

# Political Party Governance as an Institutional Challenge to the Democratic Regression in Indonesia

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**Keyword:**  
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**Abstract:** *The trend of democratic regression in Indonesia has been explored by many political scholars. Institutional problems are considered to be the underlying issue in the regression of political democratization that was actually built on high optimism. This research identifies and analyses Indonesia's political party governance models: oligarchy-based, centralized, corporate-based, and personalized. A qualitative literature study analyzed data to understand each model's characteristics, impacts and challenges. The research results show that oligarchy-based party governance tends to result in conflicts of interest, political stagnation and unequal political opportunities. Centralization makes coordination easier but has the potential to cause internal conflict. Meanwhile, the corporate model can reduce corrupt practices and improve the quality of policies. However, personalization-based governance often results in undemocratic decisions and internal conflict. As a suggestion, research suggests the need for internal reform in political parties to increase transparency, active participation of party members, and accountability. In this way, it is hoped that political parties can better represent society's interests and strengthen democracy in Indonesia.*

**Kata Kunci:**  
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**Abstrak:** Kecenderungan kemunduran demokrasi di Indonesia telah banyak dikaji oleh para ilmuwan politik. Masalah kelembagaan dianggap sebagai isu yang mendasari kemunduran demokratisasi politik yang sebenarnya dibangun di atas optimisme yang tinggi. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis model-model tata kelola partai politik di Indonesia: berbasis oligarki, terpusat, berbasis korporasi, dan personal. Sebuah studi literatur kualitatif menganalisis data untuk memahami karakteristik, dampak, dan tantangan dari masing-masing model tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tata kelola partai berbasis oligarki cenderung menghasilkan konflik kepentingan, stagnasi politik, dan peluang politik yang tidak setara. Sentralisasi membuat koordinasi lebih mudah tetapi berpotensi menimbulkan konflik internal. Sementara itu, model korporasi dapat mengurangi praktik korupsi dan meningkatkan kualitas kebijakan. Namun, tata kelola berbasis personalisasi sering kali menghasilkan keputusan yang tidak demokratis dan konflik internal. Sebagai saran, penelitian menyarankan perlunya reformasi internal partai politik untuk meningkatkan transparansi, partisipasi aktif anggota partai, dan akuntabilitas. Dengan demikian, diharapkan partai politik dapat lebih mewakili kepentingan masyarakat dan memperkuat demokrasi di Indonesia.

## INTRODUCTION

Political parties are an important pillar of democratic development in various countries worldwide. The governance of political party institutions is critical to ensuring credibility and transparency in the political process. Therefore, it is important for every political party to have a proper governance system that avoids conflicts of interest and abuses of authority (Sigman & Lindberg, 2019). Furthermore, by applying the principles of good governance, political parties will play a role as a medium of political interest that mediates the relationship between the state

and citizens. Democratic political parties are well organized and have strong ideological roots, thus being able to convey a culture of democracy to society (Tan, 2015). As the experience of new democracies, political parties in the era of transition from an authoritarian government to a democratic government, internally political parties still express a non-democratic culture. The experience of several elections shows the importance of promoting democracy in explaining the role and function of political parties in governing themselves (Crouch, 2004).

During the history of the Indonesian state, the record of democracy shows a volatile movement. There was a period where democracy was improving, but there was also a period when democracy was regressed (Warburton & Aspinall, 2019; Croissant & Haynes, 2021). Based on the electoral democracy framework, Indonesia has been able to pass the fourth-turnover test. This term refers to the ability of a country to pass the democratic transition phase to the democratic consolidation phase, based on the success of holding four democratic elections after the authoritarian turn (Power & Warburton, 2020; Taufik, et al., 2023).

Current media reports have often shown symptoms of democratic stagnation and regression. The voices of public disappointment with democratic practices are increasingly being heard. There are strong indications of pessimism towards the governance of political parties towards the future of democracy. Democratic countries are practicing democracy in increasingly undemocratic ways (Power & Warburton, 2020). Meanwhile, the challenges facing states are increasingly complex: from food disasters to conflict, climate change to terrorism and organized crime, and populism to corruption. The global trend of weakening democracy has been projected as post-democratic (Crouch, 2004).

