The wave of reform in Indonesia after Soeharto did not bring democracy to Aceh. Initial efforts for change as spearheaded by the young democrats calling for a referendum as in East Timor came to a standstill with the deadlocked peace negotiations, a lack of international support for independence, a further period of repression and the fact that the balkanisation of Indonesia (which the insurgents had predicted) did not transpire. Yet these challenges generated new opportunities. By late 2005, draft versions of the Indonesian Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, Demos’ consolidated summary report from the first all-Indonesia survey of problems and options of democracy (Demos 2005) indicated that Aceh was indeed lagging behind but that decentralisation and a fledgling country-wide system of political democracy might serve as a framework for progress within the framework of the new Indonesian political system. A few weeks later, the devastating

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1 Special thanks for comments on previous versions of this chapter by participants in the Banda Aceh workshop on the tentative results (28 November 2008), as well as from Teresa Birks, Gerry van Klinken, Willy P. Samadhi, Kristian Stokke and Silje Vevatne.
tsunami opened Aceh to international actors in ways that prevented any of the parties from exploiting the situation in similar ways as in other disturbed areas in Indonesia and in Sri Lanka. This provided a much needed boost to the new peace talks that were about to start in Helsinki. Meanwhile, conservative nationalists in Jakarta and Aceh (and Stockholm) were short of political solutions. It was Indonesia’s newly elected President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Vice-President, Jusuf Kalla on the one hand, and the Acehnese insurgents who had opted for independence less because of ethnic nationalism than resistance against internal colonialism, authoritarianism and repression on the other, who were able to explore a new roadmap within the country’s fledgling framework of decentralisation and democracy.

The formula for moving ahead, as we know, was not just autonomy and a sufficiently beneficial treaty for GAM, (Free Aceh Movement) which Jakarta had already offered its leaders, but Human Rights and democratic self-government for all, including civil society activists and the victims of both the conflict and the tsunami and its aftermath. In other words, the conflict itself was neither resolved nor managed but transformed into a democratic political framework.

While the design of this transformation is clear from the Helsinki MoU and reasonably clear from the following more troublesome deliberations on the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA), the dynamics of the new democratic framework are less well understood. In the following chapters we examine a number of key issues, including the dynamics of the local elections in December 2006 in which former insurgents and dissidents were able to participate; the dubious function of business and patrons such as Jusuf Kalla in disturbed areas; the transformation of separatist movements such as GAM and the emerging local political parties. The book will conclude with review of how some of the main actors propose to address these problems and issues. In order to properly inform this discussion, this chapter summarises and analyses survey data on the democratic opportunities and obstacles present in Aceh a year and a half into the peace agreement.
Surveying democracy

All-Indonesia surveys of the problems and options of democracy have been carried out by Demos since 2003. The work is sponsored primarily by public Norwegian funds and to lesser degree by Swedish donors and carried out in co-operation with major democracy organisations, including the University of Oslo and more recently the University of Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta. One purpose is to collate comparatively indisputable facts on the general situation to inform and contextualise specific case studies, anecdotal evidence and statements by powerful national as well as international actors. Another is to enable the evaluation of the various theories about the problems and options of democracy. Ideally, a more detailed survey should have been carried out in Aceh along similar lines and with more local participation. Ambitious attempts were made during late 2006 but could not be sufficiently concluded in terms of consistent and easily comparable data in addition to supplementary comments from senior activists. A comprehensive re-tabulation of the ‘raw-data’ has now been completed for this book by Willy P. Samadhi. Although the revised data has informed the conclusions in the analysis, it has not been possible to include it in the main body of the text. The most relevant data set is however available in the appendix.

With respect to the data obtained from the 2006 Aceh survey, the discussion in this chapter is thus based only on those broad trends identified which are considered reliable. For comparative purposes the chapter also draws on the general as well as Aceh-specific results from the first all-Indonesia survey carried out in 2003-2004 and the all-Indonesia resurvey of 2007. The interviews for the all-Indonesia resurvey were carried out around six months after those for the regional Aceh survey. Some 900 informants participated in the resurvey, nineteen of whom were based in Aceh.

The results from the first all-Indonesia survey are available in Making Democracy Meaningful by A.E. Priyono, Willy P. Samadhi and Olle Törnquist et.al. (2007) and in the summary report of the resurvey by Willy P. Samadhi, Syafa’atun Kariadi, Olle Törnquist et.al. (2008). The full resurvey report, Democracy Building on the Sand has been published in Willy P. Samadhi and Nicolaas Warouw eds (2008).
Grounded assessment of rights-based democratisation

The surveys are based on a joint analytical framework, the details of which are discussed in the introduction to Making Democracy Meaningful and Chapter 2 in Democracy Building on the Sand. In summary, there are three points of departure, namely the identification of (i) the aims of democracy, (ii) the means by which democracy is implemented (iii) the sources required in order to assess the extent to which the means promote the aims.

The first point is the widely accepted theoretical definition (by David Beetham)\(^2\) of the aim of democracy in terms of popular control of public affairs on the basis of political equality and seven associated principles. The seven principles are the right and ability to participate and authorise representatives and their executives; representatives (and their executives) who in turn shall represent the main currents of popular opinion and the social composition of the people, be responsive to people’s opinions and interests and accountable to people for what they do – which calls for transparency and solidarity. In addition, while it is obvious that the principles presuppose Human Rights (including civil, political social, economic and cultural rights), the shaping and practicing of the Rights in turn are also vested with the implementation of the democratic principles.

The second point of departure is the disaggregation of the necessary means by which to implement the aim of democracy. While the general means or institutions are universal (theoretically deduced from what is necessary in order to fulfil the aims), the formal and informal local rules and regulations vary of course. For instance, while free and fair elections are generally crucial, specific election systems vary.

In the framework for assessing democratisation that has been developed for and applied by Demos, there are four types of formal and informal means of democracy. The first is that there must be a generally accepted definition of what people (demos) shall be politically equal and control the public affairs that they have in common.

The second means of democracy refers to the institutional framework. This includes (i) constitutionalism by way of the judiciary

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\(^2\) Beetham (1999) and Beetham et.al. (2002).
(equal citizenship, rule of law, equal justice, an independent judiciary and the full set of Human Rights); (ii) popular sovereignty by way of legislative and executive government (democratic elections, representation, and responsive and accountable government and administration); and (iii) civic engagement by way of civil society (free and democratically oriented media, the arts, academia, associational life and other forms of additional popular participation, including consultation and various forms of ‘direct’ democracy). There is a need therefore to investigate the extent to which contextual versions of these general means of democracy actually exist and promote the aims of democracy. Most assessments only focus on the performance of formal institutions. Demos’ framework undertakes three further steps by also assessing (i) the geographical spread (for instance if the institutions extend to rural areas), (ii) the substantive scope of institutions (the extent to which they cover all vital issues and, for example, with respect to gender equality, whether domestic violence is deemed a matter for private or public concerns) and (iii) various informal institutions (such as more or less supportive everyday practices and customary laws).

