

Political Perceptions and Dynamics in The Formation of Southern Garut Regency: An Analysis of DPRD Members' Perspectives

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Abstract

This research analyzes the political perceptions of faction members in the Garut Regency Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) regarding the formation of Southern Garut Regency. Findings indicate broad support for the expansion, motivated by the need to enhance public services, accelerate development, and improve community welfare in the southern region. Despite this, some factions express skepticism, emphasizing the necessity for in-depth studies and administrative readiness. Utilizing political perception theory, the study explores how DPRD members form their views based on information and interpret their political and social contexts. The research also highlights theoretical limitations, such as insufficient consideration of broader power dynamics and structural influences, including central government policies and local economic interests. These findings underscore the need for further theoretical development to comprehensively capture the complexities of the regional expansion process.

Keywords: Decentralization, DPRD Members, Political Perceptions, Regional Expansion, Southern Garut Regency.



A. INTRODUCTION

The political landscape in Indonesia underwent a significant transformation following the 1998 political reform, establishing Indonesia as one of the most democratic countries and embarking on a decentralization effort (Butt, 2010). This decentralization process, involving the creation of new provinces, regencies, and local government units, was a response to existing inequalities and injustices within society. These changes emerged from a confluence of political, social, cultural, and economic shifts (Booth, 2011). Through decentralization and regional autonomy policies, regional expansion is seen as a form of regional development aimed at reducing inter-regional disparities and promoting balanced growth and development (Muta'ali, 2011).

Since the implementation of decentralization under Law No. 22 of 1999 and Law No. 32 of 2004, proposals for regional division have proliferated. This rapid regional expansion has had significant impacts on economic, social, political, and governance aspects. According to data from BAPPENAS and UNDP in 2008, after the enactment of Law No. 22 of 1999 on Regional Autonomy, regional expansion became a new paradigm in Indonesia's governance structure. Regional reorganization, particularly through regional expansion, aims to enhance the effectiveness of local government, accelerate community welfare improvements, enhance public services,

improve governance quality, boost national and regional competitiveness, and preserve local customs, traditions, and cultures.

One notable proposal for regional expansion in West Java is the formation of South Garut Regency, a concept that has been in discussion since 2004. This proposal has been championed by various local leaders and activists who have long advocated for the establishment of South Garut as an autonomous region. The plan to establish South Garut Regency has received significant attention from the current Acting Governor of West Java, Bey Machmudin, following campaign promises by the former governor, Ridwan Kamil. Despite strong political support from members of the DPRD Garut Regency, including those from the Golkar faction, the expansion process has been stalled due to the central government's moratorium policy on regional expansion.

The southern part of Garut Regency is recognized for its rich natural resources and potential for human resource development, which positions it to manage and develop its natural resources more effectively. However, the political maneuvering associated with regional expansion often involves pragmatic acrobatics by some politicians, underscoring the need for genuine efforts to prioritize public interest over political gains. Despite nearly two decades of discourse, the proposal for South Garut's regional expansion remains unrealized, with the central government's response viewed as lacking seriousness and clarity.

In analyzing the political perception of faction members in the DPRD of Garut Regency regarding the discourse on forming South Garut Regency, this study applies political perception theory to understand how individuals form political impressions and how these perceptions influence their political participation. Previous studies have explored political perceptions related to various political issues, such as the perception of political parties in Tasikmalaya Regency regarding the 30% female quota (Andrian & Widiastuti, 2011), and the perception of PKS party cadres on the relationship between Islam and the state (Putra, 2021). However, no studies have specifically examined the political perceptions of faction members in the DPRD Garut Regency concerning the proposed formation of South Garut Regency.

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in political perception theory, which explores how individuals form impressions of political phenomena and how these perceptions influence their political behaviors and attitudes. Political perception is a cognitive process through which individuals interpret political stimuli based on their environmental context, knowledge, value systems, personality traits, and past experiences (Budiardjo, 2008).

Political perception theory posits that individuals construct impressions of the characteristics and positions of political candidates, parties, and institutions. These impressions are crucial in guiding political participation and engagement. Previous research has shown that political knowledge significantly affects political perception, influencing individuals' political actions, such as voting and political advocacy (Limilia & Ariadne, 2018; Rossi et al., 1956). Political cues, which are pieces of information or signals about political entities, play a vital role in shaping these

perceptions. These cues can be manipulated, which in turn can impact political perceptions (Conover, 1981; Granberg, 1987).

Moreover, political perception is also affected by media and digital communications, which shape public understanding and opinions on political matters. Media has the power to set agendas and influence what people think about, thereby playing a significant role in the formation of political perceptions (Ahler, 2016; Mutz, 1998). This study leverages these insights to examine how faction members in the DPRD Garut Regency perceive the discourse on the formation of South Garut Regency and how these perceptions influence their political support and actions.

By applying political perception theory, this research aims to understand the subjective interpretations and cognitive processes of DPRD members regarding regional expansion. This approach provides a comprehensive framework to analyze the interplay between individual perceptions, political cues, and the broader political environment. Additionally, the study critiques the limitations of political perception theory, particularly its focus on individual-level analysis while potentially overlooking structural constraints and broader power dynamics that significantly influence political decision-making processes.

