



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Analysis of the Existence of Political Parties as Pillars of Democracy in Legislative Elections in Indonesia

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Published online: 30 September 2025

Abstract

Political parties are a key instrument in the modern democratic system, serving as a means of articulating and aggregating the people's interests. Their existence plays a vital role in determining the quality of democracy, particularly in the implementation of legislative elections in Indonesia. This study aims to analyze the existence of political parties as pillars of democracy in the context of legislative elections, by reviewing their roles, functions, and the challenges faced in strengthening political representation of the community. The method used is normative research with a legislative, conceptual, and historical approach, complemented by an analysis of academic literature and related regulations. The results of the study indicate that although political parties have been constitutionally recognized as the main pillars of democracy, their implementation still faces various problems, such as weak internal party democratization, oligarchic practices, money politics, and a crisis of popular representation. This has resulted in declining public trust in political parties. Therefore, strengthening regulations, internal party reform, and increasing public political participation are necessary so that political parties can optimally carry out their functions as pillars of democracy. This research is expected to contribute to the development of constitutional law and politics, as well as serve as a reference in the formulation of election policies in Indonesia.

Keywords: Political Parties, Democracy, Legislative Elections.

Introduction

Democracy is a political system based on the principle of popular sovereignty, in which the people are given the rights and freedom to participate in the government process. In the Indonesian context, democracy is affirmed in Article 1 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that "Sovereignty rests with the people and is implemented according to the Constitution." This shows that the people have a fundamental role in determining the direction of state policy through democratic mechanisms, one of which is through general elections. (State, 2001) Within the framework of representative democracy, the existence of political parties is a fundamental and inseparable element. Political parties serve as pillars of democracy, as they enable the public's aspirations to be channeled in an organized manner. They also serve as a vehicle for producing leaders, representatives, and controlling the government. Without political parties, the effective functioning of democratic mechanisms would be difficult, as they serve as bridges between the people and state institutions. (Asshiddiqie et al., 2006) The history of political parties in Indonesia over time demonstrates a complex dynamic, reflecting the often-fraught relationship between democracy, power, and the interests of the people. During the Old Order, political parties flourished with strong ideological undertones, but this, in turn, led to instability due to weak coalitions and political fragmentation. Entering the New Order, the role of political parties was diminished through a simplified party system and the dominance of Golkar, resulting in a purely formalistic democracy lacking broad public participation.

The Reformation era brought significant changes, opening the floodgates of political freedom and reinstating a multiparty system. Democracy led to the rapid growth of political parties, reaching dozens in the 1999 elections. However, over time, simplification policies through the parliamentary threshold led to a more orderly party system. (Basuki, 2020) However, post-reform until now, political parties still face serious challenges in the form of weak cadre development, oligarchic leadership, money politics, and declining public trust. (Putra, 2014)

The existence of political parties as pillars of democracy in Indonesia has undergone transformation over time. While at the beginning of independence, political parties served as symbols of ideological struggle, during the New Order era, they were reduced to instruments of power. After the Reformation, political parties returned to being key actors in democracy, but they still need to improve their internal quality to truly function as vehicles for political education, channels for aspirations, and guardians of democracy. (Bakry et al., 2025)

Legislative elections are a key platform for political parties to test their existence. In elections, political parties are not only required to win seats in parliament, but also to demonstrate the quality of their cadres, vision, and programs offered to the public. Legislative elections are also a crucial instrument for assessing the extent to which political parties are capable of carrying out their functions of political recruitment, political education, and championing the interests of the people. However, the reality of Indonesian politics shows that these ideal functions have not yet been fully implemented. (Nadeak, 2025) The future of Indonesian democracy will ultimately be determined by the extent to which political parties are able to emerge from the various problems of pragmatism and reaffirm their role as the main foundation of a healthy democracy. (Imansyah, 2012)

