

An Analysis of Constitutional Engineering in Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024 Regarding the Redesign of Indonesia's 2029 Simultaneous Elections

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ABSTRACT

Studies on simultaneous elections in Indonesia have primarily focused on electoral administration, presidential system strengthening, and voter behavior. However, limited attention has been given to analyzing Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024 as an instrument of constitutional engineering that reshapes Indonesia's electoral architecture. This study examines the construction of constitutional engineering in Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024 and its implications for the redesign of Indonesia's simultaneous elections in 2029. Using a normative legal research method, this study employs statutory, conceptual, and case approaches. Legal materials were collected from constitutional court decisions, statutory regulations, and relevant constitutional law literature, and analyzed qualitatively through an examination of the decision's ratio decidendi and constitutional implications. The findings demonstrate that the decision represents a form of constitutional engineering aimed at restructuring Indonesia's electoral system through the separation of national and local elections. The Constitutional Court reinterprets the concept of simultaneity by distinguishing national elections for the President, the House of Representatives (DPR), and the Regional Representative Council (DPD) from local elections for regional heads and Regional House of Representatives (DPRD). This redesign seeks to strengthen the presidential system, improve political representation, reduce electoral complexity, and enhance the institutionalization of political parties. More importantly, the decision shifts the understanding of simultaneous elections from a purely administrative arrangement to a constitutional mechanism designed to achieve democratic effectiveness and governmental stability. This study contributes to constitutional law scholarship by demonstrating how judicial decisions can function as instruments of constitutional engineering that shape institutional design and democratic development. Consequently, Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024 serves not only as a judicial ruling but also as a constitutional framework for the transformation of Indonesia's electoral system toward the 2029 elections.



Introduction

General elections constitute the primary instrument of a constitutional democracy through which popular sovereignty is exercised (Asshiddiqie, 2016). Within Indonesia's constitutional framework, the principle of popular sovereignty is explicitly enshrined in Article 1(2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which stipulates that sovereignty resides in the hands of the people and is exercised in accordance with the Constitution. This principle is implemented through elections conducted in a direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair manner as mandated by Article 22E of the Constitution. Therefore, elections are not merely mechanisms for the transfer of political power but also constitutional instruments for preserving democratic legitimacy and governmental accountability (Asshiddiqie, 2016; Dahl, 1989).

Following the Reformasi era, Indonesia's constitutional system has undergone significant transformations aimed at strengthening democracy and improving governmental effectiveness. Constitutional amendments enacted after 1998 introduced major institutional changes, including the direct election of the President and Vice President, the strengthening of the presidential system, and the establishment of various independent state institutions (Asshiddiqie, 2005). These developments demonstrate that constitutions are dynamic instruments that evolve in response to changing social and political circumstances (Elster, 1995). One of the most significant reforms in Indonesia's electoral system was the adoption of simultaneous elections, first implemented in 2019. The concept emerged as part of broader efforts to strengthen presidentialism by synchronizing executive and legislative elections. Constitutional legitimacy for this model was established through Constitutional Court Decision No. 14/PUU-XI/2013, which held that the separate conduct of legislative and presidential elections was inconsistent with the constitutional objective of strengthening the presidential system under the 1945 Constitution (Sartori, 1997; Isra, 2015).

The 2019 General Election marked a historic milestone in Indonesian democracy because, for the first time, elections for the President and Vice President, the House of Representatives (DPR), the Regional Representative Council (DPD), Provincial DPRD, and Regency/Municipal DPRD were conducted simultaneously on a single voting day. This model was subsequently maintained in the 2024 General Election. Theoretically, simultaneous elections were expected to improve budget efficiency, increase voter participation, simplify the party system, and strengthen the effectiveness of presidential government (Shugart & Carey, 1992; Sartori, 1997). However, the practical implementation of simultaneous elections revealed numerous challenges that generated criticism of the existing electoral design. The technical complexity of the five-ballot election system imposed extraordinary workloads on election administrators, resulting in severe administrative burdens and operational inefficiencies (Huda, 2020). During the 2019 General Election, hundreds of polling station officers (KPPS) reportedly experienced extreme exhaustion, and many lost their lives due to the overwhelming workload associated with vote administration and tabulation (Perludem, 2019).

