

WEST SUMATERA PROVINCE'S READINESS TO INITIATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the readiness of the West Sumatra provincial government in establishing foreign affairs. This study identified perceptions and implementation of foreign affairs conducted by the regional government of West Sumatra province. Furthermore, this Research is expected to map the challenges, opportunities, and obstacles faced by the regions in formulating foreign affairs. This Research uses a qualitative approach in processing and analyzing data collected through interviews with stakeholders in the government level of West Sumatra province and collection of policy documents on West Sumatra provincial government related to foreign affairs. The results show that the West Sumatra provincial government is not fully prepared to carryout foreign affairs. The regional government of the province of West Sumatra continues to improve it self to prepare its institutions to establish and run foreign affairs. Then, the government aware that local government has support central government in doping foreign affairs. It has various obstacles for the implementation of foreign affairs such as human resources, mechanisms, and limitations of local government initiatives to follow kupon foreign Cooperation carried out by the central government.

Keywords: *West Sumatera, Foreign Affairs, Government, Relations, Paradiplomacy*

A. Introduction

As one of the major countries in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has a strategic role and position in advancing regional integration in the Southeast Asian region, namely the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Conversely, the increasing role of Indonesia in ASEAN will provide a strategic position for Indonesia in playing a strategic role in the international world. However, Indonesia's strategic position and role in attracting benefits in the international world cannot be separated from sub-national (regional) entities and society, especially in the current era of regional autonomy. The central government needs support and also a significant role from local governments to play a more international role which can also provide benefits to local governments to expand their relationships at the global level (Beal & Pinson, 2014).

Foreign relations is part of a country's foreign policy (Shekhar, 2018). Foreign policy is defined as the policies, attitudes and steps taken by the government of a country in

making relations with other countries, international organizations, and other international legal subjects in the context of facing global problems in order to achieve national goals. So when local governments carry out foreign affairs, it cannot be separated from their goals for the achievement of Indonesian foreign policy. Within the framework of Indonesia's foreign policy and regional autonomy, regions must be positioned as safety belts in achieving Indonesia's national interests. Responding to this challenge, the government has regulated regional authority in managing foreign affairs as stipulated in law No.32 of 2004. Based on law no. 32 of 2004, the central government has the right to regulate matters relating to foreign policy, defence, security, justice, monetary and national fiscal and religion. The remaining regions are given the authority to manage their territories, including participating in foreign relations. This law is also supported by law no. 37 of 1999 about foreign relations. It provides opportunities for regions to participate in foreign affairs such as any activity concerning regional and international aspects carried out by the government at the central and regional levels, or its institutions, state institutions, business entities, political organizations, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, or Indonesian citizens. Moreover, the Regulation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3 of 2019 concerns general guidelines for foreign relations by local governments. It regulates foreign relations techniques that can be carried out by regions both through the foreign ministry and other central government agencies. Based on this law, local governments can carry out foreign relations with local governments abroad and / or institutions abroad in the form of twin or sister provincial cooperation, cooperation based on continuing central government cooperation, namely with international organizations, non-profit organizations with legal status, or other cooperation based on the approval of the central government.

Tavares (2016) explains that city and or provincial governments with the development of the global system will not be able to avoid participating in international relations. There are several reasons why regions are required to participate in foreign relations actively. Currently the authority and capacity of the regions are getting wider, this is supported by the rapid and smooth flow of information, the movement of capital, the movement of population between regions and countries, and the increasingly complex needs of the population and the problems faced by regional governments. This naturally makes local governments have to expand their relations abroad to meet the needs of the population, becoming a learning arena for certain problems faced by cities abroad and which can be applied domestically and supporting Indonesia's national interests.

By seeing the emergence of opportunities from the government side and demands in the regions that are owned by local governments to expand their relations abroad, the regions, especially West Sumatra Province, must be able to prepare themselves and answer challenges at the domestic and global levels to carry out foreign relations. West Sumatra has

a strategic position to carry out foreign relations (Isnarti, Fhadly, & Irawan, 2019). West Sumatra has access to regional and global traffic hubs through the Minangkabau international airport. In addition, this region has a high number of foreign tourists visiting, many interactions with foreign countries such as government visits, and many international scale events are held in West Sumatra.

