IDENTITY POLITICS AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN PAPUA

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ABSTRACT

Although the same phenomenon also occurs in other areas, in Papua, the practice of identity politics presents an interesting political phenomenon, because what is happening is a tug of war between the two groups of essentialistic identities among the Papuans themselves, namely between Mount Papua and Coastal Papua. The issue of local identity politics is so strong that even it is more imprinted on the mental structure of the Papuanese. The issue becomes stronger in every political moment of regional elections (Pilkada). For example, in the 2018 simultaneous regional elections, the battle for the identity between Papuanese living in the mountains (Papua Gunung) and Papuanese living in coastal areas (Papua Pantai) reemerged. On that basis, the governor candidate pairs considered the configuration of this identity politics. This trend is getting stronger, especially when the representative of Papua Gunung won the 2014 Papua Gubernatorial Election (Pilgub). In subsequent political developments, the practice of identity politics continues to dominate political dynamics in Papua. In the 2018 simultaneous regional elections, the phenomenon of identity politics was practiced by several elites to fight for power and gain strength. As an illustration, the configuration of the governor candidates proposed by several political parties in the 2018 Papua Gubernatorial Election shows the dichotomy configuration of the identity of Papua Pantai and Papua Gunung. Johm Wetipo and Habel Suwae, for example, Wetipo is from Papua Gunung, namely the Wamena Regent; while Habel Melkias Suwae is from Papua Pantai, the former regent of Jayapura Regency. Likewise, another candidate pair, Lukas Enembe and Klemen Tinal in which Lukas is from Papua Gunung, and Klementinal is a person from Papua Pantai. This phenomenon certainly has implications for the quality of democracy substantially. Simultaneous regional elections are a manifestation of a democratic political system, so selecting political leadership is based more on the prospective leader's professional ability and capacity. The thesis that can be put forward is that a democratic system provides the broadest possible opportunity for anyone to become a leader as long as they have the capacity to do so. So leaders are elected by the people through democratic mechanisms because of professionalism, not because of primordialism aspects such as ethnicity, religion and race, or other permanently attached identities. This short article will explain and analyze the strong practice of identity politics in the dynamics of Papuan politics. This issue is interesting because it is rife amid efforts to build a democratic political system, especially since the implementation of Special Autonomy (Otsus) in Papua. Several theories will be used to provide an explanation for the increasing prevalence of identity politics, such as identity politics and ethnicity.

Keywords: Identity Politics, Democracy, Ethnicity

INTRODUCTION

This concept of identity, especially after the cold war, gives rise to identity politics theory, which is gaining wide attention in cultural studies. Agnes Heller defines identity politics as a political concept and movement that focuses on the difference as a major political category. After the grand narrative's failure, the idea of difference promises freedom, tolerance, and free play, although new threats emerge. The difference politics becomes a new name for identity politics; race thinking, bio-feminism, and ethnic strife occupy a forbidden place by the big old ideas. New forms of intolerance and violent practices have emerged (Heller, 1995).

Klaus Von Beyme (1996) analyzes the development of the identity politics movement in several stages, from premodern to postmodern stages. The first stage is the premodern political movement. Fundamental divisions, ethnic groups and nationalities give rise to comprehensive social movements. In this case, the mobilization is ideologically initiated by the leaders. The goal is the expropriation and seizure of power from one ruler to a new ruler. At the modern stage, the movement emerged with a conditional approach, disunity needed resources to be mobilized. There is a balance of mobilization from above and participation from below, the role of the leader is no longer dominant and the ultimate goal is the distribution of power. Then, at the postmodern stage, the emergence of the movement comes from its own dynamics. Protests arise over various individual opportunities; no single group or division is dominant. The pattern of action and activities is based on self-awareness which is autonomous as its final goal (Abdillah, 2002).

Special Autonomy (Otsus) has been considered by various groups to be an essential key point in determining the political status of the government and Papuanese. As stipulated through Law No. 21/2001 on Special Autonomy, Papua has been given the authority to regulate its own government based on statutory regulations. With special autonomy, the central government wants separatist movements to cease their activities immediately, and Papua remains a part of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. A further implication is that peace in Papua will continue to be maintained, without any political upheaval that wants to become independent.

