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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Democracy and Reflections on 25 Years of Indonesian Reformation

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Abstract: Democracy has grown since the time of Ancient Greek civilization with the concept of Greek city-states and Athens in 450 BC and 350 BC. Even in 431 BC, Pericles, a well-known Athenian statesman, defined democracy by putting forward several criteria: (1) government by the people with full and direct participation of the people; (2) equality before the law; (3) pluralism, namely respect for all talents, interests, desires, and views; and (4) respect for a separation and personal area to meet and express individual personality (Roy C Macridis, 1983:19-20). In the same era, we can also get acquainted with the political thoughts of Plato, Aristotle, Polybius Cicero, etc., to mention some of the thinkers of that time, who also laid the foundations for the notion of democracy. During its development, the concept of democracy underwent an increasingly fertile phase and moved towards moderation during the Renaissance. So far, great thoughts have arisen about the relationship between the two rulers or the state on the one hand and the people on the other. There are new and surprising thoughts about the power and thought of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527). On the Social Contract and the Separation of Powers by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), and John Locke (1632-1704). Many of these big names have thoughts of contributing significantly to efforts to redefine or implement the term democracy.

Keywords: democracy, politics, democratic transformation, reform

1. Introduction

One thing we read from various literature on democracy is that it grows in line with the growth and development of society itself. The higher the level of complexity, the more complicated and not simple democracy is defined. One of the results of the accommodation of defining democracy to the level of development of society is the increasing shifting of the criterion of direct participation of the people in policy formulation, which became the first criterion of Pericles, by the representative model (Basuki & Subiyakto, 2023). In addition, the placement of the position and role of the ruler or state is also constantly undergoing redefinition, shifting from the position and role of "night watchman" or "firefighter" towards a larger and decisive position and role in society (Basuki, 2020).

Robert A. Dahl proposed five criteria for democracy as a political idea (Fajar & Siregar, 2021), namely: (1) equal suffrage in determining binding collective decisions; (2) effective participation, i.e. equal opportunities for all citizens in collective decision-making processes; (3) the disclosure of truth, that is, there is equal opportunity for everyone to pass judgment on the course of political and governmental processes logically; (4) final control over the



agenda, i.e. the exclusive power for the community to determine which agenda should and should not be decided through the governmental process, including delegating that power to other persons or institutions representing the community; and (5) coverage, i.e. community coverage includes all adults about the law. In this definition, Dahl seems to attach importance to public involvement in the policy formulation process, the existence of supervision of power, and the guarantee of equal treatment of the state to all citizens as the main elements of democracy.

In the form of empirical democratic political practice, several stages can be identified. Robert Dahl divides the historical course of democratic practice into three stages of transformation. The transformation of small democracies, the democratic transformation of republicanism, the democratic transformation of modern political life today.

This third stage is characterized by the uncertainty that whether we will return to small societies such as Ancient Greece and Athens is impossible. These stages, however, led Dahl to affirm that what would be achieved in the future was a more advanced form of democracy. It is a democracy that focuses on finding sources of inequality rather than trying to implement equality in society. For this reason, the path taken by advanced democracy is the dissemination of economic resources, positions, and opportunities through the dissemination of knowledge, information, and skills.

2. Method

This research uses qualitative methods by searching data from journals, online media, and literature studies. The data obtained were randomly selected to be relevant to the focus of the study. To analyze the data collected online, the authors used content analysis techniques. Content analysis is a content analysis technique carried out by concluding a text message systematically and objectively. This research is descriptive, focusing on careful measurement of a particular fact, namely democracy. The purpose of descriptive research itself is to develop concepts and gather facts.

A qualitative approach is used to describe the social world and perspectives from various aspects such as concepts, behaviors, perceptions, and relevant issues. To collect data in depth and comprehensively, the author uses several data analysis techniques. Literature study to determine the development of science related to research and prevent unwanted publications. Online data tracing is also carried out as part of data analysis techniques that refer to data tracing methods through online media such as the Internet or other network media.