In the modern political system, political parties are the main pillars of democracy. Political parties are entities born to mediate relations between the state and citizens (Syafhendry, et al., 2023; Prianto, et al, 2021). Citizens' high expectations of political parties require political party governance to be responsive and accommodating to the needs of their members and supporters. Political parties must carry out the main functions to sustain the party system, general election system and political representation system (Sartori, 2005; Tan, 2015). One of the main functions of political parties is continuous cadre recruitment. The aim is to prepare the cadres' stock before they are promoted to compete for the formation of available public positions. On the one hand, weak political recruitment will leave parties with a shortage of cadres, making them vulnerable to being taken advantage of by opportunists and political adventurers. On the other hand, weak cadre formation will also result in party governance being controlled only by certain oligarchic elites, resulting in weak internal democratization (Norris, 2006; Croissant & Chambers, 2010; Hadiz, & Robison, 2013; Budi, 2020).

On the institutional side, the premise is that democracy runs well if all democratic institutions perform their functions properly (Pamungkas et. al., 2022; Jubba et. al., 2022; Prianto, et al., 2022). However, institutional dysfunction is the root of democratic regression. This study found that the institutionalization of democracy faces many critical problems, mainly due to the governance of internal political parties.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was conducted in an explanatory approach. The aim was to explore the problem in depth, so that it could explain situations that could not be quantified numerically. This research is qualitative in approach with the support of relevant secondary data, such as relevant previous research, official websites of political parties and official websites of election organizers. The secondary data processed consists of electronic documents, online news, and news on social media.

## **CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL PARTY GOVERNANCE IN INDONESIA**

As new democratic countries, the challenges of governance or political party management will be faced with weak institutionalization, which will foster a political culture based on

economic pragmatism (Hadiz & Robison, 2013; Tan, 2015). Political parties are managed oligarchically and centrally. The decision-making mechanism is a symptom of political corporatization, which is full of profit-and-loss calculations. Several party institutions have also been personalized by their leaders.

### **Oligarchy-Based Political Party Governance**

New democracies often present a paradoxical situation. Political parties, as pillars of democracy, carry out oligarchic practices. Political parties were initially initiated, formed and developed by specific figures and groups who would act as party leaders and party elites. Historical capital is the primary basis for figures and their relatives in building the inner circle of the oligarchy. The existence of these oligarchic elite figures and groups, on the one hand, will maintain the party's internal stability, but on the other hand, it will also play an essential role in encouraging the birth of a centralized model of party governance.

Many studies have been conducted on the practices of political oligarchy in Indonesia (Winter, 2013; Hadiz & Robison, 2013; Reuter, 2015). Political changes in Indonesia have become an arena for contestation of oligarchic power. The democratic political system created many ways for oligarchs to express their power economically and politically. It is the power of wealth from oligarchs that forms democracy, not vice versa democracy, which limits oligarchs who own wealth from coming to power. This gives the oligarchs and oligarchs a critical position in political analysis in Indonesia (Winters, 2013).

It is impossible to divorce the oligarchy's strengthening from establishing a power structure that permits the concentration of money and power and a system of collective defense. A more comprehensive theoretical framework, precisely one based on structural political economy, can help explain the idea of oligarchy. For example, oligarchic networks may hire and support bureaucratic apparatus members to support their further growth on the local level in terms of politics and administration. Many of these circles successfully became leaders of political parties and parliament members, who formed new coalitions with local corporate interests, heads of large organizations, and even commandos in the armed forces or police. Numerous ex-politicians, ex-businesspeople, and ex-offenders have succeeded (Hadiz & Robison, 2013).

The strengthening of oligarchy in political parties is increasingly open in line with the democratization of the general election system, especially the regional head election system. Political parties, oligarch elites, and political investors have formed a network of power in selecting political power formations for political leadership in the regions. They are the ones who create the birth of regional heads who will protect their business interests at the local level (Hidayaturrahman et al., 2020). Power and decision-making tend to be concentrated in a small number of individuals who hold a disproportionate amount of political and economic power in oligarchy-based party control. An imbalance of power and a lack of accountability to party members and the public can result from oligarchy within political parties (Reuter, 2015; Syafhendry, et. al., 2023).

