

# The Impact of Communication on the Future of Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Papua: Understanding the Meaning of Special Autonomy in Papuan Perceptions

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**Abstract:** Communication is the key to reconciliation between divided communities because it can build or undermine perceptions of shared purpose or connection. This research explores the future of reconciliation and peace building between the central government of Indonesia and leaders of the province of Papua. The research uses in-depth interview with the chairman and members of the Papua House of Representatives and the Papuan People's Assembly in the work period of 2009 to 2014 to explore how Papuan legislators perceived the central government introduction of Special Autonomy provisions for the province. The finding suggests that the Papuan leaders see that central government only understands the issue of autonomy from their own, Jakarta-based perspective. This understanding is acquired because of a lack of communication between central government and leaders of the province of Papua. Therefore Indonesia's central government needs to perform dialogue for peacebuilding and facilitates discussion on the role of opinion leaders in peace and reconciliation efforts and the effectiveness of two-stage communication in the discussion.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Papua and the central government of Indonesia can be considered as a serious political struggle. The struggle has drained a lot of social, economic, political and cultural costs. The problematic situation has taken place since Indonesia declared sovereignty over Papua. One of the efforts to end the struggle is by issuing a special autonomy Papua policy (Yusman Conoras, 2008).

Indonesia's central government in the era of President Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur had established Irian Jaya Province as a special autonomous region. The policy regarding this matter can be found in the Decree of People's Consultative Assembly, MPR RI, Number IV/MPR/1999, also on Indonesia's Broad Outline of State Policy (or known as GBHN) in the year of 1999-2004, Chapter IV Letter G, Point 2. Following the mandate released by People's Consultative Assembly, Indonesia's House of Representatives approved and enacted Law No. 21 of 2001 on Special Autonomy for Papua Province (Special Autonomy Law) as stipulated in the State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia Year 2001

Number 135. Following that, on 21 November 2001, House of Representatives Decree was approved. The law marked the changes made Indonesian Central Government in adopting new approaches to addressing problems in Papua by prioritizing security, stability, and social welfare (Musa'ad, 2011)

In the perspective of the central government, the policy was released to promote regional development especially in the four prioritized sectors, which are the economy, education, health, and infrastructure. The regulation for the special autonomous region or province (hereafter referred to as Autonomy) was created as a step to align Papua with other areas in Indonesia as well as to strengthen the protection of fundamental rights of indigenous Papuans, as since the integration with the Republic of Indonesia, their fundamental rights tend to be and marginalized (Laurens, 2015).

There have been many studies on the Papua problem. Papua as a special autonomous region, according to the author, can be observed from various perspectives. The following list is a comparison list of research about the Papua special autonomy:

Table 1: Papers discuss about Papua's Special Autonomy

Reference	Analysis	Results
Katharina, Riris, 2017 (Khatarina, 2017).	Analyzed the formulation of Papua's Special Autonomy policy as outlined in Law No. 21/2001 based on deliberative public policy theories.	The implementation of Papua's special autonomy has failed to use a deliberative approach. The application of Papua's special autonomy only shows false participation. Furthermore, the formulation of Papua's special autonomy has been made without Papuan's active involvement.
Bhakti, Ikrar Nusa and Pigay, Natalius (2012) (Ikrar Nusa Bhakti, 2012).	Finding the Root of Problems and Solutions to the Papua Conflict (grounded research)	The central government's policy regarding Papua is very inconsistent.
Musa'ad, M.Abud (2009) (Musa'ad, 2011).	Government Structure and Authority in the Implementation of Special Autonomy in the Papua Province reviewed by using the Contingency Design Theory (Randolph and Dess 1984) Gibson et al. (1996) New Institutional Approach (Robert E. Godiri)	Papua Special Autonomy has resulted in the structure and authority of government to be the domain of the <i>trias politica</i> institution.

