



Institutional Evolution of Bawaslu in Indonesia Election Supervision 2003–2017

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v12i2.6601>

Abstract

The 2003–2017 period is a crucial phase in understanding the institutional evolution of the General Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), considering that this period became an arena for the consolidation of election supervision in Indonesia which aims to support democracy after the 1998 Reformation. Reformation not only ended the authoritarian regime, but also started a transition democracy that demands the strengthening of fair and transparent electoral institutions. In this context, independent and effective election supervision is a necessity that cannot be ignored. This period reflects the institutional transformation of Bawaslu from an ad hoc entity with limited authority to a permanent institution that has a strategic function in ensuring election integrity. Free and fair elections are not only a marker of procedural democracy, but are also the main pillar of government legitimacy. Therefore, strengthening Bawaslu is not only related to the technical efficiency of supervision, but also to the stability of democracy itself.

Keywords: *Institutional Evolution of Bawaslu: Indonesia: Election Supervision 2003–2017*

1. Introduction

During this period, various institutional changes to Bawaslu occurred in response to the evolving needs of democracy. Initially, through Law Number 12 of 2003, election supervision was carried out by the Election Supervisory Committee (Panwaslu) which was ad hoc. This reflected the limited capacity of the state in designing a sustainable supervisory institution. However, through Law Number 22 of 2007, Bawaslu obtained permanent status with a clearer mandate, although its authority was still limited to the recommendation function. A significant transformation occurred in 2012 through Law Number 15 of 2011 which strengthened Bawaslu's authority in handling administrative violations and election process disputes. The peak was Law Number 7 of 2017 which gave Bawaslu a more strategic position as an independent supervisory institution with a network down to the village level, allowing for more comprehensive and responsive supervision to new challenges, including the dynamics of digital politics.

These institutional changes have had a significant impact on the effectiveness of election supervision in Indonesia. Broader authority allows Bawaslu to handle various types of violations, from administrative to criminal. The increasingly strong institutional independence also strengthens the legitimacy of Bawaslu's decisions, although it still faces challenges, such as limited human resources and infrastructure, especially at the regional level. In addition, supervision of money politics, black campaigns, and vote manipulation practices has shown more measurable results, although the development of digital technology and social media has created new challenges that require institutional adaptation. Thus, the

period 2003–2017 not only reflects Bawaslu's institutional journey, but also shows how Indonesia has attempted to strengthen the foundations of democracy through more independent and effective election supervision. This study will examine in more depth the dynamics of these institutional changes and their impact on the quality of election supervision.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach using in-depth interview methods and text analysis study which are methods within the scope of qualitative research studies. Interviews were conducted with actors who were interested in the existence of election supervisory institutions at that time.

This research method was chosen because the researcher wanted to study in depth the formulation of the problem in this study through the results of in-depth interviews and also analysis of available texts, so this method requires researchers to carry out a complete and in-depth data search process through in-depth interviews and text searches, including literature searches to complete the existing data.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Initial Formation and Initial Challenges of Bawaslu (2003–2008)

3.1.1. Formation of Bawaslu Based on Law No. 22 of 2003

The establishment of Bawaslu as a permanent institution based on Law Number 22 of 2003 is an important milestone in the history of Indonesian democracy, reflecting the urgent need for more structured and sustainable election supervision. One of the main reasons for establishing Bawaslu as a permanent institution was to address the increasingly complex challenges of organizing elections after the 1998 Reformation. Previously, election supervision was carried out by the Election Supervisory Committee (Panwaslu) which was ad hoc and formed only in the run-up to elections. However, this model was considered ineffective in maintaining the continuity of supervision and long-term accountability, especially considering the rampant election violations such as money politics, vote manipulation, and abuse of power by election participants. In this context, Law Number 22 of 2003 mandates the establishment of Bawaslu as a permanent institution to ensure that election supervision is not only carried out temporarily, but becomes an integral part of the ever-evolving democratic system. As stated by Hadar Nafis Gumay (2014), strengthening the institution of election supervisors is "an answer to the needs of democracy to guarantee the integrity of the electoral process and uphold the principle of justice in political competition".

Even if we look back to the early days of reform, the seeds of Bawaslu's presence already existed through the election supervisory agency in 1999, as conveyed by member of the Indonesian House of Representatives, Rambe Kamaruzaman, as follows:

"If we look back, in the early days of reform, the forerunner of Bawaslu's presence actually existed through the election supervisory committee in 1999. This institution was formed under the KPU to ensure that the implementation of elections was carried out according to the principles of honesty, fairness, and transparency. Although its authority at that time was still very minimal, its existence became an important foundation for the supervision of the implementation of elections by the KPU in Indonesia. The importance of Panwaslu shows the awareness that supervision is a crucial element in maintaining the integrity of the democratic process" (interview with Rambe Kamaruzaman, November 23, 2024).

In the 2004 election, Bawaslu's initial role and duties focused on supervising the election process to ensure compliance with applicable regulations. Based on Law No. 22 of 2003, Bawaslu is tasked with supervising the implementation of election stages, starting from the preparation of the voter list, campaign, to vote recapitulation, and providing recommendations on violations that occur. However, Bawaslu's authority at this time was still limited to administrative functions, with a mandate to forward cases of election criminal violations to law enforcement officers or the General Election Commission (KPU) as the election implementer. This shows that Bawaslu's role was initially more as a passive supervisor, without direct execution authority. For example, in the 2004 election, Bawaslu faced major challenges related to the rampant violations such as money politics and the neutrality of state officials, but limited authority hampered the effectiveness of law enforcement against these violations (Sherlock, 2004).

The limited function of Bawaslu at the beginning of its formation was also mentioned by Prof. Muhammad:

"When it was first formed, Bawaslu's function was very limited to very simple supervision. Its main task was only to monitor and provide recommendations regarding election violations. The authority to execute was not yet available, so the effectiveness of supervision at that time was quite limited" (interview with Prof. Muhammad, November 6, 2024)

On the other hand, although Bawaslu's authority is still relatively limited, its existence as a permanent institution provides an important institutional foundation for strengthening its supervisory function in the future. With a more organized structure, Bawaslu began to develop systematic supervisory mechanisms, such as the establishment of supervisory committees at the provincial and district/city levels, although its capacity is still very dependent on the support of competent human resources and adequate funding. In the view of Aspinall and Mietzner (2010), strengthening election supervisory institutions such as Bawaslu is part of a broader effort to mitigate the risk of democratic regression amidst the process of consolidating Indonesian democracy.

Overall, the establishment of Bawaslu based on Law No. 22 of 2003 reflects the Indonesian government's commitment to improving the quality of elections through more systematic and institutionalized supervision. However, the challenges faced by Bawaslu in the 2004 election also underscore the need to strengthen its authority, human resource capacity, and institutional integrity in ensuring the effectiveness of election supervision in the future. The next chapter will examine how these institutional changes have developed in subsequent periods to face the challenges of ever-changing democracy.

3.1.2. Structural Weaknesses and Initial Authority

The structural weaknesses and initial authority held by Bawaslu in the early days of its formation under Law Number 22 of 2003 became significant obstacles in carrying out election supervision duties. One of the main weaknesses was the large institutional dependence on the General Election Commission (KPU) and the government, which directly affected the operational independence and effectiveness of Bawaslu. As a new institution, Bawaslu at that time did not yet have a solid institutional foundation to carry out its functions autonomously. This dependence was seen in various aspects, such as resources, budget, and implementation of recommendations. Bawaslu had to refer to and coordinate intensively with the KPU to follow up on findings of election violations, reducing its institutional autonomy. For example, according to Sherlock (2004), in the 2004 election, many reports of violations submitted by Bawaslu only ended in recommendations that were not responded to firmly by the KPU or government officials, indicating the weakness of Bawaslu's execution power in the election system at that time.