Political parties are essentially formed to serve as a means of public participation in political and governmental life. In democratic theory, political parties serve as a liaison between the people and the state, allowing the aspirations, interests, and will of the people to be channeled through an organized political process. More broadly, the purpose of political parties can also be seen from their primary functions, namely as a means of political recruitment, political education, the articulation and aggregation of interests, and the management of socio-political conflict within society. Political parties hold a very strategic position because they serve as the main entry point for the political recruitment process. One of the main objectives of political parties is to prepare cadres who will occupy political positions, both in legislative institutions (DPR, DPRD) and executive (president, vice president, and regional heads). This is emphasized in Law Number 2 of 2011 concerning Political Parties, which states that political parties function as a means of political recruitment in the process of filling political positions through democratic mechanisms. The existence of political parties as producers of leaders of the DPR, DPRD, and the executive is not merely a formal function but also a reflection of the quality of Indonesian democracy. For this reason, political parties are

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required to strengthen the cadre development process, candidate selection, and political education, so that the leaders they produce can truly represent the people and safeguard the nation's interests.

The Law on the People's Consultative Assembly, the People's Representative Council, the Regional Representative Council, and the Regional People's Representative Council (MD3 Law) is the legal basis governing the status, duties, authorities, and rights and obligations of legislative institutions in Indonesia. In practice, the MD3 Law is inseparable from the role of political parties, as members of both the DPR and the DPRD are recruited and nominated through political parties. The MD3 Law demonstrates that legislative institutions in Indonesia, both at the central and regional levels, are inextricably linked to the role of political parties. Political parties are key actors in recruitment, filling positions, forming factions, and distributing power within parliament. Therefore, the quality of parliamentary democracy in Indonesia is largely determined by the health of political parties as institutions producing representatives. The phenomena occurring in legislative elections in Indonesia demonstrate a tendency towards political pragmatism. Political parties are more often oriented towards the struggle for power than towards building a strong ideological base. This condition is exacerbated by high political costs, the practice of money politics, and weak cadre development. As a result, public trust in political parties tends to decline over time.(Aulia, 2016)One form of political party history can be seen in Aceh. The legal basis for the existence of local parties in Aceh, in addition to the Basic Agrarian Law, is also regulated in Aceh Qanun Number 3 of 2008 concerning Local Political Parties in Aceh, which was later updated by Aceh Qanun Number 3 of 2016. This Qanun serves as an implementing regulation governing the formation mechanism, verification, rights and obligations, and role of local political parties in Aceh's democratic system.

Aceh Qanun stipulates that local political parties can be formed by Indonesian citizens who are permanently domiciled in Aceh, provided that membership is spread across more than 50% of the districts/cities in Aceh.(Fahmi, 2020)Local parties serve as an important platform for directly channeling the political aspirations of the Acehnese people. This is in accordance with Article 75 of Aceh Qanun Number 3 of 2016, which stipulates that local political parties serve as a means of political education for the Acehnese people. From a legal perspective, the existence of political parties is strictly regulated. Law Number 2 of 2011 affirms that political parties have a strategic function, namely as a means of political education, a channel for aspirations, and a liaison between the community and the government.(Hariyanto, 2021) This dilemma raises questions about how political parties in Indonesia can be maintained as pillars of democracy, particularly in the implementation of legislative elections. Therefore, an analysis of the existence of political parties as pillars of democracy in legislative elections in Indonesia is crucial. This study is not only relevant in an academic context but also has practical significance. The results of the analysis can provide insight into the strategic role of political parties in strengthening democracy, while also offering solutions to ongoing weaknesses in political practice in Indonesia. Therefore, this research is expected to make a positive contribution to improving the quality of democracy and the party system in Indonesia.

This research examines several relevant criminal law theories for analyzing the existence of political parties as pillars of democracy in presidential and legislative elections in Indonesia. These theories can be explained through a multilevel approach, starting with grand theory, middle theory, and applied theory. This approach is crucial for understanding how criminal law plays a role in maintaining democratic integrity and regulating and prosecuting deviant behavior by political parties in the electoral system.

