based on justice, democracy, and participation.

The identity transformation from arms to political voice reflects a collective shift from armed fighters to politicians. Symbols of struggle are rearticulated in political discourse. However, this transformation is not entirely smooth, as some groups feel the struggle remains unfinished, particularly regarding full MoU implementation. The reconciliation and positive peace dimension of the Helsinki MoU not only ended violence (negative peace) but also created opportunities for positive peace, encompassing justice, welfare, and participation. PA plays a key role in reconciliation through political representation of ex-GAM members, advocacy for affirmative policies for conflict victims, and symbolic recognition of Aceh's history and culture.



Dr. Akmal noted the connection between political elites and local oligarchies:

Many elected officials in Aceh are directly affiliated or genealogically linked to PA networks. This creates a political symbiosis: local elites gain legitimacy through PA support, while PA controls strategic positions (Interview, 2 June 2025).

This underscores the notion that post-conflict peace cannot rely solely on formal instruments such as the Helsinki MoU but must be rooted in the everyday social life of Acehnese communities. This critique highlights the tendency to view peace merely as an elite political settlement, often neglecting cultural, emotional, and social dimensions at the community level. Informants emphasize the importance of local peacebuilding, a reconciliation process grounded in local wisdom occurring through simple yet meaningful social interactions, such as discussions at coffee stalls, deliberations at *meunasah*, joint traditional events, and practices of mutual forgiveness.

From the perspective of peace-oriented political communication, this dynamic aligns with Habermas's deliberative approach, which emphasizes participation and dialogue in public spaces as a means to achieve social consensus. In Aceh, public spaces extend beyond official government forums to include *meunasah*, *dayah*, coffee shops, and various traditional activities. These discursive spaces serve as participatory mediums, allowing communities to interact, build mutual understanding, and gradually restore social cohesion fragmented by conflict. This strategy integrates formal peace agreements with a peace culture rooted in Acehnese traditions. The Helsinki MoU provides legal and political foundations, while Acehnese local wisdom serves as an emotional and spiritual adhesive enabling society to truly move on from past conflicts. Dr. Tgk. Ridwan H. Ali, Islamic politics scholar, NU cleric, and academic in Lhokseumawe, noted that the emergence of local political parties in Aceh, a unique exception within the Indonesian political system, was critical.

The Aceh Party, formed by ex-GAM members, became dominant, winning a majority of DPRA seats in elections from 2009 through 2024. Special autonomy and political dynamics under the 2006 UUPA granted broad authority in political, economic, and cultural affairs, enabling local actors to manage development independently. However, this also generated internal political competition that occasionally led to friction (Interview, 6 April 2025).

Peace Communication of the Aceh Party Integrating Local Wisdom Based on Religious Values

Aceh has a rich heritage of local wisdom, which for centuries has served as a social cohesive force in regulating community life, resolving conflicts, and strengthening solidarity. Some local wisdom practices based on religious values, which have been part of the Aceh Party (PA)'s peace communication since 2009, include: *peusijuek*, a welcoming and safety prayer ritual that symbolizes peace, blessings, and respect. In the political context, *peusijuek* is used as a symbol of acceptance of new leaders, reconciliation between groups, and conflict resolution. *Meusyawah* or *mupakat mukim gampong* is a deliberative tradition to reach a consensus in resolving social and political problems. This principle aligns with the Islamic value of *syura* (QS. Asy-Syura: 38).