Some people are still arguing that the implementation of special autonomy of Papua has failed. Member of the Special Autonomy Fraction of

the House of Representatives of West Papua, Dominggus Sani revealed 47 reasons behind the failure of Autonomy, or more widely known as *Otsus* by the locals. Sani's statement about the failure of special autonomy was based on the results of his study of the Autonomy from the aspect of jurisdiction. One of the reasons being mentioned is the obligation of the local government to do a consultation with the central government before releasing a legislative product (Pasific Post, 2017). The reason discussed above reflects that, despite the effort to win Papuans' hearts and mind, their voice is still partly ignored by the government. Autonomy itself is one of the ways to get a better understanding of the Papuans, as it significantly affects communication. In this case, perception and communication are vital because communication is central to many aspects of work in conflict and post-conflict settings. Therefore, it is essential to understand the perception of Papuan about the Autonomy. After knowing Papuan's perception about special autonomy, the author used the concepts of communication for peace to analyze the future of reconciliation and peace building in Papua.

## 2 CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION FOR PEACE

Efforts to achieve peace according to Shekinah Jovan McCullum-Lawrence must really touch the most basic aspects. Lawrence further argues that the existence of the mediator is very important in the effort to achieve peace. In competing arguments to achieve reconciliation, both the mediator and the parties to the conflict depend on the communication skills they have (McCullum-Lawrence, 2014). Therefore the concept of communication for peace becomes relevant to be used as an analytical tool.

Julia Hoffman first introduced the Conceptualization of Communication for Peace (C4P) in 2014. C4P work has its roots in the philosophy and practice of Communication for Development. C4P is a potential starting point to the concept of communication for peace and review the development of ideas about peacekeeping and building within the actor and other relevant actors, paying attention to the role of communication and media that has been carved out within their activities. C4P inclined its focus on the role of journalism and media representation of conflict within communication science. According Hoffman, C4P observes various aspects including

the effect of media coverage of on peace negotiations, media development, journalism education, post-conflict media regulation law, peace journalism, "public information", effect on audiences understanding, empathy, public opinion, quantity and quality of the news, new media, popular culture and representation of gender, 'race', disability (Hoffmann, 2014).

Nevertheless, studies related to communication for peace have been carried out before. One of the examples of communication for peace reveals in a study conducted by Kilonzo that uses an interactive religious approach in communication. His study finds that religious institutions have a forefront role in a post-conflict situation to reconcile diverse ethnic communities, and offer some lessons learned about post-conflict peace communication (Kivinda, 2013).

Six years later, Mitra contributes to the development of communication for peace by using interpretative repertoire analyses. Mitra's study shows a great deal of contribution by going beyond the empiricist repertoires which governs the specific practice and discipline in implementing communication for peace. Based on his finding, the researcher argues that approaches in communication for peace are not as it seems to be. One should go beyond the surface to find out a thorough understanding in facilitating peacemaking dialogues, hence should observe the perspective of the peace-makers, journalists and the communication professionals (Mitra, 2015).

Further thinking related to the concept of communication for peace is the thought of Valentina Bau. Bau expressed the idea of an inclusive peace creation process which must begin with the community. It was stated by Bau after seeing the interrelationship between the three variables which were interrelated, namely participatory communication and civic involvement with the reality of post-conflict peace (Baú, 2016).

### **3 RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN**

This research consists of an exploratory study carried out using qualitative methodology with a case study approach. Procedures for conducting a case study are as follows; first, researchers determine if a case study approach is appropriate to the research problem. The second step is to identify their case or cases and focused on a case or an issue (intrinsic, instrumental) (Stake, 1995); (Yin, 2003). The data is collected through observations, interviews, documents, and literature study. In the final interpretive phase, the

researcher reports the meaning of the case, whether that meaning comes from learning about the issue of the case (an instrumental case) or learning about an unusual situation (an intrinsic case) (Creswell, 2006).