A grand theory relevant to analyzing the existence of political parties as pillars of democracy in Indonesia is the Pancasila Constitutional Democracy Theory, developed by Indonesian legal experts. This theory emphasizes that Indonesian democracy is not a Western liberal democracy, but rather a democracy based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, thus positioning political parties as the primary instrument in exercising popular sovereignty.

According to Jimly Asshiddiqie, Indonesian democracy is constitutional because it is based on the 1945 Constitution, which places popular sovereignty within a legal framework. Within this framework, political parties are the primary means of channeling popular aspirations and serve as pillars supporting the democratic system through legislative elections.(Elvany, 2017)Meanwhile, Bagir Manan emphasized that political parties in Indonesia are a "constitutional bridge" connecting the people with representative institutions. Through political parties, the people not only channel their aspirations but also

form a legitimate government through the House of Representatives (DPR) and Regional People's Representative Councils (DPRD). In Bagir Manan's view, without political parties, democracy in Indonesia would lose its basis for political legitimacy.(Shaputra, 2025)Furthermore, Miriam Budiardjo emphasized the role of political parties as agents of political socialization. From the perspective of the Pancasila constitutional democracy theory presented by these experts, it can be concluded that the grand theory of political parties' existence in legislative elections in Indonesia emphasizes that political parties are the main pillars of constitutional democracy, serving not only as a means of political recruitment and filling public office, but also as instruments of legitimacy, national integration, and political education for the people.

The existence of political parties is not only seen as normative democratic institutions, but also as entities that connect the state and society. Political parties in Indonesia function as a means of aggregating and articulating the interests of the people, as well as a medium for political recruitment that determines the quality of national leaders in a constitutional democratic system. According to Jimly Asshiddiqie, political parties are institutions that play a crucial role in realizing representative democracy because the people cannot exercise their sovereignty directly in modern governments. Therefore, political parties function as a primary pillar that bridges the aspirations of the people with state administrators through the legislative election mechanism, a form of representative democracy in Indonesia.(Nadeak, 2025) Meanwhile, Bagir Manan emphasized that political parties must have strong public legitimacy. The existence of political parties is not merely a formal requirement of democracy; they must also be able to fulfill their functions of political education, cadre development, and oversight of the government. If these functions are not fulfilled, political parties will become nothing more than a means of pragmatic power struggles.(Saraswati, 2011) According to Mahfud MD, democracy in Indonesia has constitutional characteristics, so political parties must not deviate from the legal corridors established by the 1945 Constitution and laws and regulations. This means that the existence of political parties in legislative elections is not only related to the sustainability of the democratic system, but also concerns compliance with the law as a normative foundation. Therefore, the middle theory regarding the existence of political parties in legislative elections in Indonesia emphasizes that political parties are pillars of democracy that not only carry out the function of representing the people in legislative institutions but also play a role in maintaining the quality of democracy through cadre development, political education, and adherence to constitutional principles. If parties fail to carry out these functions, Indonesian democracy has the potential to be trapped in the practice of party oligarchy.

*Applied theory*The existence of political parties in the Indonesian legislative elections can be seen in how political parties truly carry out their role as pillars of democracy in state administration. This theory emphasizes that the function of political parties is not merely normative, but must be empirically tested through party performance in each stage of the legislative elections. According to Miriam Budiardjo, political parties in practice serve as a means of political communication, political recruitment, and conflict management. This function is clearly evident in the implementation of legislative elections in Indonesia, when political parties select legislative candidates (caleg), formulate visions and missions, and convey work programs to the public. According to Ramlan Surbakti, political parties in the Indonesian political system must play an active role in preventing excessive political fragmentation. This is evident in the regulation of the parliamentary threshold in legislative elections, which is intended to strengthen the presidential system and reduce the number of small parties in parliament. Meanwhile, Hasyim Asy'ari, an election law expert, emphasized that the presence of political parties in legislative elections not only determines people's representation in the DPR but also has direct implications for government stability. Therefore, the existence of political parties as pillars of democracy can be measured by the extent to which they are able to produce qualified representatives, maintain the integrity of elections, and support democratic governance. Therefore, from an applied theory perspective, the existence of political parties in the Indonesian Legislative Elections must be seen in terms of their implementation: whether political parties are truly capable of becoming pillars of democracy or are instead trapped in transactional politics. If parties only function as a means of seizing power without fulfilling the functions of political education and cadre development, then their existence as pillars of democracy will lose its meaning.

