

Money Politics as a Form of Systemic Distortion in Pancasila Democracy : a Structural Analysis and Reform Agenda

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Abstract

Votebuying in Indonesia is hardly a new story. What makes it analytically interesting—and practically pressing—is how completely it has been absorbed into the ordinary logic of electoral life. Voters accept cash without guilt. Candidates budget for it as a standard operational cost. Enforcement agencies treat it as background noise, a baseline condition rather than a problem requiring resolution. This article takes that normalisation as its point of departure, arguing that money politics in the Indonesian context is best understood not as a cluster of individual violations but as a structural feature reproduced by intersecting conditions: economic precarity that makes a cash offer rational for voters with limited income; a party financing system that makes votebuying rational for candidates who lack programmatic alternatives; and a legal enforcement culture in which prosecution risk is low enough to be discounted. Drawing on clientelism theory, constitutional analysis, and recent Bawaslu data, the article traces how

these conditions interact and reinforce one another. From structure the analysis moves to culture—specifically, why a large portion of Indonesian voters sincerely believe electoral choice is inconsequential—and from there to comparative evidence, using Japan’s post-1945 human capital strategy to challenge that belief on empirical grounds. The article closes with a reform agenda built around three interlocking changes: restructuring party finance to reduce dependence on candidate wealth; rebuilding enforcement credibility through consistent, nondiscriminatory prosecution; and redirecting public investment away from short-cycle populism toward structural human development grounded in Pancasila’s social justice mandate.

Keywords: money politics; Pancasila democracy; clientelism; democratic backsliding; legal culture; human capital; Indonesia

Introduction

When Pemilu 2024 results were still being counted, the Bawaslu regional offices had already registered thousands of reports tied to votebuying operations during the campaign’s final hours cash in envelopes, sembako parcels, and informal promises channelled through dense networks of brokers known as *tim sukses*.¹ The figure was not surprising. What was striking, and what this article sets out to explain, is that neither voters, candidates, nor enforcement officials appeared to regard these operations as a genuine crisis. They are, in many parts of the country, simply how elections work.

The academic literature on this subject tends to split into two distinct responses. One strand—primarily normative legal scholarship—catalogues statutory violations and proposes tighter regulation. A second strand—empirical electoral studies—documents votebuying mechanics at the grassroots level and explains why brokers and voters behave as they do.² Less developed, though, is any analysis

¹ Edward Aspinall and Mada Sukmajati, eds., *Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia* (NUS Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1xxzz2>.

² Susan C Stokes, “Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina,” *American Political Science*

that holds both levels together at once: one that asks not just why individuals buy and sell votes, but why the system as a whole keeps reproducing this practice across electoral cycle after electoral cycle, despite formal legal prohibition.

That is the question this article takes up. The argument, put simply, is that money politics in Indonesia has become self-reproducing—kept in place by an interlocking set of structural, cultural, and institutional conditions that no single regulatory intervention is likely to dislodge on its own. Recognising this is not an invitation to fatalism. If anything, it points toward a clearer view of what kinds of reform might actually work, and why many earlier efforts have fallen short.

One preliminary clarification deserves mention before proceeding. Some scholars have resisted treating money politics as straightforwardly pathological. Schaffer, for instance, argues that in highly unequal democracies, votebuying can function as a form of downward redistribution a mechanism by which marginally resourced voters extract material benefit from elites who would otherwise govern without accountability.³ This is not a trivial argument and it deserves acknowledgment. Nothing in what follows denies that cash transfers may provide genuine short-term relief to poor voters. What is contested here is whether that transaction amounts to an adequate substitute for the governance improvements that meaningful democratic accountability could actually produce—and the comparative evidence examined in Part V suggests fairly strongly that it does not.

The article is structured as follows. Part II develops a structural framework for understanding how money politics becomes self-sustaining over time. Part III turns to the cultural dimension—specifically, the widespread voter belief that electoral choice has no

Review 99, no. 3 (2005): 315–25,
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055405051683>.