Integrating political perception theory with an analysis of structural and power dynamics offers a nuanced understanding of local political processes and the factors driving support for regional expansion. This theoretical lens is crucial for comprehending the complex motivations and behaviors of political actors involved in the discourse on forming South Garut Regency.

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how political factions in the DPRD Garut Regency perceive the discourse on forming South Garut Regency, focusing on their political motivations, perceived benefits, and the challenges they face in advocating for regional expansion. Through a qualitative research methodology involving in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the political dynamics and structural factors influencing the regional expansion discourse in Garut Regency.

B. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the political perceptions of faction members in the DPRD (Regional House of Representatives) of Garut Regency regarding the discourse on forming South Garut Regency. The qualitative approach is chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences and cognitive processes of the DPRD members. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews are conducted with key informants, including faction leaders, the Chairman of the DPRD, and local political observers, to gather comprehensive insights into their political perceptions and the factors influencing their support for regional expansion. Observations and document analysis supplement the interview data by providing additional context and validating the information obtained.

Data analysis is performed using an inductive approach, where the collected data are systematically categorized and synthesized to identify patterns and themes relevant to the research questions. The analysis process involves data reduction, coding, and thematic analysis to ensure a thorough examination of the political perceptions and actions of the DPRD members. Triangulation is used to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings by cross-checking data from multiple sources and methods. The study also adheres to ethical research standards, ensuring confidentiality and informed consent from all participants. Through this rigorous methodological approach, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the political dynamics surrounding the discourse on forming South Garut Regency.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Formation of South Garut Regency

The discourse on the establishment of South Garut Regency has been ongoing for nearly two decades, driven by a combination of public dissatisfaction with administrative services and the aspiration for improved local governance. This initiative emerged from the perceived inadequacies in service delivery to the southern parts of Garut, which span a vast area with challenging access to the central administrative offices in Garut City. The southern region, covering half the area of Garut Regency, often faces difficulties in accessing government services effectively due to its expansive geography (Suherman et al., 2021).

Despite the long-standing advocacy for the formation of South Garut Regency, the proposal has been consistently stalled due to a moratorium on the creation of new autonomous regions imposed by the central government. The proponents of this initiative, including local leaders and activists, argue that the creation of a new regency is necessary to bring government services closer to the people, thereby enhancing welfare and justice. Asep Dadang, the coordinator of the Presidium for the Establishment of South Garut Regency, has emphasized that the southern part of Garut lags in development compared to other regions within the regency, necessitating administrative reorganization to boost the Human Development Index (HDI) and overall development (Syaeful, 2023).

The proposal for the formation of South Garut Regency is seen as a strategic move to balance regional development, improve public services, and bring the government closer to the community. Proximity to administrative offices is expected to lead to more responsive decision-making that better reflects the needs and aspirations of the local populace. In addition to addressing accessibility issues, the proponents highlight the importance of local government presence in managing environmental and disaster-prone areas more effectively (Humas Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2022).

South Garut is rich in natural resources, including tourism, agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and plantations, spread across 15 districts. These economic potentials, combined with the need for more efficient public service delivery, make the case for regional division compelling. Investment opportunities from various

sectors are projected to increase with the establishment of a new administrative entity, thereby driving economic growth in the region (Syaeful, 2023).

Studies, such as the productivity index analysis conducted by researchers from Padjadjaran University, underscore the region's potential not only in agriculture and tourism but also in mining. South Garut boasts significant mineral resources, including semi-precious stones, perlite, obsidian, templek stone, and kaolin (Djuwaedah et al., 2010). The local government has recognized the potential for gold mining, particularly in the Bungbulang district, with substantial deposits identified. However, transitioning from traditional to modern mining practices will require careful consideration of environmental sustainability (Syaifudin, 2017).

Moreover, South Garut is endowed with geothermal energy resources, with notable potential sites in Cilayu and Arinem, capable of generating significant megawatts of power. This energy potential, combined with the region's other resources, positions South Garut as a prospective area for substantial development if the proposed administrative changes are implemented (Ferdiansyah, 2014).

The local government and community leaders have been proactive in advocating for the establishment of South Garut Regency. In December 2019, the Garut Regency DPRD and the local government held a plenary meeting to discuss preparations for the new regency. This included delineating the administrative boundaries, asset transfer, and budgeting. The Garut Regency government has committed to allocating substantial funds and resources to ensure a smooth transition once the moratorium is lifted (Ghani, 2020).

Community engagement has been a critical aspect of this advocacy. Local government officials, including the Deputy Regent of Garut, frequently visit South Garut to gather feedback and ensure that the aspirations of the local population are incorporated into the planning process. The ongoing dialogue between the government and the community underscores the commitment to making South Garut Regency a reality.