Beyond technical challenges, simultaneous elections have also generated substantive democratic concerns. Voters are confronted with multiple political choices at the same time, causing public attention to focus disproportionately on the presidential contest rather than legislative elections. This phenomenon contributes to excessive political personalization and weakens the quality of legislative representation (Mietzner, 2019). Political parties also tend to prioritize presidential candidates over party institutionalization, cadre development, and ideological consolidation. Furthermore, the increasing complexity of election management affects oversight effectiveness and increases the potential for electoral violations. Election administrators must simultaneously manage millions of ballots, thousands of candidates, and highly compressed electoral stages, thereby creating vulnerabilities to administrative errors and electoral disputes (Huda, 2020).

These challenges have stimulated both academic and political debates regarding the need to reevaluate Indonesia's simultaneous election model. In this context, the Constitutional Court once again played a crucial role through Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024, which introduced a new direction for the national electoral system. The decision is significant because it extends beyond constitutional review and touches upon institutional restructuring through the redesign of electoral simultaneity. As the guardian of the Constitution, the Constitutional Court performs a strategic function in maintaining constitutional balance and democratic governance (Mahfud MD, 2012; Isra, 2020). In exercising its authority, the Court functions not only as a negative legislator that annuls unconstitutional norms but also, in practice, as a positive legislator through progressive constitutional interpretation that shapes the direction of national legal policy (Stone Sweet, 2000). Consequently, Constitutional Court decisions frequently generate far-reaching implications for Indonesia's political and constitutional development.

From the perspective of modern constitutional law, institutional redesign through legal mechanisms is commonly referred to as constitutional engineering. This concept refers to deliberate efforts to establish or restructure constitutional institutions in order to create a more effective, stable, and democratic political system (Sartori, 1997). Constitutional engineering is not limited to formal constitutional amendments; it may also occur through constitutional court decisions that alter institutional arrangements and political incentives (Landau, 2013). Sartori (1997) argues that institutional design significantly influences political behavior and democratic stability. Therefore, electoral systems, as fundamental democratic institutions, must be designed to ensure both governmental effectiveness and adequate political representation. In Indonesia, changes in electoral design cannot be separated from efforts to adapt democratic institutions to a pluralistic society and the presidential system prescribed by the 1945 Constitution.

Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024 is particularly noteworthy because it introduces a new direction for Indonesia's electoral model by separating national and local elections. This separation is viewed as an alternative solution to the complexities experienced under the current simultaneous election system. Under this

model, elections for the President and Vice President, the DPR, and the DPD would be conducted simultaneously at the national level, whereas elections for regional legislatures and regional heads would be held at a different time. Such a redesign reflects an effort to balance governmental effectiveness and democratic quality (Bisariyadi, 2019). Separating electoral stages is expected to reduce administrative burdens, improve the quality of voter participation, and strengthen political party institutionalization. Moreover, the model may clarify the distinction between national and local issues, thereby enabling voters to make more informed and rational political choices (Norris, 2004).

Despite these anticipated benefits, the proposed electoral redesign remains controversial. Critics argue that separating national and local elections may lengthen political cycles and increase election administration costs. Furthermore, changes in electoral simultaneity may alter political power configurations at both national and regional levels. Consequently, examining Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024 is essential for understanding the future trajectory of Indonesia's constitutional system. More importantly, the decision demonstrates that the Constitutional Court does not merely perform a narrow judicial function but also contributes to democratic development through constitutional interpretation and institutional design (Jurdi, 2020).

Although simultaneous elections have been widely studied, most previous research focuses on electoral effectiveness, presidential system strengthening, voter behavior, or the political implications of Constitutional Court Decision Number 14/PUU-XI/2013 (Huda, 2020; Mietzner, 2019). Other studies generally examine Constitutional Court decisions within the framework of judicial review. However, relatively few studies specifically analyze Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024 as an instrument of constitutional engineering that reshapes electoral institutions and influences the future trajectory of Indonesia's constitutional democracy. This gap indicates the need for a more comprehensive examination of how the Constitutional Court utilizes its constitutional authority to engineer institutional change through the redesign of the relationship between national and local elections.

