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# Wali Nanggroe Institution (LWN) Revitalization and Conflict Resolution Problems in Aceh

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## Abstract

Strengthening the peace in Aceh may be possible by revitalizing the Wali Nanggroe Institution (LWN). Institutional strengthening is necessary to keep Aceh on its peaceful path. However, even LWN's existence has generated debate and differing opinions. This article seeks to answer the following: First, why does LWN deserve to be preserved and why has its revitalization been fraught with difficulties? Second, what is the relationship between the problems LWN faces and the potential role that it plays in conflict resolution? This study employs qualitative research in the form of document studies and in-depth interviews via focus groups with a variety of informants with a focus on specific and privileged institutions. Although LWN has the potential to increase the dignity of the traditional or social side of the people of Aceh, the politicization of institutions, customary discrimination, and the poor implementation of functions has resulted in the emergence of distrust. Because of this low level of mistrust, the institution's potential to serve as a forum for conflict resolution is currently far from being realized.

**Keywords:** Revitalization, Conflict Resolution, Recognition, Customary Institutions, Authority

## 1. Introduction

The *Wali Nanggroe* Institution (LWN) was established by the Aceh peace agreement reached in Finland on August 15, 2005. This agreement is known as the Helsinki MoU between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government. The formation of the LWN was one of the clauses that arose, stating, "The Nanggroe Wali Institution will be formed with all the ceremonial instruments and titles" (Helsinki, 2006). The organization was established to uphold peace as a traditional institution. The government of the Republic of Indonesia granted this mandate as part of its complete acceptance of Aceh's citizens' right to participate in peacekeeping efforts. The government of the Republic of Indonesia, the highest authority in Indonesia, invited LWN to carry out various roles, including fostering peace and resolving conflicts.

This acknowledgment also gives LWN strong legitimacy to participate as one of the crucial components in Aceh's mission for peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Recognition from the government of the Republic of Indonesia is essential capital to enable this institution to significantly impact the lives of the Acehnese people, including maintaining peace, of which conflict resolution is an integral part. However, in a decade of LWN's presence, it is felt that it has not played its role optimally. Some Acehnese have become more skeptical of and even hostile towards LWN. It was made worse by the limited role assumed, making it seem less helpful. Thus, the discourse to support and revitalize LWN started in 2019. With this revitalization, it is hoped that LWN can win back the community's trust and fulfill its role as an institution for conflict resolution and efforts to uphold peace in Aceh.

For LWN to function as an institution capable of maintaining peace and resolving conflicts, this article looks at the potential for revitalizing it. Given that there is still a chance for conflict in Aceh, this revitalization work is necessary. Conflict is essentially latent, especially when the causes of conflict continue to develop or are already entrenched. Conflicts may have roots or have the potential to develop further due to competing patronage groups, economic inequalities, social class positions, or conflicting basic values. Conflicts arise when resources are not distributed proportionally to where they are needed or when there are issues with how they are distributed and delivered. Conflicts can also arise due to cultural prejudice and unequal political access. The existence of a political transformation that causes groups to feel excluded can be one source of potential conflict. In the current context of Aceh, the potential for conflict would stem more from long-held basic values, especially ones related to ethnic or religious groups concerning cultural discrimination.

Widespread conflict is more likely to escalate in the absence of institutions that serve as mediators and conflict resolution mechanisms. There are a few specific sources of potential conflict to investigate. Firstly, the burning of the Muhammadiyah Mosque in Aceh due to recent tensions between Muhammadiyah circles and the local populations indicates a more significant issue with religious traditions (Ardi, 2018), (Mohtarom, 2018), (Sohuturon, 2017). Additionally, the position of non-Acehnese communities and their function as traditional entities will not exist based on the potential, anxiety, and concern of them, particularly in non-Acehnese community bases like Gayo in Central Aceh. Even the Gayo community had time to promote the notion of an Aceh-based Gayo Merdeka (Isma, 2016). Lastly, some Acehnese people have a mindset that has prioritizes their identity as an Acehnese person and rejects the idea they are Indonesian, and this raises the possibility of conflict in the country in the future.

Article 18B of the 1945 Indonesian Constitution, which states that the government recognizes and respects special or special regional government units governed by law, has been used to revitalize peace-building institutions and resolve the conflicts mentioned above. The state also acknowledges and upholds the units of customary law in various communities and their traditional rights so long as they are still alive and in accordance with the law. The 1945 Constitution's Article 18B also affirms the right of local governments in Indonesia, including Aceh, to be distinct from other regions or provinces (Ridwansyah-a, 2022).

This article examines LWN's potential to serve as an institution that can contribute to conflict resolution in Aceh today, as well as its current opportunities and challenges. Due to this, the following topics will be covered in this article: First, an examination of the issue of why LWN deserves to be preserved and why its revitalization is facing a number of difficulties. Second, an analysis of the relationship between LWN issues and its potential for conflict resolution will be discussed. In sum, this article aims to examine LWN's issues and then relate them to its limited capacity to act as a peacekeeping institution.

