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Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding as a Sluggish Policy: A Critical Discourse Analysis with Process Types

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Abstract

Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the government of Indonesia (GoI) and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) celebrated its 18th anniversary in 2023. However, its discursive aspect and efficacy are still under-researched. This article aims to analyze the process types in the Helsinki MoU text and explore the policy implementation of the agreement on the social changes in Aceh. The MoU document was retrieved from the United Nations peacemakers' website. Mixed methods with descriptive statistics were used to identify, interpret, and explain the data. Hallidayan systemic linguistics was employed to identify the process types and the transitivity patterns. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) as an explanatory critique was applied to critical social analysis. The findings show that the material processes dominated the Helsinki MoU text (73%), followed by the relational processes (18%), and verbal processes (4%). The actors were generally in the form of concepts and sometimes obfuscated. Meanwhile, the goals were also mostly realized by concepts. Explanatory critique reveals that there was a vagueness and hidden power relation between the GoI and GAM in the peace deal. The GoI has also been inconsistent with some of the agendas. The Helsinki MoU has yet to produce comprehensive outcomes for Aceh's development and has seemingly served as a bureaucratic means of control. The current study has limited itself to the single MoU text. Therefore, for deeper inquiries further research should focus on multiple similar texts and use a different research design, including intertextuality, questionnaires, and interviews.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article conceives of the Helsinki MoU document as a policy text of political, social, and legal significance not only to the local, national, and regional people but also to the international society. A policy text usually deals with the proposed actions on the economy, politics, and social changes (Dunn, 2018; Mulderrig et al., 2019). Unfortunately, not all policies enacted in the Helsinki MoU text have been implemented. Considering the global readership of this platform, it is necessary that this introduction briefly elucidate the history of the protracted conflict of Aceh that gave rise to the signature of the Helsinki MoU.

The people of Aceh had devoted their spirit, energy, and belongings to the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia long before Indonesia proclaimed its independence. However, after Indonesia gained its independence in 1945, Aceh experienced inequality, oppression, broken promises, and unjust policies from the central government of Indonesia (Schulze, 2004). Consequently, in 1953 Daud Bereueh, then the governor of Aceh, led a rebellion movement, which was initially supposed to be the political weapon against the centrality of the Indonesian government in Jakarta. Later in 1976, Hasan di Tiro, the supporter of Daud Bereueh's political ideology for an independent state, returned from the United States and established the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM), formally called the Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front. GAM experienced three distinct periods.

During the first phase from 1976 to 1979, GAM was only a handful of well-educated elites, doctors, engineers, business people, and academics. This phase ceased at the end of 1979 during which the leaders of the movement were imprisoned, killed, or went into exile. GAM reemerged in 1989 when hundreds of its guerillas returned from military training in Libya. To counter this reemergence, the GoI enacted a counterinsurgency operation that classified Aceh as a Military Operations Zone, *Daerah Operasi Militer* (DOM), which occurred from 1989 to 1998. During the DOM, it was estimated that 5.000 Acehnese people were killed, tortured or raped (Barber, 2000). According to Al-Chaidar et al. (1998), 500 people 'disappeared' and have never been found. An estimated 3.000 women were widowed and 16,000 children were orphaned. GAM was then once again defeated.

In the wake of the Asian financial crisis, followed by the demise of Suharto's regime in 1998, GAM arose again and this time it transformed itself into a mass movement. The fight in this third phase was for self-determination (Kadir, 2012), which attracted attention from international institutions, including ASEAN and the European Union. Eventually, after five rounds of negotiation, the GoI and GAM agreed on a peace deal. It was on August 15th, 2005 that GAM and the GoI signed a memorandum of understanding in Finland, which is formally known as the Helsinki MoU. However, until its 18th anniversary this year, the MoU has yet to be fully implemented.

This article recognizes the Helsinki MoU document as a public policy text, treating it as a particular form of peace discourse between the two parties. Similar to Fairclough (2003), this article argues that a text can have social effects. Discourse can

bring about changes in the social and the material worlds. However, there is only a small body of literature on Aceh's political discourse. Using CDA as a qualitative research methodology, [Zainal et al. \(2022\)](#) identified five reasons Aceh has not achieved full self-government. The fact that GAM was underrepresented and held a weak position during the negotiation processes were two of the reasons they advanced. Although [Zainal et al. \(2022\)](#) employed CDA, they did not focus on the linguistic aspects, such as transitivity and process types. In other words, their study was not supported by the textually-oriented analysis as the majority of studies in CDA are. As a result, the analysis is somewhat abstract. [Amalia \(2019\)](#) focused on the Helsinki MoU and claimed to have used CDA, but ignored the linguistic trivialities. In a different research setting, [Mwinlaaru and Nartey \(2022\)](#) applied a transitivity analysis to identify the process types in national anthems of African countries. They claimed that the African national anthems figure in the trauma of colonialism foregrounds the motif for freedom, and legitimizes land ownership for Africans. Although [Mwinlaaru and Nartey \(2022\)](#) used transitivity, their study focused on the substances of the anthems without exploring their social impacts on the economic, political, and socio-cultural sectors. Above all, these studies have not focused on the legal text as a special document of the public policy discourse.