The third means of democracy in Demos’ framework is that the main actors really promote and use the instruments of democracy, not just consume and perhaps even abuse or avoid them.

The final and most crucial means of democracy in the same framework is that various actors (powerful as well as alternative) are not just willing but also capable of promoting and using the democratic institutions. Democracy is not only about introducing a set of institutions to regulate politics; it is also to alter the relations of power towards actual political equality and popular control of public affairs. Most importantly, the actors with such aspirations must also be capable of (i) taking part in the essential spheres of political life, (ii) gaining legitimacy and authority, (iii) placing their issues and interests on the political agenda, (iv) organising themselves and mobilising support, and (v) developing democratic strategies for direct and representative ways of influencing the institutions that govern society.

It is critical to remember that we are thus talking of several interrelated dimensions of democracy and of degrees of democracy. It is easy to agree with the argument that advanced social and economic rights and strong judicial institutions are likely
to contribute to high scores on the other dimensions of democracy as well. This does not mean, however, that such good foundations must exist \textit{a priori} to the other intrinsic means of democracy – such as equal citizenship and popular representation – are implemented. If this was the case, authoritarian paths to democracy would be necessary, as per the common thesis that enlightened elites must create solid institutions or economic development ahead of popular sovereignty. Aside from the fact that in such scenarios popular sovereignty tends to be ‘postponed’ indefinitely, as in Singapore, the critical point is that even modest democratic opportunities – for instance freedom and ordinary people’s ability to make use of them – may foster improvements to equal justice and socio-economic rights in more promising peaceful and humanitarian ways. It is thus a matter of what kind of specific and concrete politics of democratisation that various actors and their international supporters opt for. Thus the growing critique of the liberal democratic emphasis on crafting the institutional procedures of democracy on the basis of pacts between already dominant actors does not necessarily imply that all designing of democratic institutions is done in vane. The basic implication is ‘only’ that priority should be given to institutions that open up enhanced capacity of ordinary people to foster additional institutions for more political equality and popular control.

Having reviewed the means of democracy, we return to the points of departure. The third and final point concerns the sources for assessing and analysing the extent to which all these means of democracy (the identified \textit{demos}, the institutions and the will and capacity to promote and use them) really promote the aim of democracy in countries and regions such as Indonesia and Aceh. There is a lack of reliable data and shortage of in-depth research. This calls for interviews with experts. However, the assessments should not be made primarily on the basis of statements by cosmopolitan ‘air conditioned experts’ but by reflective and experienced pro-democrats operating along various frontlines of democracy work and in local settings around the country or region.

\textit{The local informants}

In Aceh, therefore, the survey team cooperated with well reputed local associates in selecting about 200 reflective and experienced informants who were active along fourteen frontlines
of democracy work in various parts of the province. The frontlines include peasants’ and agricultural labourers’ control of the land that they till (5 informants); the struggle of labour for better conditions (5); the struggle for better lives of the urban poor (24); the promotion of urban rights (18); the fights against corruption (23); the attempts to democratise parties or build new ones (12); the promotion of pluralism and religious and ethnic reconciliation (12); the attempts at educational reform (19), the promotion of professionalism in private and public sectors (5), the promotion of the freedom and quality of the media (5), the fostering of gender equality (13); the efforts to improve alternative local representation (10); the promotion of interest-based mass organisation (41) and support for sustainable development (7). The somewhat uneven distribution of informants is of course not ideal, but reflects in part the actual opportunities and priorities among pro-democrats and the availability of critically reflecting and knowledgeable informants. Given that the main priority was to engage as senior and grounded experts as possible, it is also not difficult to understand that the typical profile of the informants was a rather well educated male from an NGO. Only 18% were women, 55% of all informants had more than high school education and almost 50% were from an NGO. In the future it is paramount that a better gender and occupational balance is attained.

The regional distribution was acceptable, given the challenges faced. Interviews were carried out in Banda Aceh (20% of the informants), Meulaboh on the west coast (14%), Blang Pidie in the north (13%), Kutacane and Takengon in the highlands (12% each), Lhokseumawe (16%) on the north east coast and Langsa (14%) in the south east. In each case, informants from the nearby districts participated. Moreover, since data analysis began after the local elections in December 2006, it was possible to distinguish between the survey results obtained from districts and municipalities where the non-party, independent gubernatorial candidates, Irwandi Yusuf of KPA³ and Muhammad Nazar from SIRA⁴, the so-called IRNA

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³ Komite Peralihan Aceh - the Aceh Transition Committee

⁴ Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh - Aceh Referendum Information Centre, the originally student-led pro-referendum organisation
ticket, won and lost. A similar distinction was also made between the districts and towns where local candidates supported by KPA and SIRA won and lost. These divisions enabled the identification of possible differences that might help explaining the results and specific problems and options. The division between the informants from the various clusters was reasonable: about two thirds of the informants were from the 15 of the 21 districts where the IRNA candidates won and about one third were from the 7 districts where local KPA/SIRA candidates won. Unfortunately, however, there are reasons to believe that the unusually frequent instances of ‘no answer’ to questions (especially as compared to the very low degree in the all-Indonesia surveys) originate in the regions where it was particularly difficult to carry out the interviews. Where there is any doubt, the specific data has not been considered in the analysis.

The major problem relates, however, to occasional errors and fragmentation of some of the data in addition to problems of comparison. Even though the re-tabulation has addressed some of these problems, many remain. Thus references in the text to full sets of specific data have been set aside in favour of identifying the main trends.

