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GO GREEN VS GO ECONOMY: ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOR IN THE POLEMIC OF WASTE IMPORT REGULATIONS IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Politics as a vital role in policy formulation has an influence on waste management in Indonesia. Ethical and normative violations regarding waste imports often occur. This is because there are gaps in legislative products and positive law in the same field. As stated in Law no. 18 of 2008 concerning Waste Processing shows that the import of waste is an activity that is prohibited in any form. However, there was an overlap in regulations, namely the Regulation of the Minister of Trade No. 30 of 2021 which notes that it is permissible to import waste for industrial activities except for Toxic and Hazardous Materials (B3). This article aims to analyze various overlapping realities and possibilities regarding the implementation of these regulations. The political interest perspective also shows the dynamics of its formulation. It turns out that politicians tend to have different standing positions even though they are still in the same commission group. It cannot be denied that there is differentiation of views which are then grouped into camps based on several possible influences, namely variations in the background of politicians and interest groups or political parties. Therefore, it is classified in this research that the group that supports waste imports is Go Economy, and vice versa, those who reject waste imports are classified as Go Green. The meaning of this term shows a contradiction in attitudes and implementation which has resulted in a polemic during waste import regulations in Indonesia.

Keywords: Waste Import, Political Behavior, Policy

Abstract

Politik sebagai pemegang peran vital dalam perumusan kebijakan memiliki pengaruh terhadap adanya tata kelola persampahan di Indonesia. Pelanggaran etis dan normatif berkenaan dengan impor sampah kerap terjadi. Hal tersebut dikarenakan adanya celah pada produk legislasi maupun hukum positif dalam bidang yang sama. Sebagaimana disebut dalam UU No. 18 tahun 2008 tentang Pengolahan Sampah menunjukkan bahwa impor sampah merupakan suatu kegiatan yang dilarang dalam bentuk apapun. Namun, terjadi *overlap* aturan

yaitu pada Permendag No. 30 tahun 2021 yang mencatat diperbolehkannya impor sampai untuk kegiatan industri kecuali Bahan Beracun dan Berbahaya (B3). Penulisan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis berbagai realitas dan kemungkinan yang timpang tindih dari pelaksanaan aturan tersebut. Sudut pandang kepentingan politik juga menunjukkan dinamika perumusan di dalamnya. Para politisi ternyata cenderung memiliki standing position yang berbeda meskipun masih dalam kelompok komisi yang sama. Tidak dinafikan bahwa terjadi diferensiasi pandangan yang kemudian dikelompokkan menjadi kubu-kubu atas beberapa kemungkinan pengaruh, yakni variasi latar belakang politisi dan kelompok kepentingan atau partai politik. Oleh karenanya, diklasifikasikan dalam penelitian ini bahwa kelompok pendukung impor sampah adalah Go Economy, begitu pula sebaliknya, bagi penolak impor sampah digolongkan sebagai Go Green. Pemaknaan istilah ini menunjukkan kontradiksi dalam sikap dan implementasi yang berakibat pada polemik perjalanan peraturan impor sampah di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Impor Sampah, Kebijakan, Perilaku Politik

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INTRODUCTION

The essence and urgency of waste management system that concerns the needs of many people was influenced by political decisions. Politics has a vital role in making waste management policies and has experienced a difficult endeavor. There are many loopholes in the resulting political products. The question may include multiple interpretations, a lack of explanation, and a stalled revision process. On itself, it seems there are difficulties in the regulatory process because the discussion on waste imports, which was originally in Commission VII of the DPR RI, had to be moved to Commission IV of the DPR RI due to the transfer of ministries within the commission structure of the DPR. The attitude of politicians in the media shows a difference meanwhile the camps within the DPR are also interesting to observe.

