

Reconsidering the Proposal of Increasing Political Party Funding Assistance and Its Correlation with Quality of Democracy

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Abstract. *In the period prior to Indonesia's general elections, the discourse on increasing public funding for political parties has gained prominence. Minister of Home Affairs Tito Karnavian proposed tripling party subsidies from Rp1,000 to Rp3,000 per valid vote, arguing that higher state funding would enhance party financial independence, reduce dependency on private donors, and improve democratic quality. However, this proposal remains controversial given that party financial reporting has not met transparency and accountability principles, and sanctions for violations remain unenforced. This study examines whether increased APBN (State Budget) funding for political parties contributes to improving democratic quality in Indonesia. Using normative legal research methodology combined with empirical analysis of BPK audit reports and party financial data, this research analyzes the regulatory framework governing party financing under Government Regulation No. 1 of 2018, actual utilization patterns of state assistance, and the correlation between funding levels and democratic performance indicators. The findings reveal a critical paradox: while APBN funding theoretically aims to reduce oligarchic influences and strengthen democratic institutions through enhanced political education, actual implementation demonstrates significant gaps between normative expectations and empirical realities. The absence of sanctions for non-compliance with political education mandates, coupled with parties' prioritization of operational expenses over educational responsibilities, undermines policy objectives. Furthermore, the minimal APBN allocation (0.0007% in 2010) remains insufficient to replace illicit funding sources or meaningfully support comprehensive political education programs. The study concludes that increased funding alone cannot improve democratic quality without robust enforcement mechanisms, binding allocation guidelines (75% for political education, 25% for operations), and stringent accountability frameworks audited by independent bodies. These findings provide objective references for reformulating political party financing policies and contribute significantly to electoral law discourse in Indonesia.*

Keywords: *APBN assistance; democracy quality; political education; political party funding.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy has been widely adopted as a political system across diverse national contexts and is commonly regarded as a foundational principle of modern governance.

As emphasized by Moh. Mahfud MD, democracy is chosen for two main reasons: first, it has become a fundamental norm embraced by most countries worldwide; second, as a constitutional principle, democracy provides essential direction for citizen participation in organizing the state as the highest political institution. Consequently, a proper understanding of democratic values and mechanisms among citizens is indispensable for ensuring the effective functioning and sustainability of democratic systems (Sulisworo et al., 2012).

Within this democratic framework, political parties occupy a central position as institutional pillars that connect citizens to the state. Political parties are responsible for fostering political awareness, articulating public interests in policymaking, recruiting and preparing political cadres, and enabling citizen participation through democratic elections (Arianto, 2004). These functions are operationalized through general elections that are conducted in a direct, free, fair, and secret manner, reinforcing political legitimacy and representation. Moreover, political parties function as key channels of political communication, serving as intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled by translating public demands into policy agendas and communicating state policies back to society.

Recognizing the strategic role of political parties, the Indonesian government has sought to strengthen party institutional capacity through increased public financial assistance combined with transparency and accountability mechanisms. This policy is regulated under Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 1 of 2018, which amends Government Regulation No. 5 of 2009 concerning Financial Assistance to Political Parties. The regulation establishes differentiated subsidy levels based on valid votes obtained by parties at the national, provincial, and local levels, ranging between Rp1,000 to 1,500. The regulation still allow adjustments according to state and regional fiscal capacity. These regulatory provisions reflect the state's commitment to reinforcing political party sustainability within a democratic system.

In the period leading up to general elections, the discourse on increasing public funding for political parties has once again gained prominence. The Minister of Home Affairs, Tito Karnavian, proposed tripling party subsidies from Rp1,000 to Rp3,000 per valid vote, arguing that higher state funding would enhance party financial independence, reduce dependency on private donors, and ultimately improve the quality of democracy (CNN Indonesia, 2023). This proposal invites pros and cons considering that the financial reporting of political parties themselves has not met the principles of transparency and accountability and there are no strict sanctions for this violation, both legally and internally by political parties (Wibowo et al., 2021).

Against this background, this study raises the research question of whether an increase in public financial assistance to political parties contributes to improving democratic quality. Accordingly, the objective of this research is to examine the correlation between increased party funding and democratic performance. The result of the study is expected to significantly contribute to electoral law discussion, informing public policy formulation, and providing an objective reference for public debate on political party fund assistance in Indonesia.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a normative legal research design. According to Soerjono Soekanto, normative legal research focuses on legal principles, legal systematics, legal

synchronization, and comparative legal analysis (Soekanto, 2006). This approach is chosen because the study aims to examine and compare legal provisions governing public financial assistance to political parties in Indonesia as stipulated in statutory regulations. By emphasizing legal norms rather than empirical data, this research seeks to assess the coherence and implications of party funding regulations within the democratic framework.