### 1.1. Literature Review

LWN has been the subject of study since the draft LWN Qanun surfaced, before Aceh ratified it as enacted law. The existence of LWN has been discussed in several significant studies in various contexts. In one of the first historical studies of LWN's origin, M. Adli Abdullah detailed how Tuanku Hasyim's appointment as *wali*, translated from Acehnese as guardian, in 1870 was not the first time that Aceh had a *wali* to protect its prosperity. A *wali* is the leader of a unifying force that defends the Acehnese land. When Sultan Ibrahim Mansyursyah passed away in 1870, Tuanku Hasyim was offered the position of *wali*, but he initially declined. Tuanku Hasyim later

appointed Sultan Mahmudsyah, the son of Sultan Alaidin, to be *wali*. According to a few written sources, the presence of the *wali* as a unifying force was particularly felt by the Acehnese during the Aceh war because *Wali Nanggroe's* position protected Aceh from Dutch attacks at the time (Abdullah, 2006).

The subsequent study, written by Delfi Suganda, discusses LWN following the Helsinki MoU and its numerous issues. Suganda claims that LWN is a local wisdom organization that emerged due to the Helsinki MoU's mandate. Although the legitimacy of this institution is debatable under Indonesian constitutional law, it has little material effect on the citizens of Aceh. The LWN Qanun has undergone two updates, however, the criteria for becoming an LWN leader have not undergone any notable changes. As a result, some Acehnese people are not included, and there is no legal certainty for the Acehnese (Suganda D. , 2021).

Meanwhile, Imam Hadi Sutrisno and his colleagues discussed the historical criticism of efforts to revitalize *Wali Nanggroe's* position, contrary to the Law of Aceh Government (UUPA). Sutrisno's study explains that the Acehnese elite made a mistake in interpreting the position of *Wali Nanggroe*, which didn't exist at the time of the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam. The study demonstrates that *Wali Nanggroe*, founded by *Partai Aceh* (Aceh Party/PA), was created by PA elites to increase public support for GAM and its popularity, not because it was based on historical research. The *Wali Nanggroe* is granted incredibly sweeping powers by the revision of the qanun *a quo*, in violation of the UUPA and without reference to the illustrious past of the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam (Sutrisno, 2022).

An article from Muhammad Ridwansyah explains that the election of *Wali Nanggroe* Aceh was not interpreted as the election of the regional head regime because the election of *Wali Nanggroe* was regulated in Article 70 paragraph (1) of Aceh Qanun Number 10 of 2019, which states that *Wali Nanggroe* is to be elected by deliberation and consensus by the *Wali Nanggroe* election Commission (KPWN) specifically. The KPWN consists of the *Tuha Peut Wali Nanggroe* Assembly, the *Tuha Lapan Wali Nanggroe* Assembly, the *Mufti* or one who represents the Alim Ulama, and one person representing the Ulama from each district or city. The Aceh Party, along with the Golkar Faction, the Democratic Faction, and the PKS Faction, all supported Malik Mahmud as the *Wali Nanggroe* Aceh in 2013. This support is not only for political interests, but almost all factions believe that LWN can become a unifying Acehnese people (Ridwansyah-c, 2022).

The purpose of this article is to complete the research surrounding the debate over the existence of the LWN. This study differs from previous ones in that it investigates the potential for implementing revitalization and how it may have an impact on making LWN capable of playing a role in maintaining peace and resolving conflict in Aceh in the future.

### 1.2. Some Relevant Studies

Revitalization in this article is "the process, method, and act of reviving something previously empowered." In other words, revitalization is to give an object or an action new life (Lynch, 1960). This study aims to systematically review and suggest ways of revitalization for the LWN, regarding its functions, duties, and authorities as outlined in Aceh *Qanun* (Law) Number 10 of 2019. This investigation of revitalization is important because the LWN is no longer thought to contribute anything to the people of Aceh. A goal would be to rediscover the socio-cultural potential of Aceh and return it to the famous Aceh *tamaddun*, or civilization, of the past, and this revitalization concept can be used as justification for the existence of LWN in the future (Ridwansyah-b, 2021).

Conflict resolution attempts to achieve peace by using conflict resolution methods to reach a solution or conflict outcome (Zainal, 2021). It is believed that conflict resolution can help to bring a win-win solution satisfying all the opposing groups because it can fulfill all or at least part of their demands (Laue J. H., 1990). According to Mial, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse this process is in general a part of conflict management efforts (Hugh Mial, 1999). In the context of the Aceh post MOU Helsinki, conflict resolution is related to the establishment of trustworthy institution which conducting a mediator role among conflicted parties.

