

Rekonstruksi Demokrasi Indonesia: Kritik Terhadap Model *One-Man-One-Vote* Dan Gagasan Demokrasi Pancasila Berjenjang

Rinto Setiyawan¹, Alessandro Rey Nearson², Prayogi Restia Saputra³

¹Postgraduate Program, Master of Law, Islamic University of Malang, Malang

²Lecturers, Faculty of Law, Tarumanagara University, Jakarta

³Lecturers, Faculty of Economics and Business, Raden Rahmat Islamic University of Malang, Malang

Received: 22 Maret 2026

Revised: 28 Maret 2026

Accepted: 2 April 2026

Abstract

Modern democracy based on the *one-man-one-vote* principle emphasizes formal equality in political participation, yet it is often criticized for failing to ensure the quality of leadership it produces. In the Indonesian context, the dominance of political parties in the nomination process and the influence of oligarchic structures indicate a gap between the principle of popular sovereignty and the actual practice of democracy. This study aims to reconceptualize Indonesia's democratic model to better align with the values of Pancasila through a tiered democracy approach. This research employs a normative legal method with a doctrinal approach, examining primary legal sources such as the Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945 and related regulations, as well as recent academic literature. The analysis is conducted qualitatively using interpretative and argumentative methods within the framework of deliberative democracy theory. The findings indicate that procedural democracy tends to produce leadership driven by popularity and economic power rather than substantive quality. Therefore, a reconstruction of the democratic system is necessary through a tiered mechanism, in which the initial selection of leadership candidates is carried out by constitutionally legitimate state institutions before being submitted to general elections. This model does not diminish popular sovereignty but rather strengthens it by ensuring that political choices remain within the framework of leadership quality. This study contributes to the development of a more substantive conception of Pancasila democracy and offers normative recommendations for reforming Indonesia's political system.

Keywords: *Pancasila Democracy; One-Man-One-Vote; Tiered Democracy; Leadership Quality; Popular Sovereignty; Deliberative Democracy*

(*) Corresponding Author: rintosetiyawan26@gmail.com¹, reyandcotaxattorney1@gmail.com², prayogirsaputra@gmail.com³

How to Cite: Setiyawan, R., Nearson, A., & Saputra, P. (2026). Reconstructing Indonesian Democracy: A Critique of the One-Man-One-Vote Model and the Idea of Tiered Pancasila Democracy. *International Journal of Education, Information Technology, and Others*, 9(2), 124-132. Retrieved from <https://jurnal.peneliti.net/index.php/IJEIT/article/view/14038>

INTRODUCTION

Modern democracy is generally understood as a system of government that places the principle of formal equality through a *one-man-one-vote* mechanism, in which every citizen has equal weight in the electoral process (Dahl, 1989). Although this principle is considered a key pillar of liberal democracy, various philosophical criticisms point to a fundamental weakness, especially in relation to the quality of leadership it produces. Plato in *The Republic* reminds that democracy that is not accompanied by a rational filtering mechanism has the potential to give birth to leadership determined by popularity alone, even paving the way for the

dominance of wealth-based oligarchs (Plato, trans. 2007). In this context, democracy is no longer a means to choose the best leaders, but merely an arena of electoral competition that is procedural.

The criticism of liberal democracy finds its relevance in the practice of constitutional law in Indonesia. Normatively, the mechanism for presidential candidacy as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Article 6A paragraph (2) limits the submission of candidates only through political parties or a combination of political parties, without opening up space for individual channels. This condition suggests that access to elections is largely determined by the internal structure of the party, which in practice often does not fully reflect the will of the people directly. A number of studies show that the dominance of political parties in the candidacy process can have implications for narrowing the space for public participation and strengthening oligarchy (Winters, 2011; Mietzner, 2013).

A similar criticism was also conveyed by Emha Ainun Nadjib who assessed that political parties tend to function like closed power entities, so that the position of the people is reduced to just periodic voters (Nadjib, 2019). In this view, people's sovereignty is substantively shifting from the hands of citizens to the party elite, which has dominant control over the selection process and distribution of government power. This phenomenon confirms the tension between the principle of democracy as the sovereignty of the people and the practice of democracy that is elitist-procedural.

