

## The Controversy of Democracy in Indonesia Presidential Election 2024

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**History:** Received 13/03/2024 | Revised 06/04/2024 | Accepted 16/08/2024 | Published 30/08/2024

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**Abstract.** The presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 has raised controversy in the process and implementation of democracy. However, this context has not been comprehensively discussed in previous studies. In addition to answering the shortcomings of previous studies, this research also focuses on the question of how the forms, factors, and implications of democratic controversy on the legitimacy of presidential election results in Indonesia 2024. This research reveals three important findings related to democratic controversy in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. First, politicians' and election organisers' feeble commitment to complying with the rules of democratic elections. Second, the massive intervention of politicians and election organisers in the electoral process. Third, the controversy of democracy in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia has long implications for citizens' attitudes towards the legitimacy of election results. From these three contexts, it can be reflected that the democratic controversy in the 2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia not only caused democratic controversy in the electoral process and implementation, but also formed negative attitudes and perceptions of citizens towards the legitimacy of election results.

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**Keywords:** *Controversy; Democracy; General Election; Presidential Election Indonesia 2024*

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### INTRODUCTION

The presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 has raised controversy in the process and implementation of democratic elections. Hyde et al. (2023) also said that the inconsistent application of rules and massive intervention from politicians underlie the emergence of controversy in the democratic electoral system and process. In addition to affecting the legitimacy of election results, democratic controversies can potentially create massive public disorder after elections (Pruett et al., 2024). This context can be reflected in the rejection of the presidential election results in Indonesia in 2019, which resulted in hundreds

of citizens being injured and more than fifty citizens dying in the rejection of the election results (Abdullah & Horakova, 2024; Fernando et al., 2024; Wijaya, 2019). Therefore, the controversy of democracy in the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 is a crucial issue that is very important to explain to reflect and evaluate the commitment of politicians and election organizers in realizing democratic principles and values often neglected in a democratic contestation.

Controversy is a concept that has a complex value in the praxis of communication and interaction between people (Achfandhy et al., 2024; Zielinski et al., 2018). Controversy

is also conceptualized as a debate that often occurs between individuals or between groups of people (Hadiprayitno, 2024; Rannie et al., 2024; Tarka, 2018), which can occur in the process of determining regulations (Fernando, Larasati, Abdullah, Saka, et al., 2024; Hidayat, 2024; Shakil, 2021) or in expressing opinions (Hastuti et al., 2024; Hussenot, 2014). Controversies in society arise in the form of miscommunication and misperception, so the data or information that appears often leads to a polemic from various fields or related to responsibility for problems in determining a decision (P. R. N. Hakim et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2024; Nguyen & Catalan-Matamoros, 2020). Controversy usually occurs in the context of social ethics in several activities of community life when perceiving a set norm or rule (Marsaban & Said, 2023; Sahoo et al., 2020). Thus, an accommodating solution is needed to overcome the controversy experienced by the community as citizens and indigenous peoples in a country (Devriésère, 2020; Hendry et al., 2023; Humaira et al., 2022)

The controversy over democracy in Indonesia's presidential election 2024 contains characteristics that are so contextual that they are essential to explain and reflect. However, so far, studies that discuss the process and implementation of elections in a democratic system have only focused on three contexts. First, studies focus on discussing the process and implementation of democracy in the

context of black campaigns (Luluardi & Diniyanto, 2021; Tapsell, 2021; Drakulich et al., 2020). Second, studies focus on discussing the process and implementation of democracy in the context of legitimizing election results (Keremoğlu et al., 2022; Vong, 2022; Köker, 2020). Third, studies focus on discussing the process and implementation of democracy in the context of election fraud (Dawson, 2022; Higashijima, 2021; James & Clark, 2020). In general, studies that discuss the process and implementation of democratic elections only discuss normative aspects such as black campaigns, the legitimacy of election results, and fraud in the process and implementation.

