

## Impact of liberal democracy toward deforestation In East Kotawaringin, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia

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### Suggested Citation:

Dhefara S. A., Aji, E. S., Lolong, K. M.L. & Abbas, R. J. (2021). Impact of liberal democracy toward deforestation In East Kotawaringin, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Advances in Pure and Applied Sciences*. (14), 01-12. Available [www.propaas.eu](http://www.propaas.eu)

Received from October 31, 2021; revised from November 02, 2021; accepted from November 22, 2021  
Selection and peer review under responsibility of Assoc. Dr. Murat Sonmez, Middle East Technical University  
Northern Cyprus, North Cyprus

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### Abstract

Indonesia is known as a country that has an abundance of tropical forests and has implemented regional autonomy in each region. This article aims to explain the link between deforestation rates and liberal democratic governments in Indonesia, specifically in East Kotawaringin which has one of the largest forests areas in Indonesia. The method used in this study is a qualitative method with data from books, journals, government reports, articles, and studies conducted by non-governmental organizations with an environmental focus. This research finds that there is a link between liberal democratic governments and deforestation rates, shown by how regional autonomy has given the local government a right to manage their region and natural resources, the high cost of the local leader election as evidence of the liberal democratic system in Indonesia, and the potential of utilizing the natural resources in the region as an assurance for funding aid in the local leader election.

**Keywords:** Deforestation; East Kotawaringin; Forest; Liberal Democracy; Regional Autonomy.

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## **1. Introduction**

Indonesia is one of the largest archipelagic states in the world. Besides the islands themselves, the Directorate General of Forestry Planning and Environmental Management of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of The Republic of Indonesia report that in 2019 there are 94,1 Million Ha of forest in Indonesia (PPID KLHK, 2020). Referring to the Indonesian Constitution 1945 and Forest Law Number 41 of 1999, explain the management of forest as a natural resource that needs to be managed appropriately to forest sustainability and bring the welfare for the nation. However, it can be seen that the management of natural resources in Indonesia has not reached its potential. One of the pieces of evidence is the cases of deforestation that happened in Indonesia. Deforestation is the situation where the forest loses its function and structure because of human activities, such as the raw materials, farming, plantation (such as cocoa or palm oil), urbanization of the local area, and other activities that possibly degrade the forest quality and quantity (Alamendah, 2010).

Forest Watch Indonesia has reported the numbers of Indonesia's deforestation in the average of 1,1 Million Ha in 2009-2013. In 2013-2014, Statistics Indonesia reported that 3,9 Thousand Ha of deforestation happened in Indonesia. In 2015-2019 the accumulation of deforestation reached 3,1 Million Ha. The numbers of deforestation in 2015-2016 are 629.176,9 Ha and decreasing in 2016-2017 to 480.010,8 Ha (BPS, 2020a). Siti Nurbaya, the Minister of Environment and Forestry of Indonesia, states that the achievement of decreasing deforestation is achieved because of the improvement of policy governance, including moratorium of new land and forest permits that can control land function in the natural, primer, and peat forest. Several other laws and policies are also implemented, one of them is the prevention of land and forest fires that also can decrease the deforestation from forest fires (Arumingtyas, 2018).

The highest rate of deforestation in Indonesia occurs from industrial activities, particularly the wood industry. The irresponsible individuals in the wood industry are abusing the right of land cultivation that led to the increase of illegal logging. From this activity, 40 million meters cubic of forest per year are destroyed, when the Department of Indonesia Forestry from World Bank recommendation limits the logging to 22 million cubics per year for sustainability. In addition to deforestation causes, land-use change has become the second-highest reason Indonesia has a high rate of deforestation, especially for palm oil cultivation. Central Kalimantan has become one of the areas that had the highest deforestation rate for years. With a total land of 12,697,165.00 Ha, the highest deforestation rate in Central Kalimantan happened in 2014-2015 with a total of 186,642.0 Ha (BPS, 2020b).

