

# otoritas

Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan

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OTORITAS

JIP

VOL. XIII

NO. 1

PP. 01-181

APRIL 2023

P-ISSN 2088-3706

E-ISSN 2502-9320



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Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan

Volume 13 • Number 1 • 2023

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Published by the Department of Government Studies,  
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Makassar

For further information, please visit: <https://journal.unismuh.ac.id/otoritas>

**ISSN: 2088-3706 (Print) | 2502-9320 (Online) | DOI : 10.26618**

First published in April 2011

Please send all articles, essays, reviews, and documents to:

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## Regional head elections, high-cost politics, and corruption in Indonesia

Leo Agustino<sup>1\*)</sup>, M Dian Hikmawan<sup>2</sup>, Jonah Silas<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

*Direct regional head elections or direct election give rise to two faces for Indonesian politics. On the one hand, a positive face towards democracy; on the other hand, it displays a negative impact. Its positive impacts include efforts to strengthen the political legitimacy of local governments; achieving political empowerment of citizens; institutionalizing checks and balances mechanisms between institutions in the region; and the emergence of female regional heads. Meanwhile, among the negative impacts of direct elections are the high costs of politics. The research presents a qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of literature studies, observations, and interviews. This paper marks aspects high costs were caused by several factors, such as candidacy buying, campaign costs, witness fees during the election, political consultant fees, and appeal fees to the Constitutional Court. Therefore, it is not surprising that the winning contestants will try to return to their capital by means of corruption. This research implies at least four modes of return of political capital exist for regional heads, namely: bribery in obtaining permits; buying and selling positions; bribes in the procurement of projects and goods; and manipulation of social assistance. Referring to this dilemma, it turns out that the election still leaves a huge amount of homework for deepening democracy in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** election, regional heads, high-cost politics, corruption

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### Introduction

The direct election of regional heads election in Indonesia was first held in the 2005–2008 period elections with the legal basis of Law No. 32 of 2004 concerning Local Government – which has changed several times until the most recent Law No. 1 of 2015 concerning Stipulation of Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 1 of 2014. Direct elections are a consequence of the political dynamics that have occurred in Indonesia since 1998 (Simamora 2011). At the same time, as stated by the Research Center for the Indonesian House of Representatives Expertise Board, direct elections can break the oligarchic chain of party leaders; improve the quality of sovereignty and people's participation; accommodate a bottom-up leadership selection process; minimize money politics; and improve the quality of regional executive political legitimacy that can

encourage political stabilization and the effectiveness of local government, Until the 2015 local head election, the direct participation of every local community was still an ideal choice in the mechanism for upholding people's political democratic rights at the regional level (Mboi 2009; Winengan 2018).

Direct election is considered as the implementation as well as a democratic process at the local level. There are at least four reasons why the election is considered to encourage the process of deepening democracy at the local level in Indonesia. First, it gives great legitimacy to regional leaders (Erb and Sulistiyanto 2009; Hadiz 2004). In the new order era, regional heads were determined by the central government so that their legitimacy was not felt in the eyes of the public. But in the Reformation era, the head was directly elected by the citizens through a direct election mechanism—this condition institutionalized the legitimacy of the regional head. With this legitimacy, regional heads also have the opportunity to innovate, work, and create to their full potential a new approach—without central government intervention—in order to improve the welfare of the people in the region. In addition, this situation encourages the realization of accountability and responsiveness of regional heads. The direct election of regional heads combined with the autonomy policy sparked a government that was more responsible and responsive to the various needs of its people. In the context of local democracy, accountability must be interpreted as the ability of the government to fulfill most of the demands of its citizens, the estuary of which is socio-economic and political equity. While responsiveness is not only defined as the ability of the local government to respond to the various needs of its citizens, but further than that, there is a willingness from the local government to optimally distribute public services.

Second, returning sovereignty to the people (Agustino 2014), which has an impact on increasing public participation in political life. In addition, direct elections also contribute to the development of the social capital of the citizens based on the belief that local people are more aware of the problems they feel than the central government. Therefore, to solve problems, people will interact with each other to develop a common commitment, which in turn fosters mutual trust, tolerance, cooperation, and solidarity—all of which are the roots of social capital.

Third, eliminate excessive executive power by instituting a checks and balances mechanism between institutions in the regions. This mechanism precludes the possibility of power in only one institution. In the New Order era, the executive institution succeeded in strengthening itself as a superior institution over other political institutions so that it gave rise to an executive heavy in local political life (Crouch 2010; Liddle 1996). Through various corrective steps taken and carried out by the government, including the holding of direct regional head elections, the situation is trying to be placed in a reasonable position where the executive and legislature stand on the same level and sit on the same level. The reinstatement of the executive and legislative bodies in a balanced position reflects efforts to improve the political system in Indonesia.

