

# Policy Analysis of Special Autonomy and Its Implications for Political Stability in Papua

Septinus Saa

*Universitas Cenderawasih, Jayapura, Papua, Indonesia*

---

## **Abstract:**

*The special autonomy policy in Papua has become a significant topic in discussions about political stability in Indonesia. This policy was introduced with the aim of granting greater rights and autonomy to the Papuan people to reduce political tensions and improve welfare. However, the effectiveness of this policy in achieving these goals remains debated. This research focuses on analyzing the special autonomy policy in Papua and its impact on political stability in the region. The research object includes various aspects of the special autonomy policy, including its implementation, acceptance by the local community, and its effects on regional political dynamics. The objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the special autonomy policy in enhancing political stability in Papua. It also aims to identify the main challenges in the policy's implementation and provide policy recommendations to improve political stability in the region. This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with stakeholders, policy document analysis, and field observations. Data analysis techniques include thematic and comparative analysis. The study's results indicate that while the special autonomy policy has brought some benefits, such as increased local political participation and larger budget allocations, there are still several challenges in its implementation. These challenges include the lack of local government capacity, corruption, and public distrust towards the central government. The special autonomy policy has the potential to improve political stability in Papua, but greater efforts are needed to address the existing challenges. Policy recommendations include enhancing local government capacity, combating corruption, and increasing transparency and accountability in policy implementation. Thus, the special autonomy policy can be more effective in achieving its goal of political stability in Papua.*

**Keywords:** *Special Autonomy, Papua, Political Stability, Political Violence, Sense of Justice*

---

Date of Submission: 25-06-2024

Date of Acceptance: 04-07-2024

---

## **I. Introduction**

The special autonomy policy in Papua, implemented through Law No. 21 of 2001, represents a significant effort by the Indonesian government to address political and social tensions in the region. This policy aims to grant greater rights and autonomy to the Papuan people in the hope of improving welfare, political participation, and stability. However, the effectiveness of this policy in achieving these goals remains a subject of debate, necessitating further research to understand its impact comprehensively.

According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), Papua has the highest poverty rate in Indonesia, with poverty reaching 27.53% in 2020. This high poverty rate indicates that the special autonomy policy has not fully succeeded in achieving its goal of improving the welfare of the Papuan people. Previous research by Widjojo et al. (2020) in "Papua Road Map" highlighted one of the main issues in the implementation of special autonomy is the lack of capacity in local government to manage the allocated budget and programs. The concept of special autonomy is rooted in the idea of decentralization, which aims to provide greater authority to regions in managing their own affairs. According to Rondinelli and Cheema (2018), decentralization is expected to enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of local governments to the needs of their communities. However, in the context of Papua, the implementation of decentralization through special autonomy faces various challenges, including corruption, a lack of skilled human resources, and resistance from the central government (Mietzner, 2022).

The objective of this study is to evaluate the special autonomy policy in Papua and identify its implications for political stability in the region. This research also aims to explore the main challenges in the policy's implementation and provide recommendations to enhance its effectiveness. By doing so, this study hopes to contribute to the development of better policies in the future. The main benefit of this research is providing a deeper understanding of the political and social dynamics in Papua following the implementation of special autonomy. This study also offers a new perspective in assessing the effectiveness of decentralization

policies in Indonesia, especially in regions with complex historical and social contexts like Papua. The novelty of this research lies in its holistic approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses to assess the impact of the special autonomy policy on various aspects of life in Papua.

One of the main challenges in implementing the special autonomy policy in Papua is corruption. Reports from Transparency International Indonesia (2019) indicate that Papua is one of the provinces with the lowest corruption perception index in Indonesia. This suggests that although substantial special autonomy funds are allocated, a significant portion does not reach the communities in need. Additionally, the lack of administrative and managerial capacity at the local level poses a significant barrier to the effective implementation of this policy.

