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Conflict of Interest in the Expansion of Sofifi City in North Maluku, Indonesia

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Abstract

Since its 24 years as the capital city of North Maluku province, Sofifi has not had the status of an autonomous region. This study aims to analyse the causes of the emergence of Sofifi's expansion conflict. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The data sources in this study came from journal articles and online media, which were processed using NVivo 12 Plus. The findings in this study indicate that Sofifi's conflict is a conflict of interest over the struggle for political power and the potential for natural resources by political elites. Even so, the community's demand for the division of Sofifi was based on three things: the reality of backwardness in development, the lack of public services, and the fact that Sofifi is the provincial capital. The emergence of demands for division has given rise to a response of rejection; the refusal is because of the announcement of the Sultanate of Tidore. In addition, there are differences in development governance between the provincial government and the Sultan of Tidore. Later, the Tidore City government also used the argument of a moratorium from the central government to dampen demands for division. This study's conclusion explains the interest in the struggle for power and natural resources behind the emergence of the Sofifi expansion conflict. This study confirms that regional autonomy conflicts tend to be caused by conflicts over power and natural resources that take advantage of ethnicity.

Keywords: *Conflict; Elite Politics; Regional Autonomy*

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Introduction

Over the last five years, several countries have experienced conflicts in autonomous regions caused by various factors. This is similar to research (Miley & Garvía, 2019), which explains a conflict between three parties, namely regional nationalists, the central government, and immigrant workers in Catalonia, Spain (Kuzina, 2019). As a country that has also implemented decentralisation with 17 autonomous communities parallel to the province, the conflict in Catalonia was caused by ethnic identity and discrimination of the working class locally, which eventually formed dissatisfaction and led to the pro-independence movement (Balcells & Kuo, 2021). The existence of conflicting interests has shifted the function of democratisation to a system of decentralisation of power in autonomous regions. Ultimately, the aspirations for welfare tend to be difficult to realise (Montecinos, 2020).

Apart from Spain, countries implementing federalism systems, such as India, also show the same problem, for example in Mizoram, Northeast India. Autonomy or regionalization in the form of states does not make them prosperous (Saitluanga, Hmangaihzela, & Lalfakzuala, 2022). The fact is that there are still many imbalances caused by ethnic conflicts and the unequal distribution of justice for the Mizoram tribe (Gogoi, 2021). Therefore, the purpose of regional autonomy, or regionalism, which was initially intended to prosper and strengthen the democratic agenda, actually happened the opposite (Ramanzini Junior, Mariano, & Gonçalves, 2022).

Other facts can also be seen, as happened in Balochistan, a province in Pakistan (Gill, Javaid, Murtza, Batool, & Jamil, 2021), that the political tendency of ethnicity in the autonomous region has trapped Balochistan in an unequal distribution of resources and social inequality (Mushtaq & Mirza, 2022). Things like this not only happen in Asian and Middle Eastern countries but also in Europe, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Throughout the centuries, Central and Eastern Europe saw frequent border changes and various ethnic conflicts (Barwiński, 2019). Indonesia is also facing the same problem; after 24 years of reform, several autonomous regions in Indonesia are still far from decentralisation expectations. North Maluku Province is one example of an autonomous region still experiencing a conflict of interest.

North Maluku is a province that has existed since Law Number 46 of 1999. The Provisional Capital City of North Maluku is set at Sofifi, one of the sub-districts in the City of Tidore Islands. After being designated the capital city of North Maluku Province in 1999, Sofifi is still far from being worthy of being the provincial capital. The lack of construction of facilities and infrastructure has made most state civil servants prefer to live in Ternate and Tidore rather than in Sofifi (CNN Indonesia, 2021).

The slow pace of development in Sofifi and the lack of optimal public services in Oba District, especially in Sofifi, have led to an assumption among the community that Sofifi needs legal status as a new autonomous region. However, there was a conflict of interest between political elites in North Maluku regarding the expansion of the city of Sofifi, which has hampered the acceleration of development and social welfare in Sofifi (Wijaya, Abd Radjak, & Muluk, 2021).

Administrative ambiguity has resulted in a slow development process in the Sofifi area, even though it has been explained in Article 20 of Law Number 46 of 1999 concerning the Expansion of North Maluku that while waiting for the readiness of adequate facilities and infrastructure in Sofifi, the North Maluku Provincial Capital, as referred to in Article 9 Paragraph (1), temporarily stipulated in Ternate, and within five years at the latest, the definitive Capital City of North Maluku Province has functioned. However, after 22 years running, Sofifi still hasn't proven its worth as a provincial capital.

In analysing conflict factors and the involvement of political elites in Sofifi, this study uses two theories as an approach. These theories are the theory of political elites and social conflict, as said by Niel (2009), who said that the word elite in Indonesia can be classified into traditional and modern elite. Traditional elites are cosmologically oriented and hereditary. At the same time, the modern elite is more oriented towards the country's prosperity and based on educational status. Modern elites can also be divided into two types, namely functional elites and political elites. Functional elites can be seen based on the legitimacy of power, which is oriented towards serving the country. At the same time, the political elite is made up of people who are involved in political activities.

Meanwhile, the author uses social conflict theory to see the conflict of interest in Sofifi's expansion plan. According to Pruitt & Rubin (2011), conflict is a difference in perceptions about interests (perceived divergence of interest). Interests are related to people's feelings about what is desired, and these feelings tend to be central in people's thoughts and actions, which form the core of many attitudes, goals, and intentions.

In the book by Gurr (1970), it can be seen that differences in interests greatly influence the emergence of social conflict. Gurr provides a psychological approach to elaborate on how collective discontent is manifested as political violence by providing an aggression-frustration mechanism (Naazer et al., 2017). Gurr said that the anger created by shortcomings due to efforts to hinder the interests of others is a motivational tool that drives humans to aggression.

