



# Establishing Elections With Integrity In Indonesia: Purposes, Problems, and Solutions

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**Abstract.** The General Election, a cornerstone of any democratic system, plays a pivotal role in nations across the spectrum of development. Serving as the mechanism to select leaders, elections also serve as a tangible arena for the expression of political engagement, the exercise of political rights, and the manifestation of people's aspirations. In effect, elections facilitate the orderly and constitutional rotation of leadership, ensuring a peaceful transition of power. Furthermore, elections serve as a critical instrument for wielding political control over authority and establishing a government that genuinely reflects the people's aspiration. In the Indonesian context, elections hold a central position in the nation's democratic identity. They serve as the tangible realization of the principles enshrined in Article 1, Paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution: "The people hold sovereign power, which is implemented according to the Constitution." As such, the primary challenge faced by democratic nations, Indonesia included, pertains to the development of an electoral framework that fortifies the bedrock of democratic values and institutions, perpetuating the ongoing practice of democracy itself. Nevertheless, a stark reality exists where instances of electoral misconduct and irregularities persist (Ham, 2015; Levin & Alvarez, 2012 cited in Rahmatunnisa, 2017). These cases of fraudulent elections are often intertwined with systemic corruption within a nation (Birch cited in Darnolf & Elklit, 2012), ultimately corroding the integrity of the electoral process. This paper seeks to delve into the imperative of conducting elections with unwavering integrity, exploring the consequential impact on the nation's societal structure, while also presenting remedies to avert the multifaceted repercussions stemming from the absence of integrity in the electoral process.

**Keywords:** Elections, democracy, integrity of the electoral process

## A. Introduction

The General Election, a cornerstone of any democratic system, plays a pivotal role in nations across the spectrum of development. Serving as the mechanism to select leaders, elections also serve as a tangible arena for the expression of political engagement, the exercise of political rights, and the manifestation of people's aspirations. In effect, elections facilitate the orderly and constitutional rotation of leadership, ensuring a peaceful transition of power. Furthermore, elections serve as a critical instrument for wielding political control over authority and establishing a

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W. Waluyo et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference for Democracy and National Resilience (ICDNR 2023)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 795,

[https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-148-7\\_19](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-148-7_19)

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Nevertheless, a stark reality exists where instances of electoral misconduct and irregularities persist.[1] These cases of fraudulent elections are often intertwined with systemic corruption within a nation, ultimately corroding the integrity of the electoral process. This paper seeks to delve into the imperative of conducting elections with unwavering integrity, exploring the consequential impact on the nation's societal structure, while also presenting remedies to avert the multifaceted repercussions stemming from the absence of integrity in the electoral process.

This study using qualitative research methods to explores primary data through documents, including scientific articles, and media publications mainly related to the current elections and the concept of integrity in the election realms. The main analyses, criticisms, interpretations, and conclusion about the issue was based on those documents.

The main aim of this article is to provide the importance of election with integrity to the audiences, including decision makers, political cadres, NGO activists. Particularly this article would talk about the purpose and meaning of election with integrity, the relation between democracy and election, deviations in elections, and the possible solutions. By discussing such issues this article could eventually also contribute to the efforts of maintaining and developing the current and the future of election and democracy in Indonesia.

## **B. The Purpose of Elections**

Elections serve as a crucial barometer for gauging the robustness of a nation's democratic fabric. The significance of democracy for the people of Indonesia is beyond dispute. Since the nation's inception, the pursuit of an ideal political system has been a prevailing aspiration, intricately woven into the fabric of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. President Soekarno's address to the United States Senate on May 17, 1956, succinctly encapsulated the fourth tenet of Pancasila, "People's Sovereignty Guided by the Wisdom of Consultation/Representation," with the term "democracy." According to Soekarno, the architect of Pancasila, democracy is inextricably linked with Pancasila as the philosophical foundation of the state and a defining national identity.

Despite its relatively young status as an independent nation, Indonesia has demonstrated a resolute commitment to democratic practice. The 1955 elections stand as a testament to this commitment, being hailed as one of the most democratic and peaceful episodes in the nation's history. From both philosophical and historical vantage points, it becomes incumbent upon us to grasp the profound esteem with which democracy is regarded in this nation, encompassing the vital domain of conducting democratic elections.

While elections are not the sole yardstick for assessing the presence and caliber of democracy, their absence unequivocally diminishes the significance of democracy in a country. Several democratic electoral principles underscore this fact. Chief among them is the ability of elections to furnish the populace with optimal choices, presented alongside comprehensive information to facilitate informed decision-making.

Furthermore, even nations with an anti-democratic disposition occasionally orchestrate elections. Countries such as Iraq, North Korea, Cuba, and even, at points in history, the People's Republic of China have conducted elections. In the Indonesian context, during the New Order regime, elections took place in 1971, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, and 1997. These elections invariably led to victories for Golkar, securing an average mandate of approximately 68%. However, it's vital to recognize that the elections under the New Order did not align with the aspirations of the populace. Historical records underscore that these elections were marred by contraventions of core electoral principles, particularly the tenets of direct, universal, free, and secret balloting.

