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Implications of Postponed General Election on the Term of Office of the President and Vice President in Indonesian Statehood

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Abstract

This study discusses the postponement of the general election and its implications for the terms of office of the President and Vice President in terms of Indonesian constitution. The purpose of this study is to examine the constitutionality of postponing the general election and its correlation with the term of office of the President and Vice President in the constitution. The research method used is normative legal research through a statutory approach. The results of this study indicate that postponing general elections when the state is in normal conditions is contrary to the constitution and has violated democratic principles. However, the postponement of the general election may occur if the country is in a state of emergency. The constitution itself has not yet regulated it, thus creating a legal vacuum that leads to ambiguity in the positions of President and Vice President. Therefore, this research provides a solution so that state sovereignty is maintained and constitutional democracy is not injured.

Keywords: Indonesia, Postponement of General Election; President and Vice President.

A. Introduction

General Election is the main catalyst in assessing the success of the democratic system in Indonesia. Democracy that is oriented towards the will and aspirations of the people through the holding of general elections periodically is in fact not internalized in the body of government. The postulate was evident from the emergence of the general election delay discourse from the Minister of Investment / Chairman of the Investment Coordinating Board who initiated the postponement of the general election to maintain political stability for the sake of smooth investment.¹ The plan was affirmed by three political parties at once as part of parliament with identical arguments. However, there are basic arguments for rejection, that view the postponement of the general election as harming democracy and violating the constitution.

Holding the general election postponed for three years is directly against the constitution. The provisions violated are Article 7, 19 paragraph (1), 22C paragraph (1), and 22E paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. ² The rationality is because the series of norms have stipulated that general election are held every five years as a basis for determining the circulation of government

Firda Cynthia Anggrainy, "Menteri Bahlil Kembali Bicara Usul Penundaan Pemilu Demi Investasi," detikNews, 2022. https://news.detik.com/berita/d-6008344/menteri-bahlil-kembali-bicara-usul-penundaan-Pemilu-demi-investasi

See Article 7, 19 paragraph (1), 22C paragraph (1) dan 22E paragraph (1) the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

configurations. The purpose of the creation of the general election mechanism is to avoid the vacuum of power, especially in the position of President and Vice President.

The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia basically still does not regulate the procedures for filling the positions of President and Vice President if the general election cannot be held at the end of the period. The provisions of Article 7 of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia on the one hand only give the President and Vice President a five-year term and after that re-elected through the general election. However, The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia does not complement it also with the determination clause of the President and Vice President when his term ends and the general election is abolished. As a result, at that moment there was a rechtsvacuum which led to the vacancy of the head of state and government in the country.

The vacancies of heads of state and heads of government simultaneously have implications for the state. The wheels of government practically stagnated due to the absence of the President and Vice President who are domiciled as chief executives. Magnus effectus the worst is that the state becomes pawned and at any time can be occupied by other parties. Of course, the possibility is logical, considering that one of the prerequisites of a country can be said to exist under Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention 1993 is to be led entirely by an effective ruling government. ³ The significance of the impact resulting from the power vacuum becomes urgent to be anticipated. One alternative way out that had been hotly discussed was to relax the restrictions on the term of office of the President and Vice President in The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The alternative is not the best option, because it goes against constitutionalism as the heart of the constitution itself.

Departing from the description that has been outlined before, the polemic of the postponement of the general election and its implications for the term of office of the President and Vice President becomes urgent for further review. Therefore, the author will accommodate it with two formulations of the problem, How is the constitutionality of the postponement of the general election in Indonesia? What are the implications of the postponement of the general election on the term of office of the President and Vice President?

B. Literature review

Democracy is a concept that citizens have rights, obligations, positions, and powers in the participation of state power both through the *public sphere* and elected representatives (from the people, by the people, to the people). 4 The concept of democracy is still universal or general, but it has been deeply rooted in the world so it becomes a part that must be listed in the constitution as "Constitutionalism". Constitutionalism is an understanding that views that the constitution whose role as the highest law can limit the power of government or briefly, John Adams called it " government by law, not by men". 5 Moreover, the main element that has a correlation

Derek Wong, "Sovereignyy Sunk? The Position of 'Sinking States' At International Law," Melbourne Journal of International Law 14, no. 2 (2014): P. 8.

