

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF REGIONAL ELECTION FROM FIVE PERSPECTIVES: A RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSAL OF THE 8TH PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA

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Abstract

This research is a response to the statement made by President Prabowo Subianto regarding the large budget required for the implementation of the 2024 simultaneous regional elections. Using a literature review approach, the author conducts a comparative study of regional elections from five perspectives: democracy, constitution, budget, corrupt behavior, and national security. The findings indicate that from the democracy aspect, regional elections, whether directly or through the DPRD, can be considered democratic as long as the process runs democratically. The constitutional aspect shows that law. of the UUD 1945 should not only be interpreted as a direct regional election but can also be understood as a regional election through the DPRD. From the budget perspective, regional elections require significant funding, which must be borne by the state and the candidates themselves. This situation triggers corrupt behavior among the elected candidates in direct regional elections. Lastly, the direct election of regional heads also has the potential to disrupt security stability, as it often leads to conflicts due to differing political choices Kata Kunci: Produktivitas, Konsumsi Bahan Bakar, Fuel Ratio, Efisiensi Kerja, Cycle Time

PENDAHULUAN

The discourse on the election of regional heads (Pilkada) by the DPRD has heated up again following the proposal directly delivered by President Prabowo Subianto during the 60th Anniversary of the Golkar Party event in Sentul, Bogor, on Thursday (12/12/2024). According to the 8th President of Indonesia, the direct Pilkada system in Indonesia is too costly. The state and political figures spend tens of trillions of rupiahs in just 1-2 days of Pilkada implementation. He stated that such a large budget should be allocated for more beneficial programs, such as improving schools and irrigation. Additionally, President Prabowo compared the direct Pilkada system in Indonesia with neighboring countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and India, where once the

members of the *DPRD* are elected, it is the *DPRD* that elects the governor and regents, which he argued is more efficient.¹

President Prabowo's statement was met with critical responses from various circles. Several observers viewed the statement as a step backward in achieving democracy in Indonesia. For instance, political observer from the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Firman Noor, considered indirect regional elections as a regressive and dangerous step for the development of democracy in Indonesia. According to him, indirect elections would render the people powerless, strip away their political rights, and remove their ability to intervene in the process.

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¹ https://www.cna.id/indonesia/akhir-dari-pilkada-prabowo-lempar-usul-kepala-daerah-dipilih-dprd-25561

A similar view was expressed by political observer from the University of Indonesia, Cecep Hidayat, who argued that indirect Pilkada would not necessarily eliminate money politics but would "instead shift to transactional politics." According to Titi Anggraini, a lecturer on elections at the University of Indonesia, rather than changing the system, it would be better to address the underlying issues by "combating money politics and reducing Pilkada expenses. There should be no more wastefulness."² Titi believes that money politics could worsen if elections fully were indirect, through party representatives in the DPRD.³

Criticism was also voiced by Djayadi Hanan, Executive Director of the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI), who stated that electing regional heads through the DPRD is not suitable for Indonesia. He argued that some of the countries mentioned by President Prabowo, such as India, Malaysia, and Singapore, are not considered democracies in the same sense as Indonesia. According to him, these countries adopt a parliamentary system, where people are aware that when they vote for members of the DPR, those members will later choose the government leaders. Thus, the public understands that the government leader elected will come from the elected politicians. In contrast, in Indonesia, the public does not have such knowledge, including who the DPRD will select as the regional head.⁴

The Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Tito Karnavian, supported President Prabowo's statement on changing the system of direct regional elections to being elected by the *DPRD*. In addition to the high costs, Tito also pointed out that direct

elections have led to violence in several regions. Seeing this condition, Tito proposed the option of an asymmetric Pilkada system, which would allow for differences in the implementation of Pilkada mechanisms across regions. Such differences could arise due to specific regional characteristics, such as administrative, cultural, or other strategic factors.

In Tito's view, Pilkada through the *DPRD* can also be interpreted as representative democracy. However, Tito stated that this idea must be examined by political parties, the *DPR*, and even academics. He mentioned that this idea would be seriously discussed under his ministry. This is because the regulations regarding regional head elections have already been included in the 2025 National Legislation Program (*Prolegnas*).⁵

Meanwhile, Ahmad Irawan, a member of Commission II of the DPR from the Golkar faction, proposed that the election of regional heads through the *DPRD* should only apply to governors and vice governors, while regents and mayors should still be directly elected by people. According to him, constitutional principle can be interpreted that Pilkada can be carried out not only directly but also indirectly. Therefore, he believes that indirect elections also have a democratic meaning. After all, the members of the DPRD are representatives of the people who are directly elected, as stipulated in Pasal 18 Parafraf 3 of the UUD 1945.

Irawan added that President Prabowo's proposal regarding the election of governors by the *DPRD* is in line with the draft law (RUU) on the Political Package (Elections, Pilkada, & Political Parties), which is included in the 2025

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² https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c23vp45d8ylo

³ https://www.tempo.co/politik/dpr-proses-usul-prabowo-soal-pilkada-dipilih-dprd-setelah-reses-1183533

⁴ https://mediaindonesia.com/politik-danhukum/727210/usul-prabowo-soal-pilkada-dipilih-dprd-

tidak-sesuai-dengan-sistem-diindonesia#google_vignette

https://www.tempo.co/politik/mendagri-setuju-usul-kepala-daerah-dipilih-dprd-pilkada-langsung-sebabkan-kekerasan--1182384

Prolegnas of the DPR RI. This Omnibus Law on Politics will discuss the chapter on elections. In addition, the draft law also covers Pilkada, political parties, and the legal procedures for electoral disputes. ⁶

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The election of regional heads by the DPRD is not a new concept in Indonesia. During the New Order era, regional elections through representatives had already been implemented, which later changed after the 1998 reform, including the system of Pilkada through the DPRD, which was changed to direct elections by the people in 2005.