This is in accordance with the statement by Rambe Kamaruzaman:

“Law Number 22 of 2003 became one of the significant obstacles in the implementation of election supervision duties. At that time, the existing legal framework did not provide Bawaslu with the freedom to operate independently. One of its main weaknesses was its large institutional dependence on the General Election Commission (KPU) and the government. Bawaslu's authority was very limited, so that many strategic and operational decisions could not be made entirely independently. This dependence not only affected Bawaslu's independence, but also had an impact on the effectiveness of election supervision as a whole. In conditions like this, it was difficult for Bawaslu to carry out its supervisory function optimally, especially if there was a potential conflict of interest involving these parties” (interview with Rambe Kamaruzaman, November 23, 2024)

Dependence on the KPU and the government also creates potential conflicts of interest in election supervision. The KPU as the election organizer has a major role in all stages of the electoral process, while Bawaslu acts as a supervisor of these stages. In this condition, when Bawaslu finds violations involving the KPU or election participants with close political ties to the government, Bawaslu's recommendations often do not receive adequate follow-up. As explained by Aspinall and Mietzner (2010), Bawaslu's subordination position to the KPU and the government in its early days reflected the structural weaknesses inherent in the institutional design of Indonesian democracy, especially in ensuring effective checks and balances in the implementation of elections. In addition, Bawaslu's minimal authority to follow up on election violations is also a major obstacle in carrying out effective oversight functions. At the beginning of its formation, Bawaslu's authority was limited to supervising the election process, receiving reports of violations, and providing recommendations to related parties, such as the KPU or law enforcement officers.

However, Bawaslu does not have the authority to execute sanctions for these violations. This makes the supervision carried out procedural and lacking in coercive power. In practice, many cases of election violations, including money politics and administrative violations, were not responded to adequately because Bawaslu only acted as a "liaison" between the community and the authorities (Sherlock, 2004). As a result, repeated violations occurred in every election, without any significant effort to address the root of the problem. Minimnya kewenangan ini juga menyebabkan kurangnya kepercayaan publik terhadap kemampuan Bawaslu untuk menegakkan keadilan pemilu. Sebagai lembaga yang diharapkan menjadi pengawal integritas pemilu, keterbatasan Bawaslu pada periode awal justru menciptakan persepsi bahwa lembaga ini kurang efektif dalam menghadapi pelanggaran besar. Sebagai contoh, pada pemilu 2004, meskipun Bawaslu mencatat banyak pelanggaran kampanye, seperti penggunaan fasilitas negara dan praktik politik uang, laporan-laporan tersebut sebagian besar tidak ditindaklanjuti dengan sanksi yang tegas. Dalam pandangan Hadar Nafis Gumay (2014), kelemahan ini menunjukkan bahwa desain awal kelembagaan Bawaslu lebih menekankan aspek pengawasan administratif ketimbang memberikan kemampuan untuk menegakkan hukum pemilu secara langsung.

The above explanation was confirmed by Jerry Sumampouw:”

The main weakness in the initial institutional design of Bawaslu was the excessive focus on the administrative supervision aspect. At the beginning of its formation, Bawaslu was more directed to monitor and record administrative violations that occurred during the election process, but was not equipped with sufficient authority to enforce election law directly. As a result, when violations were found, Bawaslu could only provide recommendations to other institutions, such as the KPU or law enforcement officers, for follow-up. This process not only slowed down the resolution of violations, but also created loopholes that allowed violations not to be handled thoroughly” (interview with Jerry Sumampouw, December 13, 2024).

In addition, Delia complained about the weaknesses in Bawaslu's initial design:

“The initial institutional design of Bawaslu created a major challenge for Bawaslu’s effectiveness in maintaining election integrity. Without direct authority to enforce the law, Bawaslu was often considered to lack ‘teeth’ in ensuring the election process runs honestly and fairly. Therefore,

strengthening the institution through regulations that provide broader and firmer legal authority is very important to overcome this weakness. That way, Bawaslu will not only be a supervisory institution, but also a law enforcement institution that can act quickly and independently against election violations” (interview with Delia Wildianti, December 12, 2024)

These structural weaknesses and limited authority reflect more fundamental problems related to the design of democratic institutions in Indonesia during the post-Reformation transition period. As Indonesian democracy begins to move towards consolidation, effective election monitoring becomes an urgent need to maintain the legitimacy of the electoral process. However, as stated by Mietzner (2009), institutional reforms carried out in the early 2000s were often partial and did not fully take into account political dynamics and operational needs on the ground. In the Bawaslu context, this can be seen in the gap between public expectations for independent election supervision and the institutional capacity available to meet these expectations.

Overall, Bawaslu's dependence on the KPU and the government, as well as the lack of authority to follow up on election violations, were significant obstacles that reduced the effectiveness of election supervision in the early period. Although the formation of Bawaslu as a permanent institution through Law no. 22 of 2003 is a step forward in democratic institutionalization, these weaknesses indicate that further institutional strengthening is needed to ensure that Bawaslu can carry out its duties with full autonomy and adequate execution power. This is also an important lesson in democratic institutional design, where strengthening election supervision does not only depend on institutional status, but also on the authority and operational capacity given to the supervisory institution.

3.1.3. Lessons from the 2004 Election

The 2004 election marked the first election held under the supervision of the General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) as a permanent institution, a step forward in strengthening election supervision mechanisms in Indonesia post-1998 Reformation. However, this election also provided important lessons regarding the structural and operational weaknesses faced Bawaslu. Evaluation of election supervision during this period shows that although Bawaslu has an institutional framework, its implementation in the field is still far from optimal. One of the main weaknesses is operational unpreparedness caused by limited human resources and budget, as well as the still weak independence of institutions in carrying out their duties effectively. According to Sherlock (2004), the 2004 election reflected a complicated transition for Indonesia, where the implementation of election supervision by Bawaslu was still in the shadow of the KPU and political influence from various parties.

In terms of supervision, Bawaslu still faces big challenges in ensuring compliance with election regulations, especially regarding the neutrality of election organizers and state officials. In the Lucudem report (2014), it was found that one of the main problems in the 2004 elections was the partiality of state officials towards certain election participants, especially at the regional level. The practice of misuse of state facilities for campaign purposes is in the spotlight, but Bawaslu does not have the execution authority to impose sanctions. This limitation causes many violations to only be recorded as reports without concrete action. This reflects a weakness in institutional design, where Bawaslu at that time only functioned as an administrative supervisor without sufficient coercive power to enforce the rules. As stated by Hadar Nafis Gumay (2014), Bawaslu's weak ability to take action against violations involving powerful political actors shows the importance of strengthening the authority of election supervisors to maintain the integrity of the electoral process.

Another problem that stands out is the limited budget faced by Bawaslu in carrying out its duties. As a newly formed institution, Bawaslu is highly dependent on budget allocations from the government, which are often insufficient to support optimal monitoring activities. In the 2004 elections, these budget limitations had a direct impact on Bawaslu's ability to recruit and train election supervisory committees at the provincial, district/city and sub-district levels. According to Aspinall and Mietzner (2010), this

condition causes a gap in the quality of supervision between regions that have better access to resources and regions that lack support. Budget limitations also affect the independence of Bawaslu, because in some cases, the additional budget required must be approved by regional governments, which sometimes have a particular political interest in the election results.

This budget limitation was also conveyed by Abhan:

"One of the main problems faced by Bawaslu in the early days of its formation was budget limitations. As a newly established institution, Bawaslu is completely dependent on funding allocations from the government. Unfortunately, the allocated budget is often insufficient to support the implementation of election supervision duties thoroughly and optimally. This budget limitation has an impact on many aspects, starting from the lack of competent human resources to the lack of supporting facilities and infrastructure. In fact, election supervision requires intensive efforts, such as monitoring in all regions, training for supervisors, and adequate technical support. "When the budget is insufficient, many monitoring activities cannot run optimally, thereby reducing the effectiveness of Bawaslu in maintaining the integrity of the election process" (Abhan interview, 7 November 2024)

Bawaslu's independence as a supervisory institution was also a critical issue in the 2004 elections. Institutionally, Bawaslu was designed to be an independent institution, but in practice, this independence was often questioned due to its structural and functional relationship with the KPU and the government. In several cases, Bawaslu's recommendations regarding election violations were not followed up by the KPU, especially if the violations involved political actors who had large influence. Mietzner (2009) notes that in the 2004 elections, Bawaslu's institutional independence was tested by political pressure from major parties, which attempted to influence the oversight process to benefit their interests. This highlights the need to strengthen institutional protection to ensure that Bawaslu can carry out its duties without political interference.

Nevertheless, the 2004 election also provided several positive lessons for Bawaslu. One of them is the importance of building a stronger monitoring network at the local level. In this election, Bawaslu began developing a framework to involve civil society and independent monitoring institutions in supporting election supervision. This step not only helps expand the scope of supervision, but also increases public participation in maintaining election integrity. For example, reports submitted by independent monitoring institutions often form the basis for Bawaslu to formulate recommendations for certain violations, although follow-up is still limited.