Nepotism and patronage are prevalent practices in oligarchy-based party governance. They are typically used to choose cadres or award posts within the party (Winter, 2013). Putting the interests of a small group ahead of the public interest can lead to political stagnation and a lack of creativity in party programs. In political party governance, oligarchy could possibly strengthen the power of long-standing political elites, making it difficult for new cadres or ordinary people to advance to important positions (Prianto, et. al., 2021).

In Indonesia, the problem of oligarchs becoming more potent within political parties is becoming more widespread. The term "oligarchy" refers to the exercise of political power by a small number of individuals or organizations with significant financial and political clout. In political parties, an oligarchy is a state in which a small number of elites with prevailing interests and power hold all the authority and influence over significant decisions (Hadiz & Robison, 2013; Reuters, 2015). Political parties financially dependent on their funders or donors frequently experience oligarchy. The party's elites frequently behave in a way that advances these

benefactors' objectives, eventually solidifying their hold on power inside the organization. As a result, political decisions may be made more in line with the interests of privileged groups (Syafhendry, et al., 2023; Prianto, et. al., 2022)

In addition, nepotism and appointing relatives or friends to essential positions can contribute to the oligarchy within political parties (Prianto, et. al., 2021). As a result, the party's authority and influence become more concentrated in a few organizations, regardless of their true credentials and skills. Political parties, thus, have a challenging time representing the interests of the public and are more prone to becoming instruments of the ruling class. Cooptation, or the exodus of elites from outside the party to join its power structure, is another tactic political parties use to bolster their oligarchy. This may occur due to connections, financial clout, or political influence.

Encouraging oligarchy inside political parties should be avoided since it can jeopardize democracy and power distribution within the political system. Political parties must undergo internal reform to avoid an overbearing and harmful oligarchy. Reducing oligarchic dominance and restoring power to the people as the rightful bearers of sovereignty can begin with greater transparency, accountability, and active engagement from party members in decision-making processes (Winter, 2023; Reuters, 2015).

Party policies that frequently assist groups, such as senior politicians with long tenure in office or members of the upper economic classes, are another indication of the influence of oligarchy-based party control (Tan, 2015). This may exacerbate the gaps between political elites and the public and lead to social and economic injustice (Prianto, 2012). Internal reforms that include transparent leadership selection procedures, involve all party members in decision-making, and restrict the dominance of specific elite groups are necessary to prevent oligarchy in Indonesian political party governance. Political parties are thought to be better able to serve as forums for bolstering national democracy and as representatives of local interests (Sartori, 2005; Pamungkas, et. al., 2022).

### **Centralization-Based Party Governance**

Under democratic political systems, political parties play an important role as instruments of power. Candidates from political parties are available to run national and local government entities democratically. There are numerous instances of the centralized party management model (Lundell, 2004; Croissant & Chambers, 2010; Papp & Zorigt, 2016), one of which is the choice of candidates (Detterbeck, 2016). There is significant variation in the experience of nations with a centralized model for managing political parties. Leadership will typically become more individualized as a result of centralization and exclusivity.

When choosing candidates, centralization and decentralization are not always mutually exclusive. It can be semi-centralized or blended in some circumstances. According to Lundell (2004), a long history of democratic involvement and the significant role played by local governments in these regions have resulted in the centralization and decentralization of candidate selection decisions in Southern European and Scandinavian countries. In contrast, the experience with political parties in Thailand, where the military junta is in charge, demonstrates how informal leadership contributes to the centralization of political parties and how elite party groupings manage them (Croissant & Chambers, 2010).

Political parties are categorized as independent and national under Indonesia's party system. Only the political party's central leadership can make strategic decisions, such as choosing candidates. General election laws also legitimize the dominance of national political party elites over candidates. Central committee leaders of political parties wield significant influence on decision-making processes. Particularly considering that general leadership figures still do not control or institutionalized political parties in Indonesia. Therefore, those in the elite circle of political party leaders control all party strategic decisions and construct their oligarchic thrones (Winters, 2013; Hadiz & Robison, 2013; Tan, 2015).