In practice, democracy does not bring up various kinds of controversies as it occurs in cases of fraud and hegemony of the ruler in political contestation. Testriono and Schraufnagel (2020) also say that the practice of democracy in political contestation is very vulnerable to intervention from the rulers. This context can be seen through the massive involvement of incumbents in controlling a political process in a democratic system (Humaira et al., 2022; Riono & Schraufnagel, 2020). Not only intervention but the controversy over democratic practices is further strengthened by the consistent tendency of autocracies to maintain their power in an authoritarian manner (Gerlich, 2021; Najib, 2023; Risky et al., 2023). Gerlich (2021) further states that in maintaining their power in democratic contestation, the rulers

often carry out three essential strategies. First, controlling opposition factions and groups. Second, massive power consolidation is formed. Third, control leaders who are considered to have the potential to win the contestation. Incumbents do not infrequently use these three strategies to win democratic contestation (Azhar et al., 2024; Kramer et al., 2024; Mounk, 2018; Warganegara et al., 2023).

General elections organized by countries that adhere to a democratic system do not raise much controversy in the process and implementation. This context also aligns with what Testriono and Schraufnagel (2020) said elections organized by countries that adhere to a democratic system often ignore democratic principles and values, giving rise to pros and cons among citizens regarding the legitimacy of election results. However, studies that discuss the process and implementation of democratic elections have not been conducted comprehensively, especially those that reflect and evaluate the controversy of democracy in the presidential election in Indonesia 2024. In addition to responding to the shortcomings of the studies that have been done, this study also explains and analyzes the democratic controversies that occurred in the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 in order to reflect the commitment of politicians and the election management committee in realizing a more democratic election process and implementation.

Presidential elections are strongly influenced by the commitment of politicians and citizens to realizing democratic values (Dalton, 2013; Kusumaryati, 2024; Larasati & Fernando, 2023). In the long run, this commitment can shape the process and implementation of presidential elections according to democratic principles (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016; Moslehpour et al., 2024). The quality and capacity of the prospective leaders portrayed by political parties become the basis for participants to determine their electoral attitudes (Dancey & Sheagley, 2013; Kimura & Anugrah, 2024; Larasati & Fernando, 2023). The commitment to realizing a democratic electoral process, in Mietzner's (2020) view, can be realized through three accommodating political orientations. First, consistent citizen awareness and involvement in the electoral process. Second, prospective leaders promoted by political parties have the capacity and capability to lead. Third, a more democratic presidential election process and implementation. These three contexts can dominantly influence the quality of presidential elections in a country that adheres to a democratic system.

The process and implementation of the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 have generated controversy and affected citizens' trust in the legitimacy of the election results. Therefore, the controversy of democracy in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia is a

crucial context to be explained and analyzed reflectively. In explaining and analyzing this context, this study focuses on three questions. First, what is the commitment of politicians to comply with electoral rules in Indonesia's 2024 presidential election? Second, how is the abuse of authority in the process and implementation of democracy in the 2024 Indonesian presidential election? Third, what is the legitimacy of citizens towards the results of the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024? This study is also based on the argument that the controversy over democracy in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia shows the weak commitment of politicians and the organizing committee to realizing democratic principles. The controversy has also dominantly shaped the attitudes and views of citizens toward the legitimacy of election results, which are considered controversial in their process and implementation.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study was conducted during massive, controversial democracy issues before and after the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024. However, this study only focuses on explaining democratic controversies disseminated in online news via Google. Fernando et al. (2023) also said that democratic issues disseminated through online news represent the characteristics of a contextual society's actual situation and conditions, so it is exciting to explain from a

political and socio-cultural perspective. In line with that, this study is also based on three considerations. First, the issues of democratic controversy in the presidential election that are sensationalized through online news are central issues that have not been comprehensively considered in political, social, and cultural studies. Second, the issues of democratic controversy in the presidential election disseminated through online news have complex message characteristics that are very important to explain. Third, the issues of democratic controversy in the presidential election disseminated through online news are fundamental to reflect in the context.

This study is a descriptive qualitative study based on primary and secondary data. The primary data in this study was obtained through an investigation process on 1,500 online news articles disseminated via Google. Searching and reading the online news began from February 10 to 17, 2024, using the search keywords "Democracy and presidential elections in Indonesia 2024". The selection and reading of the online news was done quickly, focusing on the headlines and the language arranged. The process of reading the images also focused on three contexts. First, the reading on politicians' commitment to comply with the 2024 presidential election rules resulted in 499 online news. Second, the reading on politicians' involvement in the democratic process in the 2024 presidential election resulted in 503 online news. Third, the

reading on people's attitudes and interpretations of the presidential election results in the 2024 general election resulted in 498 online news. Secondary data in this study was obtained through reading books, websites, and journal articles relevant to the focus of discussion in this study.