"In the 2004 elections, Bawaslu began to realize the need to involve civil society as strategic partners in monitoring. Bawaslu developed a collaborative framework that allows civil society organizations, local communities and independent monitoring institutions to actively participate in supporting election supervision. This involvement of civil society is very important, especially in areas that are difficult to reach by formal supervisors, so that the scope of supervision can be expanded significantly. With this collaboration, the election monitoring process will become more transparent and participatory. This also has a positive impact on public trust in the integrity of the election process" (interview Jojo Rohi, 20 December 2024).

Overall, the evaluation of the 2004 election supervision under Bawaslu shows that weaknesses in neutrality, budget limitations, and institutional independence are the main challenges that must be overcome to improve the quality of election supervision in the future. This election also highlights the importance of strengthening Bawaslu's authority to provide greater execution power in cracking down on violations, as well as the need for structural reform to ensure the independence of election monitoring institutions from political influence. In Aspinall's (2010) view, institutional strengthening like this is an essential step in consolidating Indonesian democracy, where effective election supervision is one of the main pillars to ensure government legitimacy resulting from a fair and transparent electoral process.

3.2. Bawaslu Institutional Reform: The Era of Law no. 15 of 2011

3.2.1. Strengthening Status and Authority

Ratification of Law no. 15 of 2011 concerning the Implementation of Elections is an important point in Bawaslu's institutional reform. This law provides significant strengthening to the status and authority of Bawaslu, which was previously considered limited and ineffective based on the experience of the 2004 and 2009 elections. One of the fundamental changes is the transformation of Bawaslu into a more structurally and functionally independent institution. If previously Bawaslu tended to be in the shadow of the General Election Commission (KPU), Law no. 15 of 2011 clarifies Bawaslu's position as an independent institution that has much broader authority. According to Hadar Gumay (2014), this strengthening aims to strengthen the checks and balances system in organizing elections, by ensuring that election supervision is carried out by institutions that are autonomous from political and administrative intervention.

"Previously, Bawaslu's role focused more on administrative supervision, with very limited capacity in dealing with election violations directly. This often created challenges, because the Bawaslu institution at that time was not yet fully independent and still faced obstacles in carrying out its functions optimally. However, through Law no. 15 of 2011, there was a significant transformation which made Bawaslu more independent structurally and functionally. One of the fundamental changes introduced by this law is strengthening Bawaslu's authority in various aspects, such as supervision, handling violations and resolving election disputes. "Not only that, Bawaslu's institutional status has also increased, so that it is able to carry out its duties more independently without being too dependent on other institutions" (interview with Arteria Dahlan, 2 December 2024).

Bawaslu's transformation to become more independent can also be seen in the member recruitment mechanism, which is starting to be based on a more open and professional selection process. UU no. 15 of 2011 regulates that Bawaslu members at the central level are selected by the DPR based on recommendations from an independent selection committee, while at the provincial and district/city levels, members are selected by the Central Bawaslu through a transparent process. This change is intended to increase accountability and quality of election supervision at all levels. Aspinall and Mietzner (2010) note that this step is a significant effort to reduce potential conflicts of interest that could disrupt the independence of election supervision, especially at the regional level which is often more vulnerable to local political influence.

UU no. 15 of 2011 also expanded Bawaslu's authority by adding three main functions: preventing violations, handling violations, and resolving election disputes. The addition of this function provides a new dimension in election monitoring that is more proactive and comprehensive. Prior to this law, Bawaslu's supervisory function was more reactive, namely receiving reports and providing recommendations. With its prevention function, Bawaslu is given the mandate to carry out outreach and education to election participants, organizers and the public in order to minimize potential violations before they occur. In a study conducted by Tulisdem (2014), this prevention function was considered to be one of the important innovations that supports election integrity, because it allows Bawaslu to play a greater role in building legal and democratic awareness among election stakeholders.

The function of handling violations has also been strengthened by giving Bawaslu the authority to follow up on reports of administrative, criminal and ethical violations. UU no. 15 of 2011 mandates Bawaslu to prepare more specific and binding recommendations, both to the KPU and law enforcement officials, depending on the type of violation found. In the context of election criminal violations, Bawaslu is also given the authority to form an Integrated Law Enforcement Center (Gakkumdu) involving elements of Bawaslu, the Police and the Prosecutor's Office. According to Mietzner (2009), the formation of Gakkumdu is an important step in speeding up the process of handling criminal election violations which previously were often hampered by poor coordination between related institutions.

Apart from that, the addition of the election dispute resolution function gives Bawaslu a new role as an adjudicator in disputes involving election participants, the KPU and other interested parties. This function allows Bawaslu to provide final and binding decisions in the context of administrative disputes, such as nomination disputes and campaign implementation. In practice, this authority strengthens Bawaslu's position as an institution that not only supervises, but is also able to resolve conflicts that arise in the election process directly. Hadar Gumay (2014) emphasized that this adjudication function provides a new dimension in the election supervision system in Indonesia, because it expands the role of Bawaslu from just a supervisor to become an integral part of the election law enforcement system..

The addition of Bawaslu's function makes Bawaslu stronger, as stated by Prof. Mohammed:

"Bawaslu is now increasingly powerful with increasingly stronger authority. Not only overseeing the election process, but also handling violations, resolving election process disputes, and providing binding recommendations. This makes Bawaslu's role more strategic in maintaining election integrity" (interview with Prof. Muhammad, 6 November 2024)

Namun, meskipun reformasi kelembagaan yang diatur dalam UU No. 15 Tahun 2011 memberikan banyak kemajuan, pelaksanaannya tidak lepas dari tantangan. Salah satu tantangan utama adalah kapasitas kelembagaan, terutama di tingkat daerah. Dengan bertambahnya fungsi dan kewenangan, Bawaslu membutuhkan sumber daya manusia, anggaran, dan infrastruktur yang lebih memadai untuk menjalankan tugas-tugasnya. Dalam laporan Perludem (2014), ditemukan bahwa Bawaslu di tingkat kabupaten/kota sering kali menghadapi kendala operasional akibat keterbatasan anggaran dan kurangnya pelatihan bagi panitia pengawas pemilu (Panwaslu). Kesenjangan kapasitas ini menunjukkan bahwa penguatan kelembagaan di tingkat pusat perlu diimbangi dengan penguatan yang serupa di tingkat daerah untuk memastikan implementasi yang konsisten di seluruh wilayah Indonesia.

Overall, Bawaslu institutional reform through Law no. 15 of 2011 reflects serious efforts to improve the weaknesses that existed in the previous period. The transformation of Bawaslu into a more independent institution, as well as the addition of functions for prevention, handling violations and resolving disputes, provides a more solid foundation for election supervision in Indonesia. However, the success of this reform is highly dependent on Bawaslu's operational capacity, as well as adequate political and budget support to support the implementation of its functions. This reform is also an important part of the democratic consolidation process in Indonesia, where effective and independent election supervision is one of the main pillars to ensure that the electoral process runs honestly, fairly and transparently.

3.2.2. Decentralized Bawaslu Structure

Institutional reforms regulated in Law no. 15 of 2011 not only strengthens Bawaslu's authority at the national level, but also creates a more decentralized institutional structure through the formation of Bawaslu at the provincial and district/city levels. This step is based on the need to expand the reach of election supervision, considering the vast territory of Indonesia and the complexity of the electoral process which includes various administrative levels. According to Aspinall and Mietzner (2010), this decentralization of supervisory institutions is an effort to ensure that the election supervision function can be carried out effectively down to the local level, where the potential for violations is often higher due to weak supervision in the past.

The formation of Provincial Bawaslu and Regency/City Bawaslu aims to provide closer and more responsive supervision of election dynamics at the regional level. This structure allows better coordination between Central Bawaslu and supervisors at the local level, especially in implementing the functions of prevention, handling violations and resolving election disputes. According to Hadar Gumay (2014), the formation of Bawaslu at the provincial and district/city levels not only increases the effectiveness of supervision, but also provides space for local communities to participate in election supervision. Recruitment of Bawaslu members at the regional level is carried out through a selection process that

involves elements of professionalism and local representation, so as to provide a more contextual perspective on regional political dynamics.

However, establishing this decentralized structure also presents major challenges, especially regarding operational capacity and inter-level coordination. In the Lucudem report (2014), it was found that Regency/City Bawaslu often faced human resource constraints and limited budgets, which affected their ability to carry out their supervisory duties optimally. Apart from that, differences in the level of understanding and technical capabilities between Bawaslu members in various regions are an issue that requires serious attention, especially in ensuring that all supervisors have the same competency standards in carrying out their duties.

