

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE POLITICS OF CLIENTELISM
IN INDONESIA DURING JOKO
WIDODO PRESIDENCY; AN
ANALYSIS OF THE WEAKENING
LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT ROLE
THE DEWAN PERWAKILAN
RAKYAT (DPR) 2014-2024**

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyse parliamentary oversight in Indonesia post-political reform. In particular, this study captures the relations between the president, party leaders, and members of parliament in shaping the decline of Indonesia's parliamentary oversight. Parliamentary oversight is a key issue of Indonesia's democratic politics in the post reform era. The 1945 amendment to Indonesia's Constitution after political reform in 1998 brought about a significant shift for parliament in the post-Suharto body politic. There has been a significant institutional shift in power, away from the executive branch to parliament. This research adopts a case study model to analyse how the Indonesian Parliament (DPR-Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat) carried out its oversight of the President's policies between 2014 and 2024 when the DPR's level of oversight was at its lowest point. The 1999-2014 post-reform period indicated a trend where the DPR enhanced its oversight role and function. However, in the period between 2014 and 2024 this trend began to reverse with the DPR's oversight role starting to decline. One argument attributed to this decline is the weakness of the DPR as a result of the coalition government formed by the president where majority parties in the DPR have shared seats in the cabinet. The president's success in building a coalition-based government with power sharing among party leaders has in turn enabled him to enjoy more support at DPR. However, such an argument appears too general in nature and therefore this study attempts to go beyond the coalition government argument. Alternatively, the weakness of the DPR is in effect due to the exclusive relations between the president and party leaders that has encouraged party leaders to enforce party discipline which made the legislature's oversight role less effective. This novelty of this research is in terms of the understanding of relations between the president, party leaders, and DPR members, that goes beyond existing institution-based justifications which may hamper the quality of check and balances between the DPR and the president.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Indonesia adopted democracy as its governing model since its inception in 1945. By periodization, the democratic development of Indonesia can be divided into four periods. The first is the period of parliamentary democracy from 1949 to 1957. The second is an era of Guided Democracy from 1957 to 1965. The third is the period of Pancasila Democracy from 1966 to 1998. And fourth is the period of *reformasi*, which was marked by the fall of Suharto from the presidency in 1998. To provide a historical background to Indonesia's politics, the following paragraphs outline the developments during each period.

The first is the period of parliamentary democracy from 1949 to 1957. This period was one of political uncertainty and the struggle to defend sovereignty over regions that were claimed by the Dutch. The structure of government in this era was that of a unitary state.¹ The foundation of the constitution which was initially based on the 1945 constitution was changed in accordance with the provisional constitution of 1950 after most of the Dutch colonial regions decided to merge with Indonesia. According to Herbert Feith, the main features of Indonesia politics in this era exhibited six characteristics, namely the civilians were dominant, political parties played an important role, contenders respected the rules of the democratic game, most members of the political elite showed commitment to the symbols of democratic rule, civil liberties were rarely infringed, and less coercion (Feith, 1962).²

The unicameral form of parliament consisted of 232 members and political parties played dominant role in the decision-making of the government.³ The large

¹After the recognition of Netherlands to Indonesia in 1949, Indonesia adopted federal system called Republik Indonesia Serikat-RIS. It was an aggregation from 16 states contained Republic of Indonesia plus fifteen other states established by Netherland. Sukarno become the President of the federations.

² Less coercion during the parliamentary democracy period refers to the passive role of Sukarno amid political instability which was caused by intensive conflict among political parties. The dominant role of parliament made the position of President Sukarno purely symbolic. Although conflict among political parties was chronic, President Sukarno did not intervene, at least until 1956, when he made a political speech at the inauguration of new members of DPRS.

³ According to the data of National Election Commission, during the 1955 election, about 28 political parties contested in the legislative election.