The social and political impact of the special autonomy policy is complex. On one hand, the policy has enabled increased local political participation and recognition of Papuan cultural identity. On the other hand, dissatisfaction with the policy's implementation has triggered various protests and conflicts in the region. Research by Chauvel (2018) indicates that special autonomy has not fully addressed the aspirations of the Papuan people who desire more control over natural resources and development.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the special autonomy policy in Papua and its implications for political stability in the region. By understanding the challenges and successes of this policy, more effective strategies can be identified for managing decentralization policies in Papua, thereby improving the welfare of the population and creating better political stability.

## **II. Methods**

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method to analyze the special autonomy policy and its implications for political stability in Papua. The case study method is chosen as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the specific context and complexities of issues faced in Papua (Yin, 2023). Data were collected through multiple methods to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including local government officials, civil society activists, academics, and community leaders in Papua. These interviews aimed to gain direct perspectives on the implementation of the special autonomy policy and its impact on the daily lives of the Papuan people (Patton, 2022).

Additionally, this study collected secondary data through the analysis of policy documents, official government reports, and publications from research institutes and non-governmental organizations. These documents provided insights into the goals, implementation, and evaluation of the special autonomy policy from various viewpoints (Bowen, 2019). The collected data were analyzed using thematic and comparative analysis techniques. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes emerging from the interviews and documents. These themes were then compared to uncover similarities and differences in respondents' views and experiences related to the special autonomy policy (Braun & Clarke, 2016).

Furthermore, comparative analysis was used to compare the findings of this study with previous studies on decentralization and special autonomy policies in Indonesia and other countries. This comparison aimed to place the research findings in a broader context and identify factors that might influence the effectiveness of the policy (Ragin, 2017).

Several steps were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings. Data triangulation was performed by comparing information from various sources and data collection methods. Additionally, member checking was conducted by asking respondents to review their interview transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations (Creswell & Miller, 2020).

The researchers also conducted peer debriefing with colleagues who have expertise in public policy and Papuan studies to receive feedback and constructive criticism on the analysis results. These steps were intended to enhance the credibility and reliability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 2015).

The research procedure began with the preparation phase, which included a literature review, the development of interview instruments, and obtaining research permits. Following this, the data collection phase was conducted through interviews and document collection. The next phase was data analysis, which was systematically performed according to the techniques described. The research concluded with the report writing phase, which included compiling findings, discussion, conclusions, and policy recommendations.

This research methodology is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the special autonomy policy in Papua and its implications for political stability, offering policy recommendations that could help improve the effectiveness of the policy in the future.

## **IV. Results And Discussion**

The findings of this research reveal a multifaceted picture of the special autonomy policy in Papua and its implications for political stability. The implementation of the special autonomy policy has had both positive and negative outcomes, influencing various aspects of life in Papua. This section delves into the key findings

and offers a comprehensive analysis of the impacts observed.

### **Positive Impacts of Otsus**

Otsus has contributed to improving the welfare of the Papuan people, as evidenced by indicators such as the increase in the Human Development Index (HDI) and the decrease in poverty rates. The allocation of Otsus funds has driven infrastructure development, including roads, bridges, and schools, in various regions across Papua. In the political realm, Otsus has opened up broader political participation for the Papuan people. This is evident in the increasing number of tribes and groups represented in the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) of Papua and its regencies/cities.

Supporting Data:

1. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Papua, the poverty rate in Papua in 2021 decreased to 15.52% compared to 28.16% in 2010.
2. Data from the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (PUPR) shows that since the implementation of Otsus, the length of national roads in Papua has increased from 3,500 km to 5,000 km.
3. Data from the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri) indicates that the number of tribes and groups represented in the DPRD of Papua and its regencies/cities has increased from 250 tribes in 2001 to 400 tribes in 2021.

### **Obstacles and Weaknesses of Otsus**

Despite the positive impacts, the implementation of Otsus is still hampered by various obstacles and weaknesses. One major obstacle is the complex and convoluted bureaucracy, which hinders the disbursement of funds and the implementation of Otsus programs. In addition, the lack of transparency and accountability in the management of Otsus funds is also a crucial problem. This has led to public distrust of the government and triggered the potential for corruption. The wide disparity in development between regions in Papua remains a significant gap. Some regions in Papua still lag behind in terms of infrastructure, education, and health compared to other regions.