The discourse on returning Pilkada to the *DPRD* was also raised in 2014. In fact, the regulation was issued but later canceled by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono at that time. Back then, the Red and White Coalition wanted Pilkada to be held by the DPRD, and the DPR revised the Pilkada Law, one of the key points being the election mechanism. Six factions within the Red and White Coalition (KMP), namely Golkar, PKS, PAN, PPP, and Gerindra, wanted Pilkada to be conducted by the DPRD. Meanwhile, the PDI-P, PKB, and Hanura factions—parties supporting Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla-wanted Pilkada to remain directly elected by the people. This option was also supported by some members of the DPR from the Democrat faction. Through a voting mechanism on September 25-26, 2014, KMP's proposal for Pilkada by the DPRD received 226 votes, while the combined factions of PDI-P, PKB, and Hanura advocating for direct elections received 135 votes..7

Constitutionally, the election of regional heads is an implementation of Pasal 18 of the 1945 UUD of the Republic of Indonesia, which divides the regions of Indonesia into provinces, regencies, and cities that have

regional governments regulated by law. In its implementation, several changes occurred, starting on November 23, 1945, with the issuance of UU No. 1 of 1945 on the National Committee of Regions. This committee later became the Badan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (Regional People's Representative Council), which, together with and led by the regional head, managed regional government affairs. This committee was temporary until the general election took place.

In 1948, the Indonesian government issued UU No. 22 of 1948 concerning the election of regional heads, which in Pasal 18 of the law stated that the regional head would be elected by the President of the Republic of Indonesia after being proposed by the *DPRD*. Then, in 1965, UU No. 18 of 1965 was issued, which divided regional governments into three levels: Level I (Province), Level (Municipality/Regency), and Level III for districts. The regional head for Level I was elected by the President, while Level II heads were elected and dismissed by the Minister of Home Affairs.

The election of regional heads by the DPRD was first regulated by Undang-Undang No. 5 of 1974 during the New Order regime. However, in practice, the appointment of Level I regional heads was carried out by the President of the Republic of Indonesia. This situation persisted until the fall of the New Order regime in 1998. Regional heads during the New Order era were dominated by the military until the late 1990s (Usman, 2015).

After the Reform Era, the government issued Undang-Undang No. 22 of 1999 on Regional Government, which granted authority to the DPRD to elect regional heads and propose their dismissal. However, in 2004, the election of regional heads was again altered

https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/202412171337 06-32-1178287/politikus-golkar-usul-pilkada-lewatdprd-hanya-untuk-gubernur

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with the issuance of *Undang-Undang* No. 32 of 2004, which was subsequently revised by *Undang-Undang* No. 12 of 2008 on Regional Government, regulating that regional head elections would be directly conducted by the people. Nonetheless, in this law, the *DPRD* still retained the right to propose the dismissal of regional heads through an *angket* (inquiry)

In 2014, the *Undang-Undang* on Regional Government was revised again with the issuance of *Undang-Undang* No. 23 of 2014, which aimed to restore the authority of the *DPRD* to elect regional heads. The law was passed through an open voting mechanism in a plenary session of the DPR from Thursday (25/9/2014) to Friday (26/9/2014) early morning. However, at that time, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) issued a Government Regulation in Lieu of Undang-Undang (Perpu). As a result, the election of regional heads by the DPRD was canceled, and until now, regional heads are elected directly by the people. 8 And based on Undang-Undang No. 8 of 2015 on the Amendment of Undang-Undang No. 1 of 2015 concerning the Ratification of Government Regulation in Lieu of Undang-Undang No. 1 of 2014 on the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors into *Undang-Undang*, it mandates that starting in 2015, the Regional Head Elections shall be held every five (5) years and The discourse surrounding regional head elections through the DPRD has resurfaced after Indonesia's 8th President, Prabowo Subianto, made a statement arguing that direct regional elections are merely a waste of budget. In addition to burdening the government budget, direct regional elections also have the potential to disrupt national

security stability. In several regions, direct elections for regional heads have led to social disintegration and even the risk of conflict between supporters of the candidates. For instance, in Papua, direct regional elections have consistently triggered conflicts, starting from the candidate registration process to disputes brought before the Constitutional Court. Not only in Papua, but the *Bawaslu* has also identified Madura and South Sumatra Province as conflict-prone regions during every regional election. 10

Based on these facts, the author is compelled to respond to President Prabowo Subianto's statement regarding his intention to return the election of regional heads to the *DPRD*. In this Pasal, the author will analyze direct elections versus elections through the *DPRD* from five perspectives: budget, democracy, constitutionality, national security, and corruptive behavior. The analysis will use a literature review approach, which, according to Indra & Cahyaningrum (2019), is a descriptive study conducted by researchers to gather information relevant to the topic or issue being studied.

Frame of Mind Democration

It must be acknowledged that direct regional head elections appear more "democratic" compared to elections conducted through the *DPRD*. Direct elections allow the public to directly choose their leaders, ensuring that political rights are exercised without intermediaries.