The envisioned South Garut Regency will encompass 15 districts: Banjarwangi, Bungbulang, Cibalong, Cihurip, Cikelet, Caringin, Cisewu, Cisompet, Mekarmukti, Pakenjeng, Pamulihan, Pamengpeuk, Pendeuy, Singajaya, and Talegong. This reorganization is expected to create a more manageable administrative area that can address the unique challenges and leverage the specific opportunities present in the southern part of Garut (Suherman et al., 2021).

The formation of South Garut Regency represents a significant effort to enhance local governance, improve public service delivery, and stimulate economic growth through better management of local resources. Despite the challenges posed by the central government's moratorium, the persistent advocacy by local leaders and community members reflects a strong commitment to regional development and improved welfare for the people of South Garut. The proposed reorganization aims to create a more responsive and efficient administrative structure that can better serve the needs of the local population and drive sustainable development in the region.

2. The Political Perception of Faction Members in the DPRD of Garut Regency on the Discourse of Forming South Garut Regency

Unlike the central and northern regions of Garut, the southern region is still experiencing slower progress. To accelerate development and improve the welfare of the residents in this area, the involvement of many parties is necessary. The establishment of the New Autonomous Region of Southern Garut will not be realized without political support from various entities. Political support, as an activity, includes providing assistance, contributions, or encouragement to promote and campaign for the importance of regional expansion in Southern Garut. This support can come from political parties, influential figures, or community networks acting on behalf of the community to ensure their benefits.

Several stakeholders are working together to support the establishment of the New Autonomous Region of Southern Garut, each playing different roles to achieve the common goal of realizing this regional expansion. The collaborative Quadruple Helix study by Suherman et al. examines four political actors with the most power and influence in forming Southern Garut. These actors are academics in Southern Garut, economic actors (entrepreneurs), local figures/cadres (civil society), and the Government of Garut Regency and West Java Province (government) (Suherman et al., 2021).

Various actors, including the Government of Garut Regency, the Garut Regency Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), the Government of West Java Province, the West Java Provincial House of Representatives (DPRD), community leaders, and academics, have provided their political support to realize the regional expansion of Southern Garut. Although the Central Government is still considering this plan, citing experiences from other regions in Indonesia that have failed to become independent and meet expectations for quality public services, causing new problems between the new regions and their communities, the actors within the Quadruple Helix (the Government of Garut Regency, DPRD Garut Regency, the Government of West Java Province, DPRD West Java Province, community leaders, and academics) remain optimistic about the establishment of the New Autonomous Region of Southern Garut.

The actors within the Quadruple Helix have not only approved the formation of Southern Garut as a new autonomous region but are also optimistic that this expansion will bring many positive aspects in fostering an investment and economic climate, human development, and governance that is just and serves the community. For these reasons, community leaders and representatives in the Garut Regency DPRD are fighting for the rights of the residents in Southern Garut to enjoy a better quality of life (Munawar, 2020).

West Java Vice Governor, Uu Ruhzanul Ulum, hopes that the establishment of the New Autonomous Region of Southern Garut will, in the future, be a solution to improving the welfare of the people in West Java Province, especially in the southern part. According to him, the purpose of regional expansion is to bring the government closer to the local people to achieve significant development progress. Improving the

welfare of residents is also a primary task for leaders. Kang Uu also believes that the regional expansion in West Java will lead to development and welfare advancements, and thus, he is optimistic that the presence of Southern Garut will also have a positive impact on development and community welfare (Munawar, 2020).

An inventory of actors supporting the regional expansion and the formation of Southern Garut, besides the elements of the regional government of Garut Regency and West Java Province, also includes societal and academic elements. The support from various non-governmental actors was evident in 2019 when about 20,000 residents of Southern Garut held a declaration demanding their region's separation from Garut Regency. At that time, the community criticized the stagnation of the expansion process and questioned the central government's commitment. Some figures, such as Prof. Nanat Natsir and Dedi Kurniawan from Parmusi Garut, opined that the plan to establish Southern Garut took longer than other regions in Central Java and East Java. In response to these demands, then Deputy Regent of Garut, Helmi Budiman, stated that the significant support from residents demonstrated their strong determination and high hopes for regional expansion, and the Garut Regency Government fully supported this aspiration by preparing funds for the development of public service facilities that could be used if Southern Garut Regency was eventually formed (Supriadin, 2019).

Political support for regional expansion not only comes from local community groups, academics, and politicians at the regency and provincial levels but also from some national figures. During the 2024 presidential election, presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto, as stated by Ridwan Kamil, was ready to support the expansion of Southern Garut if elected president (Halim & Lestari, 2023). Similarly, vice-presidential candidate Muhaimin Iskandar promised directly to promote Southern Garut's regional expansion if elected vice president (Fadilah, 2024).

The election of Prabowo and Gibran as the President and Vice President for 2024-2029 also brings new hope for the formation of Southern Garut Regency. Under the leadership of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the moratorium on New Autonomous Regions (DOB) will be reopened, not only for regencies in West Java Province but also for all regions proposing DOB expansions. For Garut Regency, specifically, the Southern and Northern Garut DOBs must be a top priority. Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka received the most votes and won the election in Garut, including Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno's victory in the 2019 presidential election. This victory will surely translate into a political promise that Prabowo and Gibran need to fulfill.

