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BUILDING DEMOCRACY FROM UPSTREAM: THE INTERNAL DEMOCRATIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: *Candidate recruitment is the point at which political parties decide who may later govern, yet Indonesian scholarship on electoral democracy has paid far more attention to the conduct of elections than to the closed internal processes that precede them. This article examines how Indonesian parties recruit and select candidates for the presidency, the vice-presidency, and the House of Representatives (DPR), and it proposes a recruitment design that is more democratic and inclusive. Using doctrinal legal research with statutory, conceptual, and comparative approaches, the article analyzes the 1945 Constitution, the Political Parties Law, the Elections Law, the statutes of the parliamentary parties of the 2024 election, and the documented record of recent nominations. It finds that recruitment remains centralized and opaque, that party elites dominate nomination decisions, that the law does not require cadre development for presidential nominations, and that candidacy buying persists. It argues that Constitutional Court Decision No. 62/PUU-XXII/2024, which abolished the presidential nomination threshold, shifts the burden of democratic quality onto parties themselves. The article contributes a two-track model: binding internal conventions for presidential tickets and tiered, decentralized deliberation with explicit eligibility criteria for DPR candidates, framed within the comparative literature on selectorate inclusiveness.*

Keywords: Candidate Selection; Constitutional Court; Intra-Party Democracy; Political Parties; Political Recruitment

1. Introduction

Scholars define political parties in strikingly different ways, depending on the analytical vantage point they adopt. In the most minimal sense, a political party is a group of candidates competing in elections in order to gain control of government, and this definition recurs from the classic literature to the most recent work. Downs defines a party as "a team seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election" (Downs, 1957, p. 25). Schlesinger similarly describes a party as "a team that seeks to control government by winning elective office. On this team are those who seek and those who hold office in the party's name" (Schlesinger, 1994, p. 10). Sartori advances a comparable view when he characterizes a party as any political group that presents itself at elections and is capable of placing candidates for public office through electoral means (Sartori, 1976, p. 64).

More recently, Allan Sikk and Philipp Köker (2023) have proposed a different approach that captures party novelty by measuring the turnover of candidates across elections. Rahat (2025, p. 3) regards this approach as elegant and parsimonious, because it treats candidates as the "political genes" of a party that carry both continuity and change within the organization.

These definitions converge on one point: parties occupy a central and decisive position in democratic systems. As vehicles of democracy, parties allow citizens, as holders of ultimate sovereignty, to formulate their interests, channel their aspirations, and take part in realizing collective goals through institutionalized political mechanisms (Abadi & Arsil, 2022).

One of the most consequential links between parties and democracy lies in the function of political recruitment and candidate selection. Luna et al. (2021, p. 296) stress that it is through this function that parties determine who will represent the people in public office. Scholars usually distinguish recruitment from candidate selection at the conceptual level (see, for example, Siavelis & Morgenstern, 2008), but both processes carry high stakes, because the quality of recruitment and selection shapes the quality of political representation and the performance of the officials it produces. Rahat (2007) captures the point in describing candidate selection as "the choice before the choice": before voters cast a ballot, a far smaller selectorate has already narrowed the menu from which they may choose, and the design of that selectorate, measured by its inclusiveness and its degree of centralization, conditions everything that follows.

When parties perform recruitment and selection well, these functions serve as both an entry point and a driving factor for democratic practice of good quality. Through them, parties act as more than electoral machines: they become arenas of political participation for citizens and sites for the formation of public leadership (Faulks, 1999, p. 143). Cross (2008, p. 596) calls internal candidacy one of "the central functions of political parties", and Gibson et al. (1983) treat recruitment as a principal indicator of party organizational strength, since it concerns programmed, candidate-directed activity.

Within this framework, recruitment and candidate selection reveal more than a party's administrative capacity. They express its ideological orientation, its commitment to meritocracy, and the kind of representation it seeks to build. Patterns of recruitment and selection can also serve as indicators of how modern and professional a party has become in performing its role as the principal actor of democracy. In this sense, recruitment and candidate selection form the "upstream" of electoral democracy, since they mark the point of origin of public officials in both the executive and the legislature.

Parties that recruit and select candidates transparently and objectively, on the basis of competence and track record, stand a good chance of producing officials with capacity and integrity. Closed, collusive, or transactional mechanisms, or those driven solely by elite preference, tend to produce figures with weak capacity and little commitment to public service, and they open the door to money politics and nepotism.