Substantively, the concept of democracy refers to the sovereignty of the people, where the people hold power over their rulers. Democracy is often understood as

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https://binapatria.id/index.php/MBI

⁸ https://news.detik.com/berita/d-3967434/dinamika-pilkada-dari-dipilih-presiden-dprd-hingga-rakyat

https://theconversation.com/riset-pilkada-langsung-dipapua-selalu-rawan-konflik-pemerintah-perlu-lakukantransformasi-

"government by the people" (from demos = people and cratia = government), which translates to government of the people, by the

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people, and for the peopel. Sorensen (2003:1) defines democracy as a form of government by the people.

In Indonesia, democracy is realized through elections (pemilu), a mechanism to choose representatives or national leaders. According to Mashudi (1993:2), elections in a narrow sense are a means to select representatives of the people. As stipulated in Pasal 1 ayat (1) of Undang-Undang Nomor 15 Tahun 2011 tentang Penyelenggaraan Pemilu, pemilu are a means of exercising the sovereignty of the people, conducted directly, publicly, freely, confidentially, honestly, and fairly in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the Undang-Undang Dasar 1945.

Thus, it is understood that democracy in Indonesia is partially realized through pemilu, allowing citizens to channel their political rights in selecting representatives or national leaders. Normatively, democracy aims to provide public oversight of public affairs based on political equality and solidarity among citizens. It requires a set of general principles ensuring everyone's right and ability to participate, authorize. represent, and transparently hold accountability (Solihah, Ratnia, and Siti Witianti, 2017).

Pasal 18 ayat (4) of the Undang-Undang Dasar 1945 states that governors, regents, and mayors, as heads of provincial, regency, and city governments, are elected democratically. The phrase "elected democratically" is interpreted to mean that local leaders should be elected in a manner consistent with the election of national leaders, namely, through direct elections. This interpretation is reinforced by Putusan MK No. 072-073/PUU-II/2004, which reviewed UU No. 32 Tahun 2004 in relation to the **Undang-Undang** Dasar 1945. Substantively, this decision positioned the election of regional heads and their deputies as part of the electoral regime, meaning that regional heads are to be elected directly, as stated in *Pasal 22E ayat (1)*: "General elections are conducted directly, publicly, freely, confidentially, honestly, and fairly every five years."

Although Putusan MK No. 072-073/PUU-II/2004 places regional elections within the electoral regime, some argue that the phrase "elected democratically" should not be singularly interpreted as direct elections. Instead, it may also encompass elections through the DPRD (Susilo, 2005).

Therefore, the interpretation of direct head elections inherently regional as democratic remains debatable. Alternative perspectives suggest that elections conducted through the DPRD can also be considered democratic, provided they meet the required parameters. The existence of the *DPRD* is an integral part of regional governance, with its members elected directly by the people through the electoral process. This means that the DPRD serves as a representation of the people in the region, and, by extension, as the public's representative governance. in regional Therefore, in the context of electing regional heads through the *DPRD*, the role of the *DPRD* can be understood as the people's representative in determining their leader. Representation itself can be described as the presence of a representative for those who cannot be physically present (Ekawaty, 2014).

Historically, the principle of democracy can function effectively when aligned with the enforcement of law. This means that democracy and law are like two sides of the same coin, inseparable from one another. There can be no democracy without the rule of law, and there can be no rule of law without the development of a democratic political life (Mahfud, 1999:176).

In this context, the organization of regional head elections in Indonesia, to be considered democratic, must be examined from a legal perspective. How can democracy

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function without violating the law? In reality, direct regional elections in Indonesia have given rise to various forms of legal violations during the process. One example is money politics, a form of political transaction that is difficult to eliminate from every political

contestation in Indonesia.

The practice of money politics occurs even before the candidacy process, where every individual wishing to run as a candidate and be supported by a political party must prepare a certain amount of money as a political dowry to be nominated by the party. After being nominated by a political party and running as a candidate, money politics continues, with candidates having to spend significant funds to gain voter support. In exchange for votes and loyalty, voters expect candidates to take care of them through cash handouts at public meetings and other contributions during the election period (Simandjuntak, 2012). Not only money politics, but local voters in Indonesia are also plagued by corruption, political bribery, and patronage relationships between strong candidates and voters (Hadiz, 2010; Mietzner, 2010).

The practice of political bribery has even been carried out recklessly, leading to state financial losses. For instance, Bengkulu Governor Rohidin Mersyah was arrested in a sting operation (OTT) and named a suspect by the *KPK* just before the 2024 Regional Election on November 27. Rohidin, the incumbent, was running again in the 2024 election. To finance his candidacy, it is alleged that Rohidin engaged in corruption and extorted his subordinates, with a total amount of around Rp 7 billion in Rupiah, US dollars, and Singapore dollars secured in the sting operation. ¹¹

According to the *KPK*, Rohidin had prepared "dawn attack" envelopes, each containing Rp 50,000...¹²

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Citing Muhtadi in his dissertation titled "Buying Votes in Indonesia: Partisans, Personal Networks, and Winning Margins" (2018), Indonesia ranks third globally for the highest rates of vote buying, following only Uganda and Benin in Africa. Burhanuddin revealed that during the 2014 Presidential Election, about 33 percent, or 62 million of the 187 million eligible voters, were involved in vote-buying practices. ¹³

These facts cannot be denied, as direct regional elections in Indonesia have seen numerous legal violations in their implementation. From money politics, black campaigns, to various acts of violence and criminality aimed at seizing power. In these cases, the emergence of turmoil is always caused by similar deviations, namely the distortion of public aspirations and indications of money politics.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that electing regional heads through the *DPRD* eliminates the culture of money politics. However, at least in elections through the *DPRD*, the practice of money politics is not as widespread and sporadic as it is in direct regional elections. This means that electing regional heads through the *DPRD* can be more easily monitored, controlled, and subjected to legal oversight. As a result, it can reduce the incidence of fraud in the democratic process of selecting regional leaders.

