

Reconstruction of the Electoral System to Improve the Control and Quality of Members of Parliament and Democracy in Indonesia

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Keywords	Abstract
Electoral System; Political Accountability; Democratic Reforms	Elections are a crucial part of the political process that allows for the peaceful and orderly transfer of power. They involve interactions between prospective members of parliament, political parties, and voters who compete for representative mandates based on the interests and identity of each electoral district. However, in recent times, political contention has become increasingly divisive with candidates promoting identity rather than substantive ideas for improvement. Popularity and capital seem to be the driving forces behind the strategies of candidates heading to parliament. This noisy election process and the low quality of elected parliamentarians are accompanied by a weak accountability system, as there is no direct connection between voters and elected parliamentarians. This means that people from various social communities do not have a clear channel to put forward important issues in parliament. As a result, taking to the streets becomes a common medium for political expression. To improve the quality of people's representatives, politics, and democracy, the author suggests a combination of two models of democracy: representative and participatory. The combination would involve electing representatives as usual and selecting candidates proposed by community/group organizations (such as professional, religious, and other social communities) through internal organizational elections. This would ensure that the representatives truly represent the interests and identity of the people they serve.



INTRODUCTION

Elections are an important and crucial political process and stage in democracy. The change of power can occur peacefully and scheduled through elections in accordance with the rules of the constitution and applicable laws. Elections are also a democratic party where voters will choose political parties and parliamentarians who are considered to best represent the issues, interests, and identity of each voter. The legitimacy of representative political authority in this social construction occurs when voters give consent at the voting booth, either directly or indirectly, offline or online.

However, the implementation of elections that have occurred six times since the reform era still leaves various challenges and homework. The author identifies at least 2 symptoms or symptoms that the elections and the democratic process in Indonesia are in an unhealthy state. It is feared that allowing unhealthy symptoms in democracy will further undermine the democratic body that has been hard-fought for in the 1998 reform.

The first symptom can be seen from the low quality of the parliamentarians produced. From the results of Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) research in 2010 – 2019, there are at least 586 Members of the House of Representatives/DPRD designated as corruption suspects

(Republika, 2020). In terms of discipline and responsibility, the results of the evaluation show that there is still a high rate of absenteeism of members of the House of Representatives in various plenary sessions, even though there is already an online attendance mechanism. During the fourth session of 2019-2020, one of the agendas was the ratification of the Omnibus Law on Job Creation, for example, there were 257 (~44%) members of the House of Representatives who were absent (Jawa Pos, 2020). The same phenomenon also occurred in the next period, where during the V plenary session in 2020 – 2021 there were 264 people (~46%) who were not present (CNN Indonesia, 2021), as well as 285 people (~49%) who were not present during the IV session 2021 – 2022 (Jawa Pos, 2022).

The second symptom can be seen from the excitement and noise of the elections in 2014 and 2019. The noise occurred not because of the celebration of democracy that was celebrated with joy, but rather because of the rampant campaigns full of fake news (hoaxes), especially carried out through social media. Kominfo even found 3,356 hoaxes in the period from August 2018 to September 2019, with the highest number in April ahead of the election (Kominfo, 2019). In addition, identity politics (Habibi, 2018) with the main substance of ethnicity and religion used by most election participants, especially in elections to regions and the President (Fernandes, 2018), increases negative sentiments in society. The pattern of identity politics campaigns that use the "me against you" dichotomy encourages the widening of the gap of differences and increases social rifts in society (BBC Indonesia, 2019).

In this article, the author wants to find the pain point and also the root cause of 2 unhealthy symptoms in the electoral process and democracy in Indonesia. The results of the identification of the main source of the problem will be followed up by the preparation of various alternative solutions that can be carried out to make the election process better and produce more qualified parliamentarians as representatives of the people. In the conduct of the research, the author limits the discussion of the phenomenon of democracy in national legislative elections in Indonesia in the reform era to the 2019 election.

