

Unlikely Advocates of the Liberal Creed

Strategies of Framing in the Acehnese Diaspora in Sweden

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Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War, several stateless diasporas residing in Western countries have been involved in separatist conflicts in their homelands. The aim of this thesis is to explore whether these diasporas tend to utilize a universalistic creed of liberalism for particularistic purposes. To fulfill this purpose, I will test the applicability of Maria Koinova's theory on how diasporas tend to frame particularistic goals in liberal discourses. Designed as a case study of a least likely case, this thesis examines the Acehese diaspora in Sweden. Interviews with key diaspora elites are combined with an analysis of official statements and speeches. To determine how and to what extent the Acehese diaspora in Sweden has used liberal discourses and procedures to pursue a separatist agenda, I employ three indicators of the liberal creed, i.e. references to democracy, human rights, and universalism. The empirical results indicate that Koinova's theory correctly explains important aspects of the political engagement of the Acehese diaspora in Sweden. Thus, these diaspora elites tend to frame their separatist goal in liberal discourses. I suggest that my results highlight the glocal character of diasporas as they are operating strategically in the intersection between global and local contexts.

Key words: Diasporas, Acehese Diaspora, Liberal Creed, Separatism, Framing
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACCS	Acehnese Canadian Community Society
ASF	Acehnisk Samfund Forening (Acehnese Community Association)
ASFF	Aceh Sumatra Flykting Foreningen (Aceh-Sumatra Refugee Organisation)
ASNLF	Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front (the formal name for GAM, now mainly used by the former KPAMD members)
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
DOM	Daerah Operasi Militer (a Military Operations Area instituted by Indonesia in Aceh)
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (also known as the Free Aceh Movement)
KPAMD	Komite Persiapan Aceh Merdeka Demokratik (Preparatory Committee for a Free Democratic Aceh)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PA	Partai Aceh (the Aceh Party)
PERMAS	Persatuan Masyarakat Aceh Skandinavia (Association of Acehnese Community in Scandinavia)
SAF	Svensk-Atjehnisiska Föreningen (the Swedish-Acehnese Association)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
ÖAF	Örebro Acehniska Förening (Örebro Acehnese Association)

1. Introduction

In recent years, scholars and policymakers have come to pay increasing attention to the phenomenon of diaspora politics. The upsurge of interest for diasporas has naturally followed a growth in their numbers, activities, and influence throughout the present world. Benefitting from new developments in communication technologies, these communities have become recognized stakeholders in international relations and their effect on homeland developments has received more and more attention.

One aspect of this phenomenon that has received increased scholarly attention is diaspora engagement in homeland conflicts. This focus has given rise to an academic debate on whether conflict generated diasporas ought to be seen as peace-makers or peace-wreckers (cf. Smith & Stares 2007). Some scholars have argued that diasporas residing in Western host countries are to be treated as moderate actors due to the fact that they tend to adopt liberal discourses and procedures (cf. Antwi-Boateng 2012). Other Scholars have focused more on how conflict generated diasporas have made deliberate use of these liberal procedures to gain support from the international community (cf Koinova 2010). These scholarly perspectives share a view of international politics as dominated by liberal discourses of democracy and human rights, and stress the allure of such liberal creed for diasporas acting on the international stage.

However, in a post-9/11 world, Muslim diasporas engaged in separatist struggles in their homelands have been met with increased suspicion in the West. Being accused of affiliation with international Jihadist organizations and of supporting Islamic terrorism, these diasporas have been branded the anti-thesis of the so called “free world” they reside in. Given this suspicion of Muslim diasporas as champions of principles that stand in sharp contrast to liberal values; how do these diasporas relate to the liberal creed? How do they fit into the theories expecting diasporas in the West to adopt liberal values and procedures?

This thesis will dig deeper into this puzzle by analyzing a fairly unknown Muslim diaspora with a separatist agenda, i.e. the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden. During most of the decades long civil war in Aceh, the leadership of the separatist movement lived in exile in the Stockholm suburb of Norsborg. From Sweden they directed the insurgents in Aceh until the war ended in a peace agreement in 2005. Whereas some of the most influential members of the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden have returned to Aceh, a significant number of Acehnese exiles chose to stay in Sweden and have continued the struggle for independence. Building on new primary material, this thesis will focus on this poorly researched diaspora and analyze how they have utilized the liberal creed in their separatist struggle for Acehnese independence.

Thus, this thesis sets out to make both a more general theoretical contribution in increasing the cumulated understanding of how conflict generated diasporas adopt liberal discourses, and an empirical contribution in expanding the quite limited

scientific knowledge of the political engagement of the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

The overall purpose of this study is to analyze whether conflict generated stateless diasporas, residing in Western host countries, tend to utilize the universal creed of liberalism for particularistic purposes.

To fulfill this purpose, I will conduct an empirical test of Maria Koinova's (2010) theory of how diasporas frame particularistic goals in liberal discourses. The empirical test will be designed as a case study of how – and to what extent – the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden has promoted a separatist agenda. The Acehnese diaspora has been accused of affiliation with Jihadist organizations and Islamic terrorism and could thus be considered a highly unlikely candidate of being attracted by discourses related to the liberal creed. If the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden indeed turns out to frame their separatist struggle in liberal discourses, it would therefore give strong support to the suggested importance of the liberal creed in international politics, and also indicate unique abilities of diasporas to connect local particularistic agendas to global universalistic discourses.

Taken together, these conditions and purpose culminate in the following research question:

In what ways and to what extent has the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden used liberal discourses and procedures to advance a separatist agenda?

To answer this question, I will conduct interviews with selected diaspora elites among the Acehnese living in Sweden. Their answers and outlooks will be combined with an analysis of records of their political statements, together with a review of the existing literature on the topic.

1.2 Delimitations

As indicated by the purpose and research question above, the focus of this study lies on the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden. While some references will inevitably be made to the Acehnese diaspora as a whole, the main analysis and conclusions will concern the Swedish based faction of the diaspora. Within this faction, the focus of this study is on those members of the diaspora that hold more prominent positions within this community and that are politically active in homeland affairs.

As will be further elaborated below, liberal discourses and procedures are understood as those related to issues of democracy, human rights and universalism. Moreover, particularism is in this case translated to agendas of ethnic separatism.

To the extent that this thesis comes to any generalizable conclusions, the population of cases that is implicitly thought of is here defined as stateless conflict generated diasporas from homelands with contested sovereignty that reside in countries in the “Western world”.

Finally, I have not set any absolute time frame for my analysis. However, since the separatist conflict in Aceh started in 1976, and since the first political refugees from Aceh started to arrive in Sweden in the following years, there is no need to stretch the frame to any earlier point in time. Furthermore, since the liberal creed arguably attained its dominant status in the international realm after the end of the Cold War, the thesis is naturally balanced more toward the period starting in the 1990s.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

Following this introduction, the next chapter will establish the theoretical foundation of this thesis. The elusive diaspora concept will be discussed in some detail and a conceptual definition will be provided. The next section will be devoted to a discussion on previous research on diaspora politics and will situate my study within an existing field of research. The final section of this chapter stipulates and dissects the theory guiding this thesis and clarifies how it will be employed. Chapter three contains a discussion on methodological and material dimensions. It starts with an outline of the overarching design, and proceeds with a discussion on the material and how it has been collected. In chapter four the empirical results of the paper are presented and analyzed. Before embarking on a discussion on the extent to which the Acehnese diaspora has adopted values and procedures related to democracy, human rights, and universalism, I provide a background to the Acehnese conflict and diaspora. Having analyzed my empirical results and established that Koinova’s theory accurately explains a great deal of how the Acehnese diaspora has pursued their separatist agenda, chapter five identifies the theoretical implications of these findings. Finally, chapter six briefly summarizes the results and provides some concluding remarks, before suggesting potential avenues for future research related to the results of this thesis.

2. Theory

This chapter will be divided into three sections. The first section discusses the complex concept of diaspora. Drawing upon existing studies of diasporas, this discussion eventually results in the conceptual definition that will guide this thesis. The second section reviews previous research on diaspora politics. Focusing on diaspora engagement in homeland conflicts, this section attempts to situate this thesis in relation to existing research. The third and final section will provide a discussion on the underlying theoretical assumptions of the theory used in this thesis, and clarify how it will subsequently be weighed against the empirical findings of my case study in chapter four.

2.1 The Elusive Concept of Diaspora

The usage of the concept of *diaspora* has accelerated in recent studies on migration, transnational politics, and migrant communities. This veritable explosion in the usage of diaspora as a theoretical concept has led to a simultaneous expansion in its meaning and application. Until quite recently, the diaspora concept has been almost indistinguishable from the experience of Jewish exile communities. Starting in the 1970s, a conceptual expansion has resulted in what Faist (2010: 12) terms “a veritable inflation of applications and interpretations” of the concept of diasporas. Accordingly, as the meaning of the concept has swelled, so has the number of different scholarly interpretations and applications. The academic definition of diasporas has come to incorporate a large number of different transnational formations, including groups based on a shared ethno-national identity; such as the Sri Lankan (Orjuela 2008) and Lebanese (Asal 2012) diasporas, religiously defined diasporas; such as the Muslim (Moghissi & Ghorashi 2010) and Orthodox (Hayes 2010) diasporas, and vast “pan-diasporas” based on a wider geographic denominator, such as the Latino (Wortham et al. 2002) and African (Edozie 2012) diasporas.

This expansion of the meaning of diasporas has led some scholars to warn against the risk of conceptual stretching and eventual conceptual uselessness. Faist (2010: 14) calls the diaspora concept an “all-purpose word”, and Amrith (2011: 57) notes that: “At its most imprecise, diaspora has become synonymous with migration; almost any migrant group is now labeled a diaspora.” Similarly, Brubaker (2005: 1) calls this proliferation of the concept “a ‘diaspora’ diaspora”, i.e. “a dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space”.

Given this conceptual expansion, I recognize the importance of explicitly stating the definition that will guide this thesis. In line with Sheffer (2003: 9-10), I will

delimit my definition to only include what he calls “ethno-national diasporas”. This specification puts an emphasis on ethno-national identity and implies that diaspora members have to share a sense of belonging to an existing or imagined nation or “homeland”. They also have to share elements of a common ethno-national identity around which their diasporic community is mobilized (ibid: 11-12). Moreover, in accordance with Sheffer (ibid: 9-10) I recognize that diasporas have to uphold some sort of connections with people in their actual or perceived homeland, and with compatriots in other host countries. These are also the factors that separate diaspora members from “mere” migrants.

However, in contrast to Sheffer, I see no reason to delimit the definition of diaspora to only include those who “*permanently* reside [...] in host countries” (ibid: 9, my emphasis added). Moreover, Sheffer’s definition seems to require that diasporas “are active in the cultural, social, economic, *and* political spheres.” (ibid: 10, my emphasis added). According to my definition of the concept, it will suffice that the community is active in one of these spheres (along with the other criteria stipulated below) to be titled a diaspora.

Adamson (2012: 31-32) sees diasporas as transnational identity networks mobilized around ethno-national identity constructions. Political entrepreneurs are viewed as essential in the process of mobilizing these ethnic communities as transnational social movements. By labeling diasporas as a form of transnational network, Adamson is able to draw on the more extensive literature on transnational social movements (cf. Smith 2008; Keck & Sikkink 1998). Since the transnational character of the diaspora is crucial for my study, this aspect will be added to my definition of the concept. Furthermore, Adamson’s emphasis on the importance of certain political entrepreneurs and elites as a focal point for diaspora politics, will also inform the focus of this study.

Before turning to the definition guiding this thesis, a couple of additional classifications within the diaspora concept are expedient. Sheffer (2003: 73-74) divides his categorization of ethno-national diasporas into two sub-groups; stateless and state-linked diasporas. Whereas stateless diasporas pertain to diaspora groups whose perceived nation of origin does not correspond with an existing nation-state (e.g. the Kurdish, Palestinian, Tamil, and Acehnese diasporas), state-linked diasporas cover those groups whose perceived homelands actually coincide with nation-states (e.g. the Ukrainian, Liberian, Chinese, and Croatian diasporas). As discussed in the introductory chapter, the focus of this study will be on stateless *conflict generated* diasporas. The concept of conflict generated diasporas has been thoroughly discussed by Lyons (2006a: 111) and refers to diasporas that were forced to emigrate due to war in their homeland. Lyons (ibid.) states that such diasporas often tend to harbor stronger feelings of symbolic attachment toward their place of origin.

