

## The Phenomenon of Declining of Political Parties in Malang Raya

Budhy Prianto<sup>1(\*)</sup>, Dwi Suharnoko<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Public Administration, University of Merdeka Malang, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Department of Public Administration, University of Merdeka Malang, Indonesia

(\*)✉ (e-mail) budhy.prianto@unmer.ac.id

### Abstract

In democratic countries, the political party acts as a mediator bridging communication between the government and its citizens. The decline of the political party taking place before and after the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections and legislative elections certainly affects the political parties in carrying out their roles. Conducted in Malang, the objective of this study is to describe factors contributing to the declining image of political parties and its implications. The findings showed that the image of political parties is deteriorating due to a lack of trust towards the political parties and politicians in the parliament. The Decree on direct vote system for both presidential and regional head election and establishment of an open proportional system in the legislative election also contributes to the deterioration. Implications of the phenomenon are negative attitude and declining interest towards a political party.

**Keywords:** *Democracy, Presidential Election, Legislative Election, Political Party, Constituent*

### Introduction

The number of political parties increases sharply in the reformation era. The General Election Commission reported that 48 political parties participated in the 1999 Election. However, the number plummeted to 24 political parties in the 2004 Election. There are 38 political parties including 6 local political parties in Nangroe Aceh Darussalam in the 2009 Election. In a legislative election conducted on April 9, 2014, the number declined sharply to 12 national political parties and 3 local political parties in Nangroe Aceh Darussalam. In the 2019 Election, the number slightly increased into 16 national political parties and 4 local political parties from Nangroe Aceh Darussalam (Tempo, 2019).

The fluctuation is inversely proportional to the number of voters participating in the last four Elections. In 1999 Election, the number of voters is pretty high, and the percentage of abstentions is only 10.21%. However, in the next three General Elections, the percentage keeps increasing. Percentages of abstentions in the 2004 Legislative Election, the first round of 2004 Presidential Election and the second round of the election are 23.34%, 23.47%, and 24.95%. In 2009 Election, the percentages increase into 29.1% during 2009 Election and 40% in 2009 Presidential Election. Percentage of abstentions in 2014 Legislative Election is 30%—the highest among the Legislative Election in (Tempo, 2019). However, in the 2019 Election where both Presidential and Legislative Elections took place on April 17, 2019, the percentage of abstentions fall sharply to 19.24 % (Surbakti, 2019). Meanwhile, the percentage of abstentions in 2019 Regional Head Election is 27.9%.

According to several political observers, the percentages indicate that the image of Indonesian political parties is deteriorating, and the public trust towards the parties is critically low (Republika, n.d.). Voters, particularly young voters are skeptical towards General Election because of several criminal acts involving prominent figures of Indonesian political parties. As an addition, younger voters are not familiar with most political party cadres. According to Andrinof Caniago, a political observer from Universitas Indonesia, Jokowi won the 2014 Presidential Election because voters and younger

voters, in particular, voted for him rather than Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (PDIP), Jokowi's a party. As a result, Adrinof stated that political parties should improve their image among the public to get more votes in the upcoming General Election ("Kompas," 2012).

Indonesian Survey Institute (LSN) stated that political parties become a democratic institution that gains the least amount of public trust (42%). Percentages of public trust towards the public organization, non-government organization (NGO), press institution and survey agency are 57.5%, 58.5%, 65.1%, and 69.3% respectively (Republika, July 16, 2013). A survey conducted by Surat Kabar Harian Kompas, one of the daily newspapers in Indonesia revealed that an aspect determining how many votes political parties can get is the performance of 6,607 legislative candidates competing in 2014 Legislative Election. It has been proven that voters tend to vote for the legislative candidate rather than political parties these candidates represent (Kompas, April 14, 2014).

This phenomenon occurs not only in the city but also in rural areas. Vice Secretary-General of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), Mahfuz Sidik admitted that political apathy has spread widely in rural areas these days. He said that they did not see any change even though they have visited polling stations (TPS) repeatedly (<http://politik.news.viva.co.id/news/read/484404-wasekjen-pks--masyarakat-desamakin-apolis-politik>). The public is thinking that political parties can no longer carry out their role effectively, are corrupt, and tend to neglect public aspiration. Various non-professional polls, empirical studies, and open discussions reveal how the deteriorating image of Indonesian political parties among the public is (see Surbakti, 2019). An idea that an aspect that determines the result of the 2014 Presidential Election is people's coalition instead of the political coalition had once emerged (Kompas, April 26, 2014). Based on the background, the first objective of this study is to identify some factors that result in the deterioration of Indonesian political parties' image or critically low public trust towards the political parties in the 2014 Presidential and Legislative elections. Secondly, it also aims to provide theoretical and practical implications on the deteriorating image of the political parties after the 2014 Presidential and Legislative Election.