In Indonesia, the problem runs deeper than an incomplete application of meritocracy. Party elites dominate the determination of candidates and centralize the decision; the selection process lacks standard and measurable indicators of competence; internal mechanisms of transparency and accountability remain weak; and structured, tiered pathways of cadre development for prospective officials are scarce. Several studies show that recruitment remains heavily shaped by primordial ties and personal proximity to party elites (Haris, 2005), and that the final nomination decision, particularly in

regional head elections, rests on the recommendation of the central party leadership (Fitriyah, 2020). Ufen (2008) situates these patterns within a broader trajectory in which post-Suharto parties drifted away from their ideological, *aliran*-based moorings toward dealignment and personalized leadership. Candidates consequently emerge on the strength of popularity, capital, or kinship ties rather than through adequate cadre development and competence-based selection.

The urgency of this inquiry has grown since the Constitutional Court issued Decision No. 62/PUU-XXII/2024, which abolished the presidential nomination threshold. The decision gives every party a strong reason to undertake fundamental reform of its internal governance, especially of its systems of recruitment and candidate selection. Once the opportunity to nominate becomes wider, the quality of internal selection becomes the key factor determining the quality of the candidates parties present to the public. Without substantive internal reform, the change in the legal framework may leave the quality of democracy and political representation untouched.

Against this background, the article pursues three objectives. It identifies the patterns and mechanisms of political recruitment in the nomination of presidential and vice-presidential candidates and of DPR members; it analyzes the degree of centralization, transparency, and accountability in candidate selection; and it formulates a model of recruitment and candidate selection that is more democratic, measurable, and merit-based, with the aim of strengthening the quality of political representation in Indonesia.

2. Method

This article employs doctrinal legal research, since it focuses on the legal norms, principles, and concepts that govern and shape political recruitment and candidate selection in general elections. It combines a statutory approach, a conceptual approach, and a comparative approach.

The research relies on secondary data gathered through documentary research. These data comprise primary legal materials in the form of statutory regulations; secondary legal materials in the form of books, journal articles, research reports, and other scholarly works; and tertiary legal materials such as legal dictionaries and encyclopedias. Credible online sources that can be accounted for academically supplement these materials.

The legal materials were analyzed qualitatively using a descriptive-analytical method. The author classified and systematized the collected materials and then analyzed them to identify patterns, principles, and relationships between legal norms and the practice of political recruitment and candidate selection. The results of this analysis form the basis for the conclusions and for the recommendations on a more democratic and inclusive model of recruitment and candidate selection.

3. Analysis and Discussion

3.1. Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Indonesia

The selection of candidates is the core activity that universally distinguishes political parties from other political organizations (Sartori, 1976). Some scholars go further and describe it as a function monopolized by parties (Norris, 2006; Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000), in the sense that only parties may nominate candidates for elections. Indonesia allows certain elections to be contested by "independent" candidates, namely regional head elections (Constitutional Court Decision No. 5/PUU-V/2007) and elections to the Regional Representative Council (*Dewan Perwakilan Daerah*, DPD). In practice, however, parties still dominate the determination of candidates, with the exception of the DPD.

In Indonesian elections, the constitutional significance of parties for recruitment and candidate selection appears in Article 6A(2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD NRI 1945), which provides that only political parties may propose pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Article 22E(3) of the Constitution further stipulates that the participants in elections for members of the House of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR) and members of the Regional Houses of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*, DPRD) are political parties.

Articles 6A(2) and 22E(3) bear directly on recruitment and candidate selection. Parties bear the responsibility for identifying, screening, and proposing individuals considered fit and capable of holding strategic government offices such as the presidency, the vice-presidency, and seats in the DPR and the DPRD. This process covers internal party selection and also the development of cadres so that they acquire the capacity and integrity required of public leaders.

3.1.1. Recruitment and Selection of Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates

Article 6A(1) of the 1945 Constitution provides that the President and Vice-President are elected as a pair directly by the people. Paragraph (2) of the same article states that pairs of candidates are proposed by political parties or coalitions of political parties participating in the general election. The provision gives parties the authority to recruit and nominate presidential and vice-presidential candidates, and parties exercise this authority to ensure that the figures they nominate possess the vision, competence, and political support needed to lead the state.

Law Number 2 of 2008 on Political Parties, as amended by Law Number 2 of 2011 (the Political Parties Law), reaffirms this recruitment function by providing that parties recruit Indonesian citizens as prospective presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Article 29(2) of the Political Parties Law requires that recruitment be carried out democratically and openly in accordance with the party's articles of association (*anggaran dasar*, AD), its bylaws (*anggaran rumah tangga*, ART), and statutory regulations. Article 223(1) of Law Number 7 of 2017 on General Elections (the Elections Law) likewise provides that pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates are determined democratically and openly in accordance with the internal mechanisms of the party concerned.

Article 29(2) of the Political Parties Law and Article 223(1) of the Elections Law affirm the importance of transparent and accountable recruitment within parties, so that the nomination of leaders and representatives does not become elitist or closed. Neither provision, however, expressly requires cadre development as part of the recruitment mechanism. Both emphasize formal principles in the conduct of recruitment and leave aside the substance of sustained cadre formation.