This article attempts to explore the 18-year-old MoU legal text by incorporating the Hallidayan classifications of process types in the transitivity system into CDA's explanatory critique. Linguistically, the exploration will contribute to the development of critical policy discourse analysis ([Fairclough, 2013](#); [Mulderigg et al., 2019](#)) and legal discourse ([Coulson, 2020](#)). Socially, the investigation provides positive insights for political institutions and policymakers in Aceh. To that end, this article aims to analyze how the Helsinki MoU text was grammatically realized by the process types in the transitivity system and to unmask the ideological, economic, and social effects of this text on Aceh's development. From this set of objectives, two research questions arise:

1. What process types in the transitivity system do prevalently occur in the Helsinki MoU text?
2. To what extent have the policy measures embedded in this peace discourse been undertaken for Aceh's development?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Discourse of Conflict

There has been some research on political discourse and transitivity analysis ([Adjei et al., 2015](#); [Amalia, 2019](#); [Mwinlaaru & Nartey, 2022](#)). However, the topics on the investigation of Aceh's political discourse from a transitivity perspective are scant. [Kadir \(2012\)](#) used a social-historical framework to investigate Aceh's self-determination discourses within Indonesia's unitary system with respect to the struggle for independence that was finally manifested by the signature of the Helsinki MoU. He provided a historical analysis of Aceh's self-determination on the basis of the International Human Rights Law. He referred to a conceptual understanding of the Helsinki MoU in terms of self-determination. He claimed that self-determination and the Helsinki Agreement prevented Aceh from proclaiming an independent state.

Furthermore, [Usman \(2017\)](#) studied the role metaphors play in the ex-GAM's political discourses during the preparation for local government elections in Aceh. He identified a small number of metaphors used in the pre-election political discourse. Although the study aimed at identifying political metaphors occupying the Ex-GAM's political discourse, it draws a conclusion from metaphors analyzed in isolation that regard elections as a battle. Based on limited examples, he also claimed that the ex-GAM politicians resorted to this populist metaphor but did not manage to attract the majority of votes in the elections.

In contrast, [Rizki et al. \(2019\)](#) examined the rhetorical pattern of political advertisement in the form of posters in Aceh. Using the descriptive qualitative methodology, they found that the posters of two politicians—Irwandi Yusuf and Nova Iriansyah—applied ten strategies in their political advertisement during the local election campaign, some of which are the use of dramatic statements, sketch model participation, and detailed benefit change. Furthermore, [Amalia \(2019\)](#) applied CDA to analyze the Helsinki MoU and claimed that there was no dominance of either party in the peace agreement. Other researchers applied transitivity but in different research contexts and settings.

[Seo \(2013\)](#), for instance, analyzed media news items. [Coffin \(2013\)](#) focused on digital technology in education, while [Zhang \(2017\)](#) examined the political discourse of presidential debates. Although these studies used transitivity analysis to explore the meaning-making process in discourses, they did not look at texts from a public policy perspective and they lack historical, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. [Gunawan et al. \(2023\)](#), investigated a testament of the *jihadi* Indonesian woman from a transitivity and CDA perspective. They claim that the testament embeds the Salafi jihadist ideology of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. To recap this literature review, although some studies such as [Kadir \(2012\)](#), [Usman \(2017\)](#), and [Rizki et al. \(2019\)](#) analyzed the political issues in Aceh, they used neither CDA nor transitivity in the analysis. [Gunawan et al. \(2023\)](#) used transitivity and CDA, but their study was not on public policy discourse.

2.2 CDA as an Explanatory Critique

This article uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the conceptual framework and also treats it as an explanatory critique for doing critical research with respect to textual, political, and social analysis. CDA's roots can be traced as far back as Karl Marx whose ideas on critical social theory have influenced the latter-day thinkers of the Frankfurt School such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno and currently Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak. These critical theorists and CDA scholars have stressed the significance of addressing a wide variety of social structures and their relations in economic, political, and social issues in modern societies. CDA can thus provide theories and methods for the empirical study of the relations between discourse and the social world in different domains.

As an explanatory critique, CDA focuses on the opaque relationship between language and social problems ([Bhaskar, 2009](#); [Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999](#)). Its analysis oscillates between the critical reading of texts and the critical reading of social wrongs for emancipation from the abuse of power, inequality, or hegemony. Ontologically, CDA scholars see discourse as a social practice that represents semiotic events. In other words, discourse is a socially placed action; it is shaped and shaping,

what Fairclough and Wodak (1997) called constituted and constitutive. CDA politically aims at providing social critiques to social problems such as unequal opportunities, injustices, and discrimination.