Delivering decentralized power, regional leaders have been elected since 2005 using the direct democracy system. This is a problem because political parties choose their regional

leadership candidates at the national level (Reuter, 2015; Budi, 2020). The strengthening of local democracy is not directly correlated with this situation. The national elite controls all political party branches' autonomy and independence in selecting regional head candidates to be put up for nomination in the regional head election, not just in external rules like the Regional Head Election Law and its amendments but also in internal party regulations like the Organizational Guidelines, Implementation Instructions/Technical Instructions, and Articles of Association/Bylaws (AD/ART). Additionally, the centralization of political parties in nominating regional head candidates is legitimized by Laws No. 8/2015 and No. 10/2016 (Budi, 2020; Hidayaturrahman et al., 2020).

There is a mismatch in the degree of internal democratization and decentralization of decision-making regarding Indonesian political organizations' regional head candidate selection process. Political parties are becoming more centralized and less democratic. The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) regularly maintains a high degree of centralization, according to Budi's 2020 analysis. The Golkar Party has also recently realized this after utilizing a decentralized nomination process. The Indonesian Democratic Organization of Struggle (PDIP), a command-based organization, has reinforced the centralization of candidate selection since the direct Regional Head Election held between 2005 and 2020. From election to election, there is a tendency for this command and obedience pattern to persist. The degree of internal democracy and decision-making decentralization within the Golkar Party, on the other hand, tends to follow the dynamic trajectory of political decentralization.

The centralization principle is crucial to Indonesian political party governance, influencing decision-making and party organization management. Centralization refers to the party center's decision-making process, which is locally or regionally based. This gives the party center the framework of authority and control, which facilitates coordination and control in implementing the party's political program. Communication between the party headquarters and its regional branches can be facilitated by centralization in party governance based on centralization. All party members and cadres at different levels can receive information and guidance from the party center promptly and effectively if there is a defined hierarchy and centralized decision-making (Budi, 2020; Prianto, et. al., 2021). This could enhance coordination in implementing the party's overarching political plan.

While centralization may have advantages for Indonesian political party governance, some hazards and difficulties should also be considered. One danger is the possibility of internal strife brought on by the party's ruling elite's consolidated control over power and decision-making. Party members and regional cadres may become dissatisfied and alienated, which could ultimately harm the party's unity and power. Political parties must balance centralization and decentralization when administering their party through centralization. In order for party branches throughout the country to feel accountable and involved in party decision-making, the party must allow them to participate and exercise their autonomy (Budi, 2020). This enhances the legitimacy and long-term viability of the party while strengthening its relationship with the mass base in the region (Sartori, 2005).

In Indonesia, undemocratic political parties pose a significant challenge to political party control. This is evident in the actions of several political groups, which have an authoritarian bent and disregard democratic values (Budi, 2020; Prianto, et. al., 2022). One instance would be a choice taken by the party's upper echelons without consulting other party members. In addition, political parties that are not democratic have a history of using coercion and nepotism to fill critical positions inside the party. Party members without deep ties to the party's elites suffer from unequal political possibilities as a result. Political parties consequently become more divided and need help to represent the Indonesian population's interests adequately.

Political parties that are not democratic are susceptible to power abuse and corruption. Without a robust oversight system, a few party insiders holding disproportionate authority may abuse that position for their benefit or that of their group (Hadiz & Robison, 2013; Winter, 2013;

Reuters, 2015). Political party integrity is in jeopardy, and public confidence in political institutions is diminished.

In addition, internal disputes among undemocratic political parties can undermine party cohesion. Political parties may split due to members' discontent with the policies that the party elites have adopted, making the parties less competitive in the political arena (Lundell, 2004; Hidayaturrehman, et.al, 2020). Thus, to improve the credibility and integrity of political parties in Indonesia, they must implement democratic ideals in party governance (Pamungkas, et. al., 2022; Syafhendry, et. al., 2023). Finally, the democratic process itself may suffer from undemocratic political parties. The existence of authoritarian and opaque political parties threatens freedom of expression and reduces the space for public political engagement. Therefore, the biggest challenge to political party governance in Indonesia is ensuring that political parties can reflect the interests of all Indonesians and carry out their tasks democratically (Power & Warburton, 2020; Taufik, et al., 2023).