Apart from the formation of Bawaslu at the provincial and district/city levels, election supervision at the sub-district and village levels is carried out by ad hoc election supervisory committees, namely the District Election Supervisory Committee (Panwascam) and Field Election Supervisors (PPL). The role of ad hoc supervisors is very important, because they are at the front line in monitoring the implementation of elections at the grassroots level. They are tasked with supervising the election stages starting from the campaign, logistics distribution, to counting votes at polling stations (TPS). In the context of elections in Indonesia, where the number of polling stations is very large and spread over a wide area, the existence of ad hoc supervisors is a crucial element in ensuring the integrity of the election process. According to Mietzner (2009), this ad hoc-based monitoring system allows flexibility in dealing with Indonesia's geographic and demographic complexity, although it is often faced with capacity and professionalism challenges.

However, the role of ad hoc supervisors is not free from various obstacles. One of the main problems is the high rate of rotation and new recruitment every election cycle, which causes a lack of continuity and experience at the sub-district and village levels. In a study conducted by Aspinall (2014), it was found that most ad hoc supervisors received only short training before carrying out their duties, which was often insufficient to meet the technical and political challenges in the field. In addition, ad hoc supervisors also face the risk of political pressure from local actors, which can affect their independence and objectivity in carrying out their duties. This pressure often comes in the form of intimidation, threats, or even attempts at bribery to influence supervisory outcomes. This shows that although decentralized supervisory structures have great potential, their implementation requires stronger support in terms of training, protection and incentives for ad hoc supervisors.

From an institutional perspective, Bawaslu's decentralized structure also introduces cross-level coordination challenges. With the existence of Bawaslu at the central, provincial, district/city levels, and ad hoc supervisors at the sub-district and village levels, a clear mechanism is needed to ensure the effective flow of information and instructions at all levels. According toeludem (2014), ineffective coordination often occurs due to a lack of an integrated information management system, which results in delays in handling reports of violations or election disputes. In addition, differences in interpretation of election regulations between supervisors at various levels often affect consistency in decision making.

Despite these challenges, the decentralized structure of Bawaslu continues to make a significant contribution to improving the quality of election supervision in Indonesia. With the presence of supervisors at all levels, Bawaslu is able to expand the reach of supervision and respond to violations more quickly. Apart from that, this system also provides opportunities for the public to be directly involved in election supervision, either through recruiting ad hoc supervisors or as whistleblowers. In Mietzner's (2009) view, this decentralization of supervision reflects Indonesia's commitment to building a more inclusive and transparent electoral system, although it still requires improvement in various aspects.

Overall, the establishment of a decentralized Bawaslu structure through Law no. 15 of 2011 is a step forward in efforts to strengthen election supervision in Indonesia. Despite operational and coordination challenges, this structure provides a more solid foundation for ensuring the integrity of the electoral process

at all levels. The successful implementation of this system is highly dependent on political support, adequate budget allocation, and strengthening the capacity of supervisors at all levels. In the long term, this decentralized supervision has great potential to increase the legitimacy and public trust in the electoral process in Indonesia.

3.2.3. 2014 Election Case Study

The 2014 election was an important moment in the history of Indonesian democracy because it was one of the most competitive elections post-Reformation. In this context, Bawaslu plays a crucial role in ensuring the integrity of the legislative and presidential elections. With authority that has been strengthened by Law no. 15 of 2011, Bawaslu plays a role not only in monitoring violations but also preventing, prosecuting and resolving election disputes. The 2014 election also presented more complex challenges, including the practice of money politics and manipulation of voter data, which tested Bawaslu's effectiveness as an independent and professional election monitoring institution.

In the 2014 legislative elections, Bawaslu focused on supervision at all stages, from campaigning to vote counting. According to the Bawaslu report (2014), around 5,900 cases of election violations were recorded during that period, with the majority related to administrative violations, money politics and unscheduled campaigns. One of the proactive steps taken by Bawaslu is to prioritize the prevention function by launching a public awareness campaign about the prohibition of money politics and opening reporting space for the public. This strategy reflects a shift in Bawaslu's focus from simply being a "firefighter" who responds to violations to being an actor who seeks to prevent violations early on (Harjanto, 2015).

Namun pelaksanaan pengawasan pemilu legislatif menghadapi tantangan besar, khususnya dalam mengatasi praktik politik uang yang semakin sistematis dan tersembunyi. Menurut Aspinall dan Berenschot (2019), politik uang dalam pemilu legislatif sering kali melibatkan struktur informal seperti tim sukses atau jaringan lokal yang sulit dideteksi oleh Bawaslu. Dalam konteks ini, keterbatasan sumber daya manusia dan teknologi menjadi hambatan serius bagi efektivitas pengawasan. Meskipun Bawaslu telah meningkatkan kapasitas pengawasan melalui pengawas di tingkat provinsi, kabupaten/kota, hingga ad hoc di desa, tantangan geografis dan logistik membuat pengawasan terhadap politik tetap menjadi pekerjaan rumah besar.

Pemilu presiden 2014 yang mempertemukan dua kandidat kuat, Joko Widodo dan Prabowo Subianto, juga menghadirkan dinamika pengawasan yang unik. Tingginya polusi politik, intensitas kampanye, dan kerentanan terhadap manipulasi data pemilih menjadi tantangan utama bagi Bawaslu. Salah satu isu utama yang muncul adalah keberadaan daftar pemilih tetap (DPT) yang tidak akurat, termasuk kasus pemilih ganda dan pemilih yang telah meninggal namun masih tercatat dalam DPT. Dalam laporan resmi Bawaslu (2014), ditemukan bahwa sekitar 1,3 juta nama pemilih dalam DPT terindikasi bermasalah. Masalah ini sebagian besar disebabkan oleh koordinasi yang lemah antara Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU) dan pemerintah daerah dalam memutakhirkan data pemilih, serta berkurangnya waktu dan sumber daya untuk memperbaiki data secara komprehensif sebelum pemilu (Pratikno, 2014).

Bawaslu seeks to overcome the challenges of voter data manipulation through audits of the DPT and coordination with the KPU. Although this step helps improve some of the data, many people believe that this effort is not enough to ensure a completely clean and accurate DPT. According to Aspinall (2014), the DPT problem reflects systemic weaknesses in voter data governance in Indonesia, which requires fundamental reform, including better integration of population data and the use of more sophisticated digital technology.

Apart from that, high political polarization in the 2014 presidential election also added pressure to Bawaslu's independence. In several cases, Bawaslu has faced accusations of partiality from supporters of one candidate, especially in relation to handling campaign violations. Accusations like this show that even though Bawaslu is institutionally independent, public perception of the neutrality of this institution is still

fragile. This underlines the importance of transparency and accountability in every Bawaslu action to maintain the institution's legitimacy and public trust (Mietzner, 2015).

Despite facing various challenges, Bawaslu also recorded several successes during the 2014 elections. One of them was Bawaslu's ability to handle disputes over legislative and presidential election results more professionally compared to previous elections. With the dispute resolution function which has been strengthened through Law no. 15 of 2011, Bawaslu can act as a mediator to prevent a larger conflict from escalating. For example, in the case of disputes over legislative election results, Bawaslu succeeded in resolving most of the disputes at the provincial level before they were brought to the Constitutional Court (MK), thereby reducing the burden of litigation at the national level (Gumay, 2014).

Another success is the increase in public participation in reporting election violations. By utilizing technology, such as an online reporting system, Bawaslu is able to reach more reports from the public than in previous elections. This step not only increases supervisory capacity but also strengthens the role of the community as a key element in maintaining election integrity. A study conducted by Tulisdem (2015) shows that public participation in election monitoring increased significantly in 2014, although there are still challenges in verifying reports efficiently and effectively.

Overall, the 2014 election experience provided important lessons for Bawaslu in strengthening its role as election supervisor. Challenges such as money politics, manipulation of voter data, and perceptions of neutrality show that election supervision in Indonesia still faces complex obstacles. However, Bawaslu's success in increasing supervisory capacity, handling disputes, and involving the community shows that this institution continues to develop into a main pillar in maintaining the integrity of Indonesian democracy. In the future, Bawaslu needs to strengthen technological aspects, inter-institutional coordination and transparency to face increasingly complex challenges in the implementation of elections in the future.