This allows researchers to utilize theoretical data and information quickly and easily, which can be accounted for academically, as stated by Bungin (2011). After data has been collected from various sources with in-depth interviews, literature studies, and online data searches, the next step is to reduce the data. This process involves selecting and focusing on relevant data and is needed to focus on aspects related to this research. Then, the selected data is presented according to the conditions in the research field for the final research, after the data is presented, conclusions are drawn and verified. Miles and Huberman's model data analysis approach is used to integrate a wide range of information and understand the diverse perspectives that emerge from the collected data. Thus, this study aims to provide a comprehensive picture related to the focus of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. *Development of Democracy*

Democracy in the last two decades has become increasingly popular in various developing countries, both at the level of discourse and current socio-political movements. As a political system, democracy has topped the list accepted by many countries because it is considered capable of regulating and resolving social and political relations, both involving interests

between individuals in society, relations between communities, societies, and states as well as between countries in the world. The collapse of the ideology of communism in the Soviet Union in 1989, at least has become an important momentum for the expansion of democracy as a discourse of choice of political system. The popularity of democracy as a political ideology was rapidly spread by the development of critical discourse that largely revealed the failure of the practice of authoritarianism. The presence of democracy seems to have become a meaningful and real thing to overcome the socio-political problems that have been suffered by various countries.

In a democracy, political civility must be maintained. The concept of liberalization attached to the ideology of democracy must be interpreted as a free and responsible society, that is, a society that has clear rules of the game so that the strong do not oppress the weak (Este & Moonti, 2019). This can happen if there are laws that regulate all forms of games, both political, economic, and cultural. The rules of the game should guarantee the provision of equal space or opportunity for every citizen to carry out his life activities. The rules of the game that have been formulated and outlined in the form of law should be respected by every social actor at all levels and capacities. In other words, be it rulers, governments, businessmen and ordinary people must all be respectful and subject to the law (rules of the game). Anyone who deviates from the rules of the game or whoever tries to manipulate the rules of the game can be dealt with through the judiciary indiscriminately.

From various literatures, even since classical times, it has always emphasized that the ruling in democracy is the people or demos (Susanto, 2019; Syphoyan et al., 2022). Therefore, the role of the people or demos is always considered in the political process that runs in a society. At least determine what problems to decide and participate in determining decision making. According to Robert Dahl, there are several prerequisites for a democratic system (Ansori, 2019):

First, is accountability. In a democracy, every officeholder elected by the people must be accountable for the policies he wants and has pursued (Djumadin, 2022). Not only that, he must be able to account for his words or words. And no less important is the behavior in life that he has been, is, will even live. The accountability not only concerns him but also concerns his family in a broad sense. That is the behavior of children and their wives, as well as their relatives, especially those related to their position. In this context, officeholders must be willing to face what is called public scrutiny, especially by existing mass media, especially in today's all-digital conditions.

Second, the change of power. In a democracy, the opportunity for a change of power must exist, and be done regularly and peacefully (Ishwari, 2020). So not only one person always holds office, while other people's opportunities are closed altogether. Usually, the political parties that win an election will be allowed to form an executive that controls the government until the next election. In a country where the level of democracy is still low, the rotation of power is usually low as well. Even the opportunities for it are limited. Even if there is, it will only be done in a limited environment among the political elite.

Third, open political recruitment. To allow for a rotation of power, an open political recruitment system is needed (Riskiyono, 2019). That is, everyone who is eligible to fill a political office elected by the people has the same opportunity to compete to fill the office.

Fourth, General Elections. In democracies, elections are held regularly (Aldi et al., 2019). Every adult citizen has the right to vote and be elected and is free to exercise that right as he pleases his conscience. There is freedom to decide which party or candidate to support, without any fear or coercion from others. Voters are also free to participate in all kinds of electoral activities, including campaign activities and watching the counting of votes.