Methodologically, CDA is an interdisciplinary research paradigm that commits a dialogue between disciplines, for instance, critical linguistics and social theory. As for critical linguistics in general, CDA is an interdisciplinary approach to social practice that has an overtly political agenda. Its concept and method are different from many traditional approaches such as conversational analysis which tends to understand texts merely as interactional elements among discourse participants (Blommaert, 2005). Consequently, this article posits CDA as a critical social theory and as a research method in doing language-based social research motivated by a set of core principles. As proposed by practitioners (Fairclough, 2010; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), CDA as the explanatory critique is built upon the following standpoints.

First, CDA is concerned with social problems that have linguistic aspects. Scholars hold the view that without social problems, CDA does not exist. An incomplete implementation of public policy is an example of a social problem (Dunn, 2018). The incomplete process of policy implementation is not just a matter of political practices but it is a discursive issue as well (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). The reason is that public policy is seen as a product and a process in the intersubjective production of meaning. There is an opaque relationship between public policy and how it is represented in texts. The relationship needs to be made unequivocal and transparent through analysis.

Second, discourse is historical. CDA thus sees discourse from a binding context. It recognizes that discourse and semiosis in general do not exist in isolation. Discourse needs context to have meaning. It needs context either for production or for interpretation (Fairclough, 2003; see also van Dijk, 2008). This account can also be drawn from cultural political economy in which context can be defined in terms of conditions of production and conditions of interpretation of the social problems. A discourse on public policy is not only related to economic and social aspects but is also related to political and cultural contexts (Jessop, 2010; Sum & Jessop 2015). Therefore, analyzing policy discourse from a CDA perspective requires some treatment of the economic, political, and social contexts as a means for a dialogue between disciplines. Third, CDA is an explanatory critique. CDA scholars look at social realities in critical ways and try to change them. They explore what the unjust social world is and how it should be changed by advancing critiques (Bhaskar, 2009; Lacey, 2002). Accordingly, the critiques are aimed at “making respective political stance explicit, and having a focus on self-reflection as scholars undertaking research” (Wodak, 2008, p. 298).

Finally, CDA is a form of radical analysis. The analyst is often regarded as an activist as well as a thinker. The reason is that CDA allows the analyst to unravel the opaqueness in language use and its impacts on social life such as unequal access, unequal power relations, and discrimination in order to seek equality and social justice (Fairclough, 2018). Accordingly, the success of CDA’s analysis is determined by how effective its contribution to transformation for a better society is. In brief, some scholars have used CDA as both the theoretical framework and the analytical tool in their critical research on policy texts (Fairclough, 2013; Taylor, 2004; Theine & Rieder, 2019), but none has focused on the policy text of the MoU document.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This article used mixed research methods. The quantitative procedure was used for identifying the prevalence of the process types in the Helsinki MoU text and qualitative CDA was applied as the explanatory critique. [Chouliaraki and Fairclough \(1999\)](#) and [Fairclough \(2003\)](#) argue that CDA and transitivity analysis of the process types can commit a dialogue for text-based critical research. CDA provides a concept for analyzing representations of social phenomena. Meanwhile, transitivity can provide a grammatical and semantic concept of analysis. This is because transitivity can reveal how discourse participants represent reality through language. CDA consists of three dimensions of analysis: description, interpretation, and explanation of the discourse ([Fairclough, 2010](#)). However, CDA without grammatical analysis is not a critical analysis of discourse at all.

3.2 The Technique of Data Collection

The Helsinki MoU text is the primary source of data for the present study. The data was collected by retrieving the online version from the website of the United Nations Peacemaker. The academic reason for selecting the 18-year-old Helsinki MoU is that this document is of social, political, and historical significance not only for the GoI and GAM but also for the people of Aceh and the international community.

The Helsinki MoU text identifies the parties, defines the scope, specifies the roles and responsibilities of each party, and outlines future actions. It was understood as an agreement between the GoI and GAM to establish a permanent ceasefire of a 29-year conflict for new political, economic, and legal structures. It expresses a convergence of determination between the parties, indicating the common line of the actions to be taken. The Helsinki MoU text also sets out a variety of rules for the autonomous government of Aceh. It pertains to what the parties should do and how they should behave. The Helsinki MoU consists of seven pages, which are divided into six sections. Altogether it consists of 2.860 words.

