

## Transactional Politics and Democratic Integrity in Indonesia: A Fiqh Siyāṣah and Regulatory Framework Perspective

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the persistence of transactional politics within Indonesia's contemporary democratic framework and critically evaluates the phenomenon from the perspective of Islamic law. Previous studies have predominantly examined transactional politics through political science and economic approaches, with limited integration between modern democratic theory and the normative framework of *fiqh siyāṣah* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, creating a clear research gap in interdisciplinary analyses of political practices in Muslim-majority democracies. This research employs a normative legal approach grounded in library research, analysing statutory regulations, classical *fiqh siyāṣah* literature, and contemporary studies of Indonesian electoral politics. Transactional politics is the exchange of electoral support, political loyalty, or policy influence for material benefits or strategic positions in electoral competition. The findings indicate that structural factors, including high campaign costs, patronage networks, and inconsistent enforcement of campaign finance regulations and the prohibition on political dowries, drive the persistence of transactional politics. By integrating deliberative democracy, political clientelism, and political exchange theory with Islamic legal principles, this study offers a theoretical contribution by developing an integrative analytical framework to explain and normatively evaluate transactional politics within the context of contemporary Indonesian democracy.

**Keywords:** Transactional Politics; Indonesian Democracy; *Fiqh Siyāṣah*; *Maqāṣid Al-sharī'ah*; Political Clientelism.

### Introduction

Indonesia, the world's third-largest democracy, has built a relatively stable political foundation since the 1998 Reformation.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Lili Romli, "Reformasi Partai Politik Dan Sistem Kepartaian Di Indonesia," *Politik* 2, no. 2 (2011), h. 200.

noble ideals of democracy, such as popular sovereignty, public accountability, and political representation, are clearly enshrined in the constitution. Regular general elections have become a key pillar in the mechanism of power transfer. However, behind this democratic progress lies a paradox. Political practices on the ground are often overridden by transactional logic that undermines the essence of substantive democracy itself. The 2024 Anti-Corruption Perception Survey also showed that of the 46.77 percent of people who admitted to having been offered money, goods, or facilities to vote for a particular candidate in the last Village Head Election, Regional Head Election, or General Election, 76.26 percent accepted the offer. This figure increased by 5.92 percent compared to 2023 (70.34 percent).<sup>2</sup>

Transactional politics, defined as the exchange of political support for material or non-material rewards outside formal political mechanisms,<sup>3</sup> has become deeply rooted and systemic. This practice occurs not only at the national level, such as in presidential and legislative elections, but also at the regional level in regional elections.<sup>4</sup> *Money politics*, *political bargaining*, and pseudo-coalitions based solely on short-term interests are among its manifestations. The phenomenon of reciprocity in the distribution of cabinet seats and the buying and selling of parliamentary support for the ratification of specific policies has become an open secret, indicating that transactional politics is no longer just a violation but has become a new culture of governance. Data on election violations even underscores this point: of 533 election criminal cases, only 114 (20 percent) were processed in court, and 26 of these were cases of money politics, demonstrating the intense penetration of transactional practices in political contestation.<sup>5</sup>

The rise of transactional politics is inseparable from several key factors—first, weaknesses in regulatory implementation. Although Indonesia has several regulations, such as the Election Law, the Political Party Law, and the Corruption Eradication Law, their implementation is

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<sup>2</sup>Badan Pusat Statistik, “Indeks Perilaku Anti Korupsi,” <https://www.bps.go.id/>, 2024, h. 90.

Angela Efianda and Iswahyuni Iswahyuni, “Political Leadership and Transactional Leadership,” *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 8, no. 9 (2021), h. 178. <https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v8i9.3020>.

<sup>4</sup>Kurnia Tri Wulandari et al., “Politik Transaksional Dalam Pemilihan Kepala Daerah (Pilkada) Kota Parepare Perspektif Ekonomi Syariah,” *Journal of Islamic and Law Studies* 9, no. 1 (2025), h. 40.

<sup>5</sup>Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum, “Ratna Dewi Jelaskan Pidana Politik Uang Kepada Anggota Adkasi,” <https://www.bawaslu.go.id/>, 2019.

often weak. Legal loopholes *are* still widely exploited to carry out covert transactions, for example, through asset-holding structures or fictitious projects that are formally legal but have transactional content. Second, the high cost of electoral politics forces candidates and political parties to seek funding from financiers who ultimately expect a return on their investment.<sup>6</sup>

The impact of transactional politics is highly destructive and multidimensional. *First*, there is an erosion of public accountability. A leader elected through transactions will feel more indebted to their funders than to the people who elected them. *Second*, this practice perpetuates corruption and hinders development, as development projects can be diverted to repay political debts. *Third*, and most fundamentally, transactional politics erodes the authority of law and ethical norms. This creates a legitimacy crisis not only at the political level, but also at the legal and moral levels.

The urgency of this study lies in the increasingly strong practice of transactional politics in Indonesian democracy, which impacts not only practical politics but also ethical and legal dimensions. Academically, studies on transactional politics are still dominated by political science and political economy approaches. At the same time, Islamic law-based analyses, particularly within the framework of *fiqh siyāsah* and *maqāsid ash-syarī'ah*, remain relatively limited.

The phenomenon of transactional politics has attracted the attention of several previous studies, including Sudirman L. (2012), who concluded that transactional political practices, including money politics, constitute a form of *risywah* (bribery) that is prohibited because it undermines the principles of justice, trust, and public welfare. These findings are important as a normative basis for understanding Islamic law's position on deviant political practices. However, this research is still limited to conceptual analysis. It has not linked transactional political practices to the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian democracy, particularly regarding the increasing costs of politics, changes in elite behaviour, and the development of post-reform election regulations.

