


The Configuration of Electoral Design in Indonesia Following the Constitutional Court Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024 Concerning the Separation of the Implementation of National Elections and Local Elections

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Elections Election Separation Constitutional Democracy Public Participation</p>	<p>This study examines the implications of the Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 concerning the separation of National and Local Elections in Indonesia. The separation introduces significant normative, institutional, fiscal, and socio-political challenges, including potential judicial overreach, administrative burdens, fragmentation of governance cycles, and decreased political participation. This research employs doctrinal legal analysis with statute, case, conceptual, and comparative approaches, aiming to analyze both normative aspects and practical consequences of the election separation. The findings indicate that post-decision electoral design must ensure legal certainty through legislative revisions, strengthen the capacity of election management institutions, and enhance political representation and public participation. Comparative studies with India and the United States demonstrate that separated elections can operate effectively without reducing legitimacy, provided legal, institutional, and public participation frameworks are properly established. The ideal configuration is for national and local elections to remain within a single five-year governmental period, but conducted with planned temporal intervals to substantively and sustainably reinforce constitutional democracy.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Elections constitute the principal instrument in realizing the sovereignty of the people within a democratic state. In Indonesia, the electoral system has undergone various transformations, both technically and normatively, as part of the political and constitutional dynamics in the post-reform era. One of the pivotal turning points in the history of Indonesian elections was when the Constitutional Court (Mahkamah Konstitusi), through Decision Number 14/PUU-XI/2013, declared the model of simultaneous elections to be constitutional, which was subsequently implemented in the 2019 and 2024 simultaneous elections. This decision effectively terminated the practice of separate elections that had been in place since the beginning of the reform era.

Nevertheless, recent developments indicate a fundamental shift in the design of

Indonesia's electoral system. The Constitutional Court, through Decision Number 135/PUU-XXII/2024, ruled that the conduct of National Elections and Local Elections must be separated, thereby abolishing the previously established simultaneous national scheme (Yakub, 2025). This ruling has ignited a new discourse concerning the direction and the ideal form of the national electoral system. Beyond the technical aspects of electoral administration, the decision carries significant implications for institutional configuration, political stability, and the effectiveness of Indonesia's electoral democracy.

The said decision warrants critical scrutiny, as it generates broad and profound implications for the constitutional system. Within the context of the Constitution, which guarantees the principles of representation and fairness in elections, the separation of national and local elections raises a normative question: to what extent does this policy reinforce, or conversely, undermine democratic consolidation? The Court's reasoning in this decision must also be examined in light of the doctrine of original intent and the principle of proportionality, so as to achieve a comprehensive understanding within the framework of Indonesian constitutionalism.

One of the principal arguments in Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 is the necessity of ensuring effectiveness and efficiency in the administration of elections, as well as preventing voter and organizer fatigue (DA, 2025). It is indeed true that the simultaneous elections of 2019 and 2024 gave rise to various technical difficulties, such as the overburdening of election officials, which even resulted in casualties among KPPS officers (Gadjah Mada, 2019). Nevertheless, addressing technical problems by adopting the solution of a complete separation of elections requires careful consideration, so as to avoid creating fragmentation within the electoral system that has been established over the past decade.

The design of the electoral system is not merely a matter of operational technique, but rather encompasses normative and philosophical dimensions inherently embedded within the constitutional structure (Handoko, 2023). The separation of elections may present challenges to the cohesion of national policy, particularly because the legitimacy of the President and regional heads would no longer be established within a unified electoral cycle. This situation carries the potential to generate frictions in coordination between the central and regional governments in the implementation of development and the administration of public affairs. Furthermore, the separation of elections raises issues of synchronization within the presidential system of government. In a presidential system, the simultaneous conduct of legislative and executive elections functions as a mechanism of alignment between the executive and legislative branches. If national and local elections are to be completely separated, it is highly probable that disparities of representation and legitimacy will arise between legislative and executive institutions at both the regional and national levels. Such disparities would inevitably affect the overall effectiveness of governance.

Another consequence of the separation of elections is the fiscal burden on the state. Conducting elections in two separate cycles requires a substantial budget, including expenditures for logistics, recruitment of election officials, and supervision (Juwaini, 2025).

Within the framework of efficient and accountable public financial management, such a policy must be assessed through an objective cost–benefit analysis. Otherwise, the separation of elections would amount to fiscal waste and impose simultaneous burdens on both the State Budget (APBN) and Regional Budgets (APBD). The aspect of political participation also constitutes a significant concern in the context of separated elections. One of the strengths of simultaneous elections lies in their capacity to enhance voter participation, as a single electoral momentum encompasses all public offices (Paramita, 2020). With separation, however, there exists a risk of declining voter participation due to public fatigue in facing repeated electoral cycles. Such a decline in participation may reduce the political legitimacy of elected officials, thereby affecting the overall quality of representative democracy.

The Constitutional Court, as the guardian of the Constitution, undoubtedly holds the authority to interpret constitutional norms. However, the interpretation rendered in Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 must remain within the bounds of the principle of checks and balances. Otherwise, there arises a concern that excessive judicial activism may emerge, potentially influencing the course of public policy formation and diminishing the discretionary space of the legislative and executive branches. Therefore, it is essential to examine this decision from the perspective of the doctrine of separation of powers and the supremacy of law.

Elections do not stand alone as a mere political mechanism but rather constitute an integral part of the national political and legal system (Adnan et al., 2022). Accordingly, any alteration to the electoral design must be grounded in a comprehensive study that encompasses constitutional, institutional, administrative, and socio-political analyses. Formulating electoral design policies without multidimensional considerations will only result in an electoral system vulnerable to conflict and instability. On the other hand, this Constitutional Court Decision opens the space for more systematic reform of the local electoral system, which has thus far been perceived as transactional and pragmatic. Such separation may be understood as an effort to afford particular attention to the quality of local democracy, provided it is accompanied by regulatory reform, institutional strengthening of electoral management bodies, and continuous political education for the citizenry.

To that end, the future configuration of electoral design in the aftermath of this Decision must be directed toward the establishment of a system that ensures electoral justice, strong political representation, and governmental stability. This necessitates a recalibration of electoral stages, the terms of office for public officials, as well as an electoral scheduling system aligned with the principles of constitutional democracy. Within this context, this research assumes significance as an academic contribution in formulating an electoral design that is not merely normative but also operational and sustainable. By examining the legal basis, rationale, and implications of Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024, this research will provide a critical perspective on the trajectory of electoral reform consistent with the ideals of substantive democracy.

Furthermore, the new electoral configuration following this Decision also necessitates a restructuring of the duties and authorities of the electoral management bodies. The General

Elections Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), and the Honorary Council of Election Organizers (DKPP) must adjust their organizational structures to address the complexities of elections that are no longer held simultaneously. Without such institutional reforms, there is concern that separated elections will instead add to the workload in a disorganized manner. Derivative regulations arising from this Decision—whether in the form of amendments to the General Election Law, the Regional Election Law, or technical regulations of the KPU—must also be examined in an integrative manner. These regulations should not only govern scheduling and technical procedures but must also redesign the system of candidate recruitment, the delineation of electoral districts, and the distribution of logistics in an efficient and equitable manner. This is essential to safeguard the quality of electoral competition across all levels of government.

Equally important are the socio-political implications arising from such separation. In a plural society such as Indonesia, elections serve as an arena for the articulation and aggregation of interests (Lontoh & Manguju, 2023). The separation of national and local elections risks reinforcing identity politics at the regional level, particularly if it is not accompanied by robust systems of oversight and political education. Therefore, the future design of elections must take into account the social and cultural dynamics of society. The study of electoral design also requires a comparative approach with other countries that have adopted similar systems. The experiences of countries such as India, Brazil, and the United States in managing separated elections may serve as valuable references in designing an Indonesian electoral system that is more adaptive yet remains constitutional. Such international lessons are essential as a reference to avoid policy-making based merely on trial and error.

As the world's third-largest democracy, Indonesia faces significant challenges in safeguarding the integrity and legitimacy of its electoral system. Any alteration to the electoral design must ensure that the principles of participation, representation, and electoral justice are not diminished. In this context, Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 constitutes a critical moment to evaluate and redesign a more robust electoral system, rather than merely adapting to short-term technical pressures.

Thus, the question to be answered is not merely whether elections should be conducted simultaneously or separately, but rather what electoral design is most compatible with the presidential system of government, the socio-political structure of Indonesia, and the values of constitutional democracy. An academic examination of this configuration is therefore crucial to ensuring the continuity of Indonesia's electoral democracy in the future.