Peumulia jamee, a concept of hospitality that prioritizes respect for guests. In peaceful political communication, it reflects openness and acceptance of differences. *Khanduri*, *meusyeraya*, and *majelis zikir* are religious and social traditions that strengthen social cohesion through communal prayers, mutual assistance (*gotong royong*), and togetherness. The utilization of traditional structures and the role of traditional institutions such as *Tuha Peut*, *Tuha Lapan*, *Imum Mukim*, and *Keuchik* serve as mediators in conflicts and as channels for peaceful political



communication at the local level. This local wisdom is integrated with Islamic values, which generate religious-cultural legitimacy that strengthens the PA's practice of peace communication. In the context of the PA's peace communication integrating local wisdom based on Islamic values, peace communication is closely tied to Islamic values that emphasize the principles of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *'adl* (justice), *islah* (reconciliation), and *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil). These principles provide a moral and spiritual framework for political communication. This is in line with the concept of Islamic communication, which emphasizes *qaulan sadida* (true speech), *qaulan ma'rufa* (good speech), *qaulan karima* (noble speech), and *qaulan layyina* (gentle speech) (Faridah et al., 2023).

Peace communication can be understood as a process of exchanging messages that aims to foster harmony, avoid violence, and build mutual understanding among interacting parties (Galtung, 1996; Lederach, 2005). In a political context, peace communication not only functions to convey aspirations but also to create consensus and reconciliation. The PA's peace communication must be understood as a process that integrates three pillars: religion, custom, and politics. These three are interconnected and form a distinctive Acehese communication model and form capable of maintaining post-conflict peace. Prof. Zainal Arifin, Lc, MA, Professor at UIN Sumatera Utara Medan, author of *Tafsir Inspirasi* He states that:

Local political parties in Aceh, including the Aceh Party, should always uphold justice and truth and be fair in all actions, including in conveying political information. This is aimed at achieving mutual understanding, avoiding conflict, and building harmonious relationships. In Islam, this concept is highly revered and explained in many verses of the Qur'an and hadith. He mentions that it is only right that in every communication domain, the Qur'an and Hadith become the main foundation. In the domain of peace communication, political communication is no different, especially when it concerns a local Acehese political party; it is important to use good and non-harsh language when communicating, especially when dealing with the public, including with people who may have political differences (Discussion, Medan, May 2, 2025).

Prof. Dr. Tgk. Muntasir A. Kadir, an Acehese cleric, young intellectual, and supervisor of Universitas Islam Al-Aziziyah Indonesia (UNISAI), academic and expert in Islamic politics In his view:

Peace communication and peaceful political communication in Islam are guided by the Qur'an and Hadith and must be related to the basic principles of justice, truth, deliberation, non-violence, and harmonizing and peacemaking. Peaceful political communication is not just a tool to achieve power, but also a means to create peace, justice, and prosperity. He believes that dialogue, wisdom, and a commitment to truth are the keys to building a just and peaceful political system, and these principles must be implemented by local parties in Aceh, including the Aceh Party. It is crucial to integrate Islamic values, principles, and ethics into every process, form, nature, model, and stage of PA's political communication. Of course, communication here is not only a tool for conveying information but also a medium for dakwah (preaching), building social harmony, and strengthening ukhuwah Islamiyah and community participation. With Islamic principles as the foundation, political communication is built upon godliness, humanity, ethics, moderation, and knowledge. It is hoped that all officials and sympathizers of political parties in Aceh will internalize this to create harmony, peace, social cohesion, and good political stability (Interview, June 5, 2025).



Dr. Rubino, MA, lecturer in the Doctoral Program of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting, Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UIN Sumatera Utara He believes that :

The Aceh Party must strive to actualize the values of peaceful political communication based on Islamic values, such as honesty (şidq), trustworthiness (amanah), delivering messages (tablig), and intelligence (fathanah) in its political communication activities. The party should also integrate this approach with Acehese local wisdom as part of the community's collective identity, so that it continues to be loved by the people of Aceh (Discussion, Medan, May 5, 2025).

The implementation of peaceful communication and peaceful political communication based on Islam in life lies in its ability to create more harmonious social relationships, based on the values of goodness, honesty, and mutual respect. In an ever-evolving social and political context, Islamic principles can strengthen social integrity, reduce conflict, and create a more peaceful and just society. Their application, both in the virtual and real world, will have a positive impact on creating a better communication climate for the nation. Dr. Baharuddin AR, M.S, academic at UIN Ar-Raniry He emphasizes the importance of the Aceh Party integrating Islamic values in communication.