Unlike the case with Gurr, research from Pruitt & Rubin (2011) has a different perception of the source or cause of conflict. Pruitt & Rubin (2011) divide the sources of conflict into several parts. First, Pruitt and Rubin consider that conflict occurs not because of a gap between aspirations and achievements but because when aspirations increase, these aspirations will increasingly conflict with the aspirations of other parties. Such conflict is inseparable from the need to rule.

According to Pruitt & Rubin (2011), the source of the second conflict is a conflict that occurs because of the need for respect. Further research (Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994) explains that past achievements will form an aspiration that demands respect. If achievement has gone up in the past, then aspirations will go up, too. If achievement has been going down, then aspirations will go down, too.

Batterbury, Kowasch, & Bouard (2020) say that the need for power, respect, and money are all things that can cause conflict. Economic needs are basic needs that cannot be separated from resources (Guan, Kirikkaleli, Bibi, & Zhang, 2020). According to Pruitt & Rubin (2011), conflict depends on limited resources (Scheidel et al., 2020). Time,

money, natural resources, vehicles, or whatever is needed but is in limited supply (Bebbington, Fash, & Rogan, 2018).

This is like the theory of natural resource conflicts explained by Homer-Dixon (Masarah, 2021) that natural resource conflicts tend to be caused by scarcity of natural resources. When natural resources are scarce, massive migration will occur from areas where they are scarce to areas with access to natural resources. This migration tends to create different values for resource management, which can trigger conflict (Vanegas, 2021).

In previous research, three factors were underlying the conflict in North Maluku. The first factor is the conflict of political elites, which refers to the conflict of power. Qodir (2016) has explained that North Maluku has a uniqueness that is seldom found in other regions, namely the conflict between the political elite, which is so strong. Elite conflict is nothing new in North Maluku. Several conflicts in North Maluku are inseparable from the role of political elites who fight for their respective interests.

Power struggles between political elites can't be separated from the past, which is where power struggles have always happened. Ternate controls the kingdom and ethnic groups in the plains of Halmahera and the islands around it by working together with European trading partners like the Portuguese, Spanish, British, and Dutch. The dominance of the Sultanate of Ternate over three other kingdoms, such as Jailolo, Tidore, and Bacan, as well as small kingdoms and local leaders from ethnic groups living in North Maluku, showed that among these kingdoms that showed the most resistance to the Sultanate of Ternate was the Sultanate of Tidore, which later became Ternate's main rival in seizing supreme power in North Maluku (Amal, 2007). Kurjanska (2019) has said that forming political elites is part of the This historical conflict for power by political elites also applies to the Sofifi case. Other research by Hasim (2018) says that the movement to prosecute the expansion of the city of Sofifi cannot be separated from the role of the local political elite. The dissatisfaction among the public tends to be caused by various factors, namely, decreased quality of life, economic disparities, public security, and public sector services. This dissatisfaction caused the movement to demand the expansion of Sofifi, which was supported by local elites and emerged as a massive movement. Some of these studies show that elite political conflict contributed to many of the triggers for the conflict in North Maluku. This event bears similarities to the case in Spain of dissatisfaction with central government intervention, which had formed a regional identity that led to demands for independence (Batterbury et al., 2020).

A conflict resulting from natural resources is the second conflict. In the history of the conflict in North Maluku, North Maluku has been an area where natural resource conflicts have occurred, such as in 1999. At that time, the conflict started with local transmigration in 1975 in the North Maluku region, which had the status of a District Level II region. Local transmigration of residents in several villages in the Makian Pulau District who were transferred to the Kao District area, where the PT. Nusa Halmahera Minerals is located (Hasyim, 2010). This local transmigration was carried out because of the danger posed by the eruption of Mount Kie Besi on Makian Island. Still, local

transmigration policies were also inseparable from the interests of natural resources in mining areas (Fischer, 2020).

In the case of Sofifi, it was explained that the demands and rejection of Sofifi's division led to conflicts over managing natural resources. This happened because Sofifi contributed half of the local revenue (PAD) in the City of Tidore Islands. In 2010, the local revenue of Tidore City reached 8 billion Rupiah, and Sofifi was a region that contributed 4 billion Rupiah to the PAD of Tidore City. The existence of natural resources in the agricultural and service sectors has made Sofifi a contested area. Cases like this occurred in West America from 1990 to 2000 (Martin et al., 2019).

The last factor in conflict is ethnic differences and competition. According to research by Aini (2012), ethnicity, religion, and primordial solidarity sometimes become tools used by political elites to trigger conflict. In this case, regional expansion tends to become a new arena of conflict, where the initial goal of decentralisation to improve local communities' welfare is being ignored. Regional expansion has sparked conflicts in various regions due to issues of ethnicity (Devetak, 2018).

Several facts indicate that the Makian people moved into the Kao people's customs territory, which is also where the mining company operations did not cause any problems at first. Still, the local political elite pushed for the creation of the Malifut District through Government Regulation Number 42 of 1999. This is when the conflict started, as the Kao people felt that their traditional land had been taken over by the government. At that time, the Makian ethnic people had more influence on many sectors of life in North Maluku, for example, in aspects of government, bureaucracy, and even education (Nataniel, 2019).

The formation of the Malifut sub-district, which was occupied by people from Makian Island who were transferred to Kao, made the situation even more heated. Finally, the conflict in North Maluku could not be avoided (Bakri, Madjid, & Irsyadi, 2020). The conflict stems from the rejection of the Kao community towards forming the Malifut District, which is occupied by the Makian tribe community and will be fought for to become the Malifut Regency in the future (Safi, 2017).

According to research by Umagapi (2017), the conflict in Sofifi was a result of the Tidore ethnic group's envy of the Makian ethnic group's expansion. Sofifi is in North Maluku Province. This resulted in the Tidore ethnic group not wanting a certain ethnicity to dominate Sofifi. That is because the Makian ethnic group has controlled the provincial government.