METHOD

This research constitutes normative legal research (doctrinal legal research), namely research based on library studies by examining positive legal norms and court decisions as the primary object of analysis (Nugraha, 2024). The main objective of this study is to analyze the normative aspects of the electoral system following the Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024, particularly regarding the implications of separating national and local

elections on constitutional design, the effectiveness of governmental administration, and the configuration of state institutions. Furthermore, this research is also aimed at constructing legal arguments that may serve as the foundation for the direction of future electoral regulations so as to conform with the principles of constitutional democracy and the rule of law.

In its implementation, this research employs four legal approaches. First, the statute approach, by examining the 1945 Constitution, the Election Law, the Regional Election Law, and other relevant technical regulations. Second, the case approach, by analyzing Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 as well as earlier decisions such as Decision No. 14/PUU-XI/2013, to examine their ratio decidendi and juridical implications. Third, the conceptual approach, used to dissect the basic concepts of the electoral system, the principles of constitutional democracy, and relevant legal theories, such as electoral design theory, institutionalism, and democracy. Fourth, the comparative approach, by conducting comparisons with electoral practices in other jurisdictions that implement either simultaneous or separate elections, serving as critical considerations in formulating a suitable configuration for Indonesia.

The sources of legal materials in this research consist of primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials include the 1945 Constitution, Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections, Law No. 10 of 2016 on Regional Elections, Constitutional Court decisions, as well as KPU technical regulations. Secondary legal materials comprise textbooks, scholarly journals, academic articles, constitutional law research findings, and reports from institutions such as the KPU, Bawaslu, DKPP, as well as other academic publications. Meanwhile, tertiary legal materials consist of legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, juridical indexes, and court decision directories. All of these legal materials are analyzed using a normative qualitative method through the examination, interpretation, and systematization of legal norms. The analysis is carried out deductively–inductively to discover normative meaning, consistency among norms, practical implications, and to produce both theoretical and practical conclusions in formulating an electoral design that is in line with the principles of democracy and Indonesian constitutionalism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Legal Construction of the Constitutional Court Decision on the Separation of National and Local Elections

General elections (pemilu) constitute a fundamental instrument within the constitutional democratic system, aimed at realizing popular sovereignty as affirmed in Article 1 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945), which stipulates that sovereignty rests in the hands of the people and is exercised in accordance with the Constitution. Within the Indonesian constitutional framework, elections are explicitly regulated under Article 22E of the 1945 Constitution, which provides that general elections shall be conducted in a direct, general, free, confidential, honest, and fair manner once every five years. This provision serves as the constitutional foundation for the administration of

elections as a means of realizing the principles of a democratic state based on the rule of law (democratische rechtsstaat). As articulated by Friedrich Julius Stahl, a modern rule of law state must guarantee the rights of the people through orderly and legitimate democratic mechanisms (Mutawalli, 2023).

Since the issuance of Constitutional Court Decision No. 55/PUU-XVII/2019, Indonesia has implemented a concurrent election model, whereby the presidential election, legislative elections, as well as regional head elections and elections for members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) were conducted simultaneously. Concurrent elections were intended to create budgetary efficiency, simplify electoral logistics, and strengthen the presidential system through the consolidation of political support in both the executive and legislative branches. However, in practice, concurrent elections have generated both technical and substantive problems, such as the excessive workload of election administrators, the decline in electoral quality due to fatigue, fatalities among polling station officials during the 2019 elections, logistical complexities, and the potential decline in voter rationality due to the complexity of ballot papers and the large number of electoral contestants.

In response to these realities, the Constitutional Court, through Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024, redirected the electoral design by ruling that national elections and local elections may and must be conducted separately, with a minimum interval of two years and a maximum of two and a half years between them. In this decision, the Court emphasized that the separation aims to simplify the electoral process, enhance the quality of democracy, and reduce the burden on both election administrators and participants (Asmin & Virginia, 2024). The Court further interpreted the phrase "once every five years" in Article 22E of the 1945 Constitution not as an obligation to conduct all types of elections at the same time, but rather as a constitutional limitation on the term of office that may not be exceeded.

