

PANCASILA ETHICS IN THE SHADOW OF POLITICAL PRAGMATISM: A STRATEGY FOR TRANSFORMING A PARTY SYSTEM WITH INTEGRITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of Pancasila ethics in addressing political pragmatism and to formulate a strategy for transforming the party system in Indonesia to ensure integrity. The study employs a qualitative approach using library research to examine the relationship between the ethical values of Pancasila, political pragmatism, and the integrity of political parties. Data validity is ensured through triangulation of sources by comparing information from various relevant literature. The results indicate that transforming the party system requires the internalization of political ethics, transparency in funding, accountability in party management, strengthening of internal democracy, improvement of the cadre development system, and oversight of transactional political practices. The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of Pancasila ethics as an operational framework to strengthen party governance, rather than merely as a normative foundation. The implementation of this strategy can foster the development of a more democratic, integrity-driven, and accountable party system.

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INTRODUCTION

Pancasila, as the foundation of the state and the source of values that shape the identity of the Indonesian nation, should serve as a guiding principle in every aspect of national and state life, including the political system (Cesilia et al., 2024). As a philosophical foundation, Pancasila embodies moral values that must be upheld by every individual, particularly by political actors who play a crucial role in shaping policy direction and leadership in Indonesia (Fadhil et al., 2024). Pancasila ethics demand that every political action consistently prioritize the public interest by upholding justice, truth, and morality. Every political decision is directed toward the welfare of the broader public, not merely specific groups or individuals, and ensures equal and fair treatment for all citizens (Soeprapto, 2013).

Political parties play a strategic role in realizing these values. Political parties not only serve as a bridge between the public and the government but also play a role in the process of political recruitment, the selection of future leaders, the filling of public offices, and the formulation of political decisions (Hamdi et al., 2024). Therefore, the integrity of political parties is a key prerequisite for the creation of a healthy democracy. However, party politics in Indonesia still faces the issue of political pragmatism. Short-term interests, electoral orientation, and efforts to maintain power are often more dominant than consistency with moral values and the public interest.

Political pragmatism is evident in the party's structure and decision-making processes. A centralized party structure can limit political space at the local level because party institutionalization is more oriented toward structural relationships than toward the political empowerment of local communities (Andriyansyah, 2020). Furthermore, political parties are also trapped in a "romanticism of power," where all strategic decisions fall under the domain of the central leadership. This significant authority risks being monopolized by personal or group interests, leading to transactional political practices such as political dowries that prioritize the pragmatics of power over the quality of candidates (Ekowati, 2019).

This situation highlights a gap between the ideal values of Pancasila and the practices of party politics. Corruption, transactional politics, weak accountability, and conflicts of interest among elites can undermine the quality of democracy and erode public trust in political parties (Pangareho, 2024). Therefore, political parties must have a strict oversight system to maintain the integrity of their cadres as part of their responsibility in shaping public policy and political decision-making (Rifa'i & Kusriyah, 2017). In this context, political ethics cannot be understood merely as a set of normative values. Political ethics must be translated into institutional principles that govern the processes of recruitment, cadre development, decision-making, internal oversight, and the party's accountability to the public. Without the strengthening of political ethics, the exercise of power risks disregarding norms and prioritizing purely practical objectives.

Corrupt practices, identity politics, and power struggles often override the spirit of morality and justice embodied in Pancasila. Research by Transparency International Indonesia (2019) shows that corruption remains a major problem in Indonesian politics, from the central to the local government levels. Increasingly sharp political polarization also poses a serious challenge to the realization of political ethics aligned with the values of Pancasila. Political ethics play a crucial role in state affairs, as they serve as the moral foundation governing the behavior of leaders and citizens in carrying out political duties. Political ethics emphasizes the importance of integrity, honesty, responsibility, and other moral principles in every political action, while prioritizing the public interest and upholding high moral standards (Himawan et al., 2024). Ignoring political ethics can lead to Machiavellian political practices, where politics is viewed as a means to achieve any end—good or bad—without regard for established norms (Atu, 2024).

Previous research indicates that political pragmatism and weak party institutionalization remain significant issues in Indonesian democracy. Aminuddin and Ramadlan (2015) found that political parties tend to evolve into "match-all parties" that is, parties that prioritize electoral strategies and political flexibility over ideological consistency. Meanwhile, Budiatri (2016) explains that Indonesia's party system remains weakly institutionalized due to unstable competitive patterns, weak ties between parties and the public, and the prevalence of internal oligarchies. On the other hand, Febriany and Dewi (2021) assert that Pancasila can serve as a foundation for political ethics through the values of belief in God, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice. However, these studies have focused primarily on normative aspects and have not yet linked them to institutional reforms within political parties. Therefore, this article positions Pancasila Ethics as both an analytical framework and the foundation for a strategic transformation of the party system toward greater integrity.