To achieve this objective, the research applies two main approaches commonly used in normative legal studies. First, the statutory approach is employed to analyze relevant laws and regulations, including Election Laws, Political Party Laws, and Government Regulations on financial assistance to political parties (Ibrahim, 2005). This approach allows the study to systematically examine the legal framework that constitutes the core object of analysis. Second, the conceptual approach is used by examining legal doctrines, scholarly opinions, and expert commentaries related to electoral law, political parties, and political finance, in order to clarify key legal concepts and normative arguments.

The study relies on secondary legal materials as its primary data source, which are classified into primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials consist of binding legal instruments, including the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 2 of 2011 on Political Parties, Government Regulation in Lieu of Law amending Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections, and Government Regulation No. 1 of 2018 concerning Financial Assistance to Political Parties (Wignjosoebroto, 2013). Secondary legal materials include legal textbooks, theses, research reports, journal articles, and academic papers that provide interpretation and analysis of primary legal materials (Sunggono, 2007). Tertiary legal materials, such as legal dictionaries and encyclopedias, are used to support and clarify legal terminology and concepts relevant to the research.

Legal materials are collected through library research, involving the inventory, identification, classification, and systematization of statutory regulations and scholarly literature relevant to election law and political party funding. This technique enables a structured examination of legal norms governing public funding for political parties. The analysis is conducted using deductive legal reasoning, drawing from general legal norms to reach specific conclusions (Marzuki, 2005). Following the Aristotelian syllogistic method as adapted in legal argumentation, the study formulates general premises derived from legislation and legal theory, applies them to specific regulatory contexts, and subsequently draws normative conclusions regarding the relationship between political party funding and democratic quality.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Political Party

Political parties emerge from groups of citizens who voluntarily share common ideals in advancing the interests of society and the nation (Pasaribu, 2017). This principle justifies state budget (APBN) funding for political parties, as they fundamentally consist of citizens working to advance Indonesia. Party funding derives not only from APBN but also from membership dues and legally permissible donations (Republik Indonesia, 2011). Non-APBN funding sources are considered contributors to oligarchic culture in Indonesia. Given political parties' crucial functions, high political costs, and vital need

for political funding, government intervention becomes necessary, including APBN-based party financing (Regina et al., 2015).

The government proposes full APBN funding for political parties (CNN Indonesia, 2018). Issues like corruption could potentially be addressed through increased APBN funding mechanisms, making state funding the primary financial source for parties. This would eliminate possibilities for illegal donations with special interests, as party budgets would be adequately covered by APBN funds. Illegal donations with special interests constitute the primary cause of oligarchy. Increased APBN funding would provide parties larger government funds while reducing other funding sources (Faisal et al., 2018). This creates space for state audits of political parties, with authority to dissolve parties violating financing provisions.

According to Article 9 of Government Regulation on Political Party Assistance (Banparpol), APBN-based party financial assistance prioritizes political education for party members (minimum 60%) and party secretariat operations.³⁵ Based on Article 25 of Permendagri on Banparpol (Republik Indonesia, 2014), political education encompasses:

1. Deepening understanding of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia;
2. Understanding Indonesian citizens' rights and obligations in building political ethics and culture;
3. Tiered and continuous party member cadre development.

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Political education aims to create young Indonesians aware of national and state life based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, contributing to comprehensive human development (Wanma, 2015). All electoral aspects must ultimately be determined by the people (Lutfi, 2010), necessitating political education to maintain stability and facilitate national goals. This reflects in public participation through general elections.

However, political participation extends beyond voting in elections, encompassing various continuous activities beyond electoral periods (Tjokrowinoto, 2001). Nevertheless, elections serve as the basis for calculating political participation rates and implementing public political education. National integration, national identity formation, and state loyalty are supported through political participation. History records that free elections without pressure, where voter freedom is constitutionally guaranteed, began in 1999.

Beyond public education, political education targets party improvement, including comprehensive member development. Party cadres require political education to ensure their activities align with national aspirations. Political parties bear significant responsibility for presenting quality candidates, requiring strong, fully functioning parties alongside these candidates, enabling parties to fulfill their role in achieving national ideals (Nasution, 2012). This particularly applies to non-structural party cadres. In this framework, conflicted parties must introspect and strive for reunification (Natalia, 2015).

