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Analysis for Corruption Problem in the Closed Proportional Electoral System in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study discusses the dynamics of implementing a closed proportional system in elections in Indonesia and the various problems that arise from it. Some of the issues referred to are the practices of political oligarchy and corruption and their negative impact on the building of democracy in Indonesia. This research is a literature review conducted based on qualitative methods. Sources and types of data in this research use primary and secondary data. After analyzing field data based on the perspective of political sociology theory, this study found that the implementation of general elections in Indonesia using a closed proportional list system, as was the case in elections in the Old Order and New Order eras, has great potential to give rise to some weaknesses and shortcomings. Some of the most crucial are the potential for the emergence of political, oligarchic practices among political party elites, abuse of authority and power in the form of corruption and the like, and finally, the potential for weakening democratic buildings, both substantially and institutional structures. In its substantive aspect, the closed list election arrangement hurts public participation because voters cannot elect their representatives directly but through a representative mechanism, namely political parties. Meanwhile, in terms of the institutional structure, there is the potential for abuse of the function of political parties, especially the process of political recruitment, which tends to revolve around certain groups and groups only. Keywords: Closed Proportional Election, Political Oligarchy, Corruption, Weakening Democracy

Abstrak

Kajian ini fokus membahas dinamika penerapan sistem proporsional tertutup dalam pemilu di Indonesia beserta ragam permasalahan yang timbul di dalamnya, beberapa permasalahan dimaksud adalah praktik oligarki politik, korupsi, dan dampak buruknya terhadap bangunan demokrasi di Indonesia. Penelitian ini merupakan kajian kepustakaan yang dilakukan berdasarkan

metode kualitatif. Semua sumber dan jenis data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan data sekunder, dalam hal ini adalah data-data statistika dan data-data kepustakaan yang terdiri dari jurnal, buku, artikel, dan informasi media baik cetak maupun *online*. Setelah melakukan analisa data lapangan berdasarkan perspektif teori sosiologi politik, studi ini mendapati temuan bahwa penerapan pemilihan umum di Indonesia dengan menggunakan sistem proporsional daftar tertutup seperti yang terjadi pada pemilu di era orde lama dan orde baru, itu berpotensi besar menimbulkan sejumlah kelemahan dan kekurangan. Beberapa di antaranya paling krusial adalah potensi munculnya praktik oligarki politik di kalangan elit partai politik, penyalahgunaan wewenang dan kekuasaan berupa korupsi dan sejenisnya, terakhir potensi melemahnya bangunan demokrasi, baik secara substansial maupun struktur kelembagaan. Pada aspek substansialnya, pengaturan pemilu dengan daftar tertutup berdampak buruk terhadap partisipasi masyarakat, karena para pemilih tidak lagi bisa memilih wakilnya secara langsung namun melalui mekanisme perwakilan, yakni partai politik. Sedangkan pada aspek struktur kelembagaannya, ada potensi penyalahgunaan fungsi parpol, terutama fungsi rekrutmen politik yang cenderung berputar di lingkaran kelompok dan golongan tertentu saja.

Kata Kunci: Pemilu Proporsional Tertutup, Oligarki Politik, Korupsi, Pelemahan Demokrasi

INTRODUCTION

The 2024 election is approaching, but politicians and political party elites are experiencing worry and uncertainty. The reason is that the Constitutional Court (Indonesian: *Mahkamah Konstitusi/MK*), as a constitutional justice institution in Indonesia, is currently conducting a judicial review trial in Case Number 114/PUU-XX/2022 concerning a lawsuit against the Election Law in this case, Article 168 of Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections (Election Law) (Post, 2023). Concretely, this lawsuit is directly related to the mechanisms or arrangements in legislative elections. Article 168, paragraph (2) states that central and regional (provincial, district/city) legislative polls use an open proportional system. According to some parties, this provision or arrangement is inconsistent with the 1945 Constitution, so it needs to be changed and returned to the original system, namely the closed proportional system (Argawati, 2023b).