Cadre development is an essential element of recruitment and candidate selection in a well-functioning democracy. It involves political education, ideological formation, and the strengthening of members' capacities so that they are prepared to occupy strategic positions in government, including the presidency and the vice-presidency. Cadre-based recruitment and selection aims to build loyalty, uphold ideological discipline, and prepare future political leaders (Mukhlis et al., 2024). Without a clear system of cadre development, party recruitment risks becoming pragmatic and oriented toward short-term interests.

Because Article 29 of the Political Parties Law does not mention cadre development or make it mandatory, parties retain discretion to determine their internal processes of cadre formation. This discretion may produce unequal quality of recruitment across parties, depending on how far each party's AD/ART regulates and applies cadre development. Table 1 summarizes how the AD/ART of the parties that passed the parliamentary threshold in the 2024 election regulate the recruitment and selection of presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

Table 1. Regulation of Presidential and Vice-Presidential Recruitment in Party Statutes (AD/ART)

No	Party	Provisions in the AD/ART
1.	Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP)	*Not expressly regulated*
2.	Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra)	Gerindra cadres are prepared to become prospective presidential and/or vice-presidential candidates (Article 15(5)(b)). The Chair of the Board of Patrons has the authority to approve or reject the determination and submission of presidential and/or vice-presidential candidates (Article 19(1)(o)).
3.	Party of Functional Groups (Golkar)	*Not expressly regulated*
4.	Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)	The party conducts recruitment for political office concerning the determination of prospective presidential and/or vice-presidential candidates of the Republic of Indonesia (Article 59(a)). Presidential and/or vice-presidential candidates are recruited through a process of screening and selection that takes into account (a) a democratic and open mechanism; (b) integrity, capability, and professionalism; and (c) popularity and electability (Article 78(1)).

		Further provisions on recruitment for political office are set out in the Party Guidelines (Article 78(3)).
5.	National Awakening Party (PKB)	The selection and recruitment of party members for assignment are regulated in Party Regulations (Article 9(6)).
6.	NasDem Party	NasDem recruits Indonesian citizens to be designated as presidential and/or vice-presidential candidates (Article 16(1)). Any person may register as a candidate for political office if they meet the provisions and requirements set by the Central Executive Board (DPP) (Article 16(2)). Further provisions on recruitment for political office and its requirements are set out in NasDem Party Regulations (Article 16(3)).
7.	Democratic Party (Demokrat)	The Democratic Party performs the function of political recruitment in filling political offices through democratic mechanisms, taking into account integrity, track record, and equality (Article 13(5)). The Party's High Council is authorized to take strategic decisions on presidential and vice-presidential candidates and on central legislative members (Article 20(4)).
8.	National Mandate Party (PAN)	The party performs recruitment through democracy based on equality and gender justice (Article 6(6)). The presidential and/or vice-presidential candidates proposed by the party are determined at the National Working Meeting (*Rakernas*) on the basis of the results of a convention (Article 70).

Source: Compiled by the author from the AD/ART of the respective parties.

Table 1 shows that cadre status or cadre rank is not a principal consideration in recruiting presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Only Gerindra's AD/ART states that party cadres are prepared to become prospective presidential and/or vice-presidential candidates. PKS bases recruitment on a democratic and open mechanism; on integrity, capability, and professionalism; and on popularity and electability, while NasDem goes furthest by opening the opportunity to all citizens.

Such arrangements explain why presidential and vice-presidential candidates who are not party cadres keep appearing. Table 2 illustrates the party status of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates in Indonesia's last three presidential elections.

Table 2. Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates in Three Presidential Elections

Election	Ballot No.	Candidate Pair	Status	Nominating Parties
2014	1	Prabowo Subianto	Gerindra cadre (party chair)	Gerindra, PPP, PKS, Golkar, PAN
		Hatta Rajasa	PAN cadre (party chair)	
	2	Joko Widodo	PDI-P cadre	

Election	Ballot No.	Candidate Pair	Status	Nominating Parties
		Jusuf Kalla	Non-cadre	PDIP, PKB, NasDem, and Hanura
2019	1	Joko Widodo	PDI-P cadre	PDIP, PKB, NasDem, Golkar, PPP, Hanura
		Ma'ruf Amin	Non-cadre (Chair of MUI, Islamic cleric)	
	2	Prabowo Subianto	Gerindra cadre (party chair)	Gerindra, PAN, PKS, PBB, and Demokrat
		Sandiaga Uno	Businessman (formerly a Gerindra member, who resigned from the party upon running)	
2024	1	Anies Baswedan	Non-cadre (independent figure; bureaucrat and academic)	NasDem, PKB, and PKS
		Muhaimin Iskandar	PKB cadre (party chair)	
	2	Prabowo Subianto	Gerindra cadre (party chair)	Gerindra, Golkar, Demokrat, and PAN
		Gibran Rakabuming Raka	Non-cadre	
	3	Ganjar Pranowo	PDI-P cadre	PDI-P and PPP
		Mahfud MD	Independent figure (bureaucrat and academic)	

Source: Compiled by the author.

