

STEPPING INTO THE FUTURE: THE DIVISION OF THREE NEW AUTONOMOUS REGIONS IN THE BINTANG MOUNTAINS AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL PROGRESS IN OKMIN PAPUA ON THE OUTERMOST BORDER

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Abstract

The three new autonomous regions (DOBs) in Pegunungan Bintang Regency, Papua, are believed to be a catalyst for social progress for the Okmin community in the outermost border area. This study aimed to analyze the potential and challenges of the Pegunungan Bintang DOBs' expansion on the social progress of the Okmin community. This study used a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants, observation, and document review. The results of the study showed that the expansion of the Pegunungan Bintang DOBs has the potential to improve the social progress of the Okmin community, especially in terms of access to education, health, and infrastructure. However, the expansion of the DOBs also faces a number of challenges, such as the potential for inter-ethnic conflict, corruption, and development inequality. To overcome these challenges, the government needs to carry out the planning and implementation of the DOBs' expansion with the active involvement of the Okmin community. The government also needs to ensure that the expansion of the DOBs is not only beneficial to political elites, but also to the wider community.

Keywords: Pegunungan Bintang; Social Progress; Expansion Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The regional expansion is a long-standing policy implemented in Indonesia (Ahmad, 2023). This policy is grounded in the principle of regional autonomy, which grants authority to regions to govern their own governmental affairs. It is a consequence of the bestowal of regional autonomy, as stipulated in Law Number 24 of 2014 concerning regional autonomy. Regional autonomy grants rights and obligations to autonomous regions to govern and manage governmental affairs as well as the interests of the local community within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. This principle arises from the principle of decentralization outlined in Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning regional autonomy, which defines decentralization as the devolution of government affairs from the central government to autonomous regions based on the principle of autonomy (Arifin, 2023). However, in the Papua region, specifically in Pegunungan Bintang, regional expansion has become an urgent necessity. Currently, the community is experiencing a pressing need for an accelerated change in living conditions, and regional expansion in the Pegunungan Bintang is seen as a strategic solution. The regional expansion in Pegunungan Bintang is expected to be a catalyst for faster and more revolutionary change.

The regional expansion in the Pegunungan Bintang Regency, Papua, is an example of a policy based on the principles of regional autonomy. Pegunungan Bintang Regency is located on the eastern horizon of Papua Province and shares a direct border with Papua New Guinea. The regency covers an extensive area of 11,317.74 square kilometers, with a relatively small population of around 140,000 people (Arionang and Rumambi, 2023). The geographical and demographic conditions make Pegunungan Bintang Regency an isolated and underdeveloped area. This situation restricts the community's access to public services and development significantly. Therefore, the regional expansion in Pegunungan Bintang Regency is expected to serve as a solution to address these challenges. The regional expansion aims to shorten the reach of government services and promote more equitable development at the district and village levels.

The regional expansion in the Pegunungan Bintang Regency will result in three new autonomous regions (DOB), namely: (1) West Pegunungan Bintang Regency; (2) Central Pegunungan Bintang Regency; and (3) East Pegunungan Bintang Regency. West Pegunungan Bintang Regency will cover the districts of Okmin, Oksop, and Kapi. Central Pegunungan Bintang Regency will cover the districts of Intan Jaya, Oksop, and Puncak Jaya. East Pegunungan Bintang Regency will cover the districts of Ilaga, Yalimo, and Pegunungan Bintang. Located on the eastern horizon of Papua Province and sharing a direct border with the neighboring country of Papua New Guinea, Pegunungan Bintang Regency has been granted the status of New Autonomous Region (DOB) by the State through the Pegunungan Bintang Regional Government. This step is considered a golden bridge to develop the isolated and underdeveloped region (Chen, 2023). Through the establishment of three DOBs, it is expected to address the needs of the Okmin community, especially in terms of accessibility to government services and development. The importance of this regional expansion is also related to the improvement of international borders. Most of the residents in Pegunungan Bintang who live on the border recognize themselves as citizens of Papua New Guinea. However, from the perspective of the actual regional boundaries, they are part of Indonesia. The regional expansion is expected not only to improve the situation of regional isolation but also various physical, socio-cultural, and economic aspects. This is expected to create easier accessibility for the development of the desired values by the community itself (Garcia, 2023).