³ Frederic Charles Schaffer, “Clean Elections and the Great Unwashed: Vote Buying and Voter Education in the Philippines,” 2005, 1–33.

bearing on governance quality. Part IV analyses the enforcement gap between legal prohibition and practice. Part V turns to Japan's postwar developmental experience as comparative counterevidence against the premise of electoral indifference. Part VI proposes a three-track reform agenda. Part VII concludes.

II. Money Politics as Systemic Distortion: A Structural Framework

Indonesian electoral scholarship has produced substantial documentation of how votebuying operates at the micro-level: how brokers are recruited and managed, how voter lists are compiled, how cash changes hands on the night before polling.⁴ This granular picture is genuinely valuable. What it can obscure, though, is the prior question—why these micro-level transactions are so reliably available in the first place. Why, in other words, is the infrastructure for votebuying already in place before any particular election even begins?

Clientelism theory—particularly in its comparative political science formulation—offers one answer. In clientelist systems, political support is not built primarily through programmatic appeals: party platforms, policy commitments, governance records. It is built instead through the direct exchange of material benefits for electoral loyalty. The exchange is not merely transactional in the narrow sense; it is embedded in networks of ongoing patronclient relations that carry their own norms of reciprocity and obligation.⁵ In this framework, money politics looks less like a deviance from normal democratic practice than a particular mode of democratic mobilisation—one that becomes stable, even rational, when the structural conditions for programmatic competition are simply not there.

⁴ Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*, First, 2018.

⁵ Marcus Mietzner, *Money, Power, and Ideology: Political Parties in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia*, 2013.

In Indonesia, several structural conditions converge to produce precisely this stability. The candidate-centred character of the electoral system places the financing burden primarily on individual candidates rather than on parties. Parties lack both the organisational capacity and the public financing to run platform-based campaigns. Candidates must therefore self-finance, which creates powerful incentives to deploy personal wealth—or wealth mobilised through patronage networks—to secure votes.⁶ Second, economic inequality distributes vulnerability unevenly across the electorate. In communities where disposable income is limited and public service delivery is unreliable, even a modest cash payment represents a tangible short-term benefit. This does not make voters irrational or passive; it means they are making rational decisions under real and pressing constraints.

The Bawaslu Laporan Pengawasan Pemilu 2024 recorded 2,468 money politics reports across 38 provinces during the 2024 electoral cycle of which only 87 cases (roughly 3.5%) proceeded to formal investigation, and far fewer to conviction.⁷ This prosecution rate is not incidental. It reflects a legal enforcement environment in which the effective sanction for votebuying is low enough to be essentially ignored in candidates' strategic calculations. The upshot is a system in which money politics is simultaneously illegal and entirely rational: prohibited by statute, rewarded in practice.

Habermas's deliberative democracy framework is useful here for naming what is ultimately at stake. Democratic legitimacy, on that account, depends on the quality of reason-exchange among citizens on whether political processes track genuinely communicative rather than

⁶ Ward Berenschot, "The Political Economy of Clientelism: A Comparative Study of Indonesia's Patronage Democracy," *Comparative Political Studies* 51, no. 12 (2018): 1563–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018758756>.

⁷ Bawaslu RI, Laporan Pengawasan Pemilu 2024 (Bawaslu RI, 2024) 4572; ICW, Laporan Pemantauan Politik Uang Pemilu 2024 (ICW, 2024) 1230.

merely strategic action.⁸ When votebuying becomes the dominant mechanism for translating economic resources into electoral outcomes, the damage is not limited to distorting individual choices. The communicative logic of democratic deliberation is displaced by a market logic in which political outcomes are purchased rather than reasoned toward. The formal architecture of democracy—competitive elections, party pluralism, universal suffrage—remains in place, but its substantive content is hollowed out.