One of the outcomes of the Helsinki MoU was the designation of LWN as an institution charged with safeguarding Aceh's specifics (*Kekhususan*) and privileges including maintaining the peace. In other words, making LWN as institution that responsible to develop high-quality Acehnese human resources while preserving and developing Acehnese culture and customs, as well as maintains Aceh's peace and participation in the global peace process is the main essence of establishing conflict resolution in Aceh (M. Nazaruddin, 2021).

The presence of conflict in Aceh over the last 30 years, the continued existence of GAM and its victims, and the recent possibility of conflict between fellow Acehnese people reinforce the necessity of LWN as a conflict resolution institution that must be able to communicate its message to parties involved in future conflicts. The LWN's conflict resolution is expected to provide a solution in which all parties involved are content with the outcome. Revitalization may take the form of providing an opinion or will from an official body or an assembly of a general nature that the LWN ratifies as a settlement (Missbach, 2012). Eventually resolution conflict should provide win-win solutions, namely a peaceful collaboration among conflicted parties. However, this ability could be only implemented if LWN could be revitalized by gaining trust from all Aceh people.

## 2. Methods

This study will employ descriptive qualitative research in order to define a phenomenon. Primary and secondary data with focus group discussions (FGD) are the two data sources used in this study. Through interviews with participants whom the research team had chosen, primary data were directly obtained. Chain referrals, also known as snowball sampling, is a method of source selection used to collect the samples required for research studies from the existing subject. Representatives of the *Wali Nanggroe Aceh*, academics, journalists, NGOs, and traditional leaders served as participants in this study.

The study was conducted in Langsa City, West Aceh, Banda Aceh City, and Central Aceh. The selection of this region was made to serve as a symbol of the various perspectives on LWN that exist in Aceh. Banda Aceh was one of the areas that tended to support the existence and mission of LWN, while Central Aceh, the area in the middle of Langsa City, and West Aceh were as areas that tended to feel more negatively about LWN. To make the research findings comprehensive, primary data are combined with secondary data. Various documents that are pertinent to this study make up the secondary data. This includes LWN-related government policies and legal documents, as well as scientific research papers, books, journals, and discussion transcripts. The study has 40 respondents, consist of 25 experts in Banda Aceh City, 5 respondents form Langsa, 5 respondents from Aceh Barat and 5 respondents from Central Aceh.

## 3. Result

### 3.1. LWN as a Customary Institution: Normative Aspects

#### 3.1.1. Non-Political Institution

The founding of the LWN dates back to President Megawati Soekarnoputri's enactment of Law Number 18 of 2001 regarding Special Autonomy for the Province of the Special Region of Aceh as the Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam. The *Wali Nanggroe*, to which a *quo* law refers, facilitates Aceh's implementation of customary life, culture, and community unity. In terms of norms, there are several reasons why LWN is a institution through which the Acehnese people should feel represented.

According to the characteristics of particularity and privilege that gave rise to asymmetric decentralization in Indonesia, LWN is a traditional, non-political institution with significant potential as a peacekeeper. According to Law Number 11 of 2006 Article 96, Paragraph 1, the LWN is the traditional leadership serving as the community's unifier and is independent, authoritative, and empowered to promote and oversee the implementation of traditional institutions, customs, and the awarding of titles, degrees, and other traditional ceremonies.

Although *Wali Nanggroe* Aceh has existed historically since the Sultanate of Aceh, as an official institution, it only existed as of 2013. As a result, *Wali Nanggroe* has the authority to oversee the life of traditional institutions in Aceh, such as the Aceh Customary Council (MAA), *Imeum Mukim*, *Keuchik*, *Tuha Peut*, *Tuha Lapan*, *Imeum Meunasah*, *Keujreun Blang*, *Panglima Laot*, *Pawang Glee*, *Peutua Peuneubok*, and *set peukan* (holiday) of Aceh. UUPA has mandated these institutions. The LWN cabinet is the institutional structure in terms of a vehicle for Acehnese participation in the context of maintaining and fostering Acehnese specificities and privileges (Ishak, 2013).

In addition, LWN is a unifying medium for the Acehnese people who gave birth to a political legacy (Bustaman, 2022). LWN, in the context of the Helsinki MoU and Law Number 11 of 2006, was a great institutional leader of the Acehnese people. *Wali Nanggroe* Aceh lives by values and then transforms them into the form of goodness and virtue, benefiting the many people they lead. Thus, LWN is intended as a service institution for the people of Aceh by *Wali Nanggroe* and helps the people of Aceh maintain their rights as stated in the Helsinki MoU and UUPA. Thus, the LWN can provide advice on resolving religious, social, and customary conflicts in Aceh.

### 3.1.2. Belongs to All Acehnese People

The existence of LWN as a norm for all Acehnese people. The ratification of Aceh Qanun Number 8 of 2012 is traditionally regarded as a gift for the Acehnese nation, which is made up of various entities in Aceh. This institution is common property and belongs to all Acehnese people, which is defined as anyone who is considered an Acehnese person, whether they are part of the Acehnese, Gayo, or Aneuk tribe. Other tribes included are the Jamee, Singkil, Alas, Tamiang, Kluet, Devayan, Sigulai, Pakpak Batak, Haloban, or Lekon tribes.

