

Indonesian Decentralization In The Covid-19 Pandemic: On The Right Track or Not?

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Abstract

This article aims to ascertain whether decentralization practices in Indonesia are on the right track or not in handling the Covid-19 Pandemic, which demands the presence of roles from both the Central and Local Governments. The background is the tendency of decentralization practices in general in Indonesia, which seems chaotic based on the analysis of the relationship between the Central and Local Governments in handling Covid-19. This writing uses a descriptive qualitative approach with explanations that refer to the theory of decentralization and local autonomy. The data used here are secondary data based on the study of literature derived from electronic publications, documents, or books that are relevant and actual due to the practice of Decentralization in Indonesia. The results of this paper conclude that the practice of decentralization in Indonesia in dealing with the Covid-19 Pandemic is still experiencing a need for certainty in the right direction, specifically related to the effectiveness of handling the Covid-19 outbreak and in general for central-local governance at various Government affairs. The revision of the Local Government Law is the most decisive suggestion here.

Keywords: *decentralization, local autonomy, new-normal, covid-19, government*

INTRODUCTION

It is not a new one that the Indonesian Government is one of the countries that adheres to a decentralized system in carrying out its governance. The implementation of the decentralized system shows the transfer of authority from the central Government to autonomous regions. This is the cause of the emergence of local governments in various countries that embrace decentralization. However, this does not mean that the central Government relinquishes the control of monitoring to the local Government regarding the functions or authority delegated. This is also regulated in Indonesian Law Number 23 of 2014 about Local Government, which says that decentralization is the transfer of central government affairs to an autonomous region based on the principle of autonomy, which is the principle of local government administration.

The matter of delegation of affairs shows that it is not something easy because it can bring up regionalism, which requires a long time in its formulation. There are peril issues in the transfer of functions, not only those that concern the relationship between the Central Government and the Provinces but also the relationship between the Central Government and the Municipalities and the relationship between the Provinces and Municipalities. This can occur because of scrambling about governmental affairs among them.

In the forestry sector as an example,

the problem of handling forest fires is still poorly controlled. President Jokowi appealed to the head of the local Government to be firm in handling even preventing forest fires. At the same time, the central unit that handles the forestry sector does not operate all over the forests in Indonesia. As if handed over to all autonomous regions, central supervision relies only upon Jakarta and no central unit. It was revealed that the local Government has a device that can handle forest fires up to the Village as if the local Government can use it well for forestry purposes.

So far, forestry fires always occur in Indonesia at certain seasons, as if forest governance is powerless. The question is who the responsible of this forest fire in Indonesia exactly. Besides, in such an example in the forestry sector, the complex problems of Indonesian decentralization also commonly happen in the other sectors.

The issue of decentralization and autonomy in Indonesia also about Local Head Elections (Pilkada). The development of the election process in Indonesia has never escaped various problems, one of which is the corruption impact. From 2004 to 2019, there were 139 corruption cases, 121 of which involved local heads. The reason is that the local head allegedly had to return the capital used in the election campaign.

The impact is the possibility of local government corruption related to the provision of public services to the people in a re-

gion (Republika, 2020). During the Pandemic period, the implementation of the elections was still a matter of serious discussion and study because its implementation made it possible for the spread of Covid-19 to be increasingly becoming. However, the chaotic election has begun to appear. The issue of covert campaigns carried out by distributing social assistance (social assistance) to the community is inevitable (Abadkini, 2020).

Regarding the scrambling of governmental affairs between the central Government and the regions, it is now increasingly seen in the handling of Covid-19. Between the Central Government and the Regional Governments, there were differences in decisions taken to counter the spread of the Pandemic. For example, in the Province of DKI Jakarta, where Governor Anies Baswedan believes that DKI Jakarta is a gate that allows spread to occur more quickly, so it is necessary to apply a lockdown system to break the spread. This was opposed by the central Government through the Ministry of Home Affairs on the grounds that the lockdown policy was a decision of the central Government, not the local governments' domain.

Besides DKI Jakarta, there are other local governments such as Tegal, Tasikmalaya, and Kediri, where daring to implement a lockdown system, even though in the end the three local governments of them were banned and asked to follow the direction of the central Government by imposing Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) (Inikata,

2020).

According to the above issues, what needs to be evaluated is the matter of central government control over the handling of Covid-19 that has been carried out—referring to the previous expression, where even though the transfer of functions from the central Government to the Local Governments does not mean that the central Government relinquishes the control.