Finally, fourthly, the emergence of female regional heads—which during the New Order never happened (Agustino 2019). Some of the names of the female regional heads include Tri Rismaharini (Mayor of Surabaya), Airin Rachmi Diany (Mayor of South Tangerang), Iti Octavia (Regent of Lebak), Cella Nurraciana (Regent of Karawang),

and others. This situation shows that politics in the reformation era was more open and prioritized democratic values such as equal political rights and tolerance. However, after fifteen years of running, the negative impact of direct election has also strengthened, especially the high political costs that have led to corrupt behavior by regional heads. The question now is, why is direct election considered a high cost? And, what acts of corruption are often committed by regional head candidates in the context of the regional head election? These two things are explored in this article.

## **Research Methods**

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-explanative discussion style. The choice to use this method is based on the effort of this method to gain a deep and authentic understanding of individual or group experience as it is felt by political practitioners who are in direct contact with the dynamics of the contest.

Meanwhile, the data collection techniques used in writing this article are interview studies, field observations, and literature studies, in order to obtain data that can describe socio-political phenomena in regional head elections which cost a lot.

Interviews were conducted To get a complete picture and explanation regarding expensive financing during political contestation on this matter, the author conducted interviews with several sources, namely: former regional head contestants; former regional head winning success team; academics; NGO activists; journalists; investors for regional head contestants; formal and informal figures; and Likewise with the people who are involved in campaign dynamics such as printing entrepreneurs, makers of t-shirts, stickers, and campaign knick-knacks.

Finally, in order to test the validity of the data in this study, this article used the triangulation method. Triangulation is a technique for checking the validity of data by utilizing other data for checking purposes or as a comparison with the data that researchers have so that the results can be accounted for academically.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Corruption and Elections: Overview**

In various countries, the issue of corruption has become the agenda of academics and policy makers. Even so, until 2009, 187 countries – with various historical, social, and political systems – accepted the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. The issue of corruption has gained strength because it is felt that it is increasingly rooted in the political and social life of the community. Corruption can no longer be tolerated because it is proven to damage economic and political development. Corruption is more detrimental in the political arena – to use Montesquieu's term "disease in the body of politics" – because state officials are responsible for the life of the state, which in the long run can erode democracy. Corruption distorts decision-making processes, thereby undermining the fundamental functioning capacities of state officials, eroding political trust, and undermining political legitimacy in various institutional arrangements (Ackerman, 2008; Chang & Chu, 2006; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Seligson, 2002). To the extreme, corruption can lead to state fragility, destructive conflict, and institutional violence.



United Nations Development Programme defined corruption as "the abuse of power, position, or public authority for personal gain." However, it should be emphasized that corruption is a complex concept and a much more serious problem than the abuse of public office for personal gain. Although it is difficult to agree on a precise conceptualization of corruption, many academics agree that corruption refers to the act when the power of public office is used for personal gain in a way that goes against the rules of the game (Ackerman, 1999; Klačnja et al., 2018; Rose-ackerman & Palifka, 2016).

What is even more difficult is determining which political activities constitute corruption. The diversity of cultural, political, and legal traditions around the world will inevitably lead to specific interpretations of corruption that are rooted in the context of local cultures and political systems. For example, the phenomenon of vote buying is very massive in developing countries (Jensen and Justesen 2014). In areas like this, it is typical for people to make political choices based on economic rationality or profit-and-loss calculations. Classical studies (Scott 1985) for example, show that in every general election in Malaysia, the people always wait for directions from their patrons to vote for candidates who are considered "worthy" to be elected. Barter between the loyalty of the people's choice and their patrons can be in the form of money, facilities, and other conveniences.

Similar to the case in Malaysia, even in Argentina, the target of vote-buying practice is party constituents (Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004). Especially party constituents who do not support or are still in doubt about the candidates promoted by the political parties they support. In this case, constituents often become swing voters who are very elastic in every general election. In addition to party constituents, the practice of vote-buying in Argentina is also targeting indifferent voters. They are indifferent because they think that whoever the contestants are offered by political parties (and then elected) will not change the lives of those who have voted. Vote-buying in Argentina is not only in money but also in the form of goods, such as: food, clothes, building materials, mattresses, even alcoholic drinks (Brusco et al. 2004). The same thing happened in Nigeria. The practice of vote-buying is carried out by using patrons or community leaders to buy voters' votes. The money used by political parties, in general, comes from donors who are mostly businessmen. Worse, the practice of vote-buying in Nigeria is accompanied by acts of intimidation (Bratton 2008).

