

# Indonesian Democracy and the Role of Middle Class in Election

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**Abstract.** The history of social change and political change is often influenced and determined by the middle class of society. The middle class often occupies a central position in the process of social and political change, both at home and abroad. The history of the French revolution marked by the Industrial Revolution marks the process of social change that occurred in the European community which was motivated by the middle class. Likewise with Indonesia, where the middle class occupies a central position in determining the process of social change in the community. Starting from the independence era, the transition from the Old Order to the New Order to the wave of reform 98 demanded a democratic government, motivated by the middle class namely community leaders and students. In the context of elections, the middle class in Indonesia has always been a determining factor in coloring the democratization process through the mechanism of elections. Both the quality of the implementation of democracy and in influencing the voting community to determine their choice in choosing government leaders.

**Keywords:** Middle class, Democracy, General Election

## 1 Introduction

The democratization process that has taken place in various parts of the world including in the Middle East, has placed Indonesia as an ideal model of democracy for world countries [1], [2]. Post-reform 98 Indonesia has become a stable democratic country and has experienced significant economic growth.

Before the reform process 98, Turkey was often regarded as the ideal model of Muslim democracy. Although the practice of democracy in Turkey is still dominated by military forces in political practice, at that time experts still viewed Turkey as the most democratic Muslim country in the world.

This view began to shift after Indonesia experienced a process of democratic transition from the New Order authoritarian regime to a democratic reform government. This recognition came directly from the United States which stated that Indonesia was the only Muslim majority country with a free state.

Since then, many world leaders have praised the rise of democracy in Indonesia. The US Secretary of State at the time, Hillary Clinton, called Indonesia a role model of democracy for the Muslim world. When giving a speech at the State Palace, Clinton said "Indonesia is a model of how Islam, democracy, modernity and women's rights can grow together and harmoniously in a country. In fact, President Obama in his last speech at the UN General Assembly (Tuesday, 09/20/2016) praised Indonesia's democracy as a good example for the

world democratic model. Obama said, "Indonesia has succeeded in making the people as holders of sovereignty". This is in line with the rise of the democratic movement which is increasingly widespread in most Middle Eastern Islamic countries.

Obama and Clinton's view that states that Indonesia is a good example of democracy for Islamic countries is certainly very reasonable. First, Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim country that has experienced a political transition from an authoritarian system to a democratic government. Second, Indonesia has maintained political stability and Third, Indonesia has shown a stable economic performance. As said by Joachin Von Amsberg (World Bank Director for Indonesia), Indonesia has recorded good economic growth, after China and India. This shows the achievement of democracy that is good and proud, for democratization efforts in Indonesia.

## **2 Method**

This research uses descriptive qualitative research. The data used in this study was obtained from the head of the PPLH section of Takalar District, WALHI, the Government of the Sub-District Head, Non-Governmental Organizations (LSM), and coastal communities. Data collection techniques used are observation, documentation, and interviews.

## **3 Result and Discussion**

### **Graph of Democracy and the Role of the Middle Class in Elections**

The development of the democratic index in Indonesia from 1999 to 2017 always shows an increasing graph. Since 2009 it was noted that Indonesia's democratic index reached 67, 60%, then decreased to 65, 48% in 2011-2013 and again increased sharply in 2014-2015 reaching 73, 04% (BPS, 2015).

In 2017 Indonesia again succeeded in writing a new history of direct regional head elections with the one man one vote system. This further strengthens Indonesia as one of the world's democratic countries that have held a direct electoral system.

Behind the frenzy of democratic parties in the election, there is one thing that has not been noticed, namely the role of the middle class in enlivening the five-year democratic party. Based on World Bank data, the number of the middle class in Indonesia in 2010 was around 134 million people (56.6%), a significant increase from 2003 which was only 37.7% .