Based on previous studies, there is a research gap that has not been comprehensively addressed: the absence of studies systematically

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<sup>6</sup>Ratnia Solihah, "Politik Transaksional Dalam Pilkada Serentak Dan Implikasinya Bagi Pemerintah Daerah Di Indonesia," *The Politics: Jurnal Magister Ilmu Politik Universitas Hasanuddin* 2, no. 1 (2016), h. 106-107.

integrating the analysis of transactional political phenomena in the context of contemporary Indonesian democracy with a *fiqh siyāsah* approach. Previous research tends to be normative-conceptual without integrating empirical data on current Indonesian politics and the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* framework as a normative evaluation tool for electoral political practices.

The novelty of this research lies in its systematic analysis of the integration of transactional political realities in Indonesia with the normative framework of *fiqh siyāsah* and the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. This research not only examines the legal status of transactional politics as a risk but also analyses structural factors, patronage culture, and the effectiveness of national legal regulations in addressing this practice. Therefore, this research offers an interdisciplinary approach between Islamic law and contemporary political studies in the context of Indonesian democracy.

Transactional politics, from an Islamic legal perspective, is a practice that contradicts the principles of trust, justice, and public welfare<sup>7</sup>. Power in Islam is a trust that must be exercised for the benefit of the people, not as a commodity to be exchanged for personal or group interests. The practice of providing imbalances to gain political support can be interpreted as *risywah* (bribery), which is strictly prohibited because it undermines the order of justice and the integrity of leadership. This normative perspective provides an important foundation for transactional political practices in Indonesia's democratic system.

Against this background, this study aims to systematically analyse the phenomenon of transactional politics, assess the effectiveness of existing legal regulations, and provide a normative evaluation grounded in Islamic legal principles. Substantively, this research aims to examine the forms and mechanisms of transactional political practices in Indonesian democracy, the effectiveness of national legal regulations in addressing these practices, and their legal classification from the perspectives of *fiqh siyāsah* and *maqāṣid ash-syarī'ah*.

This research relies on the integration of three main frameworks: the concept of transactional politics in the study of democracy, the theory of *fiqh siyāsah* on power as a trust that must be oriented towards justice and public welfare, and the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* approach, which

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<sup>7</sup>Ahmad Munir Suratmaputra, "Kemaslahatan Sebagai Tujuan Pensyarī'atan Hukum Islam," *Misykat* 2, no. 2 (2017), h. 6.

assesses political policies based on their impact on protecting fundamental Islamic values. The synthesis of these three frameworks serves as the basis for analysing transactional politics in Indonesia's democratic system.

This article is structured in several sections. The first section discusses the concept and forms of transactional politics in Indonesian democracy. The second section examines national legal regulations prohibiting transactional politics. The third section analyses these practices from an Islamic legal perspective, using the frameworks of *fiqh siyāsah* and *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*. The final section presents conclusions and implications for the research on the enforcement of democracy and just governance of power.

### **Research Methods**

This research is a normative legal study using a qualitative-descriptive approach. It aims to analyse transactional political practices in Indonesia and to assess them from an Islamic legal perspective, using the framework of *fiqh siyāsah*. The approaches used include a statutory approach to examine regulations related to money politics and political dowries; a conceptual approach<sup>8</sup> to examine the concepts of risk, trust (*amanah*), justice, and *maslahah* (benefit) in *fiqh siyāsah* literature; and a *maqāsid al-syarī'ah* approach to assess the impact of transactional political practices on public welfare and the integrity of governance.

This research is based on library research, with secondary data as the primary source. Primary legal materials include the Qur'an, hadith, works of classical Islamic jurisprudence scholars such as al-Mawardi and Ibn Taymiyyah, and laws and regulations related to elections and political parties. Secondary legal materials include journal articles, books on contemporary Indonesian politics, and survey reports on money politics. Data were collected through a systematic literature search, regulatory documentation, and thematic classification of transactional political practices.

Data analysis was conducted using three normative techniques. First, content analysis was used to map the forms, mechanisms, and causal factors of transactional politics in Indonesian democracy. Second, the *ushul fiqh* method, which involved *istidlāl* (Islamic jurisprudence) based on Quranic and Hadith texts, *qiyās* (evaluation) of political bribery

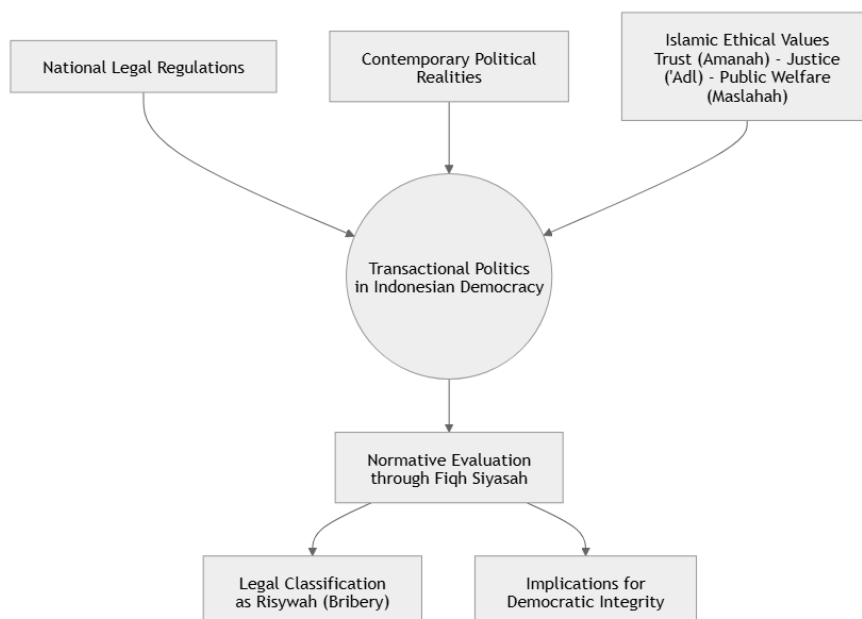
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<sup>8</sup> Nur Solikin, *Pengantar Metodologi Penelitian Hukum* (Jawa Timur: CV. Penerbit Qiara Media, 2021). h. 58-60.

practices, and the application of Islamic jurisprudence principles concerning the orientation of rulers' policies toward the public interest. Third, the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* (the principles of Islamic jurisprudence) approach was used to assess the conformity of transactional political practices with the principles of trustworthiness, justice, and public interest, thus determining their legal classification from a sharia perspective.