Table 2 shows that in each of the three presidential elections at least one candidate for president or vice-president came from outside the party's cadre ranks or internal structure. Such openness toward public figures has merit, yet it also signals that party cadres are not always the first choice in political recruitment. Parties, as the principal institutions of a democratic system, bear the responsibility for forming and preparing their best cadres to fill strategic government positions, including the highest office of the state. When a party prefers an external figure, it signals that it has not yet produced an internal figure whom the public regards as fit and competitive.

3.1.2. Recruitment and Selection of Candidates for the House of Representatives

Article 22E(3) of the 1945 Constitution provides that political parties are the participants in elections for members of the DPR. The provision places the constitutional responsibility for presenting high-quality legislative candidates on the shoulders of parties, since they are the sole participants in legislative elections. Recruitment and candidate selection within parties therefore matter greatly for ensuring that those who take their seats in parliament are the party's best cadres.

Article 29(1a) of the Political Parties Law provides that the recruitment of prospective DPR members takes place through democratic cadre selection in accordance with the AD and ART, taking into account women's representation of at least 30% (thirty percent). This provision differs from the rules on presidential and vice-presidential recruitment, because Article 29(1a) regulates the recruitment mechanism and also emphasizes cadre development as an integral part of building strong parties with integrity.

Even so, the effectiveness of this provision depends on each party's capacity to translate the values of cadre development into internal rules on cadre tiers, including the criteria that determine which cadres may be nominated or pass selection as DPR candidates. These internal rules fall entirely within the responsibility and authority of the parties.

Most party statutes, particularly those of the parties that passed the threshold in the 2024 election, do not yet comprehensively regulate the process and stages of recruitment. They do not specify, for example, how many years of membership or which cadre level a person must reach before nomination for the DPR, and party leaders still hold dominant authority over the determination of DPR candidates. Recruitment therefore often takes a pragmatic route that capitalizes on the popularity of public figures or on financial strength rather than on rigorous cadre development.

This pattern produces "instant cadres", that is, candidates who run for office without passing through a robust process of cadre formation. Such cadres can harm parties by undermining party unity and cohesion, weakening cadre loyalty, and lowering the quality of DPR candidates (Mukhlis et al., 2024, p. 147).

The weakness of this pattern of recruitment shows clearly in the large number of DPR candidates drawn from the entertainment industry over several elections, most of whom did not pass through cadre development, including in the 2024 election. In that election, parties nominated a total of 65 artists and celebrities (Khairunnisa, 2023), of whom 24 were elected and sworn in as DPR members for the 2024–2029 term (Komisi Pemilihan Umum Republik Indonesia, 2024).

3.1.3. Problems in the Practice of Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection

On the basis of the foregoing, the author identifies at least three problems in the practice of political recruitment and candidate selection in Indonesian elections. The first is the lack of transparency and participation in recruitment. In theory, parties may recruit through closed (exclusive) or open (inclusive) processes, and the application of each model varies across countries (Norris, 2006). According to Kenig and Rahat (in van Haute & Pilet, 2012), whether recruitment is open or closed depends on who holds the power of selection: voters, party members, party delegates, the parliamentary party group, the party elite, or a single leader.

In Indonesia, nearly all party recruitment takes place behind closed doors and leans toward oligarchy, with the party elite or a single leader managing and deciding the process. Neither the public nor lower-ranking cadres take meaningful part in setting the criteria, stages, or mechanisms of candidate recruitment. The result is an exclusive and elitist process that falls far short of the principles of accountability and openness.

The second problem is the dropping of candidates according to the "taste" of the elite. Party elites frequently control candidate recruitment, and many cadres who have long served the party find themselves passed over because the elite prefers candidates who are personally close, politically loyal, or able to fund a campaign. The candidates so imposed often reflect a compromise among money, personal loyalty to the elite, and the party's short-term pragmatic interests rather than the aspirations of the grassroots. The phenomenon stems in part from the institutionalization of personal leadership, which renders the determination of candidates highly centralized and absolute in the hands of the central party leadership. The AD/ART of several parties confirm this by expressly granting the party leader full authority to determine candidates for the DPR as well as for president and vice-president.