According to the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the report titled "International Obligation for Elections Guidelines for Legal Frameworks," or International Standards for General Elections Guidelines for Reviewing the Legal Framework for Elections asserts that democratic elections must adhere to certain essential elements:

- a. Legal Framework Development; where the general framework must be formulated in such a way that it is not ambiguous, understandable, and transparent, and must be able to highlight all the necessary elements of the electoral system to ensure democratic elections.
- b. Electoral System; the choice of an electoral system should ensure that international standards for democratic elections are adhered to in relation to the chosen institutions, frequency of elections, and organization of electoral units.
- c. Delimitation of Electoral Districts and Unit Boundary Definitions; the legal framework for elections must ensure that electoral unit boundaries are drawn in such a way as to achieve the objective of equal burden for each vote to the highest feasible degree, in order to achieve effective representation.
- d. Right to Vote and Be Elected; the legal framework must ensure that all eligible citizens are guaranteed the right to universal and fair suffrage and the right to participate in elections without discrimination.
- e. Electoral Administration; the legal framework must mandate the establishment and functioning of electoral management bodies in a manner that guarantees independent and fair conduct of elections.
- f. Voter Registration and Registered Voters; the legal framework must require transparent and accurate voter list maintenance, protect the rights of qualified citizens to register, and prevent unauthorized or fraudulent registration or removal of individuals.
- g. Access to Ballots for Political Parties and Candidates; there must be an assurance that all political parties and candidates can compete in elections on the basis of fair treatment.
- h. Democratic Campaigning; there must be an assurance that every political party and candidate enjoys the right to freedom of expression, freedom of

assembly, and access to voters, and all relevant stakeholders in the election process have equal opportunities for success.

- i. Media Access and Freedom of Expression; all political parties and candidates have access to the media and are treated fairly by state-owned or state-controlled media. There should also be no restrictions on the freedom and right of expression of political parties and candidates during the campaign.
- j. Campaign Financing and Expenditure; ensuring that all political parties and candidates are treated fairly under the legal provisions regulating campaign financing and expenditure.
- k. Voting Process; ensuring that polling stations are accessible, accurate records of ballots are maintained, and ballot secrecy is guaranteed.
- l. Vote Counting and Tabulation; ensuring that all votes are counted and tabulated accurately, evenly, fairly, and openly.
- m. Role of Party Representatives and Candidates; to protect the integrity and transparency of elections, the legal framework should include provisions stating that representatives appointed by participating parties and candidates must observe all voting processes. The rights and responsibilities of candidate and party representatives at polling stations should also be outlined in the legal framework.
- n. Election Monitoring; ensuring transparency and enhancing credibility by stipulating that election observers can monitor all stages of the electoral process.

Experts have agreed to the essential requisites for democratic elections that include legal clarity, periodicity, substantive choices devoid of origin-based biases or inconsequential disparities, and direct execution. Furthermore, the tenets of democratic elections encompass expansive information dissemination across all dimensions, uniform suffrage for all citizens, the absence of coercion, and the assurance of ballot secrecy.

Furthermore, democratic elections necessitate a transparent, rule-governed ballot tallying process, impartial and objective oversight, dedicated administrative infrastructure, and adherence to comprehensive regulations. From this multifaceted perspective, the conduct of democratic elections ensures a harmonious alignment across diverse elements, spanning aspects, voters, participants, executors, and the execution process itself.

### **C. Integrity in Elections**

Elections characterized by integrity often get entangled with the concept of democratic elections, despite their distinct natures. While appearing interconnected and mutually supportive, these two concepts possess disparate essences. Democratic elections, with their focal point on aspects that underscore people's sovereignty and adherence to the rule of law, diverge from elections with integrity, which uphold the essence of electoral propriety.

Elections marked by integrity materialize when all participating elements, spanning organizers and participants, willingly embrace and adhere to the moral and ethical underpinnings of the electoral process. A process of conducting free and fair elections by addressing electoral fraud and malpractices, administrative irregularities,

and violations of democratic principles throughout an electoral cycle, beginning with the campaign period to count the final results. In other words, elections with integrity are agreed upon international conventions and universal standards about elections reflecting global norms applying to all countries worldwide throughout the electoral cycle, including during the pre-electoral period, campaign, on polling day, and its aftermath.

Meanwhile, as outlined in the Administration and Cost of Election 2012 report, elections characterized by integrity encompass several key facets: (1) Embracing the foundational principles of democratic elections; (2) Enforcing a robust code of ethics, evident through ethical conduct demonstrated by organizers, candidates, parties, and all involved professionals, emphasizing accuracy and professionalism; (3) Ensuring the safeguarding of the election management body's autonomy, exemplifying institutional independence; (4) Vigilant oversight and effective legal enforcement; and (5) Prioritizing transparency and accountability, exemplified by the proactive disclosure of public information pertaining to all electoral processes.

On the other side, Muck and Verkuilen (2002) asserted that elections with integrity are elections that comply to the following principles: (1) Inclusive: all citizens must be effectively enabled to exercise their right to vote in the electoral process. (2) Clean: voters' preference must be respected and faithfully registered. (3) Competitive: must offer the electorate an unbiased choice among alternatives (4) Periodic: the main public offices must be accessed through periodic elections (5) The result must not be reversed.