Data validity was maintained through source triangulation by comparing election regulations, empirical survey reports, and academic literature, then testing these against normative Islamic legal arguments and the views of classical Islamic jurisprudence scholars. This research is limited to transactional political practices in the context of Indonesian electoral democracy (General Elections and Regional Head Elections). It is analysed from an Islamic legal perspective through the frameworks of *fiqh siyāsah* and *maqāṣid al -sharī'ah*, without conducting field research. The analytical framework of *fiqh siyāsah* includes the identification of transactional political phenomena, the analysis of positive legal regulations, the construction of the principles of trust, justice, and benefit, and the determination of the legal classification of these practices as prohibited *risywah*.

The conceptual model below illustrates the analytical framework of this study.



## Results and Discussions

### Results

#### *The Concept and Forms of Transactional Politics*

##### 1. Definition of Transactional Politics

Transactional politics is a concept derived from the combination of two terms: politics and transactional, each with its own meaning. Politics is defined as the realm that deals with state matters, including the system and foundation of government. Politics is also seen as an art to realize various possibilities in regulating the collective life of a society.<sup>9</sup> Transactional refers to an activity involving an agreement or contract, often in the context of trade, between two or more parties who exchange goods, services, or assets.<sup>10</sup>

Transactional politics can be understood as a mechanism of political exchange that follows a transactional logic akin to trade.<sup>11</sup> Within this framework, some parties act as givers and receivers in an exchange relationship. However, the most visible transaction instruments are often financial.

Politics can be seen as an integral part of democracy, especially in multiparty systems, where the formation of governing coalitions involves bargaining over interests. However, it also contradicts the basic principle of democracy, which should prioritize the public interest. When public policy is determined primarily by the interests of specific groups involved in transactions, the democratic process, which should be transparent and participatory, is eroded. Although democracy remains formally functioning, its quality declines substantially because decisions that should be for the common good become the result of exchanges of interests among a handful of elites.

##### 2. Forms of Transactional Politics

Transactional politics in Indonesia can be classified into several primary interrelated forms:

###### a. Money Politics

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<sup>9</sup> Efriza and Jerry Indrawan, *Pengantar Politik* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2019), h. 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Maulana and Emk Alidar, *Model Transaksi Ekonomi Kontemporer Dalam Islam* (Banda Aceh: Dinas Syariat Islam Aceh, 2020), h. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Sudirman L, "Politik Transaksional Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam di Indonesia," *Jurnal Hukum Diktum* 10, no. 1 (2012), h. 100.

Money politics is the most direct form of transaction, involving the exchange of material assistance for political support. In general elections or regional elections, candidates or their campaign teams often offer money or goods to voters in exchange for votes. This phenomenon occurs not only at the individual voter level but also involves community leaders who act as intermediaries in exchange for certain rewards.<sup>12</sup>

b. Politics of Patronage

Patronage politics creates an asymmetrical reciprocal relationship between the giver and recipient of aid. Concrete examples include the appointment of officials not based on ability but on loyalty, the distribution of government projects to supporters, or the provision of politicized social assistance. This patronage system creates a robust clientelistic network, where personal loyalty becomes more valuable political capital than professional competence. This pattern is powerful in regions with strong feudal traditions.<sup>13</sup>

c. Identity Politics

Identity politics is exploited as a form of transaction by constructing narratives that mobilize group sentiments based on religion, ethnicity, or race.<sup>14</sup> Through this approach, political actors build support by shifting voter considerations from a candidate's programs and capabilities to emotional and primordial ties. This form of transaction is often reinforced by the provision of selective assistance or the use of religious symbols during campaigns, which not only has the potential to divide society but also shifts the focus of democracy from substantial competition to the mobilization of exclusive identities.

d. Inter-Elite Transactions

Transactional politics among elites occurs through secret agreements between political parties or influential figures. This includes the allocation of cabinet positions based on coalition party

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<sup>12</sup>Muhammad Arqon, Danil Mustafa, and Muhammad Gogon, "Pencegahan Politik Uang Di Indonesia," *Adagium: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum* 2, no. 1 (2024), h. 16-17. <https://ejournal.mejailmiah.com/index.php/adagium>.

<sup>13</sup>Muhlis Hafel, *Kekuatan-Kekuatan Politik Di Indonesia* (Ternate Selatan: Ummu Press, 2011), h. 64.