Comparative experiences further demonstrate that electoral design constitutes an integral component of constitutional engineering. Brazil integrates executive and legislative elections as part of efforts to strengthen presidentialism, whereas the United States separates elections according to governmental levels to maintain distinctions between national and local issues. Several European countries have also reformed their electoral systems as part of broader institutional redesign efforts aimed at enhancing governmental stability and political representation (Lijphart, 2012; Sartori, 1997). These experiences suggest that electoral design functions as a form of constitutional engineering that shapes political behavior, electoral competition, and governmental effectiveness.

Against this background, this study employs the perspective of constitutional engineering to analyze Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024 as an instrument for reconstructing Indonesia's electoral design. Unlike previous studies that

primarily focus on the normative implications of Constitutional Court decisions, this research examines how the decision functions as a mechanism of institutional redesign that may shape the future direction of Indonesia's electoral system toward the 2029 General Election. The study is expected to contribute both theoretically to constitutional law and democratic governance scholarship and practically to the formulation of electoral policies that are more effective, democratic, and compatible with Indonesia's constitutional framework.

Method

This study employs a normative legal research method with a descriptive-analytical design. Normative legal research focuses on examining legal norms, legal principles, constitutional doctrines, and judicial decisions as primary objects of analysis (Soekanto, 2015; Marzuki, 2017). The descriptive-analytical approach is used to systematically describe and critically analyze the legal reasoning contained in Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024 and its implications for Indonesia's electoral system.

The research applies three complementary approaches: the statutory approach (*statute approach*), the conceptual approach (*conceptual approach*), and the case approach (*case approach*) (Marzuki, 2017). The statutory approach is utilized to examine constitutional and statutory provisions governing elections, popular sovereignty, and the presidential system. The conceptual approach is employed to analyze the theoretical foundations of constitutional engineering, constitutional democracy, electoral system design, and presidentialism as analytical frameworks (Sartori, 1997; Norris, 2004). Meanwhile, the case approach focuses on examining Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024 as the primary object of study, particularly its legal reasoning and constitutional implications for the redesign of Indonesia's simultaneous elections in 2029.

The legal materials used in this study consist of primary and secondary legal materials. Primary legal materials include the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024, Constitutional Court Decision Number 14/PUU-XI/2013, and legislation related to the electoral system. Secondary legal materials comprise scholarly books, journal articles, and academic publications discussing constitutional law, electoral systems, constitutional adjudication, and constitutional engineering (Soekanto, 2008).

Data collection was conducted through library research by examining constitutional documents, judicial decisions, statutory regulations, and relevant academic literature (Sunggono, 2016). The collected legal materials were then classified and organized according to the research objectives and analytical framework.

The legal materials were analyzed qualitatively, with particular emphasis on the *ratio decidendi* of Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024. The analysis employed systematic interpretation to examine the relationship between the Court's reasoning and constitutional norms concerning popular sovereignty, elections, and the

presidential system. In addition, teleological interpretation was applied to identify the constitutional objectives pursued by the Court through the redesign of electoral simultaneity. The theory of constitutional engineering serves as the principal analytical framework for assessing the extent to which the Constitutional Court's decision functions as an instrument of institutional redesign aimed at creating a more effective, democratic, and constitutionally coherent electoral system (Sartori, 1997; Landau, 2013). Through this framework, the study not only examines the normative dimensions of the decision but also evaluates its constitutional implications for the future development of Indonesian democracy and the institutional design of the 2029 simultaneous elections.

Results and Discussion

1. Constitutional Engineering Construction in Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024

Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 emerged within the evolving dynamics of Indonesia's constitutional system, particularly concerning the design of simultaneous elections. This decision cannot be separated from the various challenges that have arisen since the implementation of the five-ballot election model in the 2019 General Election and its continuation in the 2024 General Election. In practice, the simultaneous conduct of elections for the President and Vice President, the House of Representatives (DPR), the Regional Representative Council (DPD), Provincial DPRD, and Regency/Municipal DPRD on a single voting day generated significant complexities, both in terms of electoral administration and the quality of substantive democracy (Huda, 2020; Isra, 2021). These challenges became one of the primary reasons for the constitutional review petition that eventually resulted in Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024.

Historically, the concept of simultaneous elections originated from Constitutional Court Decision No. 14/PUU-XI/2013, which held that the separation of legislative and presidential elections was inconsistent with the constitutional objective of strengthening Indonesia's presidential system. At that time, the Court argued that simultaneous elections would strengthen the relationship between executive and legislative institutions, thereby creating greater governmental stability within a presidential framework (Sartori, 1997; Isra, 2015). This decision subsequently became the constitutional foundation for the national simultaneous election model first implemented in 2019. However, its implementation generated several consequences that had not been fully anticipated.