The central Government is still relatively slow and less alert in handling the Covid-19 case. Supported also by the statement that in addition to being slow and less alert in handling it, the Government was also considered to have no right strategy or concrete steps, especially regarding the social impact that would occur due to Covid-19 (liputan6, 2020). The supporting evidence is related when the public or a number of government policy observers consider that the creativity of the Local Government is a breakthrough that can handle Covid-19 amid the lack of firmness of the central Government and this is also supported by the "release" of the Local Government by the central Government when the implementation of CBDD done. Hence, as if everything depends on the local head. Whereas the firmness of the central Government is a necessity that needs to be upheld, but unfortunately, the expected solidity is not apparent from the central Government (Bisnis, 2020).

Therefore this article further examines the practice of decentralization in Indo-

nesia by looking at the context of the development of the Covid1-19 epidemic that requires cooperation and the proper division of tasks between the Central and Local Governments to be effective in handling the epidemic.

Various experts agree that decentralization can be defined as the transfer of func-

social actors, and social sectors. It covers the scope of international, national, sub-national, and even local. In addition, UNDP also mentioned that the existence of decentralization gave birth to several forms of decentralization itself such as (1) devolution; which is an arrangement where there is a mutually beneficial relationship between the Center and

Table 1. Types of Decentralization Authority

Type of Unit to which Authority is transferred	Aspect of Governance transferred or shared			Generic name
	Political (policy or decision making)	Economic or financial resource management	Administration and service delivery	
Autonomous lower-level units	Devolution	Devolution	Devolution	Devolution
Semi-autonomous lower-level units	Delegation	Delegation	Delegation	Delegation
Sub-ordinate lower-level units or sub-units	Directing	Allocating	Tasking	Deconcentration
External (non-governmental) units at any level	Deregulation	Privatization	Contracting	Divestment

(Source: undp.org)

tions from the central Government to autonomous regions. Some experts also view that decentralization is seen as devolving central government authority to government organizational units to carry out several interests in certain areas (Nasution, 2000).

Then, UNDP revealed that decentralization is a complex phenomenon because it involves many geographical entities,

the regions, (2) delegation; which emphasizes the transfer of government decision making to institutions that are under indirect control, (3) deconcentration; is a type of decentralization that involves the transfer of authority for special decision making by administrative means, (4) divestment/ privatization; is a form of transfer of responsibility of the central Government to the obligation in producing goods or services to

private organizations. As for the summary, here is an additional table related to the form of decentralization according to UNDP.

Like UNDP, Rondinelli defines decentralization by making several classifications because, according to him, the concept of decentralization is so broad, and there are so many components. But in short, decentralization is defined as a form of transfer of responsibility for planning, management and enhancement of resources and allocation from the central Government to local governments in terms of five matters: (1) field units of central ministry institutions, (2) subordinate units, (3) semi-public-authorities economists, (4) local authorities, and (5) private organizations.

Rondinelli also divided the types of decentralization into four, namely: (1) Deconcentration; said to be the transfer of a number of administrative authority to a lower level, (2) Delegation; leads to the transfer of managerial responsibility to organizations that are outside the bureaucratic structure and are not directly controlled by the Center, (3) Devolution; strengthening sub-national government units that are outside the direct control of the central Government, and (4) Privatization; is relinquishing responsibility for existing functions to voluntary organizations (Dennis A. Rondinelli, 1983).

The insights of various experts were accommodated in the course of decentralization arrangements in Indonesia since the Dutch East Indies era until now. At least in

history, since the Soeharto era, which is known as centralistic, has also been arranged.

The reign of Soeharto, after replacing President Soekarno from 1974, enacted Law no. 5 of 1974 concerning the Principles of Local Government that regulates decentralization. Decentralization is the transfer of government affairs from the Government or upper-level regions to the regions to become household affairs.

During the fall of Soeharto, during the period of President Habibie, Law No. 22 of 1999. Decentralization is defined as the transfer of governmental authority by the Government to autonomous regions within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Decentralization contained in Law No. 23 of 2014 is explained as the transfer of government affairs by the central Government to autonomous local governments based on the principle of autonomy. Whereas in Law Number 32 of 2004, decentralization is defined as the transfer of governmental authority by the Government to autonomous regions to regulate and manage government affairs in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia system.

METHODS

This article was written using a qualitative approach with a descriptive nature. It uses several approaches, such as a theoretical framework as a reference explanation and gathers some data from the internet in the

Since the Independence era until the Soeharto era, the public sector's reform still needs a helping hand from developed countries. At that time, until the Soeharto era, the idea of development was very strong. The paradigm for structuring the public sector becomes *prima donna* to the point that it becomes a textbook and a policy guide with development administration jargon born from development studies at leading universities.

