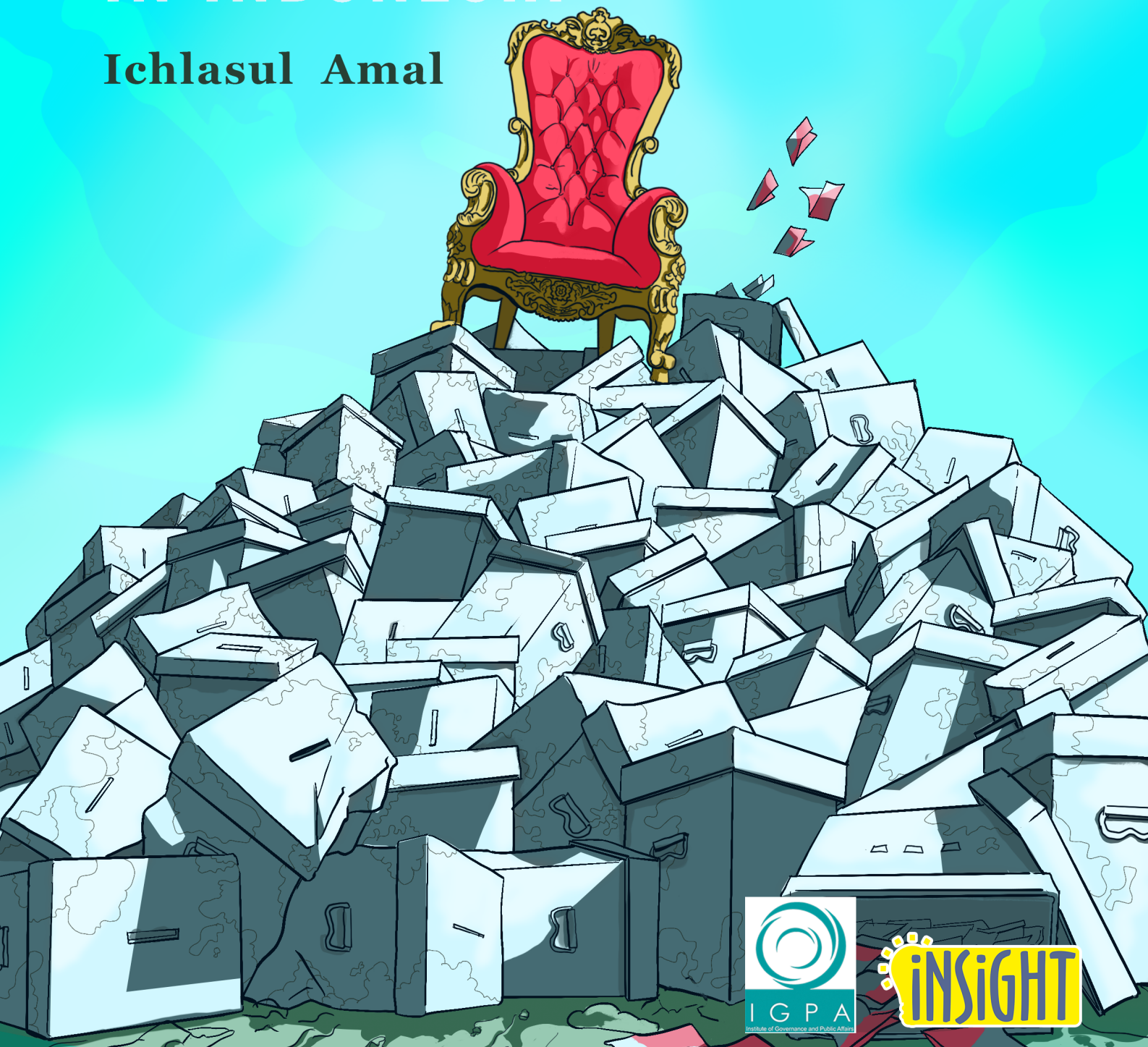


EDISI LAPORAN PENELITIAN

# POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE ORIGIN OF REGIONAL AUTONOMY IN INDONESIA

Ichlasul Amal



Amal, I. 2021. "Political Parties and the Origins of Regional Autonomy in Indonesia".  
*Bulletin Insight*, Edisi Agustus 2021, Volume 2 (2).

Penulis : **Ichlasul Amal**

Penyunting : **Arif Novianto**

Desain Sampul : **Wahyu Budi Utomo**

Tata Letak Isi : **Sarah Meirina Sari**

Ukuran : **A5**

Tebal : **27**

# Political Parties and The Origins of Regional Autonomy in Indonesia



**Ichlasul Amal**

Guru Besar Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik  
Universitas Gadjah Mada

## • BACKGROUND

In its effort to implement democratization and modernizing the governance, Indonesian political leaders has issued regulations to promulgate decentralization and regional autonomy through the law number 22 of 1999, revised by the law number 32 of 2004, and the latest law number 23 of 2014. Both the leaders and the people believe that developing regional autonomy is a positive way for a better Indonesia. According to a survey by *Lingkaran Survey Indonesia* (LSI), 73% of respondents are supporting regional autonomy (Mietzner, 2013). In other survey in 2011, LSI found that 66% of respondents supporting regional direct election (Mietzner, 2013). Both of those regulations issued by the lawmakers and those surveys on people's perspectives are showing that Indonesians have a consensus to moving towards a regional autonomy.

However, the implementations of decentralization are not without problems. For example, in the last decade, there are 223 newly established regions. Among those new regions, 80% are still dependent to the central government's budget. For these regions, 90% of the budget is being used for civil servicemen's salary (Tempo, 2016). As the result, public service and social security for the people is neglected. Up to now,

there are about 15 overleaping regulations which are in some way hampered the implementation of the other regulations. This condition has created confusions, and in other way provides opportunities for local political elites to maneuver and exploit these overleaping regulations for their own economic benefits; controlling resources; and dominating local politics.