<sup>14</sup>Putu Sastra Wingarta et al., "Pengaruh Politik Identitas Terhadap Demokrasi Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional Republik Indonesia* 9, no. 4 (n.d.), h. 121-122.

quotas, the formation of coalitions without a clear ideological basis, or various other agreements that prioritize power over policy principles.<sup>15</sup> These elite transactions often involve complex behind-the-scenes negotiations over the distribution of state resources and access to power.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Mechanism of Transactional Political Practices

Transactional politics in Indonesia operates like a circulatory system that flows through all organs of democracy. This system forms a periodically recurring cycle. At the legislative and executive nomination stage, candidates must undergo a political dowry ritual, a mechanism in which political parties act as gates that can only be opened with a certain amount of financial capital.<sup>17</sup> In this phase, candidate seats are no longer contested through a competition of ideas, but rather through an auction of support, the value of which is unofficially standardized.<sup>18</sup>

During the campaign phase, transactional mechanisms transform into a mobilization industry involving a complex supply chain. Political brokers act as distributors, bridging candidates with voters, while campaign teams serve as the spearheads, distributing both material and non-material aid. This pattern creates a hidden political market, where voters' votes become commodities traded through various packages, from direct aid to policy promises.<sup>19</sup>

After the election, this mechanism enters a power-sharing phase, resembling a profit-sharing system in the business world. Political parties supporting the government receive dividends in the form of ministerial positions, heads of state-owned enterprises, and other strategic positions.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, at the regional level, coalitions

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<sup>15</sup>Mei Susanto et al., "Fat Coalition and Crown-Presidentialism: A Critical Review of Indonesia's Concurrent Elections," *Petita: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum Dan Syariah* 10, no. 1 (2025): h. 54, <https://doi.org/10.22373/petita.v10i1.757>.

<sup>16</sup>Rangga Galura Gumelar, Ikhsan Ahmad, and Iman Mukhroman, "Pengaruh Transaksional Elit Politik Terhadap Model Komunikasi Politik Pilwalkot Serang 2018," *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi* 9, no. 1 (2021), h. 98.

<sup>17</sup>Ibadurrahman, "Implementasi dan Dampak Politik Transaksional (Mahar Politik) dalam Pilkada Terhadap Pembangunan di Daerah," *Renaissan* 6, no. 4 (2021), h. 773.

<sup>18</sup>Berna Sudjana Ermaya, "Perilaku Politik Transaksional Dan Biaya Tinggi Dalam Pemilihan Kepala Daerah Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Keadilan Pemilu* (Jurnal Keadilan Pemilu) 2 (2020), h. 54. [www.mkri.id](http://www.mkri.id).

<sup>19</sup>Wulandari et al., "Politik Transaksional Dalam Pemilihan Kepala Daerah (Pilkada) Kota Parepare Perspektif Ekonomi Syariah." h. 45.

<sup>20</sup>Muhammad Haris Zulkarnain and Syifa Izzati, "Politik Pembagian Kekuasaan

supporting regional heads form a kind of political cartel that controls the allocation of regional resources through the placement of trusted individuals within the bureaucratic structure.

#### 4. Causal Factors and Their Impact on the Quality of Democracy

Transactional politics in Indonesia does not arise in a vacuum, but is driven by several interrelated structural and cultural factors. First, weak law enforcement and political ethics create space for the development of transactional practices without significant legal consequences. Second, the high cost of politics in the electoral system forces political actors to seek funding through means that often blur the line between legal and illegal. Third, low levels of public political literacy make it easy for voters to become trapped in short-term exchanges without considering the long-term impact on the quality of democracy. Fourth, elitist and pragmatic political party structures tend to prioritize transactional logic in political recruitment and coalition formation, thus neglecting ideological considerations and capabilities.<sup>21</sup>

Deep-rooted transactional politics has had a systemic impact on the quality of Indonesian democracy. First, there has been an erosion of substantive democratic values, so that elections are no longer a competition of ideas and programs, but rather economic and power transactions. Second, there has been a loss of public trust in political institutions and the democratic process, marked by increasing public apathy and skepticism towards politics. Third, transactional politics has created space for systematic political corruption, enabling public policies and political positions to be traded for personal and group interests. Fourth, there has been a widening power imbalance between elite groups with access to political resources and ordinary citizens, thus eroding the principle of equality in democracy.<sup>22</sup> These impacts reinforce each other, creating a negative cycle that threatens the future consolidation of Indonesian democracy.

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Jabatan BUMN Dalam Pemerintahan Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin," *Parapolitika: Journal of Politics and Democracy Studies* 3, no. 1 (2022), h. 93. <https://kppip.go.id/siaran-pers/lima-fokus-kerja-di-periode-kedua-pemerintahan-jokowi>.

<sup>21</sup>Isak Pasulu, "Politik Transaksional Dalam Perspektif Pertukaran Sosial (Studi Kasus Pada Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah Serentak Tahun 2020 Di Kabupaten Toraja Utara)" (Disertasi, Universitas Hasanuddin, 2024). h. 27-31.

<sup>22</sup>Ferio Ivan Mulyono, Margaretha Anggraeni Raja Seda, and Amira Wahyudi, "Menilik Celah Plotokrasi Melalui Politik Transaksional Dalam Praktik Perdagangan Pengaruh Pasca Pemilu," *Jurnal Masyarakat Indonesia* 50, no. 1 (2024), h. 34-36. <https://doi.org/10.55981/jmi.2024.8672>.

### ***Legal Regulations in Indonesia***

Transactional politics in Indonesian regulations is not only viewed as a violation of political ethics but also constructed as an action expressly prohibited and subject to legal sanctions. Indonesian regulations establish a comprehensive approach through a hierarchy of complementary laws and regulations, from the constitutional level to the technical regulations governing election administration. This arrangement reflects the state's commitment to realizing a political process that is integrity-driven and free of the practice of exchanging votes for material rewards.