Based on this analysis, there remains scope for research to link Pancasila Ethics with strategies for transforming the party system in a more systematic manner. Pancasila Ethics should not merely be viewed as a normative moral foundation. Its values need to be translated into institutional measures that can be applied within the party system. This article examines the influence of political pragmatism on the integrity of the party system in Indonesia and analyzes the application of Pancasila Ethics as a basis for formulating a strategy for transforming the

party system with integrity. This study aims to explain the impact of political pragmatism on party institutions while formulating a transformation strategy grounded in the values of Pancasila Ethics.

METHOD

Research Methodology This study employs a qualitative approach using library research to analyze the relationship between the ethical values of Pancasila, political pragmatism, and the integrity of the party system in Indonesia. Data were obtained through a document review of academic books, journal articles, and official documents. Sources were selected based on three main criteria: relevance to the research focus, credibility of the publisher or institution, and relevance to the context of the party system in Indonesia. Literature that had no direct connection to the research problem, could not be verified, or contained only general descriptions without analytical contributions was not used as primary research material. The data collection process was conducted through literature review, initial screening based on titles and abstracts, thorough reading of relevant sources, and classification of information into main themes.

The data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, information was selected based on its relevance to forms of political pragmatism, issues of party integrity, weaknesses in party institutions, and the ethical values of Pancasila. In the presentation stage, data were grouped to identify patterns of relationships between political pragmatism and the integrity of the party system. Subsequently, conclusions were formulated through a critical interpretation of the findings to develop a strategy for transforming the party system based on Pancasila values. Data validity is ensured through source triangulation by comparing information from various sources, such as academic books, journal articles, official documents, and relevant institutional reports. This study is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to efforts to build a more integrity-based party system grounded in these values.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Pancasila Ethics in the Context of Indonesian Politics

Ethics is closely intertwined with human life; it pertains to character and morality. Ethics concerns what is good and bad, right and wrong, and serves as a guiding principle for human activities (Alim et al., 2021). Pancasila and ethics are inseparable because both teach values that encompass goodness. Pancasila ethics is an ethics that judges right and wrong based on the values of Pancasila: the value of sanctity, the value of humanity, the value of solidarity, the value of citizenship, and the value of justice. An action is considered good not only if it aligns with the values of Pancasila but also if it reinforces existing values to be more beneficial to others. The purpose of Pancasila as an ethical system is to incorporate the values contained within Pancasila, thereby making it a very strong ethical system. Pancasila ethics itself encompasses the values of the Pancasila principles, such as belief in God, humanity, unity, democracy, and justice (Lubis et al., 2024).

In the party system, Pancasila Ethics can be used to assess the consistency between the values claimed by a party and its actual political practices. The value of belief in God demands moral integrity in the exercise of power. The value of humanity emphasizes the importance of respecting citizens' political rights. The value of unity requires parties to prioritize national interests over group interests. The value of democracy demands democratic and transparent decision-making. Meanwhile, the value of social justice emphasizes the importance of equal political access, transparency, and accountability. Thus, Pancasila Ethics cannot be understood merely as an abstract moral doctrine. Pancasila Ethics must be positioned as an analytical framework for assessing the weaknesses of the party system and as a foundation for formulating strategies to transform political parties into more ethical entities.

Pancasila ethics are noble ethical values derived from the Pancasila principles to regulate behavior in social, national, and state life in Indonesia. Therefore, Pancasila ethics contain the values of belief in God, humanity, unity, democracy, and justice. These five values shape the behavior of the Indonesian people in all aspects of their lives. Indonesia employs Pancasila as an ethical system grounded in the values of its five principles. These five principles function as a system of rules or guidelines for all Indonesian citizens in their daily social and national lives (Nugraheni et al., 2023). The poor performance of state governance stems from the absence of ethics in the public sphere. Ethics does not serve as the foundational value for controlling power itself. Yet, power without ethics gives rise to what is termed “abuse of power,” whether at the executive or legislative level. Forms of abuse of power can vary widely: corruption, collusion, nepotism, the provision of services that fail to meet ethical standards, as well as the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of policies (Abas, 2017).