In the context of the Acehnese language, it is regarded as the Acehnese language spoken by the Acehnese themselves rather than the Acehnese language that is explicitly understood by Pidie, Aceh's east, west, and south coasts (Ridwansyah, 2019). Munawar Liza Zainal, a member of the Helsinki MoU negotiating team, emphasized in an in-depth interview that for GAM, this LWN is a jointly-owned institution that is aligned with the existence of the Republic of Indonesia. According to Raviq Mohammad, LWN is a new institution in the government system in Indonesia, which in its structure and institutions, accommodates all groups of people.

In the context of language, normatively, the existence of the Acehnese language is related to the existence of languages that live and develop in Acehnese society. The Acehnese language discussed here is not the Acehnese spoken regularly in coastal communities but rather one that adheres to the qanun language norms, rendering other interpretations inaccurate and lacking in basic understanding. According to Gayo people from Kenawat, Central Aceh, and Yusra Habib Abdul Gani (a GAM Information Interpreter in Malaysia), Acehnese is the language spoken by all tribes in Aceh (Gani, 2018). The establishment of LWN from the aspect of the languages that live in Aceh indicates that all languages in Aceh are part of the LWN's institutional recognition of the tribes in Aceh (Sarjev, 2022).

### 3.1.3. Improving the Traditions and Quality Life of Acehnese

Additionally, LWN has the role and power to support the continuation of Acehnese traditions, contribute to improving welfare, and defend the Acehnese populace. LWN can be used symbolically as a type of traditional representation that can support *adat* and a set of *adat* roles applicable in Aceh. According to Law Number 11 of 2006's Articles 98 and 99, the Aceh Customary Council, can set the daily market and hold harbormaster (*syahbandar*) under the direction of *Wali Nanggroe*. *Wali Nanggroe* has also established customary representation in several provinces, including the MAA of West Sumatra Province, the MAA of West Java Province, and the MAA of North Sumatra (Bakrie, <https://aceh.tribunnews.com/2022/06/29/wali-nanggroe-aceh-kukuhkan-maa-perwakilan-sumut>, 2022).

The honorary title of *Wali Nanggroe* Aceh, which serves as a representation of the Aceh royal title and is given by the authority of *Wali Nanggroe*, is then given as the highest recognition for the services and contributions made to the people of Aceh. This is also nearly identical to the honorific title of the British monarchy, which was

established in 1484 and is the order created by King Edward III. The symbolic award of this honor was adopted by the Sultan of Aceh to Britain during the ratification of the London treaty on March 17, 1824, as one of the clauses that the sovereignty of Aceh must not be disturbed by the Dutch. In exchange, another clause wrote that Aceh must also not interfere with British security at sea (Anwar, 2017).

From a historical perspective, it is also true that LWN is an institution that upholds the Acehese tradition to influence the welfare of the Acehese people through the use of local knowledge. It is claimed that the LWN can resolve special or extraordinary affairs based on customary values and local wisdom that benefits the people by exercising the authority of customary leadership that is authoritative and dignified in the order of community life. For the advancement of a dignified Aceh, local knowledge and the traditional values of the Acehese people must be revived.

Additionally, related to the obligations, powers, and responsibilities of LWN, Articles 29, 30, and 31 of the Aceh Qanun Number 8 of 2012 explains that LWN is responsible for maintaining peace in Aceh and taking part in international peace negotiations. Following the peace agreement, conditions in Aceh were generally favorable. The GAM representatives turned to the legitimate forum, LWN, which was the final step to ensure the Acehese people's right to human dignity (Mukti, 2019).

LWN also functions to provide traditional protection for all Acehese both inside and outside Aceh. The figure of *Wali Nanggroe*, who protects the people of Aceh, has been established since Tengku Muhammad Saman Chik Di Tiro served as a substitute for the king Sultan Mahmud Daudysah. Historically, the LWN has been an institution that has protected the interests of the Acehese people since the Dutch colonial period, so much so that some problems in Aceh were well resolved and even repelled the Dutch troops who wanted to attack Aceh (Kingsbury, 2006).

With its many ideal functions, LWN is an institution that can be counted on to offer the people of Aceh various services, including those related to preserving peace. Therefore, a revitalization could potentially increase the LWN's normative role if it is done so in a proper manner.

### 3.2. *The Challenge of the Existence of LWN*

Although LWN can be viewed as having many ideal aspects from a normative perspective, the institution still has many fundamental issues. These issues have led to doubts about the legitimacy of its continued existence, a general feeling of disrespect, and the possibility that the LWN will be abandoned if revitalization measures are not taken. Currently, LWN faces a number of challenges.