This research is designed to identify perceptions and implementation of foreign relations carried out by the regional government of West Sumatra Province. Furthermore, this research is expected to be able to map readiness in terms of challenges, opportunities and obstacles faced by regions in formulating foreign relations that are in line with Indonesia's national interests. Speaking of foreign affairs carried out by local governments, the position of subnational or regional entities is often neglected in the framework of foreign cooperation. So far, international relations have been dominated by representatives of the central government (Kuznetsov, 2020). There has been a tendency that there is an increasing demand for the role of subnational entities in international relations. Academically, the lack of studies on foreign relations with the regions has made it difficult for regional and central governments to formulate a series of targeted policies in order to benefit from the international community. Although the literature on regional diplomacy studies has begun to be largely, it mostly analyzes other areas that have government systems and conditions that are different from Indonesia (Melissen, 2005; Oosterlynck et al., 2018; Schiavon, 2018; Tavares, 2016). It is undeniable that the literature on cooperation or regional foreign relations in Indonesia or the Southeast Asia region is still small, as has been done by Takdir Ali Mukti (Mukti, 2013).

This paper tries to answer the main questions of how the perception of the West Sumatra provincial government and the form of cooperation that has been carried out by this province. Further, it tries to answer the factors driving and hindering foreign relations carried out by the West Sumatra government. In addition to answering the above questions, specifically, this paper is expected to be able to compile an initial understanding through the identification and exploration of the activities of the West Sumatra provincial government in conducting foreign relations. So that we get an initial picture of how so far the West Sumatra provincial government has managed foreign relations. This study also aims to interpret the perceptions of the West Sumatra provincial government in seeing the development of the external environment both at the regional (Southeast Asia) and global levels so that this research can be used as a starting point in mapping the strategic position of West Sumatra in facing the rapidly changing world.

Literature Review

In International Relations Studies, especially regarding the discussion of foreign relations, have always been dominated through the definition of foreign policy. Foreign policy is defined as a set of policies or activities that are guided by the attitudes of international relations actors in achieving their goals (Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2016). So that foreign policy is the actions of a country against entities outside its territory (Russett, Starr, & Kinsella, 2009). It means the foreign policy must involve a study of the formulation and implementation of a country's foreign policy. Furthermore, Smith, Hadfield, & Dunne, (2016) define foreign policy as the wishes, statements and actions of one actor that are often carried out by the state and also non-state actors aimed at their external environment and responding to other actors regarding goals, statements and actions. - their actions.

In carrying out foreign policy in the form of foreign relations practices, local governments are often involved. However, this involvement of local government is a representation of the central government. In other words, when participating in the international arena, local governments carry national interests instead of bringing regional interests first.

Duchacek (1990) argues that there has been a tendency to increase the role of sub-national governments in international relations. This phenomenon is called the concept of paradiplomacy, city diplomacy, sub state diplomacy or others (Duchacek, 1990; Kuznetsov, 2020; Mukti, 2013; Schiavon, 2018; Tavares, 2016). This concept refers to activities that are parallel, coordinated and complementary to the diplomacy carried out by the central (national) government. In this concept, the central government still has roles such as coordinator, initiator, information, mediator, promoter, facilitator, protector and supervisor (Minister of Foreign Affairs Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3 of 2019). In another study also concluded that the role of the national government in international relations is decreasing (Howe, 2018).

In line with its development, the paradiplomacy concept expects local governments to play a more active role in foreign relations, representing more of their regions rather than being a national representation. So that more regional interests are conveyed in foreign relations (Oosterlynck et al., 2018). Meanwhile, what is meant by parallel is, regional interests must not conflict with national interests and foreign relations that are carried out must be in line with foreign relations owned by the central government. In other words, local governments cannot establish foreign relations with foreign regional governments that do not have diplomatic relations with the central government.

There are at least four main arguments regarding the study of the activities of sub-national governments in international relations. First, it is a fact that representatives of

foreign countries in a country, especially consulates, always provide reports to their respective governments regarding domestic conditions and issues that are considered to affect international relations (Marian, 2019). Second, sub-national governments, especially their legislative organs, are often the target of foreign intervention, for example, in the form of political and economic lobbies in the form of bribery (Gordon, 2015). It indicates that the legislature is expected to be able to accommodate problems abroad which will have an impact on the region. Third, the interest of transnational companies in securing their business encourages them to establish relationships with sub-national governments where their companies are located (Marushin, 2018).

Fourth, related to the role of the mass media. Often the mass media reports on the actions and policies of sub-national governments on issues of international relations. Like the solidarity formed by the Padang city government on the Palestinian issue (Antara Sumbar, 2020). Often the mass media also report on foreign activities carried out by local governments, or when regions become delegates from the national level (Erlandsen, 2018).