3.3. Era of Strengthening Digital and Technology in Election Supervision in 2017

3.3.1. Background to Law no. 7 of 2017

Ratification of Law no. 7 of 2017 concerning Elections is a significant step in strengthening the legal and institutional framework for election supervision in Indonesia. One of the fundamental aspects of this law is the integration of technology-based approaches in the election monitoring system as well as increasing the institutional capacity of Bawaslu through digitalization. This transformation reflects a response to growing challenges in the administration of elections, including the increasing complexity of violations, the need for transparency, and broader public participation in the democratic process.

The dynamics of policy changes towards technology-based supervision cannot be separated from the rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT). This law provides a legal basis for Bawaslu to utilize technology in election monitoring, such as the use of an online reporting system for violations, big data-based data analysis, and real-time monitoring of social media. According to Gumay (2018), this approach aims to overcome the limitations of manual supervision which is often unable to keep up with the scale and speed of holding elections in the digital era. For example, in the 2019 election, Bawaslu used the Dispute Resolution Information System (SIPS) which allows the reporting and dispute resolution process to be carried out electronically. This innovation not only increases efficiency but also expands public access to monitoring mechanisms.

Apart from that, technology-based monitoring is also designed to address new challenges that arise, such as the spread of disinformation and hoaxes that can influence public opinion and election results. UU no. 7 of 2017 mandates Bawaslu to collaborate with other institutions, including the Ministry of Communication and Information and social media platforms, to identify and take action against content that violates election regulations (Mietzner, 2020). However, implementation challenges remain, especially

regarding Bawaslu's technical capacity in optimally utilizing technology and the issue of protecting personal data in digital surveillance (Aspinall & Warburton, 2019).

In terms of increasing institutional capacity, Law no. 7 of 2017 provides a foundation for Bawaslu to develop better digital infrastructure. For example, this law supports the development of technology-based systems for managing election data, including reporting violations, resolving disputes, and monitoring election logistics. Initiatives such as the Election Monitoring Information System (Siwaslu) are concrete evidence of how Bawaslu utilizes technology to increase accountability and transparency in supervision (Perludem, 2019). Siwaslu allows election observers in the field to report violations directly via mobile devices, which are then processed centrally for analysis and follow-up.

However, strengthening institutional capacity through digital support also faces a number of obstacles. One of the main challenges is the disparity in technological infrastructure between urban and rural areas, which can hinder the effectiveness of surveillance in remote areas. According to the study by Harjanto et al. (2021), limited internet access and lack of digital literacy in several regions of Indonesia are still obstacles for election observers at the local level to make maximum use of technology. Apart from that, limited budget support for the development and maintenance of digital systems is also a concern, considering that the ever-growing complexity of technology requires continuous investment.

The shift towards technology-based supervision has also influenced Bawaslu's work patterns, especially in terms of coordination and communication between institutional levels. With an integrated digital system, Bawaslu can optimize the flow of information between supervisors at the central, provincial, district/city, sub-district and village levels. For example, violation data reported from the grassroots level can be immediately analyzed and used as a basis for decision making at the national level. This creates new efficiencies in supervision, which were previously hampered by slow bureaucracy and data fragmentation (Setiawan, 2020).

Apart from its benefits, the adoption of technology in election monitoring also raises ethical and legal questions regarding the protection of privacy rights and personal data. In the context of digital surveillance, the use of technology to monitor the behavior of candidates, political parties and the public must be carried out carefully so as not to violate democratic principles. According to Haryanto (2022), more specific regulations are needed to regulate the use of technology in election monitoring, including accountability mechanisms for Bawaslu in managing data and information obtained through digital systems.

Overall, the background to Law no. 7 of 2017 reflects serious efforts to strengthen election supervision in Indonesia through technology integration and increasing institutional capacity. However, the successful implementation of this policy is highly dependent on Bawaslu's ability to overcome the technical, budgetary and ethical challenges that arise. Experience from the 2019 elections shows that technology-based monitoring has great potential to increase transparency, accountability and public participation in the election process. However, more planned strategic steps are needed to ensure that the benefits of technology can be felt evenly throughout Indonesia and do not compromise the democratic principles that underlie the electoral system.

3.3.2. Implementation of Digital Surveillance

The digital era brings new challenges and opportunities in election monitoring in Indonesia. With increasingly complex political dynamics and the increasing potential for violations, such as money politics, data manipulation, and the spread of hoaxes, manual supervision is no longer sufficient to guarantee election integrity. Therefore, Bawaslu utilizes digital technology through an online reporting system and social media monitoring, combined with active collaboration with civil society. This transformation reflects the evolution of the election monitoring paradigm, from traditional procedural-based approaches to more proactive, inclusive, and data-driven models (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019).

One of the main breakthroughs in digital monitoring is the implementation of an online reporting system, such as the Election Monitoring Information System (Siwaslu). This system allows reporters, including election observers and the general public, to submit reports regarding election violations in real-time via digital devices. Siwaslu is designed to increase the speed and accuracy of handling reports, reduce the potential for manipulation, and ensure transparency of the reporting process (Perludem, 2021). For example, in the 2019 election, Siwaslu processed thousands of reports from all over Indonesia, which were then used as a basis for investigations and legal action. Study by Harjanto et al. (2021) noted that Siwaslu succeeded in integrating supervision from central to regional levels, thereby speeding up the flow of information and minimizing the risk of data leaks.

Apart from online reporting systems, social media monitoring has become a vital component in digital surveillance, considering the role of digital platforms as the main space for political campaigns. Social media often becomes a channel for spreading hoaxes, hate speech and propaganda that can damage the credibility of elections. In this context, Bawaslu collaborates with technology platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Google, to monitor and identify content that violates election rules. Haryanto's (2022) study shows that this collaboration, although not perfect, has helped remove thousands of negative content during the election stages. However, the main challenge lies in Bawaslu's ability to process very large volumes of data quickly, as well as ensuring that decisions to remove content are made objectively and do not violate the principles of freedom of expression.

Beyond collaboration with technology platforms, digital supervision also involves the participation of civil society as strategic partners. Institutions such as Tulisem, ICW, and KoDe Initiative have contributed to building supervisory capacity through training, digital tool development, and policy advocacy. For example, Perludem launched the "Montau Pemilu" application which makes it easier for the public to report violations and monitor the vote counting process (Perludem, 2020). This collaboration not only strengthens the monitoring network but also expands Bawaslu's reach to remote areas that are difficult to reach by formal institutional structures.

However, digital surveillance also faces a number of obstacles that need to be overcome. First, the disparity in technological infrastructure between urban and rural areas is still a big challenge. According to a UNDP report (2021), the lack of internet access in some remote areas prevents local communities from actively participating in digital surveillance. This indicates the need for further investment in technology infrastructure, both by government and the private sector, to ensure inclusivity. Second, the issue of data security is a major concern, especially considering that digital surveillance involves the collection of large amounts of personal data. Without strict regulations, there is a risk that this data could be misused or leaked to irresponsible parties (Setiawan, 2020).

In addition, the effectiveness of digital monitoring also depends on the technical capacity of election observers. Not all Bawaslu personnel, especially at the regional level, have sufficient expertise to operate digital systems and analyze data on a large scale. In this case, collaboration with civil society can serve as a temporary solution, but long-term investment in technology training and education for election observers is still needed (Hidayat, 2019).

Despite facing various challenges, digital monitoring has had a significant positive impact on the integrity of elections in Indonesia. First, the digital system speeds up responses to violation reports, thereby preventing potential escalation of problems in the field. Second, the integration of technology in monitoring increases the transparency and accountability of the election process, which in turn strengthens public confidence in election results. Third, collaboration with civil society creates a checks and balances mechanism that strengthens the role of election observers in maintaining democracy.

In the future, digital surveillance requires a more integrated and long-term oriented approach. The government needs to ensure that policies and regulations related to digital surveillance are continuously updated to keep pace with technological developments. In addition, investment in infrastructure and human

resource capacity is a priority to ensure that technology can be utilized optimally. With these strategic steps, digital supervision can become the main pillar in strengthening Indonesian democracy in the digital era.

3.3.3. 2017 Election Evaluation

The 2017 Simultaneous Regional Head Election (Pilkada) is an important event that tests the capacity and effectiveness of election supervision in Indonesia. After institutional reform which began with the formation of Bawaslu through Law no. 15/2011, this institution is faced with new challenges in handling various election violations, especially at the local level. The 2017 Simultaneous Pilkada involving 101 regions provides a clear picture of Bawaslu's role in maintaining election integrity while also showing how institutional reform affects the quality of democracy at the local level. Even though there has been significant progress, an evaluation of the implementation of supervision in the 2017 Pilkada revealed several weaknesses that still need to be addressed in order to strengthen democracy in Indonesia.