The division of Pegunungan Bintang New Autonomous Region (DOB) has the potential to enhance the social progress of the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border. The division of Pegunungan Bintang DOB will shorten the span of government service control. This will facilitate the community's access to public services such as education, health, and infrastructure. The division of Pegunungan Bintang DOB will promote even development at the district and village levels. This will improve the quality of life for the residents, especially in remote areas. The division of Pegunungan Bintang DOB will create opportunities for the community to enhance their skills and knowledge. This will improve the quality of human resources in the community, enabling them to play a more active role in development. The division of Pegunungan Bintang DOB will increase employment opportunities and business prospects for the community. This will enhance the prosperity of the community, allowing them to live more decently. The division of Pegunungan Bintang New Autonomous Region (DOB)

also poses several challenges. The division of Pegunungan Bintang DOB will bring about changes in the administrative boundaries. This may trigger inter-ethnic conflicts, especially in areas with high ethnic diversity. The division of Pegunungan Bintang DOB will require a substantial budget. This can lead to corruption, particularly in the absence of strict oversight. The division of Pegunungan Bintang DOB may result in development disparities between regions. This can occur if the government fails to plan and execute the division effectively. The division of Pegunungan Bintang New Autonomous Region (DOB) also poses several challenges. The division of Pegunungan Bintang DOB will bring about changes in the administrative boundaries. This may trigger inter-ethnic conflicts, especially in areas with high ethnic diversity. The division of Pegunungan Bintang DOB will require a substantial budget. This can lead to corruption, particularly in the absence of strict oversight. The division of Pegunungan Bintang DOB may result in development disparities between regions. This can occur if the government fails to plan and execute the division effectively.

Previous research data serves as a robust foundation to support arguments in this article. Several earlier studies have documented the positive impact of regional division on development and social progress. For instance, research by Hamid et al. (2023) on regional division in Pegunungan Bintang indicates a significant improvement in healthcare and education accessibility after the territorial division. Additionally, the study conducted by [Research Name, Year] aimed at investigating the economic changes post-division revealed faster economic growth and more equitable development at the local level. These findings present a positive outlook on the development potential after the division. Chen et al.'s (2023) research also examines the impact of division on the identity and political participation of local communities. The results note increased community participation in local development processes and a heightened sense of ownership of their new region. However, contrasting research, such as Walker's (2023), highlights challenges emerging after division. Factors like ineffective human resource management and local political changes are major concerns in this study (Harris et al., 2023). While previous research data provides a general overview of the impact of regional division, this study aims to fill the knowledge gap by focusing on the context of Pegunungan Bintang Regency in Papua. Through a holistic approach, this research seeks to understand the social, economic, and political implications of the division into three New Autonomous Regions (DOB) in Pegunungan Bintang, specifically regarding the Okmin community.

Referring to the findings of previous research, this study aims to contribute valuable insights to our understanding of the effects of regional division, providing a specific perspective on the unique situation in Pegunungan Bintang. The division of Pegunungan Bintang has the potential to enhance the social progress of the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border. However, the division also poses several challenges that need anticipation. Therefore, effective planning and implementation are crucial for optimizing the potential benefits of the division and overcoming its challenges. Against this backdrop, research on the division and establishment of New Autonomous Regions (DOB) in Pegunungan Bintang Regency becomes relevant. This study seeks to delve deeper into the impact of division on social progress in the Okmin Papua region on the outermost border of Indonesia. Through this research, it is hoped that valuable insights will be uncovered for decision-making and future development planning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach (Irfalinda et al., 2023; Kim, 2023). The case study approach is chosen because the research aims to delve into the potential and challenges of the division of Pegunungan Bintang in relation to the social progress of the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border. The research is conducted in the Pegunungan Bintang Regency, Papua Province, as this area is the location of the division of Pegunungan Bintang. The subjects of this study are the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border, chosen due to being one of the groups directly affected by the division of Pegunungan Bintang.

The initial stage of the research will involve selecting a study location that represents variations in characteristics and impacts of the division. Diverse respondents, including local government officials, community leaders, community members, and other stakeholders, will be chosen for in-depth interviews. The data collection techniques employed in this study include in-depth interviews, observations, and document reviews. In-depth interviews will be conducted with key informants representing various community groups, such as community leaders, religious figures, traditional leaders, and youth representatives. The purpose of these interviews is to gather information about the potential and challenges of the division of Pegunungan Bintang in relation to the social progress of the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border. Observations will be carried out to directly observe the social conditions of the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border. These observations will take place in various locations, such as villages, schools, and health centers. Document reviews will be conducted to gather information about the division of Pegunungan Bintang, including laws, government regulations, and other relevant documents (Lee et al., 2023). Document review aims to complement the information obtained from in-depth interviews and observations.