The Constitutional Court's establishment of a two- to two-and-a-half-year interval between the conduct of national elections and local elections carries the potential risk of judicial overreach, occurring when a judicial body assumes legislative functions that properly fall within the authority of the law-making institution. This blurs the distinction between the Constitutional Court as a negative legislator and the role of a positive legislator, and poses a risk of disrupting institutional balance within the constitutional system (Sari & Raharjo, 2022).

Furthermore, when examined from the perspective of constitutional law, the legal construction in this ruling raises several critical concerns. One primary critique is the tendency of the Constitutional Court to engage in excessive judicial activism. As a negative legislator, the Constitutional Court is, in principle, only authorized to declare a norm as constitutional or unconstitutional. As emphasized by Hans Kelsen in the Pure Theory of Law (Reine Rechtslehre), a constitutional court must not create new norms, since its function is limited to safeguarding the purity of the legal norm hierarchy (Sari & Raharjo, 2022). In this context, the Court is considered to have exceeded its mandate by normatively determining the time interval between elections, which properly falls within the legislative domain of the law-making bodies (the Parliament and the Government).

The juridical implications of separating national and local elections are highly complex and necessitate comprehensive regulatory structuring. First, this change requires revisions to Law Number 7 of 2017 on General Elections and Law Number 10 of 2016 on Regional Elections to ensure consistency with the separate election scheme. Second, clear transitional regulations are needed regarding the terms of office of regional heads and members of regional legislative councils (DPRD), as well as the procedures for appointing interim officials that uphold accountability and do not violate the principle of popular sovereignty. Third, election management bodies, such as the General Elections Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu), and the Honorary Council of Election Organizers (DKPP), must develop adequate institutional capacity to conduct two major elections within a single governmental term.

The legal construction established by the Constitutional Court through this decision normatively aims to improve the quality of electoral democracy, particularly at the local level, by preventing the subordination of local issues to the dominance of national elections. Procedural democracy theory, as articulated by Joseph Schumpeter, emphasizes the importance of fair electoral competition as the core of democracy; in this context, the separation of elections is considered an effort to refine the democratic space at the local level, which has hitherto been overshadowed by national political hegemony (Sholikin, 2021). However, without clear supporting regulations and strengthened institutional capacity, the implementation of separate elections carries the risk of systemic disruption, such as fragmentation of power cycles, disharmony in center–regional relations, and weakened legitimacy of regional heads appointed through interim mechanisms.

Furthermore, the juridical consequences of this decision necessitate immediate and comprehensive regulatory arrangements. If not addressed by the legislature through revisions to Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning Elections and Law No. 10 of 2016 concerning Regional Elections, there is a potential for administrative disorder and a crisis of governmental legitimacy, particularly at the regional level (Fajar, 2023). Therefore, the legal construction established by the Constitutional Court must be complemented by systematically coordinated derivative legislation to prevent a vacuum of power or dual legitimacy within both central and regional governance. The post-Decision legal reconstruction following Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 should be directed toward ensuring synchronization between the principles of the rule of law, constitutional democracy, and governmental effectiveness, so that Indonesia’s electoral system is not only normatively valid but also functions substantively in democratic practice.

The Ideal Configuration of Future Electoral Design Post-Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 within the Framework of Democratic Consolidation

Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024, which separates the implementation of national and local elections, opens the space for a new design of Indonesia’s electoral system that is more contextual, adaptive, and oriented toward strengthening substantive democracy. Within the framework of democratic consolidation, the

ideal configuration of future elections must satisfy three main prerequisites: legal certainty, effective administration, and high-quality political representation.

First, the normative and constitutional aspects require harmonization between constitutional interpretation and statutory regulations. Separate elections can only be implemented legitimately if supported by revisions to Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections and Law No. 10 of 2016 on Regional Elections. Such revisions must regulate the electoral cycle, the terms of office of public officials, the stages of election administration, as well as the appointment of acting regional heads in a democratic and accountable manner. This aligns with the principle of *Rechtssicherheit* (legal certainty) in a rule-of-law state, as articulated by Gustav Radbruch, which holds that the law must be clear, stable, and reliable as the basis for government and citizen actions (Fajar, 2023).