3.3 The Technique of Data Analysis

The analysis of the data involved the following steps. First, to answer the first research question, this article set out six process types based on the Hallidayan system of transitivity: material process (processes involving physical actions); mental process (processes that go on in the internal world of mind); relational process (processes of being, having, attributing, and identifying); verbal process (processes of saying and talking); behavioral process (physiological processes of behaving); and existential process (processes of expressing that something exists). For an exhaustive treatment of the transitivity system, see [Thompson \(2013, Ch. 5\)](#) and [Halliday and Matthiessen \(2014, Ch. 5\)](#). Each process type has its unique participant roles and other grammatical characteristics. For example, the material process is associated with the Actor, the participant who does the action, the Goal, the affected participant, the Recipient/Client, the beneficiary of transfer of possession or service, and the Scope, the quantity of something. In addition, the material process can also have Circumstances realized by

adverbial phrases. The relational process is associated with the participant roles of the Carrier, the entity that carries or has the Attribute. When a relational clause is reversible, the clause has the participant roles of Value/Token and Identified/Identifier. The mental process concerns the participant roles of Sayer, the participant who feels, likes, or knows Phenomenon, the entity of the world in the mind. The verbal process is associated with the participant role of Sayer, the participant who says a Verbiage, what is said, and Receiver, to whom something is said. The behavioral process is realized by Behaver, the one who behaves, and Behavior is the human physiological process itself. The existential process has the participant role of Existent, the entity that exists, which is normally recognizable because the Subject of the clause is ‘there’.

Table 1. Process types in transitivity system.

Process types	Examples
Material	GAM _[Actor] undertakes _[Process: Material] the decommissioning of all arms, ammunition, and explosives _[Goal] . Outside monitors _[Goal] will be invited _[Process: Material] to monitor the elections in Aceh _[Circumstance: Place] . All former combatants _[Recipient] will receive _[Process: Material] an allocation of suitable farming land _[Scope] .
Relational	Aceh _[Carrier] has _[Process: Relational] the right _[Attribute] to raise funds with external loans. The number of organic police forces to remain in Aceh after the relocation _[Value] is _[Process: Relational] 9100 _[Token] .
Mental	Aceh _[Senser] will enjoy _[Process: Mental] direct and unhindered access _[Phenomenon] to foreign countries.
Verbal	The European Commission _[Sayer] said _[Process: Verbal] that they would help _[Verbiage] .
Behavioral	The widows _[Behaver] cried _[Process: Behavioral] .
Existential	There will be _[Process: Existential] transparency in campaign funds _[Existent] .

Table 1 provides a simple illustration for each of the process types of the main clauses in the transitivity system that the article employed. The semantic labels (Actor, Goal, Carrier, Attribute, Senser, Phenomenon, Sayer, Verbiage, etc.) are all functional and conventional categories. Their uses depend on the participant roles of the linguistic elements they play in a clause.

Second, each of the major clauses in the MoU text was inserted into the spreadsheets for identification and tabulation. Third, to decide the type of processes occurring in the major clauses, the author referred to Table 1 and Thompson (2008, 2013) and Mwinlaaru and Nartey (2022). When the borderline cases occurred, the researcher used common sense and the grammar of English. All technical labels were set to start with a capital letter. Finally, to answer the second research question, the researcher resorted to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) and Fairclough (2003), where CDA can provide the explanatory critique for the policy measures enacted in the Helsinki MoU.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The first research question of this article concerns the prevalent process types used in the Helsinki MoU document. The findings are revealed in Table 2. It shows that the most prevalent process types in the Helsinki MoU were the material processes and the relational processes ranked the second. The least realization was the existential

process. Behavioral process did not seem to have existed in the text. The findings also demonstrated that the Helsinki MoU document was concerned more with the world of doings, beings, and relations than the world of feelings and sayings (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2013).

Table 2. Frequency distribution of process types in the Helsinki MoU text.

Process types	Frequency	Percentage
Material	95	73.07%
Relational	24	18.46%
Mental	4	3.07%
Verbal	5	3.84%
Behavioral	0	0.0%
Existential	2	1.53%
Total	130	

Table 3 shows the transitivity of clauses in the Helsinki MoU document with the participants involved in the process types. It shows that the social actors are dominated by concepts and are usually obfuscated. The GoI functions more as an actor than GAM. This demonstrates that there was an unequal power relation between the two parties. The findings also revealed that the relational processes as the second dominance in the text in which the Carrier was realized by Aceh. The Attributes were frequently concepts and the Token–Value slots were generally occupied by the AMM.

Table 3. Transitivity of the clauses in the Helsinki MoU Text.

Participant Role	Entities						
	GoI	GAM	GoI & GAM	Aceh	AMM	Obfuscated	Concepts
Actor	19	11	9	7	7	18	24
Carrier	2		1	6			4
Senser	1		1	1	1		
Sayer					4		1
Behaver							
Existent							2
Goal			3	4	1		57
Recipient				5	1		
Token–Value				1	8		2
Attribute							13
Phenomenon							3
Receiver				1	3		2
Verbiage							1
Total	22	11	14	25	25	18	109

Concerning the second research question, the findings reveal that some of the policy measures articulated in the MoU, such as establishing *Wali Nanggroe* and decommissioning all arms, have been undertaken; others such as establishing a human rights court, distributing farming land, creating jobs for ex-combatants, and setting the bank interest rate by the government of Aceh remain to be seen. In addition, different from Amalia's (2019) findings, the current study found that there was not only vagueness in power relation between the GoI and GAM embedded in the Helsinki MoU, but the document has also served as a bureaucratic means of control for Aceh development. The next subsections provide a rigorous analysis of the important

excerpts that constitute the textual evidence of the findings and for the discussion section that follows.