Fifth, guarantee basic rights. In a democratic state, every citizen can enjoy their basic rights freely, including the right to express their opinion (freedom of expression), the right to assembly and association (freedom of assembly), and the right to enjoy a free press (freedom

of the press) (Arrasuli, 2019). The right to express an opinion can be used to determine his political preferences, on an issue, especially that which concerns himself and the surrounding community. In other words, he has the right to participate in determining what agenda is needed. The right to assembly and association can be realized by entering various organizations, political and non-political, without being hindered by anyone and any institution. Freedom of the press in a democratic society means that the press can convey whatever information it deems necessary, as long as it does not have elements of insulting, inciting, or pitting fellow citizens.

These basic elements of democracy are commonly known elements in political science. The understanding of democracy is universal. However, in its implementation, it is possible to adapt to elements of local values in a particular political environment. Of course, we can observe how far the interaction between universal democratic values and local values sustains each other. It is possible that we can see differences in the implementation of democracy from one country to another.

3.2. *Democracy in Indonesia*

The development of democracy in Indonesia can be divided into two stages, namely the pre-independence stage and the post-independence stage. The development of democracy in post-independence Indonesia has experienced ups and downs (fluctuations) from the independence period to the present, during the 77 years of the journey of the Indonesian nation and state, the main problem faced is how democracy manifests itself in various aspects of national and state life such as in the political, economic, legal and socio-cultural fields. As an order of life, the core of democratic life order is empirically related to problems in the relationship between the state or government and the people, or vice versa the relationship between the people and the state or government in a position of balance (equilibrium position) and mutual supervision (checks and balances).

When traced based on periods, democracy in Indonesia can be divided into 4 periods (Purnamvati, 2020). First parliamentary democracy (1945 – 1959). The parliamentary democratic system came into force a month after independence was proclaimed and began to be strengthened in the 1945 and 1950 Constitutions, it turned out that this parliamentary democratic system was not suitable for Indonesia, although it could work satisfactorily in several other Asian countries. The 1950 Constitution established a parliamentary system in which the executive branch consisted of the President and his Ministerial Ministers who had political responsibilities. Due to the fragmentation of political parties, each cabinet is based on conditions that revolve around one or two major parties and several smaller parties. The coalition did not work well and the coalition parties did not hesitate to withdraw their support at any time, so the cabinet often fell due to rifts in the coalition itself. Generally, the cabinet in the pre-election period held in 1955 could not last longer than the average of eight months, and this hindered the development of the political and political economy because the government did not have the opportunity to implement its program. However, in this period the position of parliament was very strong and in turn, strengthened the position of political parties, therefore everything related to state policy could not be separated from the critical attitude of parliamentarians to debate it both through parliamentary forums and individually.

Both periods of guided democracy (1959-1965). The characteristics of the political system in this period were the dominance of the role of the president, the limited role of political parties, the development of communist influence, and the widespread role of ABRI as a socio-political element (Tedjo, 2019).¹² In the practice of government, in this period there has been a lot of distortion of democratic practice. The July 5 presidential decree can be seen as an attempt to find a way out of democracy. Similarly, the 1945 Constitution affirmed that a president can last for at least five years. However, MPRS decree No. III/1963 which said Ir. Soekarno as president for life had canceled the five-year time limit. Sukarno's guided democracy was not a real democracy, but a form of authoritarianism. This form of democratic

system does not reflect the meaning of democracy itself. Sukarno's guided democracy ended with the birth of the 30 September PKI Movement (G30SPKI)).

The third period of Pancasila democracy was 1965-1998. This period of government emerged after the failure of the G30SPKI. The formal basis of this period is Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and the provisions of the MPRS (Rohmatillah et al., 2023). The spirit underlying the birth of this period is to restore and purify the implementation of government based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution consequently and purely. To correct the violations of the Constitution that occurred during the Guided Democracy era, we have taken corrective action. MPRS Decree Number III/1963 which stipulated a lifetime term of office for Ir. Soekarno has been canceled and the position of President has again become selective for five years. In this period the practice of democracy in Indonesia always refers to the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. Therefore, democracy at this time is called Pancasila Democracy. In democracy, Pancasila views people's sovereignty as the core of the democratic system because the people have the same right to determine themselves (Purnamvati, 2020). So is the equal political participation of all people. For this reason, the government should provide protection and guarantees for citizens to exercise political rights. However, "Pancasila Democracy" in the New Order regime was only rhetoric and ideas had not yet reached the level of praxis or application. Because in the practice of statehood and government, this regime does not provide room for democratic life.