The constitutional basis for eradicating transactional politics can be traced in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 1 paragraph 2 "Sovereignty is in the hands of the people, and is carried out entirely by the People's Consultative Assembly" and Article 22E paragraph 6 "Further provisions regarding general elections are regulated by law".<sup>23</sup> which guarantees the sovereignty of the people and the principle of holding direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair elections. This principle is then explained more operationally in Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, Article 1, paragraph 1:

General Elections, hereinafter referred to as Elections, are a means of the people's sovereignty to elect members of the People's Representative Council, members of the Regional Representative Council, President and Vice President, and to elect members of the Regional People's Representative Council, which are carried out directly, generally, freely, secretly, honestly and fairly in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>24</sup>

Strengthened by Law Number 10 of 2016 concerning Regional Elections, Article 73 paragraph 1 "Candidates and/or Campaign teams are prohibited from promising and/or giving money or other materials to influence Election organizers and/or Voters".<sup>25</sup> This law contains explicit provisions regarding the prohibition of money politics and its oversight mechanisms. This legal instrument is strengthened by various technical regulations from Bawaslu and KPU that govern procedures for preventing and handling election violations, forming a multi-layered

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<sup>23</sup>*Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945* (Bandung: Keni Media, 2024). h. 20.

<sup>24</sup>*Undang-Undang Pemilu 2019* (Yogyakarta: Genesis Learning, 2017). h. 3.

<sup>25</sup>*Undang-Undang Pilkada* (Yogyakarta: Genesis Learning, 2016). h. 41.

legal system to combat transactional politics.

Substantively, Indonesian regulations have criminalized various forms of transactional politics. Money politics is regulated in Article 523 of the Election Law, which carries significant criminal penalties (paragraph 2):

*"Every implementer, participant, and/or Election Campaign team who intentionally, during the Quiet Period, promises or gives money or other material rewards to voters directly or indirectly as referred to in Article 278 paragraph (2) shall be punished with a maximum prison sentence of 4 (four) years and a maximum fine of IDR 48,000,000.00 (forty-eight million rupiah)."*<sup>26</sup>

The regulation regarding money politics is strengthened by provisions regarding the prohibition of political dowry practices in nominations through the Political Party Law, Article 40 paragraph 3 letter c *"receiving donations from individuals and/or companies/business entities exceeding the limits stipulated in statutory regulations"*.<sup>27</sup>

The limits are detailed in KPU Regulation Number 18 of 2023 concerning Election Campaign Funds, which sets the campaign contribution ceiling for various types of elections. Article 8, paragraphs 1 and 2, for the Presidential and VicePresidential Elections and the DPR/DPRD Elections, the maximum donation limit from individuals is IDR 2.5 billion and from groups/companies IDR 25 billion. For the DPD Elections, the limits are lower: IDR 750 million for individuals and IDR 1.5 billion for groups/companies.<sup>28</sup>

Sanctions are given if you violate this article, which is regulated in Article 48, paragraph 5:

*"In the event of a violation of the provisions as referred to in Article 40 paragraph (3) letters b, c and d, the administrator of the Political Party concerned shall be punished with a maximum prison sentence of 1 (one) year and a fine of 2 (two) times the amount of funds received."*<sup>29</sup>

Strengthened by Article 228 paragraph 1 of the Election Law, which prohibits extortion from candidates, *"Political Parties are*

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<sup>26</sup>Undang-Undang Pemilu 2019. h. 322.

<sup>27</sup>Undang-Undang Partai Politik (Malang: Pt. Literasi Nusantara Abadi Grub, 2023). h. 17.

<sup>28</sup>"Peraturan Komisi Pemilihan Umum Nomor 18 Tahun 2023 Tentang Dana Kampanye Pemilihan Umum," 2023.

<sup>29</sup>Undang-Undang Partai Politik. h. 20.

*prohibited from accepting any form of compensation in the process of nominating the President and Vice President.*"<sup>30</sup> While the Corruption Crime Law regulates the corrupt dimension of transactional politics, aspects of ethical violations are addressed through the code of ethics for election organizers. Although this legal regulation is considered comprehensive, its enforcement in practice still faces serious challenges due to the complexity of proof and the strong network of interests behind transactional political practices.

The aforementioned law reveals a loophole that facilitates transactional politics: the inconsistency between the absolute prohibition on accepting rewards during the nomination process (Article 228 of the Election Law) and the regulation of campaign contributions that reach billions of rupiah (PKPU 18/2023). This loophole is exploited through a *modus operandi*, so that massive campaign contributions are no longer merely operational assistance, but are instead considered investments by donors who expect a return in the form of policies, projects, or positions after their candidate is elected. This debt of gratitude transaction is highly secretive and delayed, making it extremely difficult to prove legally.

Various challenges demonstrate that law enforcement efforts require not only inter-agency coordination but also comprehensive systemic improvements. To increase the effectiveness of handling transactional politics, strengthening the capacity of supervisory institutions, implementing more comprehensive regulatory reforms, and optimizing digital technology in the election oversight process are necessary. Furthermore, building public legal awareness and establishing secure reporting mechanisms are crucial to supporting sustainable efforts to eradicate transactional politics.

## **Discussion**

### ***Transactional Politics: A Modern Democratic Theory Perspective***

#### **1. Deliberative Democracy**

The quality of democracy, from a deliberative democracy perspective, is determined not only by the continuity of electoral procedures but also by the quality of public deliberation, which is rational, inclusive, and oriented toward the public interest.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Undang-Undang Pemilu 2019. h. 160.

<sup>31</sup> Wimmy Haliim, "Demokrasi Deliberatif Indonesia: Konsep Partisipasi Masyarakat dalam Membentuk Demokrasi dan Hukum yang Responsif," *Masyarakat*

Deliberative democracy emphasizes that political legitimacy arises from an open exchange of arguments between citizens and political actors, so that public decisions are not based solely on the aggregate of votes but also on rational considerations of the common good.<sup>32</sup> An ideal democracy demands a space for public discourse that allows for equal participation and substantive dialogue on policy issues.