The problem of the conflict over the expansion of Sofifi City is an essential topic for describing the culture of the political elite in North Maluku. So to analyse the gap or novelty in this study with previous research, the author uses the Vosviewer analysis tool. Data from previous research was sourced from several scientific article documents included in the Scopus database (http://www.scopus.com/). (TITLE-ABS-KEY (conflict) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (regional AND autonomy)) are the keywords used in the Scopus search field. The search results in the Scopus database totaled 400 documents. The journal articles were analysed using Vosviewer software to identify research gaps and novelties, which can be seen in Figure 1.

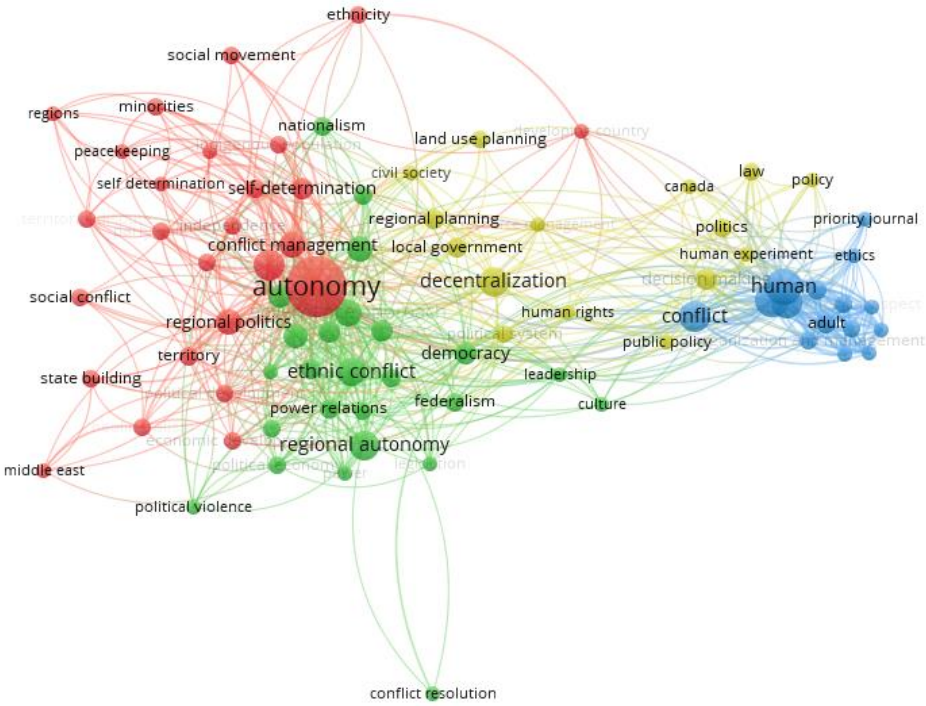


Figure 1. Research Mapping of Regional Autonomy Conflicts
Source: Scopus Article Mapping Using VOSviewer (2022)

Figure 1 shows that regional autonomy has caused many conflicts (Pettersson, Högbladh, & Öberg, 2019). Regional autonomy has strengthened political identity and territorial issues (Istania, 2022). However, from the results of research mapping using a bibliometric analysis approach using Scopus data with the help of the VOSviewer software, it can be seen that research on the involvement of political elites in regional autonomy conflicts, especially in Sofifi, North Maluku Province, is still rarely carried out.

In simple terms, there are two main reasons why this research is essential. First, there is a wrong interpretation of regional autonomy in Indonesia, especially in North Maluku. Regional autonomy, which should be part of a democratisation agenda to restore people's rights to participation in development and social welfare, has instead shifted to become a means of serving the interests of the political elite. This is because local political elites have dominated all forms of policy and decision-making regarding regional development. The second reason is the conflict of interest among the local political elite in North Maluku, which has prolonged the polemic over the expansion plan in Sofifi City. This has an impact on the slow development process in North Maluku.

Therefore, this study aims to analyse the conflicts that occurred in Sofifi, especially the conflict over the expansion plan for Sofifi City in North Maluku Province. This research will look at the conflict actors and analyse the conflict of interest in the division of Sofifi in North Maluku.

Research Methods

In this research, the type of research used is qualitative research with a case study approach. According to Creswell (2015), case study research is a qualitative approach whose research tends to explore three things, namely real life, contemporary limited systems (cases), or various limited systems (various cases), through detailed and in-depth data collection and involve many sources of information. The data sources in this study came from journal articles and online media, which were processed using NVivo 12 Plus. The method in this study is intended to describe the data obtained systematically, accurately, and regarding the facts contained in a news text by the media. The source of this research data was obtained through online media and previous research documents related to the Sofifi Expansion conflict in North Maluku Province.

Data were obtained using the Nvivo 12 plus Ncapture feature. The N capture feature is a web browser extension developed to capture web content in the form of website content, social media content, and scientific articles. Nvivo 12 Plus analysis uses the crosstab query analysis feature, which is for viewing the percentage of data that has been coded manually using Nvivo 12 Plus. Furthermore, the author uses a concept map to analyse and visualise the network of actors involved and their attitudes towards the planned expansion of the city of Sofifi. In the table, you can see online media taken as a data source.

