

## ARTICLE

# The Evaluation of Regional Head Election: Developing Synergy of Regional Autonomy and Regional Head Election

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**Abstract:** The reform aims to achieve democracy, prosperity, and justice at the local level. Even though the reform process has been rolling for more than two decades, the goal of reform in realizing local democracy through an ideal regional head election is still far from expectations. This study aims to analyze the causes of the absence of synergy between regional autonomy and regional elections and identify the causes. A qualitative approach is used in the literature review method. The result showed that the root of the problem is not creating a synergy between regional autonomy and regional head elections because the application of the decentralization concept in Indonesia is dominated by the administrative decentralization perspective and the lack of actualizing the political perspective decentralization. The definitions of decentralization and regional autonomy in Acts tend to preserve centralization. Besides, regional autonomy's main objective places more emphasis on the administrative objectives of government and regional development rather than the development of local democracy. The lack of synergy between regional autonomy and regional elections is the gap between expectations and reality and conflicts at the ideological and technical levels. The gap between expectations and reality can be seen from the hope of realizing the acceleration of the democratization process at the local level, but technically, regional autonomy is characterized by an oligarchy of political parties and transactional politics. There are some suggestions for the Ministry of Home Affairs to revise the policy packages for decentralization and regional autonomy, especially in articles regulating the definition and objectives of regional autonomy, as well as revising Acts of Regional Head Election and Acts of Political Parties, particularly regarding the mechanism for nominating regional heads.

**Keywords:** decentralization; regional autonomy; regional head elections; synergy

## 1. Introduction

Decentralization is categorized into two perspectives, namely the political decentralization perspective and the administrative decentralization perspective (Hidayat, 2009). According to a political perspective, the main objective of decentralization and regional autonomy is democratization through regional government leadership succession. Through the Regional Head Election, there is a circulation of government elites, which is one of the conditions for the realization of a healthy democratic climate in the regions. Therefore, according to Smith (1985), the Regional Head Election's urgency is as an instrument for realizing democratization and stabilization of local politics achieved through political education, training for leadership, and political stability. Regional Head Election is also an instrument for the political maturity of local communities, which is achieved through strengthening local community opportunities to influence policy (political equality), increasing regional government accountability and regional government responsiveness.

In the perspective of political decentralization, the practice of decentralization and regional autonomy must work in synergy with Regional Head Election. However, the reality that is happening in Indonesia, there is a strong indication that there is no synergy between the practice of decentralization and regional autonomy and the rule of regional elections. Regional Head Election, which should be a means for the election of a quality regional head, but based on the results of previous research, actually raises a number of anomalies, including a) Regional Head Election causes rivalry between regional heads and deputy regional heads (Agustino, 2010; Noviandikka, 2018); b) political dynasties (Sutisna & Akbar, 2018); c) Shadow state and informal economy practices in Regional Head Election (Hidayat & Gisnar, 2010, p. 32); d) chaotic regional development planning (Hidayat & Susanto, 2009); and e) Non-neutrality of regional bureaucracy and civil servants (Komisi Aparatur Sipil Negara, 2018).

This condition is very worrying for the future of decentralization and regional autonomy in particular, and the sustainability of the governance of the nation-state and democracy in Indonesia in general. The danger is the occurrence of decay and Illusive decentralization of democracy. According to Hidayat (2010), the weathering of the concept of decentralization occurs in understanding to analyze social, economic, and political problems in the regions associated with the implementation of decentralization and regional autonomy policies, which are considered dangerous (for example, causing disintegration). As a result, controversial academic recommendations emerged, such as "recentralization" or "abolishing direct regional elections" because they were judged to be the causes of social, economic, and political problems in the regions. Illusive democracy is interpreted as a condition in which people implement democracy only as an illusion, the nuances of a government system serving privileges, democracy damaged by crime (for example, corruption), and impunity (March 2015).

Therefore, to avoid this tendency, concrete and measured steps are needed to build synergies between regional election practices and decentralization and regional autonomy. This study refers to the concepts of decentralization and regional autonomy. There are various decentralization concepts, but the author refers to the concept of decentralization in two perspectives, namely a political decentralization perspective and an administrative decentralization perspective. Syarif (2008: 3) states that the division into two views is important to formulate the objectives of implementing decentralization to be achieved by a country.

The political decentralization perspective is a devolution of power from the central government to regional governments. Some experts who support this perspective include Parsons (1961), Mawhood (1983), and Smith (1985). Parsons (1961) defines political decentralization as "sharing governmental power by a central ruling group with other groups, each having authority within a specