

ACEH'S ELECTIONS: A DO-IT-YOURSELF ANALYSIS

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I. OVERVIEW

The critical question for the 2014 legislative elections in Aceh is whether Partai Aceh (PA), the party controlled by the old diaspora leadership of the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM), will be able to retain its stranglehold on local government. Chances are good that PA will hold on because of its political machine, access to resources and ongoing ability to portray itself as the party that brought peace to Aceh. Intimidation has been a serious factor in past elections and in this campaign as well, but it is probably not enough by itself to explain PA's electoral success. If PA does as well or better than it did in 2009, then there are serious questions about whether it can ever be dislodged, no matter how deep its corruption or how poor its performance in office.

A second question is whether PA's main rival, another local party called Partai Nasional Aceh (PNA), associated with former governor Irwandi Yusuf, will be able to secure enough seats to constitute a bloc (*fraksi*) in the provincial assembly (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Aceh, DPRA). If it does, it would mean there might be the beginnings of a serious check on PA's powers. PNA itself is hopeful of winning 25 seats in the assembly, but this is wildly optimistic. The best guide to the areas of PNA's strength is to look at the districts Irwandi won in the 2012 race for governor, mostly in the smaller districts of the central highlands and southwest. The populous east coast is likely to remain solidly for PA.

The elections will also reveal the strength of an alliance made last year between Prabowo Subianto's Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Gerindra) party and Partai Aceh. Local parties like PA and PNA cannot field candidates for national office, so Acehnese representatives to the national parliament have to come from national parties. In 2009, Partai Aceh allied itself with President Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat, resulting in seven out of thirteen parliamentary seats from Aceh going to the Democrats – and later, in the presidential elections, more than 90 per cent of the Acehnese vote going to Yudhoyono. Gerindra wants to do at least as well. Should it get six seats or more, it will reflect PA's ability to command obedience from its rank and file. Should it get less than five, it could reflect unhappiness at the grassroots with Gerindra's association with the Indonesian military, belief that Gerindra will not win the presidency in July, or better campaigning by some of the other national parties.

To aid in analysing the 9 April results, IPAC has attached a chart to this briefing in which readers can fill in results as they come in, compare them with 2009 and 2012, and analyse their significance. In the sections that follow, we provide a few tools to help, looking at the local parties involved in the races, the areas to watch and the key facts to know about the races at the district, provincial and national levels.

II. THE POLITICAL PARTIES

Aceh is the only province in Indonesia that allows local parties, a result of the 2005 Helsinki accord that ended GAM's three-decade armed rebellion in exchange for an autonomy package that gave it a stake in the political system. The provision on local parties was enshrined in the 2006 Law on the Governing of Aceh, and the 2009 elections were the first in which such parties participated. Of the six that took part in 2009, only one, Partai Aceh, survived and flourished. Three will be taking part in 2014: Partai Aceh, Partai Nasional Aceh and Partai Damai Aceh (Aceh Peace Party).

Because of the increase in Aceh's population, now just over 5,000,000, the number of seats in the provincial assembly has been expanded from 69 in 2009 to 81 in 2014.

A. *Partai Aceh (PA), No.13*

Partai Aceh was established in 2008 and represents the GAM leadership. It is headed by Muzakir Manaf, known as Mualem, the commander of the GAM armed forces at the time of the Helsinki agreement and now vice-governor of Aceh. Muzakir is also head of the Aceh Transition Committee (Komite Peralihan Aceh, KPA), the powerful and wholly unaccountable body of former combatants that in some areas has taken on Mafia-like characteristics, extorting protection fees out of businesses and securing contracts for construction work and other operations from elected GAM officials. KPA's activities are reportedly an important source of party financing.

PA is controlled by the old GAM diaspora leadership represented by Malik Mahmud, former GAM "prime minister"; Zakaria Saman, former "defence minister" and Zaini Abdullah, former "foreign minister" and since April 2012, governor of Aceh. In December 2013, Malik was installed as Wali Nanggroe of Aceh, a supposedly ceremonial role, but he nevertheless may be the most powerful person in Aceh. He is the founder of the party and all its senior officials defer to him.