Considering the importance of regional autonomy and the problems occurred, this research aims to provide a better perspective in understanding the structure in formulating regional autonomy in Indonesia. Only by a clear understanding on the origins and influential factors of Indonesian decentralization, we could solve the problems. However, a thorough political study in Indonesian decentralization is still limited. At present times, there are many discussions on regional autonomy and no final conclusion on the how to effectively manage the implementation of it. Many Indonesian experts were trapped at understanding decentralization as a mere matter of governance, laws, and regulations. In Indonesia, scholars and students of government and political sciences point out that the weakness of political parties contributes to create difficulties in practicing the implementation. This research is positioning itself to provide a political perspective and pin-pointing at the hearth of the process of the creation of decentralization and regional autonomy concept in Indonesia which is actually the product of the dynamics of political parties.

## • **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

How the dynamic of political parties in Indonesia contribute to the development of regional autonomy and decentralization?

## • **MAIN ARGUMENT**

Laws and regulations are only the product of political processes. The competition of political elites and the need of political parties in securing resources has motivated them to formulate law and regulations that benefits their interest, including on the matter of decentralization. Hence, this study suggest that the dynamics of political parties in Indonesia throughout different eras has shaped the structure of regional autonomy in Indonesia nowadays.

## • SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study provides a different perspective that argues the problems of Indonesian regional autonomy caused mainly by the interest of the elites. This study debunks the beliefs saying that the problems are merely related with governance, regulations and implementations.

## • METHODOLOGY

This study will employ a constructivist approach in examining the dynamics and development of political parties in Indonesia and its relations with regional autonomy. In order to do so, this study will utilize a critical readings on the Indonesian political history and scheming through the experiences of political parties and its elites.

As defined by Rondinelli et al (1983), decentralization is the process of enabling the regions to do planning, decision making for their own and to enable them to conduct administrative authority transferred from the central government. All recorded documents on political parties' involvement in defining and formulating decentralization will be categorized as important data. The data that are qualified to be examined are those which are in accordance with activities related to decentralization process such as case studies in the earlier era of independence Indonesia, role of parties in defining the power relations between the central government and local governments in New Order era, formulation of regional autonomy laws in the reform era, and political parties involvement in redistricting process (*pemekaran wilayah*) in contemporary era.

## • ANALYSIS

Introducing a little sense of self-governing to colonial society is started by the government of Netherland Indie in creating East, Center, and West Java authorities at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The creation of those three domains was the very beginning of the local autonomy in this country. Actually, the first of decentralization law was passed in 1903, it established municipalities in Java, to be followed by a few in outer islands. Volkraad (Peoples' Council) was established after the First World War

led a greater experimentation, crowned by the establishment a quasi-representative assembly. Most of the members were Dutchmen and only small numbers Indonesians.

Decentralization was long phenomenon. The urban European elites were allowed a limited measure of self-government. The law offered autonomy primarily aimed at urban areas, therefore the colonial people was higher than Indonesian and they called a *Beamtenstaat* (Benda, 1966: 591).

At the same time, traditional elites established *Budi Oetomo* in 1908. This is considered by Indonesian scholars as the awakening of nationalism in Indonesia. Not far from that year, an Islamic society called *Sarekat Islam* (S.I. – Islamic Union) was formed by H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, a political guru in teaching Socialism, Islam and Nationalism. This organization was a very popular mass organization against the Dutch Bureaucrat domination. Therefore, the Dutch were worried of the activities of S.I. as this organization has transformed into first mass modern organization in Indonesia. Several times, S.I.'s mass movements against government policies hindered the realization of Dutch colonial programs.

Because of the popularity of the organization, many communist leaders who escaped political pressures in Netherlands joined S.I. organization. The organization has then became politicized and polarized. After few years, political organization leaders of S.I. were divided into two camps: the Islamic leaders preferred to be called as S.I. *Putih* (Whites) and the socialist leaders joined the S.I. *Merah* (Reds). The disputes between S.I. *Putih* and S.I. *Merah* became unnegotiable and by the influence of Moscow, S.I. *Merah* transformed into Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI – Indonesian Communist Party) in 1924. S.I. *Putih* later transformed into *Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia* (PSI - Indonesian Islamic Union Party).

At the other side, the Nationalists were led by three elites; Sukarno, Mohammad Hatta and Sutan Syahrir. All of them were exiled outside Java. Sukarno was in many places such as in Flores and Bengkulu, while Syahrir and Hatta were exiled in Boven Digul, Papua and Bandaneira in Maluku for organizing movements against colonialism. They created *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (PNI – Indonesian Nationalist Party). However, ideological rivalry among them created a split. Sukarno and his followers were controlling the PNI, meanwhile Syahrir and Hatta formed a new party

called *Partai Pendidikan Nasional* (National Education Party). They believed that Indonesian nationalists should be educated first before actively engage in political parties.

Native Indonesian bureaucrats who worked with Dutch governments practiced centralized colonial policies. They, according to famous historian Sartono Kartodirjo, were mainly focused to the benefits of economic gain and it was often forced to interfere (by the Dutch administration) in the provinces or the regent's authority (Kartodirjo, 1974: 154-155). The experience of Indonesians in administrative government offices during this period influenced the attitude of civil servants. The attitudes were inherited from Dutch colonialism culture to Indonesian civil servant culture after the event of Indonesian proclamation of independence in 1945.

The attitudes were inherited from Dutch colonialism culture to Indonesian civil servants culture after the event of Indonesian proclamation of independence in 1945.

The 1945 Indonesian Constitution was declared one day after the Proclamation of Independence. The constitution was formed under ideological debate between nationalist including non-muslim and important Islamic leaders. The second group, Islamic *Ulamas* (religious leaders) continuously supported the phrase symbolizing Islam in *Piagam Djakarta* (Jakarta Charter); the obligation for muslim to practice Islamic Law of their whole life (*dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluknya*). Before it was implemented, one messenger told Hatta that the phrase was dangerous for Indonesian integration. The people from eastern part of Indonesia, where many distinguished religions were practiced, worried that it would become the source of discriminations. After the consultation with all groups, Hatta then eliminated that phrase from the constitution.