This research aims to provide recommendations that can solve structural problems that occur in elections and democracy in Indonesia. It is hoped that the results of this research can be used by stakeholders, especially the Government and relevant regulators to develop appropriate policies in overseeing democratization in Indonesia. On the other hand, this result is expected to increase the maturity and maturity of all actors involved in the election, both voters, political parties, legislative candidates, and campaign teams, in order to jointly encourage improvements in the election process in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method using a literature review approach to analyze systemic issues within Indonesia's electoral and democratic processes. The researcher examines various national and international scholarly articles, official reports, legal documents, and data from reputable institutions such as Indonesia Corruption Watch, Bawaslu, and Kominfo to identify root causes of low-quality legislative outcomes and democratic decline. The analysis is structured into two theoretical layers—principles (e.g., separation of powers and social contract theory) and analytical frameworks (e.g., party system theory, electoral system theory, and principal-agent theory). These frameworks guide a multi-stage analysis, including problem mapping through root cause analysis and evaluation using accountability and institutional performance theories. The findings are used to formulate three solution options, each assessed based on impact and feasibility, to provide concrete recommendations for improving democratic accountability, political party function, and electoral system design in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Foundations of Theory & Literature Review

In analyzing these various problems, the author begins by compiling a theoretical framework that is relevant in the implementation of research. The theoretical framework is intended by the author to divide into 2 (two) parts, namely the "principle" part and the "analytical" part. The principles section focuses on various definitions and concepts in relevant theories to be the starting point and corridor in research. Meanwhile, the analytical section will use various patterns/standards/analysis mechanisms based on relevant theories to dissect the problem and find the right solution according to the research objectives.

The theoretical framework in the principle section above, the author divides it into 2 (two) layers, namely: 1). Basic principles (foundations), discussing theories related to politics and democracy as a basic construction of thinking, 2). The ideal principle (pillar), discusses various theories and ideal concepts related to actors, their structures and inter-relations in the democratic process such as political parties, elections, participation, and so on.

In the analytical part, the author divides into 2 (two) stages, namely: 1). Mapping stage and optioning, discussing various ways to dissect problems and find the main source of problems that need to be solved. 2). Evaluation stage, discussing how to assess the level of success and accuracy of a concept or model that has been compiled into solution options in overcoming the problem being faced.

In the basic principle (foundation), the author will raise 2 (two) theories, namely separation of power theory and social construct theory. In the first theory, the author uses the concept of the division of power between the executive, legislative, and judiciary conveyed by Montesquie in the book *The Spirit of Law* published in 1748 as a corridor as well as a prioritization of the focus of analysis to the legislative branch. In the second theory, the author uses the concept of consent as legitimacy in obtaining political authority as a basic principle in the application of democracy (Horton, 2012) in Indonesia now and in the future.

The ideal principle (pillar) will discuss the concept of democracy as well as the main actors and their interaction patterns in democracy. Representative democracy (Vitali, 2021) and deliberative democracy (Martí, 2017) are the 2 (two) initial theories that the author uses in analyzing the right model or concept of democracy to be applied in Indonesia and able to answer existing problems. The discussion continued on the main actors, the media and their interaction patterns consisting of political parties, voters, legislative candidates and elected persons as well as elections and parliament.

Discussions related to political parties will begin with Party system theory and party system institutionalization (Mainwaring & Torcal, 2006) to identify the typology of the current political party structure as well as assess the suitability of party conditions with existing social dynamics. Regarding voters (voters) and legislative candidates (candidates), the author will review pluralism theory (Eisfeld, 2006), public choice theory (Dearlove, 1989), and identity politics (Orjuela, 2014) (Pilgrim, 2023) to see how the preferences and representation of voters' ideas and identities can be grouped, analyzed, and seen in correlation with the topics carried by candidates and political parties that are their political vehicles.

As for elections and parliament, the author will discuss 3 theories, namely electoral system theory (Bonotti & Weinstock, 2021), Duverger's law (Cole, 2005), and institutional design theory (Caplan et al., 2021). In the first theory, the author will dissect what kind of electoral system might be applied in the realm of Indonesian democracy, followed by the second theory which discusses the correlation between the electoral system and the political party system. This second theory will identify model options and provide the best recommended options related to political parties and electoral systems. In theory, the latter will

identify the structure, duration, size and model of the ideal election and parliament so that it can support the occurrence of an optimal democratic process in the future.

In the mapping stage in the analytical section, the author begins the discussion by conducting root cause analysis to determine the main problem points using a combination of technical/5 why's approach and cause-effect diagram (Doggett, 2005). Meanwhile, at the evaluation stage, the author will assess the effectiveness of the performance of the entire existing system, ranging from political parties, parliamentarians, elections, to parliamentary structures and systems, as well as identify the need for support to realize the overall concept of ideal democracy. The theories that the author will use include democratic accountability (Olsen, 2013), performance accountability (Eun Kim & Weon Chang, 2007), and principal-agent theory (Bernhold & Wiesweg, 2021). If in the first theory the assessment focuses on the speed of response and the suitability of voters' preferences fought for by the elected person, then the second theory looks at the performance achievement of all actors and democratic political media compared to the targets that have been set. In the third theory, the author will look at the partiality of the elected person as a representative of the people who also concurrently serves as a member of a political party.