The definition guiding this thesis will be heavily influenced by the definition carved out by Sheffer,¹ with a few clarifying amendments. Based on the comments

¹ Sheffer’s (2003: 9-10) original definition reads as follows: “[A]n ethno-national diaspora is a social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homelands and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries. Based on aggregate decisions to settle permanently in host countries, but to

made above, my definition will thus be a revised version and reads as follows:

A diaspora is an ethno-nationally based social formation, created as a result of migration. Its members regard themselves as being of the same ethno-national origin and reside as minorities in one or several host countries. They are to be perceived as transnational identity networks mobilized by political entrepreneurs around ethno-national identity constructions. Members of such entities maintain contacts with what they regard as their homelands and with individuals or groups of the same background residing in other host countries. Diasporas and their members are active in the cultural, social, economic, or political sphere. The diaspora also establishes external transnational networks that reflect complex relationships between the diaspora, their host country, their homeland, and often other international actors.

2.2 Previous Research on Diaspora Politics

Diaspora activities in homelands and host countries span a significant number of different fields. Scholars interested in diaspora activities have studied diaspora engagement in for example humanitarianism, development, economic investment, politics, cultural diffusion, knowledge transfer, and conflict (Brinkerhoff 2011: 117). Economic and social remittances in a development or investment context have been the focal point of much recent research on diaspora activities (cf. Gillespie et al. 1999; Bodomo 2013; Davies 2012). A predominantly optimistic view on the potential of diasporas' development engagement and economic investment in home countries characterize many of these studies and there is an ongoing debate about how to best fulfill this potential (cf. Brinkerhoff 2009).

Studies of diasporas' cultural engagement have for example focused both on the extent to which diaspora communities have maintained and nurtured homeland culture abroad (cf. Huang & Jiang 2010; Holmes 2007), and how diaspora members experience host country culture (cf. Stoessel et al. 2012). Research on diasporas' political engagement include studies on diaspora communities' active participation in homeland elections and political campaigns through voting, lobbying, financial donations, and technical expertise (cf. Lyons 2006b; Hammond 2012). It also contains research on diaspora lobbying vis-à-vis host country governments (cf. Rubenzer 2011; Heindl 2013), and toward international institutions like the EU (cf. Berkowitz & Mügge 2014).

Related to these studies on lobbying and political engagement is the research on diaspora involvement in homeland conflict. According to Brinkerhoff (2011: 117), the knowledge of how diasporas engage in homeland conflicts is the weakest compared to research on other fields of diaspora activities. The main bulk of research

maintain a common identity, diasporans identify as such, showing solidarity with their group and their entire nation, and they organize and are active in the cultural, social, economic, and political spheres. Among their various activities, members of such diasporas establish trans-state networks that reflect complex relationships among the diasporas, their host countries, their homelands, and international actors.”

on this topic has focused either directly or indirectly on whether diasporas are to be deemed peace-makers or peace-wreckers (cf. Smith & Stares 2007; Swain 2007). One of the camps in this debate argues that diasporas ought to be seen as a factor that risks renewing or prolonging civil wars. This viewpoint was arguably first articulated by Collier and Hoeffler (2000) in their famous study on motivations for rebellion. Collier and Hoeffler (ibid: 11) state that diaspora members living in OECD countries are generally more affluent than their compatriots at home. Considering the fact that they do not directly suffer the consequences of renewed conflict, they are likely to make financial contributions that might prolong the civil war. Other scholars have instead focused on the peace promoting potential of diasporas and argued for their active involvement in mediation and peace building (cf. Baser & Swain 2008; Koser 2007). Yet another group of scholars has come to the conclusion that diasporas could be *both* agents of peacemaking and agents of conflict escalation, depending on what their engagement looks like (cf. Brinkerhoff 2011; Orjuela 2008). As Orjuela (2008: 436) puts it: “[Diaspora engagement in conflicts] can be a double-edged sword, as it can reproduce – or reduce – grievances and inequalities that fuel the conflict.”

Scholars focusing on the negative impact of diasporas on peace processes (cf. Fair 2005; Hockenos 2003), tend to view diasporas as harboring conflictive attitudes stemming from traumatic experiences related to their forced migration (see also Anderson 1998; Kaldor 2001). Hall (2013: 26) contradicts this assumption and argues instead that diasporas from conflict ridden areas tend to hold more moderate stances than their compatriots at home. According to Hall (ibid: 26-27), this moderate attitude results from the fact that exiles naturally distance themselves from the harsh realities on the ground and become less inclined to defend group identities.

Antwi-Boateng’s (2012) study of what he sees as a shift in the Liberian diaspora’s tactics from hard-power strategies to a soft-power approach is in line with the literature focusing on the moderate and appeasing aspect of diaspora engagement in conflicts. However, it puts more emphasis on the process of change in diaspora behavior. Having previously supported warring parties in Liberia with financial and material resources, the Liberian diaspora in the US has now started to rely more on dialogue, public diplomacy, and media assistance (ibid: 55-57). Antwi-Boateng (ibid: 60-62) explains this shift to more moderate measures by referring to a positive view of the US and American values in Liberia – something that enables the diaspora to wield influence through soft-power strategies. While offering an intriguing explanation to diaspora adoption of liberal values, the consequence of this argument would be that *only* diasporas from homelands with a highly favorable view of this value system will eventually subscribe to it.

Koinova (2010) tries to reach beyond the dichotomous debate on whether diasporas are to be seen as moderate peace promoters or radical war prolongers, and suggests that diasporas are “actors that engage strategically in homeland projects” (ibid: 164). More specifically, Koinova (ibid.) argues that diasporas linked to homelands with limited sovereignty tend to make instrumental use of democratic discourses and minimal democratic procedures to pursue particularistic nationalist goals. Differently stated, they “utilise the universal creed of liberalism for particularistic purposes” (ibid: 155). This argument is in line with Faist’s (2010: 16)

comment that “universal norms – such as collective self-determination, democracy and human rights – may enable local or national claims.” Thus, universal norms are mainly referred to in order to extract support from international actors and democratic procedures are used to boost nationalism (Koinova 2010: 161). Koinova is obviously providing a highly instrumentalist approach to diasporas’ usage of the liberal creed. Hence, diasporas utilize liberal discourses and procedures solely as a tool to promote other, higher valued, ends.

Although compelling and in line with the purpose of this thesis, Koinova’s theory needs to be exposed to a more thorough test than she is able to provide with her own case study. Koinova (ibid: 153) tries to give her theory empirical support by looking at the cases of the Albanian, Armenian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Kosovan, Macedonian, and Lebanese diasporas in the US. Except of the Lebanese diaspora, Koinova’s cases are made up of diasporas that probably contain a significant number of people who have fled communist rule in eastern and southeastern Europe. I would argue that these diasporas are particularly likely to adopt liberal values since these values stand in sharp contrast to the political system they have resisted and escaped. Thus, Koinova appears to have selected cases that are likely to confirm her theory. I disagree with her claim that these cases are “representative of diasporas generated by conflicts and severe tensions in deeply divided societies” (ibid.). I would argue that they are not representative of some less likely cases, i.e. diasporas affiliated with homeland organizations that have often been perceived as radically religious or as ethnic separatists (and potentially terrorists), and are seen as working *against* liberal values.²

Despite these methodological objections against Koinova’s study, her theory nevertheless provides a compelling understanding of the issue of interest in this thesis, namely how and to what extent conflict generated and stateless diasporas tend to use liberal discourses in pursuing separatist agendas. In fact, Koinova’s theory is probably the most elaborate theoretical account on conflict generated diasporas and liberal discourses, and constitutes a suitable point of departure for this thesis. As became evident from my discussion on previous research above, this theoretical field is poorly explored in the scholarly literature. This thesis will set out to test the extent to which a conflict generated diaspora with a separatist agenda indeed adheres to the liberal creed. Accordingly, it will also constitute a more thorough test of the empirical applicability of Koinova’s theory.

Finally, a few words should be mentioned about the existing literature on the Acehese diaspora. Due to its small size and quite recent creation, the Acehese diaspora is a poorly studied community within the academic field of diaspora politics. The only scholar who has paid considerable attention to this diaspora is Antje Missbach. Missbach’s studies have shed light on aspects quite different from the focus of this thesis – i.e. reasons for staying among members of conflict generated diasporas after the end of conflict (cf. Missbach 2010); the diaspora impact on conflict and post-conflict developments in Aceh (cf. Missbach 2011a); how the 2005 peace agreement affected the Acehese diaspora (cf. Missbach 2011b); and dynamics behind the diasporization and de-diasporization of the Acehese diaspora (cf.

² For a more thorough discussion on the principle underlying my case selection, see section 3.1.1.

Missbach 2013). However, it will nevertheless constitute an important source of information for my empirical analysis.

2.3 Operationalizing and Testing a Theory of the Liberal Creed

The theoretical ambition of this thesis is to expose Koinova's theory to a more rigorous test. However, it should be noted that this thesis does not seek to conduct a theoretical test in a strictly positivistic sense, but rather embraces a softer qualitative approach to theory testing. Instead of trying to prove the absolute accuracy of the theory, I intend to lend it significant empirical support by testing its applicability on a "least likely" case.³ My case, the Acehnese diaspora, could be seen as least likely of adopting liberal discourses. Thus, it will constitute a suitable test to the assumptions underlying Koinova's argument.

This section serves to dissect the theoretical foundation of Koinova's argument to more explicitly uncover what will later be tested in my case study. I will argue that Koinova's argument departs from a much more general debate on cultural globalization and dispersion of values. More specifically, it is based on the assumption that the process of globalization has resulted in a dominant world culture based on liberal values such as the virtue of democracy, human rights, and individualism. Below, I will try to capture the premises and roots of Koinova's theory to be able to carve out indicators whose applicability can be tested in the ensuing case study.

Several scholars have written extensively on how an increasingly significant process of globalization has influenced local and global value systems. This field of research overlaps with a broader debate on the dynamics of cultural globalization. One of the arguments in this debate stresses the converging effect of globalization on cultures and value systems, and is thus termed the cultural convergence perspective by Ritzer (2010: 244). The hypothesis underlying this perspective is that cultures tend to grow more alike. Some scholars belonging to this school of thought tend to denounce the imperialistic character of globalization and its tendency to "Americanize" the world (ibid: 100-101 & 259-260). Other scholars are more optimistic about what they regard as the eventual victory of "Western values", an optimism that led Fukuyama (1992) to declare the "end of history". Refraining from adding any normative connotations, Koinova (2010: 153) depicts a similar world order by stating that diasporas "filter international pressures for democratisation in a world where the liberal creed has no significant ideological opponent after the end of the Cold War".

Similarly, Meyer et al. (1997: 168) discuss the existence of a dominant "world culture". The modern world culture originates in Western Christendom and provides a frame for social life that is constituted by "a demystified, lawful, universalistic

³ I will return to a discussion on my approach to theory testing in section 3.1.

nature” (ibid.). The modern world culture has been further formed and re-created through the American international hegemony that emerged after the end of World War II, which explains the world-cultural preference for political democracy, market economy, and elements of American individualism (ibid: 167-168). In Koinova’s (2010: 155) words:

[D]emocracy promotion has [...] long been embedded in the foreign policies of major powers such as the US and the European Union, as well as global institutions linking democracy promotion with development aid, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Thus, almost every country in the world – even if not sincerely interested in promoting democratisation within its borders – has been exposed directly or indirectly to elements of the liberal creed.

Koinova (ibid: 157) relates this development to the US policy of global democracy. Diasporas have been seen as important disseminators of the principles and values underlying this policy. Similarly, Shain (1999: 8) has studied how diasporas have contributed to spread what he sees as the American values of democracy, human rights, free-market economics, and religious pluralism to their homelands.

It should be noted that countries and individual or collective actors resist elements of this world culture. However, even these actors tend to pursue purposes and take actions that are in line with world-cultural expectations (Meyer et al. 1997: 159 & 161). Meyer et al. (ibid: 161 & 174) claim that even some nationalist and religious groups that openly opposes this dominant world identity have adopted selected elements of world culture and expressed it in universalistic terms to boost their legitimacy. This is obviously an argument closely related to Koinova’s instrumentalist view on the lure and usefulness of liberal values.

Nation-states that fail to adjust their features and practices to the expectations associated with being part of the world community will face persistent external suggestions to correct their behavior and to adhere to world-cultural principles. Thus, political activists like social movements can and will use world culture to pressure their governments to become more democratic and fulfill their human rights obligations in line with the expectations of the world society (ibid: 159-160). In the words of Meyer et al. (ibid: 160):

If a particular regime rhetorically resists world models, local actors can rely on legitimacy myths (democracy, freedom, equality) and the ready support of activist external groups to oppose the regime.