The fieldwork was conducted in Papua. This research aims to contribute a better understanding of the ways to understand the impact of communication in reconciliation and peacebuilding in Papua. Specifically, through understanding the meaning of Autonomy from Papuans' perceptions. At the same time, it lays the academic foundations for further studies that aim to create more targeted designs for communication interventions in peacebuilding and reconciliation programming.

### **4 THE PAPUA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (DPRP)**

As mandated by Law No. 21 of 2001 on the Provision of Special Autonomy for Papua Province, and based on Letter of the Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 161.81/1034/SJ dated May 3rd, 2005, the Provincial DPRD of Papua changed its name to the House of Representatives of Papua (DPRP). Based on the provisions of Article 6 Paragraph (4) of the Special Autonomy Law, it is stated that "The number of members of the DPRP is 1¼ (one and a quarter) times of the total members of the Provincial DPRD as regulated in legislation." Hence, the number of members of the DPRP Period of Year 2009 to 2014 was 56 person. Furthermore, in accordance with the provisions of Article 37 Paragraph (4) of the House of Representatives' Procedure of 2009, the composition of the factions in the House of Representatives of Papua was arranged as follows; Golkar Party with fifteen persons, Demokrat Party factions with twelve persons, PDI-P Party with seven persons, six persons were from PKS Party, nine were from Pikiran Rakyat Party, and the rest seven persons are from Papua Bersatu Party.

### **5 THE PAPUAN PEOPLES ASSEMBLY (MRP)**

By the provisions of Article 1 Letter G Law No. 21 in 2001, the MRP is a cultural representation of indigenous Papuans, who have certain powers in the context of protecting the rights of indigenous Papuans based on respect for customs and culture, women's empowerment, and the consolidation of religious harmony. Government Regulation No. 54 of 2004 on the Papuan People's Assembly mentions

that MRP's function is to give consideration and approval in the formulation of regional policy, in the framework of equality and diversity of life of the people of Papua while also preserving the culture and natural environment of Papua. Therefore, MRP is not a political institution and government involved three social elements to run the institution, namely traditional leaders, women leaders and the religious figure. The plan is to establish MRP as a capable body to represent the people of Papua.

## 6 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The Papuan legislators argued that the Central Government did not wholeheartedly grant the Special Autonomous Region to Papua. Central government only granted the special autonomy fund to the provincial government and did not give the recognition needed by the local government. The local legislators believed that they should be given the authority to govern their province and should get better assistance in accelerating Papua's social and economic development. Local leaders thought that central government only consider their own perspective when it comes to the implementation of the Autonomy in Papua. It is because of lack of communication between central government and leaders of the Province of Papua. Papua legislators thus encouraged the revision of the Law regulating the Autonomy to meet the expectations of the Papuan. Papua legislators also requested the central government to initiate a dialogue process that would include all Papuans, including those who support the movement for independence for West Papua. (Golkar, 2011)

From the interview result, we can also conclude that all respondents who came from the DPRP expressed doubts about the validity of the Act of Free Choice (locally known as Pepera) which was held in 1969. They considered it as one of the major obstacles in the relationship between Jakarta and Papua. As we know, the final result the Act of Free Choice was accepted by the United Nations General Assembly and following that West Irian officially became the 27th province of Indonesia on 19 November 1969. The doubt arose because Pepera was done by using the method of predetermined delegation system in which the delegates decide unanimously to join the Republic of Indonesia on 15 August 1969. (Golkar, 2011) (Party, 2011) (PDI-P, 2011) (Rakyat, 2011) (B.Watory, 2011)

Another legislator mentioned that the Autonomy gives many problems to Papua, it is because the central government only focuses on the distribution

of the Special Autonomy Funds without putting much attention to the implementation of the rules and regulation governing the Autonomy. Hence, the fund is only circulated among the bureaucrats (PDI-P, 2011). It means that the central government does not seriously support the implementation of the Autonomy itself.

DRP members also proposed that the regional government should be elected by the DPRP because as it is clearly stated in Law No.21 about Special Autonomy that the head of local government should only be elected by the DPRP so that the fund allocated for the direct election can be further assigned for the benefit of the people (PDI-P, 2011).