The integration of local wisdom and Islamic values in the Aceh Party's communication process is meant to deliver messages with an Islamic nuance using the principles of Islamic communication, such as aqidah (faith), syariah (Islamic law), and akhlak (ethics). These Islamic messages are intended to have value as dakwah in local politics in Aceh (Interview, June 3, 2025).

The utilization of Islamic communication principles includes at least six types of speech (*qaulan*) that are categorized as rules, principles, or ethics of Islamic communication: (1) Qaulan Sadida (true speech), (2) Qaulan Baligha (effective speech), (3) Qaulan Ma'rufa (good speech), (4) Qaulan Karima (noble speech), (5) Qaulan Layyina (gentle speech), and (6) Qaulan Maysura (easy speech). Islamic communication has a very important relevance in life, in all forms, types, and contexts of communication. Prof. Saiful Akmal, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Keguruan, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, Indonesia He states that:

For the Aceh Party, it's not just about winning votes, but how they maintain the legacy of peace after the Helsinki MoU. He believes that the Aceh Party's peaceful political communication must be based on Islamic values and local wisdom, as these are the sources of moral legitimacy in the eyes of the community. In Islam, communication is always emphasized to be conducted with qaulan layyinan (gentle speech), qaulan sadidan (true speech), and qaulan ma'rufan (good speech). When these values are practiced by the Aceh Party's elite, politics can become a space for silaturahmi (strengthening kinship), not an arena for conflict (Interview, May 22, 2025).

The importance of *qaulan layyinan* and *qaulan ma'rufan* in the practice of peaceful political communication in Aceh aligns with Johan Galtung's theory of positive peace, where peace is not just the absence of violence (*negative peace*) but also the presence of just, harmonious, and mutually respectful relationships. By prioritizing Islam-based communication that is gentle, truthful, and full of respect, the Aceh Party is actually working toward a strong and sustainable positive peace. In the political communication literature, the model of peace communication emphasizes a process of dialogue, persuasion, and participation without resorting to intimidation. The Aceh Party needs to present political communication that is both Islamic and local. According to Prof. Saiful Akmal,



integrating Acehese local wisdom, such as *musyawarah gampong* (village deliberation), *peusijuek* (a ritual of blessing), *peumulia jamee* (honoring guests), and the tradition of *meusyawarah dalam meusyeyuraya* (deliberation within mutual cooperation), serves as an instrument for peace communication.

By integrating these practices into its communication strategy, the Aceh Party (PA) can make politics feel less foreign or intimidating to the public. Instead, politics becomes a natural part of their socio-religious life. This makes communication contextual, Islamic, and rooted in local culture, allowing the PA to maintain social cohesion and strengthen its political legitimacy (Interview, May 22, 2025).

Peace communication is not merely a normative discourse on conflict resolution; it must be rooted in the community's value system, which is the integration of Acehese local wisdom with Islamic teachings. Local wisdoms like *peumulia jamee*, *musyawarah mukim*, *meusyeyureukat*, *peusijuek*, and the traditional philosophy "adat bak Po Teumeureuhom, hukom bak Syiah Kuala, qanun bak Putroe Phang, reusam bak Laksamana" are all part of the social cohesion and social capital that form peace communication. These local values have long been the foundation for peace communication and for maintaining social cohesion and capital. When integrated with Islamic teachings, these local values can strengthen peaceful communication patterns. For example, *Peumulia Jamee* (honoring guests) reflects Aceh's openness to outsiders, a friendly attitude, and respect for others. In the context of peace communication, this value fosters tolerance and acceptance of differences. *Musyawarah Mukim and Gampong* (deliberation at the district and village levels) positions deliberation as an egalitarian space for communication. Important decisions are always made through deliberation (*meusyawarah*), which aligns with the Islamic teaching of *syura* (QS. Asy-Syura:38). Islam-based practices like *majelis zikir* (communal prayer meetings) and communal prayers serve as a spiritual medium and a symbol of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood). Friday sermons and PA cadre religious studies often convey messages of peace through religious sermons. The principles of *Ukhuwah* and *Ihsan* (brotherhood and goodness) are practiced in daily political interactions, emphasizing kinship and noble character (*akhlak al-karimah*).