Social movements are particularly inclined to decry failures of implementation of such aspects of world culture. Thus, transnational social movements try to support nation-states’ implementation of world culture in local spaces (ibid: 164-165). Smith (2008: 10) suggests a growing tendency in this direction and claims that the transnational identities often reflected in the campaigns of social movements have increasingly assumed a universal character. According to this view, such movements are now more likely to emphasize a shared humanity, rather than particularistic differences.

Drawing on Adamson's view of diasporas as constituting a type of social movements, this study will try to determine whether the liberal elements outlined above are applicable on the Acehnese diaspora as well. The extent of their applicability will decide whether Koinova's theory stands the test.

To capture *how* diasporas adopt liberal values, Koinova (2010: 156) draws upon theories on the practice of framing. Frame analysis is common in communication studies but has also been used within the field of international relations. Theories of framing are applied to show how a cause can be framed within a rather different discourse (cf. Chong & Druckman 2007; Pokalova 2010). Scholarly works drawing on these theories study how acts of linguistic framing might influence the public opinion on different phenomena. Likewise, in their analysis of transnational advocacy networks, Keck and Sikkink (1998: 2-3) study how these actors "frame" issues to make them comprehensible to target audiences, to attract attention and encourage action, and to 'fit' with favorable institutional venues." Koinova (2010: 157) specifically analyzes how the issue of sovereignty has been shrouded and rephrased in discourses of democracy and human rights. In other words, diaspora leaders are seen as political entrepreneurs that frame their nationalist cause in democratic discourses. The task of this thesis will be to investigate whether these discourses are present in the political involvement of the Acehnese diaspora.

Based on the discussion above on the theoretical foundation underlying Koinova's argument of a liberal creed, I will try to determine the role and importance of these discourses and procedures in the political engagement of the Acehnese diaspora. Key indicators of the liberal creed, as discussed above, are thus identified to be *democracy*, *human rights*, and *universalism*. The democracy indicator can pertain to both references to the necessity of instituting democratic values and procedures in Aceh, as well as references to the importance of making use of democratic procedures (e.g. referendums, inclusive debates and processes, and democratic channels) in the work of the Acehnese diaspora and Acehnese independence movement. The human rights indicator is perhaps more straight forward and applies to explicit statements involving the concept of human rights. These references to human rights issues are closely related to appeals and pleading to human universalism. Since these two indicators are hard to entirely separate, they will be presented together in the analysis section of this paper. Indications of universalism include references to the universal applicability of international law and the obligation of the international community to act on behalf of a shared humanity. The importance ascribed to these three elements will also have to be assessed in relation to the promotion of particularistic agendas of separatism.

I am aware that this operationalization of liberal discourses and procedures into three indicators is not mutually exclusive, but the purpose of this categorization is rather to create a simple methodological tool that facilitates the empirical analysis of my material. In section 3.2.1, these indicators are translated into codes and categories for the upcoming analysis of my empirical data.

If discourses and procedures related to democracy, human rights, and universalism are deemed to play an insignificant role in the political engagement of the Acehnese diaspora, Koinova's theory will be slightly weakened. Conversely, if the Acehnese diaspora – despite its perceived anti-Western character – is indeed

proven to have adopted liberal values and procedures, it will undeniably provide strong empirical support for Koinova's theory.

3. Method

As was highlighted in the discussion in the previous chapter, the diaspora phenomenon is a highly complex one. The increasing complexity in the dynamics of diaspora politics is a reflection of what Flick (2009: 12) sees as a “pluralization of life worlds”. According to Flick (*ibid.*), the increasing popularity in applying qualitative research strategies is related to this understanding of a growing complexity in social interactions and expressions. Thus, when studying highly complex social issues, such as diaspora politics, globalization, and value systems, this thesis will try to generate in-depth knowledge by applying a qualitative research strategy.

As stated in section 2.3, this thesis seeks to make a theoretical contribution in the field of diaspora politics by testing a theory of diasporas’ inclination to adopt liberal principles and practices for particularistic reasons. To fulfill this purpose, my study will be designed as a qualitative case study. I will begin this chapter by discussing this design, including the logic behind the case selection. In the second part of this chapter, I will move on to a discussion on the material and the techniques used to retrieve it. The data collection will consist of semi-structured interviews and a complementing analysis of existing literature and text materials.

3.1 The Case Study Design

The case study design has a history of being lauded by social scientists for its wide applicability and its strengths in building and testing complex theories (cf. George & Bennett 2005; Yin 2009; Eckstein 2000). In-depth analyses of one or a few cases enable scholars to dig deep into multifaceted social phenomena, while still allowing them to use their findings to develop robust theories. It works as a bridge between traditional deductive research and detailed qualitative findings (Eisenhardt & Graebner 2007: 25). Having stated the ambition to test the applicability and accuracy of a more general theory, while at the same time acknowledging the difficulty of capturing the complexity of the diaspora phenomenon in quantitative large-N studies, this bridging feature of the case study design fits neatly with my purpose.

Eckstein (2000: 119 & 127-128) highlights the centrality of theory testing in case studies and sees it as an integrated stage of an overarching process of theory building. In testing the applicability of Koinova’s theory on a crucial case of conflict generated stateless diasporas, this thesis recognizes the theory testing procedure as an integrated part of a broader process of theory building. Thus, after having applied the theory identified in chapter 2 on my case, I will return to a theoretical discussion to

stipulate the theoretical implications of the case study, something that could enable further testing and development in forthcoming academic works. The case study design will enable such a shift from working mainly deductively to a more inductive approach. Accordingly, working cumulatively, this thesis should be seen as an attempt to make both a theoretical contribution to the academic field of diaspora politics, and an empirical contribution in its effort to better understand the activities of a poorly studied diaspora.

The empirical goal to generate a more detailed understanding of the value and procedure adoption of the Acehnese diaspora requires a more intensive approach. The single-case study format enables such an intensive analysis and allows for a complex understanding and nuanced account of the phenomenon under study (Landman 2008: 28-29). However, since this thesis also seeks to draw more generally applicable theoretical conclusions, the logic behind the case selection procedure becomes of uttermost importance. To avoid ending up with a mere empirical description of a highly unique and deviant case, the case selection will be based on the principle of the existence of “least-likely” cases, and in close connection to the applied theory. This ambition of making inferences that have implications beyond the original case makes the design comparative (ibid: 28).

By basing my case selection on the logic of least-likely cases, I draw upon Eckstein’s (2000: 143-149) review of the utility of selecting *crucial cases*. According to George and Bennett (2005: 9) a crucial case is “one in which a theory that passes empirical testing is strongly supported and one that fails is strongly impugned”. It is thus important to stress that a crucial case might support or weaken a theory, not prove or falsify it altogether (cf. de Vaus 2001: 222). As Eckstein (2000: 149) points out, a least-likely case selection is usually tailored to confirm the theory in question. This holds also for this thesis, which regards Koinova’s theory as compelling but insufficiently applied and weighted against empirical observations. If the theory turns out to accurately explain the politics of the Acehnese diaspora, it would indeed lend it strong support.

Eckstein (ibid: 149-151) argues that there are both methodological and practical reasons for selecting crucial cases rather than a larger number of objects of study. In addition to the already mentioned merits of being able to increase the level of detail and nuance, selecting crucial cases is less costly when it comes to money, time, and manpower. This is especially the case when the analyzed units constitute complex collective individuals as in the case of studying diaspora politics. Eckstein (ibid: 149) highlights Michels’ (1959) analysis of the inevitability of oligarchy in organizations as the best-known example of a political study using the least likely case selection strategy. To provide support for his thesis of the “iron law of oligarchy”, Michels tested his theory on organizations that were conceived of as promoting grassroots democracy (mainly Germany’s Social Democratic Party) and came to the conclusion that even these organizations tended to adopt oligarchic structures.

The implicitly comparative character of this thesis inevitably involves a modest ambition to make some generalizations beyond the Acehnese diaspora. The extent to which such an ambition is achieved will determine the external validity of the study (cf. de Vaus 2001: 28-29). Even though comparison as a tool of isolation emanates from a neopositivist research tradition, this thesis is also influenced by elements of a

critical realist outlook (cf. Jackson 2011). The aim here is not primarily to isolate causal mechanisms, but rather to elucidate and determine the applicability of certain social patterns. The goal is to make modest *approximations* of an objective reality, something that in this case necessitates an awareness of the impossibility of claiming to have uncovered universal and definitive explanations. The goal is rather to determine whether the pattern identified by Koinova applies also to a least likely case, something which would extend the reach of the theory's generalizability, and thus, what it might help us understand.

3.1.1 The Acehnese Diaspora as a Least Likely Case

So what makes the Acehnese diaspora a least likely case? It has pursued a separatist agenda based at least partially on ethnic motives. It has contained politically prominent members with leading roles in the conflict in Aceh, making Indonesia direct political pressure against their host countries to take actions against these individuals (cf. Schulze 2006: 261-262). Perhaps more importantly, the Acehnese separatist struggle has repeatedly been characterized – mainly by Indonesia, but also by other actors – as essentially Islamic, anti-West, or even radically Islamist.

Braziel (2008: 200-213) notes that diasporas with political agendas – especially those from Muslim countries – have faced increasing levels of suspicion in the West after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. Similarly, focusing on how the 9/11 attacks affected perceptions of Muslim immigrants in the West, Monshipouri (2010: 45) maintains that:

The 9/11 attacks, the 2004 Madrid bombings, and the 2005 London transit attacks have further inflamed the view of Islam as the “enemy,” an image informed by centuries of Orientalist thinking. The persistence of this perception at the public level has made it virtually impossible to extricate Western Muslims from the external political enemy.

Analysts like Gunaratna (2002: 6-7) have argued that Muslim diasporas in the West have been particularly vulnerable to al-Qaeda infiltration due to feelings of political impotence. Regardless of the extent to which specific Muslim diaspora communities have actually been religiously radicalized, the level of suspicion, distrust, polarization, and alienation is likely to have grown in the aftermath of 9/11.

The Acehnese insurgents (and by extension also the diaspora) have faced various allegations after the 9/11 attacks. The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) has been accused of having links with the Afghan mujahedeen and al-Qaeda (Tan 2004: 29). Reports have asserted that al-Qaeda have trained up to 3,000 followers in recruitment centers and training camps in Aceh (ibid.). Journalists have given the Aceh separatists labels like “Muslim militants” (Maclean's 2003: 10), think tank analysts have called for listing GAM as a terrorist organization due to alleged connections to “worldwide terrorist underground” (Dillon 2004: 3-5), and scholars have warned of the risk of a turn toward more radical Islam among GAM followers (Tan 2008: 205). Several of the diaspora members interviewed for this study confirmed the existence of such suspicions and described how the Indonesian government has tried to brand

them as “fanatics”, “fundamentalists”, and “opponents of the Western culture” (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014).

Given these allegation of being supporters of Islamic terrorism, violent separatism, and religious fundamentalism, the Acehnese diaspora will be treated as a least likely case. Thus, it refers to the unlikelihood that a diaspora facing such a reputation would subscribe to the liberal ideas and norms that have underpinned the Bush Doctrine and the concept of “the global war on terrorism” – the very policies that have thrown public suspicion on these groups in the wake of 9/11.⁴ In a time of polarization and labeling of Muslim communities as anti-Western and as the antipode of the so called “free world”, disenchantment on the part of Muslim diasporas in the West seems like a more likely reaction. The Acehnese diaspora has indeed pursued a highly particularistic and separatist agenda and their international reputation has been influenced by the suspicions of affiliation with Islamic terrorist organizations. I suggest that, taken together, these circumstances render their adoption of liberal values very unlikely.

Finally, it is important to make sure that the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden could be considered to match the criteria defining the set of cases which Koinova’s theory is designed to cover. Koinova (2010: 151) states that her study “concentrate[s] specifically on diasporas in liberal democracies linked to homelands experiencing limited sovereignty.” Furthermore, her imagined population of cases shares the feature of being conflict generated (ibid: 153). The Acehnese diaspora in Sweden matches these criteria perfectly and could consequently be considered to belong to the population from which both Koinova and I select our cases.

3.2 Material and Data Collection

Having described the overarching design of this thesis, I now turn to the more concrete aspect of collecting empirical data for my case study. The discussion bellow revolves around the motives and implications of the chosen techniques for data collection and the treatment of the material. The main data collecting technique used in this thesis is semi-structured interviews with key members of the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden. As a complement to the conducted interviews, I have also drawn upon other primary sources in the form of different text materials, and a review of the existing literature on the topic.