How about Indonesia? Corruption in Indonesia has existed since the past in the form of services and tributes to the king (Onghokham 1986). The obligation of lower aristocrats to entertain higher aristocrats, which required huge costs, also gave birth to corruption in the form of, among other things, taking part of the tribute that was to be handed over. Corrupt behavior was increasingly prevalent among priyayi during the VOC and Dutch colonialism because the developing work system and culture made it possible, such as illicit trade (*morshandel*), the habit of accepting bribes (*hommagien*), handing over crops more than provisions (*overwichten*), and forced cultivation, which is a form of mass tribute (Carey & Haryadi, 2016; Simbolon, 2007).

After the Independence declaration, the indigenous employees (*ambtenaar*) who filled positions left by Dutch East Indies employees continued the corrupt culture within the government. Nevertheless, according to King (2000), corruption in the early days of

independence was minimal. This is an implication of the idealism of the nation's founders, including its political elite. However, when Sukarno introduced Guided Democracy in 1959—the Parliamentary Democracy system was abolished, the press was curbed, foreign companies were nationalized, and monopolies were created—the opportunity for rent-seeking opened up (King 2000). Under Guided Democracy (Demokrasi Terpimpin), as corruption becomes endemic, financial accountability collapses due to poor administration (Mackie 1970). The corruption endemic was getting stronger in the New Order regime. With his power, Suharto "enjoyed" bribes, gratuities, and others (Juwono, 2016; Robison, 1986; Winters, 2011). The inability of the New Order regime to deal with corruption, according to Liddle (1996: 88),  
*"... the political needs (also of course financial wants) of the rulers and the lack of popular accountability in the political system. [...] Corruption has been a critical means of gaining resources and support, to the point that it is now an essential—indeed, normal—aspect of most government decision-making and implementing processes."*

In the Reformation era, the endemic nature of corruption has damaged political and social aspects, including elections. Various frauds and malpractices that occur in elections directly affect the quality of democracy (Karl 1986). Vote buying is inherent in the electoral contestation in Indonesia related to clientelism, as stated by Stokes (2007: 605), that is *"the proffering of material goods in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution that the patron uses is simply: did you (will you) support me?"* This is what encourages contestants to prepare financial resources that are not small during the campaign period to be chosen by voters. The context is in line with Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007: 2) argument's which stated, *"... the direct exchange of a citizen's vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods, and services."* As a result, political costs are high.

Aspinall & Sukmajati (2015) study with the team explained the phenomenon of vote buying, as a form of patronage and clientelism, in the 2014 election contestation in a number of regions in Indonesia. The results were surprising. In all the areas that became the basis of the research, there was evidence of vote buying. Uniquely, although it was carried out by all the contestants, vote buying was not an effective strategy to gain votes. The symptom that emerged from their study was that voters had the opportunity to change their choice near or on election day due to various factors. Vote-buying is also a phenomenon that cannot be separated from the patron-client culture in Indonesia. Muhtadi (2019) study explains that patron-client is a socio-cultural product where groups that have certain privileges (patrons) give money or profits in return for the loyalty of their followers (clients). But not just that. Muhtadi also explained that the weak relationship between party identities became a space for strengthening the practice of money politics. Apart from the political pragmatism of the voters, money politics, or vote-buying, cannot be separated from the weak psychological closeness of voters to party ideology. In short, the party failed to build a position in the eyes of the voters so that there was no emotional and ideological closeness between the party and its voters. This weak party identity has negative consequences for the party because voters (or constituents) often ignore party instructions and directions. The implication is that parties buy votes to ensure victory is in their hands.

### **High-Cost Politics: Roots of Corruption?**

Is high-cost politics the root of corruption? Referring to a number of studies, corruption is caused by high-cost politics during elections (Mietzer, 2007; Muhtadi, 2019). Political elites also admit it, as stated by the Minister of Home Affairs, Tito Karnavian, regarding the high political cost of election (Purnomo 2019). The enormous costs that candidates must incur to become regional heads during the contest cause them to use their power to return the capital they have spent. The next question is, what is the money used for and how much? To get a complete picture and explanation of this, the author conducted interviews with several sources, namely: former contestants of regional heads; former success team (or winning team for regional head contestants); academics; NGO activists; journalists; political investors (or financiers of regional head contestants); formal and informal figures; and printing entrepreneurs (makers of t-shirts, stickers, and campaign merchandise). The description of their interview is presented in the following narrative.