Fourth, the period of democratic reform (1998 – skarang?). The year 1998 was a new chapter in the dynamics of the political system in Indonesia, in that year began the tradition of democracy in all political processes in Indonesia. After almost 32 years of domination and hegemony of a highly militarized and centralized political system, Indonesia's reform released the political process from the entanglement and shackles of the country's very dominant political intervention. The winds of change are blowing fast, sweeping away the dust of the practice of authoritarianism in the past, and replaced by a fresh climate for the blossoming of democratic shoots in all spheres of life.

This political reform provides great benefits for the dynamics of the political system in Indonesia. The phenomenon of political freedom is expected to be a means for the establishment of clean, fair, and authoritative governance (Wahyuningsih, 2019). With the democratization process in Indonesia, it is certainly hoped that a democratic country will be formed that has high credibility and the realization of a prosperous civil society. Many benefits and benefits have been achieved as a result of the wave of change in Indonesia. The success of this reform flow includes the formation of dozens of parties organized by various groups of people who have varied ideological backgrounds, aspirations, and political traditions. Similarly, there is a very broad liberalization of mass media, the media is very free in seeking and disseminating information to the public. The people are not hindered when they want to express their aspirations. Openness for all elements of society in making criticisms and suggestions to the authorities in the public space.

Other positive things achieved by reforms in all fields in Indonesia are increased civil participation, political society flourishes, various efforts for economic recovery and development organized, decentralization and regional autonomy implemented, law enforcement and corruption eradication carried out earnestly and transparently, human rights protection campaigns are increasingly rife, defense and security sector reform is a priority agenda. The demand for a democratic country has also been successfully realized, namely the holding of general elections based on the spirit of upholding the principles of justice and honesty.

The democratization process in Indonesia is also seen in the desacralization of the presidential institution. During the absolute-style New Order era, the president was the sole ruler and could not be touched by law. But when reforms roll out, the president can be subverted from power through constitutional mechanisms by the people. This is a phenomenon of progress in the political system in Indonesia. Another thing that can be a

parameter for the success of the democratization process in Indonesia is the holding of five relatively smooth elections, namely the elections in 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019. For a democratic country, the implementation of elections is a momentum in reinforcing the direction of democratic consolidation and strengthening political institutions. As stated by Nugroho (2012), the democratization process in Indonesia will ensure the strengthening of a sustainable social democratic system (sustainable constitutional democracy). This is very important to make it an effective instrument that contributes to the realization of community welfare (Ardi & Hidayah, 2022).

3.3. *A Record of 25 Years of Democracy*

We must not close our eyes to, that as a nation running the wheels of democracy in the practice of state administration, there are still many weaknesses and shortcomings. The weaknesses include the sector of people's lives in the fields of economy, education, health, environmental management, etc., still far from what the community imagined. The coercion of will, political violence, corruption, and criticism by the legislative, executive, and judicial apparatus is not shrinking but showing an increasing escalation, the number of parties participating in the election does not give a sense of optimism to the public, but instead creates a sense of pessimism, skepticism, and even cynicism. The assumption that develops in society, political parties will only be used as a cover and vehicle for political adventurers to achieve and realize personal desires and ambitions that are far from efforts to improve the welfare of the people (Akbar et al., 2023).

It can be said that the democratization process that occurs in Indonesia is only limited to increasing political freedom and respect for human rights, but has not led to rapid economic development and empowering the people's economy that can lift them from poverty. Democratization in Indonesia is still pestered by anarchist actions and fuels social chaos (polarization, populism, and false identity politics). This is because of the democratic climate that should prioritize order and order and morality in politics, but in practice what happens is the spread of phenomena where leaders and people can do whatever they want and the legal system (rules) is harassed and not respected.