3.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

According to Yin (2009: 106), the interview as a research method is an essential source of case study information. It allows the researcher to focus directly on the case study topic and could give a direct insight into the minds and reflections of the

⁴ For a more thorough discussion on the importance of liberal-democratic values as an integral part of the Bush Doctrine and the war on terrorism, see Fiala (2007).

individuals that have personally experienced relevant aspects of it. When the purpose is to gain a better understanding of people's experience, motives, and reasoning, the interview normally takes the form of a guided conversation, rather than structured queries (ibid: 102 & 106-109). Several scholars have called this interview format *semi-structured interviews* (cf. May 2011: 134-136; Leech 2002).

The semi-structured interview has been acknowledged for enabling respondents to “generate and deploy meaning in social life.” (May 2011: 135). This makes it a suitable technique in generating understanding of how diaspora elites think about values and how this spills over into their political engagement in their homeland. Compared to a more standardized format, the semi-structured interview allows respondents to answer more on their own terms, while still ensuring some degree of consistency and comparability (ibid.). Certain comparability is necessary in order to evaluate the significance of some of the answers received in the interviews. However, comparability between the interviewees is not the primary target since I am more interested in accumulating an aggregated understanding of the perspectives of influential diaspora members on the topic under study.

In preparing the interviews, I constructed a framework of questions based on the purpose my research project. This interview guide constituted the precept and a conceptual itinerary in all the conducted interviews.⁵ The open-ended format does not only provide the respondents with more freedom to put their answers in their own words, it also opens up some space for improvisation on the part of the interviewer. It allows the researcher to deal with unexpected answers by asking follow-up questions. This was of particular value in my study since I did not have much case-specific previous research and knowledge to lean on. Consequently, my pre-understanding of the phenomenon I was studying was patchy and several concepts and issues that surfaced during the interviews had to be further clarified and elaborated. This element of improvisation allowed me divert from the interview guide when deemed necessary. However, the guide provided a guarantee that the conversation stuck to the original focus and was consistent with the theoretical purpose of my thesis.

In accordance with Leech's (2002: 667-668) recommendation, I tried to include several different types of questions to get the most out of my interviews. I used a combination of what Leech calls “grand tour questions” and “example questions” in asking the interviewees to mention examples of diaspora activities and political advocacy work and to walk me through these specific occasions. In line with the discussion on follow-up questions above, I also included several “prompts”.⁶ Prompts are questions meant to extract more information from a given answer and they could both be planned (e.g. the follow-up questions to question 14 in my interview guide, where I for example ask the interviewees to specify *which* politicians or organizations they have approached, *how* they have done it, and *which response* they have received) and more improvised or informal (ibid.). Furthermore, I asked all the interviewees if they agreed to answering follow-up questions later if additional queries should arise when the interview was being analyzed. All respondents agreed to this and on a couple of occasions I asked for clarifications by email.

⁵ The interview guide is attached in the Appendix of this thesis.

⁶ May (2011: 142) refers to this practice as “probing”.

Much of the literature on the practice of interviewing brings up ethical issues in conducting an interview for research purposes. This includes the right to informed consent, the right to anonymity, and the necessity of establishing rapport and trust between the interviewer and the participants (cf. Warren 2001: 88-90; Scheyvens et al. 2003: 139-147). These considerations are arguably of even greater importance in a study like this, that touches upon issues that might be regarded as sensitive and risk inflicting inconvenience on part of the respondents. Since the participants in this study have engaged politically in a separatist struggle in their homeland, and since they have friends and relatives remaining in Aceh, the topic of this thesis is characterized by an inescapable sense of sensitivity. Therefore, I have taken precaution in all the stages of my contact with the participants. I was careful to make sure that the topic and implications of my research were made clear at the start of the interview. I have offered all my participants an option to remain anonymous, and I have spelled out the respondents' right to abstain from answering my questions. Thus, procedures to ensure that trust and rapport were established were essential to this thesis. Trust was considered fundamental in making respondents talk about delicate matters, and, maybe even more importantly, to consider recommending friends and associates to participate in my study. It indirectly became a tool to gain increased access.

Another measure taken to ensure a certain level of comfort was to play down the seriousness of the interview by starting off the conversation with everyday chitchat and to avoid using an overly academic language. Due to the centrality of the diaspora concept to my study, I initially provided the interviewee with a more colloquial definition of the term.

An issue related to establishing rapport is whether to use a tape recorder in the interview situation, and much has been written on its pros and cons (cf. Silverman 2010: 199-201; Warren 2001: 91-92). I used a tape recorder for all my interviews, mainly due to the convenience of having the conversation on tape. It would have been extremely difficult to remember and accurately reproducing the entire conversations without recording them, especially since all the interviews lasted for more than one hour and fifteen minutes. However, I always asked in advance for the consent of the participants to use a tape recorder during the interview.

To analyze the result of my interviews, I used a simple tool for analysis based on codes and categories. I sorted the answers deemed relevant to the empirical analysis into four themes – or codes; the three indicators of liberal discourses and procedures (democracy, human rights, and universalism) and an additional code for particularistic discourses of separatism. Naturally, the four codes were also divided into two categories; one related to liberalism and one related to separatism. Such scheme of codes and categories is based on Saldaña's (2013: 9) recommendations, and serves as a guarantee of some degree of systematization in the search for patterns in the data. I paid special attention to answers that included both categories, since these answers could indicate an instance of framing. If possible, I also tried to determine whether the references to liberal discourses were clearly instrumental (which would be in accordance with Koinova's theory), or showed signs of more genuine commitment. Moreover, the democracy code was divided into two sub-

groups based on whether the answer referred to democratic *values and principles* or democratic *procedures*.

It should be noted that all the interviews were conducted in Swedish. Therefore, the direct quotations from these interviews are all translations from the original transcripts.

Based on the emphasis on the importance of political entrepreneurs in theories of framing – and on my pre-understanding of diaspora elites as the community members who usually initiate the adoption of new policies, values, and practices – my focus has been on identifying and including politically influential members of the Acehese diaspora. Thus, my interviews should be viewed as a form of elite interviews (cf. Richards 1996). The interviewees are selected as a result of being – or having been – in a position of influence and insights into the agendas and political engagement in the diaspora. As such, this type of elite interviewing is close to what Flick (2009: 165-166) calls the “expert interview”. The interviewees are expected to have superior knowledge of diaspora activities stemming from their own prominent position within the diaspora. Yin (2009: 107) notes that the more the participants are used as such a source of information, the more their role becomes that of an “informant” rather than a “respondent”. Having stated this, distinguishing between respondents and informants becomes less important. The interviewees were asked questions both as insiders and part of the phenomenon under study, and as experts of the field in which they are or were situated. This has implications for the representativeness of my sample. As Björnehed (2012: 68) notes:

[W]hen it comes to elite interviews, [...] a low number of respondents do not have to equal an unrepresentative sample. In elite interviews, sampling is based on selecting key individuals in certain positions who are of importance precisely for their particular insights with regard to the decision making process.

As in Björnehed’s (ibid.) study of ideas in conflict, random sampling would not be of any particular use here, since it is the experience of key individuals that are the focus of this study. The total number of interviews conducted for this thesis was seven, in which all but one respondent⁷ are linked to the renascent version of ASNLF⁸ and still actively pursue a separatist agenda toward Aceh. Thus, the relatively small number of participants becomes of less importance due to their designated roles in the study. The participants are not meant to be a representative sample of the entire diaspora residing in Sweden. As will be discussed in more detail in section 4.2, the Acehese diaspora in Sweden is probably (and has always been) the politically most active faction of the diaspora. Moreover, even though complex collective actors like

⁷ The exception is Bakhtiar Abdullah who was spokesman for the GAM leadership in Stockholm during the Aceh conflict. Abdullah still calls himself a member of GAM and holds a long-term vision of an independent Aceh, but has ceased most of his political engagement and does not support the political struggle of the current ASNLF faction in Sweden (Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014). His prominent position within GAM during the conflict years makes him an important informant of the strategies of the Acehese diaspora during that time.

⁸ Originally, ASNLF – standing for Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front – is the more formal name for GAM. Presently, the acronym is mainly used by a mostly Swedish based faction of the diaspora that opposes the 2005 MoU.

diasporas are by definition somewhat heterogeneous, a significant majority of the Swedish based members that are still politically active advance a separatist agenda that is non-consistent with, and more far-reaching than, the 2005 peace agreement (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014; Interview with Asnawi Ali 2014; Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014). Focusing on a diaspora faction that is arguably more radical and holds the most unwavering posture toward Acehese independence is in line with the least likely design employed in this thesis.

In this context it should also be noted that all the participants are men. This is likely to reveal something interesting about the gender composition among political elites more generally, but this discussion is nonetheless outside the scope of my study.⁹

The technique used in this thesis to select the respondents was based on snowball sampling. This technique refers to the practice of letting the respondents suggest other suitable participants for the study. It is particularly useful when it is difficult to locate relevant respondents due to a sensitive research topic (Biernacki & Waldorf 1981: 141-142). As already indicated above, politically active diaspora elites in separatist conflicts are likely to be particularly hard to locate.

The snowball sample is associated with a high risk of bias in the opinions and voices presented (May 2011: 145). As has been discussed in this section, and as is further discussed in section 4.2, the current Acehese diaspora in Sweden seems to hold a quite uniform position in their political engagement toward their homeland. This obviously reduces the risk of omitting important political positions in the diaspora, and I have further tried to minimize this risk by turning to more than one “gatekeeper” to gain access to diaspora members. However, it is possible that the politically less active part of the Swedish based diaspora holds divergent opinions toward their homeland. Even though the focus of this thesis is on diaspora elites, such potential disagreements should be noted and kept in mind by the reader.

3.2.2 Complementing Text Material

My empirical analysis will also draw upon some additional primary sources. Press releases, statements, and transcriptions of speeches by members of the Acehese diaspora in Sweden will constitute an important complement to my interviews. Most of these texts are available online on ASNLF’s website¹⁰ or on websites archiving documents and statements related to the Aceh conflict.¹¹ However, a couple of the texts have been given directly to me by members of the diaspora. All these texts will be treated in the same way as my interviews, and discourses related to separatism, democracy, human rights, and universalism will therefore be searched for.

As described in section 2.2, my analysis will also be complemented by a review of the existing literature on the Acehese diaspora. Such secondary data will be of

⁹ For a discussion on gender roles in the Aceh conflict see Aquino Siapno (2002).

¹⁰ <<http://www.asnlf.org/>>.

¹¹ E.g. <<http://acehnet.tripod.com/>> and <<http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/aceh/aceh.htm>>.

particular value when compiling a historical perspective on Acehnese diaspora engagement.

4. Empirical Analysis

This chapter contains the empirical results and analysis of this thesis. It is divided into three sections of which the first gives a short background to the armed conflict in Aceh. The second section describes the composition and political engagement of the Acehnese diaspora, focusing mainly on the faction based in Sweden. The third section provides an analysis of how – and to what extent – the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden has adopted liberal discourses and procedures to pursue a separatist agenda. The final section is divided into three sub-sections based largely on the coding categories explained in section 3.2.1.

4.1 Background to the Aceh Conflict

Aceh has been a site of recurring conflict and violence ever since it was incorporated into Indonesia after independence from the Netherlands in 1945. Although the trigger of conflict has varied over time, the territorial status of the area has remained a constant source of contention (Åkebo 2013: 90-91). Open conflict first erupted in 1953 when Acehnese insurgents led the Darul Islam-rebellion against the Indonesian government. The motive for the uprising was to be found in an increasing fear of losing religious, political, and economic autonomy to an Indonesian state that had become centered on Javanese identity (Bertrand 2004: 166-167; Rist 2010: 111). The uprising ended in a peace agreement in 1959, giving Aceh some minor benefits (Means 2009: 259-260). However, resentment among the Acehnese population remained strong due to economic marginalization, political centralization around Jakarta, and authoritarian rule – especially during the presidency of Suharto (Ziegenhain 2010: 120-124).