The third problem is the prevalence of candidacy buying, the practice of purchasing a nomination ticket by giving financial consideration to a party in exchange for a place as a legislative or executive candidate. The phenomenon, known as the "political dowry" (*mahar politik*), occurs when individuals who wish to run for legislative or executive office must pay a sum of money to a party in order to obtain its nomination. Mietzner (2015) shows that this practice has structural roots: Indonesia's regime of political finance provides parties with minimal state funding while their operational costs remain high, which pushes them to extract resources from candidates and wealthy patrons and turns the sale of nominations into a predictable outcome of institutional design rather than an aberration of individual morality.

Candidacy buying violates the democratic principle of meritocracy and narrows the space for potential candidates who possess integrity but lack large financial resources. Its effects damage both the quality of democracy and the quality of governance. When financial capacity, rather than capacity, integrity, or track record, determines nomination, parties tend to neglect recruitment based on performance and ideology. Elected representatives or regional heads may then become more concerned with recovering their political investment than with fulfilling the mandate of the people, which increases the opportunities for corruption, collusion, and nepotism in government.

3.2. A Democratic and Inclusive Model of Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection

3.2.1. The Urgency of Inclusive and Democratic Recruitment and Candidate Selection

Political recruitment and candidate selection constitute a central function of parties, since it is at this stage that parties determine who will formally represent them in public office. Selected candidates serve as the party's public face in the election and as the principal actors who articulate the party's record, ideology, and future policy agenda (Katz, 2001). The quality of internal party democracy in recruitment thus shapes the quality of electoral democracy as a whole.

Candidate selection serves as the critical gateway of the system of political representation, and indeed as its key and decisive stage (Hazan, 2009). Through this process parties choose those who will become the people's representatives and those

who will govern. The mechanisms employed at this stage therefore carry direct consequences for the quality of the political leadership they produce, well beyond administrative routine.

Hazan and Rahat further argue that variations in candidate selection methods, whether centralized or decentralized, inclusive or exclusive, directly affect the level of internal competition, accountability, and the quality of representation (Hazan & Rahat, 2010; Rahat & Kenig, 2018). The institutional design of candidate selection thus concerns the degree of internal democratization, which in turn affects the wider political system, and not merely the technical organization of parties. Recent studies likewise show that the more inclusive the selection procedure, the higher the legitimacy voters attribute to the party (Sandri & Seddone, 2021).

The comparative literature also warns against treating inclusiveness as an unqualified good. Pennings and Hazan (2001) find that moderate forms of democratizing candidate selection can benefit party organizations, for example by raising membership participation, whereas radical forms are more likely to erode party cohesion and, with it, the quality of representative democracy. Rahat (2007) accordingly argues for balanced methods that combine selectorates of different breadth at different stages. This tension matters for the Indonesian debate: the remedy for elite capture does not lie in maximal openness, which may hand nominations to whoever commands the most money or media attention, but in a calibrated design that widens participation while preserving the party's capacity to screen for loyalty and competence.

Elections can therefore conform to democratic principles only when every stage of the electoral process, from upstream to downstream, operates democratically. Fundamental problems tend to arise at the upstream level. Recruitment and candidate selection, which should form the foundation of electoral democracy, remain elitist and exclusive in practice, and this reveals a gap between the normative ideal of democracy and the institutional reality of parties that still requires reform.

In the context of Indonesian electoral democracy, the urgency of inclusive and democratic recruitment can be explained along four dimensions. The first concerns the expansion of equal political participation. Inclusive recruitment opens space for diverse social groups, including women, young people, minorities, and marginalized groups, to participate fairly in the political process. Comparative research shows that parties applying more open selection procedures tend to produce a more diverse slate of candidates that better reflects the social structure of society (Pansardi & Pinto, 2020).

The second dimension concerns the strengthening of legitimacy and public trust. Public trust in political parties, and in politics more generally, has declined in many countries over the past two decades (Devine, 2024; Fernandes et al., 2025). The latest national survey by Indikator Politik Indonesia, released on 8 February 2026, placed political parties second-lowest in public trust among the 11 institutions measured (61%), above only the DPR (56%) (Indikator Politik, 2026). One contributing factor is the perception that a narrow elite controls the parties through patronage. Transparent, merit-based recruitment can improve perceptions of fairness and accountability and thereby strengthen the legitimacy of the political system as a whole. When citizens feel that they

have an equal opportunity to participate and to be represented, electoral participation and partisan attachment tend to increase.

The third dimension concerns the prevention of polarization and the strengthening of social cohesion. Exclusive and oligarchic parties are vulnerable to identity politics and patronage-based mobilization, because they select candidates for personal loyalty or proximity to the elite. Democratic selection systems encourage competition based on ideas, capacity, and policy programs, which contributes to political moderation and reduces sharp social fragmentation (Cintolesi, 2022).