Table 1. Online Media Data Sources
Source: Processed by Authors (2022)

News Name	Website	Number of News
National Media		
Antaranews	https://www.antaranews.com/	9
CNN Indonesia	https://www.cnnindonesia.com/	1
Kompas	https://www.kompas.com/	5
Kumparan	https://www.Kumparan.com/	1
Timesindonesia	https://www.timesindonesia.co.id/	4
Liputan6	https://www.liputan6.com/	2
Local Media		
Gamalamanews	https://gamalamanews.com/	1
Kieraha	https://kieraha.com/	2
Halmaherapost	https://halmaherapost.com/	2
Harianhalmahera	https://harianhalmahera.com/	10
Indotimur	https://indotimur.com/	3
Nusantaratimur	https://www.nusantaratimur.com/	2
Poskomalut	https://poskomalut.com/	11
Suaraternate	https://ternate.pikiran-rakyat.com/	4
Tandaseru	https://www.tandaseru.com/	4
	Total	58

Table 1 shows that the author analyses around 15 online media. These online media were selected based on the list of media included in the top best online media in the Indonesia version of Alexa.com, then based on the database at the Press Council (dewanpers.or.id), which shows that the online media that is the source of this data is media that has accountability because the human resources in the media have been certified and passed the Journalist Competency Test. Some of these media also have media companies that are legal entities and have been referenced in the 4th quarter 2020 public relations report from the North Maluku Province financial and development supervision agency (BPKP, 2020). The news that the author uses as data is from the media, with reports related to the issue of the conflict over the expansion of the city of Sofifi in the period 1 January 2018–31 December 2022. In table 1, some media only have one news item and are used as data by the authors, such as Cnnindonesia.com, Kumparan.com, and Gamalamanews.com. That's because the news published by the media is essential data that, according to the author, should be used as data in this study.

The online media that the author chose can be classified into two types based on their coverage: national media and local media in North Maluku Province. National media is media whose scale of issues covers national issues and is spread across all regions in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the local media only focuses on issues in North Maluku. The reason for choosing these six online media on a national scale to be research reference material is because these six online media are included in the top best online media in Indonesia based on a survey conducted by Alexa.com.

Meanwhile, the reason for choosing nine online media on a local scale is that local online media are more oriented to local issues than national or international issues, so they contain more news about problems at the local level (Carlson, 2015). Data analysis begins with capturing data using the Nvivo 12 Plus feature. Next, the author imports the collected data into Nvivo 12 Plus and performs data coding. After the data is coded, it displays and analyses the data. Some data analysis menus are in the form of a crosstab query, which aims to see the tendency of discourse. Next is the concept map menu, which aims to describe the relationship between actors.

Results and Discussion

Conflicts over Sofifi City Decision as Provincial Capital

As was already said, Law Number 46 of 1999 splits North Maluku into two parts. Since North Maluku was divided, there were only two regencies, namely Central Halmahera Regency and North Maluku Regency (currently changing its name to West Halmahera Regency). There is also one city, namely the City of Ternate. In determining the provincial capital at that time, the government formed a team from Commission II of the Indonesian House of Representatives to review several names of prospective capital cities worthy of being the capital of North Maluku Province. The names of the capital cities are Goal and Sidangoli, which are in the North Maluku Regency, and Sofifi, which is in the Central Halmahera Regency. Based on various considerations, Sofifi was chosen as the

capital of North Maluku Province. However, due to the inadequate readiness of facilities and infrastructure, the temporary capital had to be located in Ternate City (Kieraha, 2019).

The election of Sofifi as the provincial capital cannot be separated from studying the archipelago's development, including geographical aspects. At that time, the government also brought in researchers from the Bogor Agricultural Institute to study the feasibility of the names of the candidates for the capital city, namely Sofifi, Sidangoli, and Goal. The result is still Sofifi, who is considered more worthy. In addition, the government at that time also saw that the city of Ternate, which was already more developed, was not geographically feasible enough to become the provincial capital. Sofifi was also chosen because it is a link to other regions geographically. It is hoped that this will become a link in the supply chain for agricultural production, especially on land. Apart from that, the security aspect is also a consideration in determining the provincial capital. Sofifi is deemed worthy because it can reach a lot of people when turmoil or conflict occurs (Hiar, 2017).

Not only does the location of the provincial capital have to make sense from a practical standpoint, but politics also play a big role in deciding where the capital city of North Maluku Province will be. In this case, political considerations mean protecting the interests of power in the capital city. Since then, the struggle for the status of the provincial capital has begun to be seen. The struggle occurred between the Sultanate of Ternate and the Central Halmahera Regency Government. The Sultanate of Ternate at that time recommended that the provincial capital be placed in Sidangoli. That was because Sidangoi was an expansion area of the Sultanate of Ternate. However, the government of Central Halmahera has a different recommendation. The government of Central Halmahera wants Sofifi to become the provincial capital because Sofifi is included in the administrative area of Central Halmahera (Wijaya, Abd Radjak, & Muluk, 2021).

However, at that time, Central Halmahera, which historically was still in the expansion area of the Tidore Sultanate, received consideration from the Tidore Sultanate, which at that time did not want Sofifi to be separated from Tidore if it had the status of a capital city. The fears of the Tidore Sultanate were immediately brushed aside by elite political actors. Verbally, the political elite at that time gave an understanding that, indeed, the capital city was in Sofifi. However, Sofifi was still part of Tidore City, and the centre of the city government was still in Tidore, namely in the Soasio Village. The Sultanate of Tidore holds this to support the placement of the capital city of North Maluku Province in Sofifi. (Tandaseru, 2021).

In 1999, the regional government of North Maluku Regency and the central government did not agree to the Sultanate of Ternate's request to put the capital city of North Maluku province in Sidangoli. This made the Sultanate of Ternate unhappy with policies that tended to hurt the Sultanate of Ternate politically. Before the conflict of interest occurred, a conflict of interests had already occurred between the Sultan of Ternate, who Mudaffar Syah then held, and opponents of the Sultanate of Ternate. At that time, the Sultan of Ternate was supported by the traditional council from Ternate, Jailolo, and Kao. Meanwhile, the opponents of the Sultan of Ternate were supported by some

North Maluku people, whose important figures were Bahar Andili, Abdullah Assagaf, Thaib Armayn, and other local elites, including the Sultan of Tidore.