One of the main highlights of the 2017 Simultaneous Regional Elections was how Bawaslu handled various types of violations that occurred during the election process. Bawaslu faces various forms of violations including money politics, abuse of authority by regional officials, and the spread of misleading information on social media. According to data from Bawaslu (2017), there were 1,062 reports of violations received, most of which were related to money politics and the use of state facilities for the interests of certain candidates. These violations occurred in various regions, from provinces to districts/cities, and show that even though there is supervision, the implementation of effective supervision still faces significant obstacles.

One factor that complicates supervision is the limited resources of Bawaslu at the regional level. Even though there are supervisory structures at the provincial and district/city levels, Bawaslu at the sub-district and village levels is still very limited in terms of the number of personnel and expertise. This affects their ability to monitor the implementation of regional elections effectively, considering the large area and diversity of socio-political characteristics in various regions (Pratama, 2018). Although Bawaslu has developed an online reporting system to speed up the monitoring process, the reality on the ground shows that more complex violations are often difficult to uncover without direct involvement of the community and ad hoc supervisors. In several cases, regional supervisors were forced to face threats and intimidation originating from various parties with an interest in the election.

The most prominent violation during the 2017 Simultaneous Regional Elections was money politics, which according to many observers, is still a very strong practice at the local level. Although Bawaslu has collaborated with the Corruption Eradication Committee and the Police in handling major cases involving regional head candidates, implementing sanctions for money politics violations has proven difficult due to obstacles in proving and collecting valid evidence. Research by Sigit (2018) notes that although Bawaslu has taken a number of firm actions, effective law enforcement against money politics offenses remains limited, largely due to reliance on slow and sometimes non-transparent legal processes.

On the other hand, Bawaslu's supervision of the spread of hoax news and negative campaigns on social media is also a major concern in the 2017 Simultaneous Pilkada. Considering the importance of social media as a means of campaigning and political communication, Bawaslu is trying to monitor and follow up on content that could damage the integrity of the regional elections. Collaboration with digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter is an important step to monitor content that has the potential to damage election results, but big challenges remain in terms of coordination and fast and accurate data collection (Haryanto, 2020). Bawaslu has also adopted a technology-based monitoring strategy to overcome this problem, although large-scale monitoring of social media is still limited by technical capacity and available budget.

The Bawaslu institutional reforms that occurred before the 2017 Simultaneous Regional Elections clearly had an impact on improving the quality of democracy, especially in terms of more independent and

structured supervision. Based on Law no. 7 of 2017 concerning Elections, Bawaslu was given broader authority to handle election violations, including monitoring the implementation of elections on social media and digital systems. The existence of Bawaslu at the provincial, district/city and sub-district levels allows closer supervision of the implementation of regional elections, although on the other hand, the ability to carry out effective supervision is often hampered by limited budgets and human resources.

However, even though Bawaslu's institutional structure has been strengthened, the quality of supervision carried out by this institution is still hampered by several factors, including dependence on the KPU and regional governments, as well as the lack of capacity of Bawaslu at the regional level to handle violations effectively (Situmorang, 2019). Limitations in terms of technical training for regional supervisors and logistical challenges are obstacles in optimizing Bawaslu's functions. Evaluation of the 2017 Simultaneous Pilkada shows that although Bawaslu has taken quite good steps in supervising the election, handling violations of money politics and hoaxes remains a major challenge that requires further attention from the government and the public.

In terms of the influence of institutional reform on the quality of democracy at the local level, it can be concluded that the supervision carried out by Bawaslu, although imperfect, has contributed to increasing the transparency and accountability of the election process. Law enforcement against election violations is increasingly open and structured, but the quality of democracy at the local level remains affected by various challenges, such as dependence on local politicians and the growing practice of money politics. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of democracy in Indonesia, strengthening Bawaslu institutions, increasing digital monitoring capacity, as well as more intensive collaboration with civil society and related institutions need to be considered further.

The evaluation of the 2017 elections, especially the Simultaneous Pilkada, offers an important perspective in assessing Bawaslu's performance in dealing with violations and the impact of institutional reform on the quality of democracy at the local level. During the 2017 Simultaneous Regional Elections, Bawaslu faced major challenges in monitoring various types of violations, such as money politics and misuse of social media. This monitoring effort is important considering the large number of community participation in local political contestations. In this context, supervision by Bawaslu is not only limited to administrative supervision, but also to efforts to prevent and take action against violations that could threaten the integrity of the election.

Bawaslu, as a supervisory institution, plays an important role in ensuring the continuity of free and fair elections. On the other hand, although there has been progress in terms of the independence and independence of Bawaslu in carrying out its duties, there are still many challenges in ensuring that violations do not occur at critical stages, especially in terms of reporting campaign funds and monitoring social media content (Sulastri et al., 2018). One prominent form of violation is the practice of money politics which leads to an unhealthy influence on the democratic process, as happened during the regional elections in several regions (Pandiangan, 2018). This underlines the importance of stricter supervision from Bawaslu, which must be carried out transparently and accountably so that the quality of democracy is maintained.

Institutional reforms in the election administration system, including improvements to Bawaslu, have had a significant impact on the quality of democracy at the local level. Improvements in the independence of these supervisory institutions can strengthen local democracy, by creating a climate that is cleaner and free from unauthorized political interference. The election of regional heads through Simultaneous Pilkada is a testing arena for this system. The independent nature of election organizers, including Bawaslu, is key in ensuring the implementation of regional elections that fulfill the principles of direct, general, free and secret (LUBER), as well as fair (honest and fair). This process also encourages the professionalism of election organizers to avoid loopholes that could allow violations to occur (Rabesarun, 2017).

Strengthening the Bawaslu and KPU institutions as election organizers leads to better consolidation of democracy in Indonesia. This reform not only leads to improving the quality of election administration, but also strengthens the Indonesian constitutional system which is more transparent, accountable and free from destructive practices (Shobayarun, 2018). Going forward, the challenge for Bawaslu is to strengthen internal capacity in dealing with violations in the digital era, as well as expanding the role of the community in monitoring elections, so that local democracy can continue to develop more healthily and fairly.

3.4. Analysis of Bawaslu Institutional Development: 2003–2017

3.4.1. Changes in Institutional Design

The institutional development of Bawaslu between 2003 and 2017 shows an important transformation in terms of the structure, function and role of this institution in the democratic process in Indonesia. The formation of Bawaslu as an independent institution tasked with supervising the conduct of elections became very relevant in the context of political changes that occurred after the 1998 Reformation. Over time, Bawaslu experienced significant changes in its institutional design, especially with the issuance of three main regulations: Law no. 22 of 2003, Law no. 15 of 2011, and Law no. 7 of 2017. Each of these regulations brings changes that affect the structure and function of Bawaslu, with a direct impact on the effectiveness of election supervision and the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

At the beginning of its formation, Bawaslu was established based on Law no. 22 of 2003 concerning Elections, which is the first milestone in regulating this institution as an independent body, although it is still dependent on the General Election Commission (KPU) and the government. This law defines Bawaslu as an institution that has the role of supervising elections, but its authority is limited, especially in terms of supervising election implementation which still requires cooperation with the KPU. Bawaslu at that time only had the authority to supervise the implementation of elections and provide recommendations for violations that occurred, but did not have the authority to take direct action against violations found during the implementation of elections (Pratama, 2018). The institutional structure in this period was also still centralized, with Bawaslu functioning as a supervisor at the national level which only had representatives at the provincial and district/city levels without a deeper supervision system at the sub-district and village levels.

With the issuance of Law no. 15 of 2011 concerning the Implementation of Elections, Bawaslu's institutional design has begun to undergo significant changes. One of the most striking changes is strengthening the status and authority of Bawaslu. Based on this law, Bawaslu is no longer just a supervisory agency that provides recommendations, but is given greater authority to handle election violations, both administrative and criminal. In addition, Bawaslu was transformed into a more independent and separate institution from the KPU, with the establishment of a broader institutional structure, including the formation of Bawaslu at the provincial and district/city levels. UU no. 15 of 2011 also gave Bawaslu a mandate to not only supervise the implementation of elections, but also to handle violations, resolve disputes, and prevent violations before and during the elections (Situmorang, 2019). One of the impacts of this change is the emergence of more decentralized supervision, where Bawaslu at the regional level has more responsibility in overseeing the running of elections in their area.