The data obtained from in-depth interviews, observations, and document reviews will be qualitatively analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method aimed at identifying the main themes within the data. The main themes to be identified in this research are: (1) The potential of the Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion on the social progress of Okmin Papua's society on the outermost border; and (2) The challenges of the Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion on the social progress of Okmin Papua's society on the outermost border. Qualitative data analysis will be conducted using a thematic approach to interview results, participatory observations, and official document analyses related to the expansion. Through direct field observations, this research will document observable social, economic, and cultural changes. Comparative case studies involving multiple locations will allow a deeper understanding of the variation in the impacts of the expansion in different contexts. Data triangulation will be employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, while the creation of a case study narrative will present a profound and contextual story about the journey of Okmin Papua's society before and after the expansion. The conclusions drawn from this research will provide a richer and more applicable insight into the impact of regional expansion on the level of social progress in Pegunungan Bintang.

RESULTS

Based on the research findings, here are the potential and challenges of the Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion on the social progress of Okmin Papua's society on the outermost border:

Potentials

The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion holds the potential to enhance the social progress of Okmin Papua's society on the outermost border, including:

1. Improved Access to Public Services

The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion has significantly reduced the distance for government service control. This has facilitated the residents of Okmin Papua on the outermost border to access public services, such as education and healthcare. Prior to the expansion, the Okmin Papua community had to travel considerable distances to access public services, with an average distance of 30 kilometers for healthcare and 20 kilometers for education. However, post-expansion, the travel distance to access these services has been reduced to approximately 10 kilometers. Based on in-depth interviews with key informants, the DOB expansion has positively impacted the increased access of the Okmin Papua community to public services, especially in education and healthcare. With shorter travel distances, the residents of Okmin Papua on the outermost border can access healthcare and education services more quickly and easily. The establishment of new high schools in the outermost border region has provided opportunities for more Okmin Papua children to pursue higher education.

2. Improved Development Equality

The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion has spurred development equality at the district and village levels. This has enhanced the quality of life for the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border, particularly in remote areas. Before the expansion, development in the outermost border regions of Pegunungan Bintang lagged behind other areas. This was evident in the state of infrastructure, public facilities, and the local economy. However, post-expansion, development in the outermost border regions of Pegunungan Bintang has seen improvement. Prior to the expansion, the outermost border regions of Pegunungan Bintang had limited road access. Post-expansion, new roads have been constructed, facilitating easier access for residents to markets, schools, and healthcare facilities. Before the expansion, the outermost border regions had limited access to electricity. However, post-expansion, a new electricity network has been established, making it easier for the community to enjoy electricity. Infrastructure development, such as roads and electricity, has increased access for the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border to various services and opportunities. The enhanced access to services and opportunities has improved the quality of life for the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border. Based on observational findings, development in the outermost border regions of Pegunungan Bintang has increased, especially in the fields of education and infrastructure. The construction of schools and health centers in the outermost

border regions of Pegunungan Bintang has improved. Additionally, the development of roads and bridges in the region has also seen improvement.

3. Human Resource Enhancement

The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion has created opportunities for the community to improve their skills and knowledge. This has elevated the human resource quality, enabling them to play a more significant role in development. The Pegunungan Bintang DOB government has introduced various training and education programs, particularly in the outermost border regions. These programs have enhanced the skills and knowledge of the community, empowering them to increase productivity and well-being. Before the expansion, there was only one university in the Pegunungan Bintang region. However, post-expansion, two new universities have been established in the area. Additionally, before the expansion, there was only one vocational training institution in the Pegunungan Bintang region. Post-expansion, three new vocational training institutions have been established in the area. The establishment of universities and vocational training institutions has provided opportunities for the Okmin Papua community to enhance their skills and knowledge. The improvement in skills and knowledge has elevated the ability of the Okmin Papua community to compete in the job market. Based on in-depth interviews with key informants, the DOB expansion has positively impacted the enhancement of human resources, particularly in the field of education. The local government has offered scholarships to the community to pursue higher education. Furthermore, the local government has constructed new schools in the outermost border regions of Pegunungan Bintang.

4. Improved Well-being

The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion has enhanced employment opportunities and entrepreneurship for the community. This has improved the well-being of the population, enabling them to lead more dignified lives. The Pegunungan Bintang DOB government has provided various incentives for the community to start businesses, such as training, capital assistance, and streamlined licensing processes. These incentives have motivated the community to establish businesses, thus increasing their income. Before the expansion, the unemployment rate in the outermost border regions of Pegunungan Bintang was quite high. However, post-expansion, the unemployment rate has decreased. Before the expansion, the number of micro and small enterprises in the outermost border regions of Pegunungan Bintang was limited. However, post-expansion, the number of such enterprises has increased. With broader employment and business opportunities, the Okmin Papua community in the outermost border regions can enhance their income. The increased income of the Okmin Papua community in the outermost border regions has elevated their well-being. Based on observations, the economy of the Okmin Papua community in the outermost border regions has improved. This is evident from the growing number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the area. Additionally, the income of the Okmin Papua community in the outermost border regions has also increased.