Problem Analysis

The low quality of the parliamentarians produced and a noisy campaign full of hoaxes and hate speech based on the radicalization of ethnic and religious identities are 2 (two) unhealthy signs of Indonesian politics and democracy that have been described previously in the introduction. This symptom is both the tip of the iceberg and the tip of an even bigger problem. To find out this, the author will look at the situations and conditions that encourage the occurrence of these 2 (two) symptoms throughout the implementation stage of the election, starting from pre-election, election implementation, to post-election.

The system of cadre regeneration and recruitment of parliamentary candidates by political parties is an important note in the pre-election stage. The lack of a cadre regeneration process, personal closeness to party elites and political dynasties (Gunanto, 2020) interfere with meritocracy and healthy competition of ideas within political parties in the fight to become parliamentary candidates. In addition, the presence of external parties with popularity capital and capital capital without the same ideology and even ideas with the supporting party becomes a further complication.

The rise of the above conditions is due to the lower power of the party in the eyes of voters, replaced by the strength of the figure of legislative candidate candidates. This phenomenon was further elaborated by Burhanudin Muhtadi based on FORMAPPI research which showed that only 33% of parliamentary candidates contesting in the 2014 elections were party cadres, and almost half (3241 out of a total of 6607 central legislative candidates) had a business background and joined the party a few months before the election. In addition, the tendency of voters has also shifted towards the figure of candidate for parliament compared to those who choose political parties. (Muhtadi, 2019).

Conditions that were not ideal in the previous pre-election stage posed an even more complicated problem when the election process began. The lack of narratives, ideas, and solutions that prospective parliamentarians can offer to voters has finally been replaced by money politics (Sholikin, 2019) and identity politics (Said, 2023). Burhanudin Muhtadi in his research even found an increase in the trend of public acceptance of the practice of money politics, from 27% in 1999 (Muhtadi, 2013) to 33% in 2019, the third highest position after Uganda (41%), and Benin (37%) (Muhtadi, 2019). The exploitation of identity politics by constructing the concept of dualism "me against you" and the dichotomy of "us" and "them" are another practical way used by politicians. This phenomenon indicates that voters'

purchasing power and political literacy are still weak as well as the blockage of issues, interests, and identities that are not conveyed in parliament in the preparation of regulations. So it is very easy to be aroused in a noisy and hostile campaign instead of a democratic party for all. The presence of digital technology has actually made it easier to practice money politics and campaigns full of noise and hoaxes through the exploitation of identity politics (Badrun, 2018).

Supervision is the next challenge in the election implementation process. This activity needs to supervise political parties, parliamentary candidates, and their successful teams during campaigns in the real and virtual world. Bawaslu as the authorized institution in this aspect in 2014 experienced difficulties due to limited funds and reach, especially in the supervision of elections abroad (Antara, 2014). As well as the problem of inconsistency in election regulations, the problem of the Permanent Voter List (DPT), the distribution of ballot logistics, and complaints about the implementation of elections are challenges for the implementation of supervision in 2019 (Bawaslu, 2019).

The last issue is related to the accountability of parliamentarians during their duties, especially to voters. In various regulatory debates such as the Job Creation Bill and the Health Bill, parliamentarians are considered unable to capture the concerns and interests of workers related to the bill, namely workers as well as medical and health personnel. This can be seen from the large rejection and even demonstrations from unions and associations of doctors and health workers during the ratification of the Health Bill (CNN Indonesia, 2023), as well as the actions of unions and labor associations in rejecting the Job Creation Law which occurred in volumes (Tempo, 2023). In fact, profession is one of the important identities of individuals that needs to be voiced by elected representatives. However, when they are elected and sit in parliament, the position of party members is much more visible than that of the people's representatives who are able to capture and voice the concerns of their constituents (Alfisyahri et al., 2023; Pilgrim, 2023; Said, 2023; Sholikin, 2019).

This dilemma is understandable if we look at the pattern of relationships that occur between voters, elected parliamentarians, and political parties. From the point of view of the parliamentarians, constituents are a collection of individuals in the same constituency. In this collection there are various individual identities that are very diverse, especially related to religion, profession, and outlook preferences. During the campaign process, this identity is played by the candidates for parliament, especially identities related to religion. However, once elected, the actions and choices of parliamentarians during the trial can no longer be monitored by voters who have different identities. Because in the decision-making process in parliament, the position as a member of parties and factions is much more dominant.