Law Number 2 of 2011 on Political Parties does not stipulate sanctions for parties failing to implement political education. Every legal product represents a political decision, determined by the balance of political forces or configurations that produce it (Ismatullah & Nurjanah, 2018). Political parties remain inseparable from power; they exist precisely to achieve power (Thoha, 2016). While normatively (*das sollen*) politics should submit to legal provisions, in reality (*das sein*), law is determined by prevailing political configurations. Political education constitutes a legal obligation for parties, yet regrettably, the law lacks sanctions for non-compliance. Political education proves essential for preventing violations, as electoral processes involve political problems. Sanctions regarding political education importance should be incorporated into party law. Sanctions in legal regulations emphasize values, truths, or laws worthy of maintenance. Law requires enforcement through sanctions as coercive mechanisms. When law includes sanctions for violators, it gains enforceability and certainty (Sodikin, 2014).

3.2. Political Education

Equations and formulas. All equations and formulas must be referred to in the text using consecutive numbers in brackets, see equation (1) for an example. The displayed equation or formula should be centered and placed on a separate line with additional space above and below. They must be numbered for reference and the numbers must be sequential, with the numbers enclosed in brackets and placed in the right margin.

Political parties are organized citizen groups acting as political units, utilizing voting power to control government and implement general policies. Political parties constitute core institutions of modern democracy, which relies on representation systems—both formal state institutions like parliament (DPR/DPRD) and public aspirations through party institutions. Neuman defines political parties as organizations of political activists seeking to control governmental power and gain public support through competition with groups holding different views (Budiardjo, 2008).

Indonesia's Law Number 31 of 2008 on Political Parties defines political parties as "social organizations formed voluntarily by Indonesian citizens based on shared aspirations to advance members', society's, nation's, and state's interests through general elections." Party participation represents political participation encompassing all

voluntary activities through which individuals participate in political processes, including voting, campaigning, attending discussion groups, etc. The opposite of political participation is “apathy” or non-participation in such activities. Public participation proves vital for improving state mechanisms. Competition for power through public office positions remains fundamental to political parties.

Political parties emerged in late 18th and 19th century Western Europe, resulting from efforts by groups outside political power circles to compete for government positions and control government policies. When working-class movements challenged upper classes and aristocrats for decision-making participation, governing groups sought public support to maintain dominant influence. Thus, political parties serve as intermediaries between people and government in the modern world.

Indonesia’s 1945 Constitution does not explicitly mention political parties, yet this does not prohibit their regulation, especially regarding national interests. Party formation fundamentally reflects citizens’ rights to associate, assemble, and express opinions, consistent with Article 28 of the 1945 Constitution: “Freedom of association and assembly, expression of thoughts orally and in writing, etc., shall be regulated by law.” Indonesian political organizations include Golkar, PDI, Demokrat, PKS, and regional groups like Panguyuban Pasundan, with numerous parties reflecting founders’ desires and ideologies.

In political systems, political parties constitute political infrastructure that accommodates and channels public aspirations, including support, complaints, or demands. Political infrastructure represents political life through socio-political organizations. Political parties in democratic and authoritarian states fundamentally differ, impacting their respective functions. In democracies, parties can relatively fulfill their essential functions—serving as vehicles for citizens to participate in state management and advocate their interests before authorities. Multiple political parties constitute democracy’s most prominent requirement, providing citizens voting alternatives (Sukarna, 1990). Without alternatives, expressing preferred aspirations becomes difficult. Therefore, multiple channels for diverse thinking constitute a *conditio sine qua non*. Without multiple political parties, democracy cannot be established.

Political parties perform several functions (Budiardjo, 2008):

1. Political communication channel: parties channel diverse public opinions and aspirations, reducing opinion confusion through “interest aggregation” and “interest articulation”;
2. Political socialization instrument: parties facilitate political socialization processes through which individuals acquire political attitudes and orientations, typically from childhood to adulthood, via seminars, cadre courses, and training;
3. Political recruitment: parties seek and attract talented individuals for active political participation (political recruitment), expanding political participation through personal contact, persuasion, and youth recruitment for future leadership (selection of leadership);
4. Conflict management: in democratic contexts, parties address competition and opinion differences, managing conflicts when they arise.

Political education (political education) constitutes a *conditio sine qua non* (absolute requirement) for educating state and national consciousness. Political parties in pre-independence nations prioritized political education, enabling members to achieve independence. In independent nations, political education must continue to prevent re-colonization in subtler forms.⁵³ This research examines political parties' political education function to determine whether parties fulfill this role in specific regions.