That proved important government decision was derived from ideological consensus between nationalist, socialist, and Islam. In supporting the efforts of the Independence revolution, Ideological rivalry among Indonesian elites were put aside. Significance elements of government, political parties and military agents were

working hand in hand in the constitution. Political parties were based on three ideological main concepts; nationalist, socialist and Islam endorsed by Hatta through a *Maklumat Wakil Presiden* (Declaration of Vice President). Furthermore, he changed the principle of presidential system of cabinet into parliamentary system known as Syahrir convention which accommodated new political parties. The national military forces were established few months after the declaration of independence consisted of paramilitary groups of political parties (for instance Laskar Pesindo from Socialist Party, regional laskar from the Nationalist and laskar Hizbullah and Saifullah from Islamic Party, Masyumi).

The professional military personals, were the embryo of national military, consisted of Dutch cadets in Indonesia trained by Netherland Indie trainers and *Pembela Tanah Air* (Peta) soldiers trained by the Japanese. The existing of two groups created rivalry and competition during the revolution adding to the complexity of having political parties' paramilitary groups and laskars. When they elected the supreme commander of the military, it was not clear who was going to be elected as the commander. Finally, General Sudirman, a former Muhammadiyah school teacher, was elected although his military experience was not so rich as compared to the former Dutch cadets. However, he was so successful to expel British troops in a campaign in Ambarawa near Semarang.

During the revolution 1945-1948, there was one regulation about regional autonomy. It regulated the position of the head of regional government. However, this law could not be effectively implemented because all leaders were busy in revolution against Dutch military who wanted to reoccupy Indonesia. In 1949, by the aid of the United States and International diplomatic pressures, Indonesia was successful to get back its territory through a federal system. Sukarno and Hatta were still a President and Vice President regardless local autonomy for local state system. Automatically, there was autonomy for local states. Nevertheless, the federal system in Indonesia lasted only for 9 months.

The local state's system which was artificially executed by the Dutch system was liquidated after the motion of Natsir "integral" (integration) by the head of Moslem party Masyumi. Therefore Masyumi party leaders in parliament were asking all local



states to integrate into the Republic of Indonesia in its centralized system. Finally, all local states joined Republic except the rebellious area such as South Maluku, and the Dutch exempted Papua when the Dutch transferred authority to the Republic of Indonesia in 1949.

Integration of local states towards unitary system of the Republic disrupted the process decentralization in federal states. Some rebellious area likes South Maluku Republic in Maluku, Darul Islam in West Java, Daud Beureueh in Aceh and Kahar Muzakar in South Sulawesi, although the reasons of rebellious movements of the local military were not only because the implementation of decentralization, further hindered national government willingness to grant regional autonomy. From 1948 until 1957, no law issued on regional autonomy. Political parties were busy with their own interests, they changed the cabinet every year, and the longest cabinet Ali Sastroamijoyo was lasted only two years.

After general election in 1955, the winners according to the collection of votes were *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (PNI), Masyumi, *Partai Nahdhatul Ulama* (NU) and *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI). In 1957, government issued a law regulating local *swatantra* governments; *swatantra tingkat I* and *swatantra tingkat II*. *Swatantras* were not implemented in all areas, only some areas in Java. It failed to be applied nationally because of massive regional rebellions of PRRI in Sumatera and Permesta in Sulawesi. They demanded to change national cabinet which they see was highly influenced by communism and they wanted Hatta returned as the Vice President since Hatta had already withdrawn from the Vice Presidency in 1956. The central government used military force to maintain peace in Sumatera and Sulawesi. Both areas demanded local autonomy therefore they bartered rubber shield with trades for their economic development. While in North Sulawesi, they bartered between Copra and daily needs with the Philippines. The rebellions forced national centralized government to formulate a more sensible policies towards the regions. Uncertainty of politics in 1957-1959 contributed to the situation in which Daniel Lev called as “the fade federalism” (Lev, 1966). It means national power structure was divided and distributed to provincial military and all administration procedures should managed through them.

In 1959, Sukarno as president made a decree to return the 1945 constitution and Sukarno became the commander of the army and dissolved big political parties



---

Integration of local states towards unitary system of the Republic disrupted the process decentralization in federal states.

---



of Masyumi and *Partai Sosialis Indonesia*. The government issued Penpres (*Penetapan Presiden* – Presidential Decision) number 6 of 1959 without consent of the House of Representative to deconcentrating of the regional budget, and the position of regional autonomy was fixed under the supervision of central government. Head of regions appointed by government from civil servant (*Pamong Praja*), they will decide all political decisions in his own area. During Sukarno period of 1959-1965, we could not find many efforts to further develop regional autonomy.

The return of West Papua to the government of Indonesia was very meaningful for Indonesian politics. President Kennedy of the U.S. pressured the Netherlands to return West Papua to Indonesia otherwise Indonesia would fall to communism according to cold war consideration. Based on negotiation between Indonesia and the United States, the United Nations initiated a referendum of free choice in 1962. Of course Indonesia won the referendum, and from these point of view, Indonesia should go back to liberal democracy and discarded communist. However, Sukarno proclaimed confrontation with Malaysia and politically leaned to Chinese communist influence.

The two to three years after the coup of 1965 were period of political uncertainty in the center and this was perceived as a power vacuum by many regional leaders. In several regions, this perception enhanced ethnic and regional assertiveness. Demand for wider regional autonomy was raised and appeals for ethnic solidarity were made, frequently mixed with ideological and religious demands. These appreciations of ethnic consciousness did not, however, give rise to regional movements like the 1950s. Rather, their proponents manipulated the new situation in the center. The new

expressions of ethnic self-consciousness strengthened the New Order movement both the regions and in the center.