### **Corporate-based of Party Governance**

In Indonesia, running a political party comes at a high expense. Due to the expensive general election system, the national character of party organizations, and the state's restricted financial sources, parties are forced to hunt for financing sources through closed systems. Party elites now use the "dark room" of party fundraising as a capitalization mechanism and the foundation for pragmatism to further their interests (Prianto et al., 2022).

Political parties in Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries have grown increasingly reliant on financial contributions from companies with substantial individual wealth (Reuter, 2015). Several billionaires who actively support politics have chosen to assume an oligarchic role as party leaders in the most recent developments. A person's or a tiny elite group's acquisition of formal political legitimacy through the combination of political and economic power. It is challenging to prevent conflicts of interest between their interests as politicians who also oversee massive corporate empires and public service responsibilities.

Political party owners with a robust financial inclination tend to approach administrators and cadres more in an industrial relations setting. According to Crouch (2004), it is a political firm in a post-democracy context. A state known as "post-democracy" is one in which formal democratic institutions continue functioning. However, they are dependent on the support and agendas of the political and economic elites. Political parties have evolved into instruments serving the interests of party owners rather than serving as a platform for political conflict. Political funders and investors control the "main door" of decision-making in political parties, which are governed solely and centrally. The primary value in the selection process for regional head candidates is money talks, thus material figures.

A governance approach known as "corporate-based party governance" incorporates political parties in making decisions by applying business management concepts. In managing political parties, this approach strongly emphasizes professionalism, responsibility, transparency, and efficiency. By implementing corporate-based governance, political parties will be more receptive to community demands and goals (Crouch, 2004). Establishing corporate-based party governance also enables political parties to forge closer linkages with stakeholders, including businesspeople, scholars, and civil society. By including different parties in decision-making, political parties can create better policies and positively affect community development. In addition, corporate-based governance can assist political parties in fortifying their base of support and enhancing the calibers of cadre development. A further indication of the significance of corporate-based party governance is the initiatives taken to lessen the widespread corruption and cooperation within political parties. Through sound governance principles, political parties can reduce the likelihood of power and budget abuses (Hidayaturrehman, et. al., 2020; Prianto, et. al., 2022). In addition, corporate-based governance helps preserve political parties' integrity and reputation by fostering a competitive and healthy atmosphere within them.

Even with its potential to yield favorable outcomes in the political sphere, adopting corporate-based party governance must also consider Indonesian politics' specific circumstances and attributes. To apply the principles of good governance, commitment and awareness are

required from all relevant parties, including parliamentarians, political party administration, and the public. Implementing corporate-based party governance in Indonesia also depends on favorable laws and rigorous enforcement of the law (Croissant & Chambers, 2010; Reuter, 2015; Pamungkas, et. al., 2022).

Given their extensive access to resources and political clout, political parties are sometimes seen as money-hungry machines. Within Indonesia's political system, political parties hold significant authority over the regulation and management of the state budget and receive financial contributions from donors and businesspeople. Political parties are, therefore, a possible location for generating significant and rapid financial gains. Political parties should represent the people's interests and exercise authority over the government (Reuter, 2015). However, in practice, many are more concerned with advancing their financial interests and personal fortunes. The many cases of corruption and abuse of power involving political party elites show that financial interests are often the main priority in politics (Hiadyurrahman, et. al., 2020; Syafhendry, et. al., 2023).

The material wealth and economic power of political parties also influence the politics of clientelism and nepotism in Indonesia (Winters, 2013; Power & Warburton, 2020). Many party elites utilize their riches to buy public support for their political agenda by offering incentives or amenities. This leads to the emergence of unhealthy and anti-democratic political practices since money interests frequently influence political decisions and policies. Growing economic and social inequality can also result from political parties acting as money-making engines. Less fortunate people are frequently left behind and need to receive their fair share of growth. However, wealthy individuals who belong to political parties typically have easier access to riches and power. This may endanger the well-being and longevity of democracy. This can threaten the sustainability of democracy and the welfare of society. Improved accountability and openness in handling political party finances are necessary to address the issues of material riches and corruption in political parties. Stringent law enforcement against abuses of authority and corrupt activities needs to be strengthened. Political parties must also resume serving as the people's representatives and championing societal interests rather than merely serving to gain personal financial gain (Crouch, 2004).