The support from political figures at both local and national levels indicates that the issue of Southern Garut's regional expansion is gaining significant attention not only locally but also nationally. The support from many parties signifies the hope that Southern Garut Regency will become a model for regional management and development for other areas. Southern Garut Regency has a great opportunity to grow and provide benefits to its residents, not only because of its natural resources but also its human resources.

3. The Political Process of Garut Regency DPRD Members in Building Political Perceptions Regarding the Formation of Southern Garut Regency

The process undertaken by the Garut Regency Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) members to build political perceptions regarding the discourse of forming Southern Garut Regency reflects the political dynamics and individual perceptions of the legislative members. Garut DPRD members play a crucial role in this process, from initial discussions to the final decision-making, ensuring that the aspirations and interests of the people they represent are thoroughly considered. They are also responsible for ensuring that this process aligns with democratic principles and applicable laws.

The factions within the Garut Regency DPRD do not directly instruct their members to approve or reject the discourse on regional expansion or the formation of new autonomous regions. As a legislative body, faction members have the autonomy to form their views based on studies and the aspirations of their constituents. Although there are internal discussions among faction members, the final decision is usually based on the individual assessments of each faction member regarding the benefits, risks, and aspirations of the communities they represent.

Moreover, DPRD members are directed to listen to the aspirations or inputs from the community regarding regional expansion through public meetings, investigative teams, open communication channels, field visits, and open discussions. This process ensures that the decisions made reflect the desires and needs of the local community.

The process of expanding Southern Garut Regency also involves political support from various parties, including academics, economic actors, and community leaders who are part of the Southern Garut Community Presidium Forum. This support reflects collaboration and synergy among various actors to realize an expansion expected to improve public services and development in the region.

However, as of now, the discourse on the formation of the New Autonomous Region of Southern Garut has not been realized, primarily due to a moratorium policy from the central government. Although the factions in the Garut Regency DPRD support the expansion to enhance services and development in the area, administrative hurdles and requirements slow down the process.

In analyzing the political perceptions of faction members in the Garut Regency DPRD, this study focuses on how individuals build impressions of their political positions, especially concerning regional expansion. These political perceptions then guide individuals to participate in politics, encompassing their roles and political actions in the discourse of forming Southern Garut Regency.

Through in-depth studies and open discussions, Garut Regency DPRD members consider aspects such as the impact on budget allocation, administration, and the political and economic interests of Southern Garut's people before taking an official stance. This stance reflects their commitment to ensuring that every decision made genuinely aligns with the needs and aspirations of the local community.

The process undertaken by Garut Regency DPRD members to build political perceptions regarding the discourse of forming Southern Garut Regency demonstrates the complexity of local politics and how the individual perceptions of DPRD members form and develop over time. From interviews with the Vice Chairman of the DPRD, Ayi Suryana (PPP), several new and significant points emerged regarding the internal and external dynamics influencing this process.

First, the development of the new autonomous region of Southern Garut is quite dynamic despite being hindered by the central government's moratorium. This expansion process has reached the provincial level and even the plenary stage, indicating strong political support at both local and provincial levels. The main obstacle to the formation of Southern Garut Regency is the central government's regional expansion moratorium policy, which is the main administrative barrier despite ongoing efforts by the DPRD to push this process forward.

The desire to establish Southern Garut as a new autonomous region is driven by several key factors: the potential for faster economic growth, increased purchasing power of the community, improved public services, and increased Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD). This reflects that the push for expansion is not only based on administrative aspects but also on economic considerations and community welfare.

The Garut Regency DPRD actively supports this expansion, with factions in the DPRD showing solid support. Each faction participates in discussions and the plenary process, indicating a strong consensus at the local legislative level. Although there were diverse views at the start of the expansion discourse, support has strengthened over time, especially after seeing the economic potential and regional growth that could be achieved through expansion.

The process of listening to community aspirations is conducted through hearings, discussions, and direct interactions with local residents. DPRD members are directed to actively oversee the expansion process, ensuring that every aspiration and need of the community is heard and considered in every legislative step. The factions in the DPRD also support their members by holding internal meetings, listening to input from hearings, and ensuring active support in the legislative process.

This entire process reflects how Garut Regency DPRD members build political perceptions and perceive the discourse of forming the new autonomous region of Southern Garut. Through active involvement in various discussions, meetings, and interactions with the community, DPRD members ensure that the decisions made reflect the needs and aspirations of the people they represent. This shows that the local political process, particularly in the issue of regional expansion, involves complex dynamics and requires support and collaboration from various parties to achieve the desired outcomes.

In an interview with a representative from the Democratic Faction, Dadang Ajat S., several new points emerged that complemented the understanding of the Garut Regency DPRD members' process in building political perceptions in the discourse of forming Southern Garut Regency.

First, Dadang Ajat S. highlighted that one of the main reasons Southern Garut's expansion has not been realized is due to the central government's moratorium. However, he added that if the moratorium is lifted, Southern Garut has already met all the necessary requirements to become a New Autonomous Region (DOB). He explained that the current expansion process differs from before. Now, regions that will become DOBs must undergo a three-year preparation period to ensure independence before being officially recognized as a new regency.