### **1.1. Purpose of study**

This article aims to find the explanation of the increasing deforestation rate in several areas in Indonesia since the implementation of liberal democracy in Indonesia. After the Reformation Era in 1999, liberal democracy that was implemented in the Indonesian political system became more accessible to the public with the implementation of regional autonomy and the local leader election that happened in 2004. Specifically, Law No. 32 of 2004 explains the implementation of regional autonomy in Article 18 and how the local government has a right to manage the government and resources of their region in Article 21. Based on that finding, the writer is aiming to map the relationship between the change in the Indonesian political system and the rate of deforestation in Indonesia, especially in East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

This research is using the qualitative method to find the relation between the rate of deforestation and the liberal democratic government in Indonesia.

### **2.1. Data collection instrument**

The case study methods are used to see the in-depth understanding of deforestation issues in East Kotawaringin Regency. The internet-based data source is used in our research, with the keywords in Indonesian related to '*deforestation in Central Kalimantan, the liberal democratic system in Indonesia, the general election for the East Kotawaringin area, the forest area of East Kotawaringin, and the regional autonomy of the East Kotawaringin district.*' Another data source from this research is the government officials, such as the dataset from Statistics Indonesia and Statistics Indonesia for East Kotawaringin Regency and General Elections Commission of Indonesia in East Kotawaringin Regency to analyze the local leader election in East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan.

### **2.2. Data analysis**

This research followed the content analysis method. The findings were discussed based on the content, considering previous literature. This was done to reduce the subjectivity of the discussion.

## **3. Results**

### **3.1. Liberal Democracy and Regional Autonomy in Indonesia**

In Law No. 32 of 2004, regional autonomy is the right, power, and regional obligation to manage their government and the interest of the local community according to the law and regulations (Fauzi, 2019). Thus, regional autonomy can be interpreted as the rights of the local citizen to manage, handle, control, and develop the region in line with the law and regulations. Regional autonomy has its regional border and governs its government according to its citizens' aspirations and needs. City and regency are the implemented regional autonomy in Indonesia. The rights of the city and regency to manage their region can be seen as one of the examples of how liberal democracy works in Indonesia.

There is also a principle in regional autonomy, which is to use the autonomy as broadly as possible in their region. The region also has a right to formulate the policies with the objective of public welfare with the service, enhancement, participation, initiative, and empowerment of the community. Furthermore, Mardiasmo (2002) and Namlis (2018) state that regional autonomy also aims for efficiency and effectiveness to the management of regional resources, establish the power of the community to participate in the development process, and also provide the space for the local government to solve their regional problems.

The general principles for good local government are also applied based on the customary law in the region. The customary law is something that is accepted and established by the principle of justice in the local community and also regulated by the constitutions. The shape of good local government also can be measured by the quality of serving and empowering the local community as a part of regional development (Fauzi, 2019). To be able to achieve a good local government, the government needs to actively participate in society. Therefore, the existence of a leader who is creative, responsive, honest, democratic, and can perform their responsibility according to the

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regional autonomy principle is also needed. The leader of a region needs to know local wisdom to be able to understand the local community's problems and interests. In consequence, it will be possible to have a good government with the regulated regional autonomy principles and the supporting actors.

Liberal democracy is a system that exercises individual rights, it can be seen in the implementation of regional autonomy. Individuals can participate in the political system by choosing their leaders and even being a leader themselves because the liberal democratic system did not see race or religion as an obstacle to being a leader. The voices and aspirations also implemented in the use of suffrage for local leader election are one of the pieces of evidence of how liberal democracy works. Furthermore, the diversity in the involvement of the public is noticeable in the decision-making process which generates the public policy as a regulation to manage and serve the public. Thus, regional autonomy can be seen as the exercise of liberal democracy in Indonesia.

### **3.2. Liberal Democracy and Democratization in Indonesia**

In the development of state administration, from the constitution to the government system, Indonesia has been through several adjustments. This section specifically focuses on the development of Indonesia's government system which is liberal democracy. The political system that constitutionally defends individual rights from the government power can be explained as a liberal democracy. The limitation of the majority decisions that are enforced by the government is implemented to protect individual rights that are drafted in the constitution are the liberal democratic government system.