This problem of waste management has generated quite a polemic in its political product regarding waste imports. The problem of plastic and the waste it produces began to enter Indonesia in the 1950s, where before that, Indonesian people did not use these items that much. In 1953, several plastic factories were established to produce household items. These factories imported plastic goods from the Netherlands and the United States using oil company distributors such as Shell and Petroleum Matschappij. This use of plastic peaked in 1970 when drinking water companies such as Aqua introduced drinking water products that used plastic as containers. But a decade later, in 1980, awareness began to emerge regarding plastic waste management which emerged from the many discussions and seminars related to waste management in a number of cities in Indonesia (Anggoro, 2019).

Until now, Indonesia still legalizes waste imports even though they already produce a large amount of waste. However, institutions that carry out waste imports remain restricted and supervised. Only companies that have an Importer Producer Identification Number (*API-P/Angka Pengenal Importir Produsen*) are permitted with Import Approval (*PI/Persetujuan Impor*) by the Ministry of Trade and recommendations from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, through the competent directorate general (Prasetyawan, 2019). On the other hand, the volume of waste imports is increasing considering that China, which absorbs 42% of the world's waste, has stopped importing waste. This causes the European Union countries to deposit their waste in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. The behavior of politicians in responding to the issue of waste imports is different, even though some of them are still in the same commission. Thus, can trigger disinformation circulating in society. Starting from the various problems above, this research will discuss "Go Green Vs Go Economy: Analysis of Political Behavior in the Polemic of Waste Import Regulations." We hoped that this research could become a reference for identifying political behavior so that it can be used as comparative material by using a comparative modelling on the differences of opinion between two

politicians from Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle as the dominant party in the Indonesian legislative house. Both came from the same commission which have dissenting opinion towards the waste management systems, which showed the differences of approach even under the same political party and commission, which related to the dynamics of Indonesian political elites behavior towards certain issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Behavior

Political behavior is an activity that is related to or directly related to the political process, whether in making political decisions or carrying out periodic political activities (Surbakti, 1999, p. 130). Political behavior in Indonesia is regulated in the Constitution Article 27 paragraph 1 and Article 28 which confirms that political rights can be actualized in the form of political behavior or political participation which is a basic right of citizens guaranteed by the state (Hamid, 2020, p. 44). In terms of political behavior among legislators, it is closely related to the interests of a group of people or parties, where legislators face a conflict between their obligations to their group and their obligations to the public or their constituents. However, legislators have more independence than executive officials with a collegial relationship rather

than the hierarchical one that is common among executive administrators (Yunus, 2014, p. 257). In carrying out its duties, the DPR has a representation function where representation is formal and substantive. Formal representation is presence in physical form such as sitting, in the literal meaning, in a representative institution, while substantial representation is channeling the aspirations of the people by articulating and integrating the interests of their constituents in programs related to the formation of laws and supervision of government administration (Efriza, 2018, p. 39). In relation to observing at political behavior in this article, we do not look at political behavior between constituents, between the DPR and its constituents, but rather differences in opinion between officials and DPR members which arise from their target market.

Green Politics

Green political theory was based on the problem between economic growth and environmental security. Andrew Heywood believed that the obsession with economic growth has an impact on depleting and destroying the environment as well as making the ecosystem vulnerable (Lestari, 2016, p. 193). Green politics argues that the environment occupies an important role in the international system and therefore needs to be discussed in more depth. This theory considers that environmental issues

are the main issue in international relations which departs from critical problems faced by world society such as global warming and pollution (Najia & Triyatno, 2022, p. 90). Green political studies usually use an ecocentric point of view and stay away from anthropocentric approaches which explain humans as the focus of values and moral (Hutabarat, 2022, p. 61). Green politics in Indonesia was needed because of the view that Indonesia has great natural resource wealth so that the government must pay attention to environmental impacts in its policies. The government is considered too generous in giving business groups the opportunity to exploit natural resources without strong control, thereby causing environmental damage (Supratiwi, 2011, p. 108). The study of green politics is often juxtaposed with natural resource issues, but in this article, we will apply it to the opinions of two politicians in looking at the waste problem in Indonesia, especially imported waste. Although green politics studies more often use an ecocentric view, in this article we focus on anthropocentrism by placing politicians as actors controlling policies related to the environment. Both views reflect the dynamics of political behavior on the political stage in Indonesia. The Go Green approach focused on support for sustainable development and environment rather than focusing mainly on business profitability, meanwhile the Go

Economy focused more on economic growth rather than sustainability.

