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April-June, 2009

Democracy Review

Komunitas Indonesia untuk Demokrasi

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POLITICAL PARTICIPATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

2009 legislative election still left some problems that may threaten Indonesia's democracy development process. Two facts indicate the seriousness of the problems, they are: firstly, a significant number of voters lost their votes as their political right that guaranteed by the Constitution. Secondly, a lot of regulation violations happened before, during, and after election. These two facts were found in many places and many communities.

There were many parties representing political parties, independent observers, NGOs, community groups, and media already delivered evidence of the violation but it is felt that the responses are inadequate. 2009 legislative election clearly had lowered political participation of the citizen without adequate political accountability taking place.

Political Participation

Political participation is the very soul of the democracy process. Political participation has two dimensions which are quality of participation and quantity of participation. Quality of participation is the participation of the citizens in democratic processes especially general election based on understanding of political discourse and dynamics that lead to political preference. Quantity of participation as already widely known is the number or percentage of the citizens who participate in general election.

Legislative election process in Indonesia indicates that both quality and quantity of participation are experiencing a downturn. Uncertainties felt by many voters in the election box and inability to explain their political preference were signals of low quality of participation. It can be caused by many factors such as lack of political education by political parties, political parties' de-idealization, or political maneuvers of political elite that go beyond public common sense.

The fact of political participation downturn itself can be seen in two perspectives which are the result of political preference of the citizen or the lost of voting right intentionally and unintentionally due to several reasons. The case of the lost of voting right and the use of voting right by illegitimate people was got public attention during the election of East Java Governor. Though the incident already becomes public attention, it was happen again during 2009 legislative election. It is expected that the citizens that unable to participate in the 2009 legislative election more than 25%.

2009 legislative election clearly indicated low quality and quantity of political participation. More over, there was also a phenomenon of floating political parties, a phenomenon in which political parties was losing its roles and relevance in the election process. Acknowledging the situation, a strong political will and consistency to avoid political decaying is a must for Indonesia.

Political Accountability

Political accountability is a mechanism in which they who receive political authority giving their accountability to they who give the authority on the way and impact of the use of the authority. 2009 legislative election has fundamental problem by significant number of voters do not able exercising their right. It is part of political authority exercise that needs to be accounted for.

The absence of political accountability indicates democracy process decay. It can be caused by several reasons

1. Ineffectiveness of political accountability mechanism in such a way that political authority holder have blank cheque to exercise the authority.
2. Low quality of politicians that many of them ignore political accountability
3. Feudalistic, partisanship, and skeptical political behavior of citizen that make them do not want to involve in political life.

Political Lessons Learned

Some lessons learned of 2009 legislative election.

1. Rules and regulation on election need to be legalized as soon as possible to provide appropriate time for election committee preparing the process and steps. Two years is considered already too late. The rules and regulations need to regulate political parties in such a way to ensure representation of citizen political aspiration instead of political elite hegemony. In the rules and regulations a clear political accountability mechanism need to be defined.
2. Selection of election committee member and secretariat staffs that having adequate competency, integrity, and credibility is a must. The function of the election committee is very clear and specific; it is not a function that fit for everybody.

3. The schedule and steps of the election need to be clear, firm, and widely known by the people. Continuous changes of the schedule as happen in 2009 election create uncertainties and hurting the legitimacy of election result.
4. Budgeting and disbursement process of the budget for the election need to be adjusted to election schedule and steps. It should not follow bureaucracy mechanism and timeline.
5. Basic data of the voters need to be used and developed consistently. The project approach in developing voters' data creates inconsistency and vulnerability. There is a need to have rules and standard operating procedure for developing voters' data.
6. Socialization and education on election for Indonesia plural citizen need to be conducted since election initial stage and this highlight the importance of field level branch of political parties and election committee. These branches need to be empowered to be able conduct political education and avoid the phenomenon of floating political parties.