Business practices are seen as efficient and effective when controlled by Jakarta. So, it is natural that the idea of developing Batam City when Soeharto was in power was launched and was very easy to implement because it was closely guarded by the RegimeRegime to encourage local businesses' interests to develop in the eyes of the RegimeRegime at that time.

Following the fall of the New Order, it seems that in the era of public sector governance reforms are very fragmented, very multi-actor, there is no single dominant player. Autonomous governance, starting with the issuance of Law 22/99, was later replaced by Law 32/2004 and now replaced by Law 23/2014 on Local Government, showing uncertainty in the systemic relation of central-local relations, relations between business and autonomy aspects, and also legal aspects. Autonomy and the local economy. Many players control local businesses. Even now, the responsibility for autonomy is not established up to the village

level with the Law No. 6/2014 *Tengang Desa*.

Initially, there was pressure from various business people in the Soeharto era who found it difficult to enter because they had to go through Soeharto so that what was desired in the reform era was that business activities would be easier if it could be decided in the regions. It turns out that at the local level, there are currently many actors who are difficult to control. As a result, the collusion of local business people and players is very much forced to do. Instead of several players wanting to by-pass to Jakarta, it turns out that they still have to be faced in the regions if the business wants to remain smooth.

Business sectors count, which are the cheapest to do activities, whether through Jakarta or directly in the region. It turns out that in regions that were thought to be easier to pass through Jakarta like in the Soeharto era, it is now difficult to control even to the grassroots level.

The answer is not decentralized, as the Soeharto era's returned to overcome the ambiguity of many actors controlling business and autonomy to be in line. The answer is a clear vision of what is desired for local autonomy in the nation-state that impacts local and national businesses' progress.

As we know that kinds of music are needed for a conductor in an orchestration,

Here we need the right orchestration to harmonize business and autonomy. The material for developing sheet music in that direction is to look at past experiences with clear indicators of change, position compared to various countries relevant to Indonesian experience, and future desires to make changes according to the ideals of the Indonesian nation's clear vision of local autonomy practices.

It seems that for Indonesia, with its area and population and ethnic heterogeneity, equal treatment for each region is something that must be avoided. Steve Leach et al., (1990) noted at the local level, in terms of the relationship between autonomy and business can choose patterns:

Traditional bureaucracy, if the public sector is dominant. If the dominant market where the public sector is a regulator, market strengthening is not a player. Community strengthening, if the players rely on more by the local community, not the market. They are strengthening residuals if business activities strengthen between the market and the community.

In Indonesia, it seems that the power of central-local and between local governments synchronization in the hands of government representatives is still needed. In areas with faster growth, it is necessary to encourage more equitable, accommodative, and aspirational urban governance.

There is a possibility that government representatives in several

regions are not needed, just as the direct or indirect election system can even be appointed by the Central Government in certain regions to synchronize with local businesses. Theoretically, there is a combination of economic decentralization and asymmetric decentralization.

General Practices of Decentralization and Autonomy in Indonesia

The big picture of decentralization and local autonomy in Indonesia can be seen from several cases, namely: *first*, from the running of the direct election; *second*, the practice of Special autonomy in Jakarta, Papua, Jogja, and Aceh; *third*, the implementation of the division of affairs in various fields; *fourth*, managing urban development; and *fifth*, the course of Village autonomy. Local autonomy is the backbone of the effectiveness of the reforms desired by the Indonesian people.

The positive contribution of this practice brought about the success of the nation-state reform. Vice versa, if it has a negative effect, it certainly has an influence on the effectiveness of reforms. For this reason, this article considers recommendations for positive local autonomy towards the course of reforms for better development in Indonesia.

B.1. Systemic Impact

The Local Government Head election (pilkada) ran smoothly without significant conflict and massive cheating.

Indonesia's elections were passed well. Indonesian people should be grateful. However, in the realm of regulations developed as a sub-system in the local government system in Indonesia, the direct local election system that runs does not provide a place for the Government's role to carry out its rights and obligations in relation to the representatives of the Government in regions which currently only rests with the Governor.

This systemic conflict is latent but continues to be left by the Indonesian people as if to improve colliding with democratic values. The value of democracy is understood by the Indonesian people to prioritize the running of the local election rather than the government system intended by the results of the election.

