



## THE APPLICATION OF DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES IN INDONESIA'S ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Taufik Irawan<sup>1</sup>, Atma Suganda<sup>2</sup>, Supot Rattanapun<sup>3</sup>

Postgraduate Program - Jayabaya University<sup>1,2</sup>, Rajamangala University of Technology  
Krungthep-Thailand<sup>3</sup>

E-mail: aa\_taufik@yahoo.co.id, atmasuganda7@gmail.com, supot.r@mail.rmutk.ac.th

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### ABSTRACT

This research examines the application of democratic principles in the General Election system in Indonesia, focusing on aspects of popular sovereignty, equal suffrage, freedom of choice, and transparency and accountability. Based on a normative juridical approach, this research finds that although the Indonesian electoral system has adopted the principle of LUBER JURDIL and is regulated by various regulations that support democracy, its implementation still faces serious challenges. The practices of money politics, identity politics, and the spread of hoaxes still threaten the quality of elections and damage their integrity. This research provides recommendations that election supervision be strengthened, political education be expanded, and law enforcement against election violations be sharpened to improve the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Democratic Principles, General Elections.

### I. INTRODUCTION

General elections are one of the main means in a democratic system that allows people to participate directly in electing their representatives in the legislative and executive institutions (Mukhlis, et al., 2024). In Indonesia, elections have a very important role as an implementation of the principle of popular sovereignty stated in Article 1 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945), which states that "Sovereignty is in the hands of the people and shall be exercised according to the Constitution." Elections, as a manifestation of popular sovereignty, are a vital means to determine the direction of government and ensure that the government runs in accordance with the will of the people (Rastikasari & Fairuza, 2023; Kirana, et al., 2024). However, in practice, the application of democratic principles in the organisation of elections in Indonesia still faces various challenges, which include political abuse, money politics, identity politics, and the spread of false information (Cornelia, et al., 2024) that can undermine the integrity of the elections themselves.

The electoral system in Indonesia is regulated in various regulations, one of which is Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, which regulates the holding of elections, implementation, and handling of election violations. The principle used in the implementation of

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Indonesian elections is known as LUBER JURDIL, which means Direct, General, Free, Secret, Honest, and Fair (Setiawati, et al., 2024; Kirana, et al., 2024). These principles are the main foundation for the sustainability of democracy in Indonesia. Within this framework, the application of democratic principles in elections is expected to provide the widest possible space for the people to channel their political aspirations, and ensure the continuity of a fair and equitable government for all levels of society.

This research aims to normatively examine the application of democratic principles in General Elections in Indonesia, focusing on how these principles are realised in the actual electoral process, as well as the challenges faced in their implementation. Based on the proposed hypothesis, namely how the principles of democracy are applied in Indonesian elections, this research will explore the extent to which democratic principles such as popular sovereignty, political participation, transparency, and equal rights are applied in the practice of elections in Indonesia. In addition, this research will also discuss the obstacles that still exist, such as the practice of money politics and injustice in the distribution of information, which can affect the quality of democracy in elections.

Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the understanding and evaluation of the application of democratic principles in elections in Indonesia, as well as offer solutions to improve the electoral system to make it more fair, transparent, and responsive to the will of the people. The consistent application of democratic principles in elections is the key to realising a legitimate government, in favour of the people, and creating prosperity for all Indonesian people.

## **II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of this study is to examine the application of democratic principles in the general election system in Indonesia. This research aims to assess the extent to which the democratic principles contained in the 1945 Constitution, such as popular sovereignty, equal suffrage, freedom of choice, and transparency and accountability, are applied in the implementation of elections in Indonesia. In addition, this research also aims to identify the challenges and obstacles faced in the implementation of these principles, as well as find solutions to improve the quality of democracy in Indonesian elections.



### **III. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

The hypothesis of this research is How is the application of democratic principles in General Elections in Indonesia? Although the electoral system in Indonesia is theoretically based on the principles of democracy contained in the 1945 Constitution, in practice the application of these principles still experiences various obstacles. Among them are the practice of money politics, identity politics, and the spread of false information that can reduce the quality and integrity of elections. Therefore, although elections in Indonesia carry the principle of LUBER JURDIL, these challenges need to be overcome so that the principles of democracy can be implemented more effectively..