These feelings of resentment eventually translated into renewed conflict in 1976. This was the year when Hasan di Tiro founded the Free Aceh Movement, also known as Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM), and declared Aceh independent from Indonesia (Means 2009: 260). For almost three decades, GAM waged a low-intensive war against the Indonesian government, which it saw as an imperialist successor to the Dutch colonial rule. To achieve its goal of Acehnese independence, GAM engaged in protracted guerilla warfare, performing hit-and-run ambushes against Indonesian targets (Schulze 2006: 225-228). In response, the Indonesian government used its army, paramilitary forces, and police squads to launch periodical counter-insurgency operations in Aceh (ibid: 244-249). During the first year of fighting, the Indonesian security forces killed several guerillas and forced the leadership of GAM, including

Hasan di Tiro, into exile. From Stockholm, Sweden, di Tiro and his closest associates continued to direct the Acehese rebellion (Means 2009: 261).

After having been curtailed by Indonesian security forces, GAM regained strength toward the end of the 1980s. After insurgents had intensified their attacks against Indonesian police, army units, civilian authorities, suspected government informers, and non-Acehnese settlers, the Indonesian government decided to declare Aceh a “military operation area” known as Daerah Operasi Militer (DOM) (Ziegenhain 2010: 123). DOM lasted until 1998, when Suharto stepped down from power, and entailed significant human suffering. GAM fighters as well as civilians suspected to be supporters of the insurgency faced arbitrary arrests, torture, and targeted killings during the military operations conducted by Indonesian forces. Severe human rights abuses fueled the conflict and generated local support for the cause of the insurgency (Means 2009: 261-262).

Even though the conflict continued after Suharto’s resignation and Indonesia’s initiation of democratic reforms, these events nevertheless opened up new space for peace negotiations between the two parties. A number of new laws came into effect in 2001, granting Aceh special autonomy. This implied a process of decentralization in which Aceh gained increased political, economic, cultural, and religious autonomy (Schulze 2007: 89-90). The first preliminary peace talks with the GAM leadership were initiated in 2000. Although the negotiations were interrupted by renewed guerilla violence and new government directed military operations, talks between the parties continued (Means 2009: 265-267).

In 2004 a massive earthquake and subsequent tsunami caused enormous human suffering and material devastation in Aceh. Soon after the tsunami had struck Aceh, both GAM and the Indonesian government announced unconditional cease-fires. Although it did not take long until both sides had violated the truce, the tsunami brought a new political environment to Aceh. The international community initiated a massive relief effort and along with it followed international pressure to solve the conflict. Representatives for Indonesia and the GAM leadership met in Helsinki in 2005 under the guidance of former Finish president Martti Ahtisaari and his NGO Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), and finally managed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (ibid: 270-274). This comprehensive peace agreement spelled out Aceh’s right to exercise authority within all public sectors, its right to elect a governor and a legislature, and its entitlement to a large share of revenues from the extraction of natural resources in the area. It also included provisions on disarmament of GAM fighters, the withdrawal of all Indonesian “non-organic” military and police forces, and an amnesty for those individuals imprisoned for alleged connections to the Free Aceh Movement. In addition, a human rights court and a commission for truth and reconciliation were to be established to investigate war crimes (Kingsbury 2006: 199-205). In a 2013 report, Amnesty International (2013) criticized the Indonesian authorities’ lack of progress on investigating such crimes. However, despite sporadic outbursts of violence – especially in the context of local elections – Aceh has enjoyed relative peace since 2005 (ibid: 20).

4.2 The Acehese Diaspora

The Acehese diaspora is a relatively young, conflict-generated, stateless diaspora. Acehese people of certain professions have had a tradition of residing and working abroad well before the armed separatist rebellion erupted. However, a more cohesive Acehese identity did not develop until scores of Acehese refugees started to arrive in Malaysia in the 1980s due to the separatist conflict (Missbach 2013: 1063). Accordingly, Missbach (*ibid.*) argues that it was not until the Acehese refugees united in their common suffering over the conflict in their homeland, that an Acehese diaspora evolved. Most of the Acehese migrants sought refuge in Malaysia and the number of Acehese living in Malaysia totaled more than 80,000 at the peak of conflict (*ibid.*: 1068). The main wave of refugees from Aceh arrived in Malaysia in the 1990s due to political prosecution during the DOM era (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014). However, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was allowed to arrange resettlement of some of the refugees to “Western” countries like Sweden, Denmark, Norway, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Missbach 2011b: 184; Interview with ASNLF member 1 2014). In 2006, approximately 700 Acehese were living in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, 300 in the US, 100 in Canada, and 250 in Australia (Missbach 2013: 1064-1065).

Many of the leading figures within the GAM movement were among the refugees that sought political asylum and resettlement in Western countries. Malaysia was considered to be too dangerous for the leadership and its most prominent members, including Hasan di Tiro, Zaini Abdullah, Malik Mahmud, Bakhtiar Abdullah, Husaini Hasan, and Daud Husin, were granted political asylum and citizenships in Sweden in the early ‘80s (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014; Missbach 2013: 1066). Husaini Hasan was the first of the GAM leaders to arrive in Sweden. He applied for asylum in Sweden since he knew about two West Papuans whom had been allowed to stay in the country for similar reasons. Soon the other leading GAM figures, their families, and other political refugees from Aceh followed suit (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014). During the DOM operations in the 1990s a “second generation” of Acehese political refugees arrived in Sweden, and members of the diaspora now talk about a “third diaspora generation”, consisting of Sweden born sons and daughters of the first and second generations (Interview with Asnawi Ali 2014).

In the beginning, the Acehese exile community in Sweden was small but well organized. They set up connections with GAM fighters on the ground and developed connections with diaspora groups from West Papua and the South Moluccas (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014). An Acehese National Council was set up in Malaysia and worked as a link between the leadership in Stockholm and the guerillas in Aceh (Missbach 2011b: 185). Sweden quickly became the center for GAM outside of Aceh, and although diaspora organizations started to pop up in Denmark, Norway and the US, the leadership and its followers in Stockholm constituted by far the best organized part of the Acehese diaspora (Missbach 2013: 1065; Missbach 2011b: 185-186).

The activities and methods of the GAM leaders and the overall Acehese diaspora have changed over time (Missbach 2013: 1079). Initially, the diaspora

focused on financial and material sponsoring of the conflict (ibid: 1067). Acehnese throughout Southeast Asia assisted in the smuggling of weapons into Aceh, and the leadership directed insurgent activities over satellite phones from Sweden (Schulze 2006: 252). The diaspora was a base for guerilla recruitment and some diaspora members were even sent to Libya to receive military training and ideological indoctrination (Missbach 2013: 1066-1067). In the 1990s, the diaspora turned more to international lobbying, diplomacy, and propaganda distribution. It was a deliberate act to internationalize the conflict and to raise international awareness of the situation in Aceh (Schulze 2006: 236-237; Means 2009: 267), something which I will return to in more detail in the forthcoming analysis.

GAM was mainly represented by Malik Mahmud (GAM's Prime Minister), Zaini Abdullah (GAM's Foreign Minister), and Bakhtiar Abdullah (spokesman of the exiled leadership) during the peace negotiations in Helsinki in 2005 (Kingsbury 2010: 137). Hasan di Tiro was still the symbolic leader of the organization at that time, but his actual function was significantly reduced after he suffered a stroke in 1997 (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014). After the MoU was signed, some of the most prominent diaspora elites returned to Aceh permanently, or on a partial basis. Malik Mahmud and Zaini Abdullah took up political roles in the new local party Partai Aceh (PA), while other returning diaspora elites occupied positions as personal advisors to the local government (Interview with ASNLF member 4 2014; Missbach 2011b: 189-190). Bakhtiar Abdullah returned temporarily to Aceh to provide training to local political actors on behalf of the Olof Palme International Center (Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014). All in all, approximately half of the Acehnese diaspora decided to return to Aceh. The lion share was Acehnese living in Malaysia, while only a few dozen of the diaspora members residing in the West returned (Missbach 2011b: 187).

Missbach (ibid: 193-198) has noted quite contradictory trends in the behavior of those in the Acehnese diaspora who decided to stay in exile after the 2005 MoU. In the aftermath of the peace agreement a palpable sentiment of exhaustion characterized the mood in the diaspora (ibid: 193). This observation was confirmed in an interview with an ASNLF member who described a widespread feeling of disillusionment stemming from a disappointment over not having been granted independence (Interview with ASNLF member 3 2014). According to this Acehnese man: "People felt that between 50,000 and 60,000 Acehnese died in vain [...] we got that autonomy already back in 1945 and what is happening now is just that we get the autonomy once again" (ibid.). This disillusionment led some diaspora members to withdraw from the diaspora altogether by resigning all types of activities and contacts with their co-ethnics (Missbach 2011b: 193). This trend was in line with a tendency of de-politicization among some diasporans. Diaspora members following such a trend avoided discussing politics after the MoU and instead focused on socio-cultural community activities (ibid: 194).

However, there were also contradicting trends of increasing engagement in homeland affairs among some diasporans. These individuals participate intensively in online discussions on topics related to the social and political developments in Aceh and appeal to international bodies to raise the international awareness of the situation in their homeland. Yusuf Daud recounted numerous visits to the UN

headquarters in Geneva in an interview, and described his participation at Universal Periodic Review (UPR) sessions, at Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) meetings, and at various side events (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014). Missbach (2011b: 196-197) suggests that such persistent engagement constitutes an attempt to justify remaining in exile after the end of conflict. Such justification should be viewed in the light of what Missbach (ibid.) identifies as an increasing gap between the diaspora and the political decision making in Aceh.

Finally, Missbach (ibid: 197-198) notes a tendency of opposition against the MoU and continued struggle for independence among some diaspora groups. The most renowned of these groups is the mostly Sweden based reascent version of ASNLF. This version of ASNLF is an extension of what was previously known as KPAMD (Interview with Asnawi Ali 2014). KPAMD was founded in 2006 and worked for an Aceh independent from Indonesia through public relations and by raising awareness and distributing propaganda (Missbach 2010: 124-125). One member of this faction referred to the MoU as “the second tsunami” (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014). As noted in section 3.2.1, this is also the faction of the diaspora that has been in focus in this thesis.

The Sweden based part of the diaspora lost most of its local influence and political clout when the most prominent members of the GAM leadership returned to Aceh. Nevertheless, it is still probably the most politically active branch of the diaspora and it enjoys at least some local support in Aceh (ibid.). According to their own admission, the Swedish branch is still seen as the center of diasporic political activity among fellow diaspora members around the world (Interview with ASNLF member 3 2014). An ASNLF-member living in Stockholm estimated the Acehese diaspora in Sweden to currently number somewhere between 150 and 200 individuals, including youngsters born in Sweden to Acehese parents (Interview with ASNLF member 4 2014). They have started the overarching association Svensk-Atjehnisiska Föreningen (the Swedish-Acehnese Association, SAF) (also known as Meunasah Atjèh, Swedia) with its base in Norsborg, Stockholm. Another related community association was on the way to start up in Örebro in 2014 under the name Örebro Acehniska Förening (Örebro Acehese Association, ÖAF) (Interview with Asnawi Ali 2014). Similar community organizations have also been founded in Denmark (Acehnisk Samfund Forening, or Acehese Community Association, ASF), Norway (Aceh Sumatra Flykting Foreningen, or Aceh-Sumatra Refugee Organisation, ASFF), Canada (the Acehese Canadian Community Society, ACCS), and in the US (the Aceh Centre). These organizations have been set up to facilitate integration in host countries, to maintain connections with Aceh, and to provide a link to other diaspora groups (Missbach 2010: 122).

4.3 Liberal Values and Procedures in the Acehese Diaspora

In the following section, the extent to which the Acehese diaspora in Sweden makes use of liberal discourses and procedures will be analyzed by employing the three indicators carved out in section 2.3. This analysis will be divided into three sub-sections. The first of these sections discusses how the Acehese diaspora in Sweden has employed a strategy of internationalization that both surrounds and phrases lingering particularistic goals. The purpose of this part is to provide an overarching backdrop which the following two sections can be compared against and incorporated into. The second and third section set out to analyze the presence of references to the three indicators in the rhetoric of the Acehese diaspora in Sweden. Section 4.3.2 deals with references to democratic principles and procedures, whereas section 4.3.3 embarks on an analysis of references to the two closely related liberal components of human rights and universalism.

4.3.1 Internationalization and Remaining Particularistic Goals

Ever since the GAM leadership was forced into exile in the late 1970s and early 1980s, internationalization has been a linchpin of the strategies of GAM and the Acehese diaspora (Schulze 2006: 236-237). The strategy of internationalization of the conflict and situation in Aceh has implied an effort among members of the Acehese diaspora to gain international recognition and support for their struggle for an independent homeland. It has been seen as the only way to level the playing field with Indonesia and has included efforts to reach out to countries, intergovernmental organizations, and NGOs (ibid: 236-238). The necessity of the strategy was further accentuated by the relative weakness of the movement's fighters within Aceh (Missbach 2013: 1080).