From the above data in democratic contestation such as general elections (election) and regional head elections (pemilukada), the middle-class social community actually has a strategic role in determining the quality of elections while influencing the map of support and political maps for candidates. With the flexibility they have, the middle class of society holds the key factor to determine the outcome and the electoral process. On the one hand the existence of the middle group is able to influence the political decisions taken by the political elite and at the same time, these middle groups can easily enter the grassroots base to influence the voting community.

Interests are indeed things that are difficult to avoid from humans as zoon politicon (social-political beings). Politics is the essence of human life where he fights for and maintains his interests. Both the interests of justice, health, security and various other fundamental interests. This fulfillment becomes a necessity for middle-class individuals to maintain and confirm their existence. So it is common and understandable if the middle class is very enthusiastic in welcoming the momentum of the General Election. As an effort to realize its political ideals as well as fulfilling political, economic and welfare interests.

### **History of Social Change By Middle Class**

In the historical record, the existence of middle groups often influences the process of social and political change in the community, both at home and abroad. As happened in the history of the French revolution, where the middle class, which was then commonly called the bourgeoisie, managed to consolidate power by overthrowing the government of the monarchy controlled by the aristocrats under the leadership of Monarchy Louis XVI. In the name of equality, the spirit of liberation and brotherhood of the middle class of society at that time was able to gather strength which led to the collapse of the king's power.

In the journey of the Indonesian nation, history shows the position of the middle class occupying a central position in determining the process of social change in society. This process is marked by a spirit of resistance to colonialism practiced by Dutch imperialism. Ir. Soekarno, Muhammad Hatta, SutanSyahrir and other fighters came to the surface representing the community's social middle class to oppose the colonial regime. All of them were groups of young intellectuals who had received a good education in Indonesia to the Netherlands. This intellectual power met with social forces in the community such as the Sarekat Islam (SI) group, which was commanded by HOS Cokroaminoto, then gathered strength together by organizing community leaders and youth leaders in various regions that eventually could unite against the colonization of Dutch imperialism

Even the reform movement 98 which tackled the spirit of democratization and openness was also motivated by the middle class who had political awareness to carry out the spirit of change from an authoritarian regime to a more democratic government. The student movement, academics united with the strength of community organizations (organizations) and religious organizations, which were motivated by mass organizations at that time, such as Gusdur (KH. Abdurrahman Wahid) who represented NU, as the largest community organization in Indonesia, Prof. Dr.AmienRais, the Academician and Chairperson of PP Muhammadiyah, Megawati represented the nationalists as well as from the marginalized political parties during the New Order, and the symbol of cultural strength of the people represented by Sri Sultan Hamengkubowono X. The middle-class power represented by the four figures above succeeded guarding the reform transition process marked by changes in the political system, social system and government until the birth of a democratic Government system that places the people as holders of sovereignty in the people own government.

From the various events above, the collective awareness of the social middle-class community is able to move the process of social change in society, from an authoritarian government regime to a more democratic government system.

### **Build Public Participation in Elections**

According to Miriam BudiardjoCommunity participation in politics is the activity of a person or group of people to actively participate in political practices and life, among others by choosing a state leader, in this case choosing a regional head directly or indirectly participating influence government policy (public policy) [3]. This activity includes actions such as: Voting in general elections, attending general meetings, holding contracts (contracting) or lobbying with government officials or parliamentarians, becoming party members or one of the social movements with direct action and so on.

Society is a central factor in a country that embraces democracy. Without community participation democracy cannot be realized, because the essence of democracy is, from, by and for the people.

Critical and constructive community political participation is crucial for the continuation of the democratic system that produces progress. The community must be prepared to be able to participate positively. The role of the middle class here is indispensable to enlighten the call to the community to participate actively in the general election.

### **Strategy to Increase Community Political Participation**

To make development successful, the role and participation of the people is a necessity. It can be said that the success or failure of the implementation of development will be very determined by the size of the role and participation of the community, including in guarding the implementation of the election. The greater the role and participation of the community, the greater the chances of successful development, and vice versa, the smaller the level of community participation the success rate of development is also getting smaller.