The practice of special autonomy, rooted in the idea of asymmetric decentralization of systemic collisions, is that this practice does not have a strong foothold as a system in the Republic of Indonesia. As if it had become fate and only five regions carried special autonomy. Other regions do not have a clear footing for this asymmetric treatment. Whatever the results of the course of special autonomy that occurs in Papua, West Papua, DKI, Aceh, and DI Jogjakarta with conditions like this will still get scorn from other regions.

The division of functions in local Government in Indonesia is quite unique in terms of detail for all levels of Government,

even for the Government, the content is referred to in the latest local government law, namely Law no. 23/2014 concerning local Government. These details are usually held in countries that adhere to the anglo-Saxon mecca. Indonesia is a natural ero-continental heritage that is developed with a real system and or opens and arrangement, especially in the Province where there is a Governor who is a representative of the Government.

While in the matter of urban development, the Indonesian nation experienced a bias of city development without measurable, directed, and systemic institutional corridors. The Indonesian nation prefers the development of the Village of Katimbang to organize City development. In contrast, rural areas will one day become urban in the development of human civilization in the world as a natural one.

Village Development is further ensured by the enactment and implementation of the Village Law. In the Village Law, it is mentioned in the considerations that some of the contents of the Constitution are read if our Constitution is not intended for the Village but for local Government. Worthy, if we call local Government in Indonesia, has now developed into three levels. What is quite unique is the permissibility of urban areas that are managed with we called in Indonesia as "Kelurahan" back into the form of the village government.

B.2. Courage to Break Through

Facing the future of decentralization and local autonomy practices in Indonesia, the five records of local autonomy in Indonesia must get serious attention from the winner of the presidential election if national reform and development in Indonesia are harmonious, synchronous, and effective to the regions in Indonesia. The five points above become the basis for developing local autonomy development policies in Indonesia going forward.

For direct elections, there must be the courage to choose between three options: (1) Revoking the system of government representatives (2) Improving the direct election system can be used as a basis for asymmetry. (3) Revoking direct elections. The practice of Special Autonomy on the basis of asymmetry in decentralization must be clarified in umbrella legislation if it is not in the Constitution. Asymmetry can be accommodated in the diversity of the election system.

That can also be continued in the system of division of functions that can be returned to real autonomy or open and arrangement. The variation of the direct election system or revoked even the revocation of the government representative system can be redeveloped the distribution of functions based on real teachings, unlike the current *ultra vires* doctrine.

Meanwhile, for urban development, strong institutional governance is needed in

relation to the diversity of cities in Indonesia in order to avoid urban development bias and synchronize with village development. The revision of the article on the return of *kelurahans* to villages must also be considered in order to develop rural-urban harmonization development by preparing the development of Indonesian urban institutions to meet Industry 4.0.

Dealing Covid-19 Outbreak

The public is busy responding to the discourse of "New Normal" in the midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic, which has not shown signs of abating. A variety of groups responded the Covid-19 Pandemic in Indonesia. But almost all agreed the Government must be the main player in overcoming this Pandemic. The State must be present and play a full role in overcoming the Covid-19 outbreak so that the vaccine will not be more widespread and can even be found.

The adoption of decentralization in the Republic of Indonesia has caused the Central Government, and there are also Local Governments. The matter of responsibility in overcoming the Covid-19 Pandemic has caused confusion between the Center and Local Governments. The signaling is when some Local Governments declare local lockdowns, but are annulled by the Central Government.

Coincided with the Government issuing a Large-Scale Social Restrictions policy (abbreviated in Indonesia as PSBB that is *Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar*),

the Covid-19 outbreak was declared a "National Disaster." Has not been evaluated and revoked the status of national disasters along with its PSBB instruments, the Government is preparing for "PSBB relaxation" with "New Normal." This paper intends to position it in the context of the local autonomy structure that developed in Indonesia.

C.1. Supply Side Heavy

Until the relaxation policy was rolled out through the "New Normal" discourse until now, the PSBB policy material has become a reference for the country's actions to overcome Covid-19. However, from this policy, it seems that the Government tends to be loose of responsibility, the Government seems to prefer not to be present in the midst of society, even the prevention of Covid-19, and then the smallest community did it themselves, and finally the smallest unit of the family by encouraging Work From Home (WFH) and physical distancing. That is, more increasingly realize in the New Normal discourse.

The PSBB policy brought the Government to focus on curative and repressive preparation of the health sector and other supporting state bureaucracy units. This is not for the demand side. The Government is considered supply-side oriented. Towards the community, the Government continues to spend large funds to all ministries/institutions to raise the "appeal" so that the cost of advertising on T.V., radio, and other

media for the benefit of Covid-19 has increased.