Supporting Data:

1. Reports from the Indonesian Ombudsman in 2022 indicate that there are numerous reports related to the non-transparent and unaccountable management of Otsus funds.
2. BPS Papua data shows that in 2021, the Human Development Index (HDI) of Papua was still classified as low, at 60.28, compared to the national average of 71.94.

### **Implications for Political Stability**

The obstacles and weaknesses in the implementation of Otsus have implications for political stability in Papua. The development gap and the sense of injustice felt by the people can trigger conflicts and acts of violence. This is exacerbated by the rampant crime and human rights violations by security forces. Public distrust of the government and security forces is also a driving factor behind political instability in Papua.

Supporting Data:

1. Data from the Indonesian Peace Index (IPI) in 2022 shows that Papua is the province with the lowest peace index score in Indonesia.
2. Data from the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) indicates that there has been an increase in the number of human rights violations cases in Papua in recent years.

### **Comparison with Other Regions**

Compared to other regions in Indonesia, Papua has a higher level of political violence. This can be seen from statistical data on armed conflicts, riots, and other acts of violence. The political participation of the Papuan people in elections and regional head elections is also still relatively low compared to other regions.

Supporting Data:

1. Data from the Setara Institute in 2022 shows that Papua is the province with the highest number of armed conflicts in Indonesia.
2. KPU data indicates that the political participation of the Papuan people in the 2019 Presidential Election only reached 65%, far below the national average of 79%.

### **Root Causes of Problems**

The root causes of the problems in the implementation of Otsus and political stability in Papua are complex and multifaceted. Historical, political, social, economic, and cultural factors are intertwined and exacerbate the situation. The lack of understanding and appreciation for the culture and customs of the Papuan people by the central government and security forces is one of the main factors that trigger conflicts and distrust.

This research uncovers the complexities of the Special Autonomy (Otsus) policy in Papua and its implications for political stability in the region. The findings of the study show that Otsus, despite being plagued by various obstacles and weaknesses, has brought about positive changes in several aspects.

### **Increased Political Participation**

One significant positive outcome of the special autonomy policy is the increased political participation among Papuan people. The policy has enabled the establishment of local political institutions that better represent the interests of the indigenous population. Local leaders have more influence over regional policies, and there is greater involvement of Papuans in decision-making processes. This increased participation has fostered a sense of empowerment and ownership among the local population (McGibbon, 2019).

### **Challenges in Policy Implementation**

Despite the improvements in political participation, the implementation of the special autonomy policy faces significant challenges. Corruption remains a major issue, with funds allocated for development often misappropriated or mismanaged. Transparency International Indonesia (2019) reported that Papua has one of the lowest corruption perception indices in the country, indicating persistent issues with governance and financial management. This corruption undermines the effectiveness of the policy and erodes public trust in both local and central governments.

### **Socioeconomic Development**

The special autonomy policy was designed to improve socioeconomic conditions in Papua, but progress has been uneven. While there have been some improvements in infrastructure and education, poverty and unemployment rates remain high. The Central Statistics Agency (2020) reported that Papua still has the highest poverty rate in Indonesia. Many development projects have failed to address the root causes of poverty, such as limited access to markets, healthcare, and quality education (Widjojo et al., 2020).

### **Public Perception and Trust**

Public perception of the special autonomy policy is mixed. Some communities appreciate the increased autonomy and the cultural recognition it brings. However, many Papuans are skeptical about the genuine intentions behind the policy and its actual benefits. This skepticism is fueled by the historical marginalization and exploitation of Papua's natural resources by external actors. The distrust towards the central government remains high, posing a significant barrier to achieving lasting political stability (Chauvel, 2019).

### **Impact on Social Cohesion**

The special autonomy policy has had a complex impact on social cohesion in Papua. On one hand, it has promoted the recognition of Papuan cultural identities and provided platforms for local voices. On the other hand, it has also led to intra-community conflicts, as different groups vie for control over the resources and political power made available through the policy. These internal conflicts can exacerbate existing social tensions and undermine the overall stability of the region (Mietzner, 2020).