The emergence of a lawsuit to return to a closed model proportional electoral system has sparked polemics in society. Some believe returning to an election mechanism based on political party vote acquisition will indirectly set back the path of democracy, returning to the previous era, the new order, and the old order. The people, as constituents, are not free to choose and determine their representatives in parliament. On the other hand, political parties have strong bargaining power because they have particular legitimacy to determine their representatives in parliament based on the number of votes obtained (Argawati, 2023c). Meanwhile, others believe that closed proportionality is the right solution to various problems while implementing the open proportional system. In particular, problems related to weakening the function of political parties and linking political liberalization, both at the elite and grassroots levels (C. et al., 2022). The big question now is whether, by implementing a closed proportional system, the electoral problems in Indonesia will be resolved and resolved. This is a dilemma because Indonesia has implemented a closed proportional system empirically. Of course, with black notes and bitter experiences that are much worse than the current experience.

At the academic level, studies regarding the closed proportional system in the dynamics of elections in Indonesia have been carried out from a political, legal, and constitutional perspective. From a constitutional perspective, a study of the closed proportional system comes from Kurnianingrum, *Reconsidering the Closed Proportional System for Indonesia*. According to him, this model will likely be implemented constitutionally because it has a reasonably clear basis regarding elections, as clearly stated in the 1945 Constitution. Elections are carried out by political parties through their participation in elections to elect the DPR, DPRD, and the President and Vice President (Kurnianingrum, 2020). However, even though implementing a closed proportional system has a relatively solid legal basis, this system has several weaknesses and disadvantages—related to this, J. Hicks (2022), in his article, *Effect of Closed List Proportional Representation On The Election Of Women And Youth*, stated that the election system with a closed model is not good enough and friendly to the existence of women. The general trend is that this system is not oriented towards a sense of justice and equal political rights between men and women (Hicks, 2022). This thesis is also confirmed and strengthened by other studies, some of which are research conducted by Hangartner et al., *Open or Closed? How List Type Affects Electoral Performance, Candidate Selection, and Campaign Effort* (Hangartner et al., 2019); Aspirito-Santo and Sanches, *Looking for Locals Under a Closed-List Proportional Representation System: The Case Of Portugal* (Espírito-Santo & Sanches, 2018), and most recently, namely research conducted by Fitzgerald and Telaumbanua, *Comparison Analysis of Open and Closed Proportional Election Systems in the Perspective of State Law in Indonesia* (Fitzgerald & Telaumbanua, 2023).

Based on the description of previous studies above, this study is intended to fill several gaps that have not been answered in previous research. The gaps in question are the various weaknesses and deficiencies of the open proportional system when applied as a set of rules for organizing elections in Indonesia. At least two main issues are the focus of discussion in this research, namely the political oligarchy within political parties and corrupt practices among elites (Amrullah, 2023). These two issues often escape public attention, even though sociologically, they are considered crucial and strategic because they are in direct contact with the democratization process in Indonesia, both at the institutional level and at the grassroots level, in this case, the people. Institutionally, oligarchy and corrupt practices as an adverse effect of implementing a closed proportional system have significant implications for the blockage of democratic channels, the distribution of power is unbalanced so that check and balance activities do not function, the control function is weakened, and most crucially is the utilization and control of natural resources. They are centralized so that they can only be accessed and enjoyed by a handful of certain groups (oligarchy) (Acemoglu, 2008).

To make this study focused and structured, the discussion of this article is designed to answer two research questions: What are the dynamics of implementing an open proportional system in elections in Indonesia? How does implementing a closed proportional system affect the emergence of oligarchic practices and political corruption in Indonesia? This research question is intended to reveal and find out to what extent the closed proportional system is relevant to elections in Indonesia and in what context many people consider this system to have a significant risk of inspiring oligarchic spirits and abuse of power or authority. Through these two questions and objectives, it is hoped that the findings in this study can produce strategic recommendations for all parties to strengthen the election implementation system in Indonesia, both now and in the future.

In general, the significance of this research is based on the proposition that a closed proportional system has several crucial problems. The implementation of this system has the

potential to shape and even strengthen the government's political structure, which tends to be corrupt and biased towards the existence of oligarchic political party groups and all their pragmatic interests. There are at least two critical arguments underlying this proposition. Firstly, empirically, Indonesia has had direct experience implementing a proportional system with a closed model when it had not yet undergone reform, specifically during the Old Order and New Order eras. In the Old Order era, the closed proportional system was proven to narrow the powers of parliament at that time. Meanwhile, in the New Order era, parliament was weakened, and corrupt practices were also born, centered in the executive ranks, in this case, Suharto's circle of power and his colleagues and family (Rahma, 2022). Second, the potential for problems of oligarchy and corruption to emerge within political parties and political elites due to implementing a closed proportional system, ultimately hurting the building of Indonesian democracy. The process of circulating political leadership is unhealthy, there is a shackling of constituents' political rights and voices because the process of electing a candidate or aspirants is no longer determined directly by the people but instead by the internal policy of the political party (Tambunan, 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a literature review conducted based on qualitative research. According to Norman (1994), qualitative research aims to understand and explore a particular social phenomenon holistically and thoroughly through narrative and description. This social phenomenon can take the form of behavior, attitudes, thoughts, motivation, perceptions, and social actions, which underlie the emergence of objectification in society. Objectification can be laws, norms, systems, and social structures (K.Denzin, 1994) (K.Denzin, 1994). This definition has methodological relevance to the primary research objective to be obtained in this study, namely to reveal and find out to what extent the closed proportional system has relevance to be applied to elections in Indonesia and in what context many people consider this system to have a significant risk of arousing enthusiasm—Oligarchy and abuse of power or authority.

The type and source of data in this research use secondary data, namely library data obtained from several previous literatures. The researchers limited the literature sources in this study to those that contain the same object of discussion or are at least related to the primary subject matter raised in this research, whether in the form of field studies or literature studies. The criteria for literature sources used as reference material are research reports published by universities, government institutions, and several research institutions, both in the form of theses, dissertations, scientific journals, books, and proceedings. Secondary data in the research also comes from information or news obtained from print and online media published between 2000 and 2023. All data obtained from all the data sources above were reviewed and analyzed by the researcher by paying attention to and emphasizing the relationship with the focus of the research problem raised in the research. The focus of the problem in question is the weaknesses and deficiencies that arise behind implementing a closed proportional system, both at the conceptual and practical levels, when implemented in Indonesia. As for data analysis activities, this research uses Miles and Haberman's data analysis techniques. In the context of this research, as described by Sugiyono, data analysis using Miles and Huberman has three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and finally, conclusion (Sugiyono, 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Concept of Elections

Etymologically, in the Big Indonesian Dictionary, the word election means an election carried out by the entire country to elect people's representatives. In English, the term election is equivalent

to the words election and general election, in which all the adults of a country can vote to elect people to represent them in parliament (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, n.d.). Based on this understanding, at least three critical main points are the main keywords in the term election. *First*, elections are synonymous with election activities, an event where people cast political votes to elect and appoint their representatives, both representatives at the executive and parliamentary levels. *Second*, elections are synonymous with the term adults (adults), who can exercise their voting rights and political votes if they have a minimum age limit, which is regulated based on specific regulations or laws. *Third*, the term election is closely related to filling certain public positions or positions, both in the council and the executive ranks as president and regional heads. They start from regional heads at the city, district, and provincial levels.