Dadang Ajat S. also emphasized several driving factors behind the desire to form Southern Garut as a DOB, including improving welfare and reducing poverty, effective regional management, local potential development, infrastructure and public service improvement, and special handling for disaster-prone areas. With a population of around 27 million people and a vast area, expansion is deemed necessary to optimize management and services to the community.

Additionally, the Garut Regency DPRD has taken concrete steps to support the expansion, including submitting proposals to the provincial and central levels, and making direct visits to the Ministry of Home Affairs (Depdagri) and the DPR RI to discuss and expedite the expansion process. Dadang also revealed that all factions in the Garut Regency DPRD share the same position in supporting this expansion discourse. Although there were differing opinions at the beginning of the discussion, all factions ultimately agreed to support the expansion for the advancement and welfare of Southern Garut's people.

The support from factions within the Garut Regency Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) is not only formal but also includes various strategic actions such as regulatory preparation, infrastructure development, and overseeing the preparation of the New Autonomous Region (DOB). DPRD faction members are directed to listen to the aspirations of the community through forums such as village meetings and direct hearings, ensuring that the needs and aspirations of the community become the foundation of every step taken.

Furthermore, the factions within the Garut Regency DPRD guide their members to monitor the expansion process through various means, including coordination and lobbying with the provincial government, the Ministry of Home Affairs (Depdagri), and the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI). They also focus on developing the necessary infrastructure and regulations so that Southern Garut is ready to become a DOB after a three-year preparation period. Continuous efforts are made to push for the lifting of the moratorium so that the expansion process can proceed.

Thus, this interview adds a new dimension to understanding the political and administrative complexities involved in the expansion process of Southern Garut Regency. The solid support from all DPRD factions, coupled with strategic steps taken, demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring that this expansion not only remains a discourse but also becomes a reality for the welfare of the Southern Garut community.

Continuing from previous findings, an interview with Lulu Gandhi Nan Rajati from the Gerindra Faction provides additional insights into the Southern Garut expansion process and the dynamics behind the existing political support.

First, the support for Southern Garut's expansion comes not only from the regency and provincial levels but has also reached the national level. This indicates a strong commitment from various levels of government to support this expansion. However, the main obstacle still faced is the central government's moratorium, which hinders further progress despite solid political support.

Lulu Gandhi also emphasized that one of the main drivers for the expansion is the improvement of the region's fiscal capacity. With the expansion, the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) is expected to increase, thereby promoting faster economic growth and better public services. This is because the current APBD is considered insufficient to accommodate the needs of Garut's large population. With the formation of Southern Garut as a new autonomous region, fiscal management is expected to become more efficient and focused.

From the Gerindra Faction's perspective, the support for Southern Garut's expansion is very strong and active. The Gerindra Faction is involved in various internal meetings, hearings, and discussions to promote this expansion. They see the expansion as a strategic step to enhance economic growth and regional management effectiveness. Despite the moratorium, the faction continues to advocate for the expansion through various legislative and political lobbying efforts.

The views of faction members at the beginning of the expansion discourse were diverse, reflecting pro and con dynamics in the community. However, over time, support has strengthened, especially after seeing the economic potential and benefits that could be gained from the expansion. This process involves various organizations and communities in Southern Garut consistently proposing the expansion.

DPRD faction members in Garut Regency are directed to listen to community aspirations through hearings, discussions with residents, and direct interactions with various parties supporting the expansion. They ensure that every voice from the community is heard and considered in the legislative process.

Overall, the interview with Lulu Gandhi Nan Rajati adds a new dimension to the understanding of the political commitment and strategies used by the Garut Regency DPRD and the Gerindra Faction in promoting the expansion of Southern Garut. The strong support, both at the local and national levels, and the focus on improving fiscal capacity and public services demonstrate the importance of this expansion for the progress of the Southern Garut region.

On the other hand, an interview with Subhan Fahmi from the PKB Faction provides additional perspectives and information that enrich the understanding of the process and challenges of Southern Garut's expansion.

Subhan Fahmi emphasized that the Southern Garut expansion process has gone through various administrative and political stages for almost two decades. All legal and regulatory requirements have been met, from determining the capital city, population size, to the approval from related villages. Although initially, some

villages were opposed, these issues were resolved through political approaches by the Expansion Committee.

Interestingly, Subhan Fahmi revealed that the only significant obstacle now is the expansion moratorium imposed by the central government, particularly under the control of Vice President Ma'ruf Amin. This adds a new dimension to understanding the challenges faced, considering that this moratorium affects not only Southern Garut but also other regions in Indonesia, except for areas with special autonomy status like Papua. In fact, Southern Garut is among the top ten regencies in Indonesia ready to be expanded once the moratorium is lifted.

The factors driving the desire to form Southern Garut as a new autonomous region include the need to improve public services, particularly in the health and governance sectors. With a large area and a significant population, public services in Southern Garut are considered less than optimal. The formation of a new autonomous region is expected to increase efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery and ensure equitable development throughout the region.