Departing from these problems, it is necessary to make efforts to reconstruct the Indonesian democratic model so that it is more in line with the values of Pancasila. Pancasila democracy basically not only emphasizes procedural aspects, but also prioritizes deliberation, social responsibility, and orientation to the common good (Fadlail, 2024). However, in practice, the substantive dimension has not been fully institutionalized in contemporary electoral mechanisms. Therefore, an alternative democratic model is needed that not only relies on vote aggregation, but also integrates selection mechanisms that take into account quality, integrity, and leadership capacity.

This research aims to reconceptualize Indonesian democracy through the development of a tiered Pancasila democracy model that is able to overcome the weaknesses of *one-man-one-vote based liberal democracy*. In particular, this study examines three main aspects, namely first, identifying critical points in liberal democratic practice that are relevant to be revised in the Indonesian context; second, formulate a mechanism for selecting candidate leaders through state institutions that have constitutional legitimacy, such as the People's Consultative Assembly; and third, to prepare normative policy recommendations that can substantively strengthen people's sovereignty. Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of democracy studies as well as a practical contribution in the formulation of the institutional design of political parties that are more in accordance with the characteristics and basic values of the Indonesian nation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a normative legal research with a doctrinal approach that focuses on the analysis of legal norms, constitutional principles, and doctrines that

develop in constitutional studies. This approach is used to examine how the concept of democracy should be formulated within the framework of constitutional values and Pancasila.

The legal sources used consist of primary and secondary legal materials. Primary legal materials include the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, especially Article 1 paragraph (2), Article 6A paragraph (2), and Article 22E, as well as related laws and regulations, namely Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections and Law Number 2 of 2011 concerning Political Parties. In addition, official state documents, such as the publication of state institutions including the People's Consultative Assembly, are used to understand the constitutional construction of Pancasila democracy.

Secondary legal materials consist of academic literature in the form of books and articles in accredited scientific journals, both nationally and internationally, especially those published in the period 2022 to 2026, which are relevant to the issue of democracy, leadership quality, and the concept of Pancasila democracy. Literature searches are carried out through academic databases such as SINTA, Scopus, and DOAJ, as well as official government portals.

The technique of collecting legal materials is carried out through literature studies with a systematic search method for relevant sources. Furthermore, the analysis is carried out using qualitative analysis techniques through interpretive and argumentative approaches, namely by examining the relationship between the applicable legal norms and findings in the literature, in order to build coherent normative arguments.

This research approach also integrates the perspective of *deliberative democracy* as a theoretical framework, which emphasizes the importance of rationality, deliberation, and quality of discourse in the democratic process, as well as the doctrine of Indonesian constitutionality rooted in the values of Pancasila. Through this approach, this study not only describes the practice of democracy that is running, but also evaluates its conformity with the principle of people's sovereignty as mandated in the constitution, as well as formulating a more substantive conceptual model of democracy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Criticism of *One-Man-One-Vote Liberal Democracy*

Modern liberal democracy is built on the principle of formal equality, both in the legal realm (*isonomy*) and politically, which is realized through *the one-man-one-vote* mechanism. This principle places every citizen as a subject who has the same weight of votes in the electoral process (Dahl, 1989). Nevertheless, various philosophical criticisms point out that such formal equality does not automatically guarantee the quality of leadership produced.

In the classical philosophical tradition of government, Plato has put forward a fundamental critique of democracy that is not accompanied by a rational selection mechanism. In *The Republic*, he argues that democracy tends to produce leadership based on popularity and mass interests, which ultimately opens up space for the dominance of certain groups, including wealth-based oligarchs (Plato, trans. 2007). This criticism finds relevance in contemporary contexts, where the electoral process is often influenced by economic capital, media power, and political party structures.