During the 2019 General Election, election administrators faced an extraordinary workload due to the large number of ballots and the complexity of electoral stages that had to be conducted simultaneously. Polling Station Working Committees (*Kelompok Penyelenggara Pemungutan Suara*—KPPS) were particularly affected because they were responsible for administering voting and vote-counting processes for five different elections at the same time. As a result, many election officials suffered from severe exhaustion, and

numerous deaths were reported due to excessive workloads. Furthermore, the vote recapitulation process required a considerable amount of time and generated various administrative difficulties in election management (Perludem, 2019; Huda, 2020).

Another issue concerned the declining quality of political participation. Voters were confronted with five separate ballots containing hundreds of legislative candidates, causing public attention to focus primarily on the presidential election. Consequently, legislative elections, particularly at the regional level, often failed to receive proportional public attention. This phenomenon contributed to the personalization of politics, in which electoral competition became increasingly dominated by presidential candidates rather than by programmatic competition among political parties (Mietzner, 2019).

These developments indicate that the simultaneous election model implemented since 2019 has not fully succeeded in balancing governmental effectiveness and democratic quality. While simultaneous elections enhanced efficiency and consolidated national political momentum, the conduct of all elections at the same time generated serious administrative challenges and reduced the quality of political representation. Consequently, academics, election administrators, civil society organizations, and political parties increasingly called for a reevaluation of Indonesia's simultaneous election design (Norris, 2004; Huda, 2020).

In response to these concerns, the Constitutional Court was once again confronted with a constitutional review petition concerning the design of simultaneous elections. Through Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024, the Court introduced a new direction for Indonesia's electoral system by distinguishing between national and local elections. In its legal reasoning, the Court emphasized that the simultaneous conduct of all elections had created excessive complexity that was inconsistent with the principles of effective governance and constitutional democracy. Therefore, the Court concluded that a restructuring of Indonesia's electoral simultaneity model was necessary (Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024).

The decision demonstrates that the Constitutional Court performs not only its traditional function of reviewing legislation against the Constitution but also a broader role in institutional redesign through progressive constitutional interpretation. In this context, the Court acts as a significant actor in the process of constitutional engineering. Constitutional engineering refers to deliberate efforts to establish or redesign constitutional institutions through legal mechanisms in order to create a more effective, stable, and democratic political system (Sartori, 1997; Landau, 2013). Consequently, Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 should be understood not merely as a judicial product but also as an instrument of institutional transformation within Indonesia's constitutional framework.

The constitutional engineering dimension of the decision is reflected in the Court's reinterpretation of the relationship between electoral design and the strengthening of presidentialism. The Court argued that strengthening the presidential system does not necessarily require the consolidation of all elections into a single electoral event. Instead,

presidentialism can be reinforced through the separation of national and local elections, thereby creating a clearer distinction between national and regional political agendas. Under this new framework, elections for the President and Vice President, the DPR, and the DPD are conducted simultaneously at the national level, while elections for regional legislatures and regional executives are held separately.

This design reflects a paradigm shift in Indonesia's electoral system. Whereas simultaneity had previously been understood as the simultaneous conduct of all elections, Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 redefines simultaneity in a more proportional manner based on the distinct characteristics of national and local elections. The separation aims to improve electoral administration while simultaneously enhancing democratic quality. From the perspective of constitutional engineering, such a redesign constitutes a restructuring of political power distribution through constitutional mechanisms (Sartori, 1997).

The Court also considered the quality of political participation. It observed that an excessive number of political choices presented at one time made it difficult for voters to pay balanced attention to all electoral contests. Consequently, the quality of political representation declined because voters tended to focus primarily on the presidential election. Therefore, the separation of national and local elections was viewed as a mechanism capable of providing citizens with greater opportunities to understand political issues more comprehensively and make more rational electoral choices (Norris, 2004).