Moreover, the development process will run smoother and accelerate faster because the strategic decision-making process is at the local government level. Otsus also provides the broadest possible opportunity for regions to design development under the conditions of regional problems. More than that, with Otsus, not only the disbursement of development gets more funds, but it also can be channelled more smoothly, both from the Central to Provinces and from Provinces to various regencies/cities and remote areas. In contrast to the New Order era's development situation, Papua was only a rural area experiencing delays in the development process. The centralization of development management had caused Papua to be lagged in all development sectors.

However, so far, the existence of Otsus has also had serious impacts on the increasingly prominent practice of identity politics which refers to ethnocentrism. For some of the Papuan elite, Otsus is interpreted as the freedom to self-determination based on ethnic sentiment. All political elites in Papua have recently determined that the Governor and Deputy Governor and the Regent and Deputy Regent in Papua must come from indigenous Papuan descent. The rise of identity politics practices using Otsus is generally based on ethnocentrism. This conservative view continues to receive support, especially from the elite, who experienced being marginalized during the New Order era. The adverse reaction from the central government's domination in the Suharto era caused a permanent sense of resentment, which was later manifested in various policies based on ethnic sentiments.

Ethnocentrism in Regional Elections

An important fact that can be found in local political dynamics after the New Order is strengthening the consolidation of the local political elite's power, especially after the direct regional elections were implemented. However, the implication of such local political dynamics is the emergence of ethnicity as an essential factor in the issue of government capture. This study also finds that it presents political facts in which ethnic networks' role in determining political parties' leadership and the local government bureaucracy is quite dominant in Papua. The symptom of giving priority to "son of the region" to occupy political positions in the regions was getting stronger and even institutionalized when the special regional regulation (Perdasus) was born that the Governor and Deputy Governor must come from indigenous Papuan ethnicities.

Various arguments have emerged over the institutionalization of the son of the region who must lead Papua. From the data and observations in the field, at least three main reasons were identified based on this decision. First, historically Papua joined Indonesia in 1963, which was different from other regions in Indonesia. In such a position, the central government's treatment of Papua is also exceptional, while still placing this area as a vulnerable secession area. Therefore, it is natural that ethnic groups outside Papua have led this area for more than thirty years. In response to such treatment, the entire Papuan elite took advantage of the momentum of providing Special Autonomy after the New Order to show that local people were also capable of leading their own regions.

Second, the development of indigenous Papuans has decreased or stagnated, especially compared to the number of migrants. Until its current development phase, Papua's population was only around 3.2 million, while the immigrant population's development was accelerating as Papua opened up to all Indonesian. Based on such facts, if indigenous Papuans do not hold the regional leadership, then the political policy cannot be controlled for ethnic Papuans' interests who are increasingly marginalized. With Papuan ethnicity at the helm, there will at least be a priority for efforts to reproduce the population of ethnic Papuans on the one hand. On the other hand, pressure from the immigrant population will be controlled and limited by various regulations.

Third, the consequence of opening Papua to everyone will increase the intense socio-economic competition in Papua. Such a situation is unlikely that ethnic Papuans will be able to compete with other ethnic populations in various social and especially economic fields. If government policies do not control this tendency, ethnic Papuans will be increasingly marginalized in socio-economic competition dynamics. Therefore, the political realm must be controlled by ethnic Papuans so that politically, the Papuans will control the direction of development in Papua in the future, with the primary role being ethnic Papuans. Thus, the Perdasus is a normative product that is deliberately used to intervene in local political dynamics so that ethnic Papuans can be protected.

Political struggles, especially concerning the struggle for power through Pilkada, feel this ethnicity nuance. However, interestingly the ethnicity here is also related to territory, namely the issue between coastal and mountain people. Coastal people or also popularly referred to as mainland people, are generally considered more educated, more skilled, and some even claim to be more civilized. Meanwhile, the mountain people living in the interior are imaged as less educated and still traditional. For those who are familiar with Papua, it will be easy to distinguish between coastal people and mountain people observing from their physique and movements. Mountain people generally have a shorter physique, slightly forward stomach, and when walking their feet are more pressing to the ground so that at first glance it looks like there is a strong pressure. If they live in urban areas, their behavior looks exclusive in the sense that they ignore the courtesy of the urban version and seem less concerned about the rules. Often spits in any place and does not care about cleanliness. This image is what the mainland Papuans consider to be backward and not smart.