Data analysis in this study refers to the stages carried out by Miles and Huberman (2014), which are focused on three stages. First, data reduction is the stage of rearranging data into a more systematic form based on the classification of the data obtained according to the situation, conditions, and implications represented by the existing data. Second, data verification is the stage of summarizing the data that has been reduced based on the questions asked. Third, data description is the stage of displaying the data obtained and then presented in a table arrangement containing descriptions of online news texts verified according to and relevant to the arguments raised. From these three processes, the data is then analyzed inductively as a basis for interpretation of the data that has been collected. Interpretation is done by restating and reflecting on the data, following the ideas, patterns, and contexts represented by the data that have been obtained. The stages and processes of analysis that were carried out made it possible to obtain a conclusion about the issues of democratic controversy in the presidential election, which were disseminated through online news via Google.

## DISCUSSION

Indonesia's 2024 presidential election has generated a wide range of societal controversies. This context can be seen and reflected upon through three essential findings of this study.

### Politicians' and election organisers' feeble commitment to complying with the rules of democratic elections

The lack of commitment of candidates in complying with electoral rules is one form of controversy that occurs in the presidential election process. Bartels (2020) also said that politicians' lack of commitment in complying with electoral rules can be seen through the violations they commit in the electoral process. This context can be seen through Table 1.

Table 1. Forms of violations committed by politicians in elections.

Form	Context	Cases
Violation of election rules	Utilizing state facilities	Allegations of election violations arose when the Ministry of Defense's X account, @Kemhan_RI, was assessed as a form of using government facilities to campaign in the 2024 general election. (Sulistya, 2024).
Violation of campaign rules	Implement campaign zoning	One of the candidate pairs was reported to the Election Supervisory Agency for violations of

		campaign zoning in the West Java and East Java regions in the 2024 general elections (Sulistya, 2024)
Spread of hoax	Implement the campaign	Erick Thohir is considered to have spread a hoax about eliminating State-Owned Enterprises on behalf of other contestants. The narrative is considered a hoax and is considered far-fetched (Budi, 2024)
Civil servant misconduct	Favoring the contestant	The potential for non-neutrality of the state civil apparatus in the election is very high because the contestants still hold ministerial positions that benefit one of the candidates in the district and the province (Hanum, 2023).
Budget deviation	Utilizing social assistance	Komisi Perlindungan Korupsi (The Corruption Eradication Commission or KPK) has highlighted that social assistance provided to the community went viral because it was pasted with a picture of one of the presidential and vice presidential candidates (A. R. Hakim, 2024).

Source. Online news via Google

Table 1 shows the forms of violations of electoral rules committed by politicians in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. Table

1 also reflects three meaningful contexts regarding the forms of violations of electoral rules committed by politicians in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. First, the use of state facilities in political campaigns is not least done by politicians in the presidential election in Indonesia 2024 (Sulistya, 2024). Second, spreading hoaxes in the implementation of the campaign is not slightly done by politicians in the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 (Budi, 2024). Third, utilizing social assistance from the state is not least done by politicians to gain sympathy from voters in the 2024 presidential election (A. R. Hakim, 2024). From these three contexts, it can be seen and reflected that the controversy of democracy in the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 does not appear a little in the form of violations of election rules by politicians.

### Abuse of power in presidential elections

The abuse of power in presidential elections is the dominant factor in the emergence of democratic controversies. Deglow & Fjelde (2024) also argues that democratic controversies that occur in elections are also dominantly influenced by the inconsistency of electoral rules, which are often manipulated by politicians. This context can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Factors that gave rise to the democracy controversy.