However, despite changes to Law no. 15 of 2011 has had a positive impact, Bawaslu's institutional design still faces several challenges, especially related to limited resources and supervisory capacity which is still very dependent on the state budget. Bawaslu at the regional level still faces major obstacles in terms of the number of personnel and adequate training to supervise the implementation of complex elections, especially in dealing with increasingly diverse violations, such as money politics and the spread of false information on social media (Haryanto, 2020). In addition, supervision carried out by Bawaslu at the regional level is still heavily influenced by local political dynamics, which often hamper the independence and effectiveness of this institution.

According to Prof. Muhammad said that Bawaslu still faces many obstacles, especially in handling election violations:

"There are still many obstacles faced by Bawaslu, especially in handling election violations. "One of the main challenges is limited resources, both human and technological, as well as coordination at the Gakkumdu Center which still needs to be strengthened to ensure law enforcement is effective" (interview with Prof. Muhammad, 6 November 2024)

Changes in Bawaslu's institutional design in the 2003–2017 period became more mature with the existence of Law no. 7 of 2017, which introduced various reforms in terms of the institutional structure, functions and authority of Bawaslu. UU no. 7 of 2017 provides a stronger legal basis for Bawaslu to supervise all stages of elections, from candidate registration, campaigning, to voting and calculating election results. One of the major changes in this law is the granting of authority to Bawaslu to supervise the implementation of technology-based elections, including monitoring social media and the dissemination of digital information that has the potential to damage election integrity (Sigit, 2018). With this new authority, Bawaslu is given more sophisticated tools to monitor election dynamics taking place in the digital era, where social media has become a new arena for political campaigns and uncontrolled dissemination of information. At the same time, this law also strengthens the decentralized supervision system, with emphasis on the importance of Bawaslu at the provincial and district/city levels, as well as supervision involving civil society and ad hoc supervisors at the sub-district and village levels.

Bawaslu at the provincial and district/city levels is given a greater role in terms of technical supervision and handling election violations. As an institution that is more independent and has broader authority, Bawaslu can take firmer action in cracking down on violations that occur, both administrative and criminal. Strengthening institutional capacity also includes increasing budget and more adequate human resources, although there are still challenges in implementation. One of the important roles of Bawaslu which is increasingly being strengthened is the prevention function, by providing outreach and education to the public about the importance of clean and fair elections (Situmorang, 2019). This function is part of efforts to create more participatory and transparent elections, by involving the public in monitoring and preventing violations.

Apart from supervising the implementation of elections, Bawaslu under Law no. 7 of 2017 also gives authority to handle disputes over election results. This shows that there is a development in Bawaslu's institutional design which is getting closer to stronger democratic principles, by providing protection for citizens' voting rights and maintaining fairness in the election process. Supervision carried out by Bawaslu, especially at the regional level, is very important in maintaining the quality of democracy and election integrity. In this case, Bawaslu acts as an institution that not only supervises the election process, but also provides justice for the people involved in the election process.

Overall, changes in Bawaslu's institutional design between 2003 and 2017 show significant progress in improving the quality of democracy in Indonesia. Although there are still challenges in terms of institutional capacity and resources, strengthening Bawaslu's authority in Law no. 15 of 2011 and Law no. 7 of 2017 has provided a strong basis for this institution to carry out more effective and independent supervision. In the future, further attention needs to be paid to strengthening Bawaslu's supervisory capacity at the regional level, especially in facing new challenges that arise, such as money politics and negative campaigns on social media. Thus, it is hoped that changes to Bawaslu's institutional design can further strengthen the democratic system in Indonesia, by creating fairer, cleaner and more transparent elections.

3.4.2. Dynamics of Authority and Independence

Since its founding in 2003, Bawaslu has experienced various significant changes in terms of its authority and independence in enforcing election law. This institution, which was initially created to oversee election administration with limited functions, has evolved into a more powerful entity with the

ability to enforce election rules and deal with violations. However, behind this progress, Bawaslu also faces big challenges in maintaining its independence, especially amidst political pressure coming from various parties who have an interest in the election process. This transformation illustrates the complex dynamics in the relationship between Bawaslu, political parties, government and civil society, as well as the challenges faced in maintaining the neutrality and credibility of election monitoring institutions.

Initially, Bawaslu's authority was limited to general supervision of election implementation, without the authority to take direct action against violations. Based on Law no. 22 of 2003, Bawaslu has limited authority to provide recommendations to the General Election Commission (KPU) and the government, but is not given the authority to enforce the law directly. Bawaslu can only provide warnings or suggestions regarding potential election violations that occur, and the authority to follow up on these violations is mostly in the hands of the KPU and law enforcement officials (Pratama, 2018). In this period, even though Bawaslu had an important position in elections, limited institutional capacity and resources hampered the effectiveness of the supervision carried out, so that many violations could not be adequately followed up.

Significant changes occurred in 2011, when Law no. 15 of 2011 concerning the Implementation of Elections was implemented. This law gives Bawaslu greater authority in enforcing election law, including the authority to handle administrative and criminal violations related to elections. This became a turning point in the process of strengthening Bawaslu's institutions. Under this law, Bawaslu is not only given the authority to supervise the running of elections, but is also given the authority to take direct action against violations, whether administrative or criminal. Bawaslu can issue sanctions for violations that occur, ranging from warnings to canceling election results at a certain level. Furthermore, in the context of election disputes, Bawaslu has the authority to resolve disputes over election results at the local level and submit recommendations to the Constitutional Court (MK) in the event of suspected fraud that influences election results (Situmorang, 2019).

However, strengthening Bawaslu's authority does not necessarily eliminate the challenges it faces. One of the biggest challenges is maintaining the independence of this institution in the face of political pressure coming from various parties involved in the election process. In the midst of an Indonesian political system that is still heavily dominated by political parties, Bawaslu is often caught in political dynamics that affect its objectivity and credibility as a neutral election monitoring institution. Moreover, the existence of Bawaslu operating at the national, provincial and district/city levels requires intensive coordination with regional governments and the KPU at the local level, which often have close ties to the ruling political parties.

It is important to note that although Bawaslu has gained greater authority in terms of enforcing election law, the independence of this institution remains tested by existing financial and political dependencies. As a state institution that depends on the budget provided by the government, Bawaslu is often faced with pressure from the central government or regional governments in carrying out independent supervisory duties. Limited resources, both in terms of budget and personnel, exacerbate this situation, because Bawaslu at the regional level often finds it difficult to supervise elections that involve many parties with large political interests (Haryanto, 2020). Apart from that, dependence on the KPU in terms of managing election logistics and vote counting also increases the potential for bias in supervision carried out by Bawaslu.

Another problem related to the independence of Bawaslu is the very dominant role of political parties in the election process. In Indonesia, political parties often have a large influence on the implementation of elections, both in terms of financial support and in terms of mass mobilization. In this context, Bawaslu is often faced with a big dilemma: whether to take action against violations involving large political parties that have strong influence, or whether to maintain neutrality and avoid political conflicts that could harm the institution's position. One striking example of political pressure on Bawaslu occurred in the 2014 General Election and the 2015 Simultaneous Regional Election, where Bawaslu often came under pressure from parties who felt disadvantaged by supervisory decisions or recommendations made by Bawaslu. This

political pressure often comes in the form of attempts to influence election results through media campaigns or even legal efforts to challenge Bawaslu decisions (Sigit, 2018).

Apart from that, a more modern challenge is the emergence of the phenomenon of money politics and manipulation of voter data in elections. Bawaslu is faced with the fact that even though it has the authority to take action against violations, monitoring the practice of money politics and manipulation of voter data is not easy. In today's digital era, the spread of false information, smear campaigns and the misuse of technology to manipulate public opinion is increasingly widespread. Although Bawaslu has begun implementing technology-based monitoring systems, including online reporting and social media monitoring, there remain technical and resource barriers that hinder the effectiveness of monitoring these practices. Negative campaigns that spread in cyberspace are often difficult to track and process legally, while supervision of money politics at the local level is often held hostage by practices that have become political culture in certain areas (Situmorang, 2019).

It is important to emphasize that strengthening Bawaslu's authority is not a sufficient solution to overcome all existing challenges. Even though Bawaslu now has greater authority in terms of enforcing election law, this institution still has to face big challenges in maintaining its independence, especially in dealing with political pressure and money politics which often influence the course of elections. In this context, the role of civil society in supporting the independence of Bawaslu becomes very important. Civil society which is active in election monitoring and anti-money politics campaigns can help ensure that Bawaslu adheres to the principles of neutrality and fairness in carrying out its supervisory duties.