The liberal democratic system in Indonesia was implemented in 2004, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono presidential era, which marked the first simultaneous election in Indonesia. From the first election in Indonesia in 1955 until 2004, local leader elections in Indonesia were only to elect the people's representative on legislative level; People's Representative Council of Indonesia and Regional People's Representative Council for both province and regency/city. Throughout the New Order era election until 1999, the public never had a chance to choose the head of the state directly (Tirto, 2020). Based on Law No. 23 of 2003 on the Election of President and Vice President, the General Elections Commission of Indonesia managed to organize Indonesia's first direct presidential election in 2004.

Following the election of the president and vice president in 2004, the idea election for local leaders also started to be arranged. Supported by the ideas of regional autonomy that began in 1999, in 2005 direct local leader election in province and regency/city level was organized (KPU, 2021). The implementation of the liberal democracy is regulated in Law No. 32 of 2004 on Local Government that stated, 'Local leader and their vice leader is elected from one pair of candidates that are elected by the principle of direct, general, free, confidential, honest, and fair' (KPU, 2021). The candidates that compete in the local leader election are the candidates that are submitted by a specific political party or a consolidation of several political parties.

Muhtadi's (2020) book titled "*Kuasa Uang: Politik Uang Dalam Pemilu Pasca Orde Baru*", explained the degree of tolerance in the money politics in Indonesia and compared the practice to vote trade in each electoral system in Indonesia. The book provides a dataset from 963 election surveys from various survey institutions in Indonesia including *Lembaga Survei Indonesia* (LSI), *Indikator Politik Indonesia* (IPI), dan Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC) in 2006 to 2015. In that period, these three well-known survey institutions conducted an opinion poll related to the local leader election in 34 provinces and 513 regencies/cities across Indonesia. In general, the tolerance to money politics in local leader elections is comparably high; 4 by 10 Indonesians are allowing the campaign team of the candidates to send off money or another gift as a

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part of the campaign. Though 60,2% of the respondents consider that vote trade is not acceptable, the number of respondents that permit the illicit practice socially is also high.

One of the well-known areas of natural resources in Indonesia, the Kalimantan Province, can be one of the examples of how the liberal democracy expands the potential for the local leaders to abuse its power and affect the environment in the process. Indonesia's transition into the liberal democracy system started with the fall of the military junta, Soeharto, in 1998 who controlled Indonesia with the centralized system in the state, politics, and natural resources. After the fall of Soeharto's regime and the decline of central government hegemony, business elite and local politicians are competing to take control of million dollars-worth natural resources (Mongabay, 2018).

As a case study, Aspinall and Berenschot (2019: 207) in *'Democracy for Sale Elections, Clientelism, and the State in Indonesia'* explain the case of bribery in Gunung Mas Regency in 2013. Hambit Binti, the 2013 regent of Gunung Mas Regency, was caught by the investigator of the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission when she went to head of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, Akil Mochtar. The evidence is 300,000 SGD, and it was linked to Cornelis Nalau, a businessman in Gunung Mas. Politicians similar to Hambit Binti not only deal with the palm oil industry to enrich them self. The cost of being the candidate in the local leader election is high, even before the campaign starts, a regent candidate needs to have at least 500,000 USD to buy the political party candidacy. For the governor candidacy, the cost can reach 2 Million USD without the operational cost for the campaign and campaign team to win the community vote by providing goods and vote trade.

The high cost became the reason democratization processes in Indonesia have not led to the decrease of economic elite domination. The candidate might depend on their capital, but eventually, the turnover is only possible with the government or donations from business sectors. Dependency on the campaign donor weakened the public policy and the state institution because the contributors of the campaign mostly use their donors to have special access to business sectors and damage the licensing, tender, the use of land, and other bureaucracy processes (Mietzner, 2011). In that sense, it can be understood that democratization has a direct linkage to the acceleration of deforestation and the expansion of business sectors, mainly palm oil. The need for campaign funds made politicians avoid the national rules (IEA, 2014).