In this search for international allies, Hasan di Tiro and the other Sweden based GAM leaders repeatedly shifted their outlook and principles (Missbach 2011a: 92). As the conflict dragged on, the GAM leaders gradually changed their rhetoric depending on the imagined audience of their campaigns (ibid: 93; Aspinall 2007: 253). In the words of Missbach (2011a: 93-94), di Tiro was "very flexible to global political trends", adapting first to an anti-colonialist discourse in the late 1970s, then shifting toward a rhetoric inspired by Islamic anti-Westernism in the 1980s, and finally turning to a discourse of democracy and human rights in the 1990s. The final shift toward a discourse of human rights could be understood as first and foremost a reaction to international developments. According to Aspinall (2007: 254), the key turning points were the successful national secessions in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s and East Timor's independence from Indonesia in 1999. GAM now turned to the UN and major Western powers to gain their long awaited international support (Aspinall 2002: 10). East Timor was used as a "blue print" for GAM and inspired their activities. Accordingly, when discussing the importance of the international

community for the Acehese struggle for independence, Bakhtiar Abdullah kept referring to the East Timorese case: “Why was East Timor granted independence? Because they gained support from the international community, even from the former colonial power” (Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014).

The initial response from the international community remained lukewarm, but as the focus on human rights intensified and permeated more and more of GAM’s rhetoric, the international community started to pay some attention to the human rights abuses in Aceh (Missbach 2011a: 95; Missbach 2013: 1074-1075). Looking back at this phase of the internationalization policy, Bakhtiar Abdullah describes it as a highly successful strategy in stating that: “Indonesia lost in the international arena, because we managed to convey the Acehese struggle for freedom and at the same time internationalize Aceh” (Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014).

In the 2002 Stavanger Declaration, GAM openly declared a new focus in their foreign policy, stressing that:

Acehese abroad shall increase diplomatic efforts in order to improve international relations of the State of Aceh especially in the following countries: the Scandinavian nations, the European Union nations, the North American nations, Australia and the Pacific nations (The Executive Committee of the Worldwide Acehese Representatives Meeting 2002).

Together with this emphasis on the role of the Acehese diaspora in the strategy of internationalization, the Stavanger Declaration also stated the importance of an increased cooperation with “friendly and neutral NGOs world wide” (ibid.).

The strategy of internationalization remains important for the faction of the diaspora that still seeks independence from Indonesia. Members of ASNLF in Sweden confirmed using their website and social media to reach an international audience in an attempt to put pressure on Indonesia (Interview with ASNLF member 4 2014; Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014). After confirming the important role of the diaspora as a source of information for the international community, Yusuf Daud explained that: “Indonesia is not afraid of the movement inside Aceh. Or the one in West Papua or the South Moluccas. They are afraid of those abroad” (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014). The crucial role of this strategy of internationalization to the Acehese independence struggle could be highlighted by Aspinall’s (2002: 15) suggestion that the Acehese nationalists’ interaction with the international system even has shaped their national identity.

Interestingly enough, a member of ASNLF in Sweden confirmed the international dimension of their struggle, but when later asked about whether GAM had received any support from international Muslim organizations, he denied it on the basis of the Acehese conflict being “a local issue” (Interview with ASNLF member 4 2014). Such an ambiguous stance toward the character of the conflict might both stem from GAM’s reluctance of being perceived as an Islamist organization in the eyes of the international community (in itself a sign of GAM’s current focus on a Western audience in their external communication) (cf. Missbach 2011a: 98), and diasporas’ unique ability to frame issues in both global and local – universalistic and particularistic – discourses, depending on the purpose and audience.

Despite a substantial effort to muster international support through universalistic appeals, the Acehese diaspora has in parallel developed and kept a highly particularistic agenda centered on Acehese ethno-nationalist defined independence. According to Missbach (2011a: 92), the underlying nationalist ideology was crafted by di Tiro and his Acehese associates in the diaspora. By referring to historical and cultural factors, di Tiro opposed the legitimacy of Indonesian rule in Aceh: “‘Indonesia’ is merely a new label, in a totally foreign nomenclature which has nothing to do with our own history, language, culture, or interests” (di Tiro 1984: 16). This line of reasoning has frequently reappeared in the rhetoric used by Acehese diaspora elites. Sweden based former GAM minister Dr. Husaini Hasan expressed a similar view of the necessity of Acehese independence at a conference on Aceh in Washington, D.C:

[T]he only alternative that is appropriate for us – Acehese – is to be free from Indonesia – that is a fixed price. We the Acehese are not Indonesians. We have no historic, political, cultural, economic or geographic relationship with them (Hasan 1999).

Although their rhetoric shifted to a human rights discourse, references to Indonesia as an illegitimate “colonial empire” has continued to characterize the language of Acehese diaspora elites (cf. di Tiro 1995). Echoing such a stance, Yusuf Daud described Indonesia as “real colonialists”, and declared that ASNLF’s goal was to “regain our country, which was lost during the ‘40s when Indonesia was created” (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014).

Having outlined how such separatist and particularistic elements have coexisted with a strategy of internationalization in the Swedish based diaspora, I now turn to the significance of democratic values and procedures in the rhetoric and tactics of the diaspora.

4.3.2 Democratic Discourses and Procedures

An inclusion of democratic discourses and procedures has been a notable result of the Acehese internationalization strategy from the 1990s and onward. Hence, the Stavanger Declaration proclaimed that: “[T]he state of Aceh practices the system of democracy” (The Executive Committee of the Worldwide Acehese Representatives Meeting 2002). As part of the rhetoric surrounding their declared commitment to a democratic Aceh, the Acehese diaspora has made recurrent references to the undemocratic nature of Indonesia. While admitting that promotion of democracy became an increasingly important element in their struggle, Bakhtiar Abdullah maintained that it was not entirely new:

It had always been an important point in our struggle. Because as far as democracy is concerned, it had never existed in Indonesia. It was ruled by a military dictatorship the entire time. That is why we put up a fight. People tried to change this by supporting GAM and by being part of the struggle to establish a democracy (Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014).

By framing their struggle for independence as a way to escape and transform past and present Indonesian authoritarianism, the democracy discourse becomes a powerful tool in the separatist toolkit. In the quote above, Abdullah seems to hold a genuine and more deeply rooted dedication for democratic values, quite contrary to Koinova's highly instrumentalist approach to diasporic value adoption. However, when asked why democracy gradually became a more important element in their struggle, Abdullah answered that: "We were in a peace process that will be monitored by the international community, including how we behave. That is why it was important to maintain this issue" (ibid.). Thus, an element of appeasement directed toward the international community seems to have guided their democracy promotion as well.

Democracy has remained an important principle in the independence struggle of the current version of ASNLF in Sweden (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014). While being Secretary General for the now defunct organization Association of Acehese Community in Scandinavia (PERMAS), Asnawi Ali composed a press release condemning the process leading up to the 2005 MoU as undemocratic:

We, Acehese Community in Scandinavia (PERMAS), wholeheartedly support the peace efforts and we wish a success. But we will never condone, under any circumstances, these undemocratic conducts to deliberately ignore the mainstream Acehese civil society groups to fully participate in the process (Ali 2005).

Meanwhile, Bakhtiar Abdullah expressed pride over the process for the exact opposite reason:

I remember a democratic process. Together with the Palme Center – and this is something that I am proud of – we invited almost 300 people from different groups; ulama,¹² activists, intellectuals, politicians – even Acehese parliamentarians in Jakarta – female activists, students, and some representatives from the Acehese diaspora to join us in Kuala Lumpur. [...] This was a couple of days before we signed the agreement. [...] We discussed its content in general and our goal to sign it and asked "what do you think?" And everyone agreed! [...] So I think we were more democratic than if we would just had rejected peace (Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014).

Regardless of who is right about the degree of inclusiveness in the peace process, democracy has obviously also been used as a tool for legitimization in the internal disputes within the Acehese diaspora. The faction still fighting for Acehese independence repeatedly returns to the democratic necessity of holding a referendum to determine whether Aceh should remain under Indonesian rule or become an independent country. In the words of Yusuf Daud:

We are still fighting for a referendum in Aceh. If Indonesia wants a real democracy in Aceh they should allow us to hold a referendum. And then we should see if the

¹² Ulama refers to Muslim religious scholars and teachers (cf. Basri 2010).

Acehnese want to be part of Indonesia or stay out of Indonesia. It is a question of democracy. [...] Yes, independence is the last stop, the ultimate goal. But we should constantly review the human rights and democracy (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014).

Similarly, another ASNLF member also referred to the desirability of holding a referendum when discussing democracy in an Acehnese context: “The solution is to let the Acehnese decide for themselves. To hold a referendum” (Interview with ASNLF member 2). This is also the stance proclaimed by ASNLF in international forums, which could be exemplified by this statement at a UNPO conference:

Given the tragic fact that the once independent Acehnese have been subjected to centuries of oppression by Dutch, Japanese and Indonesian colonialists, it is not difficult to understand why the Acehnese firmly believe that independence is the only way forward and a free referendum is one of democratic ways to resolve the conflict (Daud 2014).

Thus, diaspora elites use the call for a referendum as a way to frame their goal of an independent Aceh in a discourse of democracy. The referendum becomes the link tying together the separatist and the democratic discourses. According to Schulze (2006: 237), references to a referendum started to appear in GAM’s political rhetoric when East Timor was granted independence and GAM imagined a similar scenario for Aceh.

The referendum is also one of the democratic procedures highlighted in Koinova’s (2010: 160-161) case studies to show how such procedures have been used to boost nationalism and promote particularistic agendas. Other procedures include more vague diplomatic methods of non-violence. In the case of the Acehnese diaspora, Asnawi Ali discussed such methods and motivated them by stating that: “Thousands have already died during the conflict, so we try a different tactic of non-violence” (Interview with Asnawi Ali 2014). Likewise, Yusuf Daud recounted that: “When we arrived abroad, we thought that it must be possible to achieve our goal in a peaceful and diplomatic way” (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014), suggesting that their tactics changed in exile. Some ASNLF members discussed the new possibilities that the democratic system in Sweden presented to their struggle. Asnawi Ali mentioned what he sees as the “moral responsibility” of diaspora members to use the possibilities provided by democratic systems:

We in Sweden want them [the Acehnese in other countries] to become more active because they have freedom of speech. In Sweden we have freedom of speech which means that we can do whatever we want as long as it does not hurt anyone else. Hence, we can struggle [from abroad] (Interview with Asnawi Ali 2014).

In a similar vein, Bakhtiar Abdullah stressed the freedom of political maneuvering in Sweden as the greatest benefit of moving their struggle to the international arena (Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014). Ali also described how the first generation of members of the Acehnese diaspora taught the second and third generation about democratic principles and procedures. This was knowledge that they “had not

learned in school” and that they obtained through practical training when the first diaspora generation sent them on political missions to Geneva, Brussels, and The Hague (Interview with Asnawi Ali 2014).

ASNLF of today uses the democratic space in Sweden to discuss topics related to Acehese independence on online blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, to reach out to international NGOs, and to hold May Day demonstrations for an independent Aceh (ibid; Interview with ASNLF member 4 2014). This constitutes a good example of how democratic procedures could both be promoted and utilized by diasporas pursuing separatist agendas.

To summarize, the Acehese diaspora in Sweden has framed their struggle for independence as a struggle for democracy against an authoritarian Indonesian state. Moreover, diaspora elites regularly make references to a referendum on Acehese independence as the only democratically sustainable solution. The importance assigned to democratic procedures is also evident in the internal diasporic disagreement over the process that led to the 2005 MoU. Finally, it is worth noticing how the diaspora has made use of democratic channels in Sweden in order to promote separatist goals, and how they stress the importance of such procedures.

4.3.3 Human Rights and Universalism

As noted above, the rhetoric of the Acehese diaspora became increasingly characterized by “an even broader discourse of democracy and human rights” in the later part of the 1990s (Missbach 2011a: 95). Acehese nationalists in general started to base their arguments for an independent Aceh on the brutality of Indonesian rule. This brutality also featured as a repeated proof of the invalidity of Indonesian colonial rule in GAM’s rhetoric at the time. (Aspinall 2002: 18 & 20). Aspinall (ibid: 18) suggests that the sudden attractiveness of the human rights discourse stemmed from the growing power of international humanitarian intervention, and is thus closely related to the emerging dominance of the liberal discourse described in section 2.3. An ASNLF member in Sweden recalled how they approached major transnational human rights NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch in the 1990s (Interview with ASNLF member 3 2014). Diaspora members also started to make more frequent visits to Geneva to present their case at the UN Commission on Human Rights and the UNPO (ibid; Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014). Bakhtiar Abdullah specifically stressed the importance of Amnesty reports like “Indonesia: ‘Shock Therapy’: Restoring Order in Aceh 1989-1993” (cf. Amnesty International 1993), in making the international community listen to their appeals (Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014).