#### 3.2.1 Institutional Politicization Problem

The first challenge is that the *Wali Nanggroe* figure is affiliated with a local party, the Aceh Party. Malik Mahmud, before becoming *Wali Nanggroe*, served as foreign minister of the Free Aceh Movement (1976-2002) and became Prime Minister of the Free Aceh Movement from 2002 to 2005. Malik Mahmud himself is one of the top officials of the Aceh Party and, as of September 2022, currently serves as the *Tuha Peut* Assembly (party advisory) of the Aceh Party (Suganda D. , 2021). As a result of these two positions, *Wali Nanggroe* has a dual role.

Even though *Wali Nanggroe's* position is as a unifying figure for the Acehese people, as a result of this dual role, *Wali Nanggroe* seems to only belong to the Aceh Party (Akbar, 2019). Academician Nyak Fadlullah (Lecturer Staff of the Faculty of Sharia and Law, Ar-Raniry State Islamic University), said: "*The officials in Wali Nanggroe are not traditional people but are people affiliated with certain parties.*" Furthermore, Subur Dani, a journalist from *Serambi Indonesia* added that there are factions within the Wali Nanggroe Institution that influence public perception of Wali Nanggroe as a political figure and a political stance (Dani, 2022)

The election of *Wali Nanggroe* was the result of Aceh Provincial Legislative Council's (DPRA) decisions in 2009 and 2014. In those years, the Aceh Party became the ruling party in parliament, with 33 seats or roughly 47.8% of the vote. At the time, it was unclear whether the DPRA's decision regarding the election of *Wali Nanggroe*, namely choosing Malik Mahmud, was in Aceh's best interests. It was ratified by the DPRA, in which the Aceh Party comprised the majority of members. Even at the time of Malik Mahmud's inauguration as *Wali Nanggroe*, it was clear that he was a representative of the Aceh Party rather than of the Acehnese people (Akbar, 2019).

Furthermore, the election mechanism for *Wali Nanggroe* is regarded as opaque and undemocratic. *Wali Nanggroe* was specially elected by the *Wali Nanggroe* Election Commission, which consists of four elements with authority to elect *Wali Nanggroe*, namely (1) the *Tuha Peut Wali Nanggroe* Assembly, (2) the *Tuha Lapan Wali Nanggroe* Assembly, (3) *Mufti* or one-person representative, and (4) representatives of the clergy of each regency or city in Aceh.

The last election of *Wali Nanggroe* was held on December 14, 2018 and determined Tengku Malik Mahmud Al-Haytar as *Wali Nanggroe* for a five-year period from 2018 to 2023 (Abonita 2019). The appointment of Malik Mahmud as *Wali Nanggroe*, by some accounts, did not follow the rule of law because representatives of the ulama from each district or city were not present (Sakinah, 2020). Representatives of the ulama were not part of the election commission because in 2018 the district and city ulama had not been appointed, meaning that the *Wali Nanggroe* election commission only consisted of three elements: the *Tuha Peut* Council, the *Tuha Lapan* Council, and the *Fatwa* Council (Sakinah, 2020).

This may be due to the fact that Malik Mahmud is regarded as the initiator of peace between RI and GAM, as well as one of GAM's former leaders and as a confidant of Tgk. Hasan Tiro. Another point of contention is the procedure for selecting the *Wali Nanggroe*. Is the list of candidates for *Wali Nanggroe* made public so interested parties can register to be considered for the position? According to the head of the legal division of *Wali Nanggroe*, there is no single article in Qanun No. 9 of 2013 which regulates the procedure for self-registration as a candidate for *Wali Nanggroe*, so the Election Commission for *Wali Nanggroe* does not announce the registration of candidates to the public (Sakinah, 2020).

### 3.2.2. Customary Representation Problem

The second challenge relates to LWN's role as a traditional institution in charge of all Acehnese people. The main task of the *Wali Nanggroe* Institution is to become a unifier of the Acehnese people, actually contradict the Qanun concerning *Wali Nanggroe* No. 8 of 2012 article 69 (c) which states that the *Wali Nanggroe* must be able to speak Acehnese fluently. The Qanun above tends to discriminate against ethnic groups other than the Acehnese who inhabit the Aceh region. The Indonesian language itself has difficulty defining ethnicity and region. Aceh not only refers to the region, but also refers to just one of the tribes and ethnicities that inhabit this region.

In addition to the Acehnese, various tribes or ethnicities inhabit the region. According to Win Wan Nur, journalist and Gayo activist, there is a phenomenon of Gayo people who do not want to be called Acehnese; this occurs because the Gayo people are indigenous to the Aceh province. The Gayo people have never objected to being referred to as the original inhabitants of Aceh province as a territory. However, as an ethnicity, Gayo people clearly do not want to be referred to as Acehnese (Nur, 2013).

