

# Corruption as a Valence: The Paradox of Electorate Punishment of Political Parties in Indonesia

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**Abstract**--This article discusses corruption as a valence issue that has not been enough to delegitimize corrupt parties. Delegitimation to corrupt parties in Indonesia does not run significantly. By using a qualitative approach this article explores, as well as understanding the issue of corruption that has not been able to delegitimize political parties. This descriptive research aims to explain the symptoms, current events. By interviewing people who understand corruption supplemented with the input of literature studies, this article generates that the relationship between corruption and delegitimation in Indonesia is paradoxical. In reality, people still won corrupt parties. This article also examines people's viewpoints on corruption by analyzing their political closeness. This article sorts out the different levels of each group based on its affinity to political party institutions (1) supporters or officers of political parties tended to tolerate the party that they support, (2) pragmatic groups who were confused in political spectrums but decided only to get benefits. (3), apathetic groups did not pay attention to the political system but were disaffected by corruption activity — last (4), anti-corruption societies that actively promoted better corruption eradication.

**Key words**--Delegitimation, Political Corruption, Political Party, Valence Issue

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This article discusses political corruption as a valence issue. Specifically, it examines the disaffected people on corruption, whether they punish the most corrupt political party or tolerate the parties that provide particular benefits. Political corruption stands out as one of the most prominent and seen as a concern to be evaluated by both voters and political parties.[1] If corruption increases the level of voter disaffection, they tend to vote to the clean politician from the clean political parties, but as Wededer and Alesina (2002) mentioned that electoral punishment to evaluate corrupt political parties varies depending on the individual level and institutional context.[2] It means that the thought that political corruption decreases valence issues may be asked by insisting that voters in some cases make corrupt politicians win elections. It can be assumed by thinking that voters ordinarily compare candidates and political parties not only on corruption effects but also on their proposed policy agenda.[3] According to Curini (2018) study on corruption has mainly focused on two sub-topics. The first concerns the *consequences* of corruption

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(economic and political); and the second is that corruption has a possible impact on the vote-choice of citizens. Based on democratic theory, elections are tools for citizens to punish bad politicians like corruptors.

Research on people's tolerance for corruption was conducted by Heidenheimer (1988), who divided corrupt behaviour into three categories: "black," "gray," and "white." He linked these three types of corruption to the level of community tolerance. He called it black corruption if the elite and public agreed to condemn it and hoped it would be a punishment. The gray corruption shows the possibility that only a few people want punishment. White corruption is if an act is considered as corruption, but no one believes it must be punished. According to Joseph (1988), this classification allows various levels of acceptance of corruption. As in Indonesia, corruption cases cannot be considered identical.[4] Groups who do not understand the use of the internet, consider corruption and are not divided into other types, as irresponsible theft by officials or limited abuse of public facilities for economic purposes. In the educated group, they think that corruption is structured crime involving political actors. Both views are in line with the two divisions of the definition of personal corruption and political corruption.[5] Societies with high education and adequate political knowledge perceive corruption as a more complex definition, rather than a limited understanding of theft.

The corruption issue in Indonesia has long been a factor of public dissatisfaction, also triggered significant institutional and political system reform through massive demonstrations in 1998 marked by the economic crisis until the fall of the New Order regime. Disaffected people causally assess corruption as a problem of declining macroeconomic performance and deterioration in development so that, at the climax of disaffection, when alienated people had turned into an anti-system [6], overthrowing the New Order regime was an attempt to welcome an accountability regime capable of improving economic conditions. However, until now, the features of democracy in Indonesia have created a new style of corruption involving the contest for power through money politics.

Indonesia is currently at the 85th level out of 180 countries in the world as a country that is perceived as corrupt (transparency.org). Although this figure is supposed to be better than the previous ten years at the level of 110, doubtless, corruption in Indonesia is still quite high. Diansyah (2009), stated that the eradication of corruption is difficult because corruption in Indonesia has roots at every level from the executive, legislative, to the judiciary.[7]

Research into corruption in new democracies showed that the level of corruption from legislative institutions increasing.[8] It assumed, the role of parties in control policymaking through the law in the legislature grants several opportunities for corruptors to negotiate the agenda of the parties concerned.