Sarbaini (2015), in his writing, *Demokratisasi dan Kebebasan Memilih Warga Negara dalam Pemilihan Umum*, defines elections as an arena or stage for competition to fill positions or political positions in government that run based on an election mechanism involving citizens or conditional people (Sarbanini, 2015). Slightly different from Sarbaini, Morrison (2005) chose to formulate elections as a way or means to determine the people's wishes regarding the direction and policies of the state that will be implemented for citizens in the future (Morissan, 2005). If based on these two definitions, it is clear that elections are a democratic tool that is given explicitly by the constitution to citizens (the people) as constituents as an accurate representation of their sovereignty. The aim is to appoint and elect their representatives in the structural ranks of government. Thus, elections are a democratic institutional mechanism that clarifies and emphasises the people's position and the relationship between them and their representatives, both in parliament and the executive ranks.

A different definition comes from Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). According to him, elections contain more meaning than just the activity of giving people's votes to candidates; they are a social contract that exists between the people and public officials (Williams, 2012). In his book, *The Social Contract* (1895), Rousseau explained that humans naturally have natural freedom; humans survive and fulfil their needs with the natural freedom they have. Only when he can no longer protect those around him because of his weak social capital does he need to enter into a social contract with other parties (Rousseau & John Tozer, 1895). In the modern world, the social contract is translated into a political agreement as a grant of authority or mandate involving the people and the parties representing them, currently popularly known as elections. In short, elections are another term for the social contract between the king/leader to hold the government and the people as the actual owners of sovereignty. The trustor can revoke the trust if it turns out that the mandate recipient has neglected his obligations. To this end, it can be concluded that elections are a sacred moment for establishing a social contract to provide leadership legitimacy that truly represents existence (Anjalline et al., 2014). Trustworthy leaders can manage power as well as possible to provide social welfare, guarantee safety, and provide a sense of security to society.

Several Election System Models

Referring to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* explanation, elections and electoral systems are two different terms, each with a different meaning and context. Elections are the official activity of selecting someone for a public office in the sense of accepting or rejecting the political proposition put forward by each candidate or candidate by choosing one of the existing contestants (P. et al., 2023). The concept of contestation is an essential keyword because democracy itself necessitates the existence of a dialectic of the contestants' ideas to influence and win the contestants' votes. To

create a healthy, honest, and fair contestation climate, contestation requires an electoral system that can provide legal clarity regarding all processes and stages of election implementation in the field. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, an electoral system is the method and rules for counting votes to determine election results (Britannica et al. of Encyclopaedia, 2023). Theoretically, all countries have implemented three electoral systems: the district system, the proportional system, and the mixed system.

A. District System

The district system is an election management mechanism that divides parliamentary seats based on the location of electoral districts, not based on population. This system has another term called Plurality and Majority System or Single single-member constituency. At a technical level, this system groups countries into several regions or electoral districts, where this division is based on the number of inhabitants in the relevant (Hix et al., 2017). The candidate or candidates who get the most votes will practically take all they get without considering the difference in votes obtained by other candidates. Compared to other systems, the district system calculation mechanism is more straightforward and accessible. Because the electability status of a candidate or candidate is only measured if the candidate concerned succeeds in getting more votes than his opponent, this system does not have a minimum threshold, meaning that whatever the difference in votes, the candidate with the most votes is still the selected candidate. Therefore, in this system, the more candidates compete for parliamentary seats in their region, the greater the chance that the elected candidate will get a small number of votes. Interestingly, in the context of modern elections, the district system is known to be the most widely used system. The characteristic of elections with a district system lies in the contested seats of representative institutions, where one electoral district (Indonesian: *Daerah Pemilihan/Dapil*), whether central, provincial, district, or city, only competes for one representative. The candidate who gets the highest number of votes is a representative and wins one seat in parliament (the winner takes all) (Monroe & Rose, 2002).

In general, the district election system has the advantage of creating a solid emotional connection between voters and their representatives, the selection process and competition are tighter, political party institutions are more straightforward, the pattern of government is more conducive, the opposition is more structured, there is potential for the presence of individual/independent candidates, The district system has simple settings. Hence, it is easier for constituents to understand (Eric et al., 2007). As for the minuses, the district election system is considered less representative, more oriented towards the majority group and not towards minorities, and pro-status quo because the competition will only be controlled by big-name parties, potentially throwing away a lot of people's votes. Selected candidates tend to prioritize their districts. They are triggering the birth of primordial and identity-based political factions and groups such as ethnicity, religion, race, and the like (Topan & Hakim, 2023). It can potentially give rise to the domination or hegemony of political parties centered on limited political power (Carey & Hix, 2011). Several countries currently recorded as using a district system are England, the United States, Canada, and India.