In the city of Jayapura, for example, disputes originating from such imagery are often pronounced, in which mountain people or in Jayapura city called as Wamena people, are imaged as people who are not smart, left behind, and like to use violence. For residents of Jayapura city or coastal people in general, the Wamena people are often seen as having temperamental and riotous. The contestation of the two ethnic groups feels permanent so that whenever there is a trigger, riots will easily occur. For example, in September 2010, this ethnic riot occurred only because of a volleyball match held in Sentani. The tournament competed between the Wamena volleyball club and one of the clubs from Jayapura Regency. Because the club from Wamena lost, its supporters did not accept it and ended up rioting by burning the apparatus and several vehicles.

Evens or the volleyball tournament itself is sponsored by one of the elite, namely Klimentinal, who wants to run as a candidate for governor. Therefore, such riots easily spread to

the political sphere. Klimentinal, who is the Regent of Timika, is imaged as a mountain person, and in his daily life, there are rumors that it is time for mountain people to lead Papua. Indeed, in the history of Papua, there has never been any highland Papuans as governors. For example, Barnabas Suebu, who has been a governor of Papua for two terms, is a Coastal. Therefore, the moment of governor election for the 2011-2015 periods was filled with ethnic issues based on territory between coastal people and mountain people (Barker, 2000).

Although this issue is considered by intellectual circles in Papua to be too politicized, in reality, the dichotomy of coastal and mountain ethnicities is deeply felt in the political dynamics of Papua ahead of the election for the Gubernatorial election. As an indicator, it can be seen from the composition of the Pairs of each who wishes to compete in the Gubernatorial election proposed by all political parties. For example, the PDIP and Gerinda Party nominated John Wempi Wetipo and Habel Suwae as candidates for the governor of 2018-2023 period. This pair clearly reflects the composition between coastal and mountain ethnicities. Wetipo is a person from a mountain in the Wamena area who is also the regent of Wamena Regency, while Habel Suwae is a native of Depapre Jayapura Regency which is a coastal area. Abel is a coastal figure who was considered successful when he was the Regent of Jayapura Regency for two periods, popular with community empowerment programs. Meanwhile Wetipo is a figure of a mountain person who is quite popular in the Wamena area.

The strategy with the nuances of coastal-mountain ethnicity was also used as a response to another strong candidate, namely Lukas Enembe and Klementinal, who systematically worked on ethnic issues, namely the jargon: "The time has come for the mountain people to lead Papua". The pair, who popularized themselves with the acronym Lukmen, was promoted by a coalition of the Democrat party, Golkar Party, Partai Keadilan Sosial, Partai Amanat Nasional, and some other political parties. This ethnic-based winning strategy seems to have had a significant impact, as evidenced by the composition of the opinion polls while placing the Lukmen pair in the top position. The results of the poll are parallel with the number of Papuans who mostly live in mountainous areas. In terms of quantity, the number of mountain people is far more than the coastal people (Geertz, 1973).

The empirical fact that Papua is increasingly pluralistic has also influenced the Regent elections in Jayapura several years ago. Through the two-stage of regional elections, in the end, the winner was the candidate who took into account the ethnic composition, namely Benhur Tommy Mano and Nuralam. Benhur is a native Papuan, while Nuralam is a figure with a Javanese ethnic background. Jayapura City does have a relatively balanced population composition between indigenous Papuans and immigrants. Such demographic facts make the map of the struggle for regional leadership based on ethnicity essential (Sackett, 2021).

Thus, the issue of ethnocentrism is rife in political dynamics in Papua. Although the issue of ethnicity feels sensitive, and many oppose it, inevitably, it cannot be avoided. In practice, indigenous Papuans themselves experience a dilemma. They are ambiguous when reality speaks differently (Alghaberi, 2021), in the sense that the tendency to increase the number of newcomers is increasingly significant as a logical consequence of the opening of Papua for anyone to do business in Papua. More than that, as a consequence of Papua becoming part of Indonesia, it is impossible to reject or limit the presence of Indonesians outside Papua, even though they are ethnically different. Therefore there is no other way for the entire Papuan elite to play the issue of ethnicity when they want to gain power.