In a conference to provide input to the Minister of Home Affairs in Jakarta in the context of the upcoming MPR session, proposals for the division of the province to be named the North Maluku province have begun to be heard. This suggestion was made by Syaiful Bachri Ruray, who was also inseparable from the request of the Regent of Central Halmahera, Bahar Andili. At the end of President Habibi's leadership, North Maluku was finally divided into a province through Law Number 46 of 1999 (Klinken, 2007).

After the formation of North Maluku province, an elite political conflict finally emerged. In this case, there is a tug-of-war between the two camps. The first camp was from the Sultanate of Ternate, and the other camp was from groups that opposed the Sultan of Ternate. One of the visible conflicts of interest is the determination of the name of the province; the Sultan of Ternate wanted the name of the province to be Maluku Province (Kie Raha). In contrast, the opposing group wanted the name North Maluku Province, which has been used until now. Not choosing the Maluku name Kie Raha as the name of the province signifies the defeat of the Sultan of Ternate (Safi, 2017). Political elites try to take advantage of ethnic power, which has changed the role of regional autonomy. Research by Qodir (2012) shows that the political problem of division in North Maluku is caused by the fact that there are still many interests of ethnic sentiments and dominant groups instead of politics that care about the welfare, prosperity, and security of the general public.

This fact also illustrates that implementing the regional autonomy system does not always go as planned. Several regions in Indonesia that implement regional autonomy are still faced with identity problems (Ruslan & Hakiki, 2022). For example, some regions are politically autonomous and formed based on ethnicity. That creates a particular case of accommodative policies regarding the decentralisation or devolution of power to ethnic groups that focus on territorial identity (Panov & Semenov, 2018).

The Emergence of Demands for Expansion of the Sofifi City

The reasons underlying the plan for the expansion of Sofifi as an autonomous region are very diverse. These demands were born from elements of the community and from the legislature at the provincial level, which considered that, as the capital city of North Maluku Province, Sofifi deserved to be divided into Sofifi City. This assumption is considered to have come from several problems in the Sofifi area.

In figure 2, based on processed data from online media using NVivo 12 Plus, it was explained that the reasons for supporting or being in favour of the expansion of the city of Sofifi were due to several things, namely the first was due to reasons for development backwardness, the second was related to the status of the capital city, and the third was the lack of public services in Sofifi. The underdevelopment here means that the underdevelopment of infrastructure development in Sofifi became one of the reasons for the prosecution and support for the expansion of the city of Sofi. Reasons like this are also related to supporting the division of North Maluku into provinces in 1999 (Teng, 2022).

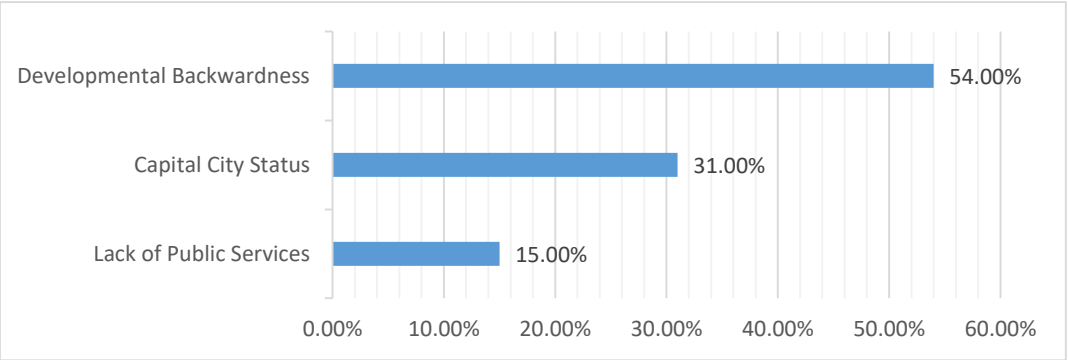


Figure 2. The Reasons for the Expansion of Sofifi City
Source: Analysis Using Nvivo12 Plus (2022)

Underdevelopment in development has the highest percentage for the emergence of the idea of Sofifi's Expansion, namely 54.0%. That was reinforced by the statement of the Minister of Home Affairs, namely Tito Karnavian, that infrastructure development such as governor's offices, court offices, military command resorts, mosques, and housing had indeed been carried out, but due to the absence of supporting infrastructure such as roads, hotels, and shopping centres, the state civil servants who work at Sofifi still choose to live in Ternate and Tidore. So it can be said that the backwardness of development in Sofifi has become the main reason for support or aspirations for the division of Sofifi as a new autonomous region. The backwardness of development can also be seen in the poverty rate, which, based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in Tidore City, reached 6.52% in 2020. This figure has increased from 2019 at 6.10% and 2018 at 5.95%. (BPS, 2020).

People from Sofifi or the Oba mainland feel like they are being left behind in terms of development by the Tidore Islands City Government, which is another reason why they want to split up. The Tidore City Government once promised the division of the City of Sofifi and a 60% division of the APBD for Sofifi, but this was never realised. Apart from that, the uneven development is also evidenced by the demands of the people of Oba Sub-District, who think that the Tidore City Government is not serious about seeking an even distribution of development throughout the Oba continent. This statement arose because while the government of North Maluku Province wanted to establish Sofifi as a special capital area whose development concentration was also guaranteed by the central government, the Tidore City government did not make efforts for the Oba and South Oba areas to be included in development priorities together with Sofifi. That's the reason for the many proposals for the expansion of Sofifi on the grounds of backward development.

Figure 2 also shows that the reason for the capital city status gets a percentage rate of 31.00%. The status of the capital city means that support for the expansion of the city of Sofifi is mandatory because it already has the status of a capital city under Law Number 46 of 1999. The unclear status of Sofifi has become a polemic that continues to be discussed. The main problem is in Article 20 of Law Number 46 of 1999, which indicates the completeness of facilities and infrastructure for a capital city.