B. Proportional System

Apart from the district system, the proportional system is listed as a popular electoral system in many countries. This system is the opposite of the district system; if the district system pays more attention to regional areas (Indonesian: *Daerah Pemilihan/Dapil*), this is different from the proportional system, which places more emphasis on the number of electoral district seats, so that

one electoral district can have several representatives (Banducci et al., 1999). Therefore, regions with a more significant number of residents or voters will have more seats or representatives. Likewise, on the contrary, regions with a smaller number of constituents will get fewer seats.

The most characteristic feature of this system is the large number of representative seats in each electoral district. In this system, the proportion of seats won by a political party in an electoral district is proportional to the proportion of votes obtained by that party (Buisseret et al., 2022). The advantage of this system lies in its inclusive nature, where minority groups have the potential to obtain representation with the support of their political votes. Therefore, the proportional system is considered more representative of the people's voice because there are no wasted votes, and all gains are counted so that even small parties or minority groups can carry and obtain seats in parliament (Fjelde, 2020). As for the shortcomings, the proportional system is considered to trigger the emergence of money politics practices, make the recruitment process unhealthy, and finally weaken the role and function of political parties. Many countries are implementing the system, including Indonesia (Uniwersytet et al. w Bydgoszczy & Kapsa, 2015).

C. Mixed System

A mixed electoral system is a general election mechanism combining two previous electoral systems: the district election system (plurality majority system) and the proportional election system (proportional system). In a mixed electoral system, what is meant by a proportional system here is a closed model, not an open model (Joseph, 2008). Almost all countries that implement mixed systems use closed proportion. A mixed system is usually implemented at a technical level by determining the proportion of seats in parliament between the proportion of parliamentary seats that will be elected using a majoritarian or district system and the proportion of seats for a proportional system. There is no specific standard for the exact percentage; each country implements different distribution policies depending on the achievements and objectives of the election with a mixed system to be achieved (Bochsler, 2023).

At the theoretical level, mixed electoral systems have two types: Parallel system and mixed member proportional. Unfortunately, although some people consider mixed elections ideal because they combine two system poles, namely proportional and district, few countries use them. Even if a country implements a mixed system, it is more dominant in combining two approaches in a proportional system, between open and closed (Parker & Richter, 2018).

Closed Proportional System: Some Weaknesses and Advantages

In applying closed proportionality, elected legislative candidates are determined based on the votes obtained by political parties. Constituents cast their political votes by voting on the political party's image or logo, not the participant's or candidate's name. Then, when a political party's vote share reaches a minimum number, the selection process is based on the candidate's serial number (Kselman, 2020). For example, if the number of votes that have been converted wins three seats, then the selected candidates are 1, 2, and 3, and so on. This means that in this model, political parties play a decisive role; the process of determining serial numbers is under the political party's internal policy. This aspect is seen by many as the weak point in implementing a closed system. The vital role and position of political parties significantly impact the low direct participation of voters because they cannot determine their political attitudes and choices to appoint their representatives in parliament. Decisions on candidate electability do not emerge from the surface of society but are locked within political parties. As a consequence, the position of the party becomes more sovereign than the people. At the same time, the relationship between the

people/constituents and their representatives becomes weakened and strained (Kurnianingrum, 2020).