Constituition

Constitutionally, the election of regional heads originates from the provisions of Pasal 18 of the *UUD 1945*, which states: "The

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02-617-1170659/pilkada-serentak-2024-dan-lingkaran-setan-politik-uang.

https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20241126095102-617-1170659/pilkada-serentak-2024-dan-lingkaran-setan-politik-uang.

https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20241125074100 -4-590749/kronologi-ott-gubernur-bengkulu-perasanak-buah-buat-ongkos-pilkada

Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is divided into provinces and these provinces are divided into regencies and cities, each of which

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divided into regencies and cities, each of which has regional government, regulated by law."

Furthermore, Pasal 18 of the UUD 1945 underwent amendments, from initially having only one clause to seven, following the second amendment during the Annual Session of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) held from August 7 to August 18, 2000. As a result of this amendment, Pasal 18 of the UUD 1945 consisted of Pasal 18 with 7 clauses, Pasal 18A with 2 clauses, and Pasal 18B with 2 clauses. This change impacted *Undang-Undang Nomor* 22 Tahun 1999 about Regional Government, which regulated that regional heads were elected by the DPRD. Consequently, the government enacted UU No. 32 Tahun 2004 on Regional Government, which introduced the system of direct regional head elections.

In its development, a judicial review of UU No. 32 Tahun 2004 regarding Regional conducted Government was Constitutional Court (MK), resulting in the decision MK No. 072-073/PUU-II/2004, which substantively placed the election of regional heads and deputy regional heads as part of the electoral regime. The ruling argued that direct regional elections are a form of election materializing the implementation of Pasal 18 of the UUD 1945. This decision reinforced the direct election of regional heads by the people. Following this, the government issued *UU No*. 22 Tahun 2007 on the Administration of General Elections, which established, first, that regional elections (Pilkada) are one of the types of elections in Indonesia, as stipulated in Pasal 1(4) of *UU No.* 22/2007. Second, administration of Pilkada became responsibility of the KPU (General Election Commission), as outlined in Pasals 8(3), 9(3), and 10(3) of UU No. 22/2007. Third, the authority to resolve Pilkada dispute results was transferred from the MA (Supreme Court) to the MK (Constitutional Court).

Subsequently, the government amended *UU No. 32 Tahun 2004* into *UU No. 12 Tahun 2008* about Regional Government. The process of issuing *UU No. 12 Tahun 2008* was not without debate regarding the mechanism for electing regional heads. If we trace the timeline, Pasal 18(4) serves as the constitutional basis for conducting regional elections, alongside Pasals 18A and 18B, as part of the second amendment to the *UUD 1945*.

In the third amendment to the *UUD* 1945, the government only included Pasal 18(3), which regulates the authority of the *DPRD*, and Pasal 22E, but Pasal 18(4) remained unchanged. According to Agustina (2009:79), the constitution did not intend to include the election of regional heads within the meaning of general elections as referred to in Pasal 22E(1), which states, "General elections are held directly, publicly, freely, secretly, honestly, and fairly every five years."

Thus, although direct regional elections are considered more legitimate in implementing meaning of "elected democracy, the democratically" in Pasal 18(4) of the UUD 1945 cannot be interpreted solely as direct regional elections. Indirect elections or those conducted through the DPRD can also be considered democratic, as long as the election process is carried out democratically (Agustina, 2009:79). This aligns with Pasal 18B UUD 1945, where the Republic of Indonesia acknowledges and respects regions with special or distinctive governance structures.

The laws related to the direct election of regional heads have undergone several changes. Following the enactment of *UU Nomor 12 Tahun 2008* on Regional Government (the second amendment of *UU Nomor 32 Tahun 2004*), in 2014 the government issued *UU No. 23 Tahun 2014* on Regional Government and *UU Nomor 9 Tahun 2015* on the Second Amendment to *UU Nomor 23 Tahun 2014* on Regional Government.

After the implementation of *UU No. 32 Tahun 2004*, which was later amended to *UU*

Nomor 12 Tahun 2008 Regional on Government, an evaluation of the direct regional election process was conducted. In this context, the role of DPRD was reactivated to elect regional heads through Undang-Undang Nomor 22 Tahun 2014 on the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors. According to Pasal 101 ayat (1) huruf d and Pasal 154 ayat (1) huruf d of Undang-Undang Nomor 23 Tahun 2014 on Regional Government, the duties and authority of DPRD in Provinces, Districts/Cities to elect Governors, Regents, and Mayors are stipulated.

The return to electing regional heads through *DPRD* is caused by two factors. First, direct elections require substantial costs, both for the government and the candidates. For example, in the 2024 simultaneous *Pilkada*, the government had to allocate a budget of Rp 37.4 trillion, ¹⁴ which is even larger than the *APBD* of West Java in 2024, which amounts to Rp 36.79 trillion. ¹⁵ The second reason for the return to *Pilkada* through *DPRD* is that direct regional elections lead to widespread, sporadic, and systematic money politics.