Seven aspects of Aceh

Seven main conclusions stand out from the analysis in theoretical and comparative perspective of the Acehnese informants’ assessments of the indicators of meaningful democracy as listed above. The first conclusion refers to the rise of ‘a political demos’. While Aceh remains far from being citizen-based demos, it is clear that the people and activists have turned remarkably quickly from the suffering, frustrations and distrust of civil war and natural disaster to engage in politics and to refute the common argument that local political freedoms would spur the abuse of ethnic and religious identities and thus sustain separatism. The second thesis argues that politics is at the helm of Aceh, even businesspersons spend most of their energy within polity-related spheres. The military seems to have lost ground and the enormous economic reconstruction and development activities are largely separated from organised – if not unorganised - politics. The third conclusion relates to one of five paradoxes, namely that the successful introduction of liberal democracy with free elections and a number of liberties – and
even (in positive contrast to Indonesia at large) genuine freedom to register independent candidates and then build parties in the local context has not been accompanied by a similarly outstanding improvement in political representation. The fourth argument (and second paradox) is that while there is a tendency among actors to avoid parties and turn directly to various institutions of governance, there are insufficient democratic institutions and capacities to frame these practices. This is primarily to the benefit of those people with ‘good contacts’. Such practices undermine the democratic space and the actors that prioritise democracy over power-politics. The fifth conclusion is a similar paradox in the sense that the liberal democratic transformation has not yet been accompanied by sufficiently matching efforts towards palpable legal justice, rule of law and accountable and transparent governance, not even by those international donors and their Indonesian counterparts who have highlighted and emphasised the implications of these impediments. The sixth conclusion is also a challenging paradox, namely that some of the problems seem to be particularly serious where the gubernatorial IRNA ticket was successful and even more clearly where the district candidates supported by KPA and SIRA won – but that there are no signs of increased or higher levels democratic political capacity to alter the situation. The final conclusion is also a paradox of sorts. Most of the problems that have been identified are particularly difficult for the pro-democratic actors that have been so crucial in Aceh to fight, while others find it easier to adjust to ‘normal’ Indonesian standards and practices. The remarkable achievements in Aceh are not on the brink per se, but the foundations are shaky and the prognosis is poor if the actors in the peace process that pointed to the chances of developing and making use of the emerging Indonesian democracy are continuously undermined. We shall elaborate on the seven characteristics of Aceh one by one. For the substantiation of the estimates and tendencies in the analysis, see the data supplements in the appendix, in Priyono, Samadhi and Törnquist et.al. (2007) and in Samadhi and Warouw, eds (2008).
(1) A ‘political demos’

The figures on Aceh in Demos’ first all-Indonesia survey carried out in 2003 and 2004 confirm the common understanding of a disturbed province, especially in terms of Human Rights and democratic politics. Moreover, conservative Indonesian nationalists resisted a political settlement. During the new peace negotiations their main argument was that conceding the right for the Acehnese to register independent candidates in the local elections – and even worse the right to form local political parties rather than having to join Jakarta based, ‘national’ parties – would sustain separatism and undermine Indonesia’s unity. Furthermore, it would foster local politics based on ethnicity (targeted against Javanese) and the predominant position of Islam. Interestingly, the survey data from late 2006 and 2007 on political attitudes and identities as well as methods of organisation and mobilisation largely refutes this position.

First, according to the informants, the Acehnese are less cynical and more hopeful about politics and democracy than Indonesians in general. To some extent this may be related to the euphoria over the local elections, just before which our interviews were carried out. Six months later, the Acehnese informants in the all-Indonesia survey suggest that fewer people perceived politics in terms of popular control of public affairs and that more people thought if it in terms of the struggle for power. However, the dominant trend remained intact. Less people in Aceh than in Indonesia at large deem politics to be the business of public figures or an elite game. Similarly, the informants in the Aceh survey suggest that many more people in Aceh are interested in politics as compared to the informants in other parts of the country’s perception of Indonesians in general. Again, six months down the line (according to Acehnese informants in the all-Indonesia survey) the difference remains, though less marked. The picture is not reversed but similar to Indonesia in general if we focus on women, who are frequently assumed to be less politically interested in ‘Islamic Aceh’. In addition, while the informants themselves in the Aceh survey are of course more interested in alternative and local political parties than those in other parts of the country, there are no extreme differences. Similarly, there are few differences between informants in Aceh and Indonesia in general when it comes to ideas of how to increase
public participation. The main focus remains the liberal priority of increasing the consciousness of the public in general and women specifically rather than stressing political organising and struggle for preferential treatment.

Second, it is true however that there are no clear signs of citizen-based constitution of the demos in Aceh. The quality of the institutions in favour of equal citizenship, for instance, is not high. The figures on the standard of civil society participation are proportionally more positive though lower than in Indonesia in general. Similarly, the various indices of Human Rights are not too impressive, aside from cultural and religious freedoms and to some extent the rights of trade unions and children and the right to education. This is in comparison with other dimensions of democracy in Aceh. However, there are also no major tendencies towards identity-based politics. Informants are not too worried about the tendency of parties to abuse religious and ethnic sentiment and symbols. Also, the estimate of people’s identity in relation to the local elections is not higher for ethnicity and religion than in Indonesia in general. In fact it is much lower where the IRNA ticket was successful in the local elections than where it was not. It is true of course, that IRNA and especially local KPA and SIRA-sponsored candidates won where ethnic Acehnese were dominant (Mietzner 2007:31). But given the survey results, this can hardly be interpreted to mean that there was a deliberate ethnic vote or an attempt to mobilise one – at least not in the areas where the ethnic Acehnese were anyway in a clear majority. The only contradictory indication is that people in regions where KPA and SIRA-based candidates won are deemed to have identified themselves more as Acehnese as opposed to non-Acehnese than elsewhere – but that was during the 2004 national elections. Generally, people identify themselves in similar ways in relation to social conflict and conflicts between different areas and districts. There are no signs of ethnic and religious identity politics, sometime even the other way around. This is also verified by the estimates in Aceh of the actors’ tendency to draw on ethnicity and religion in organising people and building alliances as compared to Indonesia in general. Generally, all survey figures point instead to territorial-based identity without extreme emphasis on local communities. Where applicable, however, there is even less class identity than in Indonesia in general.
In short, while Aceh is till far from citizen-based demos even with limited liberal rather than social democratic criteria, public engagement and action are not based primarily on ethnicity and religion but rather on political interest and participation. This is reminiscent of the Indian context in which Partha Chatterjee (2004) and John Harriss (2006) among others emphasise the predominance of politicians and their parties in relation to the majority of the population – a majority that remains unable to make use of their formal civic rights or are even deprived of them, yet engage as followers and voters who may at least turn against abusive incumbents. In other words, the local political freedoms in Aceh have been positive rather than negative for the development of democracy, both in the self-governing province and in Indonesia at large.

(2) Politics at the helm, but losing steam

Who has been governing the provinces and who the most powerful people there since the fall of Soeharto? There is broad consensus that the answer is both drastic decentralisation and unorganised localisation combined with a persistence of central control over certain vital sectors of governance. There is additionally a wider spectrum of powerful business actors, politicians and political parties whose ascendancy has come at the expense of Soeharto’s bureaucrats and military leaders, although some of the latter have taken on new identities. This is in addition to increasingly important ethnic and religious community organisations. All these tendencies operate within a framework of persistently self-financed and territorially organised military, a formal framework of democracy with strong elements of patronage, informal cooperation between politicians, bureaucrats, military and business, and similarly informal and deregulated markets. (E.g. Aspinall and Fealy 2003, Robison and Hadiz 2004, Nordholt 2004, Nordholt 2006, Nordholt and van Klinken 2007, and van Klinken, forthcoming 2009.)