Subhan Fahmi also highlighted the budget context, emphasizing that West Java, as the province with the largest population in Indonesia, has only 27 cities/regencies, far fewer than East Java and Central Java. By increasing the number of regencies/cities, the budget allocation from the central government is expected to be more proportional and enhance the region's fiscal capacity. This is a new perspective that underscores the importance of expansion in terms of budget and financial distribution.

In terms of political support, Subhan Fahmi explained that all factions in the Garut Regency DPRD, including the PKB Faction, collectively support the expansion of Southern Garut. This support has been ratified through various plenary meetings, with agreement from all factions. This indicates a strong political consensus at the local legislative level.

The approach taken by factions in the Garut Regency DPRD in supporting the expansion includes active participation in internal meetings, hearings with the community, and coordination with the provincial and central governments. DPRD members are directed to listen to community aspirations through various forums such as village meetings and open discussions, ensuring that every community voice is heard and serves as the foundation for every legislative step taken.

The interview with Subhan Fahmi adds an important dimension to the understanding of Southern Garut's expansion, particularly in terms of the administrative and political challenges faced, as well as the importance of improving fiscal capacity and public services as the main reasons behind the push for expansion. With solid political support and a focus on enhancing community welfare, the expansion of Southern Garut remains a primary agenda continuously advocated by the Garut Regency DPRD.

Continuing the analysis, interviews with other faction members add a more comprehensive nuance to the political and administrative dynamics in the effort to expand Southern Garut Regency. The PKS faction highlights that despite support for

the expansion of Southern Garut, discussions often focus more heavily on the expansion of Northern Garut. The greater budget allocation and political attention to Northern Garut cause Southern Garut to not receive the attention it deserves. This indicates the presence of political priority dynamics within the DPRD that affect the expansion process of Southern Garut. The PKS faction also emphasizes other obstacles such as sub-districts reluctant to join and debates about the new capital location, showing local resistance that needs to be overcome in addition to the central moratorium.

The PKB faction views that despite solid political support, the main obstacle remains the central moratorium. The PKB faction emphasizes that the disparity in public services between the northern, central, and southern regions of Garut is a strong motivation behind the push for expansion. The southern region feels marginalized and neglected by the parent regency government, making expansion a solution to bring public services closer to the local community.

The PAN faction provides a perspective that emphasizes the importance of expansion to address the unequal budget allocation. The PAN faction compares the situation of Garut, which must manage 42 sub-districts with a limited APBD, with Banjar, which only manages 5 sub-districts with a much larger per capita APBD. Expansion is seen as a strategic step to accelerate the much-needed infrastructure development in the southern region of Garut. PAN also highlights that support from all factions in the DPRD is solid, with administrative processes completed up to the provincial level, awaiting only the lifting of the central moratorium.

The PDIP faction reinforces the view that support for the expansion of Southern Garut is deeply rooted in local politics, with all DPRD factions supporting this move. The PDIP faction emphasizes that the need for expansion is driven by the perception that Southern Garut lags in services and infrastructure compared to other regions. With a limited budget, it is difficult for the regency government to accommodate the needs of the entire region equally. Therefore, expansion is seen as a solution that will not only accelerate development but also improve the overall welfare of the community.

The expansion process of Southern Garut Regency has become a deep discussion topic among DPRD members of Garut Regency, reflecting complex and diverse local political dynamics. From various interviews with DPRD faction members, several key themes emerge that provide a comprehensive picture of the motivations, obstacles, and strategies involved in this expansion effort.

First, political support for the expansion of Southern Garut is very strong at the local level. All factions in the Garut Regency DPRD, including PKB, PAN, PDIP, PKS, and Gerindra, show solid commitment to supporting this expansion. This support is driven by the need to improve public services and infrastructure in the southern region, which has been considered lagging behind the northern and central regions of Garut. This disparity includes health services, education, and government administration, which are generally more difficult to access by the southern community due to the distance from the government center in Garut.

The main obstacle faced in this expansion process is the central government's moratorium policy. This moratorium hampers the necessary administrative processes to realize the expansion, even though all legal and regulatory requirements have been met at the local and provincial levels. This obstacle highlights the challenges in gaining approval at the national level, requiring intensive and sustained political lobbying.

On the other hand, local support is not only formal but also includes tangible actions such as proposal submissions, community hearings, and lobbying with the provincial and central governments. DPRD members are actively involved in listening to community aspirations through village meetings, open discussions, and other participatory forums. This process ensures that the decisions made reflect the needs and aspirations of the community they represent.

The main motivation behind this expansion is to accelerate economic and infrastructure development in Southern Garut. With a very large area and a significant population, the existing APBD of Garut is deemed insufficient to accommodate the needs of the entire region equally. Expansion is expected to increase the effectiveness of budget management and public services, thereby supporting faster and more equitable economic growth in the new region.

However, not all processes run smoothly. There are internal challenges such as resistance from some sub-districts reluctant to join and debates about the new capital location of Southern Garut. These challenges reflect local political dynamics and differing interests that need to be resolved through inclusive approaches and constructive dialogue.