At present, PA controls both the executive and legislative branches of all districts along the east coast down through Aceh Timur; the center of its power base is Pidie. It also currently has 33 seats in the 69-seat provincial assembly but controls a further nine through alliances with other parties, giving it total control over the legislative agenda budget allocations and appointments to bodies such as the Independent Election Commission (Komisi Independen Pemilu, KIP).

PA has one other asset: its flag. The red, black and white banner is a slightly modified version of the GAM flag, substituting the word "Aceh" for the crescent and star of the original. In March 2013, however, the provincial assembly adopted a regulation making the GAM flag the official provincial banner. The Ministry of Home Affairs in Jakarta objected, saying that it violated a national decree banning the use of separatist symbols.¹ Nevertheless, the flags are visible at most PA rallies, a potent reminder of the message, "We led the struggle, and we brought you peace."

B. *Partai Nasional Aceh (PNA), No. 12*

PNA was founded in 2012, following former governor Irwandi Yusuf's loss to PA's Zaini Abdullah in the 2012 governor's race. The 2014 election will be PNA's first test as a formal party and the question is whether they will win seven seats in the provincial assembly, enough to constitute a formal legislative bloc (*fraksi*). A party spokesman says their target is 25, which is unreachable, especially given that in 2009, only one seat in the assembly went to a local party other than PA.² Seven seats by itself would be a major achievement, given the strength of PA's machine and PNA's lack of a functioning structure at the village level.

PNA remains tightly linked to Irwandi, who once served as GAM propaganda chief, and its top officers are also mostly GAM: Sofyan Dawood, former commander for the important east coast region of Pasee (around North Aceh) is secretary of the party's advisory council. Its chair is Irwansyah, also known as Muksalmina, former GAM spokesman for Aceh Besar, and its secretary-general is Muharram Idris, former GAM commander for Aceh Besar. The problem is that all of these men were also involved in Irwandi's campaign for governor in 2012, and he lost heavily, even in Aceh Besar.

C. *Partai Damai Aceh (PDA), No. 11*

PDA is the new name of a small party that competed in 2009, Partai Daulat Atjeh (Aceh Sover-

¹ International Crisis Group, "Tensions Over Aceh's Flag", Asia Briefing No.139, 7 May 2013.

² Text message from Thamrin Ananda, PNA spokesman, 29 March 2014.

eignty Party), which only succeeded in getting one seat in the provincial parliament, though it picked up several for district assemblies, including four in Aceh Besar. Because it did not meet the threshold to compete in 2014, it was forced to re-register under a new name.

In its past incarnation, PDA was known as the party of religious scholars (*ulama*). It was and continues to be interested in expanding the application of Islamic law in Aceh, and its base is in Aceh's Islamic boarding schools (*dayah*). In 2009, it was referred to dismissively as the “in-former party” (*partai cuak*), reflecting the degree to which the religious establishment had been coopted by the government during the conflict.³ With many of its members drawn from former members of national Islamic parties such as the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP), it was rumoured in 2009 to have the support of Indonesian intelligence that wanted to erode PA's support by portraying it as secular.

PDA is not likely to do much better in 2014 than its predecessor did in 2009. If it pulls off a surprise and gets a few more seats, it may reflect the increased influence of Islamist civil society organisations in Aceh, the one province permitted to apply Islamic law.

D. The National Parties

The national party to watch is Gerindra, because of its alliance with Partai Aceh and because of the money poured into the campaign. Muzakir Manaf is the head of Gerindra's advisory council in Aceh. In 2009 Gerindra got no seats in the provincial assembly and no seats representing Aceh in the national parliament. In 2014 it will be seeking to replace Partai Demokrat as Partai Aceh's ally by taking PD's ten seats in the assembly—the second largest bloc after PA's—and seven in the parliament. It will not be easy. PD had its own base in Aceh, led by Mawardy Nurdin, the popular mayor of Banda Aceh, who died in February after a long illness, and while it will certainly lose seats, it is unlikely to lose all of them.

