



THE CONCEPT OF COALITION AND OPPOSITION IN INDONESIAN DEMOCRACY

Baikal Firdaus¹, Hotmatua Paralihan²

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Baikalfirdaus@gmail.com

Article Info

Article history:

Received :
Revised :
Accepted :
Available online
<http://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/analytica>

E-ISSN: 2541-5263

P-ISSN: 1411-4380



This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license

ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of coalition and opposition within Indonesia's multiparty presidential democracy, with particular attention to the implications of coalition dominance for democratic accountability, legislative oversight, and policy quality. The research is motivated by the tendency of political parties in Indonesia to form broad governing coalitions, often driven not only by programmatic alignment but also by short-term political interests, access to executive positions, and strategic bargaining. Using a literature review with an interpretive-phenomenological approach, this study analyzes scholarly works, electoral developments, and coalition configurations from the post-2004 direct presidential election era to the 2024 political transition. The findings indicate that coalitions are essential for maintaining governmental stability in a fragmented multiparty system; however, oversized coalitions may weaken the institutional role of opposition parties and reduce the effectiveness of checks and balances. A weak opposition can also increase the risk of power concentration, limit alternative policy debates, and diminish public control over government decisions. At the same time, political fragmentation may create legislative deadlock when coalition management is not supported by programmatic consistency and institutional discipline. This study argues that a healthy democracy requires a proportional balance between governing coalitions and constructive opposition. Strengthening opposition functions, improving coalition ethics, and encouraging issue-based political cooperation are necessary to enhance democratic consolidation, prevent abuse of power, and ensure that coalition politics remains oriented toward public welfare rather than merely elite interests.

Keywords: coalition politics; opposition; Indonesian democracy; multiparty presidentialism; checks and balances.

1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a system of government that places the people as the holders of supreme sovereignty, both through direct participation and through mechanisms of political representation. In the Indonesian context, democracy is implemented through a presidential system combined with a multi-party system, so that the relationship between the executive, legislative, political parties, and the public is crucial to the quality of governance. The president, as both head of state and head of government, is directly elected by the people, but in practice still requires political support from parties in parliament to effectively implement the government's agenda. This situation makes political party coalitions a crucial instrument in maintaining government stability, especially since no single party has consistently enjoyed absolute dominance in the post-reform parliament (Munadi, 2019). Thus, Indonesian democracy can be understood not only as electoral competition but also as an ongoing process of power negotiation between parties supporting the government and opposition parties.

Since the 2004 elections, the dynamics of Indonesian democracy have demonstrated a complex pattern of multi-party presidentialism. Direct presidential elections are not always accompanied by a majority of the supporting parties in parliament. This was evident during the 2004–2009 administration of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, when the Democratic Party, the main party supporting him, only secured limited seats, forcing the government to build coalitions with several other parties to secure legislative support (Parandaru, 2024). A similar phenomenon was also evident during the Joko Widodo era, particularly as the government coalition continued to expand after the election. In the 2014–2019 period, parties previously outside the government began to join the coalition, while in the 2019–2024 period, the government coalition expanded further with the addition of several major parties to the government's ranks (Ansori, 2023; Beso & Rahmawati, 2021). This reality demonstrates that coalitions in the Indonesian political system are often not solely built on shared ideology or policy platforms, but are also influenced by calculations of power, access to office, and the pragmatic interests of political elites.

In a democratic system, coalitions are fundamentally necessary to ensure the government obtains sufficient political support to implement its programs. However, excessive coalition dominance can pose serious problems for the quality of democracy, particularly when the opposition's space becomes narrow and its oversight of the government weakens. The opposition plays a strategic role as a balancing force that monitors government policy, criticizes abuses of power, and offers policy alternatives to the public. If nearly all parties choose to join the government, the checks and balances mechanism can be weakened because parliament no longer functions optimally as an oversight institution for the executive (Ahmad & Nggilu, 2020). In this context, the issue of Indonesian democracy lies not only in the presence or absence of a coalition, but also in the extent to which the coalition provides space for healthy political control, constructive criticism, and the existence of an effective opposition.