In this respect, recent findings prove that if corruption is high, the electoral support for governing parties decreases. Similarly, several studies have found that the voters punish politicians and parties involved in corruption scandals, while corruption allegations appear to harm the electoral prospects of the accused politicians. However, there is no lack of exceptions to this rule, considering many voters remain loyal to their preferred parties. For example, recent empirical studies have shown that the accountability mechanisms are less decisive in their impact, because corrupt officials in many cases are re-elected or punished only marginally by voters.[3] A recent study

explains the concept of “trade-off” in electoral punishment involving not only understanding and evaluating the economic performance, but also the relative importance on the probability of voting for a candidate.[9]

In Indonesia, it is possible because some voters privately benefit from the corrupt actions, for example in the practice of clientelism, or because voters have strong bonds to certain politicians or parties so that a corruption scandal is not sufficient to switch their voting behaviour. Based on monitoring results released by Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), during 2014-2019 KPK arrested 22 corrupt House of Representatives members. Meanwhile, the regional executive level in the same period, 105 cases of corruption were recorded with 90 involving regents and mayors, while the remaining 15 involved governors. This case could be even more if we look at it from the back. In the private profession, the KPK arrested 238 corruptors and 199 corruptors who worked as civil servants. A total of 26 corruptors in the ministry were also arrested concerning corruption.[10]

The problem of political corruption that has repeatedly ensnared legislators has distorted relations in the form of institutional disaffection, especially for political parties. The issue of corruption as valence is also significantly influenced by the role of the KPK and media publications. A significant hope is that corruption affects economic growth in Indonesia and worsens their situation, thereby changing people’s perspective on fighting corruption.[11] Hence, it is interesting to question why corruption is considered valence but has not delegitimized political parties?

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative approach because it explores and understands the meaning that corruption is a valence but has not delegitimized political parties. This type of research is descriptive because it has the purpose of describing the symptoms, events, and current phenomena. Data collection techniques are collected through in-depth interviews and literature studies. Informants are determined through a purposive technique that thoroughly comprehends the issue of corruption in politics. The data analysis technique uses qualitative data analysis techniques, which are illustrative methods because they connect existing theories with conditions in the field. According to Neuman, illustrative methods connect theoretical concepts with empirical evidence.[12]

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This article classifies party support groups consisting of those who work for the political party, those who support the party for specific reasons (for example ideology or family similarity), and those who support a party figure. The second group, are those who have consistent behaviour, particularly rational and pragmatic societies which generally benefit shortly from the existence of election contestation. Apathetic groups are those who are unconcerned with political existence. They avoid political news and are driven by a powerless attitude towards the political system. Although difficult to understand as an active attitude, most of them confessed to supporting the anti-corruption movement. Finally, the anti-corruption group is the group that rejects corruption and fights for it through social activities. In the spectrum of the multiparty system, this article believes, the closeness within individuals and political parties can bring up the subjective side and have many factors. For example, a fanatical supporter has the potential to assess a conflicting party as worse and a little less for a party that is still in the

coalition he supports. Finally, in this article, political closeness is significant. So this research has divided some types of people-political parties affinity which is conceivably debatable.

### **Political Party Support Group**

This paper sorts this section into three groups. Firstly, the party workers group. They are those who claimed to participate militantly in practical politics to support and play a role in influencing the community at the small district level. Generally, their closeness to the party is restricted by mutual work relations so that the behaviour of backing and supporting is a characteristic that appears in competition.

Generally, party workers do activities based on command and follow orders based on the design of the leaders' plans. Their position is under community leaders or parents in the family environment; some of them are within the scope of the broker structure or known as the success team.[13] Their closeness to political parties is a combination of economic needs and expectations of social change. In contrast, loyal and anti-attitude towards competing political parties shows high tension.

Among them are registered as party members as a fact of public affinity with the party. Their perspective on their party is a vehicle for the job and the hope of abundance. They also recognized the importance of hope for developing life in policies that facilitate the ease of the economy. They made up for that hope with micro-activities as they received to serve the political needs of a legislative candidate. Their tasks consist of several levels and regions. Some of them worked on interaction from house to house and determined areas and influenced it through collaborative strategies. Politicians highly expect the results of their performance, and both understand each other's dependency.

This group, in the question of political efficacy external to political corruption, militantly considers serious corruption, not in the type they were running on it. They felt that distributing leaflets and inserting help packages with facial photographs were acts of charity, which traditionally practiced before the election. They claimed that the party and legislator candidates were not a low figure who had to avoid.

On the other hand, poor knowledge of corruption, coupled with an attachment to economic resources, shapes the behaviour of field workers cannot distinguish significant overlaps between electoral districts and bureaucracy. As a result, the political ecosystem will place regional leaders who are incumbent in using their power to retake the office.