So that voters voiced their concerns in the form of demonstrations and various other channels using the forum of associations and trade unions. Meanwhile, parliamentarians take refuge behind the cloak of political parties because there is no mechanism that can monitor and show the correlation between their struggle and the interests of voters in their respective constituencies if they are associated with various existing identities. Until now, the only form of punishment for lawmakers who are considered unsuccessful is not to be re-elected in the next election. And this form of punishment has proven to be ineffective because it fails to make corrections during the term of office and is proven to fail to screen qualified representatives because many parliamentarians who are barely heard of remain in office for several periods (Muhtadi, 2013, 2019; Olsen, 2013).

From the elaboration of the problems that occurred throughout the election stages to the 2 (two) main symptoms of political and democratic problems in Indonesia, it can be seen that the relationship and common thread can be grouped into 3 (three) parts (Orjuela, 2017; Vitali, 2021). The first point is related to the position and strength of each actor in the triangular

relationship between candidate parliamentarians-political parties-voters in the pre-election stage and during the election. The second point is related to the accountability of the performance of political parties and parliamentarians in voicing the aspirations of the people in various identity spectrums after the election is over. The third point is related to the current electoral structure and system in dealing with the existing situation and dynamics.

In the first point related to the relationship between parliamentary candidates, political parties and voters, the position of parliamentary candidates is the strongest because popularity capital and large capital are tempting bargaining power for political parties as well as a "guarantee" to be able to enter parliament. Political parties that lack narratives and big ideas and cadres who have the same bargaining power end up being degraded to the role of only facilitators of external parliamentary candidates with high bargaining power to fight in elections with an electoral system that still requires candidates for parliamentarians to be carried by political parties. Voters are the weakest actors in this stage because most of them vote because of money politics, limited digital literacy, and limited political understanding. The democratic party is indeed interpreted literally that in one day, the people (voters) will get various kinds of support from candidates who in the next 5 years they understand will no longer care about them.

In the second point, it can be seen that there is no check and balance mechanism on the performance of political parties and parliamentarians for 5 (five) years in office in voicing the interests of the public in various identity spectrums. So that there are widespread public demonstrations from the profession to protest against the Bill that is being discussed by the Government and parliament. Professional associations found a dead end when they had to visit parliament because they did not know exactly who they should ask for responsibility to fight for their aspirations when they were in the booth handing over their mandate. Medical personnel such as doctors, midwives, nurses, teaching staff and also workers are some examples of professions that do not get a voice in parliament. Not to mention if we consider the voice interests of certain social communities such as environmental activists, human rights, and so on.

The current electoral system, which directs the entire process of vote representation and the interests of voters from various identity spectrums in the same constituency to parliamentary candidates carried by political parties, is the next structural blockade in Indonesia's political and democratic challenges. This system not only encourages the recruitment process of prospective parliamentarians based on popularity and capital that has been proven to fail to produce credible, responsible, and qualified parliamentarians, but also ensures the inconvenience of votes and the interests of social identity which should be important considerations in the legislative process in parliament later. The blockages caused by this electoral system ultimately make the street parliament a stage to voice the aspirations and interests of the group in question.

Discussion

Based on the 3 (three) main problem sources that have been obtained from the results of the root cause analysis of the symptoms and problems in Indonesian elections and democracy, the author proposes 3 (three) solution options to be further assessed. The first option: strengthening the role of political parties in the pre-election and election stages so as to minimize the emergence of parliamentary candidates who have few ideas and only rely on popularity and capital. The second option: strengthening end-to-end supervision, starting from the pre-election to post-election stages, including supervision of the flow of data information (digital) and finance of prospective parliamentarians. The third option: adjust the parliamentary electoral system by implementing 2 (two) representation mechanisms: on the choice of the

people and on the choice of representatives of groups that reflect their identity (profession, religion, and other social groups).

All of the above options will be assessed through an evaluation of the ease of implementation and the impact that can be generated from each option. The ease of implementation can be seen from how much power and effort must be expended to bring about this change, both in the form of energy, thoughts, money, regulations, and time. Meanwhile, the impact is to see the extent to which each option can solve the 3 root causes of political and democratic problems in Indonesia (Afifuddin, 2020; Badrun, 2018; Daryono, 2021).