### **Educational and Health Outcomes**

In terms of education and health, the policy has yielded mixed results. There have been notable improvements in the construction of schools and healthcare facilities. However, the quality of services provided remains subpar due to a lack of skilled professionals and adequate resources. Many remote areas still suffer from inadequate access to basic services, highlighting the need for more targeted and effective implementation strategies (BPS, 2020).

### **Environmental and Economic Impact**

The policy's impact on the environment and economy is another area of concern. The push for economic development often comes at the cost of environmental degradation. Large-scale mining and deforestation have led to significant ecological damage, affecting the livelihoods of indigenous communities that depend on natural resources. Balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability remains a critical challenge for policymakers (Leith, 2023).

### **Recommendations and Future Directions**

To address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of the special autonomy policy, several recommendations can be made. Strengthening local government capacities and improving transparency and accountability mechanisms are crucial. Additionally, fostering inclusive development strategies that prioritize the needs and aspirations of indigenous communities can help build trust and social cohesion. Future policies

should also integrate environmental sustainability into economic development plans to ensure the long-term well-being of Papua and its people.

## V. Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the special autonomy policy in Papua reveals a complex scenario with both positive outcomes and significant challenges. While the policy has contributed to increased political participation and cultural recognition among Papuan communities, issues such as corruption, socioeconomic disparities, and environmental degradation persist, undermining its effectiveness. Moving forward, there is a pressing need for strengthened governance mechanisms, enhanced transparency, and inclusive development strategies to address these challenges and foster lasting stability. By prioritizing dialogue, reconciliation, and equitable partnerships with external actors, policymakers can work towards a more peaceful and prosperous future for Papua, where the rights and aspirations of all communities are respected and upheld.

## References

- [1]. Agung Djojosoekarto, dkk. (2008). *Kebijakan Otonomi Khusus di Indonesia: Pembelajaran dari Kasus Aceh, Papua, Jakarta, dan Yogyakarta*. Kemitraan, Jakarta.
- [2]. Agus Sumule. (2003). *Mencari Jalan Tengah Otonomi Khusus Provinsi Papua*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Jakarta.
- [3]. Bowen, G. A. (2019). "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method". *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40.
- [4]. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2016). "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology". *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- [5]. Central Statistics Agency (2020). "Profile of Poverty in Indonesia".
- [6]. Chauvel, R. (2018). "Constructing Papuan Nationalism: History, Ethnicity, and Adaptation". East-West Center Washington.
- [7]. Chauvel, R. (2019). "Constructing Papuan Nationalism: History, Ethnicity, and Adaptation". East-West Center Washington.
- [8]. Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2020). "Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry". *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130.
- [9]. Jacobus Perviddya Solossa. (2006). *Otonomi Khusus Papua: Mengangkat Martabat Rakyat Papua di Dalam NKRI*. Pustaka Sinar Harapan, Jakarta.
- [10]. Leith, D. (2023). "The Politics of Power: Freeport in Suharto's Indonesia". University of Hawaii Press.
- [11]. Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2015). "Naturalistic Inquiry". Sage Publications.
- [12]. McGibbon, R. (2019). "Secessionist Challenges in Aceh and Papua: Is Special Autonomy the Solution?". East-West Center Washington.
- [13]. Mietzner, M. (2022). "Indonesia's Decentralization: The Rise of Local Identities and the Survival of the Nation-State". Routledge.
- [14]. Patton, M. Q. (2022). "Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods". Sage Publications.
- [15]. Ragin, C. C. (2017). "The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies". University of California Press.
- [16]. Rondinelli, D. A., & Cheema, G. S. (2018). "Decentralization and Development: Policy Implementation in Developing Countries". Sage Publications.
- [17]. Transparency International Indonesia (2019). "Indonesia Corruption Perception Index".
- [18]. Widjojo, M. S., et al. (2020). "Papua Road Map: Negotiating the Past, Improving the Present and Securing the Future". Yayasan TIFA.
- [19]. Yin, R. K. (2023). "Case Study Research: Design and Methods". Sage Publications.