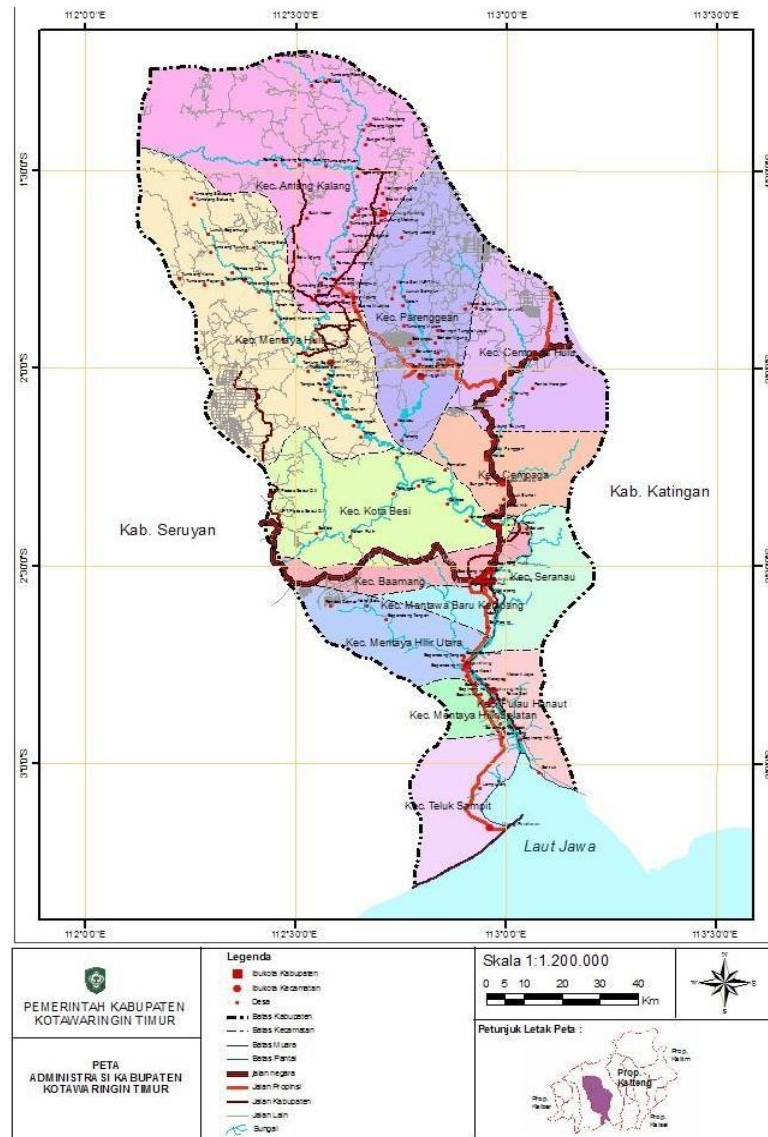
The vulnerability of the abuse in campaign funds not only came from the use of the funds itself, but also from who gave the funds to the politicians. The business sectors that can give enormous funds for the campaign often bring their interest in their donation, frequently in the region which has an abundance of natural resources. The immense need for campaign funds caused the appearance of business sectors in Indonesian political stages, with their capability to give funds as a tool to reach their interest.

### ***3.3.Regional Autonomy in East Kotawaringin Regency, Kalimantan Tengah Province and Deforestation Rate***

East Kotawaringin Regency is a regency in Central Kalimantan Province. The regency is 10,94% of the total area in Central Kalimantan by having a 16,796 km<sup>2</sup> area which consists of 17 districts (BPS Kabupaten Kotawaringin Timur, 2020c). Geographically, East Kotawaringin Regency neighbored several regencies, specifically Seruyan Regency in the west, Katingan Regency in the north and east, also directly bordered with the Java Sea in the south. Statistics Indonesia of East Kotawaringin Regency remarks that in 2019 there are 414,463 inhabitants in the regency.

**Figure 1**

*Administrative Map of East Kotawaringin Regency*



Source: Dinas Komunikasi dan Informasi Kotawaringin Timur, 2020.