Suharto put the problems of the economy in high priority soon after he became the effective head of cabinet. The government seek for financial assistance from the United States, Japan, and other Western States. The need for foreign funds was not only for economic stabilization but more urgently for developing economic plans that were drawn up in consultation with International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission in Jakarta and reflected the basic outlook of the IMF ethics emphasizing stabilization and liberalization as essential pre-requisites for development. The readiness of government to adopt their policies was crucial factor influencing the IMF, the Western Countries and Japan to supply aid on a continuous basis. In 1967, the United States, other Western Countries and Japan formed the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI). At the same time, the World Bank set up a permanent mission in Jakarta.

Long history and bitter competition between the army and political parties was perpetuated. It was not surprising that the army refused to treat the parties as equal partners in ruling the country. Most army officers had little faith in politicians as they see these party leaders has always been opportunistic in seeking power.

In the period before 1965, civilian and military factions competed for controlling important positions in the bureaucracy as the main basis of their patronage and power. In the New Order period, the bureaucracy has been reshaped by Suharto's administration which has made it more of an instrument for policy implementation and less of an arena of political struggle.

As early as December 1966 when the parties were still strong, the government established Kokarmendagri (*Korps Karyawan Departemen Dalam Negeri* – Ministry of Interior Bureaucrats Corp). This body, which civil servants and bureaucrats held all the top positions declared itself as a functional group and joined Sekber Golkar (*Sekretariat Bersama Golongan Karya* – Joined Secretariat of Functional Group). In 1970, it became clear that the government wanted Kokarmendagri to play a part in campaigning for Golkar and bureaucrats forbidden to join parties other than Golkar.

After 1968, and especially after 1974, the Suharto government was able to pour large funds into government spending programs which gave civil servants a lot of important works to do. This stands in strong contrast to the position in the Guided Democracy period when the bureaucracy was idle.

In 1974 the price of oil raised significantly from 9 US Dollars to 25 US Dollars per barrel as the influence of the Arab-Israeli War in 1973. Indonesia as one of members of Oil Exporting countries received a wind-fall of oil price. Beginning from this year, Indonesia increased the oil production up to 1.6 million barrels per day. This very good and optimistic for Indonesian financial budget but at the same time created dizziness of certain economic elites. Besides it created a rampant corruption it colluded with the principle of system the way Indonesia collected international debt. According to agreement with donor countries, the Indonesian national budget should be balance between income/assets and expenditures. Just because the increase income of a wind-fall oil price the balance of the budget was not equal any more therefore we needed some extra expenditure. This encouraged the other waste development projects increase civil servant salary up to 13-14 times a year. It made civil servant all over Indonesia stabilize, it was also important to implement decentralization for Suharto's centralized government. Until now, long after Suharto, civil servants still receive 13 times salary.

The large increase in the government budget led to a significant expansion in the scope of bureaucratic activities. One set of programs that was particularly important for regional government was that associated with *Inpres* (*Proyek Instruksi Presiden* – Presidential Instruction Projects) which aimed to disperse and equalize development in the regions. These programs were tightly controlled by the central government. Though administered by regional authorities, during the first and second Pelita, there were nine kinds of *Inpres* programs including program for building new primary schools, health clinics, markets, airports, and for reforestation.

The huge regional autonomy projects were completely financed by the foreign countries loan especially members of IGGI. Therefore, many foreigners became the advisers of the projects, among them were from Birmingham, Britain and University of California L.A. at Berkeley, USA. They established satellite offices in the Department

of Finance, Jakarta. Until the end of Suharto's government Indonesia has borrowed more than 7 billion US Dollars from IGGI. But at the same time, Indonesia had to payback its debt 9 billion US Dollars. Indonesia, according to the World Bank and IGGI groups was considered as a "good boy" because of always paying back the debts in a timely manner.

Decentralization during Suharto government acknowledged as administrative decentralization because at that period provincial governments and districts even villages was encouraged to make their own planning but ultimately decided by central government. This administrative habit was known as administration decentralization but not political decentralization by "bottom-up" planning people that criticized it derogatorily name it "mboten-up" means in Javanese not "up" at all. In fact, the implementation was actually "top-down". The government called all "development" project should be "up-graded" which intellectual people considered it misleading because up-grading would be implemented for "road" only.

Suharto government introduced autonomy system since the early period when he applied *Inpres* for his regional program. Although it was not his original idea—pushed by foreign advisers in order to increase local labor force—he allocated one third of national budgets for regional development. These project

"Decentralization during Suharto government acknowledged as administrative decentralization because at that period provincial governments and districts even villages was encouraged to make their own planning but ultimately decided by central government."

besides for regional development, long times disregarded by Sukarno leadership, effectively used by Suharto to support his power in the government.

These policies made Suharto existed 32 years and only because international economic crisis in 1997 he resigned in early 1998. Suharto appointed as a full presidency in 1967 he made first election after liberal election in 1955, and got votes 62% for government party, Golkar in 1971. He and his military supporters started to believe that political parties always created nuisance for his government. Therefore, he built political fusion among Islamic political parties became Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) and the rest non-Islam political parties changed to Partai

Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI). Since this period, Suharto government put political parties internally conflicting and it considered as “*bonsai*” (belittled/dwarfed three) in politics. From this point of view, Suharto government was seen as very centralized and in 1979 it executed nationally village law imitated from Java. The law enforced regions all over Indonesia regardless situation of regions to create a village law as in Java Island. During Suharto all governors of province and district heads appointed by Suharto himself or by central government officials.

In 1998, with the collapse of 32 years long President Suharto’s centralized government, Indonesian political system underwent transformation toward more democratic system. Reformasi (Reformation) is now the keyword of everyone to talk in public discussion. Transformation euphoria in central parliament (DPR) and local (DPRD) parliament as well as in central and local elites. It had been reorganized through the amendment of 1945 Constitution and enactment of new decentralization laws. It also reduced the presidential political executive authority and transferring in the hand of the national parliament as well as local government and legislatures. Habibie the successor of President Suharto published laws on political parties unlimited and freedom of the press. It was different from Suharto government permitted only 3 political parties.