This phenomenon shows a paradox in liberal democracy, namely that equality of vote is not always directly proportional to the quality of government decisions. Furthermore, the principles of justice and equality in liberal democracies are often only illusions on the surface. This practice has the potential to worsen inequality, weaken social ties, and lead to political disintegration if enforced without a filtering mechanism that is in accordance with the nation's history and culture. In this context, the general election has the potential to shift from a leadership selection mechanism to a mere popularity contest. A number of empirical studies also indicate the tendency of oligarchy to strengthen in modern democratic systems (Winters, 2011), including in government practices in Indonesia.

Philosophical Analysis: Formal Equivalence and Leadership Quality Standards

The debate between formal equality and leadership quality reflects the fundamental tension between procedural democracy and substantive democracy. Liberal democracy places legitimacy on the principle of equal votes, while alternative approaches emphasize the importance of the quality of deliberation and leadership capacity in producing rational political decisions (Landemore, 2020; Bächtiger et al., 2018).

In this context, the philosophical analogy regarding "gold and stone" provides a relevant conceptual framework for understanding the limits of formal equality. Ontologically, gold and stone have the same status as existing entities, but such equality is not synonymous with equality of value. The differences in nature, rarity, and quality show that existential equality does not remove the hierarchy of values in reality (Setiyawan, 2024). This analogy can be drawn further in the context of direct elections, where liberal democracy seems to provide freedom for the people to vote, but often the people are only presented with a variety of "ordinary stones" without quality filters. On the contrary, a mechanism for leadership selection through deliberation is proposed so that the people no longer need to be faced with choices between ordinary stones, but purely choose "precious stones" that have been tested for their value, feasibility, and leadership capacity.

This analogy illustrates that in the political realm, equality of rights does not automatically erase differences in leadership capacity, integrity, and competence. When the principle of formal equality is applied without a selection mechanism, democratic systems run the risk of treating all candidates as equal in quality, even though there are empirically significant differences in their eligibility to lead. Similar criticism has also emerged in contemporary literature that highlights the limitations of electoral democracy in producing quality leadership, especially in the context of the influence of populism and money politics (Mounk, 2018; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

Within this framework, criticism of one-man-one-vote liberal democracy is not directed at the rejection of equal political rights, but at the tendency to equalize the quality of leadership. The right to vote is a fundamental principle of democracy, but the right to vote still requires a standard framework that guarantees the quality of public leadership. This is in line with the idea of epistocracy which emphasizes

the importance of competence in political decision-making (Brennan, 2016), although this concept remains debated in the democratic literature.

This issue becomes increasingly relevant when compared to practices in other fields that have a significant public impact. Professions such as doctors, judges, or pilots require a competency-based selection process before a person can carry out their responsibilities. In the context of state leadership that has a much wider impact, the absence of an adequate selection mechanism actually creates a normative paradox in the democratic system.

Therefore, the tiered Pancasila democracy can be understood as an effort to bridge formal equality with the need for quality standards. In this model, equality of rights is maintained at the legitimacy stage through elections, but preceded by a selection process that ensures that the proposed candidates have met certain eligibility criteria. Thus, democracy is not only a vote aggregation mechanism, but also functions as a leadership selection system that considers quality substantively.

Tiered Pancasila Democracy Design

In response to these limitations, this study proposes a tiered Pancasila democratic model as a conceptual alternative. Pancasila democracy basically not only emphasizes procedural aspects, but also prioritizes the principles of deliberation, collective rationality, and social responsibility in the decision-making process.

The proposed tiered model places the initial selection process in state institutions that have constitutional legitimacy, such as the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), before the stage of direct election by the people. To give a more comprehensive overview of the fundamental differences between this model and the *one-man-one-vote* system, here is a comparison table:

Table 1. Comparison of Characteristics: Liberal Democracy vs. Tiered Pancasila Democracy

Comparison Dimensions	Demokrasi Liberal (One-Man-One-Vote)	Tiered Pancasila Democracy (Proposal)
Key Principles	Formal equality and voice aggregation.	Deliberation, collective rationality, and leadership quality.
Selection Mechanism	It is centralized within political parties (elite dominance).	Initial selection by state institutions with constitutional legitimacy (e.g., MPR).
Leader Output	Based on popularity and economic strength.	Based on integrity, competence, and public orientation.
People's Sovereignty	It is procedural/periodic (the people as voters).	It is substantive (the people choose from tested candidates).