The role of the community in the election (legislative elections, presidential elections and regional head elections) is a very important factor, because one indicator of the success of elections is the level of community participation in exercising their voting rights. Election is an important political mechanism that marks the implementation of popular sovereignty. Countries with sovereignty will hold elections in accordance with applicable regulations to institutionalize a democratic system. Elections are held with mechanisms and systems that guarantee justice, equal rights, transparency, sustainability and accountability.

To encourage increased community participation in the elections, a strategy is needed to increase community participation. The strategy to increase community political participation according to SaifulArif can be done [4].

#### **1. Political education**

The responsibility of community political education to build awareness and political participation of citizens is actually the duty of all political stakeholders. But the main thing is the task of political parties, as parties who have direct interests with the support and participation of the community, because the community is a source of voice support for the existence of the political party. So that efforts to build public awareness in politics are undoubtedly done by political parties. Healthy political education is a key level of understanding and community participation in politics.

Through political education there will be a process of reciprocal interaction between political parties and constituents. From this there will be a transformation process, so that the community gets enlightenment, namely the community learns and understands the mechanism, system, structure and way of working of the party and the position of the party in the state system. From here the community will also understand their responsibilities and rights as citizens.

The people are the owners of the highest sovereignty in choosing leaders who are considered competent in fulfilling their rights in advancing society. The obligation of political parties to provide political education for the people has actually been mandated by the Law, namely Article 31 of Law Number 2 of 2008 concerning political parties. Wherein it states that, political parties are obliged to carry out political education for the community in accordance with the scope of their responsibilities by paying attention to gender justice and equality and the objectives include increasing awareness, rights and obligations of society in community life, increasing political participation and community initiatives, increasing independence, maturity and building the nation's character in order to build national unit.

#### **2. Maximizing the functions of political parties**

Miriam Budiardjo stated that political parties have a function [3]:

a. Means of political communication

According to Anwar Arifin. political communication is a conversation to influence the life of the state. Political communication can also design what is possible (art of possible) and even an art that can design things that are impossible to be possible (art of impossible) [4]. While in general political communication is understood as the process of delivering political information from the party / government to the community and vice versa from the community to the party / government. Because political parties function as a forum to absorb the aspirations of the people which will be formulated in the legislation policy together with the government.

b. Political Socialization

It is a process through which a person gains an attitude and orientation towards political phenomena which generally applies where he is. It is part of the process that determines the political attitude of someone, for example regarding nationalism, social class, ethnicity, ideology, rights and obligations. Another dimension of political socialization is as a process through which people convey political culture, namely norms and values from one generation to the next. Thus political socialization is an important factor in the formation of a political culture of a nation. The process of socialization goes on for life, especially in childhood. He developed through family, school, peer group, workplace, experience as an adult, religious organization and political party, he also became a liaison who socialized the generation of political values from one generation to another.

The implementation of political socialization was carried out in various ways, namely the mass media, lectures, cadre courses, information, upgrading and so on.

The socialization was carried out by political parties to the community in the form of introducing programs from the party. Thus, it is hoped that the community can choose the political parties in the general election. Ideas, visions and strategic policies that are the choice of political parties are communicated to constituents to get feedback in the form of support from the wider community. The party becomes an intermediate structure that must play a role in grounding the ideas of the state in the collective consciousness of the citizens.

c. Political Recruitment Facility

This function is closely related to the issue of leadership selection, both internal party leadership and broader national leadership.

3. Maximizing the socialization by election organizers, socialization became the spearhead both through seminars, gatherings, dialogues and others to build public awareness in the elections [5].

#### **4 Conclusion**

Democratization as a choice in the practice of national and state life must be guarded in its implementation by the middle class of society. Momentum and consolidation of democracy through the electoral process must be consciously understood and gave birth to political enlightenment in the midst of society. So that democracy as an instrument and practice in the life of the nation and state increasingly has a meaning to create a better system of life. Hope through the above process can protect all the interests of citizens while providing restrictions and control for every administration.

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