METHODS

This research uses the library research method as part of the qualitative research method. Library research focuses on collecting data originating from libraries as primary and secondary sources (Adlini et al., 2022, p. 978). Library research itself is a research activity carried out by collecting information and data with the help of various kinds of materials in the library (Sari & Asmendri, 2020, p. 44). This research uses mass media sources that quote and explain the ins and outs of the two politicians as primary sources to see how their political behavior regarding plastic imports was formed, while secondary sources were obtained using books and articles which became tools for interpreting political behavior and the idea of green politics of the research subjects of this article. Quotations are the main tool for determining primary and secondary sources. If the quotation is the result of an interview or statement that is the subject of research, it will be positioned as a primary source, while if the source used is to interpret a direct quote, it will be categorized as a secondary source.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Importing waste has become a political policy that has generated polemics.

This problem, which seems to have little popularity, has even been discussed since before the twenty-first century. It was proven by the existence of literature that has been discussed since 1996. If waste imports are an entity that is said to be a "problem" then a policy is a necessity to be a "solution." There are differences in the actual circumstances. Policy implementations seem to overlap with each other. Deficiencies in implementation are clearly rooted in the less-than-optimal preparation of formal materials. There are also regulations that were not in line with one another. In terms of legislation, Indonesia was still behind in its green politics because it was focused more on the anthropocentric view rather than ecocentric view, albeit in here, we argued that anthropocentric view is also important to examine how the legislation and legislators organized and opinioned on the problem of waste import.

In general, Indonesia banned the practice of importing waste through its positive law. In Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, it is stated that "Every person is prohibited from importing waste originating from outside the territory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia into the environmental media of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia." In these formal materials, it is stated without

exception. This means that whatever waste is entered is still prohibited, including non-hazardous and toxic materials. Indonesia also has a positive law that clearly and openly states that waste import is prohibited. As stated in Law Number 18 of 2008 concerning Waste Management Article 28 Paragraph 1 letter (a), "everyone is prohibited from importing waste into the territory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia." and letter (b) which reads "everyone is prohibited from importing waste." The aforementioned regulations above seem to try to satisfy certain groups, especially people who support green activities or *Go Green*, such as environmental activists and social justice warriors. The above-mentioned regulations seem known better to the public than the subsequent regulations complementing them. In fact, the gap in this political product is in its derivatives.

If the *Go Green* side takes a supportive attitude towards Law Number 18 of 2008 Article 29 Paragraph 1 letters (a) and (b) along with Law Number 32 of 2009, then the *Go Economy* camp will take the opposite attitude. As the name suggests, *Go Economy* places the economy as a central priority. This party usually consists of entrepreneurs and economic actors. In this field, waste imports are needed as industrial raw materials. In fact, this is not uncommon in Indonesia. Economically developed

countries such as China have been importing waste since 1992 (Brooks et al., 2018). The reason that drives China to import waste is that Chinese industrial players consider that the quality of imported plastic waste is better than domestic plastic waste, and since China rejoined the World Trade Organization, China has actively exported its commodities using container ships on a large scale (Mak, 2018). In fact, waste imports also have an impact on government and the level of "progress" of a nation. Again, China is the example. One of the industries that requires waste imports in China is the textile sector. The textile industry managed to contribute around seven percent of China's GDP in 2015 or around seven percent of \$11,060,000,000,000.