Although *Undang-Undang Nomor 23* Tahun 2014 on Regional Government was enacted, it was never implemented. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono at the time issued two *Peraturan Pemerintah Pengganti Undang-Undang (Perppu)*: Perppu Nomor 1 Tahun 2014 on the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors, which simultaneously repealed *Undang-Undang Nomor 22 Tahun 2014* on the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors, which stipulated that regional heads be elected by *DPRD*, and *Perppu Nomor 2 Tahun 2014* on the Amendment to *Undang-Undang Nomor 23* Tahun 2014 on Regional Government. The

essence of these *Perppu* was to remove the task and authority of *DPRD* in electing regional heads.¹⁶

Now, the discourse on electing regional heads through *DPRD* has resurfaced after President Prabowo made a statement criticizing direct regional elections as wasteful of funds. This reason is quite logical considering the enormous budget for direct regional elections, which reaches tens of trillions of rupiah. On the other hand, there are still many development issues, such as the uneven distribution of educational and healthcare facilities. It would be more beneficial and felt by the people if the tens of trillions allocated for elections were redirected toward infrastructure development that supports the improvement of public welfare.

In the constitutional context, the proposal for electing regional heads through *DPRD* may be considered. As discussed earlier, *Pasal 18 ayat (4) UUD 1945* does not have a single interpretation that mandates regional heads to be elected directly, but interpreted that the election of regional heads can be conducted through *DPRD* as long as the process is carried out democratically.

In the election of regional heads through *DPRD*, the financial burden on the government is not as significant because it does not involve millions of voters. The election is only conducted by 20-55 *DPRD* members for regency/municipality levels, and 35-120 members for provincial *DPRD*. Therefore, the election of regional heads through *DPRD* is considered more efficient and can provide benefits to society without compromising the function of the law. The primary function of the regional head election is to select the best

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https://www.liputan6.com/bisnis/read/5795812/membed ah-anggaran-pilkada-serentak-2024-capai-rp-374-triliun https://bappeda.jabarprov.go.id/apbd-jabar-2024-rp3679-

triliun/#:~:text=Struktur%20APBD%202024%20melipu

ti%2C%20belanja,tidak%20terduga%2C%20dan%20belanja%20transfer.

https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2014/10/02/21435921/Batalkan.Pilkada.Tak.Langsung.Presiden.SBY.Terbitkan.2.Perppu.

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candidate, and through *DPRD*, which consists of educated individuals, suitable candidates for regional leadership can be more easily identified. Furthermore, *DPRD* is an institution elected by the people, thus it has the responsibility to accommodate the aspirations of the community (Rifa'i & Kusriyah, 2017).

Budget for Regional Head Elections

The issue of the budget has been one of the most highlighted concerns by President Prabowo Subianto regarding direct elections of regional heads by the people. According to President Prabowo, the budget required to organize direct regional head elections is very large and burdensome for the country. He suggested that this budget should be allocated for priority programs such as education, infrastructure improvement, or public welfare.

According to Halim (2012:22), the budget can be defined as a plan implemented in the form of finances, containing estimated costs for a certain period and proposed methods to cover these costs. Rudianto (2009:3) explains that a budget is a future work plan of an organization in a quantitative, formal, and systematic form. Based on these definitions, the budget can be understood as a work plan in a quantitative, formal, and systematic form, which contains proposed expenditures to be estimated over a specific period. A budget can also be understood as the planned costs that an organization must incur to implement its work plan.

The regional head election is one of the political agendas in Indonesia held every five years to determine regional leaders. Since the 1998 reform until 2024, there have been two systems used in Indonesia to determine regional leaders: the system of electing regional heads through *DPRD* in accordance with *UU No.* 22/1999 on Regional Government, and direct elections of regional heads by the people after

the government issued *UU No. 32/2004*, which was later revised by *UU No. 12/2008* on Regional Government. To this day, the model of direct elections by the people has been the system adopted in Indonesia for determining regional leaders.

In other words, there have been seven instances of direct elections by the people held in Indonesia from 2004 to 2024, specifically in 2005, 2007, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2020, and lastly in 2024. Notably, it was only in 2024 that the elections were held simultaneously across Indonesia. During the period from 2005 to 2020, elections were held non-synchronously, following the five-year leadership period. Throughout these elections, the budget was funded by the state, both at the regional and central levels. The question is, how much budget does the government need to allocate to organize direct regional head elections, and what is the impact on the *APBD* and *APBN*?

The amount of budget that regional governments must allocate to conduct direct regional head elections varies by region, depending on the number of voters in the respective area. According to tempo.co, in the 2015 regional elections, 9 provinces and 260 districts/cities participated, with a total budget reaching IDR 7.09 trillion. In the 2017 elections, 7 provinces and 95 districts/cities spent IDR 5.96 trillion. In the 2018 elections, which involved 17 provinces, 115 districts, and 39 cities, the Ministry of Finance revealed that the budget for the 2018 elections amounted to IDR 18.5 trillion. In the 2020 elections, which were participated in by 270 regional governments, the budget reached IDR 20.4 trillion. The highest expenditure occurred during the 2024 simultaneous elections across Indonesia, with a total budget of IDR 37.43 trillion, allocated to the KPU (General Election Commission) and Bawaslu (Election Supervisory Board). This budget was used for

¹⁷ https://uwrite.id/news/prabowo-pilkada-oleh-dprd-lebih-hemat-dan-efisien

honorariums, procurement of goods and services, voting procedures, operational costs of supervisory bodies, and surveillance operations. Additionally, 14 ministries and other institutions received IDR 3 trillion for activities such as election security, political party management and strengthening, legal issue resolution supervision, trial monitoring, and cybersecurit. ¹⁸ In total, from the 2015 regional elections to the 2024 elections, the government has allocated a budget of IDR 89.38 trillion.