The process of selecting and carrying candidates in direct elections is different from that of indirect elections. One thing that makes the difference is the political costs that are getting bigger and bigger. The high cost of politics is because the nomination of a contestant is not only approved by the party management at the district/city level, but there must also be a recommendation and a decree from the provincial level (Regional Leadership Council), and most importantly, get a signature (read: blessing) from the Central Leadership Council of the party that carries the mandate. This is what is known as candidacy-buying in which contestants frequently "buy the blessing" of the supporting party from the regional to the central leadership levels so that they are supported to become contestants for the regional head of the political party they are targeting.

The existence of an obligation to recommend from the provincial and central-level party administrators is what often causes differences in the determination of the SK for candidate pairs carried by political parties during pre-elections. This, among other things, happened in Depok City during the 2005 election. During the process of recruiting the mayoral candidate, all political parties with seats in the Depok City DPRD minus PKS agreed to appoint Badrul Kamal as a candidate for mayor. After the agreement, a decree is issued from each party administrator. But in the middle of the journey, when the process of selecting a candidate for deputy mayor arose, a disagreement. because the supporting party wants a representative who is different from Badrul Kamal's suggestion—namely Sihabuddin Ahmad. Therefore, the proponents who disagreed withdrew their support for Badrul Kamal, while the process for submitting the proposal has been submitted to a higher level. As a result, there are some parties whose recommendations from the central management or provincial administrators differ from the final results of nominating candidates by the party management at the city level (Regional Leadership Council, DPW).

A relatively similar case has also occurred, for example, that of Sukawi Sutarip (former Mayor of Semarang) in the 2005 election. Initially, he was nominated by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (*PDIP*), but later changed to the supporting party United Development Party (*PPP*), the National Mandate Party (*PAN*), and the National Awakening Party (*PKB*). This party-switching is thought to be due to the high

"blessing" that must be paid. The former chairman of the Corruption Eradication Commission, Taufiequrachman Ruki, once resigned as a regional head contestant on the grounds that he had to pay too high a fee in the election for the Governor of Banten. At the national level, Nurcholish Madjid was forced to resign from the election as the presidential candidate for the Golkar Party because he felt he did not have "nutrition" – and the "nutrition" that Cak Nur meant was money.

In addition, the high cost of direct election is also absorbed by the cost of socialization during the campaign period. Referring to interviews with several sources in West Java and several other regions, the costs during the campaign for candidates for regent or mayor are between Rp. 3 billion to Rp. 25 billion, while for governor candidates it ranges from Rp. 8 billion to Rp. 200 billion, with the following calculations: First, a contestant promoted by a political party – either by a single party or a coalition of parties – usually spends a budget on renting an office or secretariat, starting from the village, sub-district, to district or city levels. The amount of office rent is very dependent on the contestant's strategy, namely whether he uses the services of a supporting party, so that office rent becomes very cheap, or forms his own winning team, so that he rents an office at a "normal" price. For office rental at the village level, each candidate must at least provide Rp. 5 million to Rp. 10 million per month. The cost of renting an office at the sub-district level is between Rp. 15 million to Rp. 25 million per month, and office rent at the district level is between Rp. 40 million to Rp. 80 million per month.

Second, secretarial operational costs in the form of secretarial equipment – starting from vehicle rental for transportation of winning team members; electricity, telephone, internet, consumption, secretariat staff salaries; and office stationery; and field team operations in the form of transportation, accommodation, telephone, and consumption. The amount of the secretariat's monthly budget varies between villages, sub-districts, and districts/cities, but it averages between Rp. 5 million to Rp. 50 million.

Third, the cost of making campaign props, such as banners, billboards, stickers, pamphlets, t-shirts, jackets, hats, calendars, and others. The budget for one banner or banner is between Rp. 100 thousand to Rp. 250 thousand per piece; billboards between Rp. 150 thousand to Rp. 500 thousand per piece; stickers from Rp. 1,500 to Rp. 7,500 per piece; pamphlets ranging from Rp.100 thousand to Rp.250 thousand per ream; t-shirts from Rp. 35 thousand to Rp. 75 thousand per t-shirt; jackets start from Rp. 75 thousand to 150 thousand rupiahs per piece, hats from 35 thousand to 45 thousand rupiahs per piece, and an calendar of 5,000 rupiahs on average per sheet.