Prof. Nirzalin, a sociologist at Malikussaleh University who researches the political agency crisis of *teungku dayah* (Islamic boarding school teachers) in Aceh, notes that:

The PA has utilized local wisdom, traditional structures, and Acehese identity. The party blends its political framework with Acehese local wisdom, including language, customs, traditional structures, and Islamic values, including the teungku-teungku dayah. This creates a high sense of belonging among voters. The PA's political communication strategy, which is based on local wisdom, culture, and custom, aligns with the Identity Politics Theory, which emphasizes the importance of identity narratives in maintaining electoral dominance (Interview, June 2025).

Dr. Ibrahim Chalid, an Acehese anthropologist, states that the PA also applies a peaceful political communication strategy based on Acehese local wisdom.

Post-conflict, the PA has shifted its narrative from armed struggle to a narrative of peaceful politics through the language of silaturahmi (strengthening kinship), musyawarah, keunduri (feast), meuseraya (mutual cooperation), and the use of traditional structures. This shift has broadened support not only from its traditional base but also from civil society, religious leaders, and the younger generation who desire stability (Interview, April 8, 2025).



Tgk. Samsul Bahri (Sarjev), an official of the Aceh Party's Central Leadership Council, stated that the Aceh Party is "a child of peace."

Without the Helsinki MoU, they would not have been in the seats of the DPRA (Aceh House position. He acknowledges that "top-down" power language is no longer relevant. Now, they use the language of silaturahmi, musyawarah, consensus, keunduri, meuseuraya, peusujuk, and traditional structures in an Islamic and customary way to convey political messages to the public. This is part of the transition toward a complete peaceful political system. He believes the challenge now is not to fight but to maintain trust, which he thinks is much harder than raising arms (Interview, June 18, 2025).

As stated by Dr. Tgk. Alfian, a religious figure and academic in Lhokseumawe-Aceh Utara, in an interview on March 20, 2025, peace from the Helsinki MoU cannot only exist on paper.

In the villages, dayah (Islamic boarding schools), pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), meunasah (village prayer houses), and mosques, people must return to sitting together, organizing traditional events together, deliberating together, drinking coffee together, talking, and forgiving each other. Without this, the wounds will remain, and that is the local wisdom in Aceh—it will eventually bring people back together (Interview with Tgk. Jamal, March 20, 2025).

Identity Politics and its Challenges

The presence of identity politics, with Acehnese, Islamic, and resistance history as its political capital, is a powerful force. Prof. Muntasir notes that if not managed inclusively, this identity risks becoming exclusive, hindering broader socio-political integration. He states that:

Identity politics based on Acehnese heritage, Islam, and the history of resistance is a significant political capital in the post-Helsinki MoU political dynamics of Aceh. This collective identity has a strong binding power because it is rooted in the long historical experience of the Acehnese people, both within the framework of religion and the struggle against external domination. This identity serves as a symbol of legitimacy that can unite the mass base and strengthen the political claims of local parties in Aceh (Interview, April 5, 2025).

Prof. Nirzalin points out the potential problems that arise when identity politics are managed exclusively. An identity that:

Only emphasizes "us" versus "them" has the potential to create new fragmentation, strengthen sectarian politics, and close off space for integration with the broader Indonesian national identity. This risk can hinder the long-term democratization and socio-political development of Aceh. Post-conflict Acehnese identity politics, if it remains trapped in the memory of resistance, tends to maintain an exclusive resistance identity. In contrast, if it is managed inclusively through the all-encompassing mercy of Islam (rahmatan lil 'alamin) and local wisdom, this identity can transform into a more progressive project identity, opening up space for integration, social cohesion, and sustainable development (Interview, June 6, 2025).