Method

The research method used in this writing is a qualitative research method with a normative juridical approach. (Indra Utama Tanjung, 2024) by processing data obtained from the results of legal document studies, (Hasibuan et al., 2024) such as laws and regulations, as well as a review of relevant literature related to the existence of political parties as pillars of democracy in legislative elections in Indonesia. The analysis process was carried out continuously from data collection to the final interpretation stage. Data reduction was carried out by sorting important information from various official literature such as books, journals, documents, the Election Law, party articles of association (AD/ART), electability survey results, and election monitoring reports. Data irrelevant to the research focus, such as non-electoral aspects of parties or personal issues of party elites, were eliminated to maintain the focus on the institutional existence of parties as pillars of democracy. (Sembiring et al., 2022)

Results and Discussion

Regulation of Political Parties as Pillars of Democracy in Legislative Elections in Indonesia

The regulation of political parties in Indonesia has a very strategic position in the state system, especially as one of the main pillars of democracy. (Tanjung & Tanjung, 2023) This is because political parties are not only a vehicle for the people's political aspirations, but also an important instrument in political recruitment, political education, and a liaison between the people and the state through legislative institutions. Legally, the basis for regulating political parties can be found in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945). Article 1 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution states that "Sovereignty rests with the people and is exercised according to the Constitution." One form of implementation of this popular sovereignty is through political parties as a means of political participation in legislative elections. (Ashiddiqie, 2011)

Regulations regarding political parties are specifically regulated in Law Number 2 of 2011 concerning Amendments to Law Number 2 of 2008 concerning Political Parties. (Ashiddiqie, 2006) This law defines a political party as a national organization formed by a group of Indonesian citizens voluntarily based on a shared will and ideals to fight for the interests of its members, society, nation, and state through general elections. In the context of legislative elections, political parties function as election participants with the authority to nominate legislative members at the central and regional levels. This role demonstrates that the existence of political parties is the heart of democracy, because without political parties, legislative elections would not be able to run democratically. Furthermore, political parties also function as a means of political education for the public, as emphasized in Article 11 of Law No. 2 of 2011. Through this political education function, political parties are responsible for shaping public political awareness, increasing active citizen participation, and strengthening a culture of democracy. The existence of political parties in Indonesia often faces challenges, such as low cadre development, political pragmatism, and the prevalence of money politics in legislative elections. This condition has given rise to criticism of the role of political parties, which should be a pillar of democracy, but in reality often weaken the quality of democracy itself. (Shaputra, 2025)

Political party regulation should not be limited to formal legal aspects alone; it must also be accompanied by internal party strengthening, transparency, accountability, and improvements in the quality of cadre development. Regulatory reforms that support internal party democratization are crucial, as without democracy within political parties, democracy in legislative elections will be merely procedural and not substantive. Therefore, political parties are fundamental instruments in the implementation of legislative elections and are one of the pillars of democracy in Indonesia. However, for this role to be truly effective, political party regulation must be accompanied by a strong commitment to democratic principles, both internally and in the implementation of legislative elections.

The Positive and Negative Impacts of the Existence of Political Parties as Pillars of Democracy in Legislative Elections in Indonesia

The existence of political parties in legislative elections in Indonesia brings a number of positive impacts that strengthen democracy. First,

political parties are the primary means of public political participation. Through parties, people can channel their political aspirations either by becoming members, sympathizers, or by voting in elections. The existence of political parties is essentially a manifestation of the principle of popular sovereignty as affirmed in Article 1 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, so it can be said that political parties play a vital role in realizing government by the people. In addition, political parties also function as a vehicle for the recruitment and development of political leaders. This function is very important because it determines the quality of the people's representatives who sit in legislative institutions. Through a structured cadre development mechanism, political parties are expected to be able to produce leaders who possess integrity and competence. This has been normatively emphasized in Article 11 of Law Number 2 of 2011 concerning Political Parties, which mandates the function of recruitment and development for each party. Another function that is no less important is political education for citizens. Through various activities, political parties have an obligation to educate the public in terms of political awareness, constitutional rights and obligations, and the importance of participation in national and state life.