Apart from weak points, closed proportional systems have advantages and disadvantages. One of the superior aspects is reducing the opportunity for political transaction activities (money politics) to occur in society (Hannan, 2022). Apart from that, another advantage lies in his ability to create an atmosphere for elections oriented towards equality and inclusivism, both at the gender and community levels. Close proportionality will make the representation of women and minority groups in parliament easier because candidate selection is entirely in the hands of the party, not based on direct votes from community groups (Hicks, 2022). Many countries are known to use this system, some of which are South Africa, Argentina, Israel, Bulgaria, Ecuador, and others. Indonesia implemented this system in legislative elections, specifically in the 1955 elections, during the New Order era under Soeharto's leadership, and finally, the 1999 elections after reform. An explanation regarding the application of a closed proportional system in the dynamics of elections in Indonesia will be explained in more depth in the next sub-discussion.

Description of the Implementation of the Closed Proportional System in Indonesia

In Indonesia, election discourse is regulated in Law Number 7 of 2017, article 1 (1) concerning General Elections. It is written that General Elections, from now on referred to as elections, are a means of popular sovereignty to elect members of the People's Representative Council, members of the Regional Representative Council, President and Vice President, and elect members of the Regional People's Representative Council, which are carried out directly, publicly, freely, confidential, honest and fair in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (Syafei & Darajati, 2020). In short, elections are a democratic means for all citizens to determine and channel their political choices to elect and appoint executive and legislative public officials through applicable mechanisms and principles (Widayat et al., 2022).

As for its implementation, elections are carried out based on six principles, namely general, free, secret, honest, and fair. General means involving levels of society without exception, as long as they meet administrative requirements, such as age. The principle of freedom means that every citizen can exercise his political rights based on conscience, without encouragement or coercion from any party—Direct means choosing directly, without using intermediaries or being represented. Then, honestly, all parties involved in organizing elections must act by the law. Fair, that every voter and election participant gets the same treatment and no one is privileged, and finally. Secret, meaning that every person who makes a political choice is not known by any party they choose (Rais et al., 2019).

To translate the six principles above, a system of election administration was chosen, which we currently know as the proportional system. As a country that adheres to a democratic government system, Indonesia has known about the proportional election system for a relatively long time, starting from when the first general election was held in 1955 (Jati, 2021). Until now, the electoral system in Indonesia has been recorded as having two models, namely, a closed proportional system and an open proportional system. Meanwhile, Maulidia Rahma (2022) mentions an additional system: limited open proportion. These three systems have their own sociological and historical context, complete with records of political problems that emerged at that time (Rahma, 2022). Of the three proportional systems above, it is recorded that the closed proportional system is most often used in elections in Indonesia. Based on a search of literature

data, this system is known to have been implemented six times, starting from when Indonesia was still under the old order regime, to be precise at the first election in 1955, then continuing until the new order regime under the Soeharto government, namely at the election in 1971, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1997, and most recently the 1999 election, one year after the 1998 reformation (Al-Hamdi et al., 2021).

Problems with Closed Proportional Election Systems; Political Party Oligarchy, Corruption and Weakening of Democracy

Up to this point, three interesting questions need to be asked: Why has the closed-list proportional system survived for so long in the history of elections in Indonesia? Does this situation have anything to do with the notion that closed proportional systems tend to be more sterile from contamination by shady practices such as money politics and the like? Is it true that a closed proportional electoral system is more proven in strengthening the structure and pillars of democracy, especially political parties and their functions and roles? These three lists of questions have become popular discussions in many circles, including academics and practitioners. Moreover, when the issue of changing the electoral system is being hotly discussed after a lawsuit emerged against the election law, in this case, Article 168 of Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections (UU Election), quite a few want the closed proportional system to be reintroduced. The open proportional system was replaced because it is considered more in line with the 1945 Constitution.

If you reflect on the history of election events in Indonesia, it is not that difficult to answer the three questions above. Empirically, Indonesia is recorded to have had quite a long experience implementing a proportional system with a closed list, which started in the Old Order era and continued until the New Order, then ended in the 1998 reform era. Various notes and assessments emerged during this long period—Previous elections, both in the new-order and old-order eras. At the government level, the situation was felt to show conduciveness and tended to be stable. Government turmoil, such as conflict between elites and political party groups, is invisible. The government's political policies are homogeneous; there are rarely fundamental political frictions and differences that significantly impact the political situation and trigger large-scale protests from society at the grassroots.