This dynamic can be understood through Manuel Castells's (1997) perspective on the politics of identity, which distinguishes between resistance identity and project identity. This framework confirms that the change in political identity is not just an academic discourse but also a critical warning about the direction of ongoing socio-political transformation (Castells, 1997). Tgk. Halim



Abe, a spokesman for the KPA (Aceh Transition Committee) Kuta Pase in Lhokseumawe, also emphasizes that:

They used to fight for Aceh's dignity, but now the struggle must be directed toward improving education, economy, and governance. If they are only busy talking about identity exclusively, the common people will remain in hardship, and that is not the goal of peace (Interview, April 29, 2025).

The presence of identity politics in post-conflict Aceh based on Acehnese identity, Islam, and resistance history is indeed strong political capital. However, as reminded by the figures, this identity can become a boomerang if it is not managed inclusively.

Tabel 2. Aceh Conflict Transformation Model in Social and Political Context

Dimension	Description	Related Theory	Critical Notes
Personal	Healing trauma and reintegration of ex-combatants into society. Psychosocial assistance by NGOs and religious leaders. Restoration of social relations through <i>meusyawarah</i> , <i>meuseuraya</i> , and village traditional forums.	Lederach (1997) – Conflict Transformation (personal dimension).	Not all victims have received continuous support; there is a risk of latent trauma.
Relational	The birth of the Aceh Party and other local parties; special autonomy through the UUPA (Aceh Government Law); local political dominance in the DPRA.	Putnam (1993) – Social Capital (trust and social networks).	Social cohesion is beginning to be built, but it remains vulnerable if identity politics heat up.
Structural	Revitalization of Acehnese customs, customary sea law (<i>hukum adat laot</i>), and the application of Islamic law (<i>syariat Islam</i>) as a moral political legitimacy.	Galtung (1969) – Positive Peace; Local Democratization.	Elitist politics hinder the distribution of justice; party governance reform is needed.
Cultural	Utilization of Special Autonomy Funds for the development of infrastructure, agriculture, and fisheries.	Geertz (1973) – Cultural Interpretation; Lederach (cultural dimension).	Potential for identity exclusivity if not inclusive of minorities.
Economic		Theory of Inclusive Development (Sen, 1999).	Uneven distribution; potential for discontent among rural communities.



Political Participation	Involvement of women and the younger generation in local politics is still low, although it is beginning to grow.	Feminist Political Theory; Civic Engagement.	Quotas and leadership training are needed to strengthen their roles.
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Source: Author's interpretation 2025

Dr. T. Kemal Fasya, an Acehnese anthropologist, states that:

Despite the strong integration of Islamic values and Acehnese customs, there are serious challenges in their implementation. He notes the politicization of custom and religion. Post-Helsinki MoU, many customary and religious symbols have been used as tools for political legitimacy, which weakens their substantial meaning.

The Aceh Party was born from a long history of conflict. Therefore, the peaceful political communication they practice cannot be mere electoral rhetoric; it must be built on the foundation of Acehnese local wisdom. In Acehnese society, *musyawarah*, *peusijuek*, *peumulia jamee*, and the *kenduri* tradition are mediums for peaceful communication that existed long before the Helsinki MoU.

If the Aceh Party wants to be truly rooted and build social cohesion, they need to make these values not just symbols, but a method of daily politics. Islamic values, such as amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, gentleness in dialogue, and the spirit of ukhuwah, are the moral energy that strengthens local wisdom itself. It is this integration of local wisdom with Islamic values that can form a unique model of peaceful political communication in Aceh that is different from other regions in Indonesia (Interview, July 2, 2025).

Peace communication in Aceh cannot be separated from the cultural basis of the community. Traditions like *musyawarah*, *peusijuek*, and *kenduri* are forms of communication that prioritize harmony, respect, and kinship. This practice represents a cultural-based communication model, where message delivery is more symbolic and emotional than purely verbal and rational. The Aceh Party (PA) must utilize this cultural capital to build peaceful communication.