III. Electoral Indifference as Rationalisation: The Cultural Dimension

Among the more persistent findings in survey research on Indonesian electoral attitudes is the prevalence of what this article calls electoral fatalism—the conviction, sincerely held by a significant portion of voters, that it does not matter who wins because governance outcomes will be the same either way.⁹ This belief deserves careful analysis, because it does real work in sustaining money politics. It converts what might otherwise register as a moral compromise into a perfectly sensible decision. If all leaders genuinely are equivalent, then accepting a cash payment is not trading long-term governance quality for short-term material gain—it is simply claiming value from a transaction in which nothing of substance is on the table.

This is what this article terms the cognitive fallacy of electoral indifference—and "fallacy" is used deliberately. The claim that leadership quality is inconsequential is an empirical claim. And empirically, it is false. The Indonesian record itself offers evidence: the contrast in service delivery, anticorruption performance, and development outcomes across different provincial governments each operating under

⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy, The New Social Theory Reader*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003060963-4>.

⁹ Edita Elda, *Evaluasi Penegakan Hukum Pemilu 2024*, ed. Khairul Fahmi, 2025.

the same national legal framework demonstrates that who governs and how they govern produce measurably different results for citizens.

The question is why the fallacy persists despite so much evidence against it. Part of the answer is the time horizon problem: governance outcomes are diffuse and slow to materialise, while the cash envelope is immediate and certain.¹⁰ Part of it lies in the legitimacy deficit of Indonesian party politics: where parties are widely perceived as vehicles for elite interest rather than meaningful programmatic alternatives, the belief that choices between them are consequential is genuinely hard to maintain.¹¹ The fallacy is, in this sense, a partly rational response to a real institutional failure which is exactly what makes it so durable.

The implications from a Pancasila normative standpoint are significant. The fourth principle *kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat kebijaksanaan dalam permusyawaratan/perwakilan* presupposes a citizenry capable of deliberative political engagement, not merely transactional participation.¹² Electoral indifference rationalism corrodes that capacity through persuasion rather than force: it hands voters a cognitively comfortable account of their own choices that happens, conveniently, to serve the interests of the patronage networks sustaining the practice. Dismantling it requires more than legal reform; it requires a sustained encounter with counterevidence including the comparative evidence examined in Part V.

IV. The Enforcement Gap : Structural Explanations

Indonesia's legal framework against money politics is, on paper, robust. The Electoral Law (UU No. 7/2017) imposes criminal sanctions for

¹⁰ Fukuyama Francis, *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*, First edit, 2014.

¹¹ Pippa Norris, *Democratic Deficit Critical Citizens Revisited* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511973383>.

¹² Nanik Prasetyoningsih, "Dampak Pemilihan Umum Serentak Bagi Pembangunan Demokrasi Indonesia," *Jurnal Media Hukum* 21, no. 2 (2014): 241–63, <http://journal.umy.ac.id/index.php/jmh/article/view/1190/1251>.

votebuying on both givers and receivers; the Criminal Code and anti-corruption statutes offer additional grounds for prosecution.¹³ The Constitutional Court has affirmed the seriousness of the prohibition at the constitutional level.¹⁴ Yet the gap between this formal framework and its actual enforcement has remained one of the most consistent features of Indonesian electoral politics—consistent enough, by now, to require structural explanation rather than merely technical remedy.

Legal sociology offers the most analytically productive lens for understanding why enforcement fails so consistently. Friedman's concept of legal culture—the values, attitudes, and habitual practices that determine how law actually operates in social life—locates enforcement effectiveness not in the statute book but in the surrounding institutional and cultural environment.¹⁵ Where money politics has been normatively integrated—where voters, candidates, enforcement officials, and even courts perceive it as an unremarkable feature of electoral life rather than a serious violation—legal prohibition faces a structural headwind that no amount of formal rule-tightening can by itself overcome.