4.1 Material Processes

Table 2 shows that the material processes dominate the process types in the Helsinki MoU. The action verbs in the material processes included ‘established’ and ‘receive’. Such choices of verbs signify the prescriptions that the two parties have needs, duties, and preferences to accomplish.

- (1) Kanun Aceh_[Goal] will be **re-established**_[Process: Material] for Aceh_[Recipient] respecting the historical traditions and customs of the people of Aceh and reflecting contemporary legal requirements of Aceh.
- (2) The institution of Wali Nanggroe with all its ceremonial attributes and entitlements_[Goal] will be **established**_[Process: Material].

The verbal group ‘will be reestablished’ and ‘will be established’ are in passive forms that refer to the history of Aceh and the political promise that the parties need to manifest. The social actors in the clauses are obfuscated; they are concealed. Since the Actor is indirectly mentioned in the clause, it becomes less prominent and less affected by the action. The MoU also stipulates that:

- (3) A Human Rights Court_[Goal] will be **established**_[Process: material] for Aceh_[Recipient].

The Actor in this excerpt also obfuscates while Aceh is the Recipient. The promise enacted in ‘will be established’ has passed timelessly. The GoI has forgotten its promise and its impact is discussed later. Another stagnant implementation of the policy concerns the distribution of farming land and employment for the former GAM combatants.

- (4) All former combatants_[Recipient] will **receive**_[Process: Material] an allocation of suitable farming land, employment, or, in the case of incapacity to work, adequate social security_[Goal] from the authorities of Aceh_[Source].

The material verb ‘will receive’ in excerpt (4) refers to a promise of the allocation of suitable ‘farming land’ and ‘employment’ that ‘the authorities of Aceh’ for ex-combatants. The implementation has also been sluggish. The excerpts in (5) and (6) are the material clauses concerning security.

- (5) GAM_[Actor] **undertakes**_[Process: Material] the decommissioning of all arms, ammunition, and explosives_[Goal] **held by**_[Process: Material] the participants_[Actor] in GAM activities with the assistance of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM)_[Circumstance: Role].
- (6) The Head of Monitoring Mission_[Actor] will **make**_[Process: Material] a ruling_[Goal] which_[Actor] will be binding on_[Material Process] the parties_[Goal].

The timeless action verb ‘undertake’ in excerpt (5) indicates that the submission of weapons from GAM’s combatants is the responsibility of GAM. They have completed the task. In excerpt (6), the verb ‘make’ signifies that the presence of the third party, the AMM, has the structural power that can force the two parties to comply

with the agreement stipulated in the MoU. The presence of the modal verb ‘will’ in excerpt (6) indicates a strong commitment from the AMM to settle the conflict and the parties obey the regulation. The social actor in the clause is the AMM which holds power to monitor the peace process. It is fair to say that the decommissioning of ‘all arms, ammunition and explosives’ was implemented efficaciously because there have been no serious armed clashes in the region.

4.2 Relational Processes

The second prevalent process type in the Helsinki MoU is the relational process. In total, there are 24 occurrences of the relational processes in the MoU document. The verbs which accompany the relational clauses include ‘has’, ‘have’, and ‘be’. Sample excerpts of the relational processes in the Helsinki MoU text are as follows:

- (7) Aceh_[Carrier] **has**_[Process: Relational] the right_[Attribute] to use regional symbols including a flag, a crest and a hymn_[Attribute].
- (8) Aceh_[Carrier] **has**_[Process: Relational] the right_[Attribute] to set interest rates beyond that set by the Central Bank of the Republic of Indonesia.
- (9) Aceh_[Carrier] **has**_[Process: Relational] the right_[Attribute] to set and raise taxes to fund official internal activities.
- (10) Aceh_[Carrier] **has**_[Process: Relational] the right_[Attribute] to conduct trade and business internally and internationally and to seek foreign direct investment and tourism to Aceh.

These relational clauses are concerned with political and economic policies. The excerpts show that the relational verb ‘has’ collocates with the nominal group ‘the right’ in excerpts (7)-(10). All these rights are manifest in nonfinite verbs, ensuring the Attribute ‘right’ to use ‘regional symbols including a flag’ in excerpt (7), to set ‘interest rates’ in excerpt (8), to set and raise ‘taxes’ in excerpt (9) and to conduct international trade and to seek ‘foreign direct investment’ in excerpt (10). Rhetorically these rights are taken for granted, for Acehnese identity is inculcated in the document. It is Aceh that serves as the Carrier of having rights.