Apart from the above, several other demands cause local governments to carry out foreign relations. The high and complex needs of people who want improvements such as a better health system, a better education system and others make local governments have to provide better facilities to the sectors needed. To fulfil this, local governments can collaborate with local governments abroad. It provides more comprehensive options for the community to get better access and facilities. By establishing foreign relations, local governments can carry out exchange cooperation in education or other matters to improve the quality of life of their people.

In addition, by establishing foreign relations, local governments can learn from other cities that face the same problems and how to overcome them, such as handling waste with twin cities or other forms of cooperation (Sitinjak, Sagalaand Rianawati, 2014). Local governments can also improve relations with the diaspora in overseas cities so that there is a close relationship between the people of foreigners and their origins. It is hoped that with this diaspora relationship with local governments, ex-pats can build their home areas without having to return to the regions so that local governments can become a bridge for expatriates to contribute (Totoricagüena, 2005).

Apart from this, the border region, which is located directly to the border, is expected to establish foreign cooperation. It will increase population access from one region to another; this can also strengthen a sense of nationalism in a country. Seeing them any opportunities, facilities and demands experienced by the regions to carry out foreign relations, the current regional government should no longer be a representation for the central government in carrying out foreign relations. It is hoped that it can represent its interests with assistance from the central government without contradicting national

interests. Through the conceptual frame work above, this research is expected to be able to provide an overview of how local governments prepare for foreign relations and the obstacles they experience.

B. Method

This paper uses a qualitative research method. According to Lamont (2015), qualitative methods are used to focus on meanings and processes about specific events, phenomena, and others. Furthermore, qualitative methods collect and analyze data that comes in the form of spoken or written language and generally not in the form of numbers. Data were collected through the collection of West Sumatra provincial government policy documents related to foreign relations and then classified according to regional priority sectors. Data was also collected from a literature study that contains the activities of the West Sumatra provincial government in foreign relations.

In addition, data was also collected through in-depth interviews with stakeholders in the provincial government of West Sumatra, to get stakeholders' perceptions as materials for formulating and implementing a series of policies. The information expected through this interview first is the level of understanding and knowledge of stakeholders regarding changes in regional and global regimes. Second is the process of formulating policy at the local government bureaucratic level. Third, knowing the opportunities and obstacles experienced by these stakeholders in carrying out foreign relations in local governments.

In doing interviews, a questionnaire was prepared, which was distributed purposively to relevant stakeholders. The questions designed in the questionnaire are focused on three aspects, namely perceptions, opportunities and obstacles in establishing foreign relations. The resource persons were asked to answer open-ended questions. Among the questions raised in the interview were, what do you think about the changing regional regime and the world today? To what extent can foreign relations be used for regional progress? What is the current pattern of cooperation with foreign parties? What sectors require intensification of foreign relations? How do the local governments coordinate with the central government regarding the formulation of a foreign relations policy? To what extent is the effectiveness of foreign relations on regional development progress? What activities have been the activities of foreign cooperation so far? The data obtained will then be processed inductively which in the end is expected to provide an overview of the readiness, perceptions and developments under taken by the regional government of West Sumatra province in foreign relations.

C. Result and Discussion

After collecting data and analyzing it, it can be found regarding the readiness of the West Sumatra provincial government in establishing foreign relations. The foreign

government cooperation subdivision handles foreign relations in the West Sumatra provincial government. This sub-division is in the cooperation and overseas bureau which is subordinate to the fields of economy, development and people's welfare. Specifically, this subsection is tasked with organizing coordination and facilitation, monitoring in the field of cooperation within the region and abroad and with third parties (West Sumatra Governor Regulation No 68/2016, West Sumatra Provincial Government, 2016).

From the number of recorded collaborations produced, so far, there are two twin provincial collaborations owned by the West Sumatra provincial government. The first is between the regional government of West Sumatra province and the regional council of the Moroko kingdom Fes-boulemane in 2014 (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014) and the second with the province of Oryol, the Russian Federation in 2019 (Septian, 2019). If we look at the number of twin city collaborations that have been produced so far, it indicates that the West Sumatra provincial government has not yet focused on developing foreign relations. It can be seen from the small amount of foreign relations that can be noted by this local government.