In the context of contemporary electoral democracy, including in Indonesia, political competition is often characterized by pragmatic strategies to gain and maintain political support. High contestation costs, weak institutionalization of political parties, and a strong culture of patronage encourage political actors to optimize resource mobilization as part of their competitive strategy. In this situation, transactional political practices can be understood as a rational consequence of the structure of electoral competition, which demands effectiveness in garnering support, though this strategy can affect the quality of the deliberative process in democracy.<sup>33</sup>

The existence of transactional political practices indicates a shift in political participation patterns from rational discourse to pragmatic interest negotiation. Political support is not always determined by critical evaluation of policy programs or development visions, but is also influenced by material incentives and short-term interest relationships. This phenomenon does not eliminate procedural democratic mechanisms. Still, it can limit the space for public deliberation, as the public's and the elite's political preferences are shaped more by instrumental considerations than by substantive exchanges of arguments about the public interest.

This situation reflects a challenge to the quality of substantive democracy. When the decision-making process is more influenced by pragmatic agreements between political actors, the space for inclusive and rational public discourse tends to shrink. As a result, public political participation may become more instrumental, while debates over public interests and long-term policy orientations receive less space in electoral

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*Indonesia*, vol. 42, no. 1 (2016), h. 20-21. <https://doi.org/10.14203/jmi.v42i1.556>

<sup>32</sup> La Ilham Toha, "Kebebasan Berpendapat dan Berekspresi Periode Kedua Presiden Joko Widodo: Tinjauan Demokrasi Deliberatif Jurgen Habermas," *Dialektika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Ilmu Sosial*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2024), h. 14. <https://doi.org/10.33477/da.v17i1.7068>

<sup>33</sup> Rizky Alif Alvian dan Irfan Ardhani, "The Politics of Moderate Islam in Indonesia: Between International Pressure and Domestic Contestations," *Al-Jāmi'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 61, no. 1 (2023), h. 22-24.

competition.

Transactional politics can be understood as a phenomenon arising from the rational dynamics of political competition and as having implications for the quality of public deliberation. Transactional political practices are not only a matter of political ethics, but also a structural symptom that influences the quality of substantive democracy in an electoral democratic system.

## 2. Political Clientelism

Transactional political practices, from the perspective of political clientelism, can be understood as a reciprocal patron-client relationship between political actors and their support groups. Clientelism theory explains that political support is often built through the selective distribution of resources, such as material assistance, access to policies, or promises of positions of power, given in exchange for political loyalty.<sup>34</sup> This relationship is personalistic and not entirely based on policy program or ideological considerations, but rather on a pragmatic exchange of interests between patrons and clients in the electoral political arena.<sup>35</sup>

Patterns of clientelism are evident in various practices of mobilizing political support that rely on patronage networks. Political actors often use social assistance, development projects, and the distribution of other resources to gain electoral support. Conversely, voters or elite support groups provide political loyalty in return for the benefits they receive. This pattern demonstrates that political preferences are not entirely shaped by programmatic rationality, but also by pragmatic, short-term, reciprocal relationships.

Political clientelism also helps explain why transactional political practices tend to recur in every election cycle. Patron-client relationships create structural dependencies between political actors and voters, making resource distribution an effective mobilization strategy in electoral competition. This situation reinforces the personalization of power and weakens the institutionalization of political parties, as political loyalty is directed more toward patronage figures and networks

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<sup>34</sup> Irfandi Setiawan et al., "Patronase dan Klientalisme Politik (Studi Pada Masyarakat Daerah Pemilihan I, Kabupaten Bangka di Pemilihan Legislatif 2019)," *BULLET: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu*, vol. 1, no. 6 (2022), h. 1257-12589

<sup>35</sup> Amalina Zukhrufatul Bahriyah et al., "The Existence of Islamic Politics Against Heterodox of Islamic Movements in Indonesia," *Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2024), h. 156-162. 10.29240/ajis.v9i1.8985.

than toward the party's policy platforms.

Transactional political practices are understood not only as a matter of individual political ethics but also as a pattern of power relations shaped by broader socio-political structures. Patron-client relationships, deeply rooted in political culture, can shape pragmatic electoral behaviour in which political support is viewed as an exchangeable resource. In the long term, this pattern has the potential to impact the quality of substantive democracy by narrowing the space for competition based on policy programs and strengthening the dominance of patronage networks in the political process.

### 3. Political Exchange Theory

Transactional political practices, from the perspective of political exchange theory, are exchanges of interests between political actors who act rationally to gain and maintain power. This theory assumes that political interactions often resemble an exchange mechanism, in which political support is treated as a resource that can be exchanged for various benefits, such as access to policy, distribution of positions, or other material benefits.<sup>36</sup> Thus, political behaviour is not solely driven by normative or ideological considerations, but also by rational calculations of the costs and benefits of political competition.

Transactional political practices can be seen as part of the dynamics of pragmatic political exchange. Candidates and political parties negotiate support with voters, party elites, and interest groups through various forms of political incentives. Conversely, actors who provide support gain access to certain political resources or public policies. This pattern demonstrates that political support is not always based on shared programs or ideology, but also on rational considerations of the benefits to be gained from the political relationship.<sup>37</sup>

Political exchange theory also explains that political exchange practices occur not only at the voter level but also at the elite level through coalition formation and post-election power-sharing. Negotiations over government formation, the distribution of cabinet seats, and the allocation of public policy projects often involve

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<sup>36</sup> Anthony Downs, "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy," *The Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 65, no. 2 (1957), h. 137–138.