Several sources suggested that the national parties could pick up a few more seats in the provincial assembly, with disaffected voters who previously voted for PA more likely to vote for a national party than for PNA. National parties have also not been shy about distributing money.

In 2009, Golkar was the third largest bloc in the provincial assembly with eight seats; PAN had five and PKS and PPP four each. Golkar in particular is hoping to pick up a few more seats, hoping to capitalise on dissatisfaction with Partai Aceh's performance in office but it may face competition from other national parties. This year a new national party, Nasdem, could do well in Aceh because its founder, Surya Paloh, a media magnate, is Acehnese. It will also be interesting to see whether the popularity of Jakarta governor Joko Widodo, better known as Jokowi, the presidential candidate of PDIP, will produce any votes for the latter. Up till now, PDIP was a sure loser in Aceh, but a few candidates might come in on the Jokowi bandwagon. One prominent leader of the militia Pembela Tanah Air (PETA), Tagore Abubakar, is standing for parliament as a PDIP candidate from central Aceh.

III. AREAS TO WATCH

The areas to watch for signs of PA's vulnerability are the election districts (*dapil*) where PNA has local notables on its side, including Aceh Besar; and the central highlands, where PA hopes to eat into Irwandi's base.⁴ The overpowering advantage Partai Aceh has in terms of logistical support and campaign finances means that opposition hopes of making major inroads into its voting base may not be fulfilled.

3 International Crisis Group, “Indonesia: Pre-Election Anxieties in Aceh”, Asia Briefing No.81, 9 September 2008.

4 For a good map of the election areas, see www.kpu.go.id/dmdocuments/00_aceh_prov.pdf.

A. *Dapil 1 (Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar and Sabang)*

In 2009, Irwandi was a passive supporter of Partai Aceh, despite tensions with the party leadership, so there was no real option for disaffected GAM members. In 2014, the PNA provides that option, and it will be interesting to see who takes it up. Aceh Besar will clearly be a battleground because of PNA's support base there. In 2009 PA took three of nine seats; the Demokrats got two; and four other parties got one each. The district has now been expanded to eleven seats and PNA will be aiming to get a few.

B. *Dapil 2 (Pidie, Pidie Jaya)*

This is a Partai Aceh fortress, home of its founder, Hasan di Tiro and much of its elite. If PNA can pick up a single seat here, it would be a minor miracle. But there is reportedly an interesting split within the PA leadership in Pidie over which party to back for the national parliament, with a few top senior cadres unhappy with the decision to back Gerindra. One local PA leader who decided to back a Demokrat candidate instead was reportedly sacked from the party for disobedience.⁵

C. *Dapil 5 (Aceh Utara and Lhokseumawe)*

District 5 is the richest electoral prize, with twelve seats, two more than in 2009, when PA picked up seven of the ten seats available. This is Muzakkir Manaf's base, but several senior PA officials defected to PNA in late 2013, including the party spokesman, Nasrullah Dahlawy. One of the PNA candidates for the provincial assembly here is Amni bin Marzuki, one of the GAM negotiators involved in the failed 2003 peace effort. If PNA succeeds in getting two or more seats from this district, it would indicate PA vulnerability in one of its strongholds. Gerindra will be looking for seats here as well, because of Muzakkir Manaf's prominent role.

The bitterness of the PA-PNA rivalry in Aceh Utara can be seen in the level of threats, intimidation and violence there, including the murder of a PNA subdistrict leader in Kuta Makmur, Juwaini, who was beaten to death by two PA sympathisers on 6 February 2014, allegedly because the victim was involved in taking down PA flags.⁶

D. *Dapil 6 (Aceh Timur)*

Aceh Timur is one of PA's most secure bases; it is also an area where intimidation was high during the 2009 elections. A Golkar leader there said many voters were sympathetic to PNA but would still vote for PA.⁷ The leader of PNA in Aceh Timur is Muslim Hasballah, a former GAM commander from Peureulak who became district head after the Helsinki accord, but he is unlikely to be able to make a significant dent in PA's control. PA currently holds 25 of the 30 seats in the district assembly.