The existence of political parties also allows for the aggregation and articulation of public interests. Aspirations spread throughout society can be collected, filtered, and formulated into policies through political parties. Thus, political parties act as a bridge between the people and the government. Furthermore, political parties contribute to legitimacy for government operations because, through legislative elections, elected representatives occupy parliamentary seats, creating political stability through legitimate and constitutional competition mechanisms. However, the existence of political parties also has a number of negative impacts that can undermine the quality of democracy. (Dwiono et al., 2023) One frequent impact is the strengthening of oligarchies and political cartelization. In practice, many political parties in Indonesia tend to be controlled by a small elite, resulting in decision-making and political recruitment processes that are not democratic, but rather dominated by the interests of the small groups that dominate the party structure. (Simanjutak et al., 2024) Another negative impact is pragmatism and the rise of money politics. The open proportional representation electoral system encourages intense competition among legislative candidates within a single party, resulting in extremely high political costs. This situation opens up the opportunity for money politics, which in turn can undermine the quality of democracy and undermine public trust in the representative system. Furthermore, the weakness of internal party cadre development is also a serious problem. Although the law mandates the function of cadre development, in reality, many parties have not consistently implemented long-term political development processes. This results in legislative candidate recruitment often being based on popularity or financial strength, rather than on quality and leadership capacity. (Hafid & Nugroho, 2019) On the other hand, political fragmentation resulting from the large number of parties competing in legislative elections also has negative impacts. This fragmentation often causes parliament to split into numerous factions, complicating political decision-making. The legislative process is also slowed down by having to accommodate too many competing interests. (Purba, nd) Furthermore, the existence of political parties in Indonesia also faces a crisis of public trust. The rise in corruption cases involving party cadres, coupled with frequent internal conflicts, has led some members of the public to become apathetic toward political parties. This political apathy has led to a decline in public participation in elections and undermined democratic legitimacy. Therefore, it can be concluded that the existence of political parties as pillars of democracy in legislative elections has two conflicting sides. On the one hand, political parties can serve as a means of participation, cadre development, political education, and the channeling of public aspirations. However, on the other hand, political parties also often present problems in the form of oligarchy, pragmatism, weak cadre development, fragmentation, and declining public trust. Therefore, efforts to strengthen regulations, increase transparency, and develop internal party democracy are crucial for political parties to truly function optimally as pillars of substantive democracy.

The Existence of Political Parties as Pillars of Democracy in Legislative Elections in Indonesia

Political parties are one of the fundamental elements in the modern political system, including in Indonesia, because their existence is the main means of people's political participation. (Asshiddiqie, 2016) In a democratic country, political parties are not only seen as a vehicle for channeling the aspirations of the people, but also as institutions that play a central role in the process of political recruitment, political education, and the formation of public policy through their involvement in legislative institutions. The Indonesian Constitution, through Article 1 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, emphasizes that sovereignty rests with the people and is implemented according to the Constitution. (Antonius et al., 2023) Further elaboration of this principle is realized through the general election mechanism, which is carried out directly, publicly, freely, secretly, honestly, and fairly. Legislative elections in Indonesia make political parties the only entry point for citizens to run for legislative office. Thus, the existence of political parties plays a vital role in determining the quality of electoral democracy in Indonesia. In a regulatory context, the existence of political parties is regulated by Law Number 2 of 2008 in conjunction with Law Number 2 of 2011 concerning Political Parties, which defines a political party as a national organization formed by a group of Indonesian citizens voluntarily based on a common will and ideals to fight for the interests of its members, society, nation, and state through elections. This regulation positions political parties as both a legal and political instrument in the implementation of democracy. (Asshiddiqie et al., 2006)