Overall, the effort to expand Southern Garut reflects a strong desire from various stakeholders at the local level to improve the quality of life for the southern community. The solid political support from all DPRD factions, coupled with tangible actions to overcome administrative and political obstacles, demonstrates a high commitment to realizing this expansion. Despite significant challenges, particularly from the central moratorium policy, continuous efforts and strong political lobbying are expected to yield positive results for the Southern Garut community.

The analysis of the expansion process of Southern Garut Regency can be explained by linking findings from interviews with the theory used in this study and the discussions outlined in Chapter 4. The political perception theory provides an analytical framework that allows us to understand how Garut Regency DPRD members build their political impressions and how this affects their political participation in the discourse of expanding Southern Garut.

The political perception theory states that political perception is the way individuals process political information and form views or impressions of a particular political situation. In this context, the political perception of Garut Regency DPRD members regarding the expansion of Southern Garut is greatly influenced by factors such as the need for improved public services, equitable development, and pressure from their constituents.

The main motivation behind the strong support for this expansion is the need to improve public services and infrastructure in the southern region, which has been

considered lagging. The perception of DPRD members that expansion will bring public services closer to the community and reduce development disparities is the main driver of their support. Additionally, there is also a push from the provincial government and local agreements that further strengthen the commitment to support the expansion.

The primary obstacle faced is the central government's moratorium policy, which hampers the expansion process despite all administrative and legal requirements being met. This moratorium creates frustration among DPRD members and the public who support the expansion, as they see it as a solution to public service issues and developmental disparities. Additionally, internal challenges such as resistance from certain sub-districts reluctant to join and debates about the new capital location reflect differences in interests and views at the local level.

In response to these obstacles, Garut Regency DPRD members employ various political strategies, including lobbying with the provincial and central governments, conducting public hearings, and actively participating in discussion forums and village deliberations. This support is not only formal but also includes tangible actions such as submitting expansion proposals, coordinating with various parties, and overseeing the expansion process.

Thus, the expansion process of Southern Garut is the result of a complex interaction between political perceptions, motivations, and strategies taken by Garut Regency DPRD members. Strong support for the expansion, despite significant obstacles from central policies, reflects a commitment to addressing developmental disparities and improving the welfare of the southern Garut community.

In the context of this study, the theory of political perception is used to understand how Garut Regency DPRD members build their political views regarding the expansion of Southern Garut. However, findings from interviews indicate several criticisms and theoretical challenges that highlight the limitations of this theory in explaining the complexity of the situation on the ground.

Political perception theory tends to focus on how individuals process political information and form their views individually. However, interview findings show that decisions related to expansion are not solely based on individual perceptions of DPRD members but are also influenced by group dynamics, political pressure from factions, and collective consensus. This theory does not fully capture the complexity of social and political interactions occurring within legislative groups (Görtz & Dahl, 2021; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2019).

The theory of political perception emphasizes psychological and perceptual factors, while the main obstacle in the case of Southern Garut's expansion is the central government's moratorium policy. This theory is less capable of explaining how structural constraints and external policies affect political perceptions and actions. Structural constraints like this show that external factors also play a significant role and must be considered to fully understand the political dynamics in the expansion process (Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2019).

Political perception theory tends to overlook broader aspects of power and political influence. In interviews, it is evident that political lobbying, negotiations, and influence from provincial and central levels significantly impact the expansion process. The theory of political perception does not sufficiently capture how external power and influence affect decision-making processes at the local level (Görtz & Dahl, 2021).

This theory also falls short in explaining how changes in the local social and political context, such as resistance from certain sub-districts or debates about the new capital location, affect the political process. Interview findings show that there are complex social dynamics influencing support and resistance to expansion, which are not fully explained by political perception theory (Görtz & Dahl, 2021; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2019).

Considering these criticisms, it is clear that while political perception theory provides a useful framework, there is a need to broaden its scope to be more comprehensive in explaining complex and multi-level political dynamics. This includes integrating structural factors, power, and broader social interactions to understand political processes like regional expansion more holistically.

4. Faction Directives on the Political Participation of Garut Regency DPRD Members in Addressing the Formation of Southern Garut Regency

The directives from factions regarding the political participation of Garut Regency DPRD members in addressing the formation of Southern Garut Regency play a crucial role in determining the direction and local political policies concerning regional expansion. This process not only reflects the internal dynamics within DPRD factions but also their interactions with the community and other political actors.

First, all factions in the Garut Regency DPRD collectively support the discourse on the expansion of Southern Garut. This support is based on the perception that the expansion will improve public services, bring the government closer to the people, and accelerate development in the southern region of Garut, which has long been considered underdeveloped. Factions such as PDIP, PPP, PAN, PKS, and PKB consistently demonstrate their support through various internal meetings and plenary sessions, emphasizing the importance of expansion for the welfare of the Southern Garut community.

Factions in the DPRD direct their members to actively listen to the aspirations and inputs from the community regarding the expansion discourse. This process is carried out through public hearings, direct discussions with residents, and other participatory mechanisms. DPRD members are expected to engage in village deliberations, meetings with local stakeholders, and other participatory forums to ensure that every decision made reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community. This shows the factions' commitment to ensuring that the community's voice forms the basis of the decision-making process.