Law No. 22 and No. 25/1999 on decentralization was the third meaningful product of President Habibie and it gave to regional (provincial, local, kabupaten and kota) government all authorities of central government to region except defense, monetary, foreign policy, laws and religion. According to Bambang Brojonegoro<sup>1</sup>, “In 1999, the law was drafted without a blueprint or general design of the decentralization scheme and lacked also a whitepaper” (Crouch & Ramsfed, 2009: 198).

So law no. 22/1999 was not clear and multi-interpretative. The problem lies the different perception between the central government’s obligatory functions and the local government, the central government including the central political parties through the financial minister strengthen the parity between them. Many people argue that the

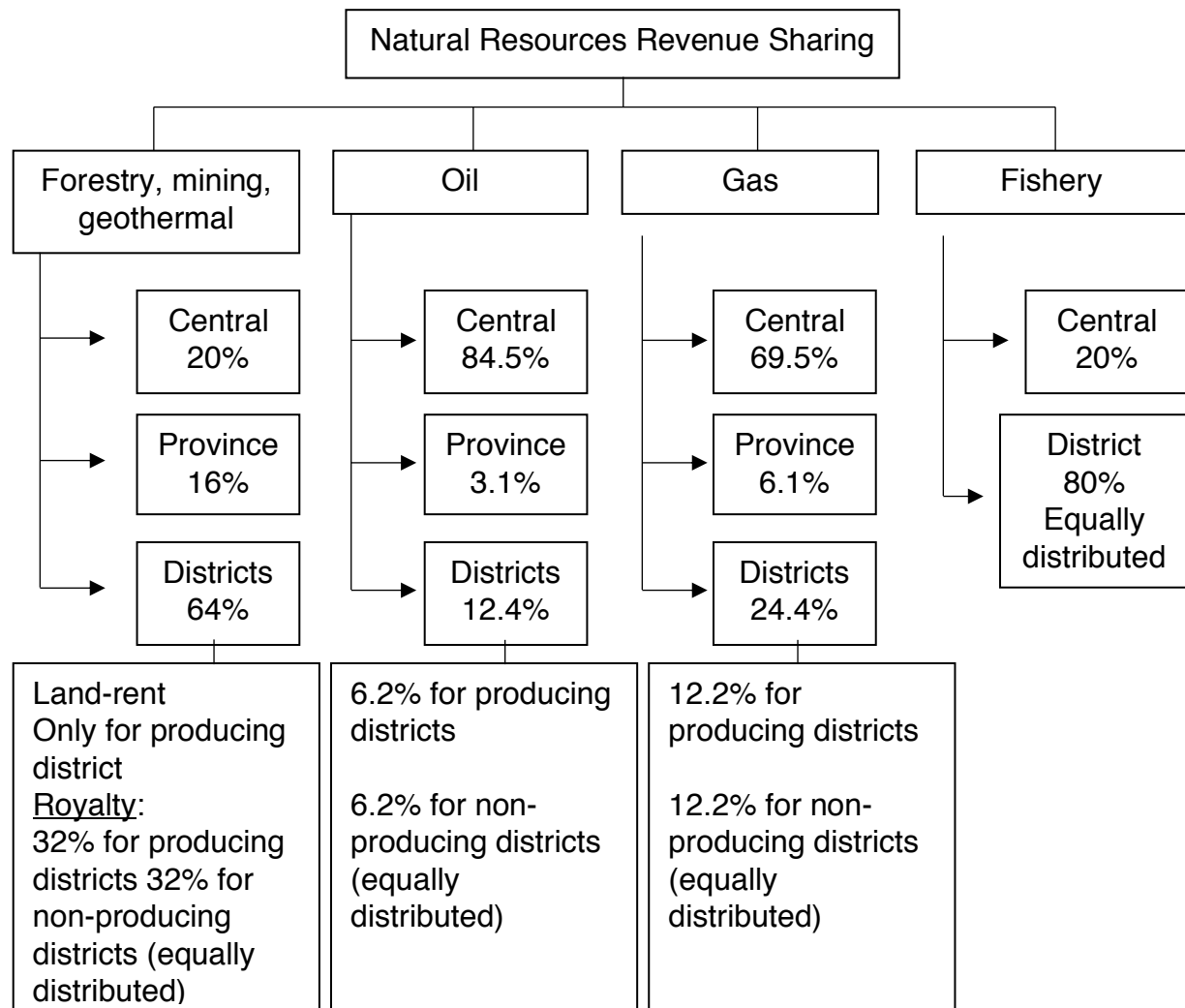
---

<sup>1</sup> Bambang Brojonegoro was the youngest Dean of the Faculty of Economic at the University of Indonesia. He then the Vice Minister of Finance and then minister of finance and now minister of Bappenas. Brojonegoro, “Fiscal Decentralization and Its Impact on Regional Economic Development and Fiscal Sustainability” in Coen J.C. Holtzappel & Martin Pamstedt, Decentralization Regional Autonomy in Indonesia, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2009.

formation of new local government in Indonesia has nothing to do with economic development and is more a matter of entertaining local political interests. The slow economic recovery and acute corruption, it is quite ironic that the decentralization policy still means an opportunity for economic resources. By this law, which was implemented in 2001, a considerable amount of political authority was handed to the district (kabupaten) and municipality (kota) just a few key responsibilities, security and defense, foreign policy, justice and religious affairs in the hand of central government. Much of the executive's fiscal power was shifted from the center to the district and municipal government. The central government should allocate a minimum of 25 percent of domestic revenues to subnational government of which 90 percent should be distributed to districts and municipalities. These mechanism remain weak, with local executives slowly strengthened at the expense of the legislative, mainly dominated by political parties. This a picture of some mixed reports for the post Suharto decentralization process.

The following scheme is formal revenue sharing of central government and regional autonomy. The ultimate implementation depend completely on the interest of central government. Since 1999, a regulation for both executive and legislative local election has on fiscal balance between the central government and regional government did not merely amend the previous laws but replicated them altogether (Nordholt & Klinken, 2007: 14). It means the central government now completely decided the outcome of local natural resources and the regional government just silently accept what central government decided.