The Qanun regarding the *Wali Nanggroe* Institution No. 8 of 2012 article 69 (c) is not in line with conditions of the people in the Aceh region, which consists of various tribes. There are 14 tribes that live in Aceh, namely: the Acehnese tribe, the Gayo tribe, the Aneuk Jamee tribe, the Singkil tribe, the Alas tribe, the Tamiang tribe, the Kluet tribe, the Devayan tribe, the Sigulai tribe, the Pakpak Boang Batak tribe, the Julu tribe, the Haloban tribe, the Nias tribe, and the Lekon tribe (Saputra, 2021). Many of these tribes do not use the Acehnese language in everyday life, meaning that the rules set to elect the *Wali Nanggroe* discriminate against them. The regulation has eliminated the possibility of members of these tribes to be able to run for *Wali Nanggroe*. One of the tribes that feels discriminated against is the Gayo tribe.

The Gayo tribe does not belong to the Acehese ethnic group, but it does live in the Aceh region. Additionally, one of the community groups that is a part of the Gayo Free Movement (*Gayo Merdeka*) group stated that they rejected rule no. 8 of 2012 article 69 (c) and added that the *Wali Nanggroe* Institution was not run for the benefit of the community but rather for a collection of political parties, specifically the Aceh Party. Therefore, this group urged that the Qanun be abolished otherwise, Gayo would be better off as a new province, namely Aceh Leuser Antara (ALA) Province (Suganda R. S., 2021). The rejection of the regulation also came from the group that is part of Aneuk Barat Selatan (ABAS). This group rejected the regulation because it was considered discriminatory. A spokesman from ABAS, Gaddafi Syah, said that ABAS rejected the regulation because it was considered more profitable for one group and rejected all forms of regional identity that can lead to the birth of new conflicts (Bakrie, Serambi Indonesia, 2012). The Qanun above has clearly discriminated against other tribes that inhabit the Aceh region and only benefits one community group, the Acehese.

### 3.2.3. Function Execution Predicament

The third challenge is related to the function of *Wali Nanggroe*, who is considered not to have a role as a traditional figure. Usually, *Wali* is a term used to refer to both state and religious leaders. Additionally, the term *Wali* can refer to the head of the family, the guardian of the marriage, or the politician *Wali Nanggroe*. The idea of *Wali Nanggroe* dates back to the Aceh sultanate, and the term *Wali Nanggroe* was first used during the conflict between the Aceh sultanate and the Dutch government (Sulaiman, 2020). Because Sultan Mahmud Syah was still young, the *Wali Nanggroe* institution was formed through the deliberations of the *Tuha Peut* assembly (party advisor assembly). As a result of the deliberation, it was determined that Al Malik Al Mukarram Tgk. Tjik. Di Tiro Muhammad Saman Bin Abdullah would be the first *Wali Nanggroe* (Isma, 2016).

The term *Wali Nanggroe* was more recently revived by Hasan Tiro in 1976, when he founded the GAM (Isma, 2016). Tiro himself had a lineage with the first *Wali Nanggroe*, Teungku Chik di Tiro, so when he established GAM, Tiro confirmed that he was the successor to *Wali Nanggroe* (Akbar, 2019). Considering this history, it is natural that the Acehese people consider the *Wali Nanggroe* to be a religious and cultural figure.

However, there are various community views that *Wali Nanggroe* is not responsive enough to incidents in various areas, such as the religious conflict that occurred in Aceh Singkil in October 2015, in which a church was burned, and one person died (Amindoni, 2019). *Wali Nanggroe*, as a traditional leader, made no statement about the conflict. Subur Dani, a journalist from *Serambi Indonesia* stated *Wali Nanggroe*, who should be an influential figure, does not provide opinions or advice when a critical event occurs in Aceh, such as when the religious conflict in Singkil occurred in Aceh; *Wali Naggroe* frequently avoids being asked about his thoughts on various events that frequently occur. (Dani, 2022)

In the past, *Wali Nanggroe* was viewed as a figure with religious and political roles, but according to current legislation, the *Wali Nanggroe* Institution is a customary institution. Although the *Wali Nanggroe* Institution currently has the duties and functions of a traditional institution, the community has not felt these tasks and functions. In addition, research shows that the implementation of Aceh Qanun No. 09 of 2013 related to the *Wali Nanggroe* Institution that the institution has not carried out its roles, duties, and functions optimally. One of the reasons for this might be that the institution is quite large and there is overlapping authority.

The establishment of the *Wali Nanggroe* Institution should be regarded as an added value to the Aceh region at large, as LWN is expected to be an alternative force in resolving various social problems where formal power is unable to do so. Furthermore, this institution is expected to be able to unite the Acehese people and keep the Aceh region peaceful (Rahman, 2020).