Referring to the Global Commission on Election, Democracy, and Security, the Commission on Election, Democracy, and Security defines the criteria for upholding democratic elections, commonly known as election integrity. This commission has identified three pivotal indicators of elections characterized by integrity. Firstly, elections are founded on democratic principles, encompassing universal suffrage and political equality as delineated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Secondly, the planning and execution of these elections adhere to professional, impartial, and transparent standards. Lastly, the entirety of the electoral cycle is guided by principles of integrity and ethical conduct.

Elections with integrity according to the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network (2011),[2] occur when the voting and counting process is (1) held based on the principles of democratic elections; direct, public, free, secret, honest, fair, transparent and accountable. (2) Performed accurately, error-free, and no manipulation. (3) Organized by election organizers based on the Election Law, KPU Regulations, Stages, Programs, Time for Elections, and the Election Organizer Code of Ethics. (4) Supervised by election participants, election monitoring institutions and voters, as well as the mass media. (5) Enforced consistently, impartially and in a timely manner.

In conclusion, the concise summary provided encapsulates diverse viewpoints on elections with integrity, as articulated by the 2012 Global Commission. The Commission's definition underscores the essence of such elections: they are conducted in alignment with the democratic tenets of universal voter rights and political equality, as manifested through international, professional, impartial, and transparent practices spanning the entirety of the electoral process.

The aforementioned discourse highlights the numerous constraints surrounding elections with integrity. Nevertheless, there exist fundamental principles that remain steadfast. It is imperative, however, to not confine our perspective to mere normative considerations. The paramount objective revolves around the realization of elections that assure equal treatment for all participants, enabling every eligible citizen to cast their vote in alignment with their aspirations. The utmost priority is to guarantee that each vote, cast within the confines of the polling booth, is accurately recorded and faithfully reflected. This aspiration underscores the core of elections with integrity. This vision is anticipated to be realized through a comprehensive framework for organizing elections in Indonesia, based on the parameters laid out in Article 22E of the 1945 Constitution and Law 7/2017 concerning Elections. These encompass a multitude of vital principles: (1) Direct participation; (2) Universality; (3) Freedom; (4) Secrecy; (5) Honesty; (6) Equity; (7) Transparency; (8) Accountability; (9) Orderliness; (10) Professionalism; (11) Independence; (12) Legal clarity; (13) Efficiency; (14) Effectiveness; (15) Proportionality; and (16) Openness.

The ultimate outcome of conducting elections with integrity is the cultivation of public confidence in the mechanisms, establishments, structures, and objectives of democracy. This holds paramount significance, given that an inability to foster trust in democracy could breed skepticism about its very existence, potentially paving the way for the rise of antidemocratic regimes. Additionally, the pursuit of elections with integrity aims to spur elevated public engagement in the electoral process. As a consequence, the quality and legitimacy of elections stand to be substantially enhanced. This positive trajectory, in turn, lays the foundation for heightened community participation in governance.

Greater community involvement contributes to a government's enhanced representativeness, enabling it to formulate policies that resonate with the collective aspirations and desires of the populace. This shift ensures that government actions are not skewed in favor of a select few or an elite minority. Consequently, suspicions are dispelled, and the prevalence of political skepticism and large-scale protests is mitigated. In this context, a broader perspective reveals that governments can effectively navigate diverse conflicts and security concerns, often rooted in discontentment and perceived illegitimacy in governance.[1]

In summary, elections with integrity are profound and extensive. Their significance extends beyond instilling trust in democratic principles and procedures among the public. Ultimately, their impact lies in securing public contentment with the government, thereby contributing to the overall stability of a nation.

#### **D. The Correlation between Democracy and Election with Integrity**

Elections stand as a cornerstone of democratic governance, embodying a political tradition that assesses the implementation of a democratic system. Within this context, the significance of conducting elections with integrity becomes paramount in fostering the vitality and advancement of democracy. When elections are held in a democratic and transparent manner, they transform into platforms for both political participation and civil liberties.

Democracy inherently relies on elections for the selection of national leaders and parliamentary representatives. Furthermore, democracy's essence lies in its inclusive

invitation for individuals from all walks of life to engage in political affairs and contribute to governance. To facilitate this, it's imperative to establish a mechanism for recruiting public officials characterized by unwavering integrity. Democracy also necessitates periodic constitutional transitions of power that encompass a broad spectrum of societal groups. Ultimately, a robust democracy culminates in the production of high-caliber elections, which in turn bolster the strength of democracy itself. However, this symbiotic relationship presents a challenge particularly in contexts where elections are conducted in authoritarian nations or within fledgling democracies.

Fundamentally, elections serve as a tool to fortify the essence of democracy, fostering a participatory government that strives to minimize the disconnect between the public and their elected representatives. However, when elections lack integrity, a counterproductive scenario can unfold. In such instances, the resultant government might adopt an elitist stance, effectively becoming immune to the influence of the populace - a state of affairs akin to untouchability. Regrettably, the present state of our democracy is perched on uncertain grounds. A sense of elitism has taken root, coupled with a noticeable deficit in public participation. This is underscored by the emergence of policies that appear to exclude widespread involvement and whose content often diverges from the genuine aspirations of the people.

In recent years, a multitude of policies have ignited widespread demonstrations and prompted efforts to seek judicial review. Prominent instances encompass the ITE Law, Minerba-related Law, Corruption Eradication Commission Law, and the Omnibus Law, all of which continue to elicit protests from diverse factions. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that democracy monitoring entities like Freedom House, V-Dem, IDEA, and the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), alongside most political analysts, have rendered a tempered evaluation of our democracy's quality. The findings of their research converge upon a shared observation: the democratic landscape remains far from its desired state and is ensnared within the palm of elite influence and authority.