Fathul Hamdani and Ana Fauzia, "Legal Discourse: The Spirit of Democracy and Human Rights Post Simultaneous Regional Elections 2020 in the Covid-19 Pandemic Era," Lex Scientia Law Review 5, no. 1 (2021): P. 101.

Bryan-Paul Frost and Jeffrey Sikkenga, History of American Political Thought (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2003), P. 118.

with democracy and constitutionalism is the general election. The general election is the process of selecting figures who will be leaders or representatives in the government where the purpose of this procurement is to benefit the right to vote as a citizen who meets the participation requirements.⁶

C. Research Methods

This article uses normative legal research. This method is legal research by placing law as the formation of normative systems in regulations. This research refers to narrative graphing using the *statute approach*. The approach of legislation is carried out by reviewing regulations related to the general election. The legal materials used are primary legal materials, secondary legal materials, and tertiary legal materials. The data collection techniques used are literature studies and the data analysis techniques used are descriptive-analytical and prescriptive.

D. Results and Discussion

1. Constitutionality of Delaying General Election in Indonesia

Democracy as a constitutional system believes in the presence of the people in rolling the wheels of government. Democracy is not limited to methods, tools, or processes, but its true essence is as a set of values or norms of people's lives in the constellation of nation and state. ⁷ Their involvement becomes the main ideal that must be realized, at least in two stages, namely:⁸ a.) Agenda Setting, which is the stage to determine the problem or problem to be discussed and decided; b.) Deciding the Outcome, which is the stage at the time of decision making.

One of the key instruments that can manifest democratic values in a complete way is the general election. The magnitude of the meaning of the general election for democracy earned him a special place in the constitution. The postulate is proven from the inclusion of Article 22E paragraph (1) to paragraph (6) which regulates the implementation of the general election. Its position lies in Chapter VIIB as a special chapter in the systematics of the torso of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. According to Ni'Matul Huda, the purpose of the inclusion is to provide a strong legitimacy base to ensure the holding of the general election in terms of time, process, mechanism, and quality.⁹

The ratio of the legislature in the context of the period of the general election can actually be seen the urgency when looking at the Comprehensive Text on the general election. The debate that found the tangent that the periodization of the general election was not only rigid for 5 years but also emphasized the prevention of delays and implementation as soon as possible if there was a situation that encouraged him to consider the sovereignty of the people which was the initial

Rahmawati Halim et al, "Political Participation of Communities in the Legislative General Elections (Pemilu)," Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik 31, no. 3 (2018): P. 279.

Gerardo L Munck, "What Is Democracy? A Reconceptualization of the Quality of Democracy," Democratization 23, no. 1 (2014): P. 17-18.

⁸ Affan Gaffar, Politik Indonesia; Transisi Menuju Demokrasi (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1999), P. 6.

Ni'Matul Huda, Hukum Tata Negara Indonesia Edisi Revisi (Jakarta: Rajagrafindo Persada, 2016), P. 290.

reason for the implementation of this democratic party. The emphasis is seen on the addition of the word "no later than" in Article 22 Paragraph (1) initiated by Patrialis Akbar. 10 In addition, the importance of scale in the general election because the periodic principle can provide opportunities to maintain or evaluate government decisions by citizens.

General election construction is arranged in such a way with the emphasis on restrictions on the term of office of each position. Starting from Article 7 of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia related to restrictions on the term of office for five years and the re-election of the President and Vice President, Article 19 Paragraph (1) regarding the House of Representatives elected through the general election, and Article 22C Paragraph (1) discusses the Regional Representative Council elected from each province through the general election. General election as a form of people's sovereignty by emphasizing their procurement every 5 years can be understood more deeply based on the interpretation of Constitutional Court Decision Number 40/PUU-XVI/2018 and Constitutional Court Decision Number 36/PUU-XVI/2018. Both of these rulings tested Article 169 letter n and Article 227 letter i of the general election act as the substance of delegates from Article 7 of the constitution. The Constitutional Court as the guardian of the constitution of course interprets Article 7 and the article that became its delegate in both rulings based on interpretation cessat in Clarisatau plain meaning rule or interpretation stopped when the article is clear so that the term of office is absolutely limited to two periods either with a pause or in a row.¹¹