In the case of Aceh prior to the peace accord, most scholars emphasised the special role of the primitive accumulation of capital by the Indonesian army in cooperation with neo-patrimonial politicians, business and militia groups with similar practices by GAM. Workers, peasants, urban poor and other subordinated classes were rarely organised on the basis of their own interests. Middle
class professionals, intellectuals and students in various action groups and NGOs were gaining some ground within the extended public space after Soeharto, but curbed again under the Megawati regime. (E.g. Schulze 2004, 2006, Kingsbury 2006, Sulaiman 2006, and Sulaiman with van Klinken 2007) As discussed in Chapter 1 and further explored in Chapter 4, much of the celebrated efforts at peace in Indonesia’s troubled regions under the subsequent reign of Vice-President Jusuf Kalla were based on the idea that brutal military force should be replaced by political (and military) facilitation of profitable business for all dominant parties involved, including those rebels prepared to compromise.

Thus Kalla’s business-oriented integration of former rebels may have been partially in line with both the internationally fashionable combination of markets and liberal democracy (Paris 2004 and Richmond 2007), even though he monopolised much of the first and reduced the latter, and with the more recent argument to contain full democratisation because this is regarded as threat to stability in case solid enough institutions are not in place from the outset (e.g. Mansfield and Snyder 2005). However, the post-tsunami reconstruction process in Aceh required the disbursement of relief and reconstruction funding by the international aid community for which it had to be accountable to its tax payers. Given the predominance of violence, abuse of power and corruption in Aceh, they were thus reluctant to work with the dominant groups and governance institutions there and instead opted for direct management in cooperation with technocrats in Jakarta.5

Given this actually existing political economy, what was the fate of the transformation of the conflict from the battlefield to democratic politics? Aside from putting an end to the armed struggle, the only major issues that were settled via the peace accord were that Aceh would obtain access to more of the income generated by the exploitation of its natural resources, that a broad range of issues within public governance would be decentralised, and that the necessary details would be further deliberated and negotiated. Deliberation referred, inter alia, to a special commission on Human Rights and the drafting of the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA).

5 For the early phase in Aceh, see McGibbon (2006), Aspinall (2005) and ICG (2005a).
Negotiation would take place within a democratic framework where the Acehnese themselves would have had the opportunity to elect their own representatives. So what are the results?

The assessment by senior Aceh democrats surveyed is somewhat surprising. Politics is definitely at the helm. Yet there are few signs of the dominant leaders within the bureaucracy and the military that were so important in Aceh under Soeharto (McGibbon 2006) and are also common in post-conflict situations. The same applies to the critical business actors who are widespread in other parts of Indonesia and who would have been expected to flood into Aceh given the influx of massive funds and new opportunities after the tsunami.

In answer to the question of which actors are most important in relation to politics in general, the answer the informants give is that role of business groups is significant in Banda Aceh and Lhokseumawe, but that overall they are not as important as compared to Indonesia at large. With regards to the political executives, bureaucrats, the military and police, the figures moreover suggest that they are slightly less important than elsewhere. Further, while political parties and politicians are not yet as crucial as at the all-Indonesia level, and while academics, experts, lawyers and the media are lagging behind, NGOs and mass organisations (possibly including religious groups and organisations such as KPA and SIRA) are comparatively more important than elsewhere. Yet there is no clear pattern as to the main actors’ social base, aside from the fact that it is not particularly related to ethnic and religious identity though there is a minor indication that NGOs were more related to interest-based organisation in those areas where the IRNA ticket was successful than elsewhere. This fits well with McGibbon’s (2006) thesis that there was a power vacuum in Aceh after 1998, giving room a wider range of powerful local actors as well as for GAM and dissident students more room for manoeuvre.

The data on which parts of the political landscape that the actors have access to and prioritise or are excluded from confirm and expand this picture. All the main actors tend to congregate around lobby groups, interest and mass organisations, political parties, local parliaments and the bureaucracy. Business groups are of course concerned with the business sector – but they seem to spend as much as three quarters of their energy in the other predominant sectors.
Similarly, NGOs, customary leaders, academics and other experts prioritise ‘their’ lobby groups, and religious leaders and the leaders of interest and mass-based organisations focus on ‘their’ own groups and constituencies as well. But they all seem to spend two thirds of their time in the other critical spheres. The same applies to the political parties and politicians. Remarkably, the politicians focus less on their main arena, the parliaments, than on lobby groups and the bureaucracy and political- and interest organisations.

Similarly, the main sources of power within this framework are not economic. Access to coercive powers (political, military, mass demonstrations) and social strength and favourable contacts in particular represent all of the actors’ main sources of power. Even the fourth source of power – culture and knowledge – is more important than economic resources as such.\(^6\)

In short, the experienced informants identify two trends. The first is that although those powerful business actors whose interest in Aceh was driven by the opportunities opened up by the disbursement of massive reconstruction funds, related economic development and improved access to natural resources after the tsunami and the peace accord may well have generated corruption within, for example, the BRR (the Aceh-Nias Agency for Reconstruction and Rehabilitation) they have yet to influence politics to the same extent as is reported from many other Indonesian provinces. This may well be at least in part due to the strategies the international donors deployed in order to avoid the Indonesian military and the notoriously corrupt local administration. Although this strategy may have been good for the independence of politics, it has also prevented people in Aceh from engaging in the decision-making process and the administration of reconstruction and economic development via their elected leaders. At worst, the unique opportunity to rebuild and redirect Aceh’s economy and administration after the tsunami and the peace accord in a socially responsible and democratic way has been undermined.

Secondly, the informants suggest that those business actors who nevertheless involve themselves in politics work very closely with the bureaucracy, military, politicians, political parties, lobby...
groups and interest organisations. Similarly of course, the latter actors also strike deals with business leaders. Generally, the survey results on these symbiotic relations between broadly speaking business and politics vindicate the results from case studies that so-called neo-patrimonial practices have survived and that ‘good contacts and special favours’ are often used by former combatants and their leaders to promote reintegration into business, especially when they cannot compete as successfully on the open market as many of their main critics, the often – though not exclusively – relatively well paid experts from civil society organisations.

The biggest challenge is if these two trends meet. That is if the powerful business actors that have so far been partially contained will be able to freely influence politics so that Aceh turns to the sorts of practices more evident in other Indonesian provinces – while at the same time politicians and other popular representatives are neither able to gain democratic control of the economic resources and priorities related to reconstruction, nor to contain the symbiotic relations between those business and administrative practices and politics that foster collusion, nepotism and corruption.