Lately, this prevailing state of affairs has been mirrored in the Indonesian Democracy Index (IDI) as well. The IDI indicates a decline in Indonesia's democracy score from 75.6 in 2019 to 74.3 in 2020. Noteworthy among the facets assessed within the IDI are civil liberties, political rights, and the robustness of democratic institutions.

**Table 1**  
**Democracy Index in Indonesia (2018-2020)**

The screenshot shows the 'Indeks Demokrasi Indonesia (IDI) Menurut Aspek dan Provinsi' page. It features a table with the following data:

Provinsi	Indeks Demokrasi Indonesia (IDI) Menurut Aspek dan Provinsi								
	Aspek Kebebasan Sipil			Aspek Hak-Hak Politik			Aspek Lembaga Demokrasi		
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
INDONESIA	78,46	77,2	79,4	65,79	70,71	67,85	75,25	78,73	75,66
ACEH	96,79	93,28	84,49	68,09	65,22	64,94	77,67	79,08	74,91
SUMATERA UTARA	76,54	72,54	77,33	62,61	61,59	60,27	51,69	71,12	57,52
SUMATERA BARAT	55,32	56,58	66,59	62,84	61,06	66,8	88,52	92,21	90,91
RIAU	86,88	85,15	86,08	62,77	61,68	65,4	89,47	84,19	83,46
JAMBI	72,88	76,67	82,71	62,76	64,63	62,98	72,92	69,21	86,45
SUMATERA SELATAN	83,13	80,54	80,32	73,12	81,95	71,39	76,01	72,23	73,25

Meanwhile, as reported by The Freedom House in their 2021 Democracy Index for Southeast Asia, the Indonesian Democracy Index attains a score of 59%. This score is distributed as 30% in the realm of Human Rights (HAM) and 29% in terms of civil liberties. Furthermore, the data detailing the state of our democracy from 2014 to 2020 proves to be unsatisfactory, as Indonesia remains classified within the partly free category, as delineated in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Freedom House**

Years	Political Rights	Civil Liberties	Score	Status
2014	30/40	34/60	64/100	Partly Free
2015	30/40	34/60	64/100	Partly Free
2016	31/40	34/60	65/100	Partly Free
2017	31/40	34/60	65/100	Partly Free
2018	30/40	34/60	64/100	Partly Free
2019	30/40	32/60	62/100	Partly Free
2020	30/40	31/60	61/100	Partly Free

Meanwhile, as indicated by the Democracy Index in Southeast Asia (Table 3), Indonesia occupies the 64th position globally in the Democracy Index presented by the Economist Intelligent Unit (EIU), attaining a score of 6.3. While the country's rank remained consistent with the prior year, the score has diminished from its previous value of 6.48. This constitutes the lowest score Indonesia has garnered in the past 14 years, further affirming its classification as a nation with a flawed democracy.

**Table 3.**  
**Democracy Index in Southeast Asia**

No	Country	Global Rank		Regional Rank		Score		Category
		2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	
1	Malaysia	43	39	7	6	7.16	7.19	Flawed Democracy
2	Filipina	54	55	9	9	6.64	6.56	Flawed Democracy
3	<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6.48</b>	<b>6.30</b>	<b>Flawed Democracy</b>
4	Thailand	68	73	12	14	6.32	6.04	Flawed Democracy
5	Singapore	75	74	15	15	4.63	6.03	Flawed Democracy
6	Myanmar	122	135	22	23	3.55	3.04	Authoritarian
7	Cambodia	124	130	23	22	3.53	3.10	Authoritarian
8	Vietnam	136	137	24	24	3.08	2.94	Authoritarian
9	Laos	155	161	27	27	2.14	1.77	Authoritarian

Many terms are currently used to refer to the democracy in Indonesia such as "Delegative Democracy", "Patrimonial Democracy"[3], "Patronage Democracy"[4], "Oligarchy" ([5][6][7]), "Defective Democracy"[8], "Democratic Setbacks"[9], "Democratic Regression"[10], "Democratic Decline"[11], "Democratic Backsliding"[12], "Illiberal Democracy"[13], "Democratic Fissures"[14]. Those terms indicate the inadequacy in the implementation of Indonesian democracy.

The deteriorating state of our democracy, intertwined with the quality of our elections, has indeed contributed to the prevailing dissatisfaction with our democratic landscape, as will be elaborated upon in the subsequent section. Moving forward, it is our imperative to ensure that upcoming elections continue to adhere to the principles of democratic integrity. This trajectory is essential to prevent any further decline in the quality of our democracy. Instead, it should lead to an upward trajectory, in alignment with the vision set forth by our nation's founding fathers, enshrined in the constitution, and guided by the imperative of reform.