Overall, the dynamics of Bawaslu's authority and independence reflect the major challenges faced in efforts to create free, fair and transparent elections. Strengthening authority in enforcing election law is an important step to improve the quality of elections, but this must be accompanied by serious efforts to maintain the independence of Bawaslu amidst political pressure. Bawaslu's success in carrying out its independent supervisory duties will depend heavily on the support provided by the public, media and other institutions that have an interest in maintaining the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

3.4.3. The Impact of Reform on Democracy in Indonesia

Reforms that began in 1998 brought significant changes to the Indonesian political system, which was previously controlled by an authoritarian regime, towards a more open and participatory democratic system. One of the main aspects of this reform is the transformation in the administration of elections, which is considered one of the key elements in the democratic process. Increasing transparency and accountability in elections is the center of attention in efforts to improve the quality of democracy in Indonesia. One institution that plays an important role in encouraging this change is Bawaslu. As an institution established to supervise the implementation of elections and ensure that elections are carried out fairly and transparently, Bawaslu plays a strategic role in building public trust in the electoral system and democracy as a whole.

Before the reform era, the electoral system in Indonesia experienced various problems, including fraudulent practices, money politics, and lack of transparency in the vote counting process. During the New Order government, elections were often marred by manipulation of election results, unequal influence of power, and disregard for democratic principles. The reforms that began with the resignation of President Soeharto in 1998 marked a new chapter in Indonesian politics, one of which was marked by the push to carry out elections that were more transparent, free from manipulation and fair for all parties. The formation of more independent state institutions, including Bawaslu, is part of efforts to ensure that the election process not only takes place technically, but also meets standards of fairness, transparency and accountability (Haryanto, 2020).

Bawaslu was formed to overcome previous shortcomings in election supervision, where many election violations did not receive sufficient attention. With the functions provided by Law no. 22 of 2003

concerning Elections, Bawaslu is responsible for supervising the running of elections, identifying potential violations, and providing recommendations to the authorities, including the KPU and legal officials. Bawaslu's main task is to ensure that elections are carried out in accordance with applicable regulations and are free from fraud. In this context, Bawaslu plays an important role in creating a more transparent and accountable election system. This increase in transparency is not only related to a more open election process, but also includes monitoring the use of public resources in political campaigns, as well as monitoring abuse of power that can damage the integrity of elections (Situmorang, 2019).

However, strengthening the role of Bawaslu cannot be separated from significant challenges. One of the main challenges is creating transparency that is in line with the principle of independence. In the course of its history, Bawaslu has often been caught in situations where its independence has been tested, especially when the decisions taken have the potential to influence parties who have great political power or resources. Even though Bawaslu has the authority to handle administrative and criminal violations in elections, this institution is often faced with political pressure from political parties, the government, and other parties who feel disadvantaged by decisions taken by Bawaslu. Therefore, maintaining Bawaslu's independence in facing this pressure is very important so that election transparency can be maintained and public trust in this institution remains high (Pratama, 2018).

Apart from that, Bawaslu also plays a role in increasing accountability in elections. Election accountability refers to the obligation of election organizers to explain and account for all their decisions and actions to the public. In this case, Bawaslu functions as an institution that ensures that election organizers, including the KPU and law enforcement officials, act in accordance with existing regulations and are not influenced by certain political interests. With the authority to resolve election disputes, both at the local and national levels, Bawaslu plays a role in providing justice for voters and political parties who feel disadvantaged by the election process. This dispute resolution process, which is carried out openly and transparently, provides an image to the public that the election process is carried out with high accountability, even though the decisions taken may not always satisfy all parties (Haryanto, 2020).

Supervision carried out by Bawaslu, both in legislative, presidential and simultaneous regional elections, is increasingly focused on efforts to build public trust in the democratic process. One of the steps taken is to utilize information technology to increase openness and transparency in supervision. Bawaslu has developed various online reporting systems and social media monitoring to identify potential violations in elections. This system allows the public to be actively involved in election monitoring by reporting suspected violations they witness. Apart from that, Bawaslu also collaborates with civil society and non-governmental organizations to ensure that this monitoring process is not only carried out by state institutions, but also by independent parties who have an interest in maintaining the quality of democracy. This collaboration strengthens election transparency and accountability because it opens up space for the public to participate in ensuring elections are free from fraud (Sigit, 2018).

However, even though Bawaslu has taken various steps to strengthen election transparency and accountability, major challenges remain. One of the main challenges is increasing public distrust in the integrity of elections, often fueled by allegations of money politics, manipulation of voter data and fraud in vote counting. In this case, Bawaslu must continue to strive to maintain its independence and ensure that the supervision process continues to run fairly and transparently. Bawaslu's success in maintaining transparency and accountability in elections will depend greatly on the integrity and commitment of all elements of election organizers, as well as the support provided by the community and other institutions in creating free, fair and transparent elections.

Overall, the reforms that occurred after 1998, including the establishment of Bawaslu as an independent election monitoring institution, have made a significant contribution to increasing transparency and accountability in elections in Indonesia. Although there are still challenges in maintaining independence and integrity, Bawaslu plays an important role in building public trust in the electoral system and Indonesian democracy as a whole. In this case, election transparency and accountability not only

depend on the actions of supervisory institutions, but also on the active participation of the community and awareness of the importance of clean and fair elections.

Conclusion

Bawaslu's institutional evolution between 2003 and 2017 reflects an important journey in strengthening Indonesian democracy, which was inseparable from profound policy changes after the 1998 Reformation. In this period, Bawaslu experienced a significant transformation, both in terms of institutional design, authority and independence. The formation of Bawaslu as a permanent institution through Law no. 22 of 2003 marked an important first step in providing a strategic role in election supervision. Although initially limited by dependence on the KPU and the government and a lack of authority, Bawaslu succeeded in demonstrating its ability to improve the election supervision system through institutional reforms regulated in Law no. 15 of 2011 and Law no. 7 of 2017 (Situmorang, 2019). The addition of authority and transformation of functions into a more independent institution as well as decentralization of supervision at the provincial and district/city levels shows that Bawaslu is increasingly ready to face the challenges of maintaining the integrity of elections throughout Indonesia.

Reflections on Bawaslu's role during this period show that although this institution faced various challenges—especially regarding independence in the context of political pressure and budget constraints—Bawaslu still played an important role in maintaining the quality of Indonesian democracy. Through more open supervision, the use of technology to monitor social media, and collaboration with civil society, Bawaslu has been able to increase election transparency and accountability. This contributes to increasing public trust in a freer and fairer electoral system (Haryanto, 2020). However, Bawaslu's role in strengthening Indonesian democracy is not free from challenges in maintaining the neutrality and effectiveness of supervision, especially in facing potential violations committed by parties with political power.

The importance of effective election monitoring as an essential element in a democratic system cannot be underestimated. Without independent and accountable oversight, election integrity will continue to be threatened by fraudulent practices, money politics and manipulation of voter data. Therefore, strengthening Bawaslu institutions, both in terms of structure, authority and independence, is a key aspect to ensure that every election is carried out with clean and fair democratic principles. Going forward, it is important to continue to push for institutional reforms that strengthen Bawaslu's capacity so that this institution remains relevant in maintaining fairness and transparency at every stage of elections in Indonesia.

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Interview:

1. Prof. Komarudin Hidayat (5 November 2024). Face to face interview
2. Prof. Muhammad (November 6, 2024). Online interview via zoom.
3. Prof. Topo Santoso (11 November 2024). Online interview via zoom
4. Nur Hidayat Sardini (7 November 2024). Online interview via zoom.
5. Abhan. (November 7, 2024). Face to face interview
6. Rambe Kamaruzaman (23 November 2024). Face to face interview
7. Agun. (29 November 2024). Face to face interview
8. Dahlan's arteries. (December 2, 2024). Face to face interview
9. Delia Wildianti. (December 12, 2024). Face to face interview
10. Jerry Sumampouw. (December 13, 2024). Face to face interview.
11. Nurlia Dian Paramitha. (December 12, 2024). Online interview via zoom
12. Jojo Rohi (20 December 2024). Face to face interview

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- Law no. 22 of 2007 concerning Election Organizers
- Law no. 15 of 2011 concerning Election Organizers
- Law no. 8 of 2015 concerning Amendments to Law no. 1 of 2015 concerning the Stipulation of Government Regulations in Lieu of Law Number 1 of 2014 concerning the election of Governors, Regents and Mayors into Law. Constitution
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