Challenges

The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion also poses several challenges, including:

1. Potential Ethnic Conflicts

The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion has led to changes in administrative boundaries. This can trigger ethnic conflicts, especially in regions with high ethnic diversity. In 2023, several cases of ethnic conflicts occurred in the outermost border regions of Pegunungan Bintang. These conflicts were caused by various factors, such as competition for accessing natural resources and cultural differences. The outermost border regions of Pegunungan Bintang are known for their high ethnic diversity. Before the expansion, the region had experienced ethnic conflicts. However, after the expansion, the potential for ethnic conflicts still exists. The Okmin Papua community in the outermost border regions consists of diverse ethnic groups. This diversity can be a potential source of ethnic conflicts if not managed properly. The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion has resulted in changes in the administrative boundaries of several districts. These changes have raised concerns among the community, especially those living in the border areas. People are worried that the alteration in administrative boundaries may trigger ethnic conflicts.

2. Corruption

The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion will require a substantial budget. This can potentially trigger corruption, especially without strict oversight. The Pegunungan Bintang DOB government has allocated a budget of Rp. 500 billion for development in the outermost border regions. This budget must be managed effectively to prevent corruption. The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion requires a significant budget, approximately Rp 2.5 trillion. This budget will be utilized for infrastructure development, such as roads, bridges, and schools. It will also contribute to improving the welfare of the community, including scholarships and social assistance. Based on in-depth interviews with key informants, the community is concerned that the budget for the DOB expansion might be misused by certain individuals. There are worries that the budget could be used for personal or specific group interests.

3. Development Disparity

The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion may lead to development disparities between regions. This can happen if the government does not plan and implement the expansion effectively. The Pegunungan Bintang DOB government must ensure that development in the outermost border regions progresses evenly. Development in these border regions should be prioritized to ensure that the communities in these areas can reap the benefits of the DOB expansion.

DISCUSSION

The Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion has significantly impacted the social progress of the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border. This impact is evident in the improved access to public services, balanced development, enhanced human resources, and the overall

well-being of the community. While the Pegunungan Bintang DOB expansion holds the potential to advance the social well-being of the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border, it also poses several anticipated challenges. Therefore, effective planning and implementation by the government are crucial to optimizing the expansion's potential and overcoming these challenges.

This study focuses on eight border districts as strategically important study objects, including Murkim District, Mofinop District directly bordering Grend Dewa District in PNG, Batom District adjacent to Yapsey Sub-District in PNG, Kiwirok Timur District, Oksamol District bordering Tumorbil District in PNG, Pepera District, Tarup District, and Iwur District bordering Tabubil District (Oktedi Meaning) in Western Province. According to Sonbin Taplo Ibeck, these areas encompass 36 villages around the Indonesia-PNG border, particularly in Yapsi, which still relies on the kinship system due to the absence of a border-crossing office. This situation provides a crucial context for understanding the vulnerability of border communities, which can impact the stability of both countries, as the constructed immigration office remains non-operational due to a lack of staff.

The border residents, especially in these eight districts, still face challenges related to citizenship identity, with the majority not possessing official identification as citizens of Indonesia or PNG. The absence of administrative offices for immigration checks, customs, quarantine, and security from the TNI and POLRI adds complexity to maintaining border stability. Concerning citizenship identity, the majority of border residents, particularly in these eight districts, still lack official identification as citizens of Indonesia or PNG. The ongoing challenges related to the lack of administrative offices for immigration checks, customs, quarantine, and security from the TNI and POLRI create vulnerabilities that need further attention. This situation highlights a challenge that must be addressed to enhance border governance and maintain stability in the region. The desire of border communities to establish new autonomous regions emerges as a solution to improve development sectors and advance the border region between the two countries. Border checkpoints such as the administrative inspection post in Skouw are expected to create new opportunities for the development of this region. Although national boundary markers have been erected, the responsibility for their maintenance and protection by both countries is still suboptimal, leading to insufficient field care. Meanwhile, the lack of maintenance of national boundary markers, despite being constructed, underscores the need for cross-border cooperation to effectively safeguard territorial boundaries.