Unfortunately this may not be a serious threat to any of the main actors in Aceh, not even to the conservative nationalist leaders and former commanders, as long as they benefit from having good contacts and provide sufficient patronage to their followers. Ironically, they seem to be more able to adjust to ‘normal’ Indonesian standards and practices than the moderate nationalists whose legitimacy is based on the argument that Aceh would benefit from full political participation and democratisation within Indonesia.

(3) Political freedom but constrained political representation

As late as January 2005, very few scholars and activists argued that democracy in Aceh was a viable proposition and a means by which to transform conflict. Thereafter, the most common supposition was that the new democratic institutions would not prove sustainable. Their scepticism was based on three crucial factors. First, history indicated that Jakarta was prepared

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7 E.g. Aspinall (2007a and 2007b) and Barron (2008). I draw also on discussions with most knowledgeable key informants. C.f. Sindre in Chapter 5 of this volume.
to continue to exploit Aceh’s resources and repress its dissidents even after the fall of Soeharto. Thus most Acehnese democracy activists deemed independence an inevitable first step towards any substantive improvement. Second, very few of the structural and institutional preconditions for democracy existed. Third, that conservative Acehnese nationalists had not bought into democracy. Just a few months later however, the introduction of democracy as a prerequisite for genuine self-government became the generally accepted basis for the peace treaty, which in turn has transpired to be remarkably solid. The reasons why this was possible have been discussed in Chapter 1 and alluded to in the introduction of this chapter. The question that is addressed here concerns the fate of the new democratic framework since its inception.

The assessments given by grounded Aceh democrats in Demos’ survey point to four paradoxes that will be discussed in the remaining sections of this chapter. The first paradox is that while liberal democracy and the unique freedom (by Indonesian standards) to register independent political candidates and build local political parties have been remarkably successful, these have yet to impact on poor popular representation. The most critical factor in the assessment given by the Aceh democrats is the extent to which the crucial actors really support and also use the aims and means of democracy, or whether they only use or even abuse or avoid them. This is a more qualified way of asking the common question in the international literature, namely as to whether or not democracy has become to only game in town. The results are remarkable, particularly given that the assessments are made by quite critical democracy activists. In fact, the informants state that more than half of the main actors both promote and use the instruments of democracy, that almost another one third only consume them and that only some 10% abuse or avoid them. These are higher figures than for the powerful actors and not much lower for the alternative actors in the all-Indonesia survey (which thus put the question somewhat differently). It is true that the Aceh informants in the all-Indonesia survey are more critical of the alternative actors in Aceh. Their willingness to both support and use democracy is deemed to be some 15% below the all-Indonesia average. This is mainly because the popular actors do not seem to find the democratic instruments very useful. Yet the data for the
powerful actors in Aceh remain significantly more positive than for the country at large.

Further, the figures for Aceh in both the local and all-Indonesia survey are of course less impressive than for Indonesia at large when we break down the quality of the means of democracy into its major intrinsic dimensions. Yet the degree of positive assessments is remarkably high given the conditions. A detailed comparison with the all-Indonesia figures is difficult due to the fragmented Aceh data. It is clear however, that a large number of freedoms and rights are deemed to have the best performance, spread and substance out of all the intrinsic institutions. This is similar to the country at large. The top cluster of such institutions comprise of the freedom of religion, belief, culture and language, elections, media, speech and organisation (including trade unions), civil society organisation as well the rights of children and the right to basic education (including citizen’s rights and duties). In addition, and most significantly, the most positively rated democracy instruments in Aceh also comprise of the freedom to form and run parties and take part in elections, including at local level and temporarily by way of independent candidates. This is a major success that stands in sharp contrast to the less inclusive regulations in other parts of Indonesia. Although some exceptions have since been made to the Indonesia-wide rules with regard to independent candidates, the opportunity for the building of parties from below that stand any chance of fulfilling the legal requirements to run in the elections remain minuscule.

In spite of the unique possibilities to at least begin to organise politically before late 2006 (when the survey was carried out) and to cluster behind independent candidates, the informants in Aceh (just as their colleagues in Indonesia at large) deemed all the in-depth indicators of political representation quite negatively, namely the extent to which political parties reflect people’s aspirations and concerns, abstention from the abuse of religious and ethnic sentiments, symbols and doctrines, independence from money politics and powerful vested interests, their degree of

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8 Legal requirements for ‘national presence’ include that new parties must prove to have substantive branch offices in 60% of the provinces, 50% of the regencies and municipalities, and 25% of the sub districts. This can easily be arranged by parties with money but not by others.
memberships control and responsiveness and accountability to their constituencies, and their ability to form and run government.

One can argue, of course, that this critique of the in-depth aspects of political representation is because the assessments in Aceh were primarily related to the already existing so-called national parties, since it had not yet been possible by late-2006 to build local parties. A possible indicator is that the assessments of the few Acehnese participants in the all-Indonesia survey in the second part of 2007 are more optimistic. However, the basic fact is that preparatory party building had already been delayed, and that this reflected problems on the part of the government as well as the political organisations and leaders of the former combatants. The latter were involved in intractable internal conflicts on how to relate to the upcoming direct elections such as the selection candidates and the identification of allies: whether to run independent candidates or link up with established national parties. Most importantly, it was also a question of if and how more democratic decisions might be made. The crucial factors have been discussed in Chapter 1 and do not need to be repeated here, and further aspects will be identified in Chapters 5 and 6, but the outcome led to a number of significant divisions. It is true that these cleavages in turn spurred an interest in genuine democracy among some groups, but they also constrained democratisation among the more conservative nationalists.

Additionally, the question of how the Acehnese would be represented at the all-Indonesia level has remained unresolved. The initial position of the Aceh nationalists was that they would neither like to ally themselves with Jakarta driven, all-Indonesia parties nor engage in all-Indonesian electoral and parliamentary politics via their own new local parties since they were now aiming for self-government, if not all out independence. In reality, however, this has resulted in a deficit of democratic Acehnese representation in the post-Helsinki period at both legislative and executive level in Jakarta. This paves the way for cooptation and non-transparent

9 For two published reviews, see ICG (2006) and Mietzner (2007 p.26ff.)

10 According to ICG 2005b, GAM itself requested that the local parties would only take part in local not national elections.
elitism and renders cooperation with pro-democrats in Indonesia at large quite difficult.