Political education forms part of Indonesia's political life renewal process, creating truly democratic, dynamic, and efficient political systems. Kansil (2001, p. 197) states: "Political education aims to create young Indonesians aware of national and state life based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, contributing to comprehensive Indonesian human development manifested in social behavior." Political parties should enhance membership quality beyond mere cadre development, focusing on collective goals rather than narrow membership interests.

3.3. Increased Political Party Funding for Democratic Quality

Improving democratic quality requires maintaining public participation in elections—not merely momentary voting but engagement throughout electoral stages. Democratic quality also relates to public trust in electoral administrators. International democracy indices indicate Indonesia's democratic life remains vulnerable. Beyond regulatory reform, strengthening oversight and political education, political cost restructuring proves necessary for improving democratic quality. Government Regulation (PP) Number 1 of 2018 increased DPR party funding to Rp 1,000 per valid vote, nine times previous rates of Rp 108 per valid vote. Provincial DPRD parties receive Rp 1,200 per valid vote, while district/city DPRD parties receive Rp 1,500 per valid vote (CNN Indonesia, 2023).

Political parties play fundamental roles in democratic societies as organizations of political activities seeking governmental power and public support through competition with groups holding different views. Political parties and power remain inseparable, as parties exist to achieve executive and legislative power (Thoha, 2016). Political parties thus constitute major intermediaries connecting social forces and ideologies with official government institutions and broader social political action.

Party activities generate expenses related to their duties and functions, requiring clear, well-managed financial sources for proper functioning. Generally, in advanced democracies, three policies address party financial issues: first, requiring party transparency and accountability in financial management; second, limiting donation amounts to parties; third, providing state budget assistance or subsidies to parties. These interrelated policies aim to reduce party dependency on donors, ensuring parties pursue public, constituent, or member interests. Indonesia has attempted implementing these policies since reformation through various laws preceding the 1999, 2004, and 2009 elections. However, these laws have not successfully encouraged party transparency and accountability in financial management.

Party financial assistance will increase, considering its use extends beyond secretariat operations to political education activities. Political education, including cadre development, absorbs most funds. Enlarging party financial assistance while increasing transparency and accountability requires examination: First, creating standard formulas for increasing assistance that meet justice principles for receiving parties while encouraging performance improvement. What constitutes justice for recipient parties

and how to measure party performance? Second, identifying appropriate methods for encouraging party transparency and accountability in financial management, given parties currently lack competent human resources and genuine commitment to transparent, accountable financial management.

No party can thrive without strong financial support needed for organizational consolidation, member cadre development, aspiration absorption, image building, campaigning, etc. Originally, membership dues fulfilled all party financial needs. Strong ideological relationships between parties and members facilitated fundraising. However, with changing social structures and increasingly complex democratic governance systems, virtually no parties survive solely on membership dues.

Financial assistance policies have not changed party behavior, especially given minimal APBN and APBD assistance amounts. Parties prefer shortcuts: forcing legislative and executive cadres to collect illegal funds while accepting major donor contributions. The former appears in numerous corruption scandals involving party officials (DKP funds, Deputy Governor of Bank Indonesia selection, Nazaruddin case); the latter manifests in growing numbers of businesspeople, retired bureaucrats, and generals becoming party officials. Parties ignore transparency and accountability principles because laws created by party cadres in DPR and government remain incomplete.

Efforts to prevent parties from falling into money owners' control, whether legally or illegally accumulated, must continue, especially considering the 1945 Constitution's strategic roles for parties in state management. Otherwise, parties will not only neglect public interests but potentially become democracy-destroying institutions. Hence, party financial assistance policies deserve attention, as such assistance helps parties avoid money owners' control, whether inside or outside parties.

Increasing assistance amounts proves important because insufficient amounts enable casual party financial management. Conversely, increased amounts encourage serious party financial management, reducing officials' illegal fundraising activities. Increased assistance also provides state instruments for demanding party transparency and accountability, as greater state fund usage intensifies BPK audits. This succeeds only with stricter administrative provisions.

3.4. Political Party Fund Assistance Regulation and Amounts

Law Number 2 of 2008 states party financial assistance finances political education and secretariat operations. Law Number 2 of 2011 emphasizes prioritizing state assistance for political education. However, BPK reports show that since Law Number 2 of 2008's implementation, assistance fund usage remains unchanged, primarily secretariat operational needs. This continues old practices identifying state assistance with secretariat operational assistance, despite PP Number 5 of 2009 emphasizing assistance for both secretariat operations and political education. BPK examinations reveal most national, provincial, and district/city parties fail to allocate assistance for political education activities. Parties cannot differentiate permissible political education activities, despite PP Number 5 of 2009 clarification through Permendagri Number 24 of 2009 defining political education as activities increasing public awareness of rights and obligations in social, national, and state life; increasing political participation and public initiative; increasing independence, maturity, and building national character in maintaining unity.