They were tough to fight incumbents who have plenty of capital in mobilizing mass and development for the campaign. They also tried to use the issue of corruption to say that local officials defended them in the campaign. They thought it was not useful because we also distributed envelopes to promote our candidates.

Bias manifestation of public officials who use their power is still maintained in democracy in Indonesia so that the combination of bureaucratic and political careers as two conflicting loyalties. Regional officials carry out orders to encourage victory, almost colouring the incumbent's strategy. The consequence of this distorted political and bureaucratic mix often relinquishes its role as a catalyst for advancing economic and social justice. It refers to the struggle for power back in the electoral mechanism.

The second group is party supporters who are more distant or who have no practical incentive relationship with political parties. The socialized party program ideologically motivated their supporting motivation. They tended to see and learned the suitability of the program with the behaviour of its cadres. In questions about corruption tolerance, they gave responses that showed their strong identity. They explicitly stated that, in addition to being far from corruption, representatives or candidates must uphold morals. Representatives must be more educated, exemplary, intelligent, virtuous, honest, and open, in addition to being trusted as experts. Regarding corruption, the choice of the representative has to be an agent of anti-corruption which punishes bureaucrats in government offices.

The third group is a different category in citizens relations with political parties; that is, those who support figures are more confident than political parties. They learn the information of figures through media or meaningful direct experience, and the results of collective adjustments.

Their characteristics are sharper in criticizing political parties as a source of bribery. They tended to recognize corruption as reasonable even for the party that carries the figure of their choice.

They agreed to realize that the phenomenon of political corruption had negative consequences on the economy and politics, especially the issue of inequality. Although they understand the various features of corruption, it seems that they are delicate towards the political ecosystem in Indonesia in particular, direct deviations of authority. In the questions of internal political efficacy, almost all these types lack the confidence to fight corruption. As a consequence of unpredictable controlling forces, sometimes they confused that there was uncertainty in the perspective of the corruption of most people around their environment. So, the low quality of self-confidence is one of the causes of political disaffection which only settles in citizen's feelings.

### **Pragmatic Citizens**

Pragmatic supporters claim they are more focused on receiving money than explaining the specific identification of political parties.[14] Generally, they are residents who do not bother to try to influence others, but in reality, are more easily mobilized in less motivated incentive draws.

They are the type of people who catch advantage of favourable circumstances and are less concerned with the crime of political corruption. They understand corruption as a lousy situation for public services and their dissatisfaction is quickly overcome through several actions to improve public facilities or guarantee programs. However, this view does not promise the punishment of political parties.

According to this situation, Hibbing (1997) shows that not all corruption charges have the same effect. They explain that voters behave more negatively to "moral charges" than other charges such as bribery and dispute of interest [15], but in another fact, the pragmatic attitude in financial incentives is stronger than attempts to understand the passionate expressions of the beliefs of politicians in eradicating corruption.

They realized that corruption is a source of high tax costs and high prices. However, they do not have the confidence to change it. It because at least they are benefiting from an expensive democratic political process and are very dependent on the enormous velocity of money, which ultimately involves entrepreneurs who have an

orientation to maintain wealth and increase their capital capacity.[16] The existence of entrepreneurs who play a role in campaign finance forms democratic clientelism as a collaborative strategy of maintaining alternative resources for political parties. This situation is widespread in Indonesia, and law decisions are strongly needed to regulate tighter, and simultaneously change the pragmatic behaviour of the community, in particular, in shirking the next generation of political corruption.[17]

In pragmatic societies, the issue of corruption as a valence is closer to the practical policy position. Thus, debates about the punishment of corrupt parties are always overshadowed by candidates who have experience but are not caught in cases of morality. They prefer to vote for the candidate that proved their experience, not only coming up with ideas about what to do in the future. Fewer punishments to parties whose members are involved in scandal cases are mostly due to the issue of tolerance of covered corruption.

### **Apathetic Citizens**

Both sophisticated and less sophisticated people perceive the powerlessness of the low coordination of understanding of political corruption, is the cause of apathetic behaviour. They mentioned that corruption is a planned and structured behaviour and has a definite effect on the economy. In sophisticated apathy, hatred against corruption will be more notable in the speech alone. At the same time, that disaffection has the same energy as those who struggle against corruption and have a slightly more sophisticated understanding of corrupt behaviour.