Fourth, campaign operational costs. These expenses are incurred during socialization or campaigning in the form of transportation fees, food allowance for campaign participants, stage and sound-system rent, presenters and performers (who can be a preacher, artist, comedian, or others thought to be appealing to potential voters), and an honorarium (also known as "travel money" for campaigners). The details of the operational costs of the campaign are campaign fees and food costs between Rp. 50 thousand to Rp. 75 thousand per person; stage and sound-system rental between Rp. 100 million to Rp. 250 million, honorarium for the presenter between Rp. 2 million up to Rp. 5 million; honorarium for performers between Rp. 2 million to Rp. 25 million, and campaign fees between Rp. 750 thousand to Rp. 2.5 million.

Fifth, the cost of donations, namely the costs incurred by the contestant when he visits or is invited by a group or community. All the interviewees stated that he always contributed to all the community groups he invited or attended. These donations can be in the form of giving money during activities or through social assistance – commonly done by incumbents – in the amount of between Rp. 5 million to Rp. 250 million per donation.

Sixth, advertising costs by load in print and electronic media. There are also contestants who make advertisements in the form of books, which are generally in the form of biographies and the Koran, as is the case in many constituencies. For advertisements in print media, the costs incurred range from Rp. 5 million to Rp. 100 million per broadcast package, and for advertisements in electronic media – including radio, television, DCD, Youtube, and other social media and personal pages – advertisements cost between Rp.20 million to Rp.5 billion.

Seventh, the cost of the *serangan fajar*. The term "*serangan fajar*" in the Election refers to vote buying by contestants ahead of election time—carried out by their winning team who visit one voter's house to another carrying money or goods to influence voter preferences at the last second. This *serangan fajar* has become a common thing done by the contestants and is felt as a powerful strategy to increase the number of votes (Muhtadi, 2019). Most forms of *serangan fajar* are to give money in the amount of between Rp. 20 thousand to Rp. 500 thousand per person. There are also those who provide groceries or vouchers that can be used after the election. A resource person stated that two nights before the election, he and several of his colleagues were given the task of putting Rp. 5 billion into envelopes, each of which amounted to Rp. 10 thousand to Rp. 50 thousand. The money is then tucked under the door of the house by attaching a photo of the candidate pair. The budget spent for the *serangan fajar* is usually between Rp. 2 billion to Rp. 20 billion.

In addition to candidacy-buying and campaign costs, other costs incurred by the contestants are financing for witnesses at the polling station. Contestants usually set aside money – known as "tired money" – in the amount of Rp. 100 thousand to Rp. 250 thousand per witness. When the election for the Governor of South Sulawesi was held in November 2007, for example, the wages of a witness ranged from Rp. 100 thousand to Rp. 150 thousand per person. Because of this, a contestant from the Golkar Party had prepared Rp. 5.2 billion in advance for the witnesses' fatigue money so that votes would not be manipulated at the polling stations. This is in line with the findings of Mietzner (2011) which states that for additional costs, at least one of the contestants must spend between Rp. 10 billion to Rp. 20 billion.

Next is the cost of a political consultant. The politics of imagery are necessary and commonplace in the direct election. The role of political consultants is very important, especially in providing input to contestants so that they can be "known," "loved," and "voted" by the public. Political consultant fees include the cost of a contestant's electability survey, which serves to find out the chances of a contestant's electability in the election that will be followed. The budget is between IDR 250 million and IDR 750 million for one survey, and usually before the election there are 3-5 surveys—the first survey, called the preliminary survey, aims to find out the level of popularity of the contestants; the second and subsequent surveys were carried out to

determine the effect of the imaging that had been carried out. This fee does not include the cost of mentoring—long-term consultation. Per year, the costs that must be paid by the contestants for the services of a political consulting agency in Indonesia are between Rp. 2.5 billion to Rp. 10 billion. The final cost that the contestants must also prepare, if needed, is the cost of an appeal to the Constitutional Court. This fee is incurred on the last occasion when the losing contestant "feels" he should win. The contestant sued the Constitutional Court with the material of the lawsuit (generally) the alleged practice of buying votes or money politics by the winning pair. For this reason, the amount of costs incurred by the plaintiffs is between Rp. 2.5 billion to Rp. 10 billion.