Pancasila, as the state ideology, also serves as the foundation for the party system in Indonesia. In this context, political parties in Indonesia should act as instruments to realize the noble ideals enshrined in Pancasila. The values in Pancasila, such as democracy, social justice, and unity, must be upheld by political parties in all their activities. However, in reality, many political parties tend to be oriented toward power and pragmatic gains, often setting aside the ethical values contained in Pancasila (Erlina, 2023). The relationship between Pancasila values and political practices within Indonesia’s party system is often neglected due to a prioritization of short-term political interests. Therefore, efforts are needed to realign political parties with the ethics of Pancasila, which promote the creation of justice, welfare, and social harmony in national life (Gadafi & Nelwati, 2024).

One of the main challenges in applying Pancasila ethics in Indonesian politics is political pragmatism. Political pragmatism refers to a political approach that prioritizes quick and tangible results, often sacrificing moral and ethical principles in the process. Within the party system, political pragmatism often leads to alliances not based on shared values or ideology, but rather on practical interests in gaining power. Political pragmatism also frequently fosters transactional politics that contradict the principle of social justice in Pancasila. This practice can be seen in the prevalence of money politics, identity politics, and patronage politics that disregard the fundamental principles of Pancasila (Nahdi, 2014). Consequently, the ethical values embodied in Pancasila have been sidelined in Indonesia’s political dynamics.

These findings underscore that Pancasila Ethics must be positioned as both a framework for critique and a foundation for the transformation of the party system. Theoretically, Pancasila Ethics broadens the analysis of political integrity because it not only assesses individual behavior but also evaluates the structures, processes, and culture of political parties. In political practice, the application of Pancasila Ethics demands improvements in cadre development, transparency in recruitment, democratization of decision-making, enforcement of codes of ethics, and strengthening of internal oversight. For democracy, these steps are crucial to reducing the dominance of elite interests, strengthening party accountability, and reorienting politics toward the interests of the public.

Political Pragmatism and Its Impact on the Party System

Political pragmatism is an approach to politics that prioritizes practical results and efficiency, often at the expense of idealistic or ethical values (Sumartono, 2018).. To a certain extent, pragmatic considerations are part of political strategy. Political parties need to respond to changing circumstances, build cooperation, and align their political actions with the interests of the public. However, pragmatism becomes problematic when power is placed as the primary goal and moral principles are treated merely as an afterthought. Under such conditions, political decisions are no longer based on long-term orientation but are largely determined by electoral calculations and the interests of the elite.

In Indonesia's party system, political pragmatism is evident in the formation of coalitions that are not always based on shared ideology, vision, or political programs. Coalitions are often formed to increase the chances of gaining power and to strengthen bargaining power within the government (Busahwi, 2021).. This shift in orientation indicates that political parties tend to prioritize electoral victory over ideological consistency. The issue does not lie in the formation of coalitions themselves, as cooperation among parties is an integral part of democracy. Problems arise when coalitions lack a clear policy agenda and do not have a value foundation that can be justified to the public. In such situations, coalitions function more as instruments for the distribution of power than as means to advocate for the interests of the public.

The Impact of Political Pragmatism on Party Ethics and Integrity The primary impact of political pragmatism on the party system in Indonesia is a decline in the integrity of political parties (Erlina, 2023). Parties that are overly focused on short-term interests tend to neglect the processes of cadre development, political education, and the strengthening of ideological identity. Political decisions are more easily influenced by the interests of the elite than by the needs of the people. Political parties trapped in political pragmatism tend to disregard ethics and the values of Pancasila when making political decisions. This results in political policies that are more oriented toward short-term interests rather than long-term goals prioritizing public welfare (Haliim, 2020).. These issues indicate that the crisis in political parties is not merely a matter of elite behavior but also reflects the weak institutionalization of values in the processes of cadre development, political recruitment, and policy formulation.

Political parties that embrace political pragmatism often prioritize electoral victory and the acquisition of power over championing the values of justice, welfare, and equity as mandated by Pancasila. As a result, the integrity of political parties is increasingly eroded, and the public is beginning to lose trust in the existing political system (Ayuningsih & Aulia, 2024). This situation has the potential to exacerbate the decline of democracy because parties no longer fulfill their representative functions substantively. Parties merely serve as vehicles for the struggle for power, while the aspirations of the public lose their place in the political process. Therefore, the strengthening of Pancasila ethics must be directed toward institutional reform within parties, not merely moral appeals. The values of Pancasila must be applied in internal regulations, oversight mechanisms, cadre development, and political decision-making processes.