The Sweden based faction of the diaspora that still seeks independence for Aceh has continued to allude to human rights abuses. They regard themselves as a link between the local population and the international community:

We work with [local] activists and NGOs. You know, the civil society. They can provide us with accurate information about the situation in Aceh. Then we write it down

in English and distribute it to Amnesty International or other organizations for human rights in Europe (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014).

The Acehnese diaspora has frequently framed sovereignty issues in human rights discourses. Already Hasan di Tiro tried to connect human rights to GAM's struggle for independence:

The vary [sic!] concept of "Indonesia" is based, and predicated, on the denials of the Right of Self-Determination to the majority of the non-Javanese peoples of the Malay Archipelago. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right of Self-Determination "The effective exercise of a peoples Right to Self-Determination is an essential condition for the genuine existence of other human rights and freedom." But in today's discussions about human rights in "Indonesia" the right to self-determination has been totally ignored, thereby justifying Javanese colonialism even more! (di Tiro 1995).

Clearly, di Tiro tries to frame Acehnese independence in a human rights discourse by using the concept of "right to self-determination". Similar acts of framing have frequented the rhetoric of the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden. For example, Husaini Hasan reached out to the international community by saying:

I sincerely appeal to all international human rights organizations, especially Amnesty International, Asia Watch, and all sympathizers of the oppressed peoples, and also the US Government to put pressure on Indonesia, not only on human rights issues but also concerning the rights of self-determination of the Acehnese people (Hasan 1999).

Likewise, Asnawi Ali pointed out that: "To be granted your own country and self-determination is part of the human rights" (Interview with Asnawi Ali 2014). Such framing was also evident in the testimony submitted by ASNLF to the UPR in Geneva in 2012:

As conventional wisdom has it, that there will be no peace without justice and there will be no justice without the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. And the human rights can not be fully, accountably realized if the right of a people to self-determination is denied (ASNLF 2012a).

It featured once again in a press release distributed at the same event: "Unless the right to self-determination to the people of Aceh and other fundamental freedoms are recognized, violations of human rights will continue unabated." (ASNLF 2012b).

These statements share an appeal to universally applicable laws and principles. By referring to universalism, the Acehnese diaspora tries to call attention to the binding obligations of the international community to interfere and pave the way for Acehnese independence. Consequently the rhetoric of the diaspora also features direct references to international laws and regulations:

Indonesia is the only colonial territories of the Dutch East Indies which has been perpetuated and never been decolonized properly in accordance with the procedures of international laws and the laws of decolonization (ASNLF 2012c).

As has been mentioned in previous sections of this thesis, such references to the universality of international law are often closely connected to discourses of human rights. Consequently, when members of the diaspora frame separatist goals in a human rights discourse, this often coincides with references to discourses of universalism in terms of the responsibility on part of the international community to act in accordance with international law. A good example of this linkage is provided by a passage of Yusuf Daud's speech to UNPO in 2014:

Despotic and colonial regimes of 21st century, such as Indonesia, often deem human rights and the rights to self-determination as antithesis of the territorial integrity of a state. It is undeniable that the territorial integrity of a state is recognized by international law, but human rights, including the right to self determination, are also an integral part of international law and by definition must be the legitimate concern of the international community (Daud 2014).

Asnawi Ali made a similar connection when recounting how the diaspora has highlighted human rights issues by asking whether "the international community will let more people die?" (Interview with Asnawi Ali 2014). A universalistic element also becomes apparent in more explicit references to a shared humanity. For example, di Tiro appealed to President Clinton to "[intervene] in the name of humanity to stop these atrocities upon our Acehnese people" (cited in Missbach 2011a: 95). More often though, such a shared humanity is referred to in a more subtle and implicit way, mainly by highlighting other cases perceived as experiencing the same problems as Aceh and where the international community is seen to have taken more adequate measures. This can be exemplified by Yusuf Daud's comment on ASNLF's efforts to trigger sanctions against Indonesian war criminals:

We wanted all generals who were responsible for the killing in Aceh during the DOM era to be sent to the Hague Tribunal. In the same way as they did in former Yugoslavia, or in Rwanda, or in other parts of Africa. Why just not in Aceh? They have killed thousands of innocent people. Why let them walk free? (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014).

If we follow Koinova's instrumentalist approach, these references to human rights and a universal humanity ought to be seen merely as means to achieve a higher end, i.e. Acehnese independence. It is indeed possible to trace instrumentalist connotations in the way the Acehnese diaspora refers to human rights and universalism. Daud admits that it was very difficult to continue talking about independence in the immediate aftermath of the 2005 MoU:

It was really difficult in the beginning. After this Helsinki-agreement, we did not dare to talk about independence any longer. Instead we tried to utilize these human rights that have not materialized in Aceh (ibid.).

When particularistic discourses of Acehnese independence was no longer a feasible argument in encounters with representatives of the international community, the human rights discourse seems to have constituted a passable complement. Asnawi Ali paints a similar picture:

After the MoU we could not talk about independence. Then we came up with a spontaneous idea of what we could talk about – human rights. “This is your right to talk about. You who are victims of military operations have the right to talk about this”. This was one of the things we could talk about (Interview with Asnawi Ali 2014).

Ali admitted that the rhetoric of human rights is a deliberate tactic: “We try to hide in these human rights. We talk about human rights, but the goal is independence” (ibid.). He also claimed that the small size of the politically active Acehnese diaspora has made this rhetoric even more important: “If you have a strong organization like East Timor, then you can say that you want your own country. But if you are small, you should talk about human rights” (ibid.). Missbach (2011a: 97) describes how international human rights organization like Tapol urged GAM to include more focus on human rights in their statements in the 1990s – something that confirms the instrumental aspect and tactical usefulness of this discourse for the Acehnese independence struggle.

However, it is also possible to discern a more genuine approach to the human rights aspiration among the Acehnese diaspora elites. Daud insisted that independence and human rights are equally important goals in their struggle and argued that: “They are inseparable. You can say that they are part of our struggle. They are very important” (Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014). Bakhtiar Abdullah took a somewhat different approach to the importance of human rights in the Acehnese independence struggle and argued that the Acehnese people already adhered to the principles of the human rights, but lacked the vocabulary to express it in the same way as is standard in the international community (Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014). In the words of Abdullah:

Previously, not everyone was aware of the human rights. They had not comprehended it. But, of course, we are Muslims and also Islam has rules on human rights. [...] It was just a matter of learning the international standard agreed upon under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But when we fought [in Aceh], we did not have enough time to learn about this issue. [...] You have to respect the international law. Why do we have the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Well, as far as I am concerned, it does not contravene Islam. You are responsible for your actions, for what you do. If you commit crimes against humanity, it is not anything you can forgive. It is the same thing in Islam and under Islamic law (ibid.).

Furthermore, Abdullah also described how the Swedish based GAM leadership directed training of local commanders in human rights and on the contents of the UN charter (ibid.). According to Asnawi Ali, these principles of human rights are also taught to newcomers in the diaspora in Sweden by the first generation of diaspora elites (Interview with Asnawi Ali 2014).

To sum up, human rights and universalism clearly play a crucial role in the internationalization strategy of the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden. Frequent references to the necessity to penalize the Indonesian government for abuses of the human rights and for crimes against humanity characterize the rhetoric of the diaspora. Moreover, the right to self-determination is used as a link between the human rights discourse and the quest for independence and enables the Acehnese diaspora to frame their separatist goals in a human rights discourse. References to a universally applicable international law also constitute an important ingredient in this rhetoric and points to the appeal of universalism in the internationalized struggle for Acehnese independence. In the following chapter, some theoretical implications of these empirical results will be suggested – opening up for future investigations of related aspects of diaspora politics.

5. Theoretical Implications

The previous chapter provided an empirical analysis of how and to what extent the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden has utilized liberal discourses and procedures to promote a separatist goal. This chapter will constitute an attempt to draw theoretical conclusions from the empirical analysis. By evaluating the capability of Koinova's theory to capture the political engagement of the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden, I will try to specify the theoretical implications and contribution of this thesis to the wider scientific field of diaspora politics. The first section will summarize the congruence between my empirical findings and Koinova's theory, and link it to a more general theoretical discussion on diaspora politics. The second section will then identify some aspects that are perhaps more difficult to understand with Koinova's theory, and provide some suggested theoretical implications of this discrepancy.

5.1 Diasporas as Glocal Actors

As has become evident from the analysis in chapter 4, Koinova's theory correctly explains the actions and strategies employed by the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden on several points. A separatist agenda has been framed in liberal discourses of democracy, human rights, and universalism in the diaspora engagement in Aceh. The Acehnese struggle for independence has been depicted as democracy promotion in the face of Indonesian authoritarianism, and democracy promotion has been seen as an integrated part of the struggle. Discourses of democracy have constituted a tool and code of conduct to generate international support for Acehnese independence. Moreover, Koinova's suggestion that Western based diasporas from homelands characterized by contested sovereignty, tend to utilize and refer to democratic procedures, seems to apply to the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden as well. Frequent references to the democratic necessity of letting the Acehnese people decide their fate in a referendum is a case in point. Their recurring emphasis of the benefits presented to their separatist struggle by democratic institutions and procedures in Sweden also points to a perceived instrumentalist value of democracy.

The separatist agenda pursued by the Sweden based diaspora has also been framed in a rhetoric of human rights. In line with Koinova's theory, members of the diaspora openly confirmed the tactical importance of adopting a rhetoric of human rights. The notion of human rights has deliberately been fashioned to incorporate the concept of "rights to self-determination". The Acehnese diaspora has been able to shift their focus to the issue of human rights in times when promotion of independence has become too sensitive in international forums. Their deliberate acts

of framing allow them, however, to gradually increase their references to a vision of an independent Aceh, once considered feasible. Finally, Koinova's theory of the adoption of liberal discourses is further supported by the fact that the Acehnese diaspora keeps justifying their right to independence by referring to the universal and all-embracing nature of international law.

Then, what are the more general implications of having provided Koinova's theory such strong empirical support? In my view, Koinova fails to transfer her findings to a more general discussion on the theoretical implications on diaspora politics. As suggested in section 2.3, Koinova's argument could be seen as based on the assumption that even hardcore nationalist and religious groups – such as ethnic separatists – tend to adapt to selected elements of a dominant world culture to boost international legitimacy. Or, to put it differently, particularistic goals are framed in universalistic discourses. This view is obviously supported by the results of my case study of the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden. Moreover, I would argue that diasporas are in a particularly suitable position to connect such particularistic goals to the discourses that make up the dominant global culture. In line with Koinova's view of diasporas as actors that strategically engage in homeland affairs, I argue that diaspora elites are able to take advantage of opportunities offered by this global structure by framing their local homeland cause in discourses found acceptable and honorable by the international community. Thus, I suggest that my findings highlight the unique position of diasporas in the international sphere. Diasporas operate in a space between the local and the global, which makes them particularly successful in connecting the local and the global, or particularistic and universalistic discourses. Accordingly, I agree with Cohen (1997: 170) when he states that: “[Diasporas] have always been in a better position to act as a bridge between the particular and the universal.”

This means that diaspora elites are in a position to act as, what I choose to call, *glocal actors*. I draw this concept from theoretical accounts of a so called process of glocalization (cf. Robertson 1995; Ritzer 2010). According to the glocalization perspective, local political entrepreneurs are capable to maneuver, adapt, and innovate in creative ways within and in relation to global dynamics and forces (Ritzer 2010: 255). These actors are active in the intersection between global processes and local dynamics. Thus, the term “glocal” refers to the ways in which they incorporate both global and local characteristics and strategically utilize both universalistic and particularistic discourses – and mixtures thereof.

In consequence, the support given to Koinova's theory from the analysis of the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden implicates the glocal character of diasporas and diaspora elites. I would argue that politically active diaspora elites are particularly suited to act as glocal actors due to their superior knowledge of both local (in this case the Acehnese), and global contexts. They are able to work simultaneously in both these contexts and selectively utilizing the means that best serve their ends. Through acts of framing, these political actors make use of global and universal discourses of democracy and human rights to promote particularistic agendas in their homeland.