The budget of IDR 89.38 trillion is equivalent to the cost of building 16,250 new schools with 20 classrooms (assuming the construction cost for one school with 20 classrooms is IDR 5.5 billion). This budget is also equivalent to four times the budget of the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (Kementerian PUPR) to build 23 new dams in 2024, which amounts to IDR 21.56 trillion.¹⁹ And the budget for direct regional elections is larger than the cost of the free nutritious meal program, which targets 82.9 million recipients with a budget of IDR 71 trillion for the year 2025. 20 Meanwhile, the budget for direct regional elections, amounting to IDR 89.38 trillion, is spent within just 1-2 days of implementation.

So, does the budget for direct regional elections impact the finances of the regions or the country? Furthermore, what is its effect on regional development?

A study by Setiawan and Setyorini (2018) titled *The Impact of Regional Head Elections on Regional Expenditure Allocation* provides valuable insights. The research, which

focused on regions in Java that participated in the 2015 regional elections, found that there were differences in the allocation of grant spending, social assistance spending, and capital expenditure between the period before and during the election year. During the election year, there was an increase in grant spending, while capital expenditure and social assistance spending decreased. These findings confirm the results of Sjahrir, Kis-Katos, and Schulze (2013), which indicated that there was an increase in budget allocation during the election year. The regional elections also led to a reduction in investment budgets spent by regional governments (Kis-Katos & Sjahrir, 2017).

In other words, the budget for organizing regional elections, which is charged to regional or national finances, disrupts regional development programs. This was experienced by Madiun the Regency government in 2012, which had to cut the budget for strengthening the food reserve for the population and protecting farmers from the downturn caused by the falling rice prices during the harvest season. This was due to the need to allocate funds for the 2013 regional election, which required a budget of Rp29 billion. 21

Even with the limited *APBD*, the Bengkulu provincial government had to limit infrastructure development because it had to allocate a budget of Rp110 billion for the 2024 regional election.²²

The disruption of regional development due to the large budget required for the regional

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¹⁸ https://www.tempo.co/politik/menelisik-besaran-biaya-pilkada-langsung-dari-masa-ke-masa-yang-disebut-mahal-oleh-prabowo--1182161

https://katadata.co.id/berita/industri/64f9acee3d25d/pup r-bangun-23-bendungan-pada-2024-anggarkan-rp-21-triliun#:~:text=PUPR%20Bangun%2023%20Bendungan%20pada%202024%2C%20Anggarkan%20Rp%2021%20Triliun%20%2D%20Industri%20Katadata.co.id.

²⁰ https://indonesiabaik.id/infografis/4-target-utamaprogram-makan-bergizi-gratis

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²² https://www.rri.co.id/pemilu/389953/dana-terbatas-alokasi-40-persen-dana-pilkada-dalam-apbd-p-sulit-terealisasi

elections, which must be prepared by both the (self-promotion of candidates)

local and central governments, has been acknowledged by the Director of Domestic Politics of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Bahtiar. According to him, local governments must allocate budgets for the elections, which has resulted in many local government projects being delayed due to the simultaneous regional elections.²³

Citing the Director of National Vigilance from the Directorate General of Politics and General Government of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Akbar Ali, he stated that local government budgets are drained by 40-45% for the direct election process, making it difficult for regional heads to implement the central government's vision and mission because part of the budget is allocated for the elections. He explained that 70-75% of the APBD is spent on routine expenses, with the allocated remaining 25% for capital expenditures. If the election budget takes up 40-45% of the APBD, it means that local governments must bear the cost of the election for two to three years after its implementation.²⁴

In addition to government budgets, each pair of regional head candidates must also spend considerable amounts of money. On average, each pair of candidates spends about Rp20 billion to participate in the election. According to Hidayat (2006:276), the economic capital owned by each regional head/deputy head candidate is often a combination of personal capital and political donor assistance (businesspeople), as well as other sources. To finance all the campaign activities, rent political marketing experts, build physical infrastructure in vote pockets, and manage image building and "image bubbling"

(self-promotion of candidates), many candidates do not have enough funds. As a result, candidates often seek businesspeople to join as political investors. In exchange for their participation in supporting the candidate in the election, businesspeople are promised many privileges, such as economic and political protection (Agustino & Yusoff, 2010).

This condition ultimately triggers corrupt behaviors among regional heads to recover the capital spent during their candidacies. The money spent on the election campaign is expected to be compensated by the public's money in the *APBD* through projects distributed to political investors who helped finance the election. This behavior is clearly detrimental to the public and tarnishes democratic values.