### **IV. CONTRIBUTION**

This research is expected to make an important contribution to the development of studies on democracy and the electoral system in Indonesia. By examining the application of democratic principles in elections, this research can provide insight into the challenges faced in maintaining the integrity of elections and the quality of democracy in Indonesia. In addition, the results of this research can provide practical recommendations for improving election mechanisms that are more transparent, fair, and free from abuse, which in turn can strengthen the implementation of democracy in Indonesia.

### **V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The conceptual framework of this research focuses on the application of democratic principles in Indonesian elections, with reference to the concepts of popular sovereignty, political participation, equality of rights, and transparency in the organisation of elections. This research uses a theory of democracy that emphasises the importance of people's active involvement in the political and electoral process. Within this framework, Indonesia's electoral system will be analysed based on the principles of LUBER JURDIL as well as challenges such as money politics, identity politics, and the spread of false information that hinder the implementation of these democratic principles.

### **VI. THEORIES AND LITERATURE REVIEWS**

Democracy, etymologically, comes from two Greek words, *demos* meaning people and *kratos* meaning power or government (Butarbutar & Triadi, 2024). In simple terms, democracy can be understood as a form of government in which the supreme power is in the hands of the

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people, and all important state decisions are taken based on the will and consent of the people. In line with this, Jimly Asshiddiqie (2022) argues that democracy is an idea that prioritises power from, by and for the people. In a broader sense, democracy includes the active participation of the people in political decision-making and state life that allows them to determine the direction of the life of the nation and state. The ideal democracy, according to Asshiddiqie, is a state that openly and continuously opens itself to the participation of the people in the administration of the state.

Various other experts have also provided a broader understanding of the concept of democracy. Joseph A. Schmitter, for example, states that democracy is a system that governs political competition, in which individuals gain power through an electoral process (Tho Seeth, 2021). Sidney Hook defines democracy as a government in which decisions are made by the freely given consent of the majority of the people (Tho Seeth, 2021). Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl mentioned that democracy includes government accountability mechanisms that are carried out through competition and cooperation between elected representatives of the people (Tho Seeth, 2021). Henry B. Mayo argued that democracy ensures that policies are determined on the basis of the majority and implemented through periodic elections (Hutabarat, et al., 2021). These concepts emphasise that democracy involves individual freedom, popular participation, and the guarantee of human rights.

In the Indonesian context, democracy is implemented through general elections, which are one of the means of popular sovereignty. According to Law No. 7/2017 on General Elections, elections are a process for electing legislative and executive members that is conducted directly, publicly, freely, confidentially, honestly and fairly. Elections are the main benchmark in assessing the extent to which democratic principles are applied in Indonesia. This also confirms that elections in Indonesia serve not only as a means of political legitimacy and representation, but also as a mechanism to ensure equal political participation among citizens.

The principles of democracy that apply to elections in Indonesia include the principles of popular involvement, equality of political rights, freedom of choice, and the principles of transparency and accountability. The existence of free and fair elections is an effort to ensure that the people's votes are counted honestly and reflect the will of the majority. Elections also serve as a mechanism for peaceful change of leadership, providing political legitimacy for the elected government, as well as a means of political education for the people. Therefore, elections are not



only important as an electoral procedure, but also as an instrument to improve the quality of democracy in the country.

## VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research methodology adopts a normative juridical approach with a focus on analysing legal regulations relating to the application of democratic principles in Indonesian elections. This approach was chosen because it provides a systematic framework for understanding legal issues in the context of elections, involving the study of laws, constitutions, and related legal literature. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method, in which the researcher aims to describe, analyse and give meaning to the phenomenon of democracy as reflected in Indonesia's electoral practices. By examining secondary legal materials in the form of literature sources, including books, journals, and other legal documents, this research will explore the extent to which the application of democratic principles-such as freedom, equality, and popular participation-is realised in the implementation of elections in Indonesia. An empirical juridical approach is also used to look at actual practices in the field, connecting theories and regulations with their implementation in everyday political life, with the aim of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the integrity and quality of democracy in Indonesia's electoral system.