Another excerpt on the major economic policy realized by the relational process occurs in excerpt (11).

- (11) Aceh_[Carrier] **is**_[Process: Relational] entitled_[Attribute] to retain seventy (70) per cent of the revenues from all current and future hydrocarbon deposits and other natural resources in the territory of Aceh as well as in the territorial sea surrounding Aceh.

In excerpt (11) the MoU stipulates that Aceh is entitled to retain ‘seventy (70) per cent of the revenues’ from sharing of exploitation of ‘hydrocarbon deposits and other natural resources’. The predicative adjective ‘entitled’ is the Attribute of the Carrier, Aceh, for the nonfinite verb ‘to retain’.

The following are three excerpts of the relational process concerning security.

- (12) The number of organic military forces to remain in Aceh after the relocation_[Value] **is**_[Process: Relational] 14700_[Token].

- (13) The number of organic police forces to remain in Aceh after the relocation_[Value] **is**_[Process: Relational] 9100_[Token].
- (14) Military forces_[Carrier] will **be**_[Process: Relational] responsible for_[Attribute] upholding external defence of Aceh.

In excerpts (12) and (13), the processes are realized by a Value–Token relation. In excerpt (14) the nominal group ‘military forces’ serves as the Carrier for the Attribute ‘responsible for upholding external defence of Aceh’. The constituent ‘will be responsible for’ indicates that the process of being is constructed from a perspective of Indonesian security. The propositions of these clauses presuppose that Aceh cannot have its own military. The GoI is totally in charge of national security. Consequently, to tackle a new movement, the GoI has strategically expanded the military bases in the province, but not a significant number of troops.

4.3 Mental Processes

Table 2 reveals that the MoU uses mental processes sparingly. The mental verbs by which the processes are manifest include ‘agree’, ‘enjoy’, and ‘decide’. The following are excerpts of mental clauses in the Helsinki MoU that require analysis.

- (15) To this end_[Circumstance: Contingency] the GoI and GAM_[Senser] have **agreed** on_[Process: Mental] the following_[Phenomenon]: ...
- (16) Aceh_[Senser] will **enjoy**_[Process: Relational] direct and unhindered access to foreign countries_[Phenomenon].
- (17) The Head of the Monitoring Mission_[Senser] will **decide** on_[Process: Mental] disputed cases_[Phenomenon] based on advice from the legal advisor of the Monitoring Mission from the legal advisor of the Monitoring Mission.

In excerpts (15)-(17), the mental verbs ‘agreed’, ‘enjoy’, and ‘decide’ refer to the cognitive and desiderative type of mental process. The participants are the GoI, GAM, Aceh (people), and the AMM; the participants seem to be inanimate, but they still refer to living things. The phenomenon includes ‘access to foreign countries’ and ‘disputed cases’, and certainly the substance of the Helsinki MoU itself as stated in ‘the following’ of excerpt (15), which includes a new law of the MoU.

4.4 Verbal Processes

There are five verbal clauses occurring in the Helsinki MoU text. The following are two excerpts of the verbal processes.

- (18) In that case_[Angle], GoI_[Receiver] will be **informed**_[Process: Verbal] and the GoI will not assume responsibility for the security of this.
- (19) AMM_[Sayer] **reports to**_[Process: Verbal] the Head of Monitoring Mission_[Receiver] who will provide regular reports to the parties and to others as required, as well as to a designated person or office in the European Union and ASEAN contributing countries.

The reporting verbs ‘informed’ and ‘reports’ in the clauses are categorized as verbal clauses since they construe verbal activities. In excerpt (18), the Sayer is indirectly mentioned in the clause while the Receiver is ‘the GoI’. On the other hand,

in excerpt (19) the Sayer conflates with ‘AMM’ while the Receiver is ‘the Head of Monitoring Mission’. This indicates that it is the AMM’s role that is decisive in maintaining law and order after the declaration of the truce. Since the MoU is a written document, it contains only a few verbal processes.

4.5 Existential Processes

The last and least prevalent process type in the Helsinki MoU document is the existential process. This process is marked by the word ‘there’. Existential process occurred only twice in the document, as follows:

(20) There will **be**_[Process: Existential] full transparency_[Existent] in campaign funds_[Circumstance: Location].

(21) There will **be**_[Process: Existential] no major movements of military forces_[Existent] after the signing of this MoU_[Circumstance: Temporal].

Excerpts (20) and (21) show that the existential processes are expressed by the finite verb ‘be’ and supported by modal ‘will’, indicating the future events with a presupposed strong commitment from the parties of the Helsinki MoU. Moreover, the nominal group’s ‘full transparency’ and ‘no major movements of military forces’ are the Existents of processes that are presupposed and back-grounded. The word ‘there’ in the excerpts has no ideational meaning; it simply indicates the characteristic of the ideational process that fills in the subject slot. Historical consensus shows that full transparency in the campaign and other funds has not always existed. As a result, several politicians have been imprisoned because of misappropriating such funds. The GoI has not moved the military forces, but they actually have expanded the military bases in Aceh.