## Method

This qualitative research approach focuses on two aspects: first, the relationship between political parties (political party elites) and voting members or communities and the arguments that underlie the behavior of political party members and the voting community and their preferences in determining choices in legislative and presidential elections in 2014; and second, the practical and theoretical implications of the decline in prestige (public distrust of) political parties, both the implications that have already been manifested and the latent implications that are still in the form of predictions. Data or information obtained through documentation studies sourced in Kompas newspapers and Tempo Magazine, and in-depth interviews with a purposive number of political party leaders, social-cultural activists, and voters in the Malang area by using the snowball technique. The process of processing and analyzing data uses the steps as stated by (Creswell, 2010).

## Results and Discussion

### The regulatory aspects of the general election and the decline in the image of political parties

Amendment of the rules as referred to in article 56 paragraph (2) of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 32 of 2004 to become articles 56-59 of RI Law 8 of 2012 concerning General Elections lies in the addition of parties from outside political parties that are given the right and given the authority to propose themselves and or propose individuals to nominate as pairs of candidates for regional head. Through articles 56 - 59 of (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 8 Tahun 2012 tentang Pemilihan Umum anggota DPRD dan DPR, 2012), the state responds to the public's desire to

continue to use an open proportional system, a system in which the determination of legislative candidates is based on the mechanism of majority votes. This system has been used since the 2009 general election after the previous article governing the closed proportional system based on the serial number in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 10 of 2008 through judicial review was declared invalid by the Constitutional Court (*Mahkamah Konstitusi/MK*). In its consideration, the Constitutional Court stated that the determination of legislative candidates based on the serial number was not by the substance of people's sovereignty as regulated in article 27 Paragraph 1, Article 28 D Paragraph 1, Article 28 D Paragraph 3, and Article 28 I Paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution. Politics the law on the 2009, 2014 and 2019 general election system at least indicates that the state hopes that by removing the nomination of legislative candidates based on the serial number, it will provide equal opportunity and treatment to all legislative candidates in contesting in the 2014 legislative elections and beyond. All contestants can carry out the fair competition in building popularity and electability before the voting audience.

Through the amendment of article 59 of (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 32 Tahun 2004, n.d.) to article 59 of Law Number 12 of 2008, it clearly shows that political parties are no longer the sole party that has the right and authority to propose candidates for regional head candidates in the election of regional heads. This change in its development then certainly had an impact on the reduced role of the party on the one hand and increased opportunities for the role of the community on the other hand in the process of proposing pairs of candidates for the regional head.

According to (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 8 Tahun 2012 tentang Pemilihan Umum anggota DPRD dan DPR, 2012) concerning General Elections of Members of the People's Legislative Assembly, Regional Representatives Council, and Regional People's Representative Council, specifically in 5 paragraph (1) the rules regarding the electoral system for DPR, Provincial DPRD, and Regency / City DPRD members. Article 5 paragraph (1) stipulates that elections to elect members of the DPR, the provincial DPRD and the regency/city DPRD shall be conducted using an open proportional system. Then in article 7, it is also emphasized that participants in the General Election to elect DPR, Provincial DPRD and regency/city DPRD members are political parties. The operationalization of the open proportional system in the voting process for the election of members of the DPR, Provincial DPRD and Regency / City DPRD, is regulated in article 154 which stipulates that the voting for the election of members of the DPR, DPD, Provincial DPRD, and regency/city DPRD is conducted by cast a single vote on the number or image mark of a political party and/or the name of the candidate on the ballot.

However, the most crucial thing in setting the open proportional system is in the process of determining the elected candidates for members of the DPR, Provincial DPRD, and Regency / City DPRD. For this reason, article 215 of Law Number 8 of 2012 concerning General Elections of Members of the DPR, DPR, and DPRD regulates this matter in detail. The full article 215 states as follows:

The determination of elected candidates for members of the DPR, Provincial DPRD, and regency/city DPRD from Election Contesting Political Parties is based on the acquisition of seats of Election Contesting Political Parties in an electoral district with the following conditions.

- a. Elected candidates for members of the DPR, the provincial DPRD and the regency/city DPRD are determined based on the candidate who receives the most votes.
- b. If there are two or more candidates who fulfill the provisions as referred to in letter with the same vote acquisition, the determination of the elected candidates is determined based on the distribution of the vote acquisition of the candidates in the constituency taking into account women's representation.