5.2 Recognizing Sincerity through a Perspective of Structuration

Obviously, Koinova's approach to diasporas' adoption of liberal discourses and strategies is of a highly instrumentalist character. References to liberal values and adoption of democratic procedures are treated as mere rhetoric and tactics. However, some of the findings in my analysis of the Acehnese diaspora – together with Aspinall's suggestion that even their national identity was affected by the internationalization strategy – might indicate a somewhat more sincere belief in some of the cited liberal discourses. Several of the Acehnese diaspora elites emphasized the integral role of democracy and human rights in their struggle, well before I had asked about its importance.

It is obviously hard to determine the level of sincerity in these references to liberal values, and one should of course be careful not to over-generalize such indications, especially when there is a clear incentive for diasporas to present their commitment to these values as utterly genuine. Such a hypothesis clearly needs further empirical testing. However, based on the findings of my case study, and the unique position of diasporas between global and local discourses, I do not see any reason for completely ruling out the possibility that diasporas actually embrace some of the liberal values and principles they put across. Recognition of elements of sincerity is possible if the glocal position of diasporas is understood from a *structuration perspective*.¹³ Koinova correctly views diaspora elites as strategically reasoning actors, adept at utilizing and re-interpreting global structures and universalistic discourses. In line with the theory of structuration, these actors could however also be expected to be influenced by the very structures they shape and interpret for their own purposes. Thus, it would be an interesting topic for future research to investigate the extent to which these liberal discourses actually affect the heartfelt values of these diaspora elites.

Bakhtiar Abdullah's comment on how the Acehnese people already had an intrinsic understanding for the necessity of human rights – long before they were eventually confronted with the international terminology of the human rights discourse – might be a hint of mutuality and further justifies why diasporas ought to be seen as glocal actors. Diaspora elites are capable to connect local discourses, e.g. Islamic rules and principles, with global discourses, in this case the human rights discourse. It is an example of how the local is filtered through the global, but also a sign of how the global becomes filtered through the local. Such political entrepreneurship is made possible precisely because of the glocal character of diasporas. They are actors neither totally disconnected from the local context of their homelands, nor unfamiliar with the latest developments in global norms and dominant world culture. Their ability to move smoothly between these contexts, narratives, and discourses make them particularly potent creators of hybrid

¹³ The theory of structuration implies a mutually constitutive relationship between agents and structures and was developed by Giddens (1984).

interpretations of the local and the global, as well as bridges between the particular and the universal.

6. Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore in what ways and to what extent the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden has used liberal discourses and procedures to advance a separatist agenda. The results of the empirical analysis show that these liberal discourses and procedures, indeed, have occupied a very important role in the separatist struggle of the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden. References to discourses of democracy, human rights, and universalism recur frequently both in interviews with key diaspora elites and in the official statements of diaspora organizations like ASNLF. At the same time, particularistic discourses related to ethnic separatism also permeate the rhetoric of the Acehnese diaspora. These two, seemingly quite different and perhaps even incompatible discourses, often occur side by side in this rhetoric, and sometimes even overlap and penetrate one another. Apposite examples include instances when diaspora elites maintain that roadmaps to real democracy have to include a referendum in which the Acehnese people could vote for independence. Other examples include rhetoric depicting the Acehnese struggle for independence as a struggle for democracy – against authoritarian Indonesian rule. Moreover, human rights discourses have clearly been used as a weapon in the independence struggle as the right to self-determination has been stressed as one of the fundamental human rights. Drawing upon the universality of international law and the obligation of the international community to act upon repeated crimes against humanity, these references to a human rights discourse overlap with both more abstract principles of human universalism, and the particularistic goal of an independent Aceh.

In line with Koinova's theory, I argue that these examples are typical illustrations of how particularistic goals are framed in liberal discourses. Thus, it constitutes a prime example of how the liberal creed has been utilized to gain international support in a local separatist conflict. In other words, I suggest that my analysis of this least likely case provides strong support for Koinova's theory. Since Koinova's theory is able to explain important aspects of a least likely case it also indicates a comprehensive appeal of the universal creed of liberalism among Western based conflict generated stateless diasporas. Thus, the results of this analysis point to the general importance of the liberal creed in international politics. It is striking that the orientation toward principles of democracy and human rights within the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden started after the liberal creed had just obtained its unchallenged international status in the 1990s. As was discussed already in the theory chapter of this thesis, now even its most unlikely advocates seem to have to at least somehow relate to the rules and principles of the liberal creed to be accepted as legitimate players in the international arena.

As mentioned in section 5.1, I regard diasporas a particularly suitable to carry out such acts of framing due to their unique position as glocal actors. The uniqueness of the glocal character of these diasporas becomes even more apparent considering their

embodiment of features that have traditionally been seen as complete opposites. Ethnic separatists could be considered standing at the extreme point of particularistic political action, while transnational social movements have often been presented as the ultimate sign of how globalization has reduced the significance of national borders and spatial belonging, and generated an unprecedented sense of universalism. Incarnating substantial elements of both these movements, Western based diasporas with separatist agendas represent a quite odd and intriguing mix of features in international politics.

Being a bridge between global and local contexts, and between particularistic issues and universalistic discourses, diasporas and their political elites can take advantage of useful elements and aspects of dominant liberal discourses in their engagement in homeland issues. Acting in the intersection between global dynamics – such as the universal creed of liberalism – and local dynamics – in this case the separatist struggle in Aceh – the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden has been able to move between the two contexts depending on their motives and audiences, and to strategically utilize elements of the liberal creed in an attempt to mobilize international support for an independent Aceh. Accordingly, depending on whether the topic in my interviews focused on the international community's obligation to provide assistance to the Acehnese struggle, or touched upon the existence of support from Islamic organizations, the respondents selectively referred to the nature of the struggle as either international or local. The political entrepreneurship involved in the practice of framing points to the ability of diaspora elites to act strategically to achieve their goals.

Having established this strategic ability to make instrumental use of liberal discourses and procedures, a more genuine facet of this political engagement should not be ruled out. As was highlighted in section 5.2, I find it likely that diaspora elites, to some extent, become socialized into some of the principles and values they make instrumental use of. To capture these dynamics, I suggest applying a structuration perspective in order to understand how the behavior of various actors is shaped by the structures they re-create and utilize in deliberate ways. Thus, even though I have emphasized the importance of strategic agency on the part of diasporic policy entrepreneurs throughout this paper, I nevertheless find it important to notice how global value structures and discourses might influence the minds of these actors, and how they set the frames for what actions diaspora elites view as suitable (or even consider possible in the first place). I do believe that Koinova misses or ignores this aspect in her highly instrumentalist approach. I would suggest that diasporas can utilize liberal discourses for particularistic purposes and at the same time genuinely believe in the adequacy and urgency of some of these universalistic principles.

This line of reasoning would obviously need further empirical exploration to be asserted with any scientific credibility. This naturally spills over into a concluding discussion on potential avenues for future research in relation to the empirical findings of this thesis.

6.1 Future Research

Further research on diasporas as glocal actors and strategic users of liberal discourses could examine the extent to – and ways in – which these discourses influence the outlooks of diaspora elites themselves. My suggestion that these glocal actors are likely to become socialized into sincerely believing in these values and principles requires further empirical investigation.

Both this thesis and Koinova's case study focus on conflict generated diasporas residing in Western host countries. To expand the applicability of this theory, diasporas based primarily in non-Western countries would constitute interesting candidates for future case studies. To what extent does the liberal creed penetrate even these countries? Could we think of any other doctrine that might challenge the dominant position of the liberal creed in the non-Western parts of the world? What would it look like? And what would the consequences be for how diaspora elites promote their causes and mobilize host country support? These issues doubtlessly deserve to be scrutinized in future academic research.

This thesis has argued for the uniqueness of the truly glocal character of Western based diasporas engaged in sovereignty issues in their homelands. But exactly how unique are these diasporas as glocal actors? What other types of political movements and actors could be considered truly glocal? Do some actors perhaps incorporate selected glocal characteristics? Studying other types of diasporas, e.g. diasporas that are not involved in sovereignty issues in their homelands, or other transnational actors and movements, might help answering these questions.

In a wider perspective, the effect of Koinova's argument on how the international community ought to view the role of diasporas in contexts of conflict could be further analyzed. Does diaspora adoption of liberal values and procedures make them more likely to become peace-makers rather than peace-wreckers? And if that turns out to be the case, what are the policy implications for whether and how diasporas should be included in initiatives for peacemaking and peace building?

Related to these queries, it would also be interesting to examine whether diasporas utilizing liberal discourses, influence their compatriots at home. Are these internationalization strategies met by skepticism among local actors? Or do they identify with them and support the campaigns initiated by the diaspora? And do local actors in any way become inspired by the ways in which diasporas frame local demands in liberal discourses?

Finally, it might be worthwhile to more thoroughly study the reactions and response among host countries toward diasporas that embrace liberal values and procedures. Do these strategies actually manage to generate any international support? And what issues and values are more likely to be internationally lauded and met with support and recognition from governments, inter-governmental organizations, and NGOs? Answering these questions might shed more light on the rationale behind diasporic strategies and on the attraction of the liberal creed.

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7.1 Interviews

Interview with Asnawi Ali, 2014. Member of ASNLF. Örebro, 27 April 2014.

Interview with ASNLF member 1, 2014. Stockholm, 6 April 2014.

Interview with ASNLF member 2, 2014. Stockholm, 6 April 2014.

Interview with ASNLF member 3, 2014. Stockholm, 6 April 2014.

Interview with ASNLF member 4, 2014. Stockholm, 6 April 2014.

Interview with Bakhtiar Abdullah 2014. Former spokesman for the GAM leadership. Stockholm, 25 April 2014.

Interview with Yusuf Daud 2014. Vice Chairman of ASNLF. Stockholm, 6 April 2014.

Appendix: Interview Guide

Introduce the topic of my thesis and define key concepts. Discuss ethical issues and the rights of the respondent. Explain the structure of the interview.

Personal Questions

1. Could you describe your relationship to Aceh?
 - Are you born in Aceh?
 - When did you come to Sweden?
 - Do you have any friends or family in Aceh?
2. Could you describe how you have been engaged in the political situation in Aceh?
 - Member of any diaspora organization?
 - How long have you been active?
3. Why have you engaged yourself in the political situation in Aceh?
 - What are the main goals of your involvement?

Thematic Questions

Questions related to the properties of the Acehese diaspora:

4. Approximately how many Acehese are living in exile?
 - In Sweden?
5. Where is the Acehese diaspora in Sweden mainly located?
 - Concentrated to any cities/regions?
6. What is the main reason for the emigration from Aceh?
7. Which diaspora organizations do you know of?

Questions related to the political activities of the Acehese diaspora:

8. What potential role do you think the Acehese diaspora can play in the political development in Aceh?
9. How has the Acehese diaspora in Sweden been engaged in the situation in Aceh?

- Could you give any examples of its political activities?
10. What kind of influence does the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden have on the political developments in Aceh?
 - Has this influence increased or decreased over time?
 11. What do you hope that the political activities of the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden will result in?
 - Has this goal changed over time?
 12. Is there any internal disagreement within the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden when it comes to the means and ends for its political engagement in Aceh?
 13. Do you see any advantages related to being part of the diaspora rather than being inside Aceh when you try to influence the political developments there?
 14. Has the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden tried to influence politicians or organizations in Sweden?
 - Or abroad?
 - Which ones?
 - How?
 - What kind of response have you received?
 - How can you get politicians or the public to listen to your campaigns and become engaged in the situation in Aceh?
 - o Do they become more engaged if you emphasize certain issues?
 - Could you give an example of an instance when the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden has tried to influence a politician or an organization? Please tell me how you proceeded.

Questions related to issues of democracy and human rights:

15. How important are issues of democracy and human rights in your struggle?
 - Has it become more or less important over time?
16. How does the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden work for democracy and human rights?
 - Has this work changed over time?
17. Do you think the issue of democracy and human rights has been more or less important in the diaspora compared to local actors in Aceh?
18. Has the issue of human rights been a means toward an end or a goal in itself in your struggle?

19. What would you say is most important in your struggle; issues of democracy and human rights or independence for Aceh?
- Do you think most members of the diaspora share this view?
 - o What about local actors in Aceh?

Concluding Questions

- Do you know of any other members of the Acehnese diaspora in Sweden who have been politically active and could consider being interviewed for my thesis?
- Can I contact you again in the future if I come up with any additional questions?