Muzakir Manaf (Mualem), as Chairman of the Aceh Party (PA), Chairman of the Aceh Transition Committee (KPA), and Governor of Aceh for the 2025-2030 period, is committed to peaceful communication by integrating local wisdom based on Islamic values in running the Aceh Party. Conceptually, the Aceh Party's peaceful political communication is conducted through several approaches, such as cultural communication based on sharia and local wisdom. The PA packages its political messages with Islamic and Acehnese cultural symbols like *hukum adat laôt* (customary sea law), *hukum mukim* (district law), *peusijuek*, *rapa'i*, *peumulia jamee*, and *musyawarah mukim* to build emotional closeness. This approach strengthens the legitimacy of their cultural power among the religious community.

Mualem also mentions participatory political dialogue, prioritizing *musyawarah* with religious leaders, traditional figures, youth, and women at the *gampong* (village) level through informal forums like "political coffee" and "meunasah meeting." This dialogue is seen as effective in reducing the tension of local political competition and serving as a means of peaceful political education. The PA also builds a network of political communicators such as spokespersons, local influencers, journalists, and community leaders to deliver a narrative of reconciliation, peace, and



equitable development for Aceh. It is known that the messages from the Aceh Party (PA) emphasize a peaceful struggle through parliament, maintaining peace, and a dignified Aceh within the framework of the NKRI, “our own party, our own people” (*partai droe uroeung droe*). With a persuasive approach in community conflict resolution, the PA plays the role of a broker mediation in horizontal conflicts between groups in villages as a form of peaceful communication to maintain the stability of its voter base.

T. Kamaruzaman (Ampon Man), one of Aceh's peace negotiators, emphasizes that peace communication cannot be separated from the cultural roots and Islamic values of the Acehnese people. The peace process is not just a political agreement but a continuous communication transformation within society.

"Since the beginning of the Helsinki negotiations, we have always realized that peace cannot be sustained by documents or signatures alone. It must live in the hearts of the people. That's why the peaceful communication built by the Aceh Party must be rooted in Acehnese local wisdom like musyawarah, peusijek (rice flour blessing), and the principle of consensus (meupakat). All of that is in line with the Islamic values of ukhuwah, brotherhood, and peace" (Interview, July 20, 2025).

The Aceh Party has a great responsibility to translate the points of the Helsinki MoU into a cool and non-confrontational political language while maintaining its Islamic identity. For the Acehnese people, politics is not just about seizing power but also a way to maintain dignity and religion. Therefore, the Aceh Party's communication must show Islamic morals (*akhlak Islami*), speak with good words, stay away from violence, and prioritize peace. Ampon Man also stresses the importance of integrating local wisdom into the Aceh Party's political communication practice, because local wisdom is a social adhesive.

"If we forget custom, then this peace will be fragile. Acehnese custom, like the saying 'adat ngon agama lagee zat ngon sifeut' (custom and religion are like a substance and its properties), becomes the foundation of peaceful political communication. So the Aceh Party must be skilled at reviving the tradition of musyawarah in the villages, respecting religious scholars as a moral reference, and displaying Islamic cultural symbols in all of its political communication. We have experienced a long period of conflict. The Aceh Party's communication must never be far from Islamic values, never far from custom, because that is the key to sincere, rooted, and inheritable peace for future generations of Aceh" (Interview, July 20, 2025).

In the view of former two-term East Aceh Regent H. Hasballah H.M. Thaib SH, who served from 2012-2017 and 2017-2022 and is often called Roky, he is also a high-ranking official of KPA/PA in the East Aceh region.

"The Aceh Party's communication must try to be close to the people, using language that the community understands, language that is attached to custom and Islamic values. For example, in musyawarah gampong, we don't just talk about practical politics, but also insert Islamic moral messages, traditional messages, and the spirit of togetherness. That's what makes the community still believe that the Aceh Party is a great home for the Acehnese people" (Interview, July 5, 2025).