In brief, it is notable that most of the main actors seem to accept the new democracy-oriented rules of the game, and a number of vital freedoms and rights have been assessed positively. Also, the extensive freedom of political participation by way of first independent candidates and then local parties is particularly impressive. However, there are also worrying signs that these positive developments have not yet generated more positive assessments of the relevant in-depth indicators of political representation. The divisions between the former combatants and their civil society allies are quite negative in this respect. Similarly, cooptation and non-transparent elitism are nourished by the fact that there is not yet a way for the Acehnese to be democratically represented within all-Indonesia discussions on the basis of their own organisations.

(4) Direct approaches in an undemocratic framework

What are the chances that the remarkable political freedoms and participation with elected ‘independent’ leaders and the now newly-forming political parties (analysed by Murizal Hamzah in chapter 7) will foster popular democratic participation? This largely depends on the contexts and tendencies that were assessed in the surveys.

Much as Indonesia at large and many other contexts around the world,11 the problems of representation in Aceh have contributed to a tendency amongst important actors as well as the people to approach governance institutions either directly or via supplementary agents such as the media, NGOs, and patrons and fixers rather than the potentially more democratically representative institutions such as political parties and popular-oriented interest-based organisations. This is not in itself an unhealthy practice. To be productive, however, comparative evidence indicates that people and actors have not just to avoid de facto undemocratic mediators, such as patrons and elitist parties; but also promote instead (as for instance in Brazil and Kerala) more representative organisations and leaders; organisations and leaders who are capable of introducing more democratic arrangements for direct access and participation.

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11 For theoretical and comparative perspectives on concrete cases in the global South, see Törnquist, Stokke and Webster, (forthcoming 2009).
in public governance and administration.\(^{12}\) The second paradox that renders the problems in Aceh particularly serious is that positive dynamics such as these do not appear to be in evidence. Rather, direct contacts persist within an insufficiently democratic framework.

First, all the main actors favour the direct approach. This tendency is almost as dominant as in Indonesia in general where around one third of the actors prioritise this option over a long list of alternatives including mediation via NGOs, peoples organisation, experts and the media, popular figures, patrons and fixers, communal groups, neighbourhood groups, political parties, interest-based organisations and lobby and pressure groups. A slightly more compressed list of alternatives was used in the Aceh-only survey, but the trend remains clear. Representative mediators such as political parties, peoples organisations and more specialised interest-based organisations are a little more significant in Aceh than in Indonesia at large, but less so than the direct approach. Only the bureaucrats, politicians, religious and customary leaders and business actors used political parties as mediators rather frequently. There are no significant differences between the districts in this regard, even if there is a slight tendency towards more direct approaches where the IRNA ticket was successful than elsewhere. If we turn to the institutions that the actors aspire to use however, it is interesting to note that NGOs do avoid but approach and perhaps cooperate with or criticise the executive and administrative governance institutions more frequently where IRNA and KPA/SIRA candidates won than where they lost.

In this situation, what do individual people do? The informants suggest that people who wish to address an institution for public governance avoid supposedly representative interest-based organisations, political parties and elected politicians. Moreover, they also do not turn directly to the relevant bureaucrats and only occasionally to the judiciary. In order of preference, people prefer to approach NGOs, the media, single issue groups, informal leaders and lobby groups. Furthermore, specific studies beyond the surveys indicate clearly that even when people do turn to interest organisations and new political parties to voice their demands and aspirations, they either seek out influential individuals within the

\(^{12}\) See ibid. and Harriss, Stokke & Törnquist (2004)
organisation or if they are supporters of the organisation, expect to be given special privileges over others.\textsuperscript{13}

Why is this? Given comparative historical evidence,\textsuperscript{14} two key aspects are the quality of the public rules and regulations that are supposed to promote (a) people’s direct access and contact with public services and political representatives and (b) government’s public consultation and (when possible) facilitation of direct participation in policy making and the execution of public decisions. These rules and regulations may include democratic (i.e. non discretionary) ways of involving interest-based organisations such as trade unions, employers associations, peasant organisations, or women’s groups when it comes to issues and decisions that they are affected by. It may also, for instance, include democratically institutionalised participatory budgeting and planning. Our surveys show quite clearly that such institutions are not common in the first place. And where they do exist, their performance, spread and substance are among the worst in comparison to other intrinsic means of democracy. Furthermore, this is also the case with regard to informal as well as formal arrangements. Traditional informal institutions do not seem to offer a better solution, as is sometimes indicated by Acehnese nationalists. And the standard of these institutions does not seem to be significantly better where the candidates who won were supported by KPA and SIRA.

What are the chances then that the more recent, free and vibrant political parties will strengthen actors’ capacity and demands in favour of such democratic institutions for direct access and participation? This depends of course on the democratic capacity of the actors, the most crucial dimensions of which are also on the list of the necessary means of rights-based democracy that are subject to review in our surveys. One piece of good news is the comparatively infrequent tendency of the actors to be socially rooted in and building alliances with ethnic and religious groups while connections with community, professional and interest groups are more common. And there are indications that religious,

\textsuperscript{13} See e.g. Aspinall (2007a and 2007b,) Frödin (2008), and Barron (2008.) I draw also on my own interviews with leading activists.

\textsuperscript{14} See Törnquist (2009), and further references in the same
ethnic and community groups are less important where the IRNA ticket and KPA and SIRA candidates were successful than in other areas? However, figures also suggest that professional and interest organisations often have links with powerful established actors, and class based orientation and identities are rare. Also, one must not forget that the importance of militias remains higher than the all-Indonesia average.

There are also pros and cons to the democratic capacity for mobilisation and putting critical issues. On the positive side, the Acehnese informants in the 2007 all-Indonesia survey suggest that values and ideals rather than, for instance, ethnic and religious identities are particularly important in Aceh. Moreover, the Aceh-only survey (but not so much the Aceh experts in the all-Indonesia survey) indicates that there is less dominant focus on specific issues and interests on the Acehnese agenda than there is in Indonesia at large. Instead, different issues are combined and the public discourse is more characterised by ideas and ideologies. Unfortunately however, there are also signs that the emphasis on general values come at the expense of the need to address fundamental social and economic problems and perspectives, with the possible exception of matters related to economic development which in Aceh not only preoccupy powerful actors, as per Indonesia in general, but alternative actors too.

Perhaps most seriously, the specific capacity to employ democratically oriented means of organisation and mobilisation remains weak. Most actors do not employ very democratically oriented means to transform economic, social, coercive and cultural resources into legitimate and authoritative influence. Receiving a popular mandate and being elected is one of the least appreciated methods – even amongst politicians. The primary means are rather the facilitation of contacts and dialogue with politicians and administrators and the building of networks, contacts and partnership with influential figures and experts. Major differences with Indonesia at large are the less frequent use of discursive activities and the option of gaining legitimacy through the legislative.