Cases of Pragmatism in Indonesian Politics One concrete example of the application of political pragmatism in Indonesia is the practice of political coalitions, which are often not based on shared ideologies or principles. In several elections, political parties in Indonesia have frequently formed coalitions with other parties that have different visions and missions, solely to gain power. This can be seen in the various political coalitions formed during general elections in Indonesia, where parties that should have differing ideologies instead unite for the sole purpose of gaining power, disregarding ethical principles (Jazuli, 2015). While coalitions are a natural part of a multiparty democracy, Problems arise when coalitions are formed without a clear programmatic agreement and are driven solely by short-term interests. Such conditions indicate a lack of ideological consistency and weak institutionalization of political parties. In practice, overly pragmatic coalitions can result in a government with minimal opposition, weaken oversight mechanisms, and obscure political parties' accountability to voters.

Political pragmatism has a direct impact on the weakening of the quality of the party system and democracy. The first impact is evident in the erosion of ideology. Parties no longer function as organizations that champion specific values and ideas, but have transformed into electoral vehicles for gaining power. This situation gives rise to parties with blurred political identities that are difficult to distinguish from one another (Ufen, 2008). Pragmatism also fuels political fragmentation because the formation of parties and coalitions is not always based on differing visions, but rather on the interest of enhancing the bargaining power of the elite. Consequently, the stability of governing coalitions becomes fragile, and policy directions are easily swayed by short-term political negotiations (Mietzner, 2007). This situation reflects the fragility of party institutions and the declining quality of democracy. When ideology is no longer the primary foundation of political activity, parties find it increasingly difficult to fulfill their role as channels for public aspirations and as institutions accountable to the people.

Strategies for Transforming the Party System with Integrity

A strategy for transforming the party system with integrity is a crucial effort in strengthening the foundations of a healthy and sustainable democracy. In the context of modern democracy, political parties should ideally serve not only as a means of mobilizing votes in elections, but also as a vehicle for political education, the articulation of the people's aspirations, the formulation of public policy, and the guardian of ideological values and political ethics. However, in practice, many political parties are trapped in a pragmatism that disregards moral principles and the nation's long-term interests. Therefore, the transformation of the party system must be directed toward building a structure that is transparent, accountable, and oriented toward public service, rather than merely a tool for power transactions (Amanah & Sa'adati, 2021).

Transformation must be achieved through strengthening internal governance, reforming recruitment and leadership development, consistent oversight, and reforming political financing (Sousa et al., 2023). Decision-making must be conducted in a more open manner and not be solely centered on the elite, so that members have clear opportunities for participation in organizational processes. The recruitment of prospective leaders must also be based on competence, track record, integrity, and commitment to the public interest, rather than solely on personal connections, financial resources, or electoral calculations. Cadre development must include political education grounded in the Ethics of Pancasila so that the party can cultivate political actors with leadership capacity and moral responsibility. Furthermore, the party must establish a code of ethics, oversight mechanisms, and strict sanctions for violations, accompanied by transparency regarding recruitment processes, decision-making, and party funding. Financial governance must also be improved, as a lack of transparency can reinforce transactional politics and dependence on interest groups.

Transforming the party system into one of integrity requires a strategy that emphasizes the values of Pancasila, transparency, internal justice, independent oversight, and collaboration among stakeholders. A healthy and integrity-driven party system requires not only structural improvements but also profound changes in political culture (Bértoa et al., 2023). To this end, strategic measures are needed that focus on principles of political ethics prioritizing the people's interests and the common good. Pancasila-based political education serves as the primary foundation for shaping politicians who are not merely power-oriented but also possess a strong commitment to serving the people. This education will equip politicians with a deep understanding of the moral, social, and democratic values embedded in Pancasila. Furthermore, this transformation will encompass the following strategic steps.

1. **Strengthening Pancasila-Based Political Education:** Pancasila-based political education serves as a crucial foundation for shaping politicians of integrity (Pangalila, 2023). In this context, the values embodied in Pancasila such as mutual cooperation, social justice, and deliberation must be instilled from an early age, not only among students or politicians but also among the general public. This aims to foster deep political awareness across all segments of society. Political education that prioritizes the ethics of Pancasila will produce politicians committed not merely to seeking power but also to serving the people and promoting the common good. Politicians shaped through this education will prioritize the interests of the people and the nation over personal or group interests. By instilling the values of Pancasila in political education, it is hoped that a generation of politicians will emerge who possess social responsibility, high integrity, and the ability to address the increasingly complex challenges of Indonesian democracy. Based on research by (Nadir & Wardani, 2019), politicians who have a good understanding of Pancasila ethics will be better able to adapt to the needs of society and formulate policies that prioritize social justice and the common good.
2. **Transparency and Accountability in Political Parties:** In order to strengthen democracy in Indonesia, political parties must prioritize transparency and accountability in every aspect of their activities, particularly in political decision-making (Bértoa et al., 2024). An open decision-making process accessible to the public will enhance public trust in political parties, as the public perceives that decisions are the result of transparent deliberations involving various stakeholders. Additionally, political parties must involve the public in the decision-making process, whether through democratic mechanisms such as deliberations or open discussions, or by providing information accessible to the public. Thus, every decision made by a political party can be held accountable and

more fairly and equitably reflect the public's interests. According to Rosidi (2017), this transparency and accountability not only help build public trust in political parties but also strengthen the quality of the decisions made, ensuring that the resulting policies are truly oriented toward the people's interests and the nation's progress.