Furthermore, Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 illustrates a shift in the Constitutional Court's role within Indonesia's constitutional system. The Court can no longer be viewed solely as a *negative legislator* that annuls unconstitutional legal norms but also as a *positive legislator* that shapes legal and constitutional policy through progressive judicial decisions (Stone Sweet, 2000). This is evident from the substance of the decision, which directly influences the design of Indonesia's electoral system in preparation for the 2029 General Election. Consequently, the Constitutional Court assumes a strategic role in shaping the future trajectory of constitutional democracy in Indonesia.

From a constitutional law perspective, Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 demonstrates that law functions not only as a regulatory instrument but also as a mechanism for social and political transformation. Through this decision, the Constitutional Court reconstructs the electoral system with the objective of creating a more effective and equitable democratic order. This reconstruction extends beyond technical electoral administration and encompasses the broader relationship among state institutions, political parties, and society within Indonesia's democratic framework.

From a more critical perspective, the decision demonstrates that constitutional engineering serves not only to address technical electoral problems but also to correct institutional arrangements that are no longer capable of meeting the demands of contemporary constitutional democracy. Through this ruling, the Constitutional Court implicitly acknowledged that the five-ballot simultaneous election model had produced consequences different from its original objectives. Accordingly, the constitutional

engineering undertaken by the Court does not merely alter electoral schedules; it fundamentally reshapes the structure of political interaction among voters, political parties, and state institutions.

The significance of this decision lies in its effort to shift the paradigm of electoral simultaneity from an administrative approach toward a functional-constitutional approach. Simultaneity is no longer understood as the consolidation of all elections into a single electoral event but rather as a mechanism designed to achieve specific constitutional objectives, namely governmental effectiveness, high-quality political representation, and the protection of citizens' voting rights. In this respect, Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 demonstrates that the Constitutional Court not only interprets the Constitution but also actively shapes the future development of Indonesia's democratic system through institutional redesign.

2. Redesigning the 2029 Simultaneous Elections

Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 introduces a new direction for Indonesia's electoral system, particularly concerning the concept of electoral simultaneity that has been implemented through the five-ballot election model since 2019. The decision represents a constitutional evaluation of the 2019 and 2024 simultaneous elections, which generated various challenges related to electoral administration and the quality of substantive democracy (Huda, 2020; Isra, 2021). In response to these concerns, the Constitutional Court proposed a more proportional electoral design by separating national elections from local elections. This redesigned framework is projected to serve as the institutional model for the 2029 General Election.

The Court's approach reflects a significant paradigm shift in the understanding of electoral simultaneity. Previously, simultaneity was interpreted as the conduct of all elections on a single voting day, including elections for the President and Vice President, the House of Representatives (DPR), the Regional Representative Council (DPD), Provincial DPRD, and Regency/Municipal DPRD. Through Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024, however, the Court emphasized that simultaneity should not necessarily be equated with the consolidation of all electoral contests into one event. Instead, elections may be differentiated according to their constitutional functions and governmental levels, namely national and local elections (Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024).

Under the proposed model, elections for the President and Vice President, the DPR, and the DPD would be conducted simultaneously at the national level, while elections for regional legislatures and regional executives would be held separately. This separation reflects an effort to balance electoral effectiveness with democratic quality. According to the Court, the simultaneous conduct of all electoral contests imposes excessive burdens on both election administrators and voters, thereby reducing the overall effectiveness of the electoral process. Consequently, a restructuring of electoral simultaneity is necessary to ensure a more efficient and manageable electoral system (Sartori, 1997; Norris, 2004).

The redesign of the 2029 electoral system extends beyond technical electoral administration and represents a broader transformation in Indonesia's constitutional democracy. The separation of national and local elections reflects an institutional adaptation to the increasing complexity of democratic governance. Under the previous five-ballot model, public attention tended to focus overwhelmingly on presidential elections, while legislative contests—particularly at the regional level—received considerably less attention. As a result, local issues were often overshadowed by national political narratives during election campaigns (Mietzner, 2019).

This phenomenon has important implications for political representation. Voters frequently make electoral choices based on the popularity of national political figures rather than on the qualifications of regional legislative candidates or the policy platforms offered by political parties. Consequently, elections become increasingly shaped by political personalization and national polarization rather than substantive policy evaluation. The separation of national and local elections is therefore expected to create a more proportional political arena in which citizens can make electoral decisions based on issues relevant to each level of government (Norris, 2004).