E. *Dapil 4 and Dapil 8 (Bener Meriah, Aceh Tengah, Gayo Lues and Aceh Tenggara)*

The four districts making up these two election districts are the heartland of the move to break away and establish a separate province called Aceh Leuser Antara (ALA) that would be dominated by the ethnic Gayo. Historically opposed to GAM and home to a variety of Jakarta-sup-

⁵ IPAC interview with PNA source, Banda Aceh, 29 March 2014.

⁶ "Ketua PNA Dianiaya hingga tewas," *Serambi Indonesia*, 7 February 2014; "Polisi Kantongi Nama Penganiaya Ketua PNA," *Serambi Indonesia*, 8 February 2014; and "Mualem: Kematian Kader PNA bukan disebabkan Kader PA," *Serambi Indonesia*, 8 February 2014.

⁷ IPAC interview, Golkar official, Aceh Timur, 22 February 2014.

ported militias during the conflict, all but Gayo Lues supported Irwandi in the 2012 elections. (In Gayo Lues, Zaini won with more than 68 per cent of the vote.)

After the elections, however, PA made a concentrated effort to reach out to former militias through one of its strange bedfellows, former provincial military commander Maj. Gen. Soenarko, a former Kopassus officer who threw his lot in with PA in 2009. Soenarko helped build ties between PA and various associations of ethnic Javanese in the area as well as some ex-militia and pro-military groups like Forum Komunikasi Anak Bangsa (FORKAB).⁸ According to one PA source, some militia members understand that PA is likely to be the dominant political force in the province for years to come, and it is thus in their interest to back them politically.⁹

But many of ex-militia members remain implacably opposed to PA, as one episode of pre-election violence makes clear. On 18 March 2014, members of two former militias, PETA and Laskar Merah Putih, vandalised a Partai Aceh office in Takengon, Aceh Tengah and burned a few cars after a PA candidate reportedly demeaned the struggle for a separate ALA province. The next day, a crowd of PA and some of its new ex-militia friends began fanning out across Bener Meriah and taking down posters of Tagore Abubakar, head of PETA and known champion of ALA who is running for a PDIP seat in the Indonesian parliament. They also burned vehicles. Shops across Bener Meriah and Aceh Tengah were closed briefly by frightened shopkeepers until the mobs were brought under control.

Dapil 4 has six seats available for the provincial parliament, Dapil 8 has five. PNA is likely to pick up several, but PA will be looking to improve its relatively poor showing here in 2009.

F. Dapil 9 (Aceh Barat Daya, Aceh Selatan, Aceh Singkil and Subulussalam)

This district has nine seats and has been reconfigured since 2009, when Aceh Selatan and Aceh Barat were in the same district. Then PA was able to pick up only three seats, but in 2012, Zaini Abdullah trounced Irwandi in both Aceh Selatan and Aceh Barat Daya, and PA is hoping for more. It is also leaving nothing to chance. On 2 March 2014, a PNA candidate for the district assembly, Faisal, a former GAM combatant, was shot 46 times on a deserted road after he received a phone call asking him to come to the area. PNA chair Irwansyah said the murder was an effort to terrorise PNA candidates because public support for PNA was strong and growing stronger along Aceh's southwest coast.¹⁰ PNA has a former GAM military commander from Aceh Selatan, Abrar Muda, on its side and expects to pick up several seats. If it cannot do reasonably well here, it has little chance in areas where PA is stronger.

G. Dapil 10 (Aceh Jaya, Aceh Barat, Nagan Raya and Simeulue)

The election district has nine seats, of which PNA is hoping to get several, based on the strength of its support in Nagan Raya and Aceh Barat. In 2009, Nagan Raya and Aceh Jaya were paired in one district, and PA secured three of the eight seats available. At the district level, however, PA won 14 out of 20 seats in the Aceh Jaya assembly; its base there remains strong.

PA is not particularly strong in Aceh Barat, although Zaini decisively defeated Irwandi there in the 2012 election. The dominant party is Golkar. The district head, HT Alaidinsyah, better known Haji Tito, came to power through a Golkar-led coalition, which PA also supported. He defeated the incumbent, Ramli, whose policies of banning women from wearing jeans and periodic raids on women allegedly dressing in violation of Islamic values had made him unpopular. Ramli, however, is now running as a PA candidate for the provincial parliament.