Another problem arising from the dominance of large coalitions is the increased risk of power concentration. When the opposition is weak, the government potentially has greater leeway to implement policies without adequate political oversight. This situation

can open up opportunities for abuse of power, weaken transparency, and reduce the legislative body's courage to correct executive policies. In a healthy democracy, government oversight is not solely carried out by formal institutions such as the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK), the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), or the judiciary. An active opposition in parliament is also required. The opposition's role is crucial because it can connect public criticism with the legislative process and state decision-making. Therefore, weakening the opposition in a multi-party presidential system can directly impact the quality of government accountability and the protection of the public interest (Attyyah Maranti et al., 2021).

In addition to the weakening of the opposition, political fragmentation also poses a significant challenge to Indonesian democracy. The multiparty system creates a diversity of political forces, but at the same time, it can lead to instability if not managed through healthy, program-based coalition mechanisms. Political fragmentation can slow the decision-making process, give rise to competing interests in policymaking, and create the potential for deadlock between the executive and legislative branches if political relations are not harmonious (Nugroho et al., 2015). However, excessively large coalitions are also not an ideal solution if they are built solely on the basis of position-sharing and short-term political gain. Elite pragmatism in forming coalitions often gives rise to office-seeking coalitions, namely coalitions that are more oriented toward gaining positions of power than toward programmatic consistency and the public interest (Beso & Rahmawati, 2021). Thus, political fragmentation and coalition dominance are both problematic if they are not accompanied by democratic ethics, ideological commitment, and a clear policy orientation.

Based on these issues, this research is crucial to analyze the dynamics of the relationship between coalitions and the opposition in Indonesia's multiparty presidential democracy. The main focus of this research is to understand how the dominance of government coalitions affects the effectiveness of the opposition, the mechanism of checks and balances, the risk of abuse of power, and the quality of public policy. This research also examines how the short-term interests of political parties contribute to the formation of pragmatic coalitions and result in the weakening of the legislative oversight function. Using a literature review and an interpretative-phenomenological approach, this study seeks to re-read the meaning of coalitions and oppositions not only as electoral political strategies, but also as important instruments in maintaining democratic balance. Academically, this research is expected to enrich the discourse on multiparty presidentialism in Indonesia, while practically it can provide recommendations on the importance of strengthening a constructive opposition, building program-based coalitions, and maintaining the orientation of power politics towards the welfare of the people (Danar Aji Kirana et al., 2024; Prakoso et al., 2023).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a literature review combined with an interpretative-phenomenological approach. This literature review was chosen because the focus of the research is directed at examining, comparing, and interpreting various scholarly theories regarding the dynamics of coalitions and opposition in Indonesia's multiparty presidential democracy. The interpretative-phenomenological approach is used to understand the political meaning of coalitions and opposition not only as formal power

configurations, but also as democratic experiences reflected in the practices of political elites, executive-legislative relations, the weakening of the opposition, and checks and balances mechanisms. In qualitative research, socio-political phenomena need to be understood through the meanings, contexts, and interpretive constructs inherent in institutional experiences and political actors (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, this study does not aim to quantitatively measure the relationships between variables, but rather to build a conceptual and analytical understanding of how coalition dominance and the presence of the opposition influence the quality of Indonesian democracy.

The data sources for this research are relevant secondary literature, including scientific journal articles, academic books, previous research results, election documents, and political studies discussing the multiparty presidential system, coalition configuration, the function of the opposition, political fragmentation, and oversight of power in Indonesia. The literature used was selected purposively based on the following criteria: it is directly relevant to the concepts of coalition and opposition, discusses the context of post-reform Indonesian democracy, particularly from the 2004 election to the 2024 election, and contains an analysis of the relationship between the executive and legislative branches.

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation, namely tracing, reading, classifying, and noting important substance from various written sources. Documentation in qualitative research serves as a data source that can be used to understand the context, build arguments, and verify thematic patterns that emerge in the study (Bowen, 2009). Thus, the data collected is not only conceptual definitions but also encompasses empirical dynamics such as the formation of large coalitions, the practice of office-seeking coalitions, the weakening of the opposition, and the potential for reduced effectiveness of parliamentary control over the government.

Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis stages, which included data reduction, theme grouping, conceptual interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Initially, the collected literature was reduced by selecting information relevant to the research focus, specifically on coalitions, opposition, checks and balances, political fragmentation, and the risk of abuse of power. Subsequently, the data were grouped into several main themes: the function of coalitions in government stability, the role of the opposition as a check on power, the impact of large coalitions on the quality of democracy, and the tendency of party pragmatism in coalition formation. The analysis process followed the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which emphasizes three stages of activity: data condensation, data presentation, and drawing/verifying conclusions. To maintain the validity of the analysis, this study utilized source triangulation by comparing various literature and previous research results, and critically reading the consistency of arguments between references. Through these stages, this study seeks to produce a systematic understanding of the positions of coalitions and opposition in maintaining the balance of multiparty presidential democracy in Indonesia.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The dynamics of coalitions and opposition in Indonesian democracy demonstrate that democratic practices not only occur at the electoral stage but also continue into the post-election power formation process. In a multi-party presidential system, the president,

directly elected by the people, still requires political support from parliament to effectively implement the government's agenda. This situation makes coalitions an almost inevitable political necessity, especially since no single political party can consistently control a majority of parliamentary seats. Conceptually, coalitions can be understood as a mechanism for inter-party cooperation to build government stability, but in practice, they also serve as an arena for power negotiations, the distribution of positions, and compromises between elite interests. Therefore, coalitions in Indonesian democracy require a critical examination, not only as instruments of stability but also as a space that can influence the quality of political accountability and the direction of public policy (Ahmat Sholihin & Kurnia, 2022; Ansori, 2023).

Since the 2004 elections, Indonesia's political configuration has shown a tendency toward strengthening government coalitions. During the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono administration, the limited support of the main party in parliament encouraged the formation of coalitions with several other parties. A similar pattern was seen during the Joko Widodo administration, particularly when parties previously outside the government chose to join the government coalition. This phenomenon demonstrates that Indonesia's multiparty presidential system does not operate according to pure presidential logic, but rather through the practice of coalition presidentialism. This means that government effectiveness depends heavily on the president's ability to manage relations with political parties in parliament. However, these relationships are not always built on shared ideologies or policy platforms, but are often influenced by pragmatic calculations to gain access to political power and resources (Beso & Rahmawati, 2021; Ansori, 2023).

The dominance of large coalitions has two sides that require a balanced analysis. On the one hand, large coalitions can strengthen government stability because the president gains sufficient legislative support to implement programs and enact policies. This kind of stability is important in a multiparty system that tends to be fragmented. However, on the other hand, excessively large coalitions can weaken political competition and reduce the space for opposition. When a majority of political parties join the government, parliament potentially loses its critical function because legislative actors have close interests with the executive. In this context, a large coalition is not automatically problematic, but it becomes problematic when it lacks transparency, a shared program, and a commitment to democratic oversight. Therefore, the primary issue is not the existence of the coalition, but rather its orientation and functioning within a democratic system (Prakoso et al., 2023).

The opposition in a democracy plays a crucial role as a balancing force against the government. The opposition should not be understood simply as the loser in elections, but as a political institution that carries out functions of control, criticism, correction, and the provision of policy alternatives. In a constitutional democracy, power must be limited to prevent unilateral domination. Therefore, the existence of a strong opposition is a prerequisite for the functioning of checks and balances. When the opposition weakens due to the dominance of the government coalition, parliamentary control over the executive also has the potential to diminish. This can diminish the quality of policy debate, narrow the space for correction, and weaken the representation of public aspirations that differ from those of the government. In other words, the opposition is not a threat to democracy,

but rather an important element that keeps power accountable and on the side of the public interest (Ahmad & Nggilu, 2020; Attyyah Maranti et al., 2021).