In the case of budget allocation for supply-side purposes, a derivative policy is regulated in the presence of the Minister of Finance's decision for that matter. A number of Ministries/ Agencies and various Central Government and Local Government units responded to adjust to the policy regulations.

This supply-side paradigm is also minimized by budget allocation for ministries and units of the state bureaucracy at the Central Government and Local levels. At the head of the formulator of this policy, there seems to be an omission to "work independently" among the various units in the State organs over Covid-19. Policymakers are not too brave in formulating new workflows in handling Covid-19 outbreaks nationally so that collaborative governance, even strategic alliance, does not occur.

The impact of "omission" perspectives in the policy formulation looks like it refers to the understanding that Covid-19 can be overcome by each community group and not to the understanding of how the State plays a total role. It is logical if the data shows the outbreak of the Covid-19 outbreak is unstoppable, while the use of funds with existing policies can lead to circumstances without adequate control.

The status quo for local autonomy hold by a policymaker in dealing with Covid-19. The central Government considers "Self-Understanding" to overcome this epidemic.

The Local Government finally acted in the paradigm of "the people who understand themselves." To realize this, two very large programs were made: *first*, the government program (central and local) in making people aware of their "own understanding." *Secondly*, programs for the main health sector are preparing and strengthening hospitals as well as programs for supporting bureaucracies such as the transportation sector as a frontier and the trade industry that has been hit by this epidemic, and bureaucracy that manages social (central and local) sectors.

C.2. Demand Side

The PSBB does not contain a clear policy due to the instruments to achieve the goals, and looks also must not in a large demand-side perspective. Although avoiding the term lockdown becomes a social restriction, and social-distancing becomes physical-distancing, it should remain large to the demand-side, which is to think about if the society, especially the weak people are handled by the Government. The Government must exist to overcome their vulnerability in the context of the PSBB. Even though the Government will eventually invite relaxation, the State must still be present to ensure relaxation guaranteed health and safety.

This large-scale social restriction must be aimed at citizens who nationally must not be discriminated against. Not to depend on their respective autonomous re-

gions because rich autonomous regions will provide protection for the lower class or vulnerable people better than weak autonomous regions. This allows injustice to occur on the archipelago.

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Covid-19 alone has plagued the view of administrative regions from any autonomous region. He crosses borders between provinces, even between countries. It is appropriate that the Center handles directly for justice, equal distribution of standards for Indonesian citizens as a whole without discriminating.

For the Central Government, it should not be just the supply-side. This is not just a departmental health problem, but the overall aspects are evenly distributed. This is the balance of supply-side and demand-side. The President is the commander of the direct handling of the Covid-19 outbreak. This is a disaster so that it can be or-

ganized by BNPB (abbreviated from Badan National Penanggulangan Bencana/ National Body for Disaster Management) under the direct control of the President.

Autonomous regions do not formulate the policy on Covid-19, especially until now it is still clearly stated in the Government's policy as a National Disaster. The autonomous region revoked its autonomy about handling Covid-19. Autonomous regions must be asked to "help" the central Government, and only carry out orders from the Central Government with a balanced demand-side and supply-side orientation in a more echoing PSBB. In this case, the Central Government is the formulator of policies and implementing direct policies that can be assisted by the Autonomous Region.

This "assisting" autonomous region can be directed to the things specified by the central Government to do what is requested. Funding entirely from the Central Government. Local Budgeting funds can be allocated for indirect activities that can be carried out by each region outside those specified by the central Government. In this way, Covid-19 is handled in a standardized manner evenly from Sabang to Merauke without discrimination. Although relaxation is a policy choice later, the organizer of relaxation with the PSBB mechanism still remains to the Central Government. There is no confusion in handling Covid-19 because there is a clear command from Jakarta.

CONCLUSION

In this article, the conclusions of the study are the practice of decentralization and autonomy in Indonesia, leading to the unknown crossroads of whether to be maintained in the right path. In general, there is chaos in the implementation of decentralization and local autonomy in Indonesia. In dealing with Covid-19, it leads to the complexity and unclearness of what you want to achieve from the use of decentralized instruments in the nation-state of Indonesia due to Covid-19 data, which is continually increasing. There is an inaccurate principle in the use of decentralized instruments in dealing with Covid-19 as a National disaster. Local autonomy is over primary instruments in Indonesian decentralization today and tends to neglect the other instruments for the reach national goals.

Suggestions that can be contributed are the need for real improvement of this practice through improving the legal basis for the implementation of decentralization and autonomy in Indonesia by revising Law 23 of 2014 as the basis for its implementation.

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