The fourth dimension concerns the regeneration and sustainability of parties. Democratic parties offer young cadres and new members clear and measurable pathways for advancement. Over the long term, such pathways strengthen party institutionalization and prevent the personalization of power.

Inclusive and democratic recruitment and candidate selection thus constitute a foundation for the quality of democracy itself. If elitist and exclusive practices continue to dominate the upstream stages of elections, citizens can hardly expect a representative and accountable government downstream. Strengthening regulation, procedural transparency, and internal party democracy is therefore a strategic agenda for democratic consolidation in Indonesia.

3.2.2. The Momentum Created by the Abolition of the Presidential Threshold

On 2 January 2025, the Constitutional Court (*Mahkamah Konstitusi*, MK) delivered a landmark ruling in Decision No. 62/PUU-XXII/2024, holding that the minimum presidential nomination threshold in Article 222 of the Elections Law contravenes the 1945 Constitution and has no binding legal force. In this decision the Court granted the petitioners' application in its entirety.

Article 222 of the Elections Law had provided that a pair of presidential and vice-presidential candidates could be proposed only by a party or coalition of parties holding at least 20% (twenty percent) of DPR seats or 25% (twenty-five percent) of the valid national vote in the preceding DPR election. The provision was challenged before the Court on numerous occasions. Titi Anggraini records that between 2017 and 2024 the Court received 36 petitions concerning the provision, of which Case No. 62/PUU-XXII/2024 was the thirty-fourth (Anggraini, 2025). Of all these petitions, only Case No. 62/PUU-XXII/2024 succeeded.

With the abolition of the presidential nomination threshold, every party participating in the 2029 election will have an equal right to nominate presidential and vice-presidential candidates, regardless of its parliamentary representation (formerly a minimum of 20% of DPR seats or 25% of the valid national vote). The decision marks a major step in strengthening popular sovereignty, reducing the dominance of political elites and oligarchy in the nomination of national leaders, and broadening access to and participation in the democratic process.

Decision No. 62/PUU-XXII/2024 also offers every party an occasion to strengthen cadre development and its systems of recruitment and candidate selection. Parties should read the decision as imposing a new responsibility to transform themselves and to

undertake serious internal reform, especially in cadre development, recruitment, and candidate selection. Parties must invest earlier and more seriously in preparing potential cadres whose competence, integrity, and leadership capacity the wider public can accept.

3.2.3. Comparative Perspectives

In most countries, the articles of association of each party regulate the process of recruitment and candidate selection, so that a single country may host a variety of recruitment models. Party history, ideology, internal structure, and the political and electoral system all shape this diversity. Nevertheless, Hazan and Rahat's research shows that the methods of candidate recruitment used by several parties in the United States, Europe, and Latin America, particularly for parliamentary candidates, have become increasingly democratic and inclusive (Rahat & Hazan, in van Haute & Pilet, 2012).

The United States is the most inclusive example. Parties there recruit candidates through primary elections, which allow party voters and/or party members to take part in selecting candidates for the general election (Rahat & Hazan, in van Haute & Pilet, 2012). Primaries serve to select candidates for executive office, including the presidency, as well as for Congress. Figure 1 shows the stages of the convention process.

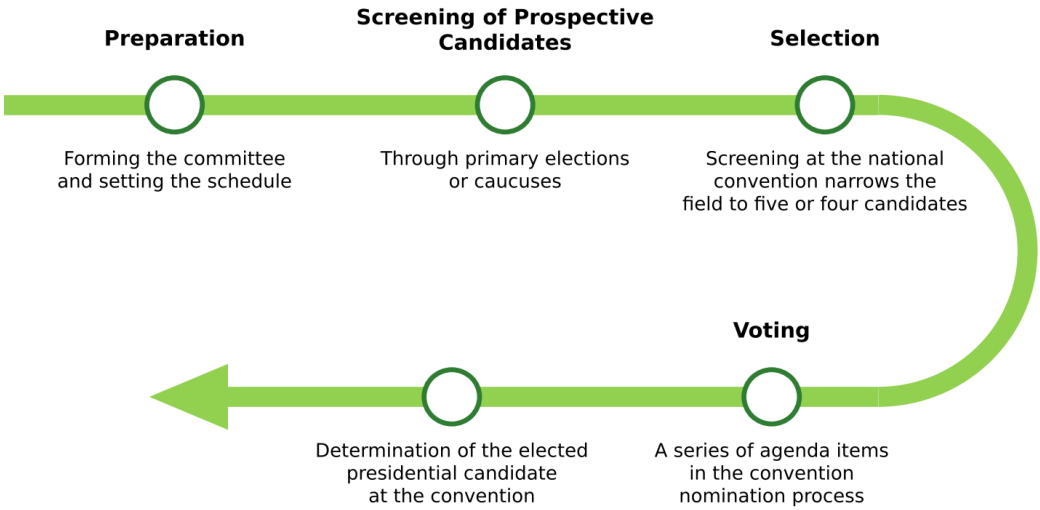


Figure 1. Stages of the Convention Process in the United States

In brief, the convention process begins with primary elections or caucuses held by the states to determine the party candidates who will proceed to the national convention. The national convention then selects among the candidates who emerge from the primaries, and the party determines its nominee on the basis of this selection.