In this scheme, state institutions play a role in screening candidates based on certain criteria, such as integrity, competence, and public interest orientation. Thus, the choices available in the general election are the result of a selection process that has considered the quality of leadership.

This approach bears a resemblance to the concept of government meritocracy, where the selection process is based on capacity and feasibility, rather than mere popularity. In the Indonesian context, this idea also has historical roots

in constitutional practice before the reform, when the MPR played a role in electing the president through a deliberative mechanism.

In addition, research by Munazih (2024) shows that in Indonesian constitutional practice, the selection function through representative institutions is not uncommon. The fit and proper *test mechanism* carried out by the House of Representatives on public officials shows that the Indonesian government system has normatively recognized selective elements in the process of filling public positions.

Philosophical Analysis: Quality versus Formal Equality

Philosophically, the debate between formal equality and leadership qualities reflects the tension between procedural democracy and substantive democracy. Liberal democracy tends to place legitimacy on the number of votes, while Pancasila democracy integrates ethical and deliberative dimensions in the governance process.

A relevant analogy can be seen in strategic professions such as doctors or pilots, which require a rigorous selection process before a person can carry out his or her public functions. In this context, the application of the principle of absolute equality without a selection mechanism in government has the potential to generate greater risks, considering that the impact of government decisions is broad and systemic.

Thus, tiered democracy can be understood as an effort to integrate the principle of equality with the mechanism of rational selection. General elections are maintained as a source of legitimacy, but preceded by a screening process that guarantees the quality of the candidate leader.

The Historical Context of Liberal Democracy

Historically, liberal democracy flourished in response to the dominance of absolute power, both stemming from monarchies and religious authorities in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. The principle of equality and individual freedom was originally intended to limit centralized power and prevent the dominance of a single authority.

However, in its development, the principle has undergone an expansion of meaning that tends to lead to formal egalitarianism without being balanced by a quality selection mechanism. This condition poses new challenges in the practice of modern democracy, especially related to the effectiveness of leadership and the quality of public policy.

In this context, Pancasila democracy can be understood as a corrective model that does not reject the principle of equality, but places it within the framework of deliberation and collective responsibility.

Cultural Criticism of Democratic Practices

Criticism of democratic practices in Indonesia also arises from a cultural and structural perspective of the state. In the theory of the republic, the state is an organization owned by the people, while the government is only a small part of the people who are given the mandate of authority. With this logic, political parties should purely function as intermediaries of aspirations. However, reality shows that

almost all of the country's power lines are controlled by the party. This monopoly results in the people not facing the state directly, but being hindered by the party, thus giving rise to an irony where the sovereignty of the people seems to shift to the sovereignty of political parties.

Emha Ainun Nadjib or Cak Nun stated that political parties in practice tend to function as closed power entities that do not fully represent the interests of the people. He described political parties as "small kingdoms" that consolidate power in the hands of certain elites (Nadjib, 2019). Cak Nun sharply highlighted the feudalism of this party by stating, "All political parties are kingdoms, and the largest kingdom is Bung Karno's kingdom. So PDIP's decision remains Megawati's. Similarly, the Democrats remain SBY. All make the government now".

Furthermore, this elitist dominance creates a structural distance that makes the people feel alienated. This is illustrated from Cak Nun's criticism that the Indonesian nation became a resilient nation precisely because they were "not protected by anyone" by the state or government, so they had to fight and take refuge independently. This view shows that procedural democratic mechanisms do not always guarantee substantive sovereignty of the people. The people often only act as periodic voters, while the strategic decision-making process remains in the hands of officials.