15 Social resources (or capital) basically mean ‘good contacts’. Cultural resources include privileged knowledge, information, and education.
executive and judicial organs of the state.\textsuperscript{16} Moreover, networking in addition to access to popular and charismatic leaders remains the main methods used by all actors while the integration of popular organisations from below is rated low. Making use of clientelism or alternative patronage comes in-between. Clientelism is probably regarded as negative and mainly deemed to be employed by bureaucrats and the military as well as by political parties, interest/mass organisations and business actors. Particularly in the case of NGOs, informants say that alternative patronage is used more extensively than clientelism. There are no significant differences between the districts in this respect, except for indications that popular leaders were less crucial where the IRNA ticket and SIRA/KPA candidates were successful. This may reflect the fact that these candidates were somewhat more rooted in organisations and movements, which may in turn go some way to explain why simplified surveys and predictions of who would win the elections (based on the tendencies in other Indonesian provinces) failed miserably.

It is true that the rather low democracy oriented capacity of the actors may now be affected by the rapid rise of the new local parties that are reviewed in chapter 7. Yet as have been indicated, separate studies\textsuperscript{17} point to a number of problems of patronage by leaders and parties. Further, the surveys reveal a lack of public institutions for direct access to and participation in governance and services. Similarly, there are very few broad and reasonably democratic organisations that are built from below on the basis of their members own basic issues and. This means that there are a lack of democratic institutions and practices to frame and direct to different, but generally likeminded, parties and leaders in similar ways as popular movements in many other parts of the world constituted the framework for example, for peasants, labour and green parties.

There are two serious consequences of this. Firstly, party-politicisation is quite extensive and intensive. Second, the

\textsuperscript{16} In the latter case, figures are only available from the Aceh parts of the all-Indonesia survey in 2007.

\textsuperscript{17} See fn 13.
parties and leaders seem forced to compete on how to offer the most attractive favours and privileges, contacts and ‘alternative patronage’. This is of course not unique but rather quite normal in Indonesian provinces. Fortunately however, the situation in Aceh is most probably not yet as serious.\footnote{Corruption for instance, seems to be a less serious problem than ‘alternative patronage’ and to some extent nepotism. Moreover, there are only occasional indicators that are similar to, for instance, the self governed Kurdish parts of northern Iraq, where previously warlords captured the institutions of government, combined them with their own organisations and now run them in line with textbook neo-patrimonial practices and nepotism (while, ironically, Washington speaks of ‘democratic advances’). What does remain a serious problem in Aceh however, is the limited space available for transforming the old command structures and loyalties from the militarised part of the nationalist movement into a democratic framework. Here there are signs of ‘normalisation’ towards sustained Indonesian practices of corruption, collusion and nepotism (KKN – Korupsi, Kolusi dan Nepotisme). Unfortunately, these practices are supported by the fashionable national and international peace-building strategy of combining liberal democracy and the market-driven inclusion of powerful actors as well as former rebels in profitable business. Worse still, even those Acehnese nationalists who opted for the development of democracy within the framework of the Indonesian state in order to foster peace and fair development now find it quite difficult to compete politically by offering their actual and potential followers meaningful and genuinely democratic alternatives to the provision of special privileges and patronage. Insightful democratic partners both within Indonesia and internationally need to support the fostering of such alternatives.}

\footnote{Comparisons are difficult since the growing number of studies of the Indonesian “shadow state” and primitive accumulation of capital often generalise from specific instances in a similar way that students of Human Rights who state that from a normative point of view, one proven case will suffice as there must be zero tolerance of any violations.}

\footnote{Michal Rubin; Is Iraqi Kurdistan a Good Ally? Available at: http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.27327/pub_detail.asp (I am indebted to Mustafa Can for spelling out the Kurdish case and pointing to Rubin’s article.)}
(5) *Democracy minus investment in rights, laws and governance*

In Indonesia at large, as highlighted in Demos’ ‘national’ survey reports and in Chapter 1, the initial preoccupation in 1998 and some time thereafter with political equality, popular sovereignty and elections was soon replaced by NGOs, new middle classes and foreign donors’ focus on Human Rights, rule of law and ‘good governance’. Elections, parties and politicians were often designated particularly ‘dirty’ and corrupt. Ironically therefore, the abandoned issue of representation became even more crucial, at lest if democracy is not to be given up or postponed until undefined enlightened elites have introduced more solid Human Rights, rule of law and ‘good governance’.

This tendency reflects the growing international frustration with shallow transitions from authoritarian rule. Reports have stressed that liberal democratic elections often serve more as hotbeds for identity politics and intransigent conflicts than as vehicle for peace and reconciliation. The new international preference is thus for ‘sequencing democracy’, i.e. that elites should ensure that the right institutions are in place and promote sufficient social and economic development ahead of full freedoms, political equality and elections.\(^{20}\)

Aceh however, is an exception. As we know, the fledgling democracy in other parts of the country provided a framework for the negotiated settlement in Helsinki. GAM and dissident civilian nationalists won the right to deliberate the laws on self-government as well as standing their own candidates, building their own parties and participating on equal terms in local elections. Moreover the candidates supported by KPA and SIRA even succeeded in winning the first free and fair elections - elections which generate less, not more, identity politics and conflict.

Regrettably, the third paradox in the Aceh survey results is that democratic progress has not yet generated similarly remarkable advances with regard to Human Rights, rule of law and ‘good governance’. Moreover these intrinsic aspects of democracy constitute some of the main problems, together with the dark side of representation, and direct access to and participation in governance.

\(^{20}\) For a critical review of the argument in for instance Mansfield and Snyder 2005, see Carothers (2007a and 2007b.)
According to the late 2006 and 2007 surveys, the weakest quality with regard to Human Rights and justice-related institutions are among those that promote freedom from physical violence, the rights of victims of conflict and disaster, good corporate governance, subordination of the government and public official to the rule of law, equal and secure access to justice, and the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

Additionally, almost none of the clear cut agreements in the peace accord on various instruments for transitional justice and truth and reconciliation have been implemented, primarily due to the lack of political will on the part of the all-Indonesia authorities to remove the obstacle of contradictory national rules and regulations.

Similarly, the institutions for democratic governance identified with the lowest quality are those that promote transparency and accountability of elected government, the bureaucracies, the military and police. Low but slightly less disturbing figures are associated with the government’s capacity to combat paramilitary groups, hoodlums and organised crime, its independence from strong interest groups and capacity to eliminate corruption and abuse of power and appropriate decentralisation. Furthermore, the criticism of poor decentralisation is possibly primarily related to the complex problems of transforming the principles from Helsinki on self government into clear cut legislation on governing Aceh (LoGA). This took about a year and many matters remain blurred, primarily because the national parliament and ministries have tried their best to retreat from what others had agreed to in Helsinki but also, inter alia, because of inconsistencies in the first drafts submitted by a number of Acehnese stakeholders (May 2008 and Ann Miller 2006 and Chapter 7 in this volume).

