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## POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS IN THE REFORM ERA IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: In the "reform era" in Indonesia, political parties faced problems related to institutionalization, consolidating ideology, and sound platform. In addition, the party system in Indonesia is not yet compatible with the presidential system of government, so the government has not been effective. The study aims to identify the peculiarities of political parties and party systems in Indonesia developed during the reform era. The results showed that several factors made the level of party institutionalization not yet developed properly. First, the existing parties often experience draining and time-consuming conflicts so that there is no time to build the institutionalization of political parties. Second, party elites have not become party rules. And third, the party tradition that respects differences (democratic political culture) among party elites has not yet grown, elements of patrimonialism and even feudalism are still strong among party elites.

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The post-New Order state of Indonesia experienced changes in its political system, a shift from an authoritarian political system to a democratic one. Among the changes that have occurred is the guarantee of freedom of expression and associations and forms of political parties. Unlike the previous era, in the post-New Order era, which was known as the "reform era", each group established a political party and there was no limitation on the number of them.

At the beginning of the reform, the number of political parties that had been established reached 184 parties, and 141 of them were approved as legal entities.

Of these, only 48 political parties met the requirements to participate in the 1999 elections. In the 2004 general elections, the number of political parties increased. More than 200 political parties are standing. Of the total number of political parties, only 50 political parties were approved as legal entities and only 24 political parties participated in the 2004 general elections.<sup>1</sup>

In the 2009 elections, the number of political parties was around 132 parties, and around 22 political parties

Miriam, B. Dasar-dasar Ilmu Politik. Jakarta: Gramedia, 2008. (In Indon.).

passed the verification so that they could participate in the elections plus 16 political parties, consisting of 7 political parties that passed the 3% electoral threshold (ET) and 9 political parties received seats in the House of Representatives. The total number of political parties participating in the 2009 general elections was 38 at the national level and 6 at the local in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD).<sup>2</sup>

The problems which arise are related to the number of political parties formed and participated in elections, which are not directly proportional to the functions they carry out. The existence of political parties as one of the pillars of democracy that fights for the aspirations and interests of the people carries out political education, and resolves conflicts, has not been optimally implemented. Various surveys conducted by analytical centers say that the public is disappointed and dissatisfied with the existence of political parties since they do not fight for the people's aspirations and interests, but instead fight for the interests of their leaders<sup>3</sup>.

#### Political parties

In this "reform era" political parties appeared to face a crisis and had a bad image among people. This happens because they were not or had not been able to carry out their functions optimally<sup>4</sup>, could not mobilize and represent the interests of citizens, or represent a link between citizens with the government.

Such conditions are compounded by the problem of party institutionalization that has not yet been realized properly. What is meant by the institutionalization of political parties, according to S. Huntington, is the process of consolidating political parties either in the form of patterned behavior or in attitudes or culture. As he puts it, "institutionalization is the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability." Huntington emphasized that in the context of political development what matters is not the number of parties, but the degree to which the robustness and adaptability of the party system take place. A party system is called strong and adaptable if it can absorb and unite all the new social forces that emerged as a result of modernization. From this point of view, the number of parties will only matter if it influences the system's capacity to set up the institutional channels needed to accommodate political participation.<sup>6</sup>

According to Huntington, a solid party system must have at least two capacities. Firstly, launching political participation through party channels, to divert all forms of anomic and violent political activity. Secondly, it includes and channels the participation of many newly mobilized groups, which are intended to reduce the level of intense pressure faced by the political system. Thus, the political party system in Indonesia is still experiencing serious problems in terms of the institution and the implementation of internal democracy.

S. Mainwaring stated that there are four requirements for a political party to be considered institutionalized. Firstly, the stability of competition between parties. In an institutionalized system, political parties play a major role in government. Secondly, the party has its roots in society. An institutionalized political party takes deep roots in society, with the average person choosing the same party and voting for it.8 Since political parties have strong "grassroots", various interest groups also tend to associate them with political parties. Thirdly, the legitimacy of political parties and elections. Party legitimacy and fair elections are considered democratic institutions that are important, desirable, and essential. Fourthly, political party organization. For an institutionalized political party, its resources are sufficient both materially and in human resources. Party leadership is not overshadowed by the interests of individual leaders, and the institutional process is working well.