From the perspective of constitutional democracy, the separation of national and local elections is also intended to strengthen local democratic governance. Simultaneous elections have often marginalized local issues due to the dominance of national political campaigns. Yet regional executive and legislative elections play a crucial role in determining local development priorities and public service delivery. By conducting local elections separately, voters are expected to devote greater attention to regional concerns and evaluate local candidates based on the specific needs and characteristics of their communities (Lijphart, 2012).

The redesign is further intended to reduce the technical complexity that characterized the five-ballot election model. During the 2019 and 2024 elections, electoral management bodies were required to administer millions of ballots, oversee thousands of candidates, and conduct multiple electoral stages simultaneously. These conditions created significant administrative burdens, particularly for polling station officials (*Kelompok Penyelenggara Pemungutan Suara*—KPPS). Reports of exhaustion and fatalities among election officers during the 2019 election highlighted the human costs associated with the existing electoral design (Perludem, 2019; Huda, 2020).

By separating national and local elections, the Court seeks to establish a more humane electoral system that reduces administrative pressures on election officials and improves the accuracy and effectiveness of vote administration and tabulation. The redesign is also expected to strengthen electoral oversight. Under the five-ballot model, election supervisory bodies faced considerable difficulties in monitoring administrative violations, campaign misconduct, vote-buying practices, and electoral disputes due to the simultaneous conduct of multiple elections. The separation of electoral stages is therefore expected to

enhance the effectiveness of electoral supervision and reduce opportunities for electoral violations (Norris, 2004).

The proposed model also has important implications for the strengthening of Indonesia's presidential system. Although simultaneous elections were originally designed to align presidential and legislative elections, the experience of the five-ballot model demonstrated that presidential contests tended to dominate public attention, thereby diminishing the visibility of legislative elections. Under the new framework, the strengthening of presidentialism is maintained through the simultaneous conduct of presidential, DPR, and DPD elections at the national level, while local elections are separated to prevent competition between national and local political agendas (Shugart & Carey, 1992; Sartori, 1997).

The separation of elections is also expected to contribute to stronger political party institutionalization. Under the previous system, political parties frequently relied on presidential candidates to mobilize electoral support. As a result, ideological development, political education, and cadre recruitment often received insufficient attention. The separation of national and local elections may encourage political parties to strengthen their organizational capacity at the regional level and improve the quality of candidates competing in local elections (Mainwaring & Scully, 1995).

Furthermore, the redesign is expected to enhance voter rationality. The complexity of the five-ballot system often created confusion among voters, limiting their ability to evaluate candidates and policy platforms effectively. By separating electoral stages, citizens may have greater opportunities to understand the qualifications, programs, and policy proposals of candidates at both national and local levels, thereby improving the quality of electoral decision-making (Norris, 2004).

From a constitutional perspective, Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 demonstrates that the Constitutional Court performs not only a judicial function but also a broader role in shaping Indonesia's democratic development through constitutional engineering. The redesign of the 2029 electoral system represents an institutional restructuring aimed at creating a more effective, stable, and democratic political order. In this regard, the Court acts as a key constitutional actor in balancing governmental effectiveness, democratic quality, and the protection of political rights (Stone Sweet, 2000; Landau, 2013).

Nevertheless, the proposed redesign remains controversial. Critics argue that separating national and local elections may lengthen political cycles and increase electoral costs. Elections conducted at different times could create a more continuous state of political competition and require additional public expenditure. However, from the perspective of constitutional democracy, the value of democracy cannot be measured solely in terms of budgetary efficiency but must also consider the quality of democratic outcomes (Dahl, 1989). Therefore, the separation of national and local elections remains relevant as an effort to create a more representative, accountable, and effective democratic system.

From the perspective of constitutional engineering, the redesign demonstrates that electoral systems are not merely technical mechanisms for organizing elections but also instruments for shaping political behavior and institutional incentives. If implemented consistently, the separation of national and local elections may produce a more balanced pattern of political representation between national and regional interests. Accordingly, the redesign of the 2029 General Election should be understood as an effort to build a democratic system that is not only procedurally effective but also more responsive to the diverse needs of Indonesian society (Sartori, 1997; Norris, 2004).