⁸ IPAC interview, PA official, Ulee Glee, Pidie Jaya, 19 February 2014.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Caleg Dibedil, Aceh Makin 'Panas' Jelang Pemilu", VivaNews, 3 March 2014.

In November 2013, Dr Husaini Hasan, former “education minister” of GAM and now the leader of a tiny GAM faction opposed to the Partai Aceh leadership, made a surprise return to Aceh from Australia where he lives. He led a convoy through the streets of the Aceh Barat capital, Meulaboh, together with a former Indonesian military district commander and militia leader, Tjut Agam, professing support for the Indonesian state. Husaini Hasan is so detested by PA leaders that he would never have been able to make an appearance like this in an area where GAM had any serious political strength, but his influence is so small that his visit is unlikely to have any impact on the election.

In Nagan Raya, support is believed to be evenly divided among PA, PNA and Golkar. A powerful but reportedly corrupt PA figure, Samsuardi alias Juragan, head of the district assembly in Nagan Raya where PA currently holds five seats, could be a polarising figure in the elections, leading to support for the PNA. Kinship ties could also help. Cut Man, a former GAM commander and PNA candidate for the provincial assembly is the brother-in-law of the Golkar district head, HT Zulkarnaini, and played an important role in getting out the vote for his election. PNA has put a major effort into campaigning across the district's 223 villages and is hoping to secure six of the seats in the district assembly, eroding Juragen's power base. The problem is that PNA ran out of funds long before the campaign ended, and this may weaken its ability to get out the vote.

IV. CONCLUSION: THREE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

The April 2014 could produce three possible outcomes. In the first, PA significantly better its 2009 performance; its leaders say in public that they expect to get 80 per cent of the vote, in private 60 per cent. PNA will have proved a paper tiger, unable to crack PA's political machine or marshal the resources necessary mount an effective campaign. A victory even larger than in 2009 will mean that Aceh will have poor governance, deteriorating social indicators and increased thuggery not just for five more years but after 2019 as well. A triumph of this magnitude could also ensure a win at provincial level for Prabowo Subianto in the July presidential race, though probably not on the same scale that PA secured for Yudhoyono, with over 90 per cent of the vote.

A second outcome is a continuation of the status quo, with the east coast solidly PA, the west coast mixed but not dominated by PA, and the central highlands the preserve of the opposition, both national parties and some PNA. In this scenario, PNA will get its seven seats and constitute a useful anti-PA bloc but will lack the numbers to pursue its own legislative agenda. A status quo victory will still mean that PA will dominate in 2019, and will have five more years to extend its control over political and economic institutions in Aceh. Status quo on the legislative side could mean that support for Prabowo could come in significantly below Yudhoyono's numbers in 2009. Jokowi's popularity extends even to Aceh and he could pull in a surprising number of votes if there is any weakening of PA discipline.

A significant win for PNA, with ten seats in the provincial assembly, is the best outcome in terms of democracy in Aceh; it also may be the least likely, since it has neither the machine nor the resources to get out the vote. A win of that size would be a strong indication of PA's vulnerability and public unhappiness with its performance, perhaps presaging a significant further decline in 2019. PNA would get a boost for district executive elections, but rivalry between the two parties could also intensify, meaning more violence.

The attached chart should help with analysis. Happy Election Day!

Appendix A: Election Monitoring Chart

Instructions: This chart will allow you to compare the 2014 results to the legislative elections in 2009 and the gubernatorial election in 2012 in terms of the strength of Partai Aceh in each district.