The obligation to consult all Papuan legislative law products to the central government also becomes a problem. A DRP member from the Demokrat Party faction mentioned that consulting the draft of Raperdasi and Raperdasus to central government has always been a controversy since it contradicts the local government's intention to strengthen the local legal instrument to support the implementation of the Autonomy. The central government is said to be only considering Indonesia's condition as a whole while the DPRD members try to formulate the draft based on the real situation in Papua. The revision given by the central government sometimes contradicts the spirit of Autonomy. For example, the case of a mutually agreed MRP, that there is only one MRP. However, the central government actually takes a decision which opposed the signed agreement along with forming a new MRP (Party, 2011).

The respondents who are members of the DRP from the Democratic Faction then affirmed the formation of the MRP of the West Papuan, one example of the Indonesian central government being reluctant in the implementation of the Autonomy. The informant mentioned as follows;

"There will be two MRPs, thousand people demonstrations which result in the death of many, meaning that it's over." (Party, 2011).

The informant further added that Autonomy is the win-win solution for the central government and the locals who want independence of Papua. At the time of its release, the people of Papua disapproved the Law No.21 Year 2001 as previously the Special Autonomous Region status was given during Suharto's era but failed to be implemented properly (Party, 2011).

The improper implementation of the Autonomy can be seen from the current condition of the education sector in Papua. During the hearing meeting of the Papuan and West Papuan People's Assembly on 23 to 25 July 2013, it was revealed that although the Gross Enrollment Rate (APK) in the education sector in Papua reached 95% but in reality

numerous problems were still prominent. The problems encountered including low attendance rate, overcapacity of schools, low number of students who continue education, high drop out rates, and low literacy rates. These problems arise because of the lack of supervision, lack of teachers and problems of teacher's placement, insufficient infrastructure and facilities (Simbiak, 2013).

Another problem that must be communicated openly according to the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP) is the Act of Free Choice (Pepera) in 1969. Just as the opinion of the DRP, MRP considers Pepera 1969 to be a collective wound of Papua which will continue to trigger protests and social opposition from the Papuan. (Marey, 2011) (Awi, 2011)

According to respondents who are members of the MRP and DRP, the obstacle to the validity of the Pepera was strengthened in the Second Congress of Papua. It was based on the results of the History Search Commission which found several main points related to the formulation of Pepera are formulated, namely in Article XVII Paragraph D in the New York Agreement. The article stipulates that self-determination must be carried out by every Papuan adult male and female who were the resident of Papua at the time when the New York Agreement was signed. This provision is not implemented because self-determination is carried out by the representative of each district in the Papua region (Marey, 2011) (Awi, 2011).

However, in the view of the central government of Indonesia, the issue of the validity Papua's integration into Indonesia has been resolved properly. The central government believed that the procedures which involved Papuan participation had been implemented and the advice, assistances from the United Nation had also completed the process. Thus, The Act of Free Choice is not flawed and it had been documented by the Directorate of International Organization of the Department of Foreign Affair ((MRP), 2013).

Therefore, the future communication and peace building in Papua will be depend on the conflicts experienced by the involved parties. The community still strongly believe in the opinion of the leader of indigenous community and religious group. Hence, it is very important for C4P to include the role of opinion leaders in the discussion, as observed in the study conducted by Karadakil (2015) (al, 2015).

Therefore, in the future it is important for MRP to invite the relate stakeholders and conduct a dialogue with the figures who understand the current situation and also the issues related to Pepera. For this reason, the central government is expected to provide a detailed and clear explanation of the evidence that can prove the credibility of the central

government. Hence, able to convince the MRP about the validity of Papua's integration to Indonesia. If MRP is convinced then the central government can request MRP assistance to make a systematic program to explain about the issue to Papuan people. Likewise, the problems associated with the implementation of Papua's special autonomy are expected by Papuan leaders and communities to be further deepened and clarified by the various aspects of their expected achievements. By doing so, it is expected that the reconciliation between Papua and central government of Indonesia can be achieved soon.