5. DISCUSSION

The most significant finding (see Table 2) is that the material processes dominate the Helsinki MoU text. Meanwhile, in the transitivity of the clauses (see Table 3), the actors are mostly realized by concepts and sometimes they are obfuscated. This indicates the vagueness of the Helsinki peace agreement. Economically, the meaning-making processes in the text emphasize physical actions, because concrete and comprehensive solutions were anticipated for the protracted conflict of Aceh. Furthermore, the actors are often concealed, because politically the GoI pretended to be accountable for the proposed actions without GAM’s awareness of it. Therefore, the real agency is unclear. In other words, although social structures can determine discursive practices and establish the system of doings and doers (Fairclough, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2008), the actors of certain actions in the MoU text are not specified. In other words, some policies are articulated without agents. Theoretically, transitivity manifests itself in representing five different worlds in the MoU text, including the physical, relation, and the world of existence (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2008, 2013). Empirically, transitivity can also manifest in the mediated legal world (Coulson, 2020). The findings reflect those of Adjei et al. (2015) and Gunawan et al. (2023), who found that the material processes dominated the texts they studied. The MoU text mostly embeds the physical actions; for instance,

establishing *Qanun* (bylaw) Aceh, establishing the institution of *Wali Nanggroe* (customary leader of state), and establishing a Human Rights Court.

For *Qanun* enactment, as in excerpt (1), the legislative members of the Aceh House of Assembly (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Aceh*, or DPRA) passed *Qanun Jinayah* (Islamic criminal bylaw) Number 6 of 2014. From the explanatory critique point of view, this law has mostly affected the subaltern groups. For instance, when the law of canning was executed for committing *zina* (adultery), *maysir* (gambling), and *khalwat* (dating in secluded places), it generally victimized the lower level of Acehnese society. The politicians and government officials who are involved in the corruption cases are exempt from the *Qanun* enforcement although the corruption issues also deserve serious attention (Rahman, 2022). Indeed, the politicians involved in such cases have never been whipped. Certainly, the ultimate goal of flogging is for corrections, not for punishment, but the abuse of power exists in such law enforcement since it discriminates against particular groups.

Establishing *Wali Nanggroe*, as in excerpt (2), was also fulfilled. However, the institution of *Wali Nanggroe* seems to have been more a political agenda for power sharing than its main functional roles. In other words, *Wali Nanggroe* has not played a significant role in the development of Aceh. The institution focuses generally on *Hukum Adat* (customary law), ignoring serious duties: tackling unemployment, fighting against injustices, and eradicating poverty. GAM actually did not fight for the *Syariah* law but for the economic injustices, unjust policies, and political rights of the GoI (Schulze, 2004). Regrettably, establishing a Human Rights Court, as in excerpt (3), was not fulfilled. Consequently, the ruthless abductions, tortures, and the bloody massacre of innocent civilians that beset Aceh during the protracted conflict, such as the tortures and killings at *Rumoh Gedong* from 1989 to 1998, the shooting tragedy at *Simpang KKA* in 1999 and at *Bumi Flora* in 2001, have passed without investigations (“16 tahun damai Aceh,” 2021).

In excerpt (4), the MoU stipulates that ‘all former combatants will receive an allocation of suitable farming land and employment’: a material process for actions. However, in practice, only some GAM top leaders have access to a large part of land distributions. The fair distributions of land remain to be seen. The same holds true for the employment promise. The most conspicuous political impact of the employment policy is that dozens of ex-GAM politicians have reached top positions, such as the head of *Wali Nanggroe*, members of legislative and executive, provincial governor, and district regents (Usman, 2017). On the other hand, ex-GAM combatants, *inöng bale* (widowed combatants), and other subaltern groups have not been treated equally; they still generally live in utter misery.

Another important finding (see Table 2) is that the second prevalent process type in the MoU text is the relational process. They are concerned, among others, with Aceh’s having the ‘right’ to use a regional flag, a crest, and a hymn (as in excerpt (7)). However, in reality, Aceh still cannot raise the flag legally or sing the hymn in public ceremonial activities. Furthermore, the policies of having the ‘right’ to set interest rates (as in excerpt (8)), ‘right’ to raise taxes (as in excerpt (9)), and ‘right’ to conduct international trade and seek foreign direct investments (as in excerpt (10)), have not been implemented either.