If all the numbers above are accumulated, then the total cost to participate in the election is in the range of Rp. 50 billion. The fantastic value issued by the pair of contestants is far from comparable to their income as regional leaders. If a simple simulation of the income and expenses incurred by a contestant during the election is performed, the pair of contestants must be those who are not working to recover costs incurred during the election process. It is estimated that the salary and other allowances of a Regional Head and Deputy Regional Head range from Rp. 6.7 million to Rp. 200 million per month, which means for five years the income is between Rp. 402 million to Rp. 12 billion. If the pair of elected governor contestants spends Rp.100 billion on election costs - Rp.50 billion for each contestant - the winners must return the election costs of Rp.834 million per month, or Rp.28 million per day, every month. There is a big difference between the official income and the election costs that have been spent. From the KPK research in 2017, there were 82.3 percent of regional head candidates who were funded by a number of parties/sponsors. This condition forced the winners to "work hard" to return it – either because of debt to sponsors or material debt – which had to be repaid, which in turn created a conflict of interest and initiated post-election corruption in Indonesia.

### **Election Winners' Corruption Mode**

The beginning of 2022 opened with three regional heads who were caught by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK)'s Hand Catch Operation (OTT). Rahmat Effendi, Mayor of Bekasi, West Java, allegedly related to bribery in the procurement of goods, services, and auction positions with an OTT amount of Rp. 5.7 M. Abdul Gafur Mas'ud, Regent of North Penajam Paser, East Kalimantan, related to bribery and corruption in the procurement of goods, services, and permits, with an OTT amount of Rp. 1.4 M. Issuance of a Wind War Plan: The Regent of Langkat, North Sumatra, is suspected of receiving a gratuity with an OTT amount of Rp. 786 million. This adds to the long line of regional heads who commit acts of corruption. From 2004 to January 2022, the Corruption Eradication Commission (CEC) has taken action against 22 governors and 154 regents/mayors. Based on data from Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW), since 2010 to June 2018, the prosecutor's office and the police have named 253 regional heads as corruption suspects.

The CEC said that licensing was one of the highest modes of corruption it handled. Although the government is pursuing a series of economic policy packages to eliminate the potential for corruption in this field. However, the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) ranking, or Indonesia's Ease of Doing Business Index, has not improved since

two years ago – ranking 73<sup>rd</sup> – which indicates that there are no significant policies to improve the business climate, one of which is the ease of obtaining various permits. Bureaucracy and licensing regulations in Indonesia to date are complicated and convoluted, take a long time, and there are overlapping rules—which opens the door wide for corruption.

For example, the cases of the Mayor of Ambon, Richard Louhenapessy, who was arrested by the KPK in May 2022 for gratification, and the approval of the principle permit for 20 Alfamidi retail branches in 2020 in Ambon City, Maluku. According to the KPK, in his capacity as mayor, Richard allegedly ordered the Head of the Ambon City Government Public Works and Spatial Planning (Head Agency of PWSP) to immediately process and issue various permit applications, namely a Business Place Permit and a Trading Business Permit. For each permit document that is approved and issued, Richard asks for a minimum of Rp. 25 million and specifically for issuance related to the approval of the principle of development of around Rp. 500 million.

Another case is that in June 2022, Haryadi Suyuti, the Mayor of Yogyakarta – just one week out of office – was caught by the CEC Hand-Catch Operation. Haryadi has become a suspect in the alleged bribery case related to the issuance of an apartment building permit in the Malioboro area of Yogyakarta. The apartment building permit application for the construction of the Royal Kedhaton apartment, which is included in the cultural heritage area of the Yogyakarta City Government, has been submitted since 2019 and will continue until 2021. Then, the President Director of PT Java Orient Property (JOP) and Haryadi, as Mayor of Yogyakarta for the 2017–2022 period, made an agreement, namely that Haryadi is committed to guarding the building permit application by ordering the Head of the PWSP Office to immediately issue the building permit. During the processing of the building permit, the party who is equipped with the provision of money during the processing of the permit takes place. During the issuance of the building permit, the JOP handed over the money in stages with a minimum value of IDR 50 million, until in 2022, the building permit was finally issued. When the JOP was about to hand over US\$27,258, the CEC Hand-Catch Operation.

The next mode is corruption in the procurement of projects and goods and services. In 2021, the government has budgeted an allocation for the procurement of goods and services of Rp. 1,214,1 trillion, or 52.1% of the national budget. The large amount of the budget is not accompanied by a transparency mechanism so that it becomes a loophole for corruption (see Recommendations for the Procurement System of Goods and Services of the Republic of Indonesia compiled by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) and Indonesian Corruption Watch. Open procurement is still the favorite choice of corruptors, although it is a bit more complicated because tender manipulation requires coordination among regional heads, council members, civil servants, and contractors—who are usually political investors in regional heads. In order for a contract to be awarded to a contractor, the regional head, who is the main actor, must ensure that the head of the service obeys his orders, in addition to the support of the council members, so that the tender runs smoothly and clears up bureaucratic/administrative obstacles. Common modes of project procurement are bribery and extortion. In Agustino (2019) research in Banten Province,

when it was led by Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah, he asked for a share of 10%–11% of the project value (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Project Money Based on Project Classification and Source of Funds