Status	Context	Cases
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Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court	Set Anwar Usman is the judge with the most problems in making decisions and determining the age threshold requirements for vice presidential candidates in the 2024 general election (Putra, 2023).
President	Chairman of the Indonesian Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) Rahmat Bagja revealed that his agency had written to the government regarding campaign restrictions in the 2024 general election (Yahya, 2024).
Minister of State Enterprises, the Minister of Investment/Head of the Investment Coordinating Board, and Minister of Communication and Informatics	Support Minister of State Enterprises, the Minister of Investment/Head of the Investment Coordinating Board, and Minister of Communication and Informatics endorsed contestants in the 2024 general election (Saputra, 2024).
Governor	Become The Governor of East Java has officially become the winning team and steering board of the national campaign of one of the candidate pairs in the 2024 general election (Achmad, 2024).
Mayor	Become The Medan mayor will lead the West Sumatra regional campaign team. The Medan mayor has also openly supported one of the candidate pairs in the 2024 general election (Mangihot, 2023)

Source. Online news via Google

Table 2 shows the factors that influence the emergence of democratic controversies in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. Table 2 also reflects three meaningful contexts regarding the dominant factors that influence

the emergence of democratic controversies in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. First, the president's involvement in the campaign process is the dominant factor influencing the emergence of democratic controversies in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia (Yahya, 2024). Second, the governor's involvement in the winning team of one of the contestants is the dominant factor influencing the emergence of democratic controversy in the 2024 presidential election (Achmad, 2024). Third, the involvement of ministers in supporting one of the contestants is also a dominant factor influencing the emergence of democratic controversy in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia (Saputra, 2024). From these three contexts, it can be seen and reflected that the massive intervention of politicians not least influences the controversy of democracy in the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024.

### The legitimisation of citizens to the results of presidential elections

The controversy over democracy in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia has also led to various interpretations from citizens regarding the legitimacy of the election results. Klein and Robison (2020) also say that democratic controversies have influenced citizens' attitudes toward legitimizing election results. This context can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Citizens' attitudes towards the presidential election results

Attitudes	Context	Cases
Receive	Quick results	Most netizens in Indonesia are surprised and resigned to the results of the 2024 election quick count through reports from survey institutions (Yuslianson, 2024).
Receive	Victory declaration	Hanif thanked all the people and the nation of Indonesia who had voted for candidate number three in the 2024 election, which had been declared superior (Choirul 2024).
Ignoring	Survey results and victory claims	Human asked the public to wait for the official determination of the General Election Commission regarding the 2024 election results. Do not respond to quick count results from some survey institutions (Besar 2024).
Reject	An undemocratic victory	The victory of candidate number two in the 2024 election is considered flawed by democracy activists while the media fears that the victory will threaten press freedom (Bbc.com 2024).
Reject	Non-conforming results	Voices challenging the validity and fraud of the election will continue even after the inauguration especially if the two

camps that lost the quick count declare that they do not accept the election (Bbc.com, 2024).

Source. Online news via Google

Table 3 shows the legitimacy of citizens towards the results of the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia, which is considered controversial. Table 3 also reflects three meaningful contexts regarding the legitimacy of citizens towards the results of the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. First, the legitimacy of citizens towards the results of the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 is shown through an attitude of acceptance (Yuslianson, 2024). Second, the legitimacy of citizens towards the results of the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 towards the victory claim of the presidential candidate is shown through an attitude of neglect (Besar, 2024). Third, the legitimacy of citizens towards the results of the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 is shown through an attitude of rejection (BBC, 2024). From these three contexts, it can be seen and reflected that the democratic controversy in the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 has formed a complex and contextual citizen legitimacy in responding to the election results.

### Making Sense of Controversy Democracy in Indonesian Presidential Election

Indonesia's 2024 presidential election has generated many complex and contextual controversies. This context can be seen



through three essential findings in this study. First, the lack of commitment from politicians and election organizers to comply with democratic election rules is a form of controversy that occurred in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. Second, the massive intervention of politicians and election organizers in the electoral process is the dominant factor that raises democratic controversies in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. Third, democratic controversies in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia have long implications for citizens' attitudes toward the legitimacy of election results. From these three contexts, it can be reflected that the controversy over democracy in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia shows the weak commitment of politicians and the organizing committee to realizing democratic elections. The controversy has also dominantly shaped the attitudes and views of citizens toward the legitimacy of election results that are considered controversial.