### **E. Deviations in Elections**

Elections play a pivotal role in the manifestation of democracy in Indonesia. However, the electoral process has not been devoid of irregularities in its execution. Numerous observations in the field have revealed instances of deviations that compromise the integrity of the election. Some of these deviations are as follows: Firstly, inadequate preparedness to handle the magnitude of such extensive undertakings opens avenues for human and technical errors. For instance, according to data from the Ministry of Health, as many as 527 KPPS officers lost their lives during the 2019 simultaneous elections.[15]

Secondly, it fails to address traditional inquiries pertaining to DPT, logistics distribution, etc. Thirdly, ballots were pre-marked (as observed in Malaysia) prior to the designated day. Fourthly, discrepancies emerged in the calculation process (contrary to C1 stipulations, instances of vote inflation, etc.). Fifthly, instances of monetary influence during the campaign period extending into the quiet phase. Sixthly, concerns regarding the ethical conduct of organizers: during 2013-2017, DKPP

received 2,441 complaints, encompassing issues such as vote manipulation, infringement of voting rights, biased treatment, legal violations, omissions, negligence within the election stages, breaches of neutrality and impartiality. Seventhly, the autonomy and impartiality in conducting the elections. Eighthly, the calculation procedure often lacks transparency and accountability, and so forth.

### ***Vulnerabilities of Local and Regional Elections: Lesson Learned from the 2019 Election***

Drawing insights from the execution of the 2019 elections across different districts and cities in Indonesia, it was observed that the electoral process encountered numerous susceptibilities. Undoubtedly, these vulnerabilities would eventually exert an influence on the elections' overall quality and integrity. A study conducted by Bawaslu concentrated on the outcomes of the 2019 Bawaslu Election Vulnerability Index. Within the context of the 2019 Election, several significant occurrences emerged:

1. **Voter Rights:** Inaccurate voter data due to differences in sources during voter list compilation, including ownership of E-KTP (electronic ID), recording the voting rights of inmates in prisons and patients in hospitals, as well as workers on plantations. An example case is the inflation of additional voter numbers from 100 to 600 individuals in a correctional institution in Simalungun Regency (North Sumatra).
2. **Disputes (Election Objections):** Dispute issues were found in 233 districts/cities, with the highest score in 24 districts/cities (100).
3. **Minority Representation:** There are 221 districts/cities categorized as High Vulnerability for Minority Representation Issues. This relates to the absence of representation for minority and disabled groups in the list of legislative candidates.
4. **Public Participation:** Low public participation in supervising elections, observed in 90 districts/cities.
5. **Candidate Participation:** Issues related to candidate participation include the low engagement of election participants in political education processes. Instances in the field often report that election participants or candidates fail to promote their visions, missions, and programs. This issue occurred in 52 districts/cities.
6. **Election Oversight:** Low public participation in election oversight, observed in 39 districts/cities.
7. **Gender Rights:** Gender issues are connected to the failure to meet the quota for female candidates on the list of legislative candidates, which logically follows the decrease in female representation. Female representation stands at only 30.69 percent. This issue occurred in 39 districts/cities.
8. **Campaigning:** This issue pertains to campaign materials involving ethnic, religious, and racial sentiment, as well as hate speech, and the influence of "money politics." Campaign issues occurred in 27 districts/cities.
9. **Voter Participation:** Issues with voter participation occurred in 9 districts/cities. This involves concerns about the number of voters not meeting the KPU's target and polling stations that are difficult to access or affected by disasters.
10. **Voting Process Execution:** Issues related to the execution of the voting process occurred in 22 districts/cities. These include (a) the distribution of voting logistics,

(b) result compilation and determination, and (c) result rejection. One case of this issue is the postponement of voting due to the delayed distribution of logistics (in one polling station, election logistics were taken by a member of the Polling Station Organizing Group).

The notes presented by Bawaslu encompass a comprehensive examination. Both in terms of process and content, these notes highlight several fundamental issues within our electoral procedures. Consequently, it holds paramount importance that these notes are not merely subjected to scrutiny, but also employed as a basis for introspection and the formulation of comprehensive solutions to address these challenges. This approach is vital to enhance the quality of elections and prevent them from being ensnared in a framework characterized by manipulative undertones.

### ***Manipulations/Malpractices in Elections***

Elections serve as the primary mechanism for selecting leaders in a democratic framework. However, practical implementation often sees elections marred by instances of fraud and violations. The concept of electoral misconduct, as exemplified by Birch *“the manipulation of electoral process and outcomes so as to substitute personal or partisan benefit for the public interest (Birch in Ham 2015). Any purposeful action taken to tamper with electoral activities and election-related materials in order to affect the results of an election, which may interfere with or thwart the will of the voters (Lpoez-Pintor in Ham 2015). Clandestine efforts to shape election results.*

Elections lacking in integrity are those that breach established electoral regulations or norms. The focal point of the aforementioned definitions in assessing electoral anomalies lies in considering the individuals involved, their intentions, and the aftermath of the committed infractions.[1] Instances of electoral misconduct involving those responsible for organizing elections are not unfamiliar in Indonesia. An illustrative case is the 2014 legislative elections, during which two members of the General Elections Commission (KPU) in Serang District were found to have accepted bribes from election participants in exchange for securing votes.

Birch has emphasized that combating electoral malpractice is a fundamental principle essential for achieving electoral integrity. He further elucidated that leaders can engage in election manipulation across three dimensions: electoral institutions, voice selection, and election administration and procedures. In the same vein, the primary catalysts for election malpractice often stem from factors like corruption, inequality, limited urbanization, restricted press freedom, and inadequate capacity to voice dissent. In pursuit of democratic elections and electoral integrity, addressing malpractice within the electoral process (electoral malpractice) is imperative.