The interpretation of the Judge of the Constitutional Court on Article 7 of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and its delegate rules, namely Article 169 letter n and Article 227 letter I of the general election act cannot be separated from the mandatory benchmark, namely the original intent on the formation of content material. This is because originalism puts forward judges not to deprive the people of the vote through the rules produced by the people's representatives and respect for the constitution as the highest social contract. 12 Therefore, the restriction of the term of office in response to the long experience of authoritarianism or easily called constitutionalism. 13 The fact of its enforceability must be preserved. The postponement of the general election is a betrayal of the originality of the material content of Article 7 of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and Article 19 Paragraph (1), Article 22C Paragraph (1), and Article 22E Paragraph (1) and (2).

Mahkamah Konstitusi RI, Naskah Komprehensif Buku V (Jakarta: Sekretariat Jenderal dan Kepaniteraan Mahkamah Konstitusi RI, 2010), P. 571.

Check out Constitutional Court Decision Number 40/PUU-XVI/2018 and Constitutional Court Decision Number 36/PUU-XVI/2018

Agnes Harvelian et al, "Constitutional Interpretation of Original Intent on Finding The Meaning of Social Justice In The Constitutional Review," Yustisia 9, no. 3 (2020): P. 289.

Moses Adagbabiri, "Constitutionalisme and Democracy," International Journal of Humanities and Social Science 5, no. 12 (2015): P. 109.

However, the urgency of holding the general election and their scale is not only to maintain constitutional rights and the concept of constitutionalism but also to strengthen the presidential system and ensure the commander-in-chief in a country does not experience a vacuum of power.

The periodization of the implementation of the general election is actually not only aimed at limiting the term of office of power but also becomes the pulse of democracy so that it must not be stopped or as much as possible held as soon as possible. This axiom is evident from the arrangements in Article 431, 432, and 433 of the general election act. These three Articles regulate the "follow-up general election" and "after-holding the general election". Based on The Explanation of Article 431 Paragraph (1), "follow-up general election" is to continue the stages of the general election that have been stopped and/or have not been carried out. Meanwhile, "aftergeneral election" in The Explanation of Article 432 Paragraph (1) is interpreted as carrying out the stages that cannot be carried out.

Further understanding of the prerequisites for delaying general election in Article 431 of the general election act explains the reasons for delaying general election can be due to riots, security disturbances, natural disasters, and others where to the level it is impossible to hold them. As for Article 432 if there is a delay in the general election declared for the same reason, then there must be an after-general election. Even Article 433 explained in detail about the after-general election after the determination of the delay and the provisions of the postponement of the general election starting from the General Election Comission ranging from the Regency to the Provincial level. In addition, the postponement of general election can also only be done by the President with the requirement that 40% of the province cannot carry it out and 50% of registered voters cannot exercise their right to vote. This normative arrangement, in fact, shows efforts to as much and as quickly as possible continue to carry out general election. If it comes in a matter of years such as postponed for 5 years (one term of office), then it is tantamount to canceling the general election.

The prerequisites for delaying the general election as a form of delaying limited time that is so strictly constructed are highly adapted to Article 3 letters d, e, g, and i of the general election act which seeks the enforcement of the principles of lawlessness, orderly, proportional, and accountable. In line with that, Article 4 letters a, c, and d of the general election act also explicitly list the purpose of the general election that seeks to strengthen the democratic constitutional system, consistency of the electoral system, and certainty of the general election act. The prerequisites for delaying the general election with the principal who seeks to suppress the implementation of the general election as soon as possible, also have some logical crucial reasons. According to Jimly Asshidiqqie, the scale of the general election as soon as possible is needed due to:¹⁴ a.) People's aspirations change over time; b.) Capricious social living conditions; c.) Growing demographics and changes in the average age of the population; d.) Guarantee the regulation of leaders in the executive and legislative. All the elaboration of the principal foundation and logical crucial reasons show the greatest fear of a country, namely the loss of the means of the aspiration of the voice of the people and most importantly the implications of the vacancy of the positions of all executive cabinet. All of this of course can lead to a vacuum of power and cause legal chaos (rechtsverwarring) due to legal vacancies (rechtvacum). Therefore, a solution is needed regarding the postponement of the general election that is still on the rails of democracy and constitutionalism.