Project Classification	Project Money Based on The Source (%)	
	APBD	APBN
Highways Project (Road)	10	11
Watering Project	11	11
Building Construction Project	10	10
Procurement Project	10	10

*Source: Agustino (2019)*

Throughout 2021–2022, several regional heads were arrested by the KPK for corruption in the procurement of projects and goods/services. They, among others, (i) Nurdin Abdullah, Governor of South Sulawesi, were arrested in the CEC Hand-Catch Operation on suspicion of bribery in the procurement of goods and services and infrastructure development of Rp 2.5 billion; (ii) Dodi Reza Alex Noerdin, the Regent of Musi Banyuasin was exposed to the Hand-Catch Operation by the CEC on suspicion of accepting bribes for four infrastructure projects at the Musi Banyuasin PUP Office worth Rp 2.6 billion; (iii) Budhi Sarwono, Regent of Banjarnegara, became a suspect for allegedly accepting bribes for a number of infrastructure projects in Banjarnegara Regency with a value of Rp. 2.1 billion; (iv) Rahmat Effendi, Mayor of Bekasi, who was arrested by the CEC Hand-Catch Operation for alleged bribery cases in the auction of positions, management of contract labor projects, and procurement of goods/services amounting to Rp. 7.1 billion; (v) Abdul Gafur Mas'ud, Regent of Penajam Paser Utara, East Kalimantan, was arrested on suspicion of receiving "quotations" from a number of projects, such as upgrading the Sotek-Bukit Subur Road and building a library building.

The next type of corruption is the money transaction of positions, which in the practice of corruption takes the form of gratuities, bribes, and extortion. The money transactions of positions, according to Tjahjo Kumolo, Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform, occurred because of weak supervision and the government's internal supervisory apparatus in the regions did not function properly. Meanwhile, Herman Nurcahyadi Suparman, Acting Executive Director of the Monitoring Committee for the Implementation of Regional Autonomy stated that the gap was in Law No. 5 of 2014 concerning State Civil Apparatus. Article 53 of the State Civil Apparatus Law states that "regents/mayors in regencies/municipalities have obtained the authority from the President as the holder of the highest authority for the development of ASN to be able to determine the appointment, transfer, and dismissal of officials other than the main and middle high-ranking officials and functional officials with major expertise". So, as long as the regional head is appointed as one of the staff building officials, the sale and purchase of positions is difficult to avoid.

One of the cases of money transactions of positions that were successfully captured in the CEC Hand-Catch Operation in 2021 was Puput Tantriana Sari, the Regent of Probolinggo. Puput is suspected of being involved in the sale and purchase



of village head positions involving 22 suspects. Coordinated by the subdistrict head, the candidates agreed on Rp 20 million per position to be handed over to Hasan Aminuddin, Chairman of Commission IV House of Representatives – Husband of Puput. The amount of money exchanged between these positions varies. In a similar case in Klaten in 2017, Sri Hartini, the Regent of Klaten, determined the total price for certain jobs. The price for the position is determined by ranging from Rp. 10 million for Echelon IV to Rp. 400 million for Echelon II (see Table 2). For example, an administrative position at a local health center is valued at Rp. 5 million to Rp. 15 million; for school principals, the price is Rp. 75 million to Rp. 125 million; and the highest, Rp. 400 million for the position of head of service (Echelon II).

**Table 2.** Price of Echelon / Position in Klaten Regency  
(Only for the Department of Education area)

No	Echelon/Position	Price
1	Echelon II (Head of Department)	Rp.400 million
2	Echelon III (Secretary and Head of Division)	Rp.100-150 million
3	Echelon IV (Head of Sub-Division and Head of Section)	Rp.25 million
4	Head of Regional Technical Implementation Unit	Rp.50-100 million
5	Administration of Head of Regional Technical Implementation Unit	Rp.25 million
6	Elementary School Principal	Rp.75-125 million
7	Administration of Elementary School	Rp.30 million
8	Junior High School Principal	Rp.80-150 million
9	Certain Functional Positions (transfer teacher in district)	Rp.15-60 million
10	Permanent Position (no mutation)	Rp.10-50 million