Latin American experience shows both the promise and the limits of this model. Carey and Polga-Hecimovich (2006) find that presidential candidates chosen through primaries tend to perform better in the subsequent general election than those chosen by party elites, a "primary bonus" that suggests inclusive selection can strengthen rather than

weaken a party's electoral position. Kemahlioğlu et al. (2009), however, show that parties adopt presidential primaries under particular strategic conditions shaped by the calculations of party leaders, so that the use of primaries reflects intra-party power relations as much as democratic commitment. For Indonesia, the implication is that a convention will deliver its democratic benefits only if party statutes make its outcome binding and remove the leadership's power to override it.

In European countries, recruitment and candidate selection for public office vary, but most parties use mixed methods whose character depends on who holds the final decision: the party elite, the party members, or the party delegates (van Haute & Pilet, 2012, pp. 52–53). In the recruitment of legislative candidates in Germany and the United Kingdom, for example, the mechanisms used by several parties can be reduced to three (Pilet et al., 2009). In the first, the party leader at the national level conducts the selection and determination of candidates alone, so that the decision on legislative candidates lies entirely with the party leadership. In the second, party officials select candidates in stages, beginning at the local level and continuing at the national level; the nomination of candidates is a matter for the local or district level, while their final selection falls to a regional assembly composed of representatives of the regional branches, which in Germany is called the *Land* delegates' assembly. This is a highly decentralized way of finding candidates. In the third, a forum composed of district, regional, or local delegates selects legislative candidates, while the central leadership holds two powers: recommending prospective candidates to the forum and announcing the names of the selected candidates to the public.

3.2.4. A Democratic and Inclusive Model of Recruitment and Candidate Selection

One reason for the poor practice of political recruitment and candidate selection in Indonesia is that most parties have not built a standard, open, democratic, and accountable recruitment system. Recruitment has tended to be elitist and exclusive, so that the resulting candidates often do not reflect the aspirations or preferences of the grassroots.

Democratic principles apply to the conduct of elections downstream, and they must equally bind the upstream processes of political recruitment and candidate selection. The upstream process resembles a spring: if clear water flows from the source, the water downstream will also be clear, whereas if the source is already muddy, the water downstream will be muddy as well. Fundamental reform is therefore needed to make recruitment more democratic, transparent, accountable, and inclusive and to open greater space for public participation in recruitment and candidate selection. The guidelines on political party regulation issued by the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR (European Commission for Democracy Through Law, 2010) frame the legal side of this reform: they accept that the law may require parties to observe democratic and transparent internal procedures while insisting that such regulation respect party autonomy. The model proposed below works within that boundary by assigning the details of internal procedure to party statutes and limiting statutory intervention to minimum guarantees.

For the recruitment and selection of presidential and vice-presidential candidates, the convention offers a model that Indonesia can adopt. Nomination through a convention is more inclusive and democratic: it widens the range of nominees, allows competition involving party members, and can curb dynastic politics because aspiring presidential candidates must compete openly within the party. Several Indonesian parties have held conventions before. Golkar held one in 2004 and nominated its winner, Wiranto, as its presidential candidate in the 2004 election. In 2013, the Democratic Party held a convention to choose its candidate for the 2014 presidential election, in which 11 candidates took part and Dahlan Iskan emerged as the winner (Prabowo, 2014). The Democratic Party ultimately did not nominate Dahlan Iskan, because it failed to obtain enough votes to nominate a candidate on its own. More importantly, the result of the convention did not bind the party, since Article 13(5) of the Democratic Party's AD/ART vested full authority to determine the presidential candidate in the Chair of the Party's High Council. No party has held a presidential convention since. A convention in Indonesia should therefore rest on the six features set out in Table 3.

Table 3. Six Essential Features of a Presidential Convention in Indonesia

No.	Feature	Description
1.	Conception	The convention is the party's highest authority in determining presidential and/or vice-presidential candidates.
2.	Legal basis	It must be regulated in the party's AD/ART.
3.	Timing	It is held in the years in which presidential and vice-presidential elections take place in Indonesia.
4.	Participants	Party members with at least three years of membership.
5.	Voters	All party cadres take part as voters.
6.	Organizer	An independent and non-partisan committee organizes the convention.

Source: Formulated by the author.