Based on the assessment, strengthening the role of political parties in option 1 can solve or at least minimize the presence of unqualified parliamentary candidates. However, the implementation of this option requires minimal requirements in the electoral system and structure of elections in Indonesia. Without fundamental changes in the electoral mechanism, there is no incentive for political parties to change the current recruitment pattern of parliamentary candidates who have proven to be "successful" in increasing each party's seats in parliament (Firmansyah & Kurniawan, 2021; Hannan, 2022; Seftyanto et al., 2019).

End-to-end supervision, which is the concept of the second solution option, should also be able to ensure the minimum of political transactions at each stage of the election with strict supervision of the flow of information, data and finance. This will encourage political parties and prospective parliamentarians to change the game that has been happening. However, to carry out all of this requires a huge effort. It needs to be extraordinarily strengthened to Bawaslu throughout Indonesia, both in terms of human resource capacity and capabilities, as well as in terms of the infrastructure owned (Bernhold & Wiesweg, 2021a, 2021b; Caplan et al., 2021; Fernandes, 2018). Not to mention the revision and adjustment of related regulations so that the supervision of the flow of data and financial information can be carried out without any conflict of authority with existing institutions. In addition, compliance with applicable laws and regulations such as those related to the Personal Data Protection Law is also important to pay attention to.

The third solution offered by adjusting the electoral system model that accommodates 2 (two) representative concepts can answer all existing problems. The number of members of the House of Representatives through the national legislative election will be relatively small, thus encouraging the party to look for a truly qualified candidate. Popularity and capital will not be enough to ensure that political parties can control the narrative in parliament later in accordance with the ideals of their respective parties along with the representatives of groups who have loyalty to the profession and identity they represent (Gunanto, 2020; Habibi, 2017; Horton, 2013).

The problem of accountability for the performance of representatives in parliament in overseeing the main issue will also be resolved (Belo & Rika, 2023; Budiatri & WIRATRAMAN, 2022; Martí, 2018). A professional representative elected by his or her professional association will fight for the interests of his profession because he or she has a single representative identity compared to a member of parliament elected by the people with a dual representative identity; a representative of the people and a member of the party. Discussions on various regulatory issues such as in the previous discussion session of the Health Bill will be much more substantial and answer the interests of everyone because representatives of the health worker profession will fight for their fate with full militancy, At the same time political lobbying will be carried out by representatives of the health profession so that representatives of other groups will fight for their interests. Likewise, lobbying is carried out to political parties. So that the Indonesian parliament will later be full of discourses and debates in accordance with the interests represented by each representative. This is the most striking difference with the model of factions of group delegates in the new order era whose

presence was appointed by the Government (Huda, 1999) so that it is not rooted in the group they represent, as well as the lack of substantial discourse and debate related to the topic of legislasi.

This mechanism will also be an indirect social control to political parties in the consistency of carrying a narrative or idea. Inconsistencies and/or wrong political calculations will make the party lose votes in the next election. This is because the representatives of the group will convey various dynamics of discussions in parliament to the association which will later be forwarded to each member. If one of the parties consistently rejects the interests of workers, for example in the Job Creation Bill, then in the next election, the party will lose a significant vote from the people who also perceive as workers as a form of punishment. This punishment mechanism becomes more predictable, because the information and validity of the information can be held accountable because the workers' representatives are in the process of discussion in parliament as parliamentarians from representatives of the labor class.

Changes in the electoral system and model are the key to the implementation of the third option. The implementation of this also solves the third root cause problem as well as an incentive for political parties to make changes. Changes in regulations that require the approval of the existing parliament can be minimized by using the power of narratives in digital media so as to exert political pressure on parties to accept the changes in mechanisms that need to be made in order to improve the quality of democracy and politics in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Indonesia's democratic decline is marked by low-quality parliamentarians and noisy campaigns dominated by hoaxes, hate speech, and identity politics symptoms of deeper structural issues. This study identifies five key pain points across electoral stages: candidate recruitment based on popularity and wealth, rampant money politics, lack of identity-based representation, weak oversight, and poor accountability mechanisms. These lead to three root causes: power imbalance among candidates, parties, and voters; absence of effective performance checks; and a flawed electoral system that suppresses diverse identity representation. To address this, the study proposes three solutions: (1) strengthening political parties' role in candidate selection, (2) enforcing comprehensive electoral supervision, and (3) reforming the electoral system with a dual-representation "2 in 1" model. Among these, the third option emerges as the most effective and feasible, as it addresses all root problems while offering the greatest potential to enhance democratic quality in Indonesia.

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