Three specific enforcement failures stand out from the 2024 data. The first is evidentiary difficulty: money politics is conducted through decentralised broker networks specifically structured to prevent transaction tracing, and individual recipients rarely testify against distributors. Bawaslu's 2024 report found that 63% of reported cases were closed at the preliminary stage for insufficient evidence.¹⁶ The second is institutional capture: candidates who prevail through votebuying acquire the political leverage to suppress subsequent enforcement action, creating a dynamic in which successful rule-breaking tends to immunise against accountability. The third, and

¹³ Disdukcapil Prov Kalsel, "Uu 7 Tahun 2017," 2020, 1–283, http://disdukcapil.kalselprov.go.id/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/UU_NO_7_2017.pdf.

¹⁴ MK RI, Putusan No. 42/PUUXII/2014; Mahfud MD, *Perdebatan Hukum Tata Negara* (Rajawali, 2010) 10125.

¹⁵ Ofer Raban, "Real and Imagined Threats to the Rule of Law: On Brian Tamanaha's Law as a Means to an End," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1009267>.

¹⁶ Bawaslu RI, *op. cit.* 82100; Perludem, *op. cit.* 4565.

perhaps most structurally intractable, is the consent problem: when both parties to the transaction regard it as mutually beneficial as the logic of electoral indifference rationalism actively encourages the conventional enforcement model, which requires an aggrieved party to motivate prosecution, finds no firm footing.

O'Donnell's observation—that the rule of law requires not just legal instruments but a supporting ecology of institutional capacity and civic culture—applies with particular force here.¹⁷ The enforcement gap in Indonesian money politics cases is not primarily a resource problem; Bawaslu's budget and personnel have grown substantially across recent electoral cycles. It is a problem of institutional incentives and cultural normalisation. Addressing it requires interventions at both levels simultaneously, a point the reform agenda in Part VI takes up in detail.

V. Leadership Quality and Democratic Outcomes: Japan as CounterEvidence

The empirical case against electoral indifference rationalism gains considerable force from comparative historical evidence. Japan in 1945 offers perhaps the most striking available illustration of what political leadership choices—sustained and strategically directed over time—can actually produce.

The postwar condition of Japan requires little elaboration: the physical destruction was comprehensive, the human cost profound, and the country's international standing was at its modern nadir. What followed over the next three decades was not merely recovery but transformation and the mechanism of that transformation is central to the argument here. Under the governance model built around MITI and closely coordinated industrial policy, the Japanese state made a deliberate, long-horizon investment in education, technical training, and human capital formation as the primary engine of reconstruction.¹⁸ By

¹⁷ Guillermo O'Donnell, "The Quality of Democracy: Why the Rule of Law Matters," *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 4 (October 2004): 32–46, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2004.0076>.

¹⁸ Arthur E. Tiedemann, "Chalmers Johnson. MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925–1975 . Stanford: Stanford

the late 1960s, the results were measurable in educational attainment rates, productivity growth, and per capita income figures that confounded the expectations of most observers at the time.

The international comparisons are telling. Japan's expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP consistently exceeded the OECD average from the 1950s through the 1980s; its technical secondary school enrolment rates were among the highest in the industrialised world.¹⁹ Barro's analysis of the relationship between human capital investment and longrun economic growth identifies the Japanese case as a paradigmatic instance of the mechanism his model predicts.²⁰ None of this was inevitable. The specific choices made in the immediate postwar period about what the state would prioritise, where fiscal resources would flow, what kind of future political leadership would work to construct were exactly that: choices. They were consequential precisely because they had not been predetermined.

The contrast with Indonesia's current fiscal priorities is instructive. Kemenkeu data for 2024 show that social protection spending largely shortcycle direct transfers accounts for a substantially larger share of central government expenditure than structural investment in education quality or vocational training.²¹ This pattern is not coincidental: it reflects the electoral logic of money politics, in which governments are rewarded for visible, immediate, and individually attributable benefits rather than for diffuse longterm goods. Short-term populism and money politics are not simply analogous phenomena. They are causally connected: each sustains the political incentives that reproduce the other.