Furthermore, instances of election malpractice were instigated by various factors which include, but are not limited to: (1) substantial inequality marked by a high poverty rate, (2) a prevalent culture of corruption, (3) a lack of strength within civil society and the ability to mount protests, (4) intense competition coupled with lax law enforcement, (5) restricted freedom of the press, (6) inadequate dedication to the cause from leaders, political parties, and influential factions, (7) subpar levels of education, particularly in terms of literacy, (8) electoral systems and regulations that create opportunities for manipulation, and (9) inept and unenthusiastic event organizers.

These assertions are supported by the research of Lehoucq (2003), Bader (2012), Darnhof and Elklit (2012), and Rahmatunissa (2017).

### ***The Potential Impacts of Manipulated Elections***

Manipulated elections are against the elections with integrity, as expounded upon in the preceding section. Norris (2014) underscores the significance of electoral integrity in his work "Why Electoral Integrity Matters," while accounts from diverse election observers corroborate the assertion that elections marred by fraud (termed as flawed elections) exert a comprehensive and interwoven impact that is fundamentally antithetical to the outcomes of elections conducted with honesty. According to these sources, manipulative elections systematically erode public confidence not only in the electoral process itself but also in the institutions, systems, and objectives underlying the election. This erosion of trust becomes a conduit for sowing skepticism among the populace towards the ideals of democracy.

Failing to promptly address and foresee this situation can potentially yield consequences in the future, taking the form of diminished public engagement in elections. This circumstance often carries the potential to incite protests, widespread unrest, and even violence. Within a society marked by divisions, the introduction of manipulative elections will only serve to exacerbate tensions among supporters of competing candidates, both victors and losers alike. Consequently, this will not only further delegitimize the election results but also cast doubts upon the entire electoral process. The predictable outcome of this trajectory entails a pervasive sense of government distrust and a reluctance to engage with it, which in turn can instigate instability and catalyze shifts within the political framework (Lehoucq 2003, Nasef 2012, Soho 2015, Birch & Muchlinski 2017, Rahmatunissa 2017).

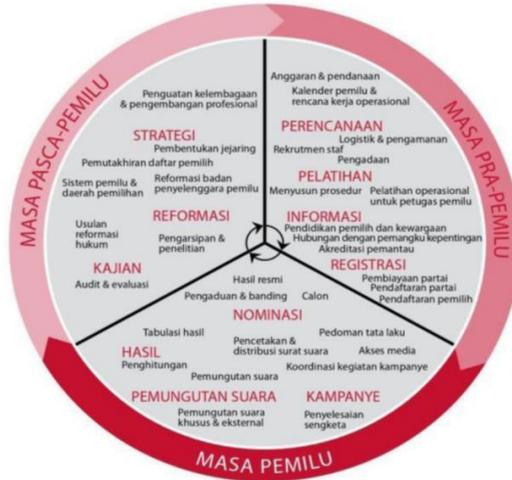
Considering the gravity of these adverse possibilities, which encompass distrust in elections, disillusionment with democratic aspirations, and the fracturing of national unity, it becomes imperative for us to recognize the severe ramifications that can arise from the occurrence of manipulative elections. Within this context, the integrity of election administrators needs to be ensured as a significant component in the implementation of elections with unwavering integrity.

### **F. Strengthening the Integrity of Election Organizers**

A wide array of concepts, definitions, approaches, and empirical insights related to elections underscore the crucial role played by election organizers in ensuring the execution of elections with integrity. The integrity of elections, particularly in terms of unbiased and equitable administration, extends beyond the actual voting day to encompass both pre-election and post-election phases.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) delineates distinct phases or cycles within each electoral process. They have categorized the election timeline into three main periods: (a) The pre-election period, encompassing stages such as formulating the legal framework, strategizing, educational efforts, voter registration, and campaigning. (b) The election period, which covers the voting and results verification stages. (c) The post-election period, which entails result audits, process evaluation, and a comprehensive assessment of the election's execution.

**Figure 1**  
**The Phases of Elections According to IDEA**  
**Source: IDEA, 2009**



### *Why Election Organizers Matter?*

Organizers with strong integrity are capable of mitigating the gaps in regulations and political systems that have yet to fully align with democratic principles. Consequently, the pivotal role assumed by election organizers of integrity encompasses several key functions. Firstly, they stand as the vanguard and hold the responsibility for ensuring the realization of elections conducted with the utmost integrity. Secondly, their primary focus lies in the meticulous preparation and execution of high-caliber, nationwide, consistent, and autonomous elections, in accordance with the mandate stipulated in Article 22E, paragraph 5, of the 1945 Constitution. Thirdly, they serve as institutions tasked with managing the escalating intricacies associated with organizing elections. Lastly, they address the escalating potential for infractions committed by participants and instances of authority misuse by election organizers, as highlighted by Puskapol UI (2019) and Helen (2019).

### *Strengthening the Integrity of Election Organizers*

The foundational pillar of democratic and genuinely integral elections resides in the integrity of election organizers. The significance of upholding this integrity cannot be overstated, stemming from three key rationales. Primarily, the responsibility of ensuring elections that are equitable and unbiased rests upon the organizers, thereby nurturing and upholding public faith in the democratic mechanism. Furthermore, the intricate nature of conducting elections in Indonesia, especially given the simultaneous implementation of executive and legislative elections at both national and local tiers, accentuates the imperative nature of impeccable election administration. Lastly, the

spectrum of potential infractions by participants, coupled with the potential for misuse of authority vested in election organizers, underscores the criticality of this concern.