### **Personalization-Based Party Governance**

After building an oligarchic elite, managing corporately, and strengthening centralized mechanisms in governance, the next step is to personalize political party institutions. Although this sequence is not cyclical, stages, or cause-and-effect, the fact is that personalization is the lowest standard in institutionalizing political parties (Tan, 2015).

Personalization means legitimizing the leader figure as an institution, thereby negating the role of the leader and other members. The party becomes private property, and there are no leaders in the relationship between personal and organizational matters. The practice of personalizing political parties occurs in many countries. Populist leaders are the main actors in personalizing political parties. The iron law of political oligarchy tends to be implemented by populist leaders (Rahat & Kenig, 2018; Friedman & Friedberg, 2019). This phenomenon occurs not only in new democratic countries but also in countries with established democratic traditions.

The experience of the Justice & Development Party (AKP) in Türkiye, personalized used, is an exciting practice. The Justice & Development Party (AKP) experienced a transformation from an internal democratic model to a personalized one in a relatively short time. This model of internal democracy is considered prone to division and internal conflict. Personalization impacts party leadership based on strong leadership, which will give birth to internal stability (Lancaster, 2014). Strengthening personalization is the impact of the failure of party institutionalization. Factors such as fragmentation, polarization, level of democratic culture and volatility have made party institutionalization more challenging in developing countries. The trade-off model can lead to an authoritarian model—something that is dangerous in many new democracies with fragile

systems. In Türkiye's political experience, stagnation, and a decline in the quality of democracy occurred due to the erosion of fundamental freedoms and the weakening of the rule of law.

Another example is the experience of Silvio Berlusconi and the Forza Italia Party. The personalization pattern of the Forza Italia Party differs from the Justice & Development Party (AKP) model in Türkiye. Personalization is an advanced stage after the corporate party phase. Party leaders have broad political and economic power. Berlusconi became chairman, owner and founder, and all decisions were in his hands (Calise, 2015). One of the entry points for personalization is reduced state funding, inviting corporations to participate in political financing. The tradition of political parties in Italy relies heavily on state subsidies. Corporations that control party decisions. The increasing influence of political and business figures has made public policies tailored to their interests (Hopkin, 2005; Musella, 2015).

This is analogous to the experience of Indonesian political parties following the reform. Based on political conglomerates, there are numerous political parties. The general chairman of a political party has ultimate power over it. The general chairman and his oligarch clique own all party resources. Political parties are essentially powerful, populist politicians' fan clubs institutionalized. In Indonesia, political parties are often created, funded, and owned by a group of people under the direction of an influential leader. The party leader's decision will represent the collective decision of the party. In Indonesia, the practice of political party governance, known as "personalization-based party governance", is becoming more and more common. Political parties use this strategy to concentrate greater attention on a select few personalities or those who serve as the focal point of all party activity. As a result, party leaders frequently make strategic choices without consulting other party members, which leads to a more centralized and less democratic party structure.

Political parties share traits with organized fan clubs, so they are frequently likened to sports fan clubs. Political parties seek to uphold and advance the ideology or leader they endorse, just as fan clubs work to support and promote their preferred team. Political parties have devoted members who are prepared to battle for the party's goals and agenda, much like fan clubs have devoted members who are willing to support and defend the interests of their favorite team or star. They will fight for the political party they support, giving up their time and effort. Political parties also have distinctive identities and symbols, like fan groups identifying with specific colors or symbols (Musela, 2015). The public can more easily identify political parties since their logos and colors are frequently associated with the ideologies or principles they uphold.