Meanwhile, Erikson looked at internal democracybased institutions, internal integrity, political identity related to party ideology, organizational resilience, and campaign capacity.9

### Political parties and political party systems in the reform era

Despite the development of political parties in the reform era in Indonesia, they have not yet become a public institution that has responsibility or accountability for its voters. In the New Order era, political parties became the political "machines" of the rulers, so that they were more focused on the interests of maintaining the power of the ruler (status quo). 10 When entering the reform era, it was as if political parties were shocked by the huge demands of the community but were not accompanied by good institution-building. Political parties today have not shown accountability to

In the reform era, they were also trapped in an oligarchic form in the strategic decision-making

Firmanzah. Pengelola Partai Politik. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2008. (In Indon.)

Farida, Ida; Lestari, Annisa. Implementation of E-Government as a Public Service Innovation in Indonesia // RUDN Journal of Public Administration, 2021, No. 1, pp. 72-79

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Inu Kencana, S. Pengantar Ilmu Politik. Bandung: Pustaka Reka Cipta, 2009. (In Indon.).

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The list of all Indonesian parties can be seen in 2019 Republic of Indonesia Election Commission Online Portal by URL: https:// infopemilu.kpu.go.id/pileg2019/verpol/skparpol; Lestari, Annisa. Implementation of E-Government as a Public Service Innovation in Indonesia // RUDN Journal of Public Administration, 2021, No. 1, pp. 72-79

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Robin, F.; Peter, H. Young Muslim Women's Political Participation in Scotland: Exploring the Intersections of Gender, Religion, Class and Place // Political Geography, 2019, Vol.74

Mao, Z. Empirical Analysis of Rural Citizen's Politic Participation in the Underdeveloped Regions of Chinese Eastern Provinces // Asian Social Science Review, 2010, No. 6(5), pp. 160-174.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Ramlan, S. Memahami Ilmu Politik. Jakarta: Grasindo, 2010. (In Indon.)

process. 11 The trend so far shows that political party decision-making is closed and only determined by a small group of party elites. The key decision is usually made by a person or a tiny group of party elites: the problem of internal mechanisms in decision-making is characterized by centralization. The role of the central board is still dominant, and sometimes it differs from regional aspirations.

A party serves several functions, to wit: political education function, political recruitment, political communication, articulation and aggravation of interests, conflict resolution functions. The complaints that arise are that the political parties have not carried out their functions optimally. 12 In this context, the root of the problem relates to institutional failures. At least, there are three problems related to political institutions, namely13: ideology and platform, cohesiveness and conflict management, as well as recruitment and regeneration.

#### Ideology and party platform in Indonesia

Each political party is based on the ideology it wants to promote, which later forms its identity. To distinguish between one party from another, ideology criteria might be used. Apart from that, ideology is also the basis of struggle or ideals that a political party wants to achieve.<sup>14</sup> Ideology defined as a system of values and norms is per se abstract. The ideology adopted by a political party needs to be translated into actions and symbols that are real and perceived clearly by the

The existence of an ideology is also an important guideline for political values in carrying out political programs and activities. It serves as a guide for every party member and administrator in translating this ideology into a party program or activity. In addition, ideology also serves as a framework for a political party in discussing and debating matters relating to economic, social, or political life. 15 It is equally important that ideology for the party can become the basis for resolving social problems and then finding proper solutions.

As Rio Gunawan, the Chairman of the Indonesian Nasdem Party Branch, stated, that a way to translate the ideology is possessed by a political party into real and concrete things formulated in the form of a political party platform. The party platform contains general guidelines and an outline of the party's policy

in its contribution to solving the problems of the nation and state. The party platform is a blueprint, in which a system of values and norms (ideology) is translated and becomes the basis for the arrangement of political actions that are more concrete.16

Fery Triatmojo as a Chairman of the Election Commission of the Bandar Lampung City of Indonesia stated that the party platform is considered to be significant for two goals. Firstly, as an instrument of communication to the constituent masses, the party stands for. Besides reflecting the identity of the party, the platform also guides the party's direction when it has access to power. In this context, platforms can be seen as proposals that parties offer to constituents and the electorate. Secondly, the platform is the party's perspective on how the life of the nation and state in various fields should be managed. It is a derivative of party ideology, which contains the values, expectations, and normative direction of the party policy. Thus, for party members, the platform is a reference for attitudes and actions in their daily political life. 17

What about the ideology and platforms of political parties in Indonesia? When referring to the basic principles that each political party formulates, in general, political parties are based on three ideologies, namely Islam, Nationalism, and Democratic Socialism. 18

Islam as an ideology that is owned by Islamic parties has no difference between one Islamic party and another. Such parties are the Moon Star Party (PBB) and the National Awakening Party (PKB).