2. Implications of General Election Delays on The Term of Office of the President and Vice President

Constitution and Constitutionalism are two inseparable things. Constitution according to Thomas Paine is described as "not the act of a government, but of a people constituting a government and government without a Constitution is power without a right". 15 In line with this understanding, the formation of a constitution that aims to instill the concept of constitutionalism in a country in its formulation is certainly inseparable from the philosophical, sociological, political, and historical background of the inner state of society so that the creation of a basic law that is the spirit of the people's desire in each material content.¹⁶ The importance of the originality of any content material in the constitution leads to the morality and ethics of the constitution which must not be eliminated, especially in its formal process which will determine the nature of its substance in terms of *limitation power*. Constitutionalism through periodic general elections can be found in a comprehensive text.

Based on the discussion of the minutes of the session in a comprehensive text shows that the formulation of Article 7 of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia initially found a sharp bifurcation between two alternatives. Henceforth, the alternative that is accepted is the idea of the President and Vice President holding office for five years and thereafter can be re-elected in the same office only once. The reason behind it because of sociological reasons in the form of giving opportunities for others to become leaders to explore the potential of finding people whose leadership is more maximal and preventing the rise of authoritarianism through

Jimly Asshiddiqie, Konstitusi Dan Konstitusionalisme Indonesia (Jakarta: Sekretariat Jenderal dan Kepaniteraan Mahkamah Konstitusi RI, 2005), P. 169-171.

Thomas Paine, "Rights of Man," Constitution Society, 1792, http://www.constitution.org/tp/rightsman2.htm.

Pimpinan Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat dan Tim kerja Sosialisasi Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Periode 2009-2014, Empat Pilar Kehidupan Berbangsa Dan Bernegara (Jakarta: Sekretariat Jendral Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat RI, 2014), P. 118.

evaluation.¹⁷ In line with that, the *legislative ratio* of Article 7 of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia can be seen as to prevent the absence of a presidential period that exceeds reasonable limits such as the New Order regime for up to 32 years so that there is a sacrosanctization of the President's office that derogate democratic principles.

General election and re-election are very pivotal to preventing a vacuum of power since it's very dangerous to a nation's existence. Thus, evidence of efforts to prevent the occurrence of the vacuum of power is also formulated in ways outside the general election contained in Article 8 of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. However, Article 8 of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia is formulated in a state of the president's term that is still not over. So there is still rechtvacuum about the way to prevent a vacuum of power when the President and Vice President's term is already over along with can't be re-elected too. Considering the position of the President and Vice President who is very strategic as heads of state and heads of government, the loss of the two figures really makes the country left with no one to rule. Unlike the state with the Parliamentary system where if the head of government experiences a vacancy, then there is still a head of state who can appoint the head of the new government. 18

Procurement of a general election to avoid a vacuum of power that cannot be covered by the presidential system due to the role of the head of state and head of government carried by one party only, namely the President, can actually be minimized through constitutional changes accompanied by objective reasons. This is because a good constitution always provides a procedure for transforming itself in accordance with democratische rechtstaat and constitutional democracy. Based on K.C Wheare view, there are three ways regarding ways to change the constitution in a legal way, namely there are formal amendments, judicial interpretations, and constitutional conventions (customs or traditions). 19

The first method of change, namely formal amendments, is a way to change The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia based on the normative rules that have been determined in it. Wheeler defines amendments as changes in a limited scope that include one or a limited number of rules in the constitution.²⁰ Formal amendments to Article 22 E Paragraph (7) of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia can be made by carrying out a limited addendum in the form of "In the event of the implementation of general election once in five years as intended by Article 22E paragraph (1) cannot be implemented due to the occurrence of wars, rebellions,

Mahkamah Konstitusi RI, Naskah Komprehensif Buku IV Jilid I (Jakarta: Sekretariat Jenderal dan Kepaniteraan Mahkamah Konstitusi, 2010), P. 484-485.