There were many factors why the government situation at that time was considered to be running (as if) stable, apart from the more straightforward posture and composition of the political parties, an equally important factor was the imbalance in the distribution of power, which made the function of political control not work. This means there was a practice of political hegemony at that time carried out by enormous political forces against other political forces outside themselves (Stokes, 1999). Of course, the problem of unequal distribution of power and political power was not a coincidence but rather emerged based on the design of the political system in force at that time. The design of the political system in question is implementing a closed proportional system in holding legislative elections. In specific contexts, it must be acknowledged that a closed proportional system leaves gaps or spaces that trigger the growth of political hegemony practices among elites and political parties so that the government's political dynamics appear fine (KEYMAN, 2010). If you look deeper, such views are limited to the surface, not showing the actual conditions.

The growing dominance of power among a handful of specific political forces was the most prominent phenomenon amidst the development of the closed proportional electoral system at that

time. This increase in dominance is also considered by many groups, especially academics and political observer institutions in Indonesia, as an indicator of the strengthening of political oligarchy practices. Oligarchy describes a pattern of government run by only a handful of people or specific groups (Ramseyer & Rosenbluth, 1995). Typically, this group consists of several elite political parties and politicians who share the same interest platform. During the Old Order and New Order eras, the practice of political oligarchy continued to increase and develop, along with the emergence of electoral arrangements that limited people's participation in directly electing their representatives and handed over this authority to political parties. Consequently, through this arrangement, political parties can choose and take any political steps as long as they represent the party's internal interests, not their voters' (Lefkofridi & Giger, 2020).

In the Indonesian context, the strengthening of oligarchy in the political dynamics of the Indonesian government at that time was evident in some political events in elite political party circles and public officials, both in the legislative and executive ranks. Elites and actors who fall into the oligarch category often openly make and take political decisions related to the people's wishes and interests within their group circles (Vedi et al., 2013). This fact can be found in the political policies that took place then. During the Old Order, oligarchic political attitudes could be traced to Soekarno's decision to implement guided democracy (1959-1965). Through this policy, Soekarno proclaimed himself the sole ruler at that time and put all elements of power under his control (Benedict et al., 1983).

Likewise, when the old order regime ended and was replaced by a new one. A similar situation was also found in the Soeharto leadership era. Under his leadership, the closed election system became the only election model applied throughout the election events of his time, starting from 1971 to the 1999 election (Vedi et al., 2013). Implementing elections using a closed proportional system during the New Order period was also not free from defects, even exceeding the old order. One is narrowing participation space, resulting in an unhealthy political recruitment process. Those who have the opportunity to advance in the election are dominated by elite party circles, whose practical power networks have more robust access and power relations (Argawati, 2023a). This type of communication and political recruitment pattern makes the legislative political constellation run unhealthy because it can be predicted who will be elected from the start. Ultimately, the elections will be monotonous and normative because the candidates or candidates selected will only be the same.

Another black note of the closed proportional system is the emergence of a fairly wide gap between the people as voters and their representatives, in this case, the members of the legislature. This happens because the choice of candidates or aspirants does not arise purely from the grassroots (the people) but results from internal party appointments by co-opting the constituents' votes. That is why it is a common sight when, in many general election events with a closed proportional system, quite a few elected candidates are unfamiliar with their constituents. Likewise, on the contrary, voters do not fully know and know who their representatives are. In this situation, political parties have not only cut off the closeness of the people to their representatives but have also denied the meaning of their authenticity as channels for people's aspirations. Political parties no longer represent themselves as a means of popular politics but have experienced a distortion of their meaning and role to become influential political oligarchs (Aminah et al., 2020).