In the file of demands from academics and legal practitioners at the Constitutional Court to review the law on the division of North Maluku, it is considered that the facilities and infrastructure in question are not only complete physical facilities but also a complete legal entity that is related to Sofifi's status. The absence of a clear legal entity related to Sofifi's status has also impacted the last reason regarding support for the expansion of the city of Sofifi, namely the lack of public services. The presentation rate of this third factor is known to be 14.00%. That is because the City of Tidore is an island separated from Sofifi, which tends to hamper several aspects of public services (Ngatmo, 2021).

The Rejection of the Expansion of the Sofifi City

When movements and demands for the expansion of the city of Sofifi emerged, the rejection of these demands also appeared to confront the interests of certain groups that wanted the expansion of the city of Sofifi.

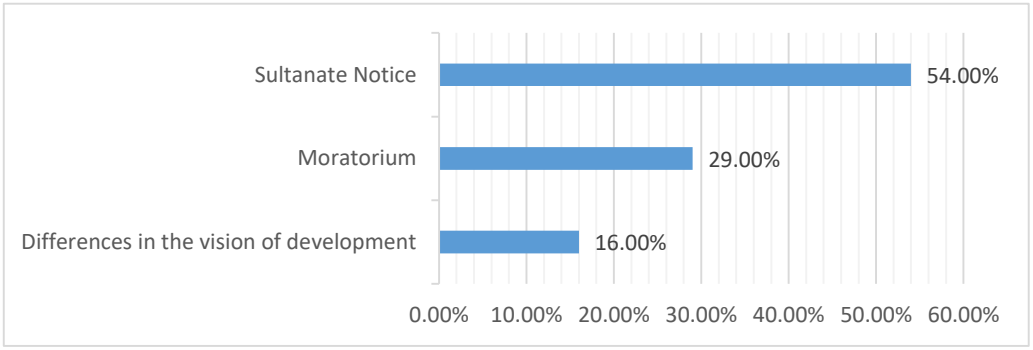


Figure 3. The Reasons for Opposing Sofifi City Expansion
Source: Analysis Using Nvivo12 Plus (2022)

The declaration from the sultanate was the most talked-about reason why the city of Sofifi shouldn't grow. Based on the results of processing data from online media with NVivo 12 Plus, figure 3 shows that 54.0% of the reasons for rejecting the Sofifi expansion were based on an imperial decree. In 2010, Sultan Djafar Sjah, who was the 36th Sultan of Tidore, issued the imperial edict. The proclamation is based on the Tidore Sultanate edict, document number 01/KT/2010. Sultan Djafar's announcement became the reason for rejecting the interests of other parties who wanted Sofifi's division so that other parties had access to be able to control Sofifi.

In the Declaration of the Sultanate of Tidore, three points are discussed. The first point explains that it will be increasingly difficult to apply local wisdom values to the indigenous people of the Sultanate of Tidore if there is an expansion of the city of Sofifi. That's because the expansion of the city of Sofifi will break social and cultural relations if Sofifi becomes an autonomous region apart from the Tidore Islands. Previous events evidence this. The expansion of the Tidore Sultanate's power has diminished since 1956. According to Awaluddin, Faitanu, & Hasan (2016), the Makian and Tidore tribes are the majority tribes who inhabit the mainland of Oba. Previously, Papua, East Halmahera, and Central Halmahera had become autonomous regions. So, through this royal decree, the

Sultanate of Tidore provided an option: if Sofifi wanted to continue to be divided, then the capital city should be moved to another urban district.

Apart from that, the moratorium was also why the Sofifi DOB was rejected. In Figure 3, the reasons for the moratorium were conveyed to the media and processed through the NVivo 12 Plus analysis tool, resulting in a presentation rate of 29.0%. The moratorium in question is a stipulation on postponing the regional expansion plan. This moratorium was decided during the reign of President Joko Widodo. Until now, around 314 proposals for new autonomous regions have not been fulfilled. This is because the moratorium aims to evaluate the area's quality before it is strictly expanded. Reasons for the moratorium were conveyed to the media and processed through the NVivo 12 Plus analysis tool, resulting in a presentation rate of 29.0%.

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This expansion moratorium policy is an exception for Papua. That is because the central government still thinks that the expansion of regions in Papua can support the acceleration of development in Indonesia. The consideration of the division of Papua is because Indonesia in its eastern part is still considered too broad with only two provinces, namely Papua and West Papua. Therefore, the central government approved the law, which was signed by the president on July 25, 2022 (Ninditya, 2022).

The rejection of division was due to the Tidore Sultanate Declaration and the fact that the central government had put a stop to it. Because of this, the government had to come up with a policy for the Special Capital City Area to clarify Sofifi's status. However, even though Sofifi has been designated as a special capital area, the opportunity to make Sofifi an autonomous region is still open (Harianhalmahera, 2019).

Lastly, there is the difference in development vision. The percentage figure for the different variables in the development vision is 16.00%. This difference in development visions means there are differences of opinion between the Tidore Sultanate and the North Maluku Provincial Government regarding the direction of Sofifi City's development. As a capital city area, Sofifi always triggers a tug-of-war in implementing development. The Sultanate of Tidore once thought that the slow development in Sofifi was due to the provincial government's intention to make the people understand that Sofifi had to be split so that it could be built.

Wijaya, Abd Radjak, & Muluk (2021) explained that the Tidore Sultanate has a more traditional development perspective while adhering to customary and cultural values, while the North Maluku Provincial Government has another perspective on development, namely one that is more modern.