To follow up the economic policy on the right to set interest rates (as in excerpt (8)), in 2018 the government of Aceh enacted *Qanun* Number 11 stipulating that all banks in Aceh must operate on the basis of the Islamic finance law. However, in the

five years of the *Qanun* practices, the interest rates are still set by the Central Bank of Indonesia. Ideologically, in the past, the conventional banks used marketing vocabulary such as ‘result-oriented’, ‘in tune listening’, and ‘service excellence’. Now the Sharia banks adopt religious terms, such as *mudharabah* (profit sharing), *musyarakah* (joint venture), and *qaulan ma’rufah* (good communication). Yet the profit-oriented practices have not changed. It is the discourse that actually has changed. Indeed, even the converted banks still levy taxes instead of *zakat* (alms) from the clients’ accounts. In principle, the ultimate purpose of Sharia banking is to create well-being for the *ummah* (community), not simply to boost the financial growth of the stakeholders and the banking institutions. Furthermore, the government of Aceh ‘has right’ to seek foreign direct investments, as in excerpt (10), but it appears that foreign companies are still reluctant to invest in Aceh. This is probably because they are still haunted by *pajak nanggroe* (local taxes); the raised taxes (see excerpt (9)), that are illegal because they are levied by the *oknum* (unknown authority). Consequently, neither large greenfield investments nor big brownfield investments flow into Aceh.

In excerpt (11) the MoU stipulates that Aceh ‘is entitled to retain 70 per cent’ of the revenues. Linguistically, this excerpt was also in the relational process. Politically, this sum of revenue ‘70 per cent’ is a commitment between the GoI and GAM. Aceh receives a special autonomy revenue from natural resources about 10 trillion rupiahs annually. With the approval of DPRA, the Aceh government through decrees stipulates where the revenues should be spent. Compared to other provinces in Indonesia like East Java and West Java with a population of 40.6 million and 49.9 million respectively, this sum of revenues is rational for Aceh with a population of 5.2 million. Surprisingly, Aceh has yet been able to eradicate the crippling poverty, high unemployment, and high stunting rates. This is because the government of Aceh has mismanaged the annual revenues. The members of the parliament are so engrossed in power maintenance that they rarely visit villages to provide solutions to unemployment, economic hardship, and education for disadvantaged youths. They are generally in search of ordinary people when they need votes to secure their political power.

Taken together, [Mwinlaaru and Nartey \(2022\)](#) found that transitivity in the African nations’ anthems represented the people’s resistance to colonization, the motif for freedom, and their right to land ownership. This study shows that transitivity manifests various discrete issues, including the rule of law, social order, and economy. For instance, the Helsinki MoU demanded the GoI’s confession of the flag of Aceh, the right to *Qanun*, the rights to a larger portion, and the self-management of the revenues. Regrettably, although the MoU has passed for 18 years, a number of points specified in the document have yet been implemented. In other words, Aceh has not obtained its power of self-government ([Zainal et al., 2022](#)) as there was at face value no dominance in power in the peace agreement ([Amalia, 2019](#)). These are some of the indicators of the sluggishness of the Helsinki MoU implementation. The conundrum occurred because the MoU was not carefully planned and the GAM leaders signed it without mature considerations. Therefore, since its total implementations are stagnant, the Helsinki MoU policy text to some extent constitutes a bureaucratic means of the economic, political, and social controls for the post-conflict Aceh.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has shown the material processes constitute the most dominant process type in the Helsinki MoU text, followed by the relational processes. The actors are mostly concepts, frequently obfuscated. Unless concealed, more actors' roles were filled by the GoI than GAM. This indicates that there is an unequal relation between the GoI and GAM. Meanwhile, the goals are also in general realized concepts. The article has argued that the material clauses dominated the MoU text because the GoI and GAM deserve a real overarching approach to the protracted conflict. In addition, the prevalent process types also indicate that there are prescriptions and provisions that need to be carried out to generate solutions to the economic, political, social, and structural problems in Aceh. However, although the agreement has passed for nearly 18 years with special autonomy revenues, the development of Aceh is still lagging behind the other provinces in Indonesia. This is probably because most of the actions are in the form of concepts and obfuscated in which the agency is not clear. This indicates that there was a vagueness in power relations, agendas, and policies articulated in the Helsinki MoU.

The article has argued that although the Helsinki MoU has played a significant role as the negotiated way of regulating Acehnese society that is embedded in discourse, a number of the crucial provisions in the form of social transformations it needs to generate have not been implemented. These provisions include setting the bank interest rates and the establishment of a Human Rights Court. Others, such as the equal distributions of land and the invitation of foreign direct investments have also been sluggish. This implies that the Helsinki MoU has served as the bureaucratic means of control for the post-conflict Aceh. Therefore, this study would provide some academic enlightenment not only for text-based critical research but also for political institutions and better future Aceh development.

The current study has some limitations. It has relied on the analysis of a single large text. It has not been supported by ethnographic data such as interviews and questionnaires. Therefore, further research should include various texts, such as other agreements, laws, decrees, or statutes on public policy that came after the Helsinki MoU. The research methodology should include interviews, questionnaires, and a discourse-historical approach. Textual analytical tools can include intertextuality and interdiscursivity.

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