- c. In the case of candidates who meet the conditions referred to in letter a, the number is less than the number of seats obtained by the Election Contesting Political Parties, the undivided seats are given to the candidates based on the subsequent acquisition of the most votes

This clause in article 215 points a, b, c, empirically has a very large consequence on the views and attitudes of the constituents of political parties and the public over political parties. In several cases, the phenomenon emerged that during the eligible voters were more likely to vote for a candidate's name than to vote for a political party.

Various provisions with all kinds of changes regulated in Laws on Political Parties, Laws on General Elections, as well as Regional Government Laws and Decisions handed down by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia relating to the holding of elections, have had an impact on the life and role political parties. The rules of the proportional system are open and the rules that open up opportunities for individual candidates in presidential and regional head elections seem to be more personable than the role of political parties. This fact reinforces the opinion of (Mack, 2010) that the electoral system is one of the preconditions that causes misalignment of political parties.

### **Relations between political party elites and constituents and the voting community**

Seeing the data stated above, in general, the phenomena emerged in all types of political parties that determine the decline of political parties' prestige (image) are four factors. First, the public perceives political parties in parliament as being heavily involved in corruption cases. Some of the cases that emerged were scandals involving the *Partai Demokrat* (PD) and *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS). Later another case involving officials of *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP), *Partai Gerindra* and *Partai Demokrat Indonesia Perjuangan* (PDIP). Second, related to the decline in public trust that people consider the existing political parties are having little concern over the various problems that befall the people; the main people at the grassroots. Third, the behavior of party politicians by some people is considered as very pragmatically act, where party officials are perceived to tend to behave pragmatically in dealing with various strategic national issues. This pragmatic behavior was later recognized as transactional politics. Transactional politics have damaged the noble values in political science. Also, it damages the morals and order of society. The further impact is that ideology-based parties, as well as Islam-based parties, are experiencing a degradation. Transactional politics carried out by the elite of political parties is then imitated by some people. People no longer believe in ideology but rather to deify money (Kompas, 14 May 2014). Transactional politics has ruined everything. Such transactional political practices are one reason for the decline in support of several political parties. While the fourth cause is still related to the behavior of party politicians who have been implicated in amoral scandals such as infidelity, many wives and drugs. On the other hand, parties perceived as caring about people's problems and rarely involved in corruption get a pretty good public appreciation.

From the constituent's point of view, political parties are the link to fight for their interests which are expected to be realized in state policy. Constituents are part of a wider community that has diverse interests and needs. Political parties as a bridge between the community and the state have a bargaining position as one of the main channels in knowing how to fight for the interests of the people in the political system in this country. Therefore political parties are very dependent on the support of constituents in the general election (Fionna, 2013). Society and the State both need political parties to build relations between the people and the state. The relations between these three parties (community, political parties, and the state) are closely related (Surbakti, 2019).

Constituents certainly expect political parties to be close to them and can always be trusted to be their bridge in the life of the state. On the eve of simultaneous general elections - presidential elections

and legislative elections held simultaneously - in 2019, constituents from each political party only become the main target of the political parties concerned to achieve the interests of political parties, namely winning the presidential and vice-presidential seats as well as winning as many parliamentary seats. This is as said by a constituent informant of a political party:

"Their new election moments usually becomes a moment to come to us. So that the relationship between the party and the constituents is in my opinion just a relationship that has no bound; it happens only when there are general elections. If there is no general election, then the party's relationship with us as a constituent would be impossible".

The mutual relationship between political parties and constituents as consumers should lead to the creation of loyalty between the two parties. However, this does not seem to have become a reality in Malang. In the end, constituents tend to have a negative view of political parties, including political parties and their elected legislators during general elections. The statement of a socio-cultural observer who was a research informant strengthened the phenomenon of these negative views:

"I think it is natural for a constituent's view to be like that, and that is indeed a result of low trust in the party and the relative inadequacy of the image of legislators among constituents".