## VIII. RESULT

### **Principles of Democracy in the Indonesian System of Government**

Democracy, as a system of government that prioritises the sovereignty of the people, is a fundamental principle in the Indonesian state. In the Indonesian context, democracy is exercised by recognising that the supreme power is in the hands of the people, which is manifested in the implementation of general elections (elections) as a means to determine the government. Robert A. Dahl explains that democracy is a system in which the people play a role in political decision-making, either directly or through their elected representatives (Umita, et al., 2023). Elections, as the main mechanism in Indonesia's democratic system, allow the people to elect their representatives in the legislative and executive bodies, who act in the interests of the people.

The implementation of democratic principles in Indonesia is not only enshrined in electoral practice, but is also firmly regulated in state law. The 1945 Constitution, as the state constitution, affirms that Indonesia is a state of law that adheres to the principles of democracy, as stated in Article 1 paragraph (2) which states that "Sovereignty is in the hands of the people and shall be exercised according to the Constitution". This constitution also guarantees human rights and the

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principle of popular sovereignty, which is the basis for organising elections as an implementation of the people's political rights to participate in the life of the state (Cornelia, et al., 2024; Rohmatillah, et al., 2023; Triadi, et al., 2024).

In addition, Indonesia has various laws that support the implementation of democratic principles, including the General Election Law (Law No. 7/2017), which regulates the mechanism and procedures of elections in Indonesia. This law guarantees free, fair and transparent elections, where every citizen has the right to vote and be elected without discrimination. It also provides space for political parties to act as pillars of democracy, as stipulated in Law No. 2/2011 on Political Parties. In addition, freedom of expression and freedom of the press guaranteed by Law No. 9 of 1998 on Freedom of Expression in Public and Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press are one of the pillars that support the democratic system in Indonesia.

However, the application of democratic principles in electoral practice in Indonesia is not without challenges. Despite the existence of various regulations that support democracy, the implementation of elections in Indonesia is still faced with various problems, such as the practice of money politics, unequal political access, and low political participation among some people. In addition, although Indonesia claims to be a democracy, abuse of power and corruption are still major problems that threaten the integrity of the democratic system. Therefore, the system of checks and balances between the executive, legislative, and judiciary must be strengthened to maintain the balance of power and prevent abuses (Cornelia, et al., 2024; Rohmatillah, et al., 2023; Triadi, et al., 2024).

The importance of transparency and accountability in government is also highlighted in this study. As part of efforts to improve the democratic system, various bureaucratic reform and corruption eradication policies, such as the establishment of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and efforts to increase transparency in government, are needed to ensure cleaner elections that are free from corrupt practices. Likewise, the principle of the rule of law, which affirms that every policy must be in accordance with existing laws and regulations, must be implemented consistently in the administration of elections.

**Analysis of the Application of Democratic Principles in General Elections in Indonesia**

General elections in Indonesia are one of the vital instruments in the implementation of democracy. As a country with a democratic system, elections have an important role in realising people's sovereignty and government legitimacy. In this context, the application of the basic



principles of democracy determines the success of elections in creating a legitimate government that is responsive to the needs of the people.

## 1. Application of the Principle of Popular Sovereignty

The first principle tested in elections is popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty affirms that political power comes from the people, which is realised in elections as a mechanism to elect representatives of the people and state leaders. Elections in Indonesia allow the people to directly elect the President, legislators, and regional heads. This reflects the principle that political decisions should reflect the will of the people.

However, in practice, there are challenges in realising the sovereignty of the people to the fullest. The phenomenon of political dynasties or the dominance of power by certain families or groups in elections in certain regions (Panggabean, & Harahap, 2024; Marwenny, et al., 2024; Riawan, 2024) shows the inequality in opportunities for all people to participate equally. In addition, money politics is still a problem (Sonia, et al., 2024) that can reduce the true meaning of popular sovereignty, because voters who are influenced by money tend not to vote based on rational political considerations.