For the recruitment and selection of DPR candidates, the appropriate model is decentralization through tiered deliberation (*musyawarah berjenjang*), similar to the practice of several parties in the United Kingdom and Germany. At the first stage, party officials at the branch level (*Dewan Pimpinan Cabang*, DPC, or its equivalent) deliberate to choose a number of prospective DPR candidates. The names produced by the DPC are then discussed and selected at the regional level (*Dewan Pimpinan Daerah*, DPD, or its equivalent), and the outcome of the regional deliberation is forwarded to the Central Executive Board (*Dewan Pimpinan Pusat*, DPP, or its equivalent) for formal determination.

Parties must also establish the criteria required in the recruitment of legislative candidates, which should address at least four matters. The first is loyalty, understood as the extent of a cadre's involvement within the party. Party rules should require that prospective candidates have been party members for a minimum period, for example three or five years, and have completed all levels of cadre training. This requirement ensures that each candidate understands the party's values, vision, mission, and platform and carries a strong ideological commitment. Cadre development then

functions as a means of forming character, leadership capacity, and political and civic knowledge, so that candidates are representative in ideological and substantive terms as well as administratively. The requirement also filters out instant politics, in which individuals with no loyalty to or record of contribution to the party suddenly join and run for office for personal gain or image-building. Cadres who have spent many years in the party have usually demonstrated their dedication and integrity and therefore deserve greater trust in public office, and the requirement also strengthens the party's internal consistency in maintaining cadre quality and organizational solidarity.

The second criterion is capability: parties should determine candidates according to objective, meritocratic principles such as capacity, expertise, and track record. Applying meritocracy in this way will raise the quality of the legislature as a whole, because candidates selected through this mechanism come prepared for the complex tasks of representation with clear experience and competence. Meritocracy also strengthens the party's legitimacy in the eyes of the public, since selection rests on professionalism and performance rather than on personal proximity or financial power.

The third criterion is electability, which reflects the degree of public support and trust that a prospective candidate commands. By taking electability into account, parties can ensure that their candidates have a strong chance of winning and of representing the voice of the people effectively in parliament.

The fourth criterion is local representation. Recruitment of prospective DPR candidates should take into account the candidate's electoral district (*daerah pemilihan*, *dapil*) of origin, or at least require residence in that district for a specified period, such as a minimum of three or five years. This requirement ensures that candidates understand the social and cultural characteristics and the problems of the local community. It also prevents "parachute politics" (*politik karpet terbang*), in which parties place legislative candidates in districts they do not know purely for electoral arithmetic, without any emotional bond or moral responsibility toward the area. A direct tie between candidate and district enhances accountability and strengthens the relationship between representatives and the communities they represent. Candidates who come from or have long lived in a district tend to enjoy greater acceptance because voters see them as understanding and caring about local problems. Such a policy can also foster high-quality local cadres with strong roots in society, so that political recruitment serves as a vehicle for sustained local leadership development and not only as an administrative selection exercise.

4. Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that the democratic deficit in Indonesian candidate recruitment originates in law as much as in party culture. The 1945 Constitution gives parties a monopoly over presidential nominations and DPR candidacies, yet the Political Parties Law and the Elections Law impose only a formal requirement that recruitment be "democratic and open" and, for presidential tickets, impose no requirement of cadre development at all. Party statutes fill this space with provisions that concentrate final authority in a leader or a high council, as Table 1 shows. The consequences documented in this article follow from that design: non-cadre presidential and vice-presidential

candidates in each of the last three elections, instant cadres and celebrity candidates in the DPR, the dropping of candidates by elite preference, and candidacy buying that Indonesia's regime of political finance makes structurally predictable.

The article's contribution lies in linking these findings to the comparative theory of selectorates and in turning that theory into a concrete institutional design. Hazan and Rahat's dimensions of inclusiveness and centralization explain why Indonesian selection produces the outcomes it does, and the cautions of Pennings and Hazan explain why the remedy should be calibrated rather than maximal. The model proposed here applies this insight on two tracks. For presidential and vice-presidential tickets, a convention whose result binds the party, organized by an independent committee and open to members of at least three years' standing, removes the leadership veto that emptied the Democratic Party's 2013 convention of effect. For DPR candidates, tiered deliberation from branch to region to centre, combined with explicit criteria of loyalty, capability, electability, and local representation, distributes selection power while keeping a filter against instant candidacies.

Decision No. 62/PUU-XXII/2024 makes this reform pressing, because the removal of the nomination threshold transfers responsibility for the quality of presidential candidates from coalition arithmetic to the internal procedures of each party. Further research should evaluate whether parties use this opening to democratize their selection procedures or whether it entrenches new oligarchies, and should examine how statutory design can require minimum internal democratic guarantees without violating the autonomy that the constitutional order grants to political parties.

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