University Press. 1982. Pp. Xvi, 393. \$28.50," *The American Historical Review* 88, no. 1 (February 1, 1983): 158–59, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/88.1.158>.

¹⁹ OECD, *Education at a Glance Indicators*, 2023.

²⁰ World Bank, *Human Capital The Human*, 2018; Robert J Barro, "Human Capital and Growth," *American Economic Review* 91, no. 2 (May 1, 2001): 12–17, <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.91.2.12>.

²¹ Kemenkeu RI, *Nota Keuangan dan RAPBN 2025* (Kemenkeu RI, 2024) 7590.

The Japanese case is not offered as a blueprint, and it would be a mistake to read it that way. The political context of postwar Japan including the particular authority conditions that made MITI-centred governance possible differs enough from contemporary Indonesia that any direct institutional transplantation would be inadvisable.²² The argument is more targeted than that: the case demonstrates that governance under conditions of severe resource constraint can produce transformative long-term outcomes when leadership is oriented toward structural investment rather than immediate political return. That demonstration is directly relevant to the empirical premise on which electoral indifference rationalism depends.

VI. A Reform Agenda: Three Interlocking Tracks

The analysis in the preceding parts points toward a reform agenda organised around three interlocking tracks. These are treated here as interdependent rather than sequential, because the experience of previous reform efforts suggests that partial approaches tend to fail in predictable ways: institutional redesign without cultural transformation produces formal compliance without substantive change; cultural transformation without institutional support has no durable anchor; and both without a reorientation of public resource allocation end up addressing symptoms rather than the structural conditions that keep reproducing the problem.

A. Party Finance Reform

The current candidate-centred financing structure is not simply a background condition that money politics exploits. It is an active driver of the phenomenon. Candidates who lack access to party organisational resources must self-finance, and self-financing at the scale that Indonesian electoral campaigns now require creates a near-immediate incentive to treat campaign investment as capital that must

²² Pratikno, “Dari Good Governance Menuju Just & Democratic Governances,” *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik* 8, no. 3 (2005): 1–19.

yield returns—one way or another.²³ Systemic reform here means moving toward a party-centred public financing model in which resources are conditional on transparent governance performance and programmatic accountability—and in which the structural weight of individual candidate wealth in electoral competition is substantially reduced.

This is not just about formal rule changes. The political economy of party reform in Indonesia is well-documented in its difficulty: parties that benefit from the current system have little incentive to redesign it, and reform coalitions face familiar collective action problems.²⁴ The argument here is not that this reform is easy, but that it is a precondition for durable change in the other two areas. Without restructuring the supply side—candidates' structural need to buy votes—candidates' structural need to buy votes—the demand-side interventions examined below will achieve only partial and reversible effects.

B. Enforcement Credibility

Rebuilding enforcement credibility does not primarily require more rules. It requires visible, consistent, and politically non-discriminatory prosecution of the rules already on the books, at all levels of the hierarchy. The 3.5% investigation rate from Bawaslu's 2024 report is the relevant benchmark—not as a number to be incrementally improved through bureaucratic means, but as an indicator of how far current enforcement practice is from the threshold at which sanction risk would genuinely enter candidates' strategic calculations.

The structural reforms needed include strengthening Bawaslu's jurisdictional independence and appointment procedures, improving coordination protocols between Bawaslu and the police/prosecutor, and developing protected witness mechanisms that reduce the cost of testimony for voteselling voters. None of these reforms is technically

²³ KPU RI, Laporan Penyelenggaraan Pemilu Serentak 2024 (KPU RI, 2024) 2250.

²⁴ Friedman, *op. cit.* 14; O'Donnell, *op. cit.* 35.

complex. Each of them faces substantial political resistance from incumbents whose electoral success depends on the enforcement environment remaining as it is.