3. Strengthening the Presidential System and the Implications of Electoral Redesign for Constitutional Democracy

Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 does not merely alter the structure of electoral administration but also reflects a broader effort to reorganize Indonesia's constitutional system through the strengthening of presidentialism and the enhancement of constitutional democracy. In this regard, the Court's electoral redesign demonstrates the close relationship between electoral institutions, governmental effectiveness, political stability, and democratic representation. Consequently, the separation of national and local elections should not be viewed solely as a technical adjustment to electoral administration but rather as a form of constitutional engineering aimed at improving the performance of Indonesia's democratic institutions (Sartori, 1997; Landau, 2013).

The original rationale for introducing simultaneous elections through Constitutional Court Decision No. 14/PUU-XI/2013 was to strengthen Indonesia's presidential system. The Court argued that separate legislative and presidential elections weakened the relationship between the executive and legislative branches because elected presidents frequently lacked sufficient parliamentary support, thereby reducing governmental effectiveness and increasing dependence on political bargaining. Simultaneous elections were therefore designed to synchronize political support for the President and the legislature and to promote greater governmental stability within a presidential framework (Shugart & Carey, 1992; Sartori, 1997).

However, the implementation of the 2019 and 2024 simultaneous elections revealed a number of unintended consequences. Public attention became overwhelmingly concentrated on presidential contests, while legislative elections received comparatively less scrutiny. Electoral competition increasingly revolved around presidential candidates rather than programmatic competition among political parties. As a result, legislative elections partially lost their representative function because voters were more strongly influenced by national political polarization than by assessments of legislative candidates and policy platforms (Mietzner, 2019).

These developments suggest that the previous model of simultaneous elections did not fully achieve the substantive strengthening of presidentialism. Although elections were formally conducted simultaneously, political dynamics became increasingly personalized

and centered on presidential figures. Under such circumstances, political parties became highly dependent on the popularity of presidential candidates to secure electoral support. This dependency weakened party institutionalization because parties had fewer incentives to develop ideological platforms, strengthen cadre recruitment, and provide political education to citizens (Mainwaring & Scully, 1995).

Through Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024, the Constitutional Court seeks to redesign the electoral system in order to create a more balanced and effective presidential system. This redesign is achieved through the separation of national and local elections. Under the proposed framework, elections for the President and Vice President, the DPR, and the DPD remain simultaneous at the national level to preserve the objectives of presidential strengthening. Meanwhile, elections for regional legislatures and regional executives are conducted separately to ensure that local issues are not overshadowed by national political contests.

This approach reflects a significant shift in the understanding of presidential strengthening. Whereas the previous model equated presidential strengthening with the consolidation of all elections into a single electoral event, Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 reorients presidential strengthening toward the differentiation of political agendas according to levels of government. National elections are intended to focus on strategic issues concerning the central government, while local elections are expected to concentrate on regional development and local governance (Sartori, 1997; Lijphart, 2012).

The new design is expected to provide voters with a clearer political focus. Under the previous electoral framework, voters were required to cast ballots for five separate elections on the same day, resulting in disproportionate attention to presidential contests. Consequently, regional legislative and executive elections often failed to receive adequate public consideration. By separating electoral stages, citizens are expected to gain greater opportunities to understand political issues more comprehensively and evaluate candidates on the basis of their qualifications, policy proposals, and performance records.

The redesign also has important implications for the quality of democracy and political participation. Under the five-ballot model, many voters experienced confusion due to the complexity of electoral choices and the large number of candidates competing simultaneously. This situation reduced the quality of political participation because voters often lacked sufficient time and information to evaluate all candidates effectively. Moreover, the dominance of national political narratives frequently marginalized local concerns and reduced public engagement with regional issues (Norris, 2004).

The separation of national and local elections is therefore expected to encourage more balanced democratic participation. Citizens will not be exclusively focused on presidential contests but will also be able to evaluate legislative and regional executive candidates more rationally. This objective is particularly important because democratic quality depends not only on voter turnout but also on the extent to which citizens make informed and meaningful political choices (Dahl, 1989). Accordingly, the electoral redesign

promoted by the Constitutional Court may contribute to a more substantive and participatory democratic process.

In addition to improving political participation, the separation of elections is expected to strengthen political party institutionalization. Under the previous system, political parties frequently relied on presidential candidates as the primary source of electoral support. Consequently, efforts to strengthen party ideology, organizational capacity, and cadre development often received limited attention. The introduction of separate local elections may encourage political parties to build stronger support bases at the regional level and to recruit candidates who possess both competence and close connections with local communities (Mainwaring & Scully, 1995).