This study reflects that the democratic controversy that arose in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia was influenced by the inconsistency of politicians and the election organizing committee in implementing democratic rules. Nguyen and Catalan-Matamoros (2020) also said that the inconsistency of democratic election rules, apart from giving rise to controversy, can cause citizens to distrust the legitimacy of honest and fair election results. Therefore, the

inconsistent process and implementation of electoral rules underlie the emergence of democratic controversy in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. In addition to the inconsistent process and implementation of electoral rules, the weak commitment of politicians and election organizers to realizing the concept of honest and fair elections also forms a counterproductive attitude among citizens towards election results. Testriono and Schraufnagel (2020) also say that citizens, politicians, and organizers' weak commitment to realizing democratic elections has led to controversy in the process and implementation.

The democratic controversy in the presidential election process and implementation in Indonesia in 2024 has long implications for the image of a democratic political system. In other words, democratic controversies, apart from having implications for the quality and image of a democratic political system, can also shape public distrust of the legitimacy of general election results. This context by Dettman et al. (2017) can be reflected through protests by citizens to reject the results of elections that they consider not to have taken place democratically. In addition to generating a massive wave of protests, democratic controversies also have the potential to generate anarchism and conflict between citizens and authorities on a massive scale. In other words, besides having the potential to lead to rejection of the legitimacy

of the election results, democratic controversies can also lead to massive social conflicts. Marleku (2020) also said that the concept of democratic elections is highly dependent on citizens, politicians, and organizing committees' commitment to implementing consistent election rules.

The findings in this study are different from those of previous studies. Studies that have discussed democracy issues in general elections only focus on its normative-situational characteristics and implications. However, the findings in this study show that the controversy over democracy has long implications for the image of the political system and has the potential to give rise to social conflicts that occur massively after the general election. This context, in the view of Galuh Larasati et al. (2023), occurs because general elections, apart from being a procedure for determining candidates for electoral leaders democratically, also have the potential to form a social discourse that can affect political, economic, and post-election conditions. Fernando et al. (2023) also said that the social discourses that emerge and develop in general elections are not normative-situational but continuous so that the political, economic, and legal conditions of a country after the general election are greatly influenced by the social discourses that develop in the process and implementation of general elections.

The democratic controversy that emerged during the process and implementation of the presidential election in Indonesia in 2024 shows complex characteristics and implications for the image of a democratic political system. Increasing the awareness of citizens, politicians, and election management committees is essential to minimize the emergence of democratic controversies in the process and implementation of future elections. This context is also emphasized by Herzog et al. (2023), who said that to minimize and prevent the potential emergence of democratic controversies, democracy education must be carried out as early as possible in the nation's next generation formally and informally. In addition to optimizing educational institutions, structural evaluation is crucial in shaping the culture of citizens, politicians, and election management committees in realizing democratic elections. In other words, the manifestation of the principles and concepts of democratic elections can not only be realized through structural consistency but also influenced by cultural conditions

## CONCLUSION

The presidential election in Indonesia 2024 has raised controversies about democracy that are so complex in process and implementation. This context can be seen through three essential findings in this study. First, politicians and election organizers have a weak commitment to comply with

democratic election rules. Second, the massive intervention of politicians and election organizers in the electoral process. Third, the controversy over democracy in Indonesia's 2024 presidential election has long implications for citizens' attitudes toward the legitimacy of election results. From these three contexts, it can be reflected that the controversy over democracy in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia has not only led to controversy over democracy in the electoral process and implementation but has also shaped the negative attitudes and perceptions of citizens toward the legitimacy of the election results. The findings in this study are different from those of previous studies. Studies that have discussed democracy issues in general elections only focus on its normative-situational characteristics and implications. However, the findings in this study show that the democracy controversy has long implications for the image of the political system and has the potential to raise citizens' distrust of the legitimacy of election results. The findings in this study are not only expected to be able to serve as a dialogical basis for social and political science studies. However, they are also expected to be a preference in reflecting and evaluating the system, process, and implementation of general elections in the future. This study also has a weakness in the data collection process, which is only done through an investigation process on online media reports disseminated

on Google. Therefore, the data obtained and displayed in this study only refer to the archive of online news text descriptions. However, the weaknesses in this study are expected to become the basis or reference for further studies, especially studies that want to explain citizens' reception of the process and implementation of elections that are counterproductive to democratic values. Through such studies, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of the democratic controversies that occur in the process and implementation of elections in the future can be obtained.

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