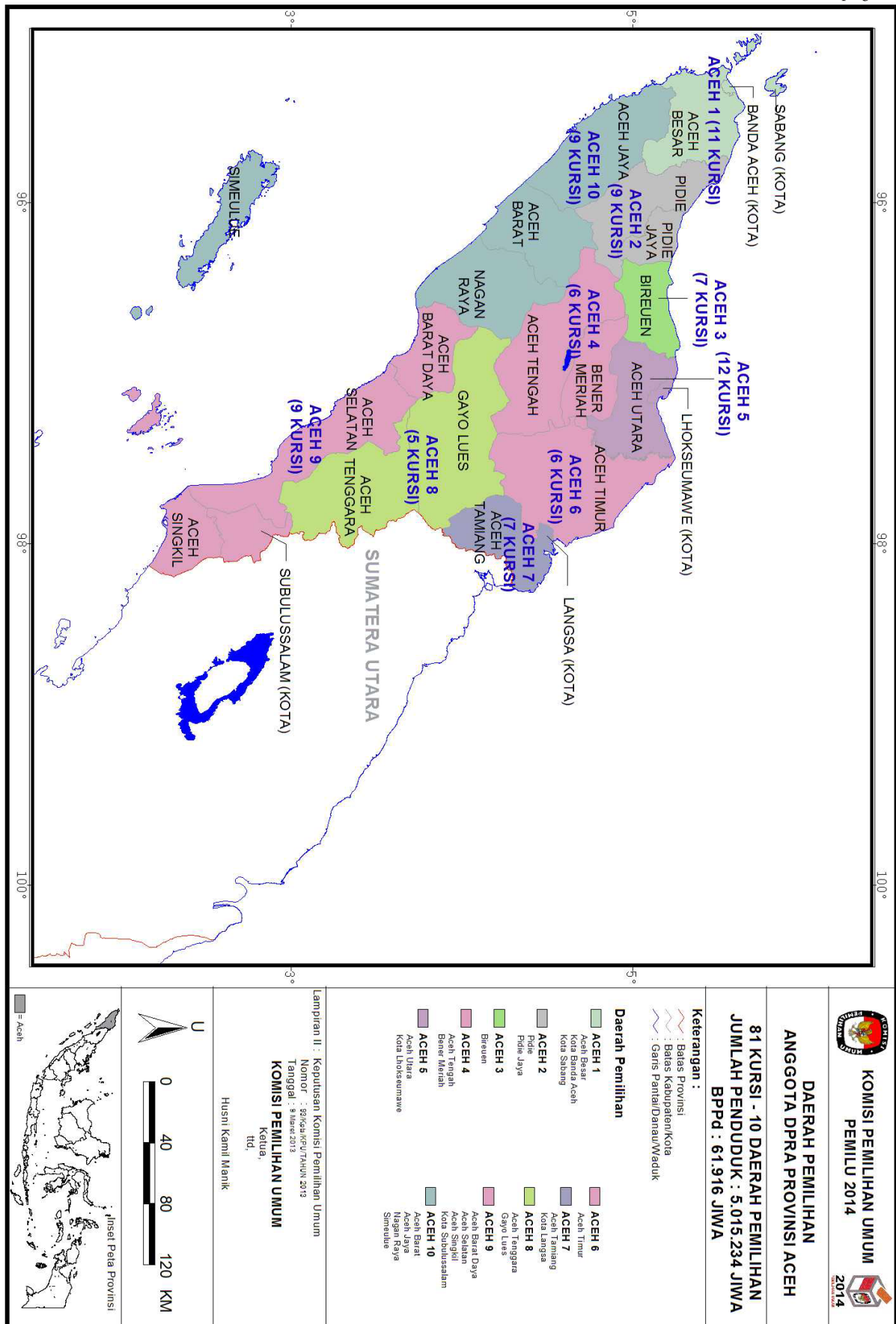
- In the first column, you can fill in the results of the percentage vote for PA per election area (daerah pemilihan, Dapil) for the provincial legislature (DPRA). Note there are two more DAPIL this year than in 2009 and the number of seats in the provincial legislature will increase from 69 to 81.
- Underneath the name of each district/municipality, you can fill in the number of seats won by PA in the district legislatures (DPRK). Note that five districts have changed seat allotments for 2014, with Pidie and Aceh Barat shrinking and Aceh Tenggara, Bireuen and Aceh Timur expanding.
- In column 6, under the percentages for Zaini and Irwandi respectively, you can jot down the split between Partai Aceh and Partai Nasional Aceh (PNA), Irwandi's party, in the district vote for DPRA, to see whether PNA has been able to expand much beyond Irwandi's 2012 base.