From a constitutional perspective, Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 also reflects an expansion of the Constitutional Court's role within Indonesia's democratic system. The Court no longer functions solely as a *negative legislator* responsible for invalidating unconstitutional laws but increasingly acts as a *positive legislator* that influences constitutional and political development through progressive judicial interpretation (Stone Sweet, 2000). In this context, the Court serves as a key actor in the process of constitutional engineering within Indonesia's constitutional order.

Through this decision, the Constitutional Court indirectly restructures the relationships among state institutions, political parties, and citizens. The electoral redesign affects not only the technical administration of elections but also the broader distribution of political power and the future trajectory of democratic development. Accordingly, Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 may be understood as a form of institutional engineering intended to create a more effective, democratic, and responsive electoral system in preparation for the 2029 General Election.

The most significant long-term implication of the decision lies in its potential to transform the relationship between presidentialism, political parties, and local democracy. Under the previous system, the dominance of presidential candidates tended to create party dependence on nationally popular figures, often at the expense of organizational development and cadre recruitment. By separating national and local elections, political parties are encouraged to establish stronger regional support bases, ensuring that their sustainability is no longer determined solely by the popularity of national political figures.

Furthermore, the separation of elections has the potential to strengthen local democracy by increasing public attention to regional issues. Under the simultaneous election model, local political competition was often overshadowed by national electoral narratives. A more autonomous local political arena would provide voters with greater opportunities to assess regional executive and legislative candidates according to the specific needs of their communities. Over time, this process may enhance political accountability and strengthen the relationship between local governments and citizens (Lijphart, 2012).

From the perspective of constitutional engineering, these developments demonstrate that Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 is not merely a modification of

electoral procedures but a potential catalyst for broader institutional transformation within Indonesia's democratic system. The success of the 2029 electoral redesign should therefore be evaluated not only in terms of technical efficiency but also in terms of its capacity to strengthen presidentialism, promote political party institutionalization, and enhance the quality of local democracy in a sustainable manner (Sartori, 1997; Landau, 2013).

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 can be understood as a form of constitutional engineering aimed at restructuring Indonesia's electoral design within its constitutional system. Through this decision, the Constitutional Court not only performed its conventional function of constitutional review but also shaped a new direction for electoral institutional design through constitutional interpretation oriented toward strengthening presidentialism, enhancing democratic quality, and protecting citizens' political rights (Sartori, 1997; Landau, 2013). From the perspective of constitutional engineering, the decision confirms that electoral design is a crucial institutional instrument that influences the relationship among state institutions, political parties, and citizens within a constitutional democracy.

The redesign of the 2029 electoral system, which separates national elections from local elections, reflects a significant paradigm shift in the concept of electoral simultaneity in Indonesia. Under this new framework, simultaneity is no longer understood as the consolidation of all electoral contests into a single electoral event. Instead, it is conceived as a constitutional mechanism designed to achieve broader constitutional objectives, including governmental effectiveness, democratic representation, and electoral accountability. This model has the potential to strengthen Indonesia's presidential system by creating a clearer focus on national political issues, encourage political party institutionalization through stronger political competition at the regional level, and enhance the quality of local democracy by providing citizens with greater opportunities to evaluate regional issues and leadership more rationally (Shugart & Carey, 1992; Mainwaring & Scully, 1995).

From a practical perspective, this decision carries important implications for lawmakers, election management bodies, and democratic governance. Legislators should immediately undertake the harmonization of electoral laws and regulations in accordance with the constitutional direction established by the Constitutional Court. Election administrators should use the decision as a foundation for developing a more effective, measurable, and citizen-oriented electoral management system. Furthermore, the separation of national and local elections is expected to improve political representation, strengthen local governmental accountability, and increase citizen participation in democratic processes.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. It focuses exclusively on the normative analysis of Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 and does not empirically examine the potential effects of the new electoral design on voter behavior, party

system development, or governmental effectiveness following the 2029 General Election. Therefore, future research should expand the analysis through empirical and comparative approaches, particularly by examining the implementation of separate national and local elections and comparing Indonesia's experience with other countries that have adopted electoral separation as part of a broader constitutional engineering strategy to strengthen constitutional democracy (Norris, 2004; Lijphart, 2012).

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