So far, talking about cooperation in foreign relations, the West Sumatra provincial government is still a third party in establishing these foreign relations. In other words, the West Sumatra provincial government acts more like an Indonesian delegation or a representative of the central government in carrying out foreign relations cooperation. The West Sumatra provincial government is not the party that directly carries out foreign relations or known as a second party. We can see from the involvement of the West Sumatra provincial government on various occasions on an international scale such as at various exhibitions and expos that have been carried out and also trade promotions that have been carried out in several countries. For example, the promotion of halal tourism in Dubai (Faisal, 2016). Or in certain events where the province of West Sumatra is chosen to be a representative of the Indonesian government both at home and abroad, such as the choice of West Sumatra to be the location for a diplomatic tour organized by the Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia to attract investment and investment (the Jakarta post, 2015). At the national level, the West Sumatra government plays an essential role in carrying out foreign cooperation, such as the involvement of the West Sumatra provincial government in the Indonesia Malaysia Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-TG, joint investment) (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). In this event, in 2020 West Sumatra supposed to be the host for this IMT-GT Joint Investment meeting. This cooperation can be seen as a collaboration carried out by the central government and abroad because in this case, the West Sumatra provincial government is only a representation of the Indonesian state along with nine other provinces.

Seeing the opportunities for cooperation in foreign relations that can be carried out by the local government, the West Sumatra provincial government has the initiative to carry out foreign relations. It can be seen that the West Sumatra provincial government is actively implementing programs and promoting the promotion of domestic and foreign investment by becoming participants or delegates from the government Indonesia at various expos and exhibitions held (Rizal, 2019). It is also supported by the high number of foreign visits made by the governor of West Sumatra in the context of promotion or attracting investment and investment to West Sumatra.

From the interview, it was found that the West Sumatra provincial government was active in exploring relations with outside parties in various fields such as the agricultural and mining sectors by inviting several foreign investors from Australia, Poland and China to manage deep mines that required higher mining technology. Exploration of cooperation with Spain in agriculture and tourism with Thailand. However, not many concrete results from this exploration could be produced, the high number of foreign visits made by the West Sumatra government and a large number of investigations carried out did not produce output such as the signing of an agreement to cooperate, either in the form of sister city or the like. So that foreign relations carried out by the regional government of West Sumatra Province have not produced legal documents followed by action plans. In addition, even though there have been many invitations for foreign investors to West Sumatra, the issue of land permits that cannot be separated from adat in West Sumatra has become a challenge for this problem, thus reducing the interest in foreign investment.

On one hand, there are opportunities for local governments to carry out foreign cooperation. Several steps that have been taken by the West Sumatra provincial government to carry out foreign cooperation such as participating in promotions, becoming representatives of the Indonesian government, conducting exploration. On the other hand, the West Sumatra provincial government has not full readiness in establish foreign relations cooperation. There are several obstacles that the West Sumatra provincial government has in preparing it self to carry out foreign relations cooperation. Among the obstacles experienced by the West Sumatra provincial government, among others; human resources, mechanisms, focus of cooperation and its relation to geopolitics, as well as the action plan after signing the cooperation.

The regional government of West Sumatra province does not yet have a particular agency or bureau that deals with regional cooperation with abroad. Currently, the foreign cooperation sub-division is under the cooperation and overseas bureau which not only focuses on discussing issues of foreign cooperation, but also issues of regional cooperation, coordination and other communications concerning regional cooperation both at home and abroad. It results in a high work load on the staff of this division so that they are not

focused and have little motivation to take care of foreign relations. Besides, there is a long process to initiate foreign cooperation, starting from the mapping of cooperation partners, licensing for regional councils and others. In addition, there is a stigma for staff that when dealing with foreign relations it will only be a way for the head of government and other high-ranking officials and those who will go abroad are only important officials, thus reducing motivation to take care of foreign affairs.

In the cooperation mechanism, there are other obstacles to establish foreign relations. After the collaboration is carried out, the local government is again confused about what agency will be the executor of the cooperation that has been made. This is also accompanied by poor coordination between agencies and the needs of each agency in carrying out foreign cooperation. So that after signing the cooperation, there is no apparent action plan. The sister province cooperation with Fes Boulemane has been signed since 2014, but until today there has not been any activity that becomes an action plan based on this agreement. Impressed, this cooperation agreement is like a sleeping agreement.

The focus of foreign relations is a significant problem in foreign cooperation that will be established by the regional government of West Sumatra province. Until now, there is no specific area that will be the focus of this regional government foreign relations cooperation. Will it focus on advancing agriculture, trade, education, tourism or import or other exports. Several things indicate that the focus of local government cooperation has not been seen. First, every overseas visit made by stakeholders always carries a common agenda, such as increasing regional potential, regional promotion, or investment and investment. Second, they are selected as partners for cooperation. Fesboulemane and Oryol are located quite far from West Sumatra. So that to implement the cooperation program will require long and intensive communication. Apart from that, there is no significant similarity between the two regions with West Sumatra and what issues will be discussed together are also the same problems faced by this regional government.