Mahfud MD, chairman of the 2008-2013 Constitutional Court, said Indonesia is currently still limited to a mere procedural democracy. Procedural democracy as it is today makes elections carried out as a mere democratic routine. Elections are held not to improve the quality of democracy, but rather more heartbreaking, where elections are enlivened by behaviors that injure democratic values, money politics, bribery bribery, promise injuries, and fraud as usual in the election stage. Democracy throughout the reform era was procedural, not substantial. The elections have not been conducted in a transparent and juridical manner so they have not produced people's representatives or regional leaders with quality and integrity.

Therefore, Mahfud said that democracy has not been able to form a government that can prosper the people. According to Mahfud MD "The emergence of democratic and electoral problems in Indonesia is not caused by continual-paradigmatic errors and normative arrangements, but rather due to deviation from the implementation of democracy from the underlying system,". To deal with the problem of imbalance between democracy and law, he continued, it can only be solved by efforts to make the law a commander in chief who must be preceded by democratic structuring, in the sense of political recruitment to be clean from transactional politics and mutual hostages. Here, political party awareness is required as a forum for recruiting political leaders to recruit responsibly and uphold moral integrity. Mahfud said, that to improve democracy, law, politics, etc., we need strong leadership, namely leadership symbolized by our flag, which is red and white. "Strong leadership must be red-characterized, that is, 'courageous' to act decisively. At the same time, leadership must be white leadership, that is, leadership that is clean from the stain of transactions and hostage-taking, so that its courage can emerge. Courage that is not supported by cleanliness will be

very dangerous, as well as cleanliness that is not supported by courage will be blunt and ineffective.

Recently, the fate of democracy has often been the subject of discussion and a source of concern for many parties. Unrest is also evident among supporters and fighters of democracy, especially among civil society. Various criticisms are addressed to the strengthening tendency of authoritarianism, the narrowing of civic space, the decline of state tolerance to critical attitudes and criticism, and the encouragement to exercise and maintain power by utilizing the law in a discriminatory manner (rule by law) and not based on law (rule of law). Various evaluations of the current state of democracy also show that the above problems are not only experienced by Indonesia but hit many democratic countries in parts of the world. Indonesian civil society, for example, strongly criticized several developments that were considered to weaken democracy, such as the discourse on extending the President's term, high corruption cases involving politicians and government officials, the passing of several laws that were considered to limit the rights of citizens or not in favor of the interests of the people, and various serious problems that ensnared law enforcement agencies and officials. As stated by Thomas Hobbes in the book 'Leviathan' published in 1651 (Nurrahman, 2022). In this concept of the Leviathan state, the state is the owner of absolute power, without control. There is indeed a corridor that can be created, that is, through the law. However, the law is also a product of the ruler, so even the law can be manipulated by the state. How should the people respond to the condition of the country that has become the Leviathan? For Hobbes, the choice was twofold: submit fearfully or resist by demanding that the ruler step down.

Currently, the dynamics that arise regarding the determination of political parties participating in the 2024 election can be a serious problem for the future of Indonesian democracy. Several allegations were addressed to the Central General Elections Commission (KPU) which was considered dishonest in verifying political parties. Free, fair, and fair elections are the most important pillars of democracy. Therefore, the integrity of election organizers is very important for maintaining public trust in democracy. If election organizers are considered no longer trustworthy in carrying out their duties, it will reduce public confidence in democracy itself. If this happens, the future of democracy in Indonesia will be even bleaker.

Thomas Power (2020) revealed that threats to Indonesian democracy come from above, namely from political elites and official government institutions, as well as from below in the form of anti-democratic actions with grassroots support (Power & Warburton, 2020). There are structural situations that make it difficult to deepen democracy in Indonesia: stable but low economic growth, stark wealth inequality, patronage politics, endemic corruption, and a legacy of political and social authoritarianism. Here wealth inequality is used within the framework of religion to mobilize the masses behind the issue of religion-based group politics (identity politics). The decline of democracy caused by elites is demonstrated through the use of Law No. 11/2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions to send political opponents, journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens.