Policy Implications

Based on this analysis, several policy implications can be formulated as follows:

1. It is necessary to rearrange the selection mechanism for prospective leaders through strengthening the role of state institutions in the candidate screening process. This mechanism aims to ensure that candidates who participate in electoral contestation have met certain ethical and competency standards.
2. Political party reform is important to restore the function of the party as a means of articulating the interests of the people. The regeneration process needs to be strengthened in order to produce leaders with integrity and leadership capacity.
3. Political education based on ethics and rationality needs to be improved to encourage better quality public participation. This is in line with the deliberative democratic approach that emphasizes the importance of rational discourse in the governance process.
4. Strengthening the role of representative institutions in the selection function of public officials can be an instrument to maintain the quality of leadership in a democratic system.

With the implementation of these policies, the democratic system is expected to balance the people's voting rights with the selective responsibility of the government elite. Tiered democracy does not eliminate the element of general elections, but makes it more meaningful, namely the people's choice only among elected candidates who have met the noble standards of Pancasila.

CONCLUSION

Based on the overall analysis that has been carried out, this study confirms several things, including:

1. Indonesian democracy faces a fundamental challenge in implementing a liberal model based on *one-man-one-vote*, which emphasizes formal equality without being balanced by a mechanism for selecting leadership qualities, so that the function of democracy as a means of selecting leaders is reduced and vulnerable to being influenced by economic power, popularity, and the oligarchic structure of the party.
2. From a constitutional perspective, the principle of people's sovereignty as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia not only means aggregation of votes, but also contains a substantive dimension that demands leadership quality, in line with the democratic values of Pancasila, especially the principle of deliberative in the Fourth Precept.
3. This study concludes that the reconstruction of Indonesian democracy needs to be directed at the development of a tiered Pancasila democracy model, where general elections remain a mechanism for the legitimacy of the people, but preceded by an initial selection process through state institutions that have constitutional legitimacy.
4. The implications of the research show the need for reform in two main aspects, namely normative reform through the structuring of election regulations and strengthening the selection mechanism for prospective leaders, as well as political reform through improving the function of political parties and strengthening public political education.
5. Thus, democracy not only functions as a procedural mechanism, but also as a system that guarantees the quality of leadership substantively, so as to be able to strengthen the realization of people's sovereignty in a more meaningful way and in harmony with the values of Pancasila.

ADVICE

Based on the results of the analysis and conclusions that have been described, this study proposes several recommendations as strategic steps in strengthening the quality of Indonesian democracy, including:

1. Systematic efforts are needed to increase public understanding of the basic values of the state, namely Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, through political education that encourages rational and responsible participation in democratic life.
2. It is necessary to conduct a thorough evaluation of the structure of the Indonesian constitution, especially related to the role and relationship between institutions such as the People's Consultative Assembly, the House of Representatives, the Constitutional Court, and the President of the Republic of Indonesia, in order to identify weaknesses in democratic mechanisms and the dominance of political parties in the political process.
3. Directed planning is needed to reorganize the democratic system, including through the possibility of deliberative amendments to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, involving various stakeholders, in order to strengthen a more quality

leadership selection mechanism in accordance with the democratic values of Pancasila.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bächtiger, A., Dryzek, J. S., Mansbridge, J., & Warren, M. E. (2018). *The Oxford handbook of deliberative democracy*. Oxford University Press.
- Brennan, J. (2016). *Against democracy*. Princeton University Press.
- Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and its critics*. Yale University Press.
- Emha Ainun Nadjib. (2019). *Indonesia is part of my village*. Bentang Pustaka.
- Landemore, H. (2020). *Open democracy: Reinventing popular rule for the twenty-first century*. Princeton University Press.
- Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). *How democracies die*. Crown.
- Mietzner, M. (2013). *Money, power, and ideology: Political parties in post-authoritarian Indonesia*. NUS Press.
- Mounk, Y. (2018). *The people vs. democracy*. Harvard University Press.
- Munazih, M. (2024). Assessing the quality of leaders: Fit and proper test in a democracy based on morality, intellect, and electability. *Pattimura Magister Law Review*, 4(3), 386–406.
- Plato. (2007). *The Republic* (D. Lee, Trans.). Penguin Classics. (The original work was published around 380 BC)
- Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945.
- Winters, J. A. (2011). *Oligarchy*. Cambridge University Press.