Statistics Indonesia of East Kotawaringin Regency (BPS, 2019) in *'Kotawaringin Timur Dalam Angka 2019'* explains that forest and aquatic forest area in East Kotawaringin Regency in 2018 are 1,125,621.79 Ha, which includes 17,427.27 Ha protected forest, 501,268.59 Ha limited production forest, 198,370.89 Ha permanent production forest, and 408,555.04 Ha converted production forest. With the area that dominated with the forest, in 2018 20,78% of gross regional domestic products of East Kotawaringin Regency came from agriculture, forestry, and fishery (BPS Kabupaten Kotawaringin Timur, 2021). Thus, it shows the significance of the forestry sector in East Kotawaringin Regency income. In the governance issues, East Kotawaringin Regency has periodically changed local leaders that are selected by the People's Representative Council of Indonesia every 5 years. However, the

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implementation of regional autonomy was begun in 2005 marked the first local leader election in the reformation era, specifically on June 23rd, 2005 (Tempo. co, 2005). After the first local leader election, there have been three local leader elections that were executed in East Kotawaringin Regency with the 5 years terms of service.

**Table 1**  
*Winning Candidate of East Kotawaringin Regency Leader Election*

Local Leader Election	Winning Candidate	Terms of Service
2005	M. Wahyudi K. Anwar & H. M. Amrullah Hadi	2005-2010
2010	Supian Hadi, S. IKom & Drs. H. M. Taufiq Mukri, SH, MM	2010-2015
2015	Supian Hadi, S. IKom & Drs. H. M. Taufiq Mukri, SH, MM	2016 - 2021
2020*	H. Halikinnor, SH. MM. & Hj. Irawati, Spd*	2021-2025*

*Source:* processed by the author from various sources

Parallel with the change in government regime, the change of forest size also happened in East Kotawaringin Regency. Statistics Indonesia of East Kotawaringin Regency reported the statistics of forest in this regency every year in the publication namely '*Kabupaten Kotawaringin Timur Dalam Angka.*' Based on this publication, the authors have compiled the statistics of forest size in Hectare (Ha) from 2003 until 2019, except 2007, which are simplified in this table.

**Table 2**  
*Forest Size According to East Kotawaringin Regency Spatial Plan 2003-2019 (Ha)*

Year	Protected Forest	Industrial Plant Forest	Monumental	Limited Production Forest	Permanent Production Forest	Production Development Area / Converted Production Forest	Total
2003	5,207.02	12,599.06	640.00	247,289.08	523,302.10	400,091.05	1,189,128.31
2004	5,207.02	12,599.06	640.00	247,289.08	523,302.10	400,091.05	1,189,128.31
2005	5,207.02	12,599.06	640.00	247,289.08	523,302.10	400,091.05	1,189,128.31
2006	6,668.97	107,530.00	625.00	167,420.00	381,551.24	686,819.67	1,350,614.88
2008	6,558.97	85,230.00	625.00	234,804.10	388,923.13	595,607.97	1,311,749.17
2009	6,558.97	85,230.00	625.00	234,804.10	388,923.13	595,607.97	1,311,749.17
2010	6,558.97	85,230.00	625.00	234,804.10	388,923.13	595,607.97	1,311,749.17
2011	6,558.97	85,230.00	625.00	234,804.10	388,923.13	595,607.97	1,311,749.17
2012	6,558.97	85,230.00	625.00	234,804.10	388,923.13	595,607.97	1,311,749.17
2013	17,421.89	132,515.00	625.00	453,474.32	245,270.37	552,112.64	1,401,419.22
2014	17,421.89	132,515.00	625.00	453,474.32	245,270.37	552,112.64	1,401,419.22
2015	17,421.89	130,201.00	610.00	191,196.44	507,279.59	dna*	846,708.92
2016	17,421.89	dna*	607.63	191,196.44	507,279.59	dna*	716,505.55

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2017	17,421.89	dna*	dna*	191,196.44	507,279.59	dna*	715,897.92
2018	17,427.27	dna*	dna*	198,370.89	580,126.86	408,555.04	1,204,480.06
2019	17,427.27	dna*	dna*	501,268.59	198,370.89	408,555.04	1,125,621.79