Another problem lies in the weakness of political parties. The root of this problem is that the recruitment of cadres is mostly not serious and perfunctory. Qualified community leaders, lecturers, and researchers are increasingly involved in the executive and legislature. Two decades after Reformasi, the party has not yet begun to show serious efforts in recruiting and regeneration of political parties only in the period leading up to elections. On the other hand, elections in an open proportional system do not strengthen the institutionalization of political parties because cadres loyal to the party can be defeated by newcomers who win the competition because they can practice money politics more massively. Finally, the national political system was filled with instant cadres. High-cost elections due to the massive practice of money politics are another record. Ed Aspinall and Ward Berenschot (2019) noted that from time to time, elections in the Reformation era were increasingly expensive from the local to national levels with the 2019 election as the most expensive election (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). This high election cost has an impact on the rampant corrupt practices at

various levels of state institutions because candidates elected both in the legislature are interested in returning the capital they have spent.

The weak internalization of civic virtue among citizens is another important note. This can be seen in the sharp, superficial, and less civilized feud between netizens on social media. Citizens need to learn to differ in opinion or political choices while remaining friends, companions, and brothers as fellow children of the nation. The rise of hate speech, intolerance, and discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities is a worrying symptom. Differences in political choices or beliefs must not erode our social capital in the form of mutual trust, tolerance, mutual help, and mutual respect for differences. Threats to freedom of media and expression such as book suppression, banning discussion of books and films, and criminal threats to outside scientists conducting research in Indonesia are other problems. The use of the ITE Law to criminalize citizens or journalists is another threat to freedom of expression.

These various problems have caused the decline of Indonesia's democracy today. Ed Aspinall (2019), Thomas Power, and Eve Warburton (2020) analyzed the development of democracy in Indonesia and argued that there was a stagnation and even a decline in democracy when President Jokowi began to carry out non-democratic practices such as disbanding mass organizations without due process, increasing intolerance, increasing political polarization, massive fake news and violations of human rights.

4. Conclusion

Democracy is a state condition that places the people as the highest holders of sovereignty. Democracy mandates implicitly that supreme power resides in the joint decisions of the people, the ruling society, the government of the society, and the people. In general, democracy has lived on thanks to the efforts of the Ancient Greeks who were considered the founders of Western civilization by 18th-century scholars who tried to empower these early democratic experiments into a new archetype for post-monarchical political organization

Indonesian democracy is certainly not perfect. However, Indonesia has been seen as a fairly successful example in undergoing the transition process to democratic consolidation in the not-too-distant future. Indonesia is also seen as a country that dispels the erroneous assumption that democracy cannot develop in a Muslim-majority society. So, various achievements of democratization so far must be maintained and democratic consolidation must remain the main agenda in Indonesia's political development. For this reason, there is still a lot of homework that needs to be done. All parties, for example, must stop various proposals and discourses that could undermine the foundations of democracy. All parties need to realize and believe that democracy is a suitable system for a pluralistic Indonesia. Political parties need to find solutions to prevent money politics in elections. The government needs to realize that a vibrant civil society and an independent media are important prerequisites for the survival of democracy.

The extent of the success of these 18th-century democracy-generating scholars in transforming the democratic ideals of the ancient Greeks and Romans into the most widely applied political institutions in the world over the next 300 years is hard to deny, although the moral reasons they often used to justify such efforts may be debatable. Nevertheless, the critical turning point in history, catalyzed by the revival of democratic ideals and institutions, essentially transformed the centuries that followed and has dominated the international landscape since the collapse of the remaining empires after the Second World War. Representative democracy in the modern era tries to bridge the gap between human 'nature' and the grip of authoritarianism, through 'social contracts' that protect the rights of citizens, limit state power, and guarantee the exercise of popular sovereignty through voting rights.

This is the case in Indonesia. The journey of democracy has experienced ups and downs and has become a never-ending discourse. Indonesian democracy is certainly not perfect.



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