Apart from that, the black mark of closed proportional system elections in general elections in Indonesia is the potential for corruption in elite circles. So far, some groups have often used corruption and nepotism as an excuse to change open to closed proportionality (Pratiwi, 2018). If

we learn from the experience of previous elections, closed-list proportional elections are not without gaps in corruption; this system cannot eliminate corrupt behavior at all but only shifts it. If corruption occurs within the circle of candidates and their voters in an open proportional system, the pattern changes and changes places in a closed proportional system, namely between the candidate and the party. (Vincenzo, 2004) Why is that? Because in a closed proportional system, the regulation of candidate selection is controlled by political parties in the form of determining candidate serial numbers, the candidate with the closest and most robust relationship with the political party practically has the upper hand. Of course, the meaning of closeness here is not merely psychological and ideological but also contains the meaning of financial capability (De Vries & Solaz, 2017).

Trapping a closed proportional system arrangement in a vortex of oligarchy and corruption, as per the empirical experience of political dynamics in the old-order and new-order eras, is a challenge and threat to democracy in Indonesia (Hannan, 2022). There are at least two main reasons; first, democracy relies on the meaning of popular sovereignty, that the people are the holders of sovereignty or supreme power in the state (Hannan & Busahwi, 2021; Liddle, 2000). In this regard, elections are a sacred event for the people to exercise their political rights to elect and appoint leaders and their representatives to certain public positions. Therefore, when elections eliminate the principle of direct participation of the people, it is the same as reducing the meaning of democracy from its natural understanding. Second, democracy requires open, transparent, honest, and fair competition so that all citizens have the same opportunities and chances to get involved as voters (Syarif & Hannan, 2020; Weale, 2013). Unfortunately, in a closed proportional system, competition with a climate like this is challenging because the process and stages of holding elections tend to be dominated and centered in internal circles of political parties, especially regarding political recruitment activities. In a closed proportional system, it is difficult—not to say impossible—to ensure that the election process and stages run pretty, with integrity and honesty, because from the start, the recruitment process has been problematic and full of flaws and has been running in secret. Thus, borrowing the language of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the dishonesty and injustice of a closed proportional system are not only reflected in its political actions and behavior but have existed since in the realm of thoughts and ideas.

CONCLUSION

Indonesia has had empirical experience using proportional closed lists as a regulatory system in legislative general elections, specifically in the Old Order era in the 1955 election and the New Order era in the 1971, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, and 1997 elections, and most recently in the 1997 election. 1999. During that long period, using an electoral system with a closed proportional approach left many black marks, which caused the process and stages of holding the power competition at that time not to be completely healthy. It tends to deny the principles of justice, honesty, and openness. One of the black notes of the closed list proportional system in elections in Indonesia, both during the old order and the new order, was that there was a disconnection from public participation in exercising their political rights, where voters could not directly elect and determine their representatives in parliament. Political parties dominate the process and stages of holding elections. This kind of arrangement, on the one hand, weakens the position and role of constituents and, at the same time, strengthens the position of political parties. The worst risk of this arrangement is the potential for a political cartel relationship between candidates or candidates and political parties, the recruitment process and distribution of power becoming centralized and continuously rotating in the same circles or groups. This situation is a gateway for the entry of oligarchic practices, political business, and transactional politics between candidates and political

party elites. Ultimately, it can threaten and weaken the building of democracy in Indonesia, both at the substantial level and its institutional structure. These findings strengthen some previous theoretical buildings which hold the view that the process and activities of leadership circulation in the process of selecting and filling public positions without using the principles of transparency and participation of citizens as voters, both in public positions at the legislative and executive levels, have great potential to leave behind weaknesses and defects. Typically, the weaknesses and defects in question are the strengthening of corruption, collusion, and nepotism, and they tend to be oriented towards centralizing power in specific groups or groups. Therefore, to minimize these defects, filling public positions through a proportional election mechanism should be carried out using an open model. The election mechanism with an open system is considered the most relevant to the spirit of democracy because the process emphasizes the participation or involvement of the people as a whole.

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