To break the parties' monopoly on nominations, the constitutional court (*Mahkamah Konstitusi*) ruled in 2007 that candidacy for local government posts should be open to all eligible citizens (*calon independen*) not just candidates supported by political parties. Rationally, the law No. 12/2008 on Regional Government amended law no. 32/2004 to allow independent candidates to participate in subnational executive government election. This innovation was the climax of an overall trend towards greater competitiveness in local executive elections (Saehler, 2010: 271).

**Chart 01. Revenue Sharing under Regional Autonomy**

Source: Law No. 33/2004

Until the new government under Joko Widodo since 2015 there are not much difference on decentralization policies with the previous one. Except regulation on general election change every five years depend on political consideration and strategic benefit of the elites' position in the parties. As the present public expectation, ordinary citizens are not able to actively influence and shape local politics as much as had initially been hoped following decentralization and direct local elections.

Since 2005, direct gubernatorial ballots have been held in all 34 provinces and more than 500 districts and municipalities have conducted direct elections for their heads of government. In April 2009, 32,263 candidates competed in provincial parliament across the state, and 246,588 parliamentary to seize on of the 16,270 seats available in district and municipal parliaments (Kompas, 9 April 2009).



Beyond casting their votes, ordinary citizens are not able to actively influence and shape local politics as much as has initially been hoped, following decentralization and the introduction of direct local elections. In the meantime, political parties are busy to prepare general election in 2019 with new regulation the election of presidency is at the same time with the election of membership of national parliament.

During reformation in 1998, political uncertainty was very high because Habibie as successor of Suharto suddenly proclaimed that political parties, in Suharto government only three parties allowed namely Golkar, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP), and Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI), became unlimited in numbers. Embryo political parties which registered to Panitia Pemilihan Umum (Committee of General Election) was more than 100 candidates. After being tested of serious need the number reduced into 48. This number of political parties allowed to participate in general election.

In Election with unstable political and social situation. Partai Demokrasi Perjuangan under the leadership of Megawati got the highest votes. Unfortunately Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (The People Parliamentary Council) which consisted the rest of political factions including military, Golkar, Utusan Daerah (regional representative) and other with the leadership of Amien Rais (known as one of leaders of mass demonstration against Suharto) promoted “poros tengah” (middle axis) meant as long as not Megawati. Chosed of semi blind non party Abdurrachman Wahid. A Son of prominent leader of NU, had a close relation with NGOs and tendency of preference to Chinese culture. Megawati with highest votes election who legally should be a the position appointed as president acclaimed that she accepted as vice president as long as “her teacher” Gus Dur (Abdurrachman Wahid) the president. Gus Dur was successor president Habibie who failed to get support from MPR.

Harold Crouch, a famous Indonesianist from Australia, mentioned “If Habibie was an unlikely reformer, Abdurrachman Wahid was unlikely president” (Crouch, 2010: 28). While political parties were very strong in parliament and Abdurrahman political groups supporters were small, he in certain occasion provocatively comparing parliament and “kindergarten”. The political parties member of parliament became very angry and initiated DPR created process of an political impeachment. Apart from

the erratic personal style of the president, the fundamental weakness the Abdurrahman Wahid government lay in lack of parliamentary support.

Megawati moved on from vice president into president replaced the position of Gus Dur. While the vice president was occupied by a formerly opposed Megawati, Hamza Haz from the moslem party PPP. Like a former president Abdurrahman Wahid, she recruited rainbow cabinet and sought to tie all major political groups to her government and minimized of a later challenge from DPR. The rainbow cabinet ensured the stability of her government three years remaining her presidential term, although during her presidency, she espoused unclear vision or policy framework. The stability of Megawati's government, in contrast to the months of upheaval under Abdurrahman Wahid, provided space for the MPR and DPR to adopt important legislation. One of it was giving Papua special autonomy meant the money given to Papua was the biggest amount regardless number of population. This money allocation was not too much compared to the Indonesian advantage from Freeport in Papua. She also prepared draft legislation which resulted steps toward reforms in other areas. New electoral laws were adopted and the regional autonomy laws were revised.

In the whole of her government's term, she to achieved high economic growth and only raised a little more than 4%. It made a drastic inclination of her party PDIP from 33,8% in 1999 to 18,5% in 2004 general election. Following the constitution change, five candidates contested the first direct presidential election which resulted in the victory of retired general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono with 60.6% compared to Megawati 39.4% after the elimination of other three candidates (Crouch, 2010).

Yudhoyono became a president astonished many peoples. His political party, Partai Demokrat, a new party created after the election law during Megawati government, get only 7% for DPR seats. However, during presidential election defeated Wiranto, former super rank in military hierarchy, from Golkar and final presidential election remaining Megawati and Yudhoyono. His first term of presidency was very stable, he controlled the military and good relation with DPR although his party was very small fraction. He included all political groups in his cabinet.

After the two period of President Yudhoyono, political battles took place again in the 2014 elections. Jokowi and Jusuf Kalla cabinet consisted of wide coalition among supporting parties during election, PDIP (main political party), Nasdem (National Democrat), Hanura (Hati Nurani Rakyat), and PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa). Other rival coalition consisted of Gerindra (Gerakan Indonesia Raya), PAN (Partai Amanat Nasional), PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera), PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan) and Golkar (Partai Golongan Karya) under leadership of Prabowo and Hatta Rajasa. Rivalry was very severe and finally Jokowi and Jusuf Kalla were the winner. The election held a single time because the candidate for presidential election were only two.

After election political situation was changing, political parties previously supported Prabowo and Hatta Rajasa now joining the Jokowi and Jusuf Kalla government liked as Golkar and PAN. The government runned as usual except many fiscal projects that provoked corruption in executive as well legislative. One example of political parties involved in big corruption was projects of infrastructures electricity and roads in Maluku and North Maluku.