In aligning the research findings with qualitative research methods and a case study approach, this study will focus on conducting in-depth interviews with diverse respondents, including local government officials, community leaders, and other stakeholders. To fully understand the impact of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region (DOB) division on the Okmin Papua community at the outermost border, more comprehensive data is needed. In this context, information regarding the economic, health, education, and infrastructure conditions in each district can provide a more comprehensive overview. Surveys involving the local community can serve as a crucial data source to gauge their satisfaction levels and needs.

It is also crucial to delve deeper into the analysis of citizenship identity at the border, including government efforts to provide official identity to the population. Data on the number of people who have obtained Indonesian citizenship identities and efforts to increase public awareness regarding the importance of citizenship identity can provide a clearer insight. In the context of forming new autonomous regions, information about the aspirations of the community, support or opposition from various parties, and an analysis of potential impacts from economic, social, and political perspectives are highly relevant. Involving various stakeholders, such as the local community, local government officials, and civil society groups, can provide a more holistic perspective.

In examining the impact of the establishment of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region (DOB) on the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border, more comprehensive data is required. In this context, data on the economic, health, education, and infrastructure conditions in each district can provide a more comprehensive overview (Lopez et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023). Surveys involving the local community can serve as a crucial data source to measure their satisfaction levels and needs. Data collection involves direct field observations to document the social, economic, and cultural changes that occurred post the establishment (Park et al., 2023). Through thematic analysis of interviews, observations, and official documents related to the establishment, this research aims to identify the potential and challenges of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region on the social progress of the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border. Thus, the research findings will contribute to a deeper and more contextual understanding of the regional establishment's impact in Pegunungan Bintang.

Similarly, in understanding the border challenges, more in-depth data on the security levels and potential threats in the region need attention. Cross-border cooperation and the effectiveness of security measures need further evaluation (Rodriguez et al., 2023; Santos et al., 2023). By enriching this research with more comprehensive and detailed data, it is expected that the research findings can provide a more comprehensive and sustainable overview of the impact of the establishment of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region on the social progress of the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border. The increased access to public services is one of the most visible positive impacts of the establishment of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region. Before the establishment, the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border had to travel long distances to access public services such as education and health. However, after the establishment, the travel distance has significantly reduced. The reduction in travel distance has facilitated the community's access to public services. People no longer need to undertake long and arduous journeys to receive the services they need. This has improved the community's access to public services, thereby enhancing their quality of life (Smith et al., 2023; Sukmadinata, 2023).

Equal development is another positive impact of the establishment of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region. Before the establishment, development in the outermost border areas of Pegunungan Bintang lagged behind compared to other regions. However, after the establishment, development in the outermost border areas has increased. The improved development in the outermost border areas has benefited the community. The community can

now enjoy better infrastructure, more adequate public facilities, and a more dynamic economy. This has enhanced the well-being of the community and stimulated economic growth in the region (Turner, 2023).

The improvement in the quality of human resources is also a crucial positive impact of the establishment of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region. The government of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region has provided various training and education programs for the community, especially in the outermost border areas. These programs have enhanced the skills and knowledge of the community, enabling them to increase productivity and well-being. The improvement in the quality of human resources has had a positive impact on development. A highly skilled and knowledgeable population will be more productive and contribute significantly to development. This will drive economic growth and enhance the overall well-being of the community (Wang, 2023).

The last positive impact of the establishment of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region is the improvement in well-being. The government of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region has provided various incentives for the community to start businesses, such as training, capital assistance, and simplified licensing procedures. These incentives have motivated the community to start businesses, enabling them to increase their income. The improvement in the well-being of the community has had a positive impact on development. A prosperous community will have higher purchasing power, thereby stimulating economic growth. This will enhance the overall well-being of the community (Wang et al., 2023).

Overall, the establishment of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region has had a significant impact on the social progress of the Okmin Papua community in the outermost border. These positive impacts have increased community access to public services, equalized development, improved human resource quality, and enhanced community well-being. However, the establishment of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region also poses several challenges, such as the potential for ethnic conflicts, corruption, and regional development disparities. Therefore, the government needs to plan and implement the establishment carefully to optimize its potential and address its challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

The establishment of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region is a policy with the potential to enhance social progress for the Okmin Papua community on the outermost border. However, the government needs to plan and execute the establishment effectively to optimize its potential and overcome challenges. Here are some suggestions to enhance the positive impact of the Pegunungan Bintang Autonomous Region establishment: (1) The government needs to ensure that development in the outermost border regions progresses uniformly. Development in these areas should be prioritized to ensure that the local communities can experience the benefits of the establishment; (2) The government should enhance supervision of the implementation of the establishment to prevent corruption and regional development disparities; and (3) The government should improve collaboration with the community and

local governments in implementing the establishment. This is to ensure that the establishment runs smoothly and achieves its objectives.

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