Economic actors in Indonesia certainly have a special place in government and parliament. Pressure on industry's need for raw materials prompted the passing of a ministerial regulation legalizing waste imports. In fact, this regulation was published several times. The legalization of waste import was contained within the Regulation of the Minister of Trade Number 31 of 2016 concerning Provisions for the Import of Non-Hazardous and Toxic Waste which regulates several waste entities that can be imported, such as scrap, waste or paper,

rubber, plastic, textile and scrap metal materials with certain specifications. The substance of the Regulation of the Minister of Trade is inconsistent with the prohibition on waste imports confirmed in the previous regulations which is Law Number 18 of 2008. This is the biggest legislative gap in the practice of importing waste. However, waste imports continue due to this Ministry Regulation. The new regulations have the potential for undesirable violations such as violations of imported waste materials, the limits of which are regulated in the trade regulation.

In front of the public and the media, political actors show their seriousness in fighting the practice of importing waste. This resistance is shown openly by Nyoman Parta as Member of Commission IV DPR RI said "first, the Government must stop sending waste from wherever the country comes from, remembering that the waste that is imported is plastic waste and contains nonhazardous and toxic materials." He continued, "Because there is a lot of waste in Indonesia. So, it is sufficient for industrial raw materials so there is no need to import" (Guntoro, 2020). Meanwhile in the same year, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry along with Commission IV from DPR found 1.078 imported scrap plastic containers in Tanjung Priok, Jakarta. Director General of Waste Management and Hazardous Toxic

Materials from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Rosa Vivien Ratnawati explained that imports of plastic scrap are strictly regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Trade Number 92 of 2019 concerning Amendments of the Regulation of the Minister of Trade Number 84 of 2019 concerning Provisions for the Import of Non-Hazardous and Toxic Waste as Industrial Raw Materials. She continued that "in the Minister of Trade's regulations it is clear that raw materials must not be mixed with waste, must not come from landfills, must not be mixed with nonhazardous and toxic waste materials" (Budianto, 2020).

The statements of the two officials above are contradictory to what was stated by the Chairman of Commission IV DPR RI, Sudin which stated, "the government needs to continue to increase the number and capacity of domestic recycling businesses in order to meet the needs for raw materials for the national paper and plastic industry." The statements from the three officials show qualitative differences in the data. Nyoman stated that waste in Indonesia is very sufficient, even Rosa criticized the existence of plastic waste in Tanjung Priok which should not be there, while Sudin implied that the availability of waste for raw materials for paper and plastic is still not enough so there is a need

to increase the number and capacity the recycling business. For Sudin, to lower the waste imports, the government needs to support the recycling business capacities (Rahman, 2020). There are no sharp differences of opinion between those three government officials, albeit they are focusing on different aspects of plastic waste management altogether. They tried to maintain their neutrality for both the business and environmental activists by focusing on how the government could reduce plastic waste by focusing on capacity building.

But there is another point of interest in their differences of opinion, especially from two of the legislators. Both revealed different data in the same year. The explanations given by both must be based on facts even though they are expressed simply. The validity of data is an important matter in government and parliament. This is because the legislative products that emerge from their bases are entities that apply to society and industry. Looking at the statements from the two legislative members at least shows roughly that there are differences in views between members in one commission. The reflection of *Go Green* can be categorized as opposing waste imports, while *Go Economy* can be categorized as allowing waste imports with certain provisions or not. These two groups have their own rationalizations. *Go Green*

used the lens of environmental sustainability and looks at the piles of waste produced, while *Go Economy* used the lens of the reality that waste in Indonesia was still not used enough as raw materials and saw that industries that import waste can support the Indonesian economy in terms of employment, income, and others. These two groups also have their own "markets". *Go Green* targets activists and the public, while *Go Economy* targets certain business actors and associations. Since they have different "markets," the political behavior shown by Nyoman and Sudin is also different. Nyoman uses explicit words in opposing the practice of importing waste. Meanwhile, Sudin showed implied language when he said that the waste produced was still insufficient, so he chose to say that the government must increase the number of recycling businesses.