Corruptive Behavior

As discussed above, the high cost of direct regional head elections that must be borne by the candidates, which also involves political investors, encourages corrupt behavior among elected regional heads. They will attempt to recover the capital spent (both personal funds and those of the investors) through various APBD projects. As a result, from 2004 to 2024, 167 regional heads elected through direct elections have been implicated in corruption cases.²⁵

Corruption, derived from the Latin *corruptio-corruptus*, the Dutch *corruptie*, and the English *corruption*, literally refers to actions that are corrupt, rotten, immoral, dishonest, and are often associated with financial matters (Hamzah, 2014). According to

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https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/201711071709 20-32-254099/kemendagri-sebut-banyak-proyek-didaerah-terhambat-pilkada

https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2019/12/02/15442801

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https://babel.antaranews.com/berita/425503/kpk-ri-167-kepala-daerah-terjerat-korupsi-sepanjang-2004-2024

Zulkarnain (2010), there are three models of corruption in elections. First, the acceptance of campaign funds from sources prohibited by law or regulations, which creates a corrupt relationship between the donor and the recipient. Second, the abuse of power for campaign purposes, such as using state facilities, mobilizing the bureaucracy to win certain regional head candidates, implementing populist policies such distributing cash, food assistance, or other materials to the public just before the election. Third, the buying of votes or support to win the election.

In other words, there is a strong tendency for heads of regional governments elected through direct elections to abuse their power. Moreover, according to Ritonga & Alam (2010), the likelihood of *Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah* (APBD) deviations increases when an incumbent head of region, whose term is about to end, decides to run for re-election. Incumbents must compete to retain their position and secure re-election for the next term. As a result, budget politicization is often carried out by incumbents to support their candidacies (Chortareas, Logothetis, & Papandreou, 2016; Nordhaus, 1975).

Peraturan Pemerintah No. 58 of 2005 on Pengelolaan Keuangan Daerah stipulates that the regional head, as the head of the local government, is the holder of power over regional financial management and the ownership of regional assets. This means that regional heads have the authority to establish policies in managing the APBD. In this position, incumbents can utilize budget items to support their candidacies. Not only can they engage in corruption related to the APBD, but they also hold the power to extort their subordinates, as seen in the case of the Governor of Bengkulu, who has been named a suspect by the KPK.

The budget items for grants and social assistance are often exploited by incumbents to

win public support for re-election. Financial assistance for community groups, religious institutions, and cash or food aid for the public often sees a spike just before the regional elections. Not only these two budget items, but even capital expenditures and goods and services are also frequently tainted by corrupt practices.

In other words, corrupt practices are often carried out by heads of regions elected through direct elections. From the moment they take office, elected regional heads must work to recover the political capital they spent during their campaigns, including reimbursing the investors who funded their candidacies with *APBD* projects. This cycle continues until the end of their term, when incumbents again run in the regional election, typically abusing their power to secure re-election.

Even if the regional head can no longer run for office, corrupt behavior persists as they direct their resources and power to a candidate they believe can cooperate and continue their leadership legacy. This means that, to this day, the direct election of regional heads has created a vicious circle of corruption within regional governance.

Corrupt behavior in Indonesia, which has deeply ingrained and firmly rooted, is indeed unavoidable in regional head elections, whether conducted directly or through the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (DPRD). In other words, replacing the direct election system with one conducted by the DPRD does not automatically eliminate corrupt practices among elected regional heads. This is because regional head elections through the DPRD are also not free from money politics. However, the scope of money politics in elections through the DPRD is narrower, occurring only between the candidates and the electors. As a result, corrupt practices are easier to monitor, prevent, and address. This is in contrast to direct regional head elections, where money politics involves a much larger segment of society, making it difficult to monitor, prevent, and especially to take action against.

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Similarly, in budget politicization, regional heads elected through the *DPRD* tend not to abuse their power for electoral purposes. This is revealed by Winoto and Falikhatun (2015), who conducted a study on budget usage during regional elections. The findings indicate that regional heads elected through the *DPRD* tend not to misuse the budget in the period leading up to the election. Likewise, regional head elections through the *DPRD* do not impact the *APBD* in the same way that direct regional head elections do, which require a significant financial outlay for the direct election process.

National Security

Direct regional head elections not only encourage corrupt behavior but also trigger horizontal conflicts. Political differences are no longer viewed as a form of democracy but rather as an opponent that must be defeated at any cost. This includes sowing division within social bonds in society. The potential for conflict in direct regional head elections has intensified since the 2014 elections, alongside the rise of populist politics and identity politics. This situation certainly affects the stability of national security.

Etymologically, security (from the Latin "securus") means being free from danger, free from fear (Liota, 2002). Along with the dynamics of international relations, Buzan (1997) provided a broader definition of security, stating that it encompasses not only military aspects and state actors but also the activities of non-state actors. Buzan further divides the security sector into five categories: military, political, environmental, economic, and social. Various security concepts involve many diverse actors, which can be seen from the dynamic interactions between the sectors and actors involved (Buzan, 1997).

This development in the concept of security shifts national security from a state-centered approach to a community-centered approach. As a result, security becomes more

comprehensive, and security management requires collaboration between stakeholders and security institutions. In this context, national security is understood as a fundamental need to protect and safeguard a country's national interests using political, military, and economic power to counter both internal and external threats. This aligns with the view that national security in democratic countries generally includes state security, public security, and human security (Mukhtar, 2005).

Observing the frequent conflicts that occur during each direct regional head election clearly disrupts national security, public security, and human security. These conflicts cause danger and fear among the people, both during the election process and after the direct regional head election. Moreover, it is not uncommon for the outcome of the direct election to lead to discrimination in development. Elected regional heads tend to prioritize the communities that supported them during the election.