Conflict of Interest in the Expansion of the Sofifi City

Different visions regarding the direction of development are a manifestation of a conflict of interests in the struggle for power in North Maluku Province. In this case, Sofifi, the capital city area, is only used to symbolise the struggle for power in North Maluku Province. Something like this had already happened when the Sultanate of Ternate and the Sultanate of Tidore were also involved in the polemic over determining the capital city of North Maluku Province.

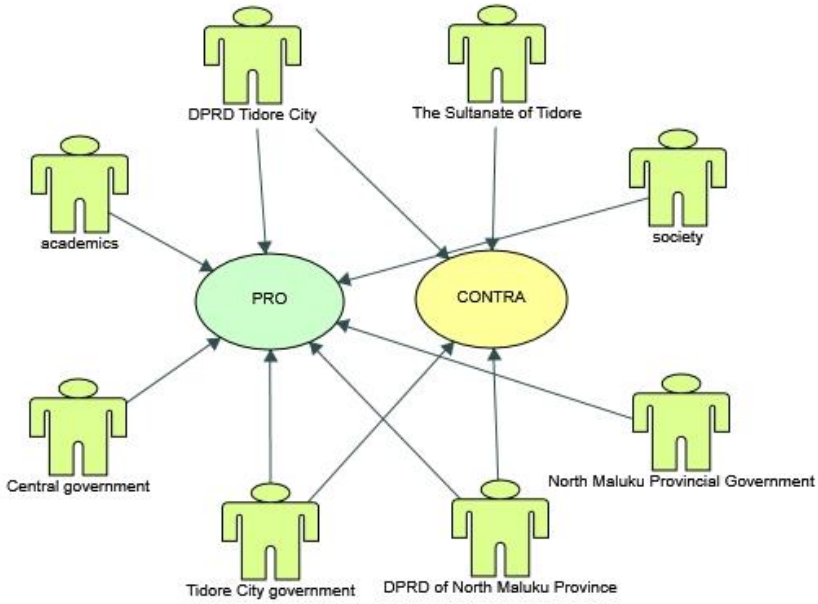


Figure 4. The Relationship between Actors in the Sofifi City Expansion Conflict
Source: Analysis Using Nvivo12 Plus (2022)

Figure 4 explains that eight categories of actors have a relationship with the conflict in the demands for the expansion of the city of Sofifi. These categories are the Central Government, Provincial Government, Regional People's Legislative Council (DPRD) of North Maluku Province, Tidore City Government, Regional People's Legislative Council of Tidore City, Tidore Sultanate, Academics, and Community. To be able to narrate the role of actors in the conflict over the expansion of the city of Sofifi, the author will describe them sequentially.

In the conflicted relationship between these actors, it can be seen that the role of the Regional People's Legislative Council of Tidore Islands City is a top priority that must be discussed. That is because the division procedure must go through approval or support from the Regional People's Legislative Council in the main area. In 2010, the Tidore Islands City held a plenary meeting on the recommendation for the division and release of Sofifi from the Tidore Islands City. However, the meeting ended due to chaos.

In research by Awaluddin, Faitanu, & Hasan (2016), it was explained that the commotion during the plenary meeting took place when a group of people on behalf of the Tidore ethnic group came to the Regional People's Legislative Council of Tidore

plenary building to protest and obstruct the discussion on the expansion of the city of Sofifi. Therefore, the discussion regarding the division of Sofifi was not continued for the reason that it would trigger a conflict. This makes the Regional People's Legislative Council tend to have a dual attitude. In a sense, some members of the Regional People's Legislative Council believe they are in line with the Sultan of Tidore to refuse, and others choose to form an alliance outside the parliament to gather support regarding the expansion of Sofifi (Hasim, 2018). This hindered the discussion on the expansion of the city of Sofifi at the plenary session of the Regional People's Legislative Council of North Maluku Province. Ishak Naser, a member of the Regional People's Legislative Council of North Maluku Province, said the reason for the discussion on the expansion of Sofifi did not work due to the fact that the proposed division of Sofifi City had to come from the government and members of the Regional People's Legislative Council in Tidore and not members of the Regional People's Legislative Council of North Maluku Province (Yahya, 2021).

The second factor is the Tidore City government, in this case the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Tidore. The fact shows that the Tidore Islands City Government has a dual attitude towards the expansion of Sofifi City. This is because the Tidore government, under the leadership of Ali Ibrahim and Muhammad Senen, once used the Sofifi issue as a political tool to gain public support as the regional head of the City of Tidore Islands (Gamalamanews, 2019). However, the attitude of the Tidore Islands City government tends not to be maximal in supporting the expansion of Sofifi. The Tidore Islands City's local revenue (PAD) still depends on Sofifi (Qodir, 2016). This has resulted in a double attitude from the Tidore City government.

On the one hand, the Tidore government promised the division of Sofifi so that it would be separated from Tidore. Still, on the other hand, the Tidore government used natural resources in Sofifi as an increase in Tidore City's original regional income. In addition, the Sofifi community also believes that the Tidore government is not serious about development in Sofifi (Kumparan, 2019).

It is known that the potential for natural resources in Tidore is mostly found on the Oba mainland, which includes the Sofifi Village. As explained in the working document from the Regional Development Planning Agency for the City of Tidore Islands, the City of Tidore Islands may have mineral and excavation resources on the Oba mainland (Oba is the name of the sub-district that includes Sofifi). As in Central Oba District, Noramake Village, Akedotilou Village, Aketobololo Village, and Akelamo Village. The laboratory analysis showed that the gold content in the Central Oba area from river sediments reached the highest value, up to 127 gr/t. It reached 803 mg/t Au from the soil, while from the rock, it reached 328 gr/t Au (Bappeda Tidore, 2021).

PT. Gema Nusantara Bhakti and PT. Shana Tova Anugrah have both explored Akelamo. Meanwhile, North Oba District is located in Kaiyasa Village, but no laboratory analysis results have been published yet. South Oba District is in Nuku Village, with the highest sample value of Cu 0.36%. Au 0.094 g/t, Ag 5.29 g/t (Bappeda Tidore, 2021).