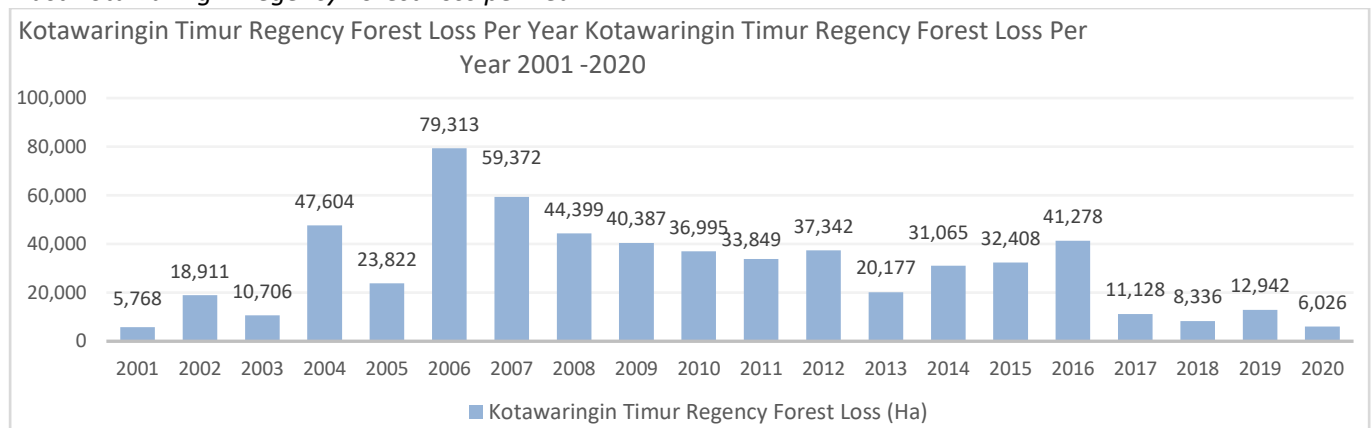
Source: processed by the author from Statistics Indonesia of East Kotawaringin Regency Publication, 'Kabupaten Kotawaringin Timur dalam Angka 2003-2019' (dna\* = data not available)

Based on the dataset, the authors interpret there is an attempt from the East Kotawaringin Regency government to make data more accessible and transparent in the Reformation Era. However, it can be deciphered that there is an increase in the production and industrial plant forest area. This increase means there is an amount of forest that has become a production commodity. Unfortunately, there are several years when the Statistics Indonesia of East Kotawaringin Regency did not update the forest data, such as the data in 2008 that was used until 2012, which prevent the authors to interpret the exact number of forest loss in East Kotawaringin Regency in the Reformation Era.

Another dataset obtained from Global Forest Watch (2021), explains that from 2001 until 2020 East Kotawaringin Regency has lost 33% of its total primary forest or tropical forest that has not been disturbed by human activities. From the same sources, in 2001 there was 489,000 Ha primary forest in East Kotawaringin Regency or up to 31% of the regency. Counting the loss of East Kotawaringin Regency primary forest that reached 33%, there is 327,630 Ha of primary forest left in 2020. Specifically, the total forest loss in East Kotawaringin Regency per year is explained in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2**

*East Kotawaringin Regency Forest Loss per Year*



Source: Global Forest Watch (2021)

It can be explained from the dataset that there is a significant decrease in the forest size in East Kotawaringin Regency, specifically in primary forests. The losses are the responsibility of the yearly forest fires and the land-use change. Datmika (2020) explained that forest fire is an annual event in the East Kotawaringin Regency dry season, even in 2018 there is 30,000 Ha forest loss because of the forest fire in several districts in East Kotawaringin Regency. Though it was a natural disaster, land clearing for the palm oil industry makes the fire worse. Production forest areas in East Kotawaringin Regency are endangered from the uncontrolled and irresponsible land clearing from the palm oil license holders (Antaranews, 2017).

The problem that later occurs as the relation between the environment and regional autonomy in East Kotawaringin Regency is the degradation of forest in the area because of the natural resources' utilization by the regional government. Based on the statistic released by Statistics Indonesia of East Kotawaringin Regency (2020), palm oil becomes one of the most profitable sectors in plantation sectors that contribute 19,71% of total gross regional domestic products of East Kotawaringin Regency, noted as the highest contribution for the region. It demonstrates how palm oil



as a commodity has potential for this region, even if it was compared to another regency in Central Kalimantan Province; East Kotawaringin Regency occupies the first rank in the palm oil plantation and production with the percentage 26,97% and 35,62% across Central Kalimantan Province.