In addition, political parties frequently follow traditions or host activities akin to those of fan clubs, such as rallies, political campaigns, or other gatherings meant to foster comradeship and camaraderie among members and bolster party loyalty and support among participants. Thus, political parties can be considered organizations that share traits with fan clubs, such as support, loyalty, identification, and rituals, in addition to serving as a venue for hiring leaders and advancing ideologies. We must comprehend that political parties are more than just regular political associations; they are an institutionalization of fan clubs inside the political community (Friedman & Friedberg, 2019)

A personality cult around party leaders is one of the hallmarks of personalization-based party governance (Musela, 2015; Calise, 2015). Party members frequently identify more with the head of the party than with the party's policies or platform. As a result, party members may become politically blind and rely their decisions primarily on loyalty. Hiring party cadres is one area where personalization-based party governance is felt. Rather than being chosen on their ability and commitment to the party, party cadres are typically chosen primarily on their ties to party officials. This may lead to a drop in the caliber of party cadres and a need for more creativity in how party operations are carried out. In addition, internal strife can arise in party governance based on customization. Personalization-based political parties sometimes experience a crisis of identity and public trust when their leaders are involved in scandals or controversies. This can damage the party's overall reputation and jeopardize its long-term viability. Political parties must enhance internal democratization processes to mitigate personalization-based party governance's possible dangers and drawbacks. This can be achieved by giving meritocracy top



priority during cadre recruiting, expanding party member involvement in decision-making, and improving transparency within the party's political process. Political parties can bolster their legitimacy in the eyes of the public and further enhance the standard of administration.

Since 2005, regional leaders have been elected through direct democracy to exercise decentralized power, while regional leader candidates in political parties have been decided centrally (Reuter, 2015; Budi, 2020). There is a misleading difference between the internal democratization level and the external decentralization of political power. Political parties are increasingly undemocratic and centralized in decision-making. In a centralized political party, the relationship between the candidate and the supporting party is principal-agent. In the regional head candidate selection situation, an agent (middleman) regulates the interaction mechanism between the candidate, the sponsor, and party elites at the national level. Formal regulations that regulate the interactions of the parties are unable to limit informal candidate selection practices.

The strengthening of oligarchy in political parties is increasingly open through electoral democracy. Political parties, oligarch elites, and investors have formed a power network to build political power formations. They select friends and opponents in each contest. The impact is that the quality of the open electoral space has yet to absorb the best people to appear in contestations for public office. Potential candidates often need more access, run out of energy, and even fall out of the rigors of electoral politics. The existence of several electoral regulations, procedures, and political institutions is likely to hinder the access of potential parties. As the central pillar of democracy, governance or political party management is considered one of the entry points in weakening electoral democracy in Indonesia (Tan, 2015; Prianto, et. al., 2022; Syafhendry, et. al., 2023).

### **CONCLUSION**

Political parties are organizations that have an important role in the democratic system. As a forum for political interests, political parties must have good governance to be able to represent and channel community aspirations. Political party governance covers various aspects, from organizational structure to decision-making processes. The organizational structure must be designed effectively and efficiently, so that political parties can run well and in accordance with their objectives. Apart from that, political parties must also have strict monitoring mechanisms, both internal and external, to minimize abuse of power and ethical violations.

As representatives of society, political parties must also be able to develop programs that suit the people's needs and aspirations. With good governance, political parties can ensure that the programs prepared come from consultation and dialogue involving various parties, including the community. Good governance also ensures that political parties run campaigns transparently and fairly. Political parties must absorb the aspirations of society as a whole and not take sides in just one group. This is important to build public trust in political parties and democracy. Political party governance must prioritize democracy and deliberation in decision-making to reach the best decisions. Decisions must be based on shared interests, not just the interests of specific individuals or groups. This way, political parties can fulfil their primary function as liaisons between the government and the people.

Political party governance also includes transparent and accountable financial management. Political parties must be able to account for the use of party funds originating from public donations. In addition, political parties must comply with applicable regulations and rules relating to political funding to prevent corrupt practices and abuse of power. Good governance helps political parties play an effective role in a democratic system. Political parties with good governance can better realize the community's aspirations and interests. Therefore, every political party must evaluate existing governance and commit to continuing to improve its quality to create a better political system.

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