*Source: Agustino (2019)*

Another mode of corruption of regional heads is the corruption of social assistance and grants. For social assistance and grants, the terms and conditions have been stipulated in the Regulation of the Ministry of Home Affairs concerning the Fifth Amendment to the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 32 of 2011 concerning Guidelines for the Provision of Grants and Social Assistance Sourced from Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budgets. However, the local government – which receives direction from the regional head – can directly help the organization or community it wants with a nominal amount that can also be set regardless of the value. This simple mechanism makes it easier for regional heads to commit acts of corruption. This, for example, occurred in the province of Banten. The determination of the recipients of aid and grants falls to the family members of the governor (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Scheme of Social Assistance to Institutions Led by Families of Regional Heads  
(Banten Case)

<b>Name of Institution/Organization</b>	<b>Organizational Relations with Regional Heads</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<i>KNPI</i> Banten Province	Head: Aden Abdul Khalik (Governor of Banten's stepbrother)	Rp.1.850.000.000
<i>Tagana</i> Banten	Head: Andhika Hazrumy (Son of the governor of Banten)	Rp.1.750.000.000
<i>PMI</i> Banten	Head: Ratu Tatu Chasanah (Governor of Banten's sister)	Rp.900.000.000
<i>PW GP Ansor</i>	Bendahara: Andika Hazrumy (Son of the governor of Banten)	Rp.550.000.000
<i>Himpaudi</i> Banten	Head: Ade Rossi Cherunnisa (daughter-in-law of the Governor of Banten)	Rp.3.500.000.000
<i>P2TP2A</i>	Head: Ade Rossi Cherunnisa (daughter-in-law of the Governor of Banten)	Rp.1.500.000.000
<i>GWKS</i>	Head: Ratu Tatu Chasanah (Governor of Banten's sister)	Rp.700.000.000
<i>Karang Taruna</i>	Head: Andika Hazrumy (Son of the governor of Banten)	Rp.1.500.000.000
<i>Dekranas</i>	Head: Hikmat Tomet (Husband of the Governor of Banten)	Rp.750.000.000
<i>Dekopinwil</i>	Head: Ratu Tatu Chasanah (Governor of Banten's sister)	Rp.200.000.000
Forum PBB ( <i>Paguyuban Banten Bersatu</i> )	Head: Ratu Tatu Chasanah (Governor of Banten's sister)	Rp.500.000.000
<i>IMI</i> Banten	Head: Tubagus Haerul Jaman (Governor of Banten's stepbrother)	Rp.200.000.000
<i>Koalisi Politisi Perempuan Indonesia</i>	Head: Ratu Tatu Chasanah (Governor of Banten's sister)	Rp.200.000.000
<i>Gerakan Pemuda Ansor</i> Tangerang City	Head: Tanto Warsono Arban (son-in-law of the Governor of Banten)	Rp.400.000.000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>Rp.14.000.000.000</b>

Source: Agustino & Fitriani (2017)

## Conclusion

The beginning of the reformation of the Indonesian nation criticized Suharto's authoritarian new order system, which facilitated systematic corruption. Unfortunately, when the New Order state collapsed in 1998 and the democratic system began to be institutionalized in 1999, the phenomenon of corruption did not disappear. Corruption has become a story that has not stopped since the beginning of the Reformation until now. The description of this article describes the expenditure and return of capital after the election of regional heads. Political reform in Indonesia certainly produces many positive changes for national politics and local politics in Indonesia. One of them is the election of regional heads, who are no longer elected by members of the council. During the new order regime in power, the election of regional heads became the arena

for regional elite oligarchs. However, after the political reforms in Indonesia in 1998, the regional head election changed direction, where the public (or voters) became the determinant of someone becoming a regional head—through a direct election mechanism. The implication is that anyone can participate in political contestation at the local level. But the problem is that there is a high cost to politics because the expenses of the contestants to win the election have become very fantastic. The figure is above Rp. 75 billion – even that is not necessarily a win. There are many variants of costs that must be incurred so that when a contestant wins in a direct election, he uses the years in which he was in power to return the capital he has spent. This is what triggered the number of criminal acts of corruption in Indonesia during the Reformation era. One thing that is certain after the collapse of the new order regime is that it is very difficult to minimize corruption in Indonesia. However, through the political dynamics that occurred in the local election contestation in Indonesia, it also opened the eyes of many people (including writers) to how dangerous corruption was in the reformation era. And this, of course, jeopardizes the future of Indonesian democracy as well as democracy at the local level in Indonesia.

### **Acknowledgment**

The authors would like to thank to all participants and informants, our gratitude also to Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and Researcher of Indonesian Politics Research & Consulting (IPRC) for the support.

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