The preceding discussion demonstrates that the *Wali Nanggroe* Institution faces a variety of challenges and distrust from various community groups. First, the *Wali Nanggroe* Institution, which is expected to be a unifier of the people in the Aceh region, can actually cause conflict due to regulations that are deemed quite discriminatory. Second, the *Wali Nanggroe* Institution is ineffective in carrying out its institutional functions. Whereas people expect this institution to be a conflict-resolution institution, the reality on the ground is that this institution is only

regarded as a symbolic institution with no role. Third, this institution is thought by some to only carry out the interests of one group, namely the Aceh Party, rather than serving the interests of the Acehnese people. Finally, as a result of the lack of a clear regulated mechanism for the selection of *Wali Nanggroe*, the election of *Wali Nanggroe* in 2018 was considered to be undemocratic and not transparent.

#### 4. Discussion

The study above shows that efforts to carry out revitalization still have the potential to be affected. However, the effort to revitalize – namely, to return to the applicable rules and make this institution a traditional representative institution for all Acehnese people without exception, in a comprehensive sense – can have its challenges. Although field data show opportunities and even the need to revitalize this institution, the challenges that some Acehnese people have presented are also enormous.

From the field findings, it is clear that revitalization needs to involve many aspects, including social, cultural, political matters that must be carried out simultaneously. In this circumstance, where the revitalization is still ongoing process, the potential of LWN as a significant conflict resolution institution will still take time to be played.

According to the findings, public trust can be built if the LWN and its members are figures who represent traditional symbols and interests. Its position may be similar to that of Malaysian kingdoms and several Indonesian kingdoms that serve as symbols of *adat* that traditionally lead in one region. Those trusted to play a role in LWN must be able to purify symbols, intervene, and pursue practical political goals. Building public trust in LWN by revitalizing it entails an effort to restore LWN's nature as a traditional institution.

Simply put, the failure to develop public trust have arisen due to LWN's historical propensity to reflect the existence of political power rather than the representation of traditional/cultural groups. The LWN, which is supposed to be “politically neutral,” is increasingly perceived as being affiliated with or supporting a number of political parties, especially those who support the Aceh Party. Part of the reason for this is that the procession of the *Wali Nanggroe* election is compared to or linked to the election of political personnel. (Sulaiman, 2020).

The Aceh Party cadres, who are assigned in a closed-door manner without apparent transparency, hold a significant number of institutional positions in the LWN. Additionally, Mr. Malik Mahmud Al-Hatar, current *Wali Nanggroe*, is a well-known individual and an active leader of the Aceh Party. Of course, this situation is not consistent with the aspirations of the Acehnese people, who demand LWN inclusivity from the leadership and institutional side.

With these circumstances, it would seem that LWN has not yet been able to escape Aceh Party's dominance. As a result, many Acehnese people do not fully recognize and trust the government. In the end, it obviously has the potential to make it challenging for this institution to play a role in making decisions related to conflict resolution, given the low level of trust and respect. An institution must be respected and trusted by all parties in order to keep the peace and contribute to a fair resolution. The trust factor is crucial especially for the resolution of protracted conflict in Aceh.

The revitalization process requires more time because there is still a lot of mistrust of institutions, particularly due to the subtleties of political exclusivism in the LWN. Furthermore, it is evident from the field research that the LWN has not yet made any such comprehensive and concrete efforts to break free of the political confines of certain circles. On the other hand, there seems to be something missing. Given the political climate and the apparent waning of support for PA, it is possible that LWN will be rejected all together.

Because of this, it will be necessary to completely depoliticize the LWN in the future, which will require, among other things, modifying the selection procedure to include traditional leaders and interests. For the election to reflect the nuances of a traditional institution's highest office and not a political institution, the process should be transparent, nondiscriminatory, and orderly.

The legal aspect of LWN's existence as an institution that represents the interests of all Acehnese people is another major issue that can also support the implementation of the peace role. The LWN is designed to be used by all different types of Acehnese people as a hub for traditional activities. In this instance, the institution is universally considered to be the property of everyone who lives in the Aceh Region. Actually, the definition of "Aceh" in various documents is not intended to validate the exclusive interests of particular ethnic groups, such as a people with Aceh cultural background only.

The LWN can best serve the diversity of the Acehnese people under the model of being a "salad bowl", in which different cultures can be integrated while maintaining their separate identities. Using the "salad bowl" as a working model to understand relationships between ethnic groups, potential conflicts that may exist between the Acehnese people can be discussed and resolved traditionally with the assistance of LWN. Resolving conflicts can be aided by experience in various settlement areas in terms of *adat*. Resolution infrequently requires a traditional legal procession and procedure, which is usually complex and involves many steps. This circumstance serves as a firm foundation for all Acehnese people to carry out their individual role in maintaining peace.

It has not been ideal up to this point, though, to represent typical compositions in LWN. Currently, the institution is criticized primarily on the basis that it is thought only to represent or reflect one of the dominant ethnic groups in the Aceh province. In fact, one of the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) participants claimed that the LWN only represents Pidie residents. This study's findings also suggest that LWN has discriminatory undertones for non-Acehnese people from a historical, legal, and practical perspective.