Certainly, differences of opinion reflected what Yunus said about the interests vested between the constituents-at-large and the political party or business associations. Opinion which was sharply opposed waste import such as from Nyoman Parta could be interpreted in two ways, either his constituents were from environmental activists or he was trying to get support from them meanwhile Sudin was either trying to be neutral or convinced that the plastic waste was not entirely problematic if handled in a good manner by

investing in the recycling industry which reflected a business approach to his views. What was interesting that politician came from the same party, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) which showed that a political party was a monolithic organization in terms of political opinions although they have the only one ideological worldview. These differences of opinion probably stemmed from the differences in interpreting the data that they have found. Since data was neutral, people can interpret it differently according to the interest that they have.

However, based on data from the National Waste Management Information System in 2020, the generated waste from 286 districts/cities amounted to 35,580,076.55 tons/year, with a composition of around 17.12% or around 609,000 tons/year being plastic waste. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Ministry of Industry in 2019 stated that the need for plastic raw materials as industrial raw materials was 7.2 million tons/year (Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan, 2020). Of course, plastic waste production in Indonesia is still far from sufficient to meet raw plastic needs. In terms of material quality, plastic waste in Indonesia is not guaranteed to be used as raw material. This is the reason why Indonesia still must import waste. The data above shows that politicians should be able

to speak according to existing data. Awareness of the importance of reading facts can help politicians to talk about something actual and build their networks throughout their niche markets, whether it supports *Go Green* or *Go Economy*. The truth must be accountable considering that politicians occupy strategic positions in a country. This is also driven by the ability of politicians to influence society so that what is narrated to the people is substantial and factual because it will influence people's behavior.

Their background differences also have an influence on their differences of opinion. I Nyoman Parta was a politician from Gianyar, Bali who focused on fieldwork by meeting his constituents and before he became a national politician, he was a regional politician in Bali for over a decade focusing on everyday problem in the society (Nainggolan, 2024). Meanwhile, Sudin was from Lampung and have been a national politician since 2009 and was active in several business in Jakarta since 1990 (Bhayangkara, 2023). As we can see above, Nyoman Parta was opposed to importing waste because of his background, that he was a politician from regional who were not focusing on business problem but everyday problem of the society, meanwhile Sudin was a businessman, so his tone was more neutral rather than confrontational. Both are different in their

way of looking at the problem of waste management because of their different experiences throughout their political careers. This opinion reflected their respective representational function just as what Efriza explained. Both articulate and integrate the two different opinions from society as reflected in Nyoman Parta's views and the business from Sudin's views. Although they have different opinions on dealing with waste importation, both show a similar green politics in their solutions for the problem, both also showed an anthropocentric view by looking at how humans, either it is government or business, are the main actors of waste importation. Nyoman Parta, in its opposition to the waste imports, strongly criticized the government for the problem. On the other hand, Sudin, in a gentler tone, focused more on how the government could tackle the problem of waste import through recycling business capacity building. Although both have different solutions for the waste import problem, Nyoman Parta held that the government must stop waste import, meanwhile Sudin keeps that it was needed for sufficient supply. Both maintained that the government has a responsibility to organized waste import to be better and impacting the Indonesian society positively.

CONCLUSION

Considering that the waste import regulation is a positive law which is quite important but still subject to multiple interpretations, the government and legislation should be able to act quickly and precisely in fixing this matter. The understanding of Go Green or Go Economy can immediately be discussed in the DPR's General Hearing Meeting (RDPU) right up to the ratification process using individual rationalizations by prioritizing the common good. With clear political products, gaps in violations can be minimized and followed up. Politicians' ideologies should not only be applied on stage but should be used as a basis for political behavior in the interests of society. Politicians also should not see society as a group that only wants to accept good news or narratives but should see them as a form of responsibility so that what is conveyed is something factual so that the public can act and try according to what they should. Differences of opinions is a part of political behavior, as we have shown above, we were not trying to judge which one is better than the other, but focused more on showing how politicians from the same party may have different opinions because there are lots of factors contributing to it, either constituents, backgrounds or experiences.

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