Thus the authors conclude that it is not enough to observe C4P issues should be further observed by using several other theories such as, the role of elements as proposed by Kilonzo (2009), and the discussion of interpretive repertoires initiated by Mitra (2015). Thus important discussion is crucial in the two-stage communication in C4P to make it relevant to the real condition in Papua.

Therefore, as stated that the root of the main problem of Papua is marginalization, discrimination, including the lack of recognition of Papua's contributions and services to Indonesia as stated in (Ikrar Nusa Bhakti, 2012), then it becomes important to place a Papuan opinion leader role consisting of DPRP and MPRP as one of the crucial aspects in the effort to achieve peace in Papua.

Therefore, in the long run the government needs to build dialogue and negotiations towards reconciliation. Gradually or simultaneously it is necessary to seek dialogue spaces to prevent widespread suspicion and mistrust, especially between migrants and indigenous Papuans and between the authorities and the community. The gradual dialogue effort needs to be discussed with leader opinions and involves active participation from opinion leaders from Papua.

Thus the idea of involving active participation from Papuan opinion leaders is in line with Bau's idea that the process of achieving peace must begin with the community. (Baú, 2016). The placement of Papuan opinion leaders as one of the important aspects in a series of two-stage communication processes in an effort to realize Papuan peace must be accompanied by a number of other important things. Among the other important aspects is the fact that the elimination of the identity of the Papuan people, especially during the Trikora, UNTEA and before PEPERA, is actually part of a process that has led to the maturation of Papua's nationalism. Therefore, the Central Government of Jakarta should appreciate the demand for strengthening Papuan identity, among others, by putting Papua's opinion leader position as one of the important aspects that

determine the efforts to realize peace efforts in Papua.

The existence of Law No. 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for Papua is the commitment of the government and all the people of Indonesia to adopt a new perspective in addressing various problems that have so far colored the life of the Papua Province, but until now it has been proven that the settlement of Papuan is still far from expectations. For that reason, the central government has time to review various aspects that are considered unsatisfactory from the law from the perspective of the Papuan people by involving active participation from Papuan opinion leaders in an open dialogue full of togetherness and mutual understanding.

Regarding the role of the MRP with the DPRP, it has been running well in Papua. One example, when MRP proposes with what is referred to as Decree 14 or SK14, the decision is supported by the DPRP. The MRP's decision stating that the Governor and Deputy Governor are indigenous Papuans, including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor must also be Papuans accepted by the DPRP. The MRP itself gets these aspirations directly from community groups. The relationship between the DPRP and MRP and the community is due to the fact that the Papuan people in general are inseparable from culture. In each problem, they will always solve it with adat and entrust their problems to the elites, both through the DPRP and MRP (Katharina, 2011).

The implementation of the MRP's role with the DPRP in voicing the aspirations of the Papuan community needs to be further appreciated. In line with the provisions in Article 122 of the 2009 DPRP Code of Conduct which states that the draft Perdasus that has been approved with the DPRP and the Governor before being determined to be Perdasus submitted to the MRP for discussion to get consideration and approval, more appreciation must be given. The consideration of the MRP which is a form of agreement between the Papuan people who always solve every problem that they meet in a customary manner also needs to be adopted as one of the provisions in every discussion of reconciliation efforts in Papua. Therefore, it is necessary to review the provisions of the 2010 Article DPRP Rules which have caused the MRP's role to weaken.

With regard to reconciliation efforts, it is time for the central government to open their ears to hear what the Papuan people hope for. Various events that are considered to be hurting the people of Papua, such as when the DPRP came to Jakarta to meet with the Minister very difficult, should not be attempted again. Jakarta and Papua must sit together. The government also has time to invite the Papuans

who reject Papua's special autonomy. The attitude shown by the center so far which is afraid to open a dialogue forum with those who reject Papua's special autonomy should be eliminated.