Apathetic citizens have hope the law in Indonesia will sentence the corruptor to death. Corruptors are not ideally treated like kings or re-entering the election contest. They assume that elections only produce people who are corrupt because they buy what they want. Apathy is the effect of people's boredom on elections. Elections in Indonesia have not resulted in welfare improvements or significant changes for them.[18]

### **Anticorruption Society**

Society in this category refers to a group of people who are haunted by the previous failure of anti-corruption.[17] Since the issuance of Law No. 30/2002, they put their hopes in KPK's very autonomous activities. Anticorruption society is they who try to be sporadic in wider Indonesian society and are not educated in corruption education. Their disappointment at corruptors has the same energy. They do activities to attract public sympathy in corruption problems, and it makes them the most potent and ideal type in the sphere of corruption education as a punishment for corrupt parties. Objectively speaking, they are not tempted by choice of partisanship but instead place themselves on the ability of the KPK. At a level that is not affiliated by the KPK or independent organizations, they fully support any punishment for corruptors. For anti-corruption crusaders in Indonesia, corruption is disquieting. On the one hand, despite the best efforts of the KPK since 2004, corruption is considered to have become more pervasive, and otherwise competing factions in Parliament, the executive, police, and judiciary have united against KPK as a common enemy.[19] To eradicate corruption, they are determined to motivate parliament and to promote improvements to the party system and stricter laws.

### **Delegitimation as a Paradox**

In Indonesia, the topic of corruption as a valence issue develops along with freedom of opinion and the growth of neutral media and free access to information channels. Although the issue of corruption is valence, the efficacy of punishing political parties is very dependent on a similar perception of each level of society. Corruption has indeed been assessed as a problem that coexists with issues of expensive staples and foreign debt. It is a cause of economic failure in Indonesia so far, but in practice, people are still confused to define its usage and concept.

The types of people in this study accepted that corruption is a source of state bankruptcy, but they still questioned some new parties that are eager to offer change. They also considered the experiences of officials who have good morality. New parties that are still clean benefit from the issue of valence to embrace apathetic groups or groups that are passionate about corruption.

As a comparison, a Bagenholm and Charon study (2014) on corruption in Western and Eastern Europe, found that new parties that politicized corruption was more successful in raising 5.6% of their votes from previous elections than new parties that did not use them. So, in the spectrum of multiparty democracy, the existence of a clean new party in Indonesia might be an alternative for voters.[20] However, reflecting the pragmatic character of Indonesian society, the new party requires perseverance in maintaining its ideological consistency in a relatively long time to form a reliable party identification.

The Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) strategy might effectively encourage youth to turn to cleaner and bolder parties and create negative perceptions of elder political actors tainted with electability. However, the switching voice does not seem useful like PSI's strategy. It is because the social cleavage between regime supporters and the society who are dissatisfied with the government's performance shows that the problem of politicization of corruption is complex and can be examined more specifically from the perspective of party identification and political personalization. Even more, the spectrum of political support in Indonesia today is the primary motivating factor of disagreement in coordinating signals that the issue of corruption is a public enemy, regardless of political alignments.

Corruption as a valence gives a broad meaning that the public not only assesses candidates and party positions in aspects of policy but from the mistakes of their cadres. This combination is Indonesia's reflection on Yudhoyono's Democrat Party (PD), the ruler that ended in 2014. The PD's vote dropped dramatically, degrading from the top party's predicate to become a middle party after its politicians got caught in megaproject corruption cases. Throughout the 2014 presidential election campaign, presidential candidate Joko Widodo utilized the issue of corruption passionately to fill a transition period that only resulted in stagnation, to improve the performance of Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) with an excellent drive to increase commitment and budget.

Politicizing the issue of corruption, Widodo took advantage of citizen's disaffection against the rise of national corruption, explicitly corrupt politicians of the Yudhoyono era also promoted as figures from political parties that were no more corrupt. Joko Widodo was the winner in the 2019 election. This victory invited higher hopes from the public towards the corruption eradication. However, the government at the end of its tenure was at

differences with the desire of the people. The government proposed a supervisory board (appointed directly by the President), in the KPK Bill Draft and cuts its authority in investigating corruption cases.