Generally all these indices refer to performance as well as spread and substance of the rules and regulations, and informal institutions did not seem to be in a better shape than the formal.

Do these poor results signal that the critics of full freedoms and elections ahead of solid institutions may be right given that efforts at popular sovereignty do not seem to have substantially improved the situation? Three factors speak against such a conclusion. First, full freedoms and elections have been very positive for democracy and for the capacity to build peace thereby providing a positive framework for reconstruction.
Second, the other main problems identified in the Aceh-only survey: too little and too poor popular representation, direct access to politics and popular participation in public governance, are not directly related to the problems anticipated by those who view freedoms and elections as counterproductive, namely increased ethnic and religious political identities and abuse of related sentiments, symbols and doctrines.

Third (and this is at the core of the third paradox), interviews and monitoring carried out since the surveys indicate that not even those middle-class technocrats and international donors who speak up most vociferously about the problems of the rule of law and ‘good governance’ have prioritised cooperation with and providing support for the newly elected leaders to carry out the necessary reforms.

This lack of support is not limited to the deplorably deficient coordination between the well-funded post-tsunami relief and reconstruction work on the one hand and the poorly funded support for the victims of violence, reintegration and employment schemes for ex-combatants and democracy education on the other.21

It also relates to the meagre levels of support given to foster a functional law on local government in Aceh and improving local administration in the spirit of the Helsinki MoU. Despite their limitations, particularly at local level, the considered attempts by some of the newly elected representatives to counter corruption and promote good governance reform, including for example the transparent appointment of government officials, could have been much better supported.

Hopefully there are now more positive attempts, but the major tendency by donors and their partners seems to rather have been ‘protect’ their own ventures from ‘dirty’ politics and administration, in the same way many NGOs tend to avoid politics and public governance, yet retaining their own problems of corruption, insufficient accountability and democratic representation. If this is generally correct, it is provocative, remarkable and calls for a fundamental change of priorities.

21 For a general review, see Frödin (2008), Baron (2006) and further references in Chapter 1. Even early constructive critique in this respect (including by this author) in the supposedly open minded Swedish setting was rigidly and sometimes arrogantly ignored or at best negated.
(6) **Challenging victories**

The sixth conclusion is also a paradox. Several of the problems identified appear to be particularly acute where the gubernatorial IRNA ticket was successful in the provincial elections, where the local candidates supported by KPA and SIRA won in the district elections, and more generally for those actors whose legitimacy is based on the argument that Aceh will benefit from full political participation and democratisation within the context of the Indonesian state.

Informants from areas where the IRNA ticket was successful and particularly where local KPA and SIRA candidates won suggest that ethnic and religious identities were less crucial in their regions than they were deemed to be by informants elsewhere. But they also suggest that people have a more cynical attitude to politics and are more likely to view politics as a struggle for power rather than the popular control of public affairs than is suggested by informants from areas where the other candidates won. Similarly, it is true that the substance of the existing institutions to promote democracy may be better where the IRNA ticket KPA/SIRA candidates won, but most critically, the basic indicators for the existence, performance and spread of institutions tend to be worse where the IRNA ticket and particularly the KPA and SIRA candidates were successful.22

Not surprisingly, there are also indications that the districts where the KPA and SIRA candidates won are those that have been most affected by Human Rights abuses, military repression and violence.

Challenges such as these need not present a major problem as long as there are those who are willing and able to develop their democratic capacity to positively affect change. However, as per the discussion in Chapter 1, there are no signs of a significantly higher capacity to do so where the IRNA ticket and the KPA/SIRA candidates gained majorities.

(7) **Contained Democrats**

Perhaps most worryingly, the most crucial problems identified are those that the pro-democracy actors find most difficult.

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22 The exception is that the informal institutions may be better spread where IRNA won.
to address. First, the chances of gaining democratic political control of business activities and the massive reconstruction programme remain limited. Business actors prefer markets and informal contacts and have the sympathies of Vice President Jusuf Kalla in particular. Some of the less democracy oriented Acehnese nationalists and ex-combatants, are often embraced and seem to adjust. And the donor and central government led reconstruction and economic development programmes have shied away from local government and administration, conforming to the international tendency of combining shallow liberal democracy and extensive neo-liberal economy.

Second, the divisions amongst former combatants and their civilian allies have hampered efforts by the latter in particular to use the extensive freedom of political participation first through independent candidates and subsequently through local parties towards the expansion and deepening of democratic representation.

Third, while there has been a tendency to avoid the problems of representation by turning directly to various institutions of governance through ‘good contacts’ and/or via potentially less representative mediators such as the media and lobby groups, this has not benefitted the genuine pro-democrats who would prefer democratic institutions for equal and fair direct access and participation in public life.

Fourth, the lack of such a framework as an incentive for and privilege of pro-democratic politics also hampers the development of more genuine popular movements that are rooted in basic public ideas and aspirations.

Fifth, the shallow democratic framework in turn fosters extensive and partially destructive party-politicisation of best possible access to ‘good contacts’ and alternative patronage. Again, this serves to sustain the old command structure in sections of the nationalist movement, especially to the extent that it is a useful way of conforming to ‘normal’ Indonesian democracy and KKN. Meanwhile, the pro-democrats have few alternative ways of rallying supporters and building parties due to the weak interest organisations that are formed and controlled by people themselves and the weak public institutions for equal and fair direct access and participation in public life. They even suffer from the mainstream
national and international peace-building strategy of combining liberal democracy and market driven inclusion of powerful actors and former rebels in profitable business.

Not only have the facts on the ground in Aceh proved the critics who claim that more democracy is problematic because there are insufficiently solid institutions to sustain Human Rights, rule of law and ‘good governance’ wrong – indeed the freedoms and elections have instead been instrumental in paving the way for peace and a reduction in identity-based politics. These critics are also doing little to foster any such institutions. Once again, the democrats whose strength and legitimacy hinges on the extent to which it proves possible to build a better Aceh for ordinary people by way of democratisation within the framework of the Indonesian state stand to lose.

In short, democratisation in Aceh has proved to be remarkably important and fruitful in fostering peace and reconstruction. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, this formula has worked thanks to a number of factors. If any number of these factors are undermined in a process of trying to conform Aceh to the national and international model of promoting so called liberal peace – through limited democracy and extensive private business – rather than fostering the unique elements of social democratic peace, much is at stake not just for Aceh but also Indonesia and the world.
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