The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) and the Democratic Party (PD) were born from the same ideology, nationalism. However, in translating nationalism as an ideology, the Democratic Party and PDIP have different views. According to the Democratic Party, the spirit of nationalism is interpreted as not differentiating between race, ethnicity, nation, gender, profession, religion, and belief in one God. Meanwhile, the PDIP believes that nationalism is related to the nationalism perspective, as a spark of a sense of belonging to the nation and state which must be preserved.<sup>1</sup>

Nationalism attached to the Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) and subsequently continued by the PDIP was taken from the Marhaenism conception adopted by the 1927 Awakening of the Indonesian National Party (PNI), which was the forerunner of the PDIP nationalism ideology. Based on this nationalismmechanism ideology, PDIP later adopted an identity as a populist party.20

<sup>11</sup> Powell, M.; Barrientos, A. Welfare Regime and Welfare Mix // European Journal of Political Research, 2004, No. 43(1), pp. 83-105.

Dahl, R.A. Perihal Demokrasi: Menjelajahi Teori dan Praktek Demokrasi secara Singkat. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia (Translated), 2001. (In Indon.)

<sup>13</sup> Jo Thori, L. Rainy Day Politics. An Instrumental Variables Approach to the Effect of Parties on Political Outcomes // European Journal of Political Economy, 2020, Vol. 61, January.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Pratikno. Political parties in pilkada: some problem for democratic concolidation. In M. Erb & P. Sulistiyanto (Eds.), Deepening Democracy in Indonesia? Direct Elections for Local Leaders. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Soelistyati, I.G. Pengantar Ilmu Politik. Jakarta: Ghalia Indonesia, 2006. (In Indon.).

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Rio Gunawan as Chairman of the Indonesian Nasdem Party, on 23 December 2020.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Interview with Fery Triatmojo as Chairman of the Election Commission of the Bandar Lampung City of Indonesia, on 24 January 2020.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Rahman, H.I. Sistem Politik Indonesia. Yogjakarta: Graha Ilmu, 2007. (In Indon.).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Haris, S. Partai, Pemilu, dan Parlemen di Era Reformasi. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2014. (In Indon.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Setiawan, R.; Esti, M.; Sidorov, V.V. Islam and Politics in Indonesia // RUDN Journal of Political Science, 2020, Vol. 22 (4), pp. 731-740.

The problem that arises is that the ideology possessed by each political party has not been translated into real and concrete actions. Even if there are programs and policies that they formulate, they are still general.

# Recruitment and cadre of political parties in Indonesia

In each organization, members are the main source of support. In political parties, the role of members is significant because members serve as spokespersons to voice and disseminate party platforms and programs to the public. In addition, members are a source of regeneration that can produce political party leaders.

Political parties recruit members. The recruitment system includes a pattern of selection, ranking, and education for its members. Thus, someone is not able to automatically get a membership without going through a selection.<sup>21</sup>

A well-institutionalized political party will carry out regeneration and political education for its members on an ongoing basis. The purpose of regeneration and political education is to improve the quality of members so that later they will be able to face the problems and challenges that are always developing in the political life of society, nation, and state.<sup>22</sup>

Cadre formation and political education are carried out by political parties to produce leaders. Therefore, institutionalized political parties carry out regular political education and leadership training. This education and training are organized in stages according to the level and scope of each management level.

The problem that has arisen in political parties today is the lack of institutionalization of the recruitment process. The way of selection, grading, and education for members is not carried out adequately. The phenomenon of "instant cadres" emerges, the unpreparedness of political parties in nominating candidates for legislative or executive members, which indicates that political parties do not use a systematic recruitment pattern.

Meanwhile, in the membership system, indeed all parties have used the Membership Card (KTA) for those who have become party members. However, the problem is that generally, political parties have no definite and accurate data on the number of members registered in each of the existing parties. There are only claims made by each political party. So far, only the number of party officials has been recorded properly.

Political parties today are still weak in terms of regeneration and political education. It must be admitted that several political parties have carried out a gradual regeneration process. However, the process of regeneration is still limited to the cadres' understanding of the vision and mission of the political party concerned.