In addition, nickel mining deposits are found on the Oba mainland, such as in the Oba District, Woda Village. From the X-ray analysis results, Ni's content was 1.38%, Fe

203 was 29.25%, MgO was 16.00%, Mn02 was 0.68%, and Si02 was 32.84%. For Oba District, nickel has been explored by PT. Banua Sanggam Lestari, PT. Our Business Performance, PT. Mulia Anugrah Sawitindo, and PT Cetara Bagun Persada. Whereas in South Oba District, Hager Village, from the results of laboratory analysis of surface samples, the highest yields were Fe 10.16 percent and Ni 0.005%. For the South Oba District, nickel has been explored by PT Usaha Kita Prestasitama and PT. Cetara Bangun Persada. Apart from gold and nickel, there are also potential natural resources in the form of coal, iron sand, and stone on the Oba mainland (Bappeda Tidore, 2021).

This indicates that the government of the City of Tidore Archipelago and the Sultanate of Tidore tends not to want to let go of the land of Oba, which will be fully expanded to become the City of Sofifi, because it is considered to contain abundant natural resources.

In the meantime, the people of Sofifi City kept doing things to demand that the city be split up, even though the political elite had different goals. This is because Sofifi City is behind in terms of development and it is hard to get to public services (Poskomalut, 2022). Several academics in North Maluku also agreed with this because they thought that Sofifi needed to be split up right away (Halmaherapost, 2019).

The two most important actors in the expansion of Sofifi City were the North Maluku Provincial government and the Tidore Sultanate. The reason is important because the Sultan of Tidore historically controlled the Sofifi area as part of the territory of the Tidore Sultanate. It was also important to maintain Sofifi in the Tidore Sultanate because the Tidore Sultanate wanted to build political power in North Maluku through Sofifi (Umagapi, 2017).

Meanwhile, the Provincial Government of North Maluku, which currently has an office in the Sofifi area, is interested in the existence of the division of Sofifi to establish strong legality by the Provincial Government to regulate Sofifi (Wijaya, Abd Radjak, & Muluk, 2021). Another interesting fact is that power over North Maluku Province, especially Sofifi, is not only held by the Tidore sultanate. Because Sofifi has not been separated from the City of Tidore Islands, the provincial government feels that it does not have much legitimacy to regulate Sofifi (Tandaseru, 2022).

Based on this conflict of interest, we can say that Indonesia's current form of regional autonomy policy is still not fair. Decentralisation proposes a concept of the division of authority (Yakub, Abdul Ghani, & Anwar, 2020). However, implementing the pattern of division of authority as conceptualised by the decentralisation system has created problems (Hanson, 2022). One of the crucial problems is the emergence of elite conflict and power struggles over the aspirations of certain ethnic groups.

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts related to the pros and cons of the planned expansion of the city of Sofifi into a new autonomous region have given birth to changes with the presence of decisions that are seen as a middle ground for differences in the development plans for the capital city. To defuse the conflict, which resulted in slow development in North Maluku, the central government planned to establish a regulation on the special area of the capital

city of Sofifi. It is hoped that this regulation will become the legal basis for budgeting and determining policies related to development in Sofifi as the capital city of North Maluku Province (Harianhalmahera 2019). This special area of the Capital City of Sofifi covers two districts and a city covering most of the Tidore Islands City area, especially on the Oba mainland and in parts of West Halmahera Regency.

After the issuance of this regulation, the provincial government plans to complete all facilities at Sofifi, such as building a public hospital and an asylum. In addition, the infrastructure provided by the government includes housing for the State Civil Apparatus, Loleo Airport located in Oba, and two ports located in Gita and Sofifi, as well as urban planning in the Sofifi area. The development was carried out to test the feasibility of making the area a special capital city area. However, the policy of making Sofifi a Special Urban Area does not rule out the possibility of becoming a step in the expansion plan for the City of Sofifi.

Therefore, regional autonomy is usually used to reconcile conflicts between the central and regional governments. As in the case of Italy, there was a conflict between the central and regional governments due to social concerns (Napolitano & Saputelli, 2020). So in several countries, regional autonomy is often used to reduce conflict and build peace (Holland, Dahlman, & Browne, 2020).

Conclusion

The Sofifi City Expansion Conflict is a fight that starts when political elites in North Maluku fight over who has the most power. This is true because the power struggle has become a part of North Maluku's history. Apart from the struggle for power, the struggle for authority over the management of natural resources also indicates the division conflict in Sofifi. Domination of ethnicity tends to be a political tool to seize power over natural resources. Although the push for expansion by the people of mainland Oba, especially Sofifi, did not prioritise ethnic demands, efforts to prevent these demands from the community tended to use ethnic strength. Apart from that, differences in the development paradigm in managing Sofifi were also a factor in causing conflict between the Provincial Government and the Tidore Sultanate. However, what is most important in this article is where the demand for regional autonomy for the welfare of Sofifi's people has been neglected because of the polemic at the elite level.

The results of this study show that the policy of using the regional autonomy system to spread power and make government work better has had a bad effect. This bad effect happens when there is an imbalance in human resources, which leads to local political elites in Indonesia having too much power.

Recommendations that need to be considered in the case of the conflict over the division of Sofifi City are: first, the need to review Law No. 1 of 2003 concerning the formation of North Halmahera Regency, South Halmahera Regency, Sula Islands Regency, East Halmahera Regency, and Tidore Islands City in North Maluku Province, which did not take Sofifi's status into account; second, the importance of reviewing the meaning of regional autonomy, which should prioritise the aspirations of the people in government

decisions, including the decision on the expansion of the city of Sofifi. Third, there must be human resource development to overcome human resource imbalances at the local level.

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