At a time when Papuans showed an attitude of refusal to engage in dialogue with the Center they called Jakarta, various approaches taken by the central government, such as those carried out in the time of President Gus Dur, were exemplary. At that time President Abdurahman Wahid or Gus Dur, who as head of state officially apologized publicly to the people of Papua for human rights violations committed by the TNI in the past on a visit to Irian Jaya on 1 January as well as formally agreed to change the name of Irian Jaya to using the name Papua.

Related to the material of dialogue, a common understanding should be sought regarding the referendum. If all this time the central government considers the discussion of referendum to be taboo because the stage has been exceeded in the previous phase. But for Papuan leaders and people, history In May 2000, for example, at the time of the Second Papuan People's Congress and the Third Papuan People's Congress in October 2011, there were still demands for an independent Papuan state in federal form. Not only that the issue of demands for independence "Merdeka" and doubts about the history of Papuan integration are still being raised by the Presidium of the Papuan Council and the Papuan Customary Council. Therefore, it is time for the central government to pay more attention to doubts about the history of disintegration of Papua into the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia by explaining various facts and data related to history that exist to traditional leaders, government figures and the Papuan people continuously by prioritizing the principle of parallel relations and partnerships to achieve the same understanding of the same history of Papuan integration between the two parties.

Therefore the central government has time to make an inventory of various things that are considered "taboo". In addition, the central government must strive to create compromises between the two parties in order to achieve recalibration or re-frame the relationship between Jakarta and Papua so as to create integration or the realization of a force that binds and suppresses differences between the two parties in order to reduce uncertainty in a relationship. dialogic and striving for more communication that seeks to achieve a common perspective related to various things that have been considered taboo by involving active opinion leader participation. In turn, Papuan opinion leaders then gave an explanation of the various results of dialogue to the Papuan people so that the same understanding

was reached in relation to various problems that had been the obstacle related to Papua's special autonomy.

Thus the central government needs to do an interpersonal approach to traditional leaders as well as various opinion leaders in Papua. In addition, the central government also needed to find opinion leaders from Papua who were able to become mediators such as the role played by Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, who at the time of negotiations in Helsinki served as Vice President during a peaceful settlement between Indonesia and Aceh.

Another important step, the central government must be able to maintain partnership relations with Papua by communicating with Papua so that a common understanding is achieved in the community. By conducting dialogues by placing Papua opinion leaders in equal positions with the central government of Jakarta, there is a willingness from the Central Government to understand the issue of special autonomy in Papua from the point of view of the Papuan people.

## 7 CONCLUSION

From the findings of the research on Papuan legislative perceptions as part of the Papua provincial government on their views on the Autonomy, we can conclude that there is no intensive communication between the central government and the provincial government of Papua on the implementation of Autonomy which has led to poor perceptions of Papuan legislators. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a special and intensive dialogue to create a better flow of communication between the central government and the provincial government of Papua is horizontal and continuous. This will significantly affect the implications for the creation of reconciliation and peace in Papua. The central government should provide a complete explanation and communicate on the various issues that are questioned by the Papuan leaders.

Communication as the central process of human interaction, a good communication is the root of conflict prevention which eventually can result in a reconciliation towards a more conducive and peace condition. On the other hand, based on studies conducted Kilonzo (2009) religious institutions have the potential to communicate the message of peace. Many of them can be used to develop the people and help them to advance their community. As well as in case of Republic of Indonesia, especially for the benefit of the people of Papua itself.

From this study we can also draw the conclusion that conflict resolution and reconciliation depend on the conditions of the conflicted parties. Regarding to the influence brought by the leader, it signified the study on the role of leaders in the communication for peace building in Papua is vital and relevant. Looking at the interview result with the local legislators, it seems that the central government should open a discussion and build a better understanding regarding the Autonomy. When the local legislators and central government shared the view then reconciliation and peace building process can be brought into realization

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