	Dapil 2014	Dapil 2009 and PA% in DPRA	Kab/Kota	Seats won in 2009 by PA in DPRK	Party of executive (year elected)	% Vote for governor in 2012 Pilkada for Zaini Abdullah (PA) compared to Irwandi (independent)
1	DP1	DP1 31%	Banda Aceh	6/30	PD-PKS 2012	25.7% PA; 44.6% Irwandi
2			Sabang	6/20	PA 2012	36.5% PA; 43.0% Irwandi
3	DP2	DP2 74%	Aceh Besar	10/35	PA 2012	40.1%PA; 31.8% Irwandi
4			Pidie	34/45	PA 2012	74.6%PA;11.1% Irwandi
				/40		
5	DP3	DP4 45%	Pidie Jaya	16/25	PA 2013	68.7%PA; 10.1% Irwandi
6			Bireuen	25/35	PA 2012	57.6%PA; 33.5% Irwandi
				/40		
7	DP4		Aceh Tengah	3/30	PD 2012	25.1%PA; 57.8% Irwandi
8			Bener Meriah	3/25	PD 2012	36.0%PA; 47.1% Irwandi
9	DP5	DP5 69%	Aceh Utara	32/45	PA 2012	76.3%PA; 14.8% Irwandi
10			Lhokseumawe	13/25	PA 2012	61.9%PA; 25.2% Irwandi
11	DP6	DP6 54%	Aceh Timur	25/35	PA 2012	73.4%PA; 14.0% Irwandi
				/40		
12			Aceh Tamiang	7/30	PAN-PBR 2012	42.4%PA; 42.5% Irwandi
13	DP7		Langsa	6/25	PA- 2012	39.2%PA; 42.2% Irwandi

14	DP8	DP7 8%	Aceh Tenggara	1/25	Golkar 2012	39.2%PA; 47.7% Irwandi
				/30		
15			Gayo Lues	1/20	Golkar 2012	68.2%PA; 20.4% Irwandi
16	DP9		Aceh Singkil	0/25	PBR 2012	23.9%PA; 59.8% Irwandi
17			Subussalam	0/20	N/A (caretaker)	23.7%PA; 63.4% Irwandi
18		DP8 40%	Aceh Selatan	10/30	PD-PKB-PAN 2013	53.2%PA; 35.4% Irwandi
19			Aceh Barat Daya	9/25	PA 2012	72.2%PA; 15.8% Irwandi
20	DP10		Simeulue	2/20	PD-PPP 2012	49.2%PA; 35.4% Irwandi
21			Aceh Barat	7/30	Golkar 2012	56.7 %PA; 28.4% Irwandi
				/25		
22		DP3 36%	Aceh Jaya	14/20	PA 2012	64.6%PA; 19.5% Irwandi
23			Nagan Raya	5/25	Golkar 2012	57.7%PA; 25.8% Irwandi

Appendix B: National Election Commission map of voting areas in Aceh

Source: KPU, www.kpu.go.id



INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT (IPAC)

The Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) was founded in 2013 on the principle that accurate analysis is a critical first step toward preventing violent conflict. Our mission is to explain the dynamics of conflict—why it started, how it changed, what drives it, who benefits—and get that information quickly to people who can use it to bring about positive change. In areas wracked by violence, accurate analysis of conflict is essential not only to peaceful settlement but also to formulating effective policies on everything from good governance to poverty alleviation.

We look at six kinds of conflict: communal, land and resource, electoral, vigilante, extremist and insurgent, understanding that one dispute can take several forms or progress from one form to another. We send experienced analysts with long-established contacts in the area to the site to meet with all parties, review primary written documentation where available, check secondary sources and produce in-depth reports, with policy recommendations or examples of best practices where appropriate.

We are registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs in Jakarta as the Foundation for Preventing International Crises (Yayasan Penanggulangan Krisis Internasional); our website is www.understandingconflict.org.