The weakening of the opposition is also closely linked to the risk of abuse of power. In a healthy political system, oversight of the government is not solely carried out by formal institutions such as the judiciary, the Supreme Audit Agency, or the Corruption Eradication Commission. Political oversight from parliament is also necessary to ensure open scrutiny of government policies through public debate and legislative mechanisms. When major parties are in a government coalition, parliament's critical capacity can be weakened due to the vested interest in maintaining the coalition's internal stability. As a result, policies that should be thoroughly reviewed are potentially approved without substantive scrutiny. In this context, the opposition serves as a political channel for public criticism and a reminder that state power must always be within the bounds of law, political ethics, and the interests of the people (Attyyah Maranti et al., 2021; Nugraha, 2023).

Beyond the issue of coalition dominance, political fragmentation is also a significant challenge in Indonesia's multiparty presidential democracy. Fragmentation arises from the large number of political parties with diverse interests, social bases, and electoral orientations. On the one hand, fragmentation reflects the plurality of societal aspirations. However, fragmentation can complicate the decision-making process, especially when the government must negotiate with multiple parties to secure policy support. Poorly managed fragmentation can lead to slow legislative processes, conflicting interests in policy deliberations, and even potential deadlock between the executive and legislative branches. Therefore, coalitions are necessary to manage fragmentation, but ideally, these coalitions should be built on programmatic agreements, not solely on the allocation of power positions. Otherwise, coalitions can become pragmatic instruments that reinforce short-term political transactions (Nugroho et al., 2015; Beso & Rahmawati, 2021).

The tendency toward pragmatic coalitions demonstrates the strengthening of the office-seeking coalition pattern in Indonesian democracy. This pattern occurs when political parties focus more on gaining office, access to power, and political gain than on pursuing a consistent ideological agenda or policy program. This phenomenon is evident in the fluidity with which political parties shift positions from outside the government to within the coalition after elections. Interpretatively, this situation suggests that party ideology in Indonesian politics is often flexible and easily negotiated to suit elite interests. As a result, the public may have difficulty clearly distinguishing between political parties' positions, whether they are supporters of the government, critics of policies, or simply actors adapting to opportunities for power. If left unchecked, this type of coalition pattern can undermine public political education, as political competition is no longer based on ideas, programs, and ideology, but rather on strategies for gaining short-term political advantage (Beso & Rahmawati, 2021; Danar Aji Kirana et al., 2024).

Based on this analysis, the relationship between coalitions and the opposition in Indonesian democracy must be positioned within a balance of power framework. Coalitions remain necessary to ensure government effectiveness, but the opposition must also be maintained to ensure oversight mechanisms remain effective. A healthy democracy requires not only a stable government but also a strong space for criticism, open policy debate, and effective oversight of power. Therefore, improvements to

Indonesian democracy need to be directed at forming more program-based coalitions, strengthening party political ethics, transparency in coalition negotiations, and institutionalizing a constructive opposition. Thus, the coalition and the opposition should not be positioned as two poles that exclude each other, but as two instruments of democracy that are equally necessary to realize accountable governance, quality policies, and more equitable public welfare (Prakoso et al., 2023; Danar Aji Kirana et al., 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the dynamics of coalitions and opposition in Indonesia's multiparty presidential democracy are crucial issues related not only to government formation but also to the quality of oversight, the balance of power, and democratic accountability. Political coalitions are fundamentally necessary to create government stability, particularly in fragmented multiparty systems. However, overly large and pragmatic coalitions can narrow the opposition's space and weaken the mechanisms of control over executive power. Conversely, the opposition has a strategic function as a balancer, a watchdog, and a provider of policy alternatives to ensure the government remains operating in accordance with the principles of public interest, law, and political ethics. These findings emphasize that the primary problem with Indonesian democracy lies not in the existence of separate coalitions or oppositions, but rather in the imbalanced relationship between the two when coalitions are more oriented toward power-sharing than programmatic alignment, and when the opposition lacks sufficient political space to carry out its critical functions. Therefore, strengthening Indonesian democracy requires program-based coalitions, a constructive opposition, transparency in political negotiations, and a commitment by political parties to prioritize the interests of the people over those of elites and specific groups.