<sup>37</sup> Arinta Eka Putri et al., "Problematika Pendanaan Partai Politik dan Munculnya Politik Transaksional dengan Kajian Epistemologi," *Gudang Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu*, no. 1, no. 6 (2023), h. 239–241.

agreements to exchange support between political actors. This demonstrates that transactional politics is part of the rational logic within complex systems of power competition, particularly in multiparty systems and governing coalitions.

Transactional political practices cannot be fully understood as individual moral deviations, but rather as structural phenomena related to the high costs of politics, intense electoral competition, and the need for political actors to build effective coalitions of support. This theory helps explain why political transaction practices persist in electoral democracies, despite often being viewed as normatively problematic.

### ***Islamic Legal Perspective***

Islamic law, derived from the Quran, Hadith, Ijma', and Qiyas, is a set of rules and guidelines for Muslims in their lives. One of its primary goals is to uphold justice and the common good. Islamic law regulates all aspects of human life, both as individuals and in social interactions. The application of Islamic law is intended to achieve comprehensive happiness and Well-being in this world and the hereafter.<sup>38</sup> One important aspect regulated within the scope of Islamic law is politics and state administration.

Selecting a leader in national life is part of Islamic transactions, which have a specific legal and ethical basis. From an Islamic perspective, a national leader plays a crucial role in maintaining justice, prosperity, and the Well-being of the people. A leader who is honest, intelligent, and trustworthy will bring prosperity and peace to his people. Conversely, if a leader is oppressive, corrupt, and abuses power, suffering and injustice will befall the people they lead. Therefore, the selection of leaders must be based on moral considerations, integrity, and ability, not solely on personal or group interests.<sup>39</sup>

Based on this principle, the power of a leader in Islam is viewed as a trust, not as personal property to be used as desired. This is emphasized in the words of Allah swt:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ ۗ

Translation:

*Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due*

<sup>38</sup>Sirman Dahwal, *Hukum Islam Indonesia* (Bandung: Mandar Maju, 2021). h. 40.

<sup>39</sup>Sudirman L, "Politik Transaksional Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam Di Indonesia." h. 104.

*and when you judge between people to judge with justice. (al-Nisa/4:58)*

This verse was revealed regarding holders of power (leaders), emphasizing the fundamental principles that underpin political ethics in Islam. Emphasizes two core obligations: first, fulfilling the mandate to rights owners proportionally, and second, upholding justice in every legal decision. In the context of power, trust is manifested in an adequate Leadership capacity to uphold religion and regulate world affairs, including fair distribution of assets and law enforcement against perpetrators of injustice, as well as integrity in managing public assets such as ghanimah and zakat. Thus, fair politics and good Leadership in Islam can only be realized through the pillars of trust and justice.<sup>40</sup>

The principle of justice, which is the foundation of Islamic Leadership, is further emphasized through the word of Allah.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ

Translation:

*Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct...(al-Nahl/16:90)*

The interpretation of this verse emphasizes the command of Allah SWT to uphold justice which includes two dimensions: justice towards the rights of Allah SWT through His approval and the avoidance of shirk, as well as justice towards fellow human beings by fulfilling the rights of each party, while the command of ihsan includes perfection in worshiping Allah SWT and interacting socially through noble speech and deeds including maintaining friendship.<sup>41</sup> This verse requires power holders to be procedurally and substantively fair in all aspects of government, with the principle of ihsan, which requires leaders to go beyond formal obligations through policies oriented to the benefit of the people, as well as the prohibition of doing injustice, which is an absolute ethical limit in exercising power.

Transactional politics, which in its operation is synonymous with the buying and selling of interests and the giving of rewards to obtain power or policies, essentially contradicts the noble values mentioned above. From an Islamic legal perspective, this practice clearly falls under the category of risywah (bribery) or ghulul (betrayal of trust), the prohibition of which is affirmed in the hadith of the Prophet

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<sup>40</sup>Ahmad bin Abd al-Halim bin Abd al-Salam Ibnu Taimiyah, *Al-Siyasah Al-Syar'iyah Fi Islah Al-Ra'i Wa Al-Ra'iyah*, cet. 4 (Beirut: Dar Ibnu Hazm, 2019). h. 25-26.

<sup>41</sup>Nukhbatun min Asatidzati Al-Tafsir, *Al-Tafsir Al-Muyassar*, cet. 2 (al-Su'udiyah: Majma' Al-Malik Fahd li Thiba'ati Al-Mushaf Al-Syarif, 2009). h. 277.

Muhammad SAW.

و قال: لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الرَّاشِيَّ وَالْمُرْتَشِيَّ.<sup>42</sup> عن عبد الله بن عمر

Meaning:

*From Abdullah bin 'Amr, he said: Rasulullah saw cursed the bribe giver and the bribe taker.*

The classification of transactional politics as risywah not only has normative implications but also impacts the governance of power. The exchange of material interests in the political process can shift public authority to those with economic resources, leading to policies that no longer reflect the interests of the wider public. This situation creates unequal access to power and has the potential to undermine the principle of substantive justice in governance.

Transactional political practices tend to produce negative consequences in national life, such as increased abuse of power, decreased public accountability, and weakened legitimacy of political institutions. Within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence, the actions of rulers must always be oriented toward the public good. Therefore, political transactions that favour the interests of particular groups are inconsistent with the primary goal of sharia, which is to maintain justice and public welfare, transactional politics automatically fails to meet the requirements of the Islamic legal maxims, which states:

<sup>43</sup>تصرف الإمام على الرعية منوط بالمصلحة

Meaning:

*All forms of action by the ruler towards the people must be based on public interest.*

Transactional politics undermines social order and constitutes a betrayal of the Islamic mandate of Leadership. The views of classical scholars such as al-Mawardi in al-Aḥkam al-Sulṭaniyyah and Ibn Taymiyyah in al-Siyasah al-Syar'iyyah emphasize that power must be exercised solely to realize the welfare of the people, safeguard religion, regulate worldly affairs, and that the ruler's policies must always be in line with sharia principles to prevent injustice and corruption.