Strengthening the integrity of election organizers can be done through the following steps: (1) Upholding the ethical standards of Election Organizers; ethics are important foundation in ensuring a democratic, fair and honest election process. Such manner keeps the public trust high towards elections. (2) Maintaining the Integrity of Election Organizers; Election organizers must have integrity as shown by strong commitment not to be involved in corrupt and manipulative practices. (3) Building a Conducive Work Environment; a conducive working environment is an important prerequisite of effective elections as organizers must work in an inclusive environment and avoid political pressure. (4) Improving the Capacity Building; training, education and upgrading of technical skills will improve EMB's preparedness to face complex challenges.

Achieving the integrity of election organizers hinges upon several pivotal considerations. First and foremost, a robust selection process for these organizers is imperative. Its primary objective is to ensure the capacity, competence, and ethical uprightness of those entrusted with execution. This is of profound significance, as it's widely acknowledged that, alongside rule-based frameworks, the human element substantially influences the conduct and outcome of elections, thus determining the very fabric of their integrity. Second, the professionalism of implementing bodies such as KPU, Bawaslu, and DKPP is paramount. The absence of professionalism, intrinsically tied to the quality of the selection process, jeopardizes the realization of the envisioned integrity-infused elections, potentially leading to disorderly proceedings.

Thirdly, the openness and accessibility to public oversight, encompassing non-governmental organizations and the media, play a vital role. The absence of support in the form of feedback or constructive critique, along with vigilant scrutiny from the public, could potentially result in the manipulation of the election process and a departure from its true course. Communities with limited vested interests have the potential to act as effective and impartial guardians of the integrity-focused election execution. Conversely, if society lacks a sense of vigilance, elections may transpire without proper oversight and could easily become ensnared by the vested interests of specific groups. Fourthly, the provision of training is essential. Ultimately, the achievement of elections with integrity hinges on proficient personnel who possess a precise understanding of their tasks. The implementation of elections with integrity requires trained or capable personnel in the field with strong comprehension of the circumstances to ensure that all plans are executed as expected.

Furthermore, delving into greater detail, there are a total of eleven distinct stages that constitute the central focus of an election assessment conducted with integrity in mind. Within these eleven stages, a comprehensive set of 49 indicators has been established. These indicators serve as the fundamental criteria for appraising the integrity of elections. They are presented in the form of affirmative or negative statements, accompanied by response choices of agreement or disagreement. The subsequent content encapsulates the core essence of this survey instrument:

(1) Voter Regulations, encompassing indicators such as: a) Electoral regulations exhibit bias against minor parties; b) Election regulations favor the ruling party; c) Election regulations curtail citizens' rights. (2) Election Procedures, including

indicators like: a) Elections are proficiently managed; b) Information regarding voting procedures is readily available and accessible; c) The administrative apparatus operates impartially; d) Elections are conducted in adherence to pertinent regulations. (3) Electoral Boundaries, with indicators such as: a) The delineation of constituency boundaries undermines participating election parties; b) The specification of electoral district limits benefits the incumbent party; c) The determination of electoral districts remains neutral and unbiased; (4) Voter Registration, incorporating indicators like: a) Certain citizens remain unregistered on the Voter List; b) The voter list contains inaccuracies; c) Individuals not meeting requirements are included in the Voter List;

(5) Registration of Political Parties and Participants, with indicators like: a) Opposition candidates encounter obstacles to election participation; b) Women are provided equal opportunities for candidacy; c) Minority groups have an equitable chance for representation; d) Exclusive party leaders nominate candidates; e) Certain political parties/candidates face restrictions on holding campaign rallies; (6) Campaign Media, comprising indicators such as: a) Newspapers present election-related news in an impartial manner; b) Television news displays favoritism towards the governing party; c) Political parties/candidates enjoy equitable access to broadcasting political messages and advertisements; d) Journalists offer equitable coverage of election proceedings; e) Social media serves as a platform to expose election-related transgressions; (7) Campaign Finance, involving indicators like: a) Political parties/candidates are granted uniform access to subsidized public funds; b) Equitable access to political contributions is afforded to political parties/candidates; c) Political parties/candidates transparently disclose financial accounts; d) Wealthy entities unduly influence elections; e) Misappropriation of state resources for campaigns is evident;

(8) Voting Process, with indicators such as: a) Instances of voter intimidation through violence on election day; b) Incidents of sound manipulation; c) The voting process remains straightforward; d) Voters are given preference options aligned with their preferences; e) Postal voting options are available; f) Voting facilities catering to individuals with disabilities are present; g) Overseas citizens are facilitated to vote; h) Online voting provisions are made available; (9) Vote Counting Process, incorporating indicators like: a) Secure ballot boxes; b) Timely announcement of results; c) Accurate vote counting; d) Limited presence of international oversight entities; e) Restricted presence of domestic oversight bodies;

(10) Post-Election Phase, with indicators such as: a) Political parties/candidates accept election outcomes; b) Elections engender peaceful protests; c) Elections lead to violent protests; d) All disputes are resolved through legal channels; and (11) Election Organizers, involving indicators like: a) Impartiality of election organizers; b) Authorized party responsible for disseminating information to citizens; c) Competent authorities afford opportunities for public assessment of their performance; d) Proficient performance of election organizers. These eleven focal points merit considerations as a checklist for fostering elections characterized by integrity. These notes encompass not only normative aspects but also concrete and specific elements, essentially representing prerequisites for the realization of elections imbued with integrity.