## 2. The Principle of Equal Rights in Elections

The principle of equal rights affirms that every citizen should have equal rights to participate in elections without discrimination. This includes the right to vote and be elected, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, race or social status. This principle also guarantees equal access for every citizen to stand as a candidate in both legislative and executive elections.

In general, this principle has been well implemented in Indonesia, where all eligible citizens have equal voting rights. However, on the other hand, access to adequate political education and political counselling is often uneven, especially in remote areas (Mayestika, et al., 2022). This can limit voters' understanding of their voting rights, which in turn affects the quality of democracy.

## 3. Free and secret elections

The principle of free and secret elections is key to ensuring that voters are not pressurised or intimidated into voting. Indonesia has established voting procedures that ensure voter secrecy. Each voter can cast his or her vote in a closed voting booth without interference from any party, and the results will be counted in an open and transparent manner.

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However, practices of vote buying and intimidation of voters in certain areas still occur (Kurniawan & Wahyuni, 2023), especially in areas with high poverty rates. This threatens voters' freedom of choice, as their votes can be influenced by economic factors or social pressure. The spread of false information (hoaxes) during campaigns (Moonti, et al., 2024) can also affect freedom of choice, by creating information distortions that lead to decisions that are not fully informed.

**4. Accountability and Transparency in Elections**

Accountability and transparency are key principles in ensuring the integrity of elections. The electoral process in Indonesia is governed by a number of regulations that require the KPU to organise elections in an open manner. Processes such as nomination, campaigning, voting, and vote counting must be conducted responsibly and accountable to the public.

Despite adequate regulations, non-transparent practices are still common, especially in terms of voter registration and the management of election logistics. Oversight by Bawaslu is crucial in ensuring electoral accountability, but in some cases, there have been difficulties in cracking down on violations, whether related to money politics or vote-counting fraud. This shows that while good oversight mechanisms are in place, the challenges in implementation are still great.

**5. Challenges in Implementing Democratic Principles: Money Politics, Identity Politics, and Hoaxes**

The principles of democracy in elections are often disrupted by various challenges, such as money politics, identity politics, and the spread of hoaxes. Money politics is one of the main obstacles to ensuring that elections are fair and honest. Candidates with greater resources often use funds to buy votes or influence voters through various illegitimate means.

Identity politics (Astuti, et al., 2023), which uses SARA (ethnicity, religion, race and intergroup) issues to gain support, also undermines the principle of national unity and leads to social polarisation. This identity politics-based campaign can threaten the integrity of elections by utilising social differences to win votes, rather than based on a clear programme or vision. The spread of hoaxes or false information through social media can also influence public opinion and reduce the quality of democracy. Hoaxes can be used to attack the reputation of candidates or trick voters, ultimately undermining public trust in the integrity of elections.





## IX. CONCLUSION

The application of democratic principles in Indonesia's electoral system is theoretically well-established in the 1945 Constitution and various laws and regulations, which emphasise the importance of popular sovereignty, equal rights, freedom of choice, and accountability and transparency. Nevertheless, electoral practices in Indonesia are still faced with significant challenges, such as money politics, identity politics, and the spread of false information that threaten the integrity of elections and the quality of democracy. Therefore, although the implementation of elections includes the principle of LUBER JURDIL (direct, general, free, secret, honest and fair), its application in practice is often distorted by factors that reduce fairness and voter freedom. This requires further attention to ensure that elections can truly reflect the will of the people and produce legitimate and accountable governments.

## X. SUGGESTION AND RECOMMENDATION

To improve the quality of democracy in Indonesian elections, there needs to be a more serious effort to overcome the practices of money politics, identity politics, and the spread of hoaxes. First, strengthening election supervisory institutions, such as Bawaslu, and increasing transparency in every stage of the election are needed. Second, more equitable political education at all levels of society, especially in remote areas, needs to be strengthened to increase understanding of citizens' political rights. Third, strict measures against abuse of power in the form of money politics and the spread of hoaxes must be applied consistently through stricter law enforcement. Thus, elections in Indonesia can be more fair, transparent, and free from negative influences that damage the integrity of democracy.

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