C. Human Development Reorientation

Reducing the demand for votebuying at the structural level requires addressing the conditions that make cash-for-vote transactions attractive to voters in the first place. In concrete fiscal terms, this means reorienting public investment away from short-cycle social protection transfers and toward structural improvements in education quality, health capacity, and economic opportunity—the kind of investments that reduce the material vulnerability that gives a cash payment its compelling logic.²⁵ The Indonesian government’s constitutional commitment to allocating 20% of the national budget to education—prescribed by Article 31(4)—provides the normative basis for this reorientation. Reform attention should focus on the gap between that commitment and its actual fulfilment in terms of measurable educational quality outcomes, which remains significant.

Civic education also needs redesigning. In its current form — largely rote transmission of constitutional principles— it does little to connect electoral choices with governance outcomes in ways that voters find meaningful or credible. What is needed is substantive engagement with the causal connections between electoral choices, governance quality, and the conditions of citizens’ actual lives. The goal is not ideological instruction but something closer to empirical literacy: the capacity to evaluate evidence about what governments actually deliver for the people they govern, and to bring that evaluation into electoral decisions.²⁶ This kind of civic capacity is precisely what the fallacy of

²⁵ Kemenkeu RI, op. cit. 7882.

²⁶ Matthew H. Graham and Milan W. Svobik, “Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization, and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States,” *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 2 (2020): 392–409, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000052>; Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy*, 2008.

electoral indifference forecloses and precisely what a reformed, Pancasila-grounded civic education curriculum could help to rebuild.

Conclusion

Money politics in Indonesia has proven resistant to purely regulatory responses—not because regulation is unimportant, but because the conditions that sustain it extend well beyond what regulation alone can reach. The self-reproducing quality of the phenomenon—the way structural incentives, cultural rationalisations, and institutional failures interlock and reinforce each other—means that effective reform requires simultaneous movement on multiple fronts.²⁷ Changing one element while leaving others intact tends to produce formal adjustment without substantive change.

What this article has attempted to do is bring that interlocking structure into view. The Bawaslu data on prosecution rates documents not an oversight but a system—one in which the effective sanction for votebuying is low enough to be rationally discounted by anyone with a realistic view of how enforcement actually works. The prevalence of electoral indifference rationalism documents not political apathy but a learned response to institutional failure—empirically mistaken, but culturally very well-grounded in repeated experience. And the Japanese comparison documents not a development model to be transplanted but a proof of concept: that leadership choices about where to invest public resources carry long-run consequences for citizens that dwarf the value of any individual cash envelope.

The Pancasila framework offers something more than a normative critique of money politics. Its fifth principle—*keadilan sosial bagi seluruh rakyat Indonesia*—is not a description of current reality but a standing demand for structural transformation. The persistence of votebuying is, among other things, a symptom of the gap between that

²⁷ James Robinson and Daron Acemoglu, “Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty” (Random House, 2012), <http://www.randomhouse.com>; Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808678>.

demand and the actual social conditions Indonesian democracy has so far managed to produce. Closing that gap is the deeper project of which electoral reform is one necessary, but genuinely insufficient, part.²⁸ How far that project proceeds will ultimately depend on whether those with the authority to pursue it judge the structural investment it requires to be worth more than the political return available from the current arrangement—which is, in the end, itself an electoral choice.²⁹

What the preceding analysis has attempted to demonstrate is that money politics in Indonesia persists not primarily because the law is silent, but because the law has been rendered socially inaudible. The more difficult truth, and the one that tends to be underemphasised in policy-oriented scholarship, is that votebuying in Indonesia has crossed a threshold that purely regulatory responses are not equipped to address: it has become culturally normal. Each electoral cycle reinforces this normalisation. Voters accept cash not because they are unaware that it is prohibited, but because the practice has been absorbed into the ordinary texture of how elections feel an expected ritual, no more remarkable than campaign banners on every lamppost. Understanding why legal prohibition has failed, in this reading, requires taking that cultural embedding seriously rather than treating it as a secondary obstacle to enforcement.