Is still going right now is mega project, a 6.2 trillion rupiahs project for buying instruments electronic cards for adult people all over Indonesia. This identity card system is useful for “pilkada” (local election in districts and province) as well as for election in 2019, but this project actually started by domestic ministry of internal affairs previous government, Yudhoyono. According to independent audit of BPK (Badan Pengawas Keuangan/State Financial Audit) government loss corrupted by government people and persons political parties in DPR is around 2,3 trillion rupiahs. Until now, the project is in process, many people in various villages on line to take picture for identity of population card.

KPK (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi) is taking responses to investigate private persons and political figures in DPR who according some witnesses already put in jail accused several DPR members involved in this corruption. Members of political parties from almost all commissions made maneuver to counter KPK by establishing hak angket toward the existence of KPK.

According to state law, it was strange and uncommon to use hak angket to ask responsibility to a non-government institution as KPK. Big public protests from several elements of society supported what KPK had been done. Hak Angket and other hak as hak interpelasi actually belonged to parliamentary system and not presidential system. In presidential system should be used check and balance government political parties and opposition. To cite from Kharis Suhud (retired general) the former head of DPR and MPR during Suharto periode, these all instruments of DPR was roughly adopted from parliamentary system.<sup>2</sup> Political parties in DPR at present time should eliminated these instrument if they understood presidential system, because Hak Angket and others leading to motion of no confident that made government fall. While in presidential system the government already be quartered for five years except the president colludes constitution or having moral hazards. Publics hoped that president Jokowi would take position to these unfinished polemics.

President Jokowi is on dilemmatic position. In one hand he would have to keep his Nawacita when he promise during election of presidency which it means he should accomplish to eliminate corruption, in the other hand a lot members of his political parties who ambitiously initiate hak angket he has to leave them. If he made hard action to figures hak angket and he was afraid that he was accused disloyal to his parties. Now, his fellow travelers, Chief of DPR and head of Golkar, Setya Novanto already considered as accused corruption in making an electronic card identity.

This uneasy choice position of president Jokowi terrify him that he would be left by political parties supporter in general election 2019. He still remember the position of PDIP in election 2014 PDIP voted dropped to 18.3 percent in left by it fellow travels. Some people believed that compare to PDIP vote in election 1999, many 'kos-kosan' (student in home family) supporter of PDIP in 1999 election like Arifin Panigoro and his group, even PNI old fellows who involved in "kudatuli" incident left out PDIP in 2004 election.

Besides problems of hak angket, Jokowi government versus DPR was debating on presidential threshold in 2019 joint election between public and presidential election. Big political parties, Golkar and PDIP demand 20% votes or coalition of

---

<sup>2</sup> interview with Kharis Suhud.

parties if they proposed a candidate of president. Till now still in process depend on government and DPR to make final decision while time for making election bill is very limited.

Related to decentralization idea, Jokowi government was concerned with number of poverty which still high even so many policies overcoming it. As indication usually be used was gini index. For few years average in Indonesia is 0.39 nearly 0.4 and now reduce a little become 0.38. Government policy to eliminate poverty has been distributed health cards and smart card wherever he travels all over poor areas. From last year, he decided one billion rupiah for every village and number of village in Indonesia is around 7.800 and for the budget APBN prepare 70 trillion. Only more than half of the budget already disburse and the rest of the villages still having administrative problem how to decide border of some villages while number of small island around 5,000 not to mention villages that could be electrified. Without electricity, how to use computers when it were importance for making finance responsibility and reports to department of transmigration and remote areas in Jakarta. Decentralization by intended of Jokowi government is hindered by disperse geographical situation of Indonesia which makes idea decentralization is difficult to be realized. If real decentralization would be applied it would be unhealthy competition and even fighting between districts and province to get more retribution in order to enrich their area's income.

## • CONCLUSION

History is a chain for development of certain community. Indonesia was occupied by Netherland colonialism for 300 years. It brought good and bad for the country. Therefore colonialism has embossed to the people deeply, it has made political scarface to the leaders and elites seriously. The influence of long colonialism has contributed to the country in unifying and solidifying a single unit of country. A fourteen and five hundred islands has been united and making the biggest an island nation in the world. Colin Brown, intellectual from Australia, calls Indonesia as "Unlikely Nation."

During the other Dutch colonialism, the Dutch government had made policy decentralization at the end of World War I but it focused to their own citizens who lived

in big cities. Indonesians that worked for the Dutch government imitated the system although after independence in 1945. Decentralization or regional autonomy has become preference choice for incoming government since then.

The governments from Unitary Republics in 1950 up to present time under the newest elected President Joko Widodo considered political parties, except under Suharto 1968-1998, has played significant political role in Indonesia. The attitude of parties is similar with during the colonial period before the war.

Among intellectuals on Indonesian politics there are disputable opinions upon the political situation after independence. Herbert Feith in his masterpiece book, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* describes comprehensively the dynamics of Indonesian politics in 1950-1958. He has successfully point-out democratic leaders in 1950-1955 after general election 1955 was replaced by private authority of demagogue Sukarno "guided Democracy". It promoted controversial opinion by Henry Benda opinion that Indonesia in 1950-1958 was not "democratic declining" as Herbert Feith started, but Indonesia politics returned back to the Javanese "authoritarian" culture, like a boat returns back to their wharf.

For the same token, Edward Aspinall (2011: 312) concludes in his recent article *Decentralization and Ethnic Politics in Indonesia: Nine Theses* "...arguably most important of all, is the historical legacy of the tradition of Indonesian national identity. Since the early twentieth century, Indonesian nationalist have emphasized the imperative of national unity, first in the face of they saw as Dutch attempts to divide and weaken Indonesians, and later against separatist and localist challenges to the national state."

In addition, the one that makes difficult to apply decentralization in modern Indonesia is the location of local government of Indonesia. In the beginning of Orde Baru, 1966-1967, Suharto government proclaimed that the last provincial government was Province Bengkulu. At that period so many local people demanded for provincial government such as Bangka-Belitung, Island of Flores, North Maluku and others came to Jakarta to show their important local position. It made 25 provincial government and around 350 districts and "*kota madya*" (urban city). After East Timor became a part of Indonesia, the number of province has 34 provinces and 536 districts and cities. The

remaining accepted by DPR and waiting moratorium from the central government is around 60 districts. This situation makes one of improbability for central government to implement proper decentralization in Indonesia.