# The problems of the party system in Indonesia

Hasni, the Chair of the Moon Star Party (PBB) Branch, stated that since independence until now, Indonesia has been building a party system based on a multiparty approach. During the Parliamentary Democracy era (1945-1959) there was a multiparty system with a high level of competition, while during the Lead Democracy era (1959-1965), even though they practice a multi-party system, there was no competition because the existing political parties had no legislative role. Likewise, the New Order era, with only three parties, was called a multi-party system. However, at this period there was a dominant political party, namely Golkar: a hegemonic party system was formed.<sup>23</sup>

During the Reformation period, the state also supported a multiparty system. It was "hyper-multiparty" in fact. The multiparty system currently operating, similar to that during the Parliamentary Democracy, is experiencing polarization and fragmentation which in turn complicates the decision-making process in the legislature. Several examples and cases that were shown by the DPR regarding the use of interpellation rights, inquiry rights, etc. recently are sufficient as evidence to show the existence of these negotiations.

The problem is how to create a working multiparty system. Of course in the process of "simplification", the party should be created naturally, unlike the Guided Democracy and New Order regimes. The Political Party Law and the Election Law try to decrease the number of parties by applying strict conditions for the establishment or formation of political parties and imposing an electoral threshold to be able to participate in elections. Another way is to implement a district electoral system. As Duverger believed the district system fosters political parties integration. Meanwhile, the proportional system tends to facilitate party fragmentation and the emergence of new political parties. This system is considered to have the effect of increasing their number.

Indeed, the advantages of the district system can simplify the number of parties because there is only one seat contested in each electoral district. This will encourage parties to set aside existing differences and foster cooperation. With fewer parties, this will in turn increase cooperation between the parties and facilitate the formation of a stable government and enhance national stability. In addition, the district system can improve the quality of representation because the elected representatives can be recognized by the population of the district so that they have a closer relationship with representatives, and thus they will encourage to fight for their aspirations.

Although the district system is recognized as being able to simplify the number of political parties, the options for Indonesia at this time are not yet able

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Farida, I.; Setiawan, R. Leadership in Cope with Prostitute in Social Department of Bandar Lampung // International Journal of Social Sciences and Development, 2018, No. 2(1).

Firmanzah. Pengelola Partai Politik. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2008. (In Indon.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Interview with Hasni as the Chair of the Moon Star Party (PBB) Branch, on 23 December 2020.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Setiawan, R. Partisipasi Publik Dalam Program Bantuan Listrik Pedesaan Masyarakat Kabupaten Mesuji // *Jurnal e-JKPP*, 2017, Vol. 3(3).

to implement it. This is because it is well known, the Indonesian nation is very heterogeneous. Such a decision of implementing the district system means that existing groups, especially minority groups, will be less represented.

#### Conclusion

In this reform era, political parties have become an important institution for Indonesia. They are believed to be the strategic instruments for the development of Indonesian democracy in the future. Although there have been various reactions to the existence of political parties today, all parties agree that democracy will be better if political parties are professional and accountable. This challenge is a tough task that must be shared by all components of the nation where the presence of professional, democratic, and accountable political parties is a necessity today.

The party is one of the pillars of democracy itself. There are at least three reasons why political parties are necessary for democracy to function. Firstly, political parties are the main vehicle for political representation; secondly, political parties are the main mechanism for public administration; thirdly, political parties are the main channel for maintaining democratic accountability.

For political parties to function properly efforts that need to be done include strengthening the institutions of political parties so that they become strong democratic institutions. In this context, efforts to strengthen party platforms, regeneration, political recruitment, and create internal party cohesiveness, are a necessity that must be carried out immediately. If these factors are developed, then, in turn, the party system will cement a democratic regime.

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## ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ПАРТИИ И ПАРТИЙНЫЕ СИСТЕМЫ В ЭПОХУ РЕФОРМ В ИНДОНЕЗИИ

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#### Ключевые слова:

политические партии; партийная система; идеология; партия; демократия; эпоха реформ; Индонезия

Аннотация: В эпоху реформ в Индонезии политические партии столкнулись с проблемами, связанными с институционализацией, консолидацией идеологии и формированием прочной платформы. Кроме того, партийная система в Индонезии остается несовместимой с президентской системой правления, поэтому правительство не может быть эффективным. Исследование направлено на выявление особенностей политических партий и партийных систем Индонезии, сложившихся в эпоху реформ. Результаты показали, что сформировалось несколько факторов, из-за которых уровень партийной институционализации еще не развился должным образом. Во-первых, существующие партии часто сталкиваются с серьезными конфликтами. Во-вторых, партийные элиты не сформировали четкие партийные правилама. В-третьих, партийная традиция, уважающая различия (демократическая политическая культура) среди партийных элит, еще не созрела, элементы патримониализма и даже феодализма все еще сильны среди партийных элит.

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