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<sup>42</sup>Sulaiman bin al-Ash'ath al-Azdi al-Sijistani Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abi Dawud* (Beirut: Dar al-Risalah al-'Alamiyyah, 2009). h. 433.

<sup>43</sup>Muhammad Mustafa Al-Zuhaili, *Al-Qawa'id al-Fiqhiyyah Wa Tathbiqatuha Fi Al-Madzahib Al-Arba'ah* (Damaskus: Dar al-Fikr, 2006). h. 493.

Transactional political practices that prioritize the exchange of material interests have been proven to contradict the basic principles of Islamic Leadership. The values of justice, trustworthiness, and the welfare of the people, the pillars of the Islamic political system, are distorted when bribery and influence peddling dominate the political process. Building clean governance requires integrating legal strengthening and the internalization of Islamic ethical values into political practice.<sup>44</sup> This synergy will create a political system that is not only free from pragmatic transactions but also capable of realizing substantive justice and prosperity for all citizens.

### ***Synthesis of Transactional Politics***

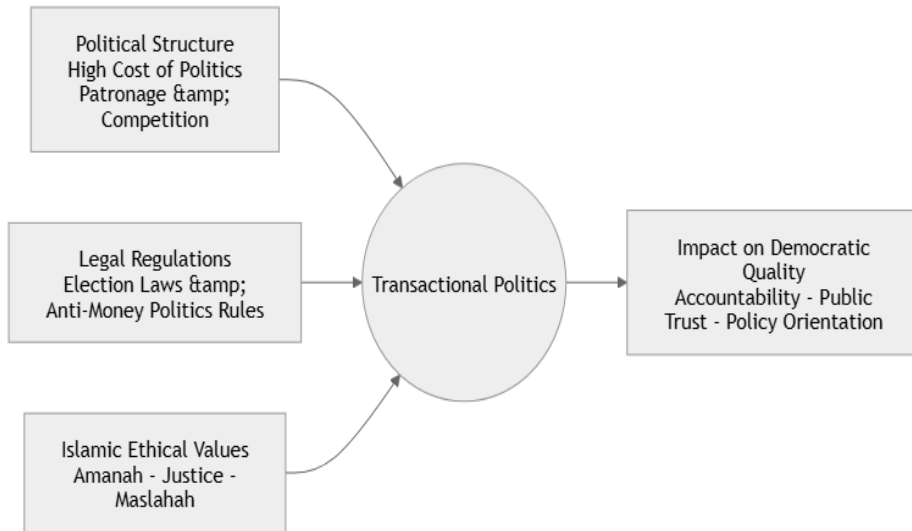
Transactional politics is a multidimensional phenomenon that can be understood through an integration of the perspectives of modern democratic theory and Islamic law. From a modern democratic perspective, this practice emerges as a rational consequence of the structure of electoral competition, characterised by high political costs, a culture of patronage, and the need to build support networks. However, from the perspective of *fiqh siyāsah*, transactional political practices are considered contrary to the principles of trust, justice, and welfare, as they shift power's orientation from the public interest to the pragmatic interests of specific groups.

The synthesis of these two perspectives shows that transactional politics is not only a structural phenomenon in electoral democracy but also raises ethical and normative issues within the framework of Islamic law. Its impact is not limited to procedural aspects of elections but also affects the quality of substantive democracy by weakening public accountability, narrowing programmatic competition, and shifting policy orientation from the interests of the wider community to those of patronage networks. Therefore, strengthening democracy with integrity requires synergy among political structural reform, effective legal regulations, and the internalisation of Islamic ethical values in the practice of power.

To clarify the conceptual relationship between structural political factors, legal regulations, and Islamic ethics in explaining transactional political practices and their implications for the quality of democracy, the following analytical synthesis diagram is presented.

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<sup>44</sup> Shakir Hussain and Ashfaq Ahmed, "Maqasid al-Shariah and Its Influence on Islamic Governance and Policy: A Framework for Contemporary Reform", *Journal of Religion & Society (JR&S)*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2025), h. 280.



## Conclusion

Transactional politics in Indonesian democracy is a structural phenomenon influenced by the dynamics of modern political competition and has normative implications from an Islamic legal perspective. The integration of deliberative democracy, political clientelism, and political exchange theory demonstrates that this practice emerges rationally within an electoral democratic system. However, within the framework of *fiqh siyāsah*, it is considered contrary to the principles of trustworthiness, justice, and public welfare, thus weakening accountability, distorting policies, and reducing the quality of substantive democracy. The primary theoretical contribution of this research lies in the development of an integrative analytical framework that combines modern democratic theory with an Islamic legal perspective to interpret transactional politics comprehensively.

The findings of this study have important implications for strengthening democratic governance with integrity. In practice, the research results emphasise the need for effective anti-money laundering regulations, political institutional reform, and the internalisation of Islamic ethical values, such as trustworthiness, justice, and an orientation toward public welfare, in the practice of power. Synergy among the structural dimensions of politics, the legal regulatory framework, and Islamic ethics is a prerequisite for realising a political system that is not only procedural but also substantive and just.

This study has limitations due to its normative approach grounded in the literature, without empirical field data, and its focus on

the context of Indonesian electoral democracy. Therefore, further research is needed, using empirical and comparative approaches, to examine variations in transactional political practices at the local level and compare them with those of other Muslim-majority countries, while also developing an analysis of contemporary maqāṣid al-syarī'ah to evaluate modern electoral politics.

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