Though assistance funds finance secretariat operations, party accountability reports across levels inconsistently classify costs into respective activity types. Parties struggle to allocate staff salaries/honoraria, inventory purchases, and office rentals to specific activities with unclear permissions. Provincial and district/city parties maintain secretariat staff and pay salaries/honoraria, yet such costs lack clear classification in PP Number 5 of 2009. Inventory (fixed asset) purchases are prohibited, yet parties use assistance funds for computers, furniture, vehicle installments, even office rentals.

Law Number 2 of 2011 clearly prioritizes party financial assistance for political education. Regarding this provision, government regulations must ensure most assistance funds finance political education. Preferably, regulations specify usage percentages, e.g., 75% for political education, 25% for secretariat operations. Allocation certainty facilitates both audits and party officials' budget allocation and reporting.

No universal ideal assistance amount exists across all nations. Some countries finance all party activities (100%) like Uzbekistan, while others provide nothing (0%) like New Zealand. In Britain, Italy, and Australia, individual and corporate donations exceed state assistance; conversely, in Austria, Sweden, Portugal, and Mexico, state assistance exceeds individual or corporate donations. France, Denmark, and Japan show balanced ratios between state assistance and individual/corporate donations (Öhman & Zainulbhai, 2009).

To assess how much party financial assistance takes from state budgets, examine APBN assistance percentages of total Indonesian party spending annually. Following PP Number 5 of 2009 formulas, Kepmendagri Number 212/2009 established Rp 108 per vote for parties obtaining DPR seats. APBN party financial assistance remains minimal compared to total party needs. Total APBN party assistance equals Rp 9.2 billion—only 0.0007% of the 2010 APBN total of Rp 1,300 trillion. These figures suggest substantial room for increasing party financial assistance, given assistance represents merely 0.0007% of APBN. Some Western European nations assist parties up to 30% of individual party total spending. Applying this figure in Indonesia would trigger public rejection given poor party performance, especially with numerous corruption scandals revealing political parties or party elite politicians as primary perpetrators.

The analysis reveals a critical paradox in Indonesia's political party financing system: while APBN funding theoretically aims to reduce oligarchic influences and strengthen democratic institutions through enhanced political education, the actual implementation demonstrates significant gaps between normative expectations and empirical realities. The absence of sanctions for non-compliance with political education mandates, coupled with inadequate monitoring mechanisms, has resulted in parties prioritizing operational expenses over their fundamental educational responsibilities. Furthermore, the minimal proportion of APBN allocation to parties (0.0007% in 2010) suggests that current funding levels remain insufficient to genuinely replace illicit funding sources or meaningfully support comprehensive political education programs.

This structural weakness perpetuates a vicious cycle wherein parties maintain dependency on questionable funding sources while simultaneously failing to fulfill their constitutional obligation to politically educate citizens. Consequently, any future reform must address not merely the quantum of financial assistance but also establish robust enforcement mechanisms, clear allocation guidelines with binding percentages for

political education (such as the proposed 75%-25% split), and stringent accountability frameworks audited by independent bodies. Without such comprehensive reforms, increased APBN funding risks becoming merely another state expenditure without corresponding improvements in democratic quality, party accountability, or citizen political literacy, ultimately undermining the very democratic consolidation objectives that justify public financing of political parties in the first place.

4. CONCLUSION

This study finds that increased APBN financial assistance to political parties does not automatically improve democratic quality in Indonesia. Although Government Regulation No. 1 of 2018 signals state commitment to party institutional strengthening, its implementation remains ineffective. Three key problems persist: the absence of enforceable sanctions for neglecting political education, weak monitoring mechanisms that allow fund misuse, and insufficient funding levels (0.0007% of the APBN) that fail to reduce reliance on illicit financing. As a result, public funding functions largely as routine state expenditure without significantly enhancing party accountability, political education, or democratic consolidation. Accordingly, this study recommends amending Law No. 2 of 2011 to introduce clear sanctions for non-compliance, enforcing binding fund allocation standards, increasing APBN support to 15–20% of party operational needs, and strengthening BPK oversight through regular audits and public disclosure. It also emphasizes the need to standardize political education programs with measurable outcomes and to enforce transparency through digital financial reporting platforms. Only through comprehensive institutional reforms can public funding meaningfully contribute to democratic quality and public trust. Future research should assess the long-term impacts of these reforms across regional contexts and party systems.

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