Policy consideration formulated by the parties and other elites Indonesia consistently continues along all periods. In fact, there is always the possibility that political actors will favor certain interests and familiar usages. Therefore policy of decentralization or regional autonomy until now remain the same, centralization.

Policy consideration formulated by the parties and other elites Indonesia consistently continues along all periods. In fact, there is always the possibility that political actors will favor certain interests and familiar usages. Therefore policy of decentralization or regional autonomy remain the same, centralization.

The political formula toward regions, likes all governments, is always against to strengthen regions. To change the preference of central government policy dominated by political parties in Indonesian politics never success. This is a development decentralization or regional autonomy in Indonesia.

## • REFERENCES

- Aspinall, E. (2011). Democratization and Ethnic Politics in Indonesia: Nine Theses. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 11(2), 289-319.
- Benda, H.J. (1966). The Pattern of Administrative Reforms in the Closing Years of the Dutch Rule in Indonesia. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 25(4), 591.
- Buehler, M. (2010). Decentralization and Local Democracy in Indonesia: the Marginalization of the Public Sphere. in Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner (eds.) *Problems of Democratization in Indonesia: Election, Institutions and Society*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Crouch, H., & Ramsfed, M. (2009). *Decentralization and Regional Autonomy in Indonesia*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Crouch, H. (2010). *Political Reform in Indonesia after Suharto*. ISEAS, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Feith, H. (1962). *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*. Cornell University Press.
- Feith, H. (1965). History, Theory, and Indonesian Politics: A Reply to Harry J. Benda. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 24(2), 305-312.
- Holtzappel, G., & Martin R. (eds.). (2009). *Decentralization Regional Autonomy in Indonesia*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Kartodirjo, S. (1975). Bureaucracy and Aristocracy, The Indonesian Experience in the XIXth Century. *Archipel*, 154-155.
- Kompas. (2009). *Selamat Berpesta Demokrasi Indonesia...!*.  
<https://properti.kompas.com/read/2009/04/09/05064062/selamat.berpesta.demokrasi.indonesia>
- Lev, D. (1966). *The Transition to Guided Democracy, Indonesia Politics, 1957-1959*. Cornell University.
- Mietzner, M. (2009). *Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia, from Turbulet Transition to Democratic Consolidation*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.



- Mietzner, M. (2015). Indonesia: Democratic Consolidation and Stagnation under Yudhoyono, 2004-2014. in Case, William (ed.). *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Democratization*. Routledge.
- Nordholt, H. S., & Klinken, G. V. (2007). Introduction. in Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry Van Klinken (eds.). *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia*. KLTIV Press.
- Rondinelli, D., Nellis, J.R., & Cheema, G.S. (1983). Decentralization in Developing Countries: A Review of Recent Experience. *World Bank Working Papers*, No. 581.
- Saehler, M. (2010). Decentralization and Local Democracy in Indonesia. The Marginalization of the Public Sphere. in Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner (eds.), *Problems of Decentralization in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions and Society*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Seymour, R., & Turner, S. (2002). Otonomi Daerah: Indonesia's Decentralization Experiment. *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 4(2), 33-51.
- Smith, Benjamin (2008). The Origin of Regional Autonomy in Indonesia: Experts and the Marketing of Political Interest. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 8(2), 201-234.

## Tentang Kami



Institute of Governance and Public Affairs (IGPA)<sup>17</sup> adalah pusat kajian yang didirikan dengan tujuan untuk melakukan penelitian serta melakukan diseminasi dan publikasi hasil penelitian di Magister Administrasi Publik (MAP), Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik (Fisipol) Universitas Gadjah Mada. IGPA didirikan sebagai upaya untuk merevitalisasi kegiatan penelitian yang telah dilaksanakan MAP Fisipol UGM yang berdiri sejak 1994.

Sebagai pusat kajian, IGPA fokus melakukan kajian terkait dinamika organisasi sektor publik, citizenship, tata kelola pemerintahan di Indonesia, dan juga persoalan publik di era kontemporer. Pada tahun 2021, IGPA fokus melakukan penelitian tentang ekonomi digital di Indonesia. Beberapa penelitian yang telah dilakukan adalah terkait ekonomi gig, desa dan kota cerdas, hingga persoalan sekolah online pada saat pandemi COVID-19. Dengan berbagai kajian dan publikasi yang telah, tengah, dan akan dilakukan, maka IGPA diharapkan mampu menghasilkan berbagai penelitian yang berkualitas untuk dimanfaatkan oleh semua pihak untuk mendorong lahirnya kebijakan dan manajemen publik yang adil dan memberi kebermanfaatn bagi masyarakat luas.



### Jurnal Kebijakan & Administrasi Publik (JKAP)

Silahkan kirim naskah jurnal ilmiah Anda ke JKAP.

Informasi lebih detail, kunjungi  
[journal.ugm.ac.id/jkap](http://journal.ugm.ac.id/jkap)

Dapatkan ebook semua edisi *Bulletin Insight* secara gratis  
di website: [igpa.map.ugm.ac.id](http://igpa.map.ugm.ac.id)

## **Institute of Governance and Public Affairs (IGPA)**

Magister Administrasi Publik FISIPOL UGM unit II  
Jl. Dr. Sardjito, Sekip Yogyakarta, 55223

Magister Administrasi Publik  
Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik  
Universitas Gadjah Mada  
Jl. Prof. Dr. Sardjito, Sekip, Yogyakarta 55281

Mobile : +62813 9135 5393  
Telepon : (0274) 512700 ext. 110 atau (0274) 563825; 588234  
Fax : (0274) 589655  
Email : [igpa@ugm.ac.id](mailto:igpa@ugm.ac.id)  
Website : [igpa.map.ugm.ac.id](http://igpa.map.ugm.ac.id)  
Instagram : [@igpa.mapfisipolugm](https://www.instagram.com/igpa.mapfisipolugm)