Second, from an institutional design perspective, the temporal separation of elections requires enhanced institutional capacity of the electoral management bodies, namely the General Election Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu), and the Election Organizer Ethics Council (DKPP). The ideal future configuration envisions professional, independent electoral bodies capable of planning and managing two electoral stages within a single governmental term. Conducting elections twice within a five-year period must still ensure budgetary efficiency and human resource management so as not to undermine national or regional political stability. The implementation of sound electoral governance is a crucial requirement to guarantee the integrity and credibility of elections as a fundamental pillar of democracy (Alaydrus et al., 2023).

Third, in the context of political representation and the quality of democracy, local elections that are no longer dominated by national political currents can enhance attention to local issues, strengthen the accountability of regional heads, and create more substantive participatory space for the public. According to deliberative democracy theory as articulated by Jürgen Habermas (Hardiman, 2009), a healthy democracy must ensure a rational and communicative public sphere, whereby elections function not merely as a mechanism for vote aggregation, but also as a forum for the formation of collective political consciousness (Muthhar, 2016).

Moreover, Indonesia can refer to comparative practices from other countries. In India, for instance, national and state elections are not held simultaneously, yet the democratic process continues without undermining the stability of the parliamentary system. In the United States, the federal system allows local elections to be conducted separately according to state-specific contexts, without diminishing the legitimacy of the electoral process. Accordingly, as a unitary state, Indonesia can constitutionally design a tiered and separate electoral system, provided that legal regulations, electoral scheduling, and democratic principles are strictly maintained.

India conducts national elections to elect members of the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the national parliament) every five years (Setiawan, 2023), while state elections (for the State Legislative Assemblies) are held separately according to the respective terms of office of each regional parliament (Devadasan et al., 2023). There is no legal obligation to conduct

national and local elections simultaneously, as the Indian Constitution grants each state the autonomy to determine the schedule of its regional elections. This system allows local issues to receive greater attention and encourages more active citizen participation in electing leaders relevant to their specific needs. Separate elections also prevent national political dominance from overshadowing local political dynamics. This aligns with the principles of participatory democracy, where elections serve as a mechanism for the contextual and tiered representation of citizens' aspirations.

Furthermore, the United States, which adopts a presidential system and a federal structure, also conducts national and local elections separately. The presidential election is held every four years (Warshaw, 2019), while congressional elections (for the Senate and House of Representatives) follow a different schedule, although some overlap may occur (Kaslovsky, 2022). Meanwhile, state and municipal elections are conducted independently by each state, including elections for governors, mayors, and state attorneys general. This system demonstrates that, although elections are held separately, political legitimacy and governmental effectiveness are maintained, and local oversight and accountability may even be enhanced. Moreover, separate elections in the United States allow voters to focus on issues relevant to each level of government, while minimizing voter fatigue, which often arises in large-scale simultaneous elections.

Thus, the ideal configuration for future electoral design post the Constitutional Court ruling is a system in which national and local elections remain within a single five-year governmental cycle, but are conducted with a planned temporal interval, supported by adequate legal frameworks, robust institutional capacity, and active, deliberative public participation. Elections are not merely procedural mechanisms, but a vital instrument for the sustained maintenance of constitutional democracy.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024, which separates national and local elections with a specified temporal interval, represents a reinterpretation of Article 22E of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The ruling aims to enhance the quality of democracy, reduce the burden on election organizers, and strengthen electoral accountability. However, from a constitutional law perspective, there is a potential for judicial overreach, as the Court has established a normative time-gap standard that, in principle, should fall within the legislative authority. This situation raises concerns regarding the balance of state functions and necessitates regulatory follow-up in the form of amendments to the Election Law and Regional Election Law to prevent legal vacuums or crises of legitimacy within the governmental cycle.

On the other hand, the separation of national and local elections creates opportunities for a more adaptive and contextual electoral design within the framework of democratic consolidation. The ideal configuration of future elections must ensure legal certainty through harmonized and clear regulations, institutional effectiveness with professional and independent election bodies, and improved political representation by providing greater

attention to local issues. Comparative practices from India and the United States demonstrate that separate elections can be conducted effectively without undermining the legitimacy of the governmental system and can even enhance political participation and accountability at the local level. Accordingly, post-constitutional court elections must be designed not only to be normatively valid but also substantively capable of strengthening constitutional democracy in Indonesia, thereby ensuring that the principles of the rule of law and constitutional democracy operate in tandem with effective and accountable governance.

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