The facts above found were supported by various polls conducted by the Indonesian Survey Institute since 2004, which found fairly consistent results that the public tends to have a negative view of political parties. In early 2015, the level of trust in political parties and the House of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat/DPR*) was in the range of 50%, far below the confidence in the president (83%) and the Corruption Eradication Commission (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi/KPK*) (81%). The negative view of constituents as the main consumers of political parties is reflected in their opinions about political parties or politicians. One of the socio-cultural observers in Malang stated:

"In Malang some time ago, there was corruption done in the congregation, I was ashamed because one of them was my protege, her name was Nanda. That's an example; it turns out that they don't have the traits of a statesman. This is due to the political party being in power for too long, its elites always set short goals. These short objectives are wrapped in various jargon of struggle, but their purpose is how to gather power and opportunity by doing corruption. The corruption case in Malang was a failure of political parties. Now when the young generation, the millennial generation, is not interested in the political frenzy, they cannot be blamed".

So, three negative things that people often remember are that politicians often don't keep promises; only care about personal and group interests; and like to talk about themselves or arrogant.

The negation of the three negative things is a key condition of the creation of trust in a relational relationship. It is no wonder that the level of constituency trust will always be low for political parties. Consistently, various polls have also found that constituents feel they are not close to political parties, with a value between 15-20%. This will make it difficult for political parties to approach their constituents. The results of these polls are one of the reasons constituents change their choices in each election. The relationship created between constituents and political parties has been only a transactional relationship, and it will be quite difficult to move towards a relational relationship where trust from both parties is necessary. Good party management and political credibility greatly influence the level of constituents' trust in them. These two things have not been seen in the political context in Indonesia. The wearing down of the constituents' trust in political parties which is still experiencing internal conflicts will naturally occur. This will continue as long as political parties do not try to regain the confidence of their constituents.

"This is a result of political parties forgetting too long their obligations to carry out political communication and education to their constituents," urged a research informant.

The phenomenon as stated above ultimately makes the life of political parties encourage the strengthening of democratic practices elitist. This practice is more directed at political parties becoming office-seeking parties that are influenced by the tendency to gain power. This is possible because positions in government offer incentives to accumulate financial resources through rent-seeking. The social basis of the masses can be ignored and party ideology can be set aside. This elitist practice of democracy by (Mack, 2010) on one hand is called leadership failure and on the other hand as a form of alienation from the core base that causes misalignment in political parties.

## **Conclusions**

To overcome the decline of political parties' prestige, thus, requires internal and external solutions. On the internal side, transactional politics and wild political party oligarchies are the effects of an open proportional system that has major implications for liquid or fading ideology, so that constituent ties with political parties become very loose. Political parties, in turn, tend to be fragmented and easily fragmented. Even further than that, virtue, integrity, especially attitudes prioritizing the public interest are almost no longer visible. Therefore political parties must have the courage to change their perspective to immediately rebuild a party ideology, something far more valuable than power and money. In this ideology, in addition to the people's ideas and state ideas that must be fought for, the soul bond between political parties and their constituents is also linked. By re-holding and building the ideology of politicians, political parties will be more demanded to politic by upholding ethics and morals, politically politic to be more beneficial to society.

On the external side, given the widespread practice of pragmatic and transactional politics in the context of legislative elections is the implication of an open proportional system, it needs to be reconsidered to return to a closed proportional system. Transactional political practices are also rampant since the implementation of the direct election system for regional heads at the provincial and district/city levels. Therefore it is better if the regional head election system at both levels of the regional government is handed back to the DPRD according to their respective levels. Indeed, this step raises fears of a strengthened oligarchy (elite) of political parties if a closed proportional system again applies to legislative elections and an indirect electoral system in regional elections. However, several studies say that the implementation of an open proportional system and the direct election system for regional heads are more disadvantageous than the possibility of the practice of oligarchy (elite) political parties in the administration of democracy.

## **Acknowledgments**

The authors would like to acknowledge the funding of the Directorate of Research and Community Service, Directorate-General for Research and Development at the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, Indonesia No.: 229/SP2H/LT/DRPM/2019, 19th February 2019, which made a portion of this research possible.

## **References**

- Creswell, J. W. (2010). *Research Design Pendekatan Kualitatif, Kuantitatif dan Mixed* (Third). Pustaka Pelajar.
- Fionna, U. (2013). *The Institutionalisation of Political Parties in Postauthoritarian Indonesia From the Grass-roots Up*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Kompas. (2012). *Kompas*.

Mack, C. S. (2010). *When political parties die: a cross-national analysis of disalignment and realignment*. Praeger.

Republika. (n.d.). *No Title*.

Surbakti, R. (2019, January 8). Peserta Pemilu dan Partisipasi Pemilih. *Kompas*.

Tempo. (2019). *No Title*.

Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 8 Tahun 2012 tentang Pemilihan Umum anggota DPRD dan DPR, Pub. L. No. 8 (2012).

Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 32 Tahun 2004.