3. **A Fair and Equitable Party System:** The development of a more inclusive and representative party system is crucial to ensuring that all segments of society have equal opportunities in the political process (Holmsten et al., 2024). This encompasses not only providing equal opportunities for every party member in the selection of legislative candidates but also in internal party decision-making. With a fairer system, political parties will be more transparent in offering opportunities for all parties to contribute and will not prioritize the interests of elite groups in decision-making. A fair and equitable party system will help create cleaner politics and reduce the potential for discrimination or injustice within the party. Furthermore, this will enhance the integrity of political parties as they will pay closer attention to the people's voices rather than merely following the interests of specific groups that may hold greater power. Barokah (2022) argue that with a more equitable party system, every party member will feel valued, and this will foster a healthier and more democratic political climate. This inclusive system will reduce disparities in political representation and ensure that every citizen's voice is heard and taken into account.
4. **Strengthening the Role of Political Party Oversight Bodies:** To ensure that political parties carry out their functions and duties with a high degree of integrity, it is essential to establish an independent oversight body (Birch et al., 2017). This body must possess sufficient authority to assess and monitor the activities of political parties to ensure they remain in line with the ethical principles enshrined in Pancasila. This independent oversight aims to prevent practices that harm the public, such as political pragmatism or the abuse of authority in political decision-making. With a supervisory body possessing the power and authority to oversee political parties, it is hoped that a cleaner and more accountable party system can be established (Susila Wibawa, 2019) argues that this oversight body will play a crucial role in ensuring political parties do not become entangled in political practices that harm the public, as well as ensuring that political parties adhere to the moral principles enshrined in Pancasila. With strict oversight, political parties will be more cautious in making decisions and more responsive to the people's needs.
5. **Inter-Party Collaboration in National Development:** Collaboration among political parties in Indonesia is crucial for strengthening a democratic political system characterized by integrity (Schermann & Enns-jedenastik, 2014). In the context of national development, this inter-party collaboration is not only necessary to reach political agreements but also to create policies that are more people-centered and ensure equitable distribution of welfare. Every political party must be committed to upholding integrity and prioritizing the principles of social justice and equity in every policy they formulate. This inter-party collaboration is also vital for reducing the political polarization that frequently occurs, thereby fostering a more stable and productive political system in nation-building (Assistance, 2013). Collaboration grounded in the values of Pancasila will enable strong synergy among political parties in addressing various national development challenges. Therefore, every political party must be willing to cooperate for the common good and in the interest of the people. With this spirit of collaboration, national development can proceed more smoothly and inclusively.

From the various strategies discussed above, it can be concluded that strengthening Indonesia's political system to make it more just, transparent, and ethical requires a holistic approach that involves all segments of society and political parties. These strategies include political education based on the values of Pancasila, enhancing the transparency and accountability of political parties, establishing a more inclusive and fair party system, strict oversight of political parties, and encouraging inter-party collaboration in national development. Additionally, it is crucial to empower the public in the political process through effective voter education, aimed at increasing active public participation in elections and political decision-making. The transformation of the party system requires a comprehensive approach. Political education, transparency, internal democracy, oversight, and programmatic collaboration must proceed simultaneously (Ansell & Gash, 2018).. This strategy is crucial for restoring the party's

function as a vehicle for public representation and preventing democratic decline caused by pragmatism, oligarchy, and weak political accountability.

CONCLUSION

Political pragmatism in Indonesia not only reflects the opportunistic behavior of the elite but also points to the weak institutionalization of political parties. A focus on short-term electoral interests has shifted the role of political parties from a means of public representation to an instrument in the struggle for power. Therefore, efforts to strengthen democracy must focus on institutionalizing Pancasila ethics in the processes of cadre development, political recruitment, financial management, decision-making, and coalition-building. Theoretically, this article argues that the quality of the party system is determined not only by organizational stability and political competition but also by ethical consistency in fulfilling the functions of public representation and accountability. Practically, the government and political parties need to strengthen integrity-based cadre development standards, disclose information on funding and nomination processes, and establish more transparent internal oversight mechanisms. These steps are crucial for fostering a party system that is more integrity-driven, democratic, and oriented toward the interests of the people.

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