The presence of political parties in legislative elections has significant implications for the consolidation of democracy in Indonesia. On the one hand, political parties can strengthen democracy by providing a platform for public participation, increasing political awareness, and creating more structured representation mechanisms. Furthermore, the existence of political parties also ensures the legal and peaceful circulation of elites through the electoral process, thus maintaining political stability. (Asshiddiqie, 2022) However, on the other hand, the existence of political parties in legislative elections often faces criticism due to weak internal democracy, the dominance of political oligarchies, and the practice of money politics, which actually weakens the quality of democracy. Political parties' dependence on funding from elites or certain groups has led to a tendency for parties to prioritize the interests of political sponsors over the aspirations of the wider community. This has implications for declining public trust in political parties, which are essentially pillars of democracy. Therefore, the existence of political parties as pillars of democracy in legislative elections in Indonesia must be understood dialectically. Political parties hold an irreplaceable position in the democratic system, but at the same time, the quality of democracy is largely determined by the extent to which political parties are able to consistently carry out their functions in accordance with democratic principles, both internally and in their interactions with society and the state. Regulatory reform and strengthening of political party accountability mechanisms are key prerequisites to ensuring that political parties truly function as pillars of democracy, rather than weakening it.

Conclusions and Recommendations

CONCLUSION

1. The regulation of political parties as pillars of democracy in legislative elections in Indonesia is a fundamental aspect in ensuring the upholding of a democratic political system. Political parties are positioned not only as formal platforms for political recruitment but also as a means of articulating public interests, providing political education, and liaising between the public and the state. Through the regulations outlined in the Political Parties Law and the Election Law, the state strives to establish a legal framework that affirms the central role of parties in maintaining political stability while expanding public participation.
2. The existence of political parties as pillars of democracy in legislative elections in Indonesia presents two opposing sides: positive and negative impacts. On the one hand, political parties contribute positively to strengthening democracy by serving as a means of public political participation, a platform for political recruitment, and a liaison between public interests and the government. Through legislative elections, political parties also

serve as a crucial instrument for realizing public representation in parliament, while also providing a mechanism for peaceful and democratic rotation of power.

3. The existence of political parties in legislative elections in Indonesia is an inseparable element of the implementation of democracy. As a key pillar of democracy, political parties play a role in providing a platform for public participation, channeling aspirations, and determining the direction of public policy through representation in legislative institutions. The presence of political parties also serves as a means of recruiting national and regional leadership, ensuring the rotation of power can proceed peacefully and constitutionally.

SUGGESTION

1. The regulation of political parties as pillars of democracy needs to be strengthened through regulatory improvements that place greater emphasis on transparency, accountability, and integrity. Both the Political Party Law and the Election Law must be consistently directed at preventing oligarchic practices and money politics, which can undermine democratic values. Political parties need to develop more democratic internal mechanisms, particularly in the recruitment and selection of legislative candidates. With a clear, hierarchical, and meritocratic cadre system, political parties can produce leaders of quality, integrity, and closeness to the people's aspirations.
2. To maximize the positive impact of political parties, it is necessary to strengthen their capacity to carry out their primary functions, such as political education, cadre recruitment, and channeling public aspirations. Parties must be more oriented towards public service than simply pursuing electoral victory. Therefore, to minimize negative impacts, internal political party reform is essential. The process of cadre recruitment and legislative candidate selection should be conducted openly, transparently, and based on meritocracy to avoid being dominated by oligarchic practices or nepotism.
3. Political parties in Indonesia need to strengthen their internal organizational quality by upholding the principles of transparent, accountable, and meritocratic internal democracy. This is crucial to ensure that the recruitment and cadre development processes are sound, free from oligarchic control, and capable of producing legislative candidates with integrity and competence. The existence of political parties as pillars of democracy must be supported by continuous improvement in their political education function. Political parties should not only be active during elections but also consistently provide political education to the public to create rational, critical voters who are aware of their political rights and obligations.

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