References

- Ahmad, A., & Nggilu, N. M. (2020). Denyut nadi amandemen kelima UUD 1945 melalui pelibatan Mahkamah Konstitusi sebagai prinsip the guardian of the constitution. *Jurnal Konstitusi*, 16(4), 785. <https://doi.org/10.31078/jk1646>
- Ahmat Sholihin, & Kurnia, H. (2022). Fenomena koalisi partai politik pada suatu pemerintahan. *Administraus*, 6(2), 54–70. <https://doi.org/10.56662/administraus.v6i2.141>
- Ansori, L. (2023). Pembentukan kabinet koalisi dalam sistem presidensial multi partai di Indonesia. *Al Daulah: Jurnal Hukum Pidana dan Ketatanegaraan*, 12(2), 316–334. <https://doi.org/10.24252/ad.vi.42086>
- Attyyah Maranti, I. U., Cahyadi, N. D., Mahayuna, I. M. M., Abdi Negara, M. A., & Kurniawati, D. (2021). Tinjauan politik hukum peran oposisi dalam pembentukan Undang-Undang Pemberantasan Korupsi di Indonesia. *Journal Kompilasi Hukum*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.29303/jkh.v6i2.78>
- Beetham, P. D., & Leeds, U. (2022). Mengamati “koalisi” partai politik. [Nama jurnal/prosiding belum dicantumkan], 6–8.
- Beso, A. J., & Rahmawati, R. (2021). Hubungan eksekutif dan legislatif pada era Presiden Joko Widodo periode 2014–2019. *Jurnal Polinter: Kajian Politik dan Hubungan Internasional*, 6(2), 89–112. <https://doi.org/10.52447/polinter.v6i2.4471>

- Erita, R. (2022). Pemilihan kepala daerah dalam perspektif Indonesia sebagai negara demokrasi Pancasila. *Journal Justiciabelen (JJ)*, 2(1), 70. <https://doi.org/10.35194/jj.v2i1.1941>
- Kirana, D. A., Munif, M. A. U. A., Faturrahman, M. F. Z., & Al Gibran, R. F. (2024). Partisipasi masyarakat dan pengaruhnya terhadap proses legislasi di Indonesia: Tinjauan analitis terhadap peran rakyat dalam pembentukan kebijakan publik. *Eksekusi: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum dan Administrasi Negara*, 2(3), 285-299. <https://doi.org/10.55606/eksekusi.v2i3.1260>
- Nugraha, S. (2023). Legislatif dan demokratisasi: Peranan legislatif dalam membangun demokrasi di Indonesia. *Morality: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum*, 9(2), 353. <https://doi.org/10.52947/morality.v9i2.487>
- Nugroho, H., Widyanta, A. B., Hasibuan, D., Djalong, F. V., & [penulis lain belum dicantumkan]. (2015). Deadlock demokrasi liberal dan problem representasi politik di Indonesia. http://herunugrohoprofd.com/Berkas/Riset/Deadlock_Demokrasi.pdf
- Prakoso, B., Himmah, R., & Illahi, F. K. (2023). Dinamika politik menuju Pemilihan Presiden 2024 di Indonesia: Studi social network analysis.
- Masrek, M. N. ., Baharuddin, M. F. ., & Syam, A. M. . (2025). Determinants of Behavioral Intention to Use Generative AI: The Role of Trust, Personal Innovativeness, and UTAUT II Factors. *International Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 14(4), 378-390. <https://doi.org/10.14419/44tk8615>
- Masrek, M. N., Syam, A. M., & Mustaffar, M. Y. (2026). Understanding Performance and Effort Expectancy in Generative AI Use Through Data Mining Models. *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management* 16 (1), 72-91
- Nadia, R & Syam, AM. (2025). The Role Of Nonverbal Communication In Improving Interpersonal Relationships In The Workplace. *International Journal of Cultural and Social Science* 6 (1), 72-82
- Nugraha, A. (2023). Strategi penulisan berita media online di era digital. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 18(1), 45-57.
- Ramadhana, RA & Syam, AM. (2025). Strategi Komunikasi Pemasaran Digital Dalam Meningkatkan Brand Awareness Pada Brand Wardah Beauty. *Jurnal Ilmiah Muqoddimah: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik, dan Humaniora* 9 (2), 1071-1079
- Romli, A. S. M. (2018). *Jurnalistik online: Panduan praktis mengelola media online*. Bandung: Nuansa Cendekia.