Furthermore, DPRD factions do not directly force their members to approve or reject the expansion discourse. Instead, they direct their members to conduct in-depth

internal discussions and reach a consensus. This process involves careful consideration of the party's internal political views, the community's aspirations, and the potential accelerated development through expansion. Once a consensus is reached, DPRD members are given the freedom to express their opinions in official forums in line with the faction's views.

Factions also play a significant role in overseeing the expansion process through various strategic steps. These include drafting proposals, providing support during discussions, lobbying and negotiating with local and central governments, and monitoring the implementation of the expansion. Factions ensure that the necessary regulations and infrastructure preparations for the expansion proceed smoothly and align with community interests. These steps demonstrate that factions are not only rhetorically supportive but also actively engaged in concrete actions to realize the expansion.

In the broader political dynamics, faction support for the expansion also involves collaboration with various other actors, including the provincial government, community leaders, and academics. This collaboration shows that the expansion of Southern Garut is not only supported by local political actors but also by a broader network that includes various stakeholders interested in enhancing welfare and development in the region.

Overall, the faction directives on the political participation of Garut Regency DPRD members in the discourse on the expansion of Southern Garut reflect a collective commitment to improving the conditions in the southern region of Garut. This process involves various participatory mechanisms to ensure that decisions are based on community aspirations and supported by concrete strategic actions. Despite facing obstacles such as the central government's moratorium, strong support from all factions and collaboration with various actors show optimism that this expansion will eventually be realized and bring significant benefits to the Southern Garut community.

The faction directives on the political participation of Garut Regency DPRD members in addressing the discourse on the formation of Southern Garut Regency reflect the political strategies and internal dynamics within the legislative body. In the context of political perception theory, the actions and views of DPRD members are influenced by how they process political information and form impressions and political positions regarding this expansion issue.

DPRD factions in Garut Regency collectively direct their members to support the discourse on the expansion of Southern Garut. This support is not only formal but also manifested in tangible actions such as drafting proposals, providing support during discussions, political lobbying, and overseeing the implementation of the expansion. Faction members are directed to actively engage in listening to community aspirations through public hearings, village deliberations, and open discussions, ensuring that every decision made reflects the needs and desires of the local community.

Political perception theory emphasizes that individuals form their political views based on the information processing influenced by their environment, knowledge, values, and past experiences. In this case, Garut Regency DPRD members form their perceptions of the importance of the Southern Garut expansion through interactions with constituents, political pressure from factions, and assessments of development and public service needs in the southern region. The collective support from all factions indicates an understanding that the expansion is a strategic solution to address developmental disparities in Garut.

Although political perception theory provides a good framework for understanding how political views are formed, several criticisms can be made based on field findings. This theory tends to focus too much on how individuals process political information and form their views. However, findings from interviews show that decisions related to expansion are also significantly influenced by group dynamics, pressure from faction leaders, and collective consensus. Political perception in this context is not only the result of individual processes but also the outcome of social and political interactions within the group (Görtz & Dahl, 2021; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2019).

Political perception theory falls short in explaining how structural constraints like the central government's moratorium affect political perceptions and actions. These structural constraints highlight that external factors beyond individual control also play a crucial role in the political decision-making process (Görtz & Dahl, 2021).

The theory does not adequately capture how power and political influence from provincial and central levels impact the expansion process. In this case, political lobbying and negotiations with the central government are key factors influencing the success of the expansion efforts. Political perception theory needs to be expanded to include analysis of how power and external influence affect political perceptions and actions (Görtz & Dahl, 2021; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2019).

In implementing the directives to support the expansion, factions in the Garut Regency DPRD employ various strategies. They direct members to engage in in-depth internal discussions to reach a collective agreement, submit official proposals to provincial and central levels, and conduct intensive political lobbying. Factions also ensure that the necessary regulatory and infrastructure preparations for the expansion proceed well, demonstrating their commitment not just rhetorically but also through concrete actions.

The faction directives on the political participation of Garut Regency DPRD members in the discourse on the expansion of Southern Garut show how political perceptions and actions are interrelated and influenced by various internal and external factors. While political perception theory provides a useful framework, field findings indicate the need to expand this theory to encompass structural factors and broader power dynamics. By understanding this complexity, we can better appreciate how political decisions are made and how political support is formed in the context of critical issues such as regional expansion.

D. CONCLUSION

This research aims to analyze the political perceptions of faction members in the Garut Regency DPRD regarding the formation of Southern Garut Regency. The findings reveal broad support for the expansion, driven by the need to improve public services, accelerate development, and enhance community welfare in the southern region. However, some factions express skepticism, citing the necessity for thorough studies and readiness assessments. The study employs political perception theory to understand how DPRD members form their views based on received information and their interpretation of political and social contexts. Nonetheless, it identifies theoretical constraints, such as the theory's limited consideration of broader power dynamics and structural influences like central government policies and local economic interests. The research underscores the need for further theoretical development to fully capture the complexities of the regional expansion process.

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