According to Dr. Alfian, a '98 activist, the Aceh Party has a great moral responsibility, not only as a political representative of former combatants but also as an important actor in building



peaceful communication based on Islamic values. "In the context of Aceh, Islamic values are not just symbols but a moral foundation for creating a just and civilized political space.

If the Aceh Party wants to survive as an influential political force, it must build a peaceful political communication that emphasizes brotherhood (ukhuwah), justice ('adl), and avoids hate speech and polarization. The most suitable model of peaceful communication in Aceh is the integrative model, where political elites combine the aspirations of the people through traditional forums, musyawarah, and religious approaches, not just through formal political channels" (Interview, March 2, 2025).

Related to the most suitable peaceful communication model for the PA, Dr. Dahlan A. states, "Islamic values teach the principle of gentleness in communication. This principle, when integrated with Acehese culture, will strengthen the legitimacy of the Aceh Party's political communication in maintaining social cohesion. Therefore, the integrative model of peaceful communication connects Islam, custom, and modern political interests so that the political message is not exclusive but invites all parties to be involved in peaceful development."

In relation to this, Prof. Dr. Daniel, Rector of UIN SUNA Lhokseumawe, an expert in Islamic philosophy and an Acehese cleric, said:

"The key to peaceful communication lies in honesty, justice, and siding with the common people. Islam teaches amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, and that should be realized in communication. The Aceh Party must position itself as a moral example, not just an electoral machine. If their communication gets trapped in the rhetoric of power, the meaning of peace can be eroded. But if they can integrate Acehese local wisdom with Islamic values, then the Aceh Party's communication can become a unique model of peace in the world" (Interview, June 7, 2025).

For this reason, peaceful communication has a theological root in Islam, particularly the principle of *qaulan layyinan*. This will strengthen the argument that peaceful communication is not just a social strategy but a moral and spiritual obligation. The PA's peaceful communication in Aceh must be integrated with local wisdom rooted in Islamic teachings to have strong legitimacy in the eyes of the Acehese community.

CONCLUSION

Local parties are an integral part of the road map to the peace process, as stated in the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on August 15, 2005. The existence of local political parties in Aceh is no longer a legal debate since the enactment of Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Government of Aceh and Government Regulation No. 20 of 2007 on Local Political Parties in Aceh, which explicitly provides the legal basis for their existence.

The Aceh Party as a peaceful transformation in the socio-political context after the 2005 Helsinki MoU: The Aceh peace process, marked by the signing of the Helsinki MoU on August 15, 2005, is one of the great achievements in Indonesia's political history. From an armed conflict that lasted for nearly three decades, Aceh shifted to a phase of reconciliation, democratization, and development. One important manifestation of this transformation is the birth of the Aceh Party (PA) as a local party representing former Free Aceh Movement (GAM) combatants. The PA is not only a political vehicle but also a symbol of conflict transformation toward sustainable peace. The Aceh Party serves as the political representation of a large portion of former GAM combatants. It needs to strengthen substantive communication regarding its various "peaceful politics" missions.



The PA is not merely a tool for conveying political aspirations but a foundation for rebuilding trust eroded during the conflict, bridging differing views, and ensuring that every political decision made is always oriented toward the interests of the Acehese people and the sustainability of peace. The PA is not just an electoral political entity but also a key actor in continuous peacebuilding in Aceh, which can serve as a model for local-based conflict resolution for other regions in Indonesia and the world. The Aceh Party is a symbol of peaceful transformation from armed conflict to local democracy. Its presence strengthens social cohesion, opens up space for political participation, and maintains post-peace stability. However, the sustainability of peace heavily depends on the ability of the PA and other Acehese political actors to address economic challenges, the younger generation, and democratic consolidation. The PA's transformation is evidence that peace is not just about ending war but about reordering the political, social, and cultural future of Aceh.

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