Conflicts in direct regional head elections arise from the registration process, campaigning, election day, vote counting, and challenges to the election results. Ironically, these conflicts do not only occur at the elite level but also involve grassroots communities, causing the escalation of conflict to spread widely, resulting in loss of life and damage to public facilities.

As seen in Papua during the 2011 Puncak Regency Election, where at that time, Gerindra the Party issued recommendations for two candidate pairs (paslon) - Elvis Tabuni-Hery Dosinaen and Simon Alom-Yosia Tenbak. The conflict between the supporters of these two candidate pairs escalated into a civil war, resulting in 53 deaths, hundreds injured, and dozens of houses being and offices burned down. The

government machinery was also paralyzed due to the prolonged conflict.²⁶

The difference in vote counts also triggered conflicts in direct regional elections. For example, during the 2007 Tuban Regency Election, the narrow margin between the candidates led to anger among the supporters of the losing candidate, who then engaged in various anarchic actions, such as burning down the KPU office, the regent's office, the regent's house, and the regent's hotel. In the case of the Tuban election conflict, this narrow margin caused the supporters of the losing candidate to become enraged and engage in anarchic actions, including the burning of the KPU office, the regent's office, the regent's house, and the regent's hotel. Even in the South Sulawesi election, the difference in vote counts caused a conflict between the Makassar and Bugis ethnic groups.²⁷

This situation certainly impacts national security. Horizontal conflicts, especially those involving ethnic, religious, racial, and intergroup (SARA) issues, can divide national unity, leading to national security instability. This means that direct regional elections have the potential to disrupt national security stability. In practice, direct regional elections always involve elites and the masses, which automatically leads to conflicts not only at the elite level but also at the mass level.

According to the 2023 Bawaslu report on the Election Vulnerability Index (IKP), five provinces were identified with high vulnerability levels in the implementation of direct regional elections: DKI Jakarta, North Sulawesi, North Maluku, West Java, and East Kalimantan. Additionally, when examining the

distribution of provinces across various dimensions (socio-political context, election administration, contestation, and participation), it becomes evident that provinces across all major islands in Indonesia have high vulnerability potential.

At the district/city level, the findings indicate that 16.5% of areas are categorized as highly vulnerable, 67.9% fall under the medium-risk category, and the remaining 15.5% are categorized as low-risk. Among these, the five highest-risk districts/cities are Intan Jaya Regency, Jayawijaya Regency, Bandung Regency, Yalimo Regency, and Mappi Regency. The dominance of districts from Papua Island in this high-risk group shows that there needs to be serious attention and careful anticipation from election organizers, election supervisors, and other stakeholders at both the central and regional levels. ²⁸

We certainly still remember the intensity of identity politics during the 2017 DKI Jakarta gubernatorial election. This case began with an alleged religious defamation involving an incumbent candidate, which not only became a local issue but also shook national attention and even attracted global attention with the 212 rally, attended by millions of Muslims.

According to the Director of Lingkar Madani Indonesia, Ray Rangkuti, identity politics in the 2017 election had a significant and dangerous impact. The effects of identity politics during the 2017 DKI Jakarta election, for example, are still being felt by the general public. The polarization of the public remains unresolved.

²⁶ https://theconversation.com/riset-pilkada-langsung-di-papua-selalu-rawan-konflik-pemerintah-perlu-lakukan-transformasi-196411

²⁷ Nurhasim, Moch., Konflik Dalam Pilkada Langsung Studi Tentang Penyebab Dan Dampak Konflik http://download.garuda.kemdikbud.go.id/article.php?arti cle=504921&val=10355&title=KONFLIK%20DALAM

^{%20}PILKADA%20LANGSUNG%20%20STUDI%20T ENTANG%20PENYEBAB%20DAN%20DAMPAK% 20KONFLIK

²⁸ BAWASLU, 2023. Indeks Kerawanan Pemilu 2024. Jakarta: Bawaslu

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Ray assesses that the dangers of identity politics are even greater than the dangers of money politics. While money politics is temporary, the effects of identity politics spread and persist. Money politics also never results in violence. In contrast, identity politics is prone to violence. Policies created by regional leaders who emerged from elections influenced by identity politics are also considered difficult to undo, as they perpetuate societal divisions. This means that direct regional elections have the potential to create disintegration at the societal level. ²⁹ These divisions even continue into discriminatory development policies.

This situation, however, would not occur if regional elections were conducted by the DPRD, where the process would be confined to the elite level without directly involving the public. As such, political conflicts at the elite level could be localized and not escalate to the mass level.

CONCLUSION

The direct election of regional heads, which has been held seven times from 2004 to 2024, has provided important lessons in Indonesia's democratic life. The aim of direct regional elections was to provide political education, foster fair play, and the ability to accept both victory and defeat. However, in reality, it has given rise to various problems in development.

The direct election of regional heads, intended to minimize the practice of money politics at the elite level, has instead led to the opposite outcome. Money politics expanded, involving not only political elites but also the public. Transactional politics has become a common sight in every regional election. As a result, the cost of politics has become very high, triggering corrupt behavior among elected regional heads. Moreover, the direct election of regional heads has also caused

divisions at the social level that are difficult to heal.

It seems that the election of regional heads through the DPRD should be considered as an alternative to replace the current system of direct regional elections in Indonesia. As long as the process remains democratic, electing regional heads through the DPRD would not eliminate the democratic values in Indonesia.

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