Dwi Rianisa Mausili, "Presidential Treshold Anomaly in Indonesian Government System: Parlementer Reduction in Indonesian Presidential System," Bappenas Working Papers 2, no. 1 (2019): P. 36.

K.C. Wheare, Konstitusi-Konstitusi Modern (Bandung: Nusa Media, 2010), P. 127-184.

John P. Wheeler Jr, Salient Issues of Constitutional Revision (New York: National Municipal League, 1961), P. 50.

widespread security disturbances, natural disasters and outbreaks of intractable diseases. the People's Consultative Assembly is authorized to postpone the implementation of the general election until a certain time limit." In addition, there is also an addendum to the addition of Article 22 E Paragraph (8) with the reading "All state positions whose filling is carried out through general election as stipulated in this constitution to temporarily remain in office as temporary officials until the general election is held."

Second, changing the meaning of the articles contained in The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia without changing the formulation. This can be done by the Constitutional Court as the sole interpreter of the constitution because based on Article 24C Paragraph (1) of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, interpreting the constitution in its final and binding ruling into its authority.²¹ This method can be done with the General Election Commission as a general election organizing authority submitting an application for interpretation to Constitutional Court because the general election is considered unsustainable in very precarious state conditions when the President's term is up and cannot be re-elected. Thus, the Constitutional Court can issue a ruling interpreting Article 7 of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia to make the incumbent remain in office for twice six months or more until the circumstances allow the general election. This interpretation is done on the grounds of preventing the occurrence of the vacuum of power in the midst of state conditions in a precarious state.

Third, the way to change The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia is through a convention. The convention can be understood as the practice of state life that has become prevalent. ²² The possibility of the convention being implemented in Indonesia because the basic unwritten rules are also recognized for their enforceability by The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The scheme of internalization of the convention on the postponement of the general election can be carried out if all parties accept it and are aimed at rational reasons such as avoiding the vacuum of power.

If we look at formal amendments, judicial interpretations, and Constitutional Conventions as ways to ensure the positions of President and Vice President are filled regardless of the postponement of the general election, then the thing needed to realize it is the reason or ratio of legislation supported by theoretical affirmations is the theory of Emergency State Law. Emergency State Law theory focuses on a state of danger that threatens public order so that the state is forced to take extraordinary actions that are not uncommon under normal circumstances. 23 Even though, these

See Article 24C paragraph (1) the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

Ahmad Gelora Mahardika, "Konvensi Ketatanegaraan Dalam Sistem Hukum Nasional Di Indonesia Pasca Era Reformasi," Rechtvinding 8, no. 1 (2019): P. 57.

Muhammad Rinaldy Bima, "Implementation of State of Emergency Within the Constitutional Law System In Indonesia," Diponegoro Law Review 4, no. 1 (2019): P. 122.

three ideas of preventing the vacuum of power are actually still not something that can provide great benefits because this will still be a landmark decision that can lead to the third termism achieved by autocratic legalism. Therefore, the three ways to prevent the vacuum of power caused by delaying the general election are only the best bad choices where as much as possible should still be avoided.

E. Conclusion

The postponement of the general election in Indonesia is unconstitutional considering that the formation of the constitution is not only an aspect of formality but also must pay attention to the substance that will be included in the content material (democracy and constitutionalism). Without both ethics and morals, the constitution would not be considered valid. However, if the country is faced with a dangerous situation where a general election cannot be held when the President and Vice President cannot take office again, then the only option is to delay the general election. To ensure the positions of President and Vice President remain filled after the postponement of the general election can be done with three events, namely formal amendments, interpretations of the Constitutional Court on the content material of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, or conventions. All of these methods can be taken when they have fulfilled theoretical affirmations with the Theory of Emergency State Law which legalizes states to take unusual actions in exceptional circumstances. Although such methods are formally acceptable, the consequences of third termism leading to autocratic legalism will be likely. Therefore, this idea remains a last resort.

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