In addition, if this weak aspect of customary representation persists, it is not improbable that the perception of discrimination will come to light. When conflict-starting momentum develops, it could eventually lead to an ethnic conflict in Aceh. The conflict can escalate, given the latent potential for this conflict, character deterioration, and the absence of traditional institutions like the LWN. The paradox arises from the fact that the existence of LWN, perceived as discriminatory in and of itself, is the source of the conflict.

In order to revive LWN as a traditional representative institution for the entire Acehnese population, field findings also point to the need for multifaceted, concrete steps. This includes interpreting the election regulations or, if necessary, amending the laws to better reflect the recognition of racial and ethnic minorities. Additionally, the institution needs a mechanism that mandates a more equitable distribution of job openings within the organization, so that the LWN to have a more proportionate leadership structure that accurately reflects the representation of all ethnic groups within the region. If necessary, there may be a pattern of alternate LWN leadership among Aceh's ethnic groups, as there is in Malaysia.

Another issue that LWN has is that this organization is not functional. On the tasks, functions and authorities of LWN were discussed in the Qanun about *Wali Nanggroe*, but these topics did not advance. Mass public discontent with LWN is relatively high. The organization hopes to carry out the necessary functions in a positive way. Many people believe that there are ideal conditions that the public hopes for, but actual conditions are not as anticipated by the public. Respondents of this research claimed that LWN had failed to uphold its obligations and exercise its power so various communities could sense its presence.

Indeed, if we look at the authority held by LWN, it has not used its authority to communicate opinions, guidelines, and advice to the Aceh government and DPRA, to offer proposals and considerations to the Aceh government, nor suggest to the Aceh government cooperation with foreign institutions or agencies. This organization is supposedly able to position itself as a source of advice, consideration, and consultation for the Aceh government, both by the executive and the DPRA, despite not being a political institution, including in relation to the conflict issues. It has yet to take advantage of this power and authority.

The same applies to LWN's role as a protector and defender of Aceh's traditions and culture. LWN's responsibility in this regard is to protect Acehnese traditions from the forces of modernization and globalization. To ensure the sustainability of Acehnese customs, this institution must continue to offer guidance on how the culture of Acehnese people can support their development and general well-being. However, in reality, such a role is not properly

implemented yet. LWN, it has also not carried out many of its duties, including awarding or revoking honorary titles to people or entities with titles based on historical traditions, language, and customs of the Acehese people or determining holidays followed by traditional ceremonies based on historical traditions and customs of the Acehese people.

Because the domain of LWN overlaps with that of various regional offices or apparatuses, such as the Culture and Tourism Office, the LWN's responsibilities, powers, and functions may be weakened. Several respondents believed that the LWN's main tasks and functions overlap with already-existing organizations within the Aceh Government and not operational as a result of financial (Notes, 2022). Even though there was a tight budget, everything went to *Wali Nanggroe*" (Team, 2022).

## 5. Conclusion

On August 15, 2005, the Indonesian government and GAM signed a MoU in Helsinki. According to the MoU, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and GAM were and are committed to resolving the Aceh conflict in a peaceful, comprehensive, long-term, and dignified manner for all. The establishment of the LWN was one of the points in the MoU that was later stated in Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh and its implementing regulations in the Qanun. The existence of LWN is an independent unifying institution for the Acehese people that promotes Aceh's customs and culture. However, there are issues with LWN's implementation, specifically with the politicization and representation of LWN, in which specific sub-ethnic groups and political groups dominate. LWN's issue is that Aceh's residents have not felt the effects of its existence. This results from the improper performance of the LWN's obligations, authority, and functions.

The issue of politicization and representation in the LWN can cause resentment and serve as a point of contention. This is in addition to LWN's non-operational presence in Acehese society. In light of these circumstances, the LWN needs to be revitalized in order to serve as an institution that unites all ethnic groups in Aceh to boost institutional capacity so that all Acehese people can feel its presence. For the reasons listed above, the LWN presents a tremendous opportunity for revitalization. However, considering that there are many problems that have caused a delay in revitalization, in the end, the potential of LWN as a significant peacekeeping and conflict resolution institution will still need time to be realized.

The issue is that the LWN is not yet operational and thus requires revitalization. This includes, among other things, strengthening institutional capacity, which includes strong leadership, adequate infrastructure, no overlapping authorities, and adequate funds. If this institution is not revitalized, it may lose its authority in the eyes of the Acehese people. In the Qanun, LWN is described "as a unifier of an independent, authoritative society" (Syahwandi, 2020).

However, in the eyes of many Aceh people LWN is only symbolic institution that provides little benefits for them and in general dysfunctional. There is a significant gap between the hope of the people and reality. This situation creates apathy for most people, where LWN eventually becomes ignored in their daily activities. Also, with these fundamental problems, indicating the lack of capability to function its duties up until today, LWN is eventually lacking to gain confidence from the people as working institution that is able and trusted to carry out conflict resolution role.

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