In line with this, so far there has not been any implementation of the program or action plan of the two twin provincial collaborations. In addition, it is not clear why the two regions were chosen as sister or twin provinces of West Sumatra province. The sister province cooperation with Oryol was formed due to a visit from the West Sumatra delegation and the West Sumatra governor to the Russian Federation. If the West Sumatra provincial government has a clear focus on foreign cooperation, before foreign visits the agenda and issues to be discussed should be more precise, so that if a Cooperation agreement is formed there will be an action plan afterwards. The West Sumatra provincial government can take advantage of foreign cooperation with regions closer to Indonesia, such as regional governments in Southeast Asia. Apart from having

similarities in demographics and others, communicating for action plans will be easier, because there are similarities in areas, closer locations, and similar problems. For example, the local government of Padang city province can cooperate with one of the regions in Thailand on agricultural issues. Almost the same geographic area and almost the same Community agricultural production will facilitate cooperation in the form of exchange learning.

The proximity of the location of this collaboration will also make it easier for the community to take advantage of the cooperation, such as increasing the interest of students to make exchanges because the target area is not too far from the country of origin so that it will make it easier for adaptation and more. However, travelling abroad outside Asia and being considered more prestigious is still a different obstacle for the regional government of West Sumatra province in conducting foreign relations. Thus, this regional government has not been seen to take advantage of ASEAN as a Close neighbouring country to initiate foreign relations cooperation.

In addition, the stages of the West Sumatra provincial government in establishing foreign relations are more limited to foreign exploration and visits. This can be seen from the high number of foreign visits made by the government elite in West Sumatra as well as the number of government guests visiting West Sumatra. However, this exploration was not continued with a more binding form of cooperation such as a cooperation agreement or the like. Most of the collaborations that are carried out are limited to visits, exploring what are as can be used as a cooperation sector, then there are reciprocal visits without proceeding to make cooperation documents that can become the basis for implementing the action plan of this collaboration.

It can be said that the regional government of West Sumatra province has experience in interacting globally and initiating foreign relations with an indication of the large number of activities carried out on an international scale. However, this regional government does not have sufficient readiness to initiate foreign cooperation, with an indication that an institution is not ready to handle this issue, does not have a clear focus on issues or interests that will be under foreign relations and target countries to become partners.

D. Conclusion

The regional government of West Sumatra province is one of the provinces that is expected to establish foreign relations. However, so far, it can be concluded that this regional government is not yet ready to establish foreign relations as the party that directly communicates regional interests abroad. This can be indicated from the small number of sister province collaborations owned by the regional government of West Sumatra

province, the absence of an action plan as a form of implementation of cooperation, and the absence of a special bureau in charge of the foreign cooperation section, only a sub-section that discusses this matter. Several obstacles make the regional government of West Sumatra province not ready to establish foreign relations, such as when viewed from the institution, the West Sumatra provincial government does not yet have a special bureau that discusses foreign cooperation, although there is already a sub-section that discusses joint foreign cooperation with other collaborations.

This has resulted in a large number of staff workloads and overlapping with regional cooperation. Second, there is no focus on foreign cooperation that will be carried out, so far it has not been seen that the regional government of West Sumatra province will carry out foreign cooperation, significantly to advance a particular sector. So far, the exploration of foreign cooperation has been aimed at all fields.

The absence of a focus on this cooperation will make local governments confused in determining the targets of foreign governments to be selected as partners for cooperation. In addition, so far, geopolitically, there is no visible direction in selecting the target of cooperation chosen by the West Sumatra government. Third, there are many explorations of cooperation that have been carried out but not followed by the preparation of legal documents of cooperation, which should be the basis for implementing foreign cooperation between regional and foreign governments. This is because they do not have a sector focus that will be developed in foreign relations, so they cannot appoint a specific agency to initiate further cooperation after the exploration has taken place.

With this research, it is hoped that the regional government of West Sumatra province can continue to improve itself to prepare for foreign cooperation by having a clear direction of focus on cooperation and sectors. Regional governments are expected to be able to carry out foreign cooperation starting from regional are as such as Southeast Asia because they have many similarities in demographics which will make it easier for foreign cooperation action plans.

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