Joko Widodo's second government has realized corruption as valence. Some people forced him to drop the new Law on Corruption. During December 2019 and early 2020, Indonesia was enlivened by news of the pressure to issue Perppu. Nevertheless, at the beginning of his administration, after the cabinet was formed, the government showed anti-corruption in dramas presenting its new ministers who were far from political corruption such as Erick Thohir, Wisnuthama, and Nadhiem Makarim collaborating with national comedians, parodying the practical of corruption. The show was a kind of different anti-corruption vision in different societies. Moreover, the show was broadcasted by Metro TV. Freedom of the press as an anti-corruption tool precisely be used by the government to divert disturbances, considering that the media owner is a ruling coalition. Consequently, freedom of the press is not a significant factor in overcoming corruption, but it is a complement to policy reforms and the strength of the law even though the less democratic government be able to change it.[21]

Although the show from the ministers showed eloquence against corruption, mainstream media such as *Tempo*, have warned the society with the formation of an oligarchic regime that has the potential to create new injustices and at the same time decompress the student's spirit to pressure and supervise the regulation to replace KPK Law (Perppu KPK).

The case above shows that the relationship between disaffection of the theme of corruption and electoral punishment for political parties and incumbents did not work optimally. Although corruption is a valence issue, political parties are challenging to be punished because of cleavage in society and entirely depend on political closeness, and the level of corruption perception. This paper tries to conclude this paradoxical condition in several aims.

First of all, even though Indonesia already has anti-corruption instruments, judicial institutions, and the police, its authority is regulated by political forces. Official institutions become a benchmark for the extent to which corruption penalties affect public preferences so that people tension can be controlled. As an archipelago state, horizontal, and vertical coordination among Indonesian citizens do not yet have the right moment. As a consideration, the May 1998 momentum was the highest agreement on the transfer of power in Indonesia. Even though in reform regimes, the New Order parties still got a decent place. Even the Democratic Party and Golkar Party's corruption cases had not been able to punish them from parliament.

Second, political facts about corruption are difficult to achieve because politicians aim to influence public sentiment in their favour to secure re-election. They are often involved in incentive games that blame the opposite candidates. Besides, there are biases when political corruptors engage in relations with certain voter groups and create attributions of blaming right to wrong. Finally, encouraging voters do not have viable choices and are not assured how others around will behave. Third, the electoral punishment of political parties will be useful if choices can compensate for the past. In the case of Indonesia, all major parties have a track record of being entangled in corruption, and also low identification of political parties and powerful party personalization, making it difficult for people to fasten their hopes for a better party.[22]

Finally, the pragmatic pathway of voters in Indonesia is the leading cause of various problems: advantages, difficulties in identifying or assessing corruption, and inequality of corruption perception in Indonesia's political ecosystem. Weak party system institutionalization also erodes the ability of voters to control their representatives through regular elections and undermines the incentives for politicians to curb political corruption and to act in the interest of their electorate[23]. On the other hand, the difficulty is that national-level institutional change can be, and often is, defeated by subnational institutional stasis.[24]

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The issue of corruption in Indonesia is a valence issue in a non-policy position. It is because the activity against corruption seizes different degrees based on individual perspective. This article opens the debate that alignments influence the way people interpret corruption: people who work for the party, partisans who are ideologically bound to the party, people who ignore the party but are very interested in figures, those who take advantage of the benefits of political parties, citizens who apathetic, and citizens who are passionate about corruption.

The political corruption in Indonesia is complicated by the spectrum of political support that has not been coordinated among the citizens. The punishment from voters is insignificant because people who have a high tolerance for political corruption in this study have an energetic attitude and capability to mobilize pragmatic groups. They are the agents of enormous material capital. On the one hand, anticorruption society is tiny compared to them, and this makes the integration of anticorruption signals biased. The factor of lack of knowledge on the issue of political corruption is not equivalent to the news of corruption in the media, and also the efforts of state awareness to eradicate it.

Awareness to punish corrupt parties in Indonesia does not seem to be significant. It is because the citizens face bias. First, politicians from the political party have at least been in a corruption case. Second, competition between legislative candidates who throw corruption issues in the campaign becomes a problem, and it causes confused citizens to be pragmatic. Third, the political ecosystem in Indonesia has shown that the severest punishment for parties which was proven corrupt is the evaporation of votes. It is because people's votes in elections will be accommodated in new alternatives, and patterns of corruption will be repeated. There are no examples yet in the punishment of coordinated political parties that encourage the public to forget the most corrupt parties.

This study found that affinity closeness between people and political parties determines the level of perception of incorruption. The implication of affinity concept in this study is the potential to be more comprehensive by including more respondents and a more extensive range of areas so that the prevention of political corruption based on community participation generally validates the behaviour of the society.

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