### ***Follow Up Actions to Take***

In addition to the aforementioned considerations, several other tangible measures hold relevance within our context to actualize elections characterized by integrity. These specific measures are derived from the conclusions drawn from diverse studies conducted by experts encompassing election scholars, advocates, and practitioners. A subset of these measures includes: [2][16]

1. Arranging Public Access to Information for Transparency: This involves the implementation of various information systems such as the Political Party Information System (SIPOL), Electoral District Information System (SIDAPIL), Voter Registration Information System (SIDALIH), Candidate Information System (SILON), Logistics Information System (SILOG), Vote Calculation Information System (SITUNG), and Election Stage Information System (SITAP) to enhance public access to information.
2. Openness in Election Results: Ensuring transparency in election results through the use of scanning applications for vote calculation documents that can be accessed by the public.
3. Preventing Document Manipulation and False Documents: Implementing measures to prevent manipulation of Ballot Box Record (BA) and Vote Calculation Results (HPS) documents, for example by using distinct paper for these documents.
4. Enhancing Understanding Among KPPS Members: Providing a clear understanding to members of the Polling Station Organizing Group (KPPS) about the significance of BA and HPS documents.
5. Addressing Voter List Issues: Paying careful attention to voter list concerns and ensuring that every eligible voter can exercise their right to vote.
6. Ensuring Professionalism in the Organizational Structure: Ensuring professionalism within the organizational structure to conduct all election stages in accordance with the law
7. Accessibility of Polling Stations: Ensuring that every polling station is easily accessible to voters and no voters face geographic constraints.
8. Clarity in Rules Regarding Time and Place: Setting clear rules regarding time and place to prevent fraudulent manipulation during vote tallying.
9. Optimizing Supervision: Maximizing supervision over lower-level structures to ensure the integrity and professionalism of organizers involved in legislative and presidential elections.

These supplementary measures remain pertinent for ongoing consideration and implementation by the stakeholders involved in organizing elections up to the present time, particularly during the Reformation Era which potentially interrupt elections in the future. Emphasis to these factors can ensure elections with strong integrity in the future.

### **G. Supporting Elements in the Strengthening of Integrity in Elections**

In addressing the concerns regarding the capacity, capability, and integrity of election processes, it becomes essential to recognize the intricate web of factors that contribute to ensuring the integrity of elections. Beyond the primary considerations, such as the capacity to manage and conduct elections effectively, additional supporting elements play a crucial role.[1] These elements are vital for enhancing the overall integrity of the

electoral process. This perspective stems from the foundational understanding that the pursuit of elections with integrity occurs within a complex system rather than a vacuum. Within this system, the interconnections among various sub-systems are profound, exerting mutual influences that ultimately shape the entire operational framework.

Within the framework of this system, certain elements merit noteworthy consideration due to their significance. Foremost among these are political parties. In this context, political parties assume a pivotal role in facilitating the recruitment process for election administration and in formulating comprehensive rules. Notably, parties play a crucial role in enlisting election participants and also serve as vital agents in public political education. Moreover, parties are integral to ensuring the integrity of both transparent and confidential voting procedures, thus contributing to the realization of clean, high-caliber, and harmonious electoral campaigns. Another vital responsibility of political parties is to establish standardized cadre development protocols and to exercise stringent oversight and discipline over the political conduct of their members.

Secondly, the realm of Civil Society plays a significant role in elucidating the significance of elections, motivating individuals to abstain from actions that could undermine the quality of elections, overseeing all electoral processes, and supervising election outcomes. Moving on to the third point, the Election Observer Institution assumes a pivotal position. This institution bears the crucial responsibility of monitoring and supervising the complete electoral process. It engages in observing the election preparedness phase, scrutinizing and assessing the progression of the election to uphold its integrity and identify potential violations. Lastly, Donor Institutions have emerged as principal advocates for disseminating international standards related to elections conducted with integrity across various dimensions. These institutions support the establishment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), facilitate the engagement of observers, bring in experts in the realm of fair elections, enhance the capacity of political parties, and arrange for the presence of international observers during the voting and vote-counting phases.

## **H. Closing**

The pursuit of elections characterized by integrity stands as a shared and paramount objective, albeit one laden with intricacies. It is imperative for us to fathom that the repercussions of elections possess a complexity far beyond their superficial appearance. These electoral events transcend mere routine occurrences; instead, they represent junctures of profound consequence for the destiny of countless generations within the nation, both present and future. Hence, the matter of elections assumes a gravity that demands utmost earnestness. While their complexity is undeniable, it is not insurmountable; rather, it is an imperative undertaking. In this context, the role of election administrators assumes profound significance. They stand as champions of democracy, wielding influence over the trajectory and even the moral fabric of the nation. Consequently, the integrity of both elections and those overseeing them becomes an inviolable principle, one beyond compromise.

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