Central to that cultural normalisation is a belief this article has called electoral indifference rationalism: the conviction, widely held and sincerely expressed, that it does not matter who leads because conditions will remain the same regardless. This is not an unreasonable inference from lived experience in many parts of Indonesia it is, in fact, a rational response to a history of governance that has repeatedly failed to close the gap between electoral promises and delivered outcomes. But it is nonetheless an empirical mistake, and an important one. Leadership choices are consequential. The Japanese case, examined in Part V, illustrates this with particular clarity: a country confronting

²⁸ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard UP, 1971) 322; Sen, *op. cit.* 22748.

²⁹ Olivier Jacques, “Electoral Competition and the Party Politics of Public Investments,” *Party Politics* 28, no. 6 (2022): 1029–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211036382>.

comprehensive physical and institutional destruction after 1945 was rebuilt not through accident but through deliberate choices about where to direct scarce public resources. The decision to prioritise education to gather what teachers remained and make human development the foundation of reconstruction produced results that the conventional wisdom of that moment would not have predicted. That is not a blueprint for Indonesia, but it is a proof of concept: who leads, and what they choose to invest in, matters enormously for the people they govern. A leader who prioritises short-term material distribution over long-term structural investment is not making a neutral administrative choice. They are making a choice about what kind of future their constituents are allowed to have.

The enforcement gap documented in Part IV is, in this light, not merely a technical failure of institutional capacity. It reflects something more structurally entrenched: a persistent and visible distance between what the law says and what actually happens. Indonesia is not short of legal instruments against money politics UU No. 7/2017 is formally robust, and the Constitutional Court has affirmed the seriousness of the prohibition. What is absent is the institutional will and political independence to apply those instruments consistently and without discrimination across the hierarchy of power. This article does not claim to have measured that gap precisely a systematic index of enforcement compliance in Indonesia would require research beyond the scope of what is developed here. But the Bawaslu 2024 data offers a sufficient indicator: a 3.5 percent investigation rate is not a measurement problem. It is a structural statement about which violations the system has decided to take seriously. When the gap between legal text and legal practice is that wide, and that stable across electoral cycles, it ceases to be an anomaly and becomes a feature one that rational actors, candidates and voters alike, incorporate into their calculations from the start.

The reform agenda this article has proposed party finance restructuring and digital transparency as the entry point, enforcement credibility and geographic targeting as the operational layer, and human development reorientation as the structural foundation is built on a single underlying conviction: that money politics will not be reduced by

asking people to behave differently. It will be reduced when the structural conditions that make it rational are altered. Transparency mechanisms raise the cost of financial concealment. Concentrated enforcement in high-vulnerability districts raises the probability of prosecution to a level that enters candidates' calculations. Investment in education and economic opportunity, over time, reduces the material desperation that makes a cash envelope a genuine offer rather than an insult. None of this is sufficient on its own, and none of it will produce results in a single electoral cycle. But the combination, pursued simultaneously, changes the incentive structure within which both candidates and voters make decisions and that is the only kind of change that is durable.

The Pancasila framework offers something more than a normative critique of this condition. Its fifth principle *keadilan sosial bagi seluruh rakyat Indonesia* is not a description of what Indonesia is, but a demand for what it must become. The persistence of money politics is, among other things, a symptom of the distance between that demand and the reality that Indonesian democracy has so far produced. Closing that distance will not happen because candidates suddenly develop civic virtue, or because voters spontaneously reject cash they genuinely need. It will happen, if it happens, because reformers manage to rebuild the conditions under which democratic accountability becomes more rational than transactional politics. That is a structural project, not a moral one. And how far it proceeds will depend, in the end, on whether those with the authority to pursue it judge the investment it requires to be worth more than the political return available from the arrangement as it currently stands which is, itself, an electoral choice.

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