Although on various occasions Papuans have pledged unity in ethnic differences, in practice the nuances of ethnicity cannot just disappear in the identity of every community group, especially in political life. However, interestingly that the understanding of ethnicity itself is so far still more primordialism. What Clifford Geertz refers to as "primordial" refers to the notion that ethnicity is an identity that a person has carried from birth. Primordial refers to something that is ascriptive and attached to everyone. Although the political elites have repeatedly emphasized that whoever is in Papua is Papuan, in reality, each of them still has their primordial identity as Javanese, Buginese, Floresnese, Minahasanese, Malukunese, and so on.

Given these facts, it can be argued that the understanding of ethnicity in Papua is still essentialistic by basing on permanent body characteristics. The notion of ethnicity understood by all Papuans has not used a constructivist perspective yet, in which ethnicity is a socio-cultural construction that is dynamic, fluid, and discursive. For most Papuans, ethnicity still uses biological factors as the basis for ethnic categorization.

This essentialistic point of view was then used by all political elites in Papua as an instrument to gain mass support in seizing power through Pilgub and Pilkada. For the candidate for governor, Lukmen pair, for example, the essentialist perspective is considered a necessity so that the ethnic dichotomy of coastal people and mountain people is permanent. Even though the dichotomy is more of a socio-cultural construction, the pair exploited it in order to gain massive votes. Therefore, the irony is often shown by the behavior of the political elite in Papua when it comes to politics. On the one hand, they want professionalism as the basis for Papua's development. However, on the other hand, they still maintain an emotional connection with the bases of traditionalism and primordialism.

Such ambiguous attitude often creates complicated problems later on when the elites have run the wheels of government. The government bureaucracy, for example, should act professionally and be neutral from political interests, but in fact it will be difficult for them (Mukherjee, 2021). In many cases, bureaucratic services will be characterized by the political interests of the Regent or Governor. This is where the ethnicity factor appears in the bureaucratic structure. For example, when Barnabas Suebu served as governor, the ranks of officials in the governor's office were dominated by people who came from the Barnabas clan. Likewise, when Lucas Enembe became governor for the 2013-2018 period, from nearly 33 strategic positions in the bureaucratic ranks of the Governor's Office, as many as more than 70% of them were replaced to the mountain Papua region.

Likewise, when a Jayapura Regent, Benhur Tommi Mano was elected, several Mano clans were appointed as heads of districts and sub-districts, and several Mano tribesmen were placed in strong positions in the government of Jayapura City. It was because of the agreement made before (during the campaign), that if Benhur was elected, he had to give his clan allotments to be placed in strategic posts. Therefore, it is not surprising that in some Regional Working Units (SKPD) or agencies, the Heads come from a tribe led by Benhur Tomy Mano.

This is when a new problem arises, namely that the bureaucracy is unable to act professionally because of the bias of the interests of the political elite and the bias of ethnicity. As a result, the bureaucracy cannot avoid the interests to support its leaders. This is where the bureaucracy becomes a political instrument and cannot act professionally in carrying out services to the public, which should be its primary function. It is common that the Papuan bureaucracy in the Special Autonomy era is biased towards ethnicity or regional origin. It will be challenging for non-Papuan ethnicities to dominate the ranks of high-echelon officials in the Regency or Provincial government in Papua. Unlike during the New Order era, where ethnicities from outside Papua dominated the bureaucracy (Mashinini, 2020).

Mountain and coastal ethnicities are exploited for the sake of fighting over the political elite in the Regional Election, but in reality, they are only being used. Mountain people are the majority; the time has come for the mountain people to lead Papua. The people of the coastal area all this time has the lead but had no concern for the mountain people.
However, empirical facts show that the strengthening of ethnicity in the Regional Election also suggests other facts. The number of newcomers also changed the composition of the candidates. Therefore, there are many candidates from Java who are combined with other ethnic candidates, because of empirical considerations, that the Javanese population is indeed large in Papua.

Thus, the fact that in the Papua Regional Election, the practice of identity politics is still rife; it has more or less influence on the quality of democracy. If in the future, everyone intends to improve the quality of local political democracy, then the issue of identity politics that exploits primordialism needs to be ended immediately. It may be difficult to avoid it, but if everyone commits to implement the democratic political system to the governance, all people

have to prioritize professionalism in choosing leaders. This is what is at stake for the future of democracy, how far the practice of identity politics can be reduced and then everyone commits to being more rational and professional in choosing candidate leaders.

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