The palm oil industry potential in a regency is often abused by the regent that controls the region. The license of palm oil can be sold at the price of 400 to 1,200 USD per hectare and the authority of the regent can grant the license to whoever and whenever they approve those (The Gecko Project & Mongabay, 2018). It was not a coincidence that the beginning of the direct local leader election that became the evidence of full implementation of regional autonomy correlated with the popularity of the palm oil industry with the land expansion up to 4 times in 2005 for the palm oil industry or 3,750 km<sup>2</sup> per year. This is also related to Figure 2 which shows the high numbers of deforestation in East Kotawaringin Regency. The high rate of deforestation in 2006 that extended to 79,313 Ha reflects the boost after the local leader election, poles apart from the earlier years that peaked with 47,604 Ha in 2004. After 2006, the rate of deforestation in East Kotawaringin Regency did not reach another significant peak, but it does not mean that there is a decrease in the rate of deforestation because cumulatively it highlights the abundance of forest loss because of deforestation.

The connection between palm oil land exploitation and the practice of local leader election happens because of the high cost of candidacy in local leader elections. The Gecko Project & Mongabay (2018) also mention this problem, with a media consensus view on how the high cost of candidacy facilitates the business sectors to be involved in Indonesia's democratic process. Even before the candidacy process, the political party candidacy also needs support from the ruling political party in the local parliament. The expenses, often known as political dowry, in the region which has an abundance of natural resources, can stretch to 1 Billion IDR or equivalent to thousands of USD.

The cost of political dowry was too difficult to be handled by personal pocket. The support from business sectors became one of the patrons for the candidacy cost. The political dowry cost will be returned when the candidate wins the election. The Gecko Project & Mongabay (2018) explain the methods of returning favor can be carried out by increasing the infrastructure project free in the region and giving those projects to the corporation that owned by the cronies or the kin, withdrawing money that used to buy the medical devices and oil tanker in a higher cost, or for the region with an abundance natural resources, simplify the permit for natural resources licenses; one of them are palm oil industry.

Palm oil, which is a favorable sector in East Kotawaringin Regency, frequently has a land dispute between the corporation and the local community. Walhi (2020) reported an irregular land claim by PT. HMBP II, a palm oil corporation, since 2006. Chronological explanation by Mongabay (2020) points out that this dispute began in 2003 when PT. Karya Agung Subur Kencana was receiving the permit to run an 8,200 Ha palm oil land in Tanah Putih Village, Kota Besi District and Natai Nangka Village, Mentaya Hilir Utara District, but in 2005 transition of leadership happened; the Acting Regent of East Kotawaringin Regency, Suandi, publish a decree that transfers the land permit to PT. HMBP. The local community has sued the corporation through the government, but after years the community has not received their rights.

In addition to political dowry before the candidacy, another political dowry that needs to be spent in the candidacy process is campaign funds. There is a high need for campaign funds because campaigns become an important step in the democracy practice with the goals of convincing the voters and getting to know the candidates (Tim, 2015). The campaign is defined as a communication strategy that aims at the public and is continually conducted in a determined period (Fatimah, 2018). The significance of campaigns in local leader elections is to attract a mass of voters to win the political contestation. The greater the campaign funds, the more campaign activities the candidates can engage in. The variation in campaign activities is related to the high cost of the campaign to be able to reach the local community.

Different from the campaign funds admission that has regulations and sanctions regarding the violation, the use of campaign funds does not have specific regulations nor sanctions if the violation was proved (Supriyanto & Wulandari, 2013). The leniency of a regulation made the candidate use the campaign fund as much as possible to attract the voters. Big scale campaigns need a high-cost campaign, the cost not only came from personal funds or political parties' funds but also from other patron donations such as business sectors.

**Table 3**

*Campaign Funds of Winning Candidate in East Kotawaringin Regency Leader Election 2010-2020*

Local Leader Election	Winning Candidate	Campaign Funds (1 USD = 14,251 IDR)
2010	Supian Hadi, S. IKom & Drs. H. M. Taufiq Mukri, SH, MM	272,328.90 USD
2015	Supian Hadi, S. IKom & Drs. H. M. Taufiq Mukri, SH, MM	108,061.45 USD
2020	H. Halikinnor, SH. MM. & Hj. Irawati, Spd	34,160.89 USD

*Source: KPU Kotawaringin Timur (2021).*

The General Election Commission of East Kotawaringin stated that the campaign funds from every candidate in the local leader election in 2010 until 2020 are fluctuating and uneven. In 2010, Edi Waldianto, S.E. and Drs. Untung, MPd. become the candidate who has the least election funds with 3,506.38 USD while the winning candidate Supian Hadi, S. IKom, and Drs. H. M. Taufiq Mukri, SH, MM sum of campaign funds reach 272,328.90 USD. In the next local general election in 2015, the least campaign funds numbers are 70.52 USD from Djunaidy Drakel and Haryanto, S.H while the highest is held by Supian Hadi, S. IKom & Drs. H. M. Taufiq Mukri, SH, MM is still the winning candidate with 108,061.45 USD. Unfortunately, the campaign reports in 2010 and 2015 did not state the detailed use of campaign funds. Nevertheless, this dataset is evidence of the high need for campaign funds to win the election in East Kotawaringin Regency.

The audit from campaign funds reports in the 2020 East Kotawaringin Regency general election is different from the earlier reports. Based on Law No. 8 of 2015 On Election of Governor, Regent, and City Major, regulation about limiting the funds and which patrons support the campaign. In this report, every candidate should state the source of funds, even from their funds, political parties, and donors from other parties such as individuals, associations, and private legal entities (KPU Kotawaringin, 2021). Campaign activities also need to be detailed, from the meeting to the properties in public. It was an attempt to build more transparency at the government level, though it was not stated who the specific donors were or what kind of activities were held in the campaign period. The point of interest from this dataset is the winning candidate of East Kotawaringin Regency general election in 2020, H. Halikinnor, SH. MM. and Hj. Irawati, Spd with funds 34,160.89 USD was not the highest campaign funds, but Muhammad Rudini Darwan Ali and H. Samsudin, S.Pd.I are with the funds of 91,396.40 USD.

However, the dataset still shows the need for high costs in democratic practice in Indonesia. Campaign funds that reach thousands of USD become a burden for the local general election, opening the opportunity for business sectors to be involved as the patrons of a candidate and bringing their interest in the process. Regions with an abundance of natural resources become vulnerable to exploitation, becoming a tradeoff from the political aid to the exploitation permits. With the vulnerability of natural resources exploitation in the natural resources-rich regions in Indonesia, the authors found the correlation between the implementation of liberal democracy in Indonesia with the rate of deforestation of East Kotawaringin's forest.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings to identify the linkage between the rate of deforestation and liberal democracy that implemented with the regional autonomy in Indonesia, it can be concluded that there is a correlation between the implementation of regional autonomy and the decrease of forest in the region that has an abundance of natural resources, one of them is East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan Province. These findings are based on three main arguments. First, how regional autonomy has given the local government a right to manage their region and natural resources. Second, observing the high cost of the local leader election is evidence of the liberal democratic system in Indonesia. Third, see the potential of utilizing the natural resources in the region as an assurance for funding aids in the local leader election.

Three arguments that completed by the dataset about forest area in East Kotawaringin Regency from Statistics Indonesia of East Kotawaringin Regency, rate of deforestation from a non-governmental organization, and campaign funds from the General Elections Commission of Indonesia in East Kotawaringin Regency show the decrease of forest area and the high requirements of campaign funds in East Kotawaringin Regency. Thus, it is possible to conclude that liberal democracy has an impact on environmental preservation. Yet, the relevant laws and regulations and the policy regarding regional autonomy and environment need to be considered in the related analysis. The authors suggest analyzing deeper in law aspects for another research related to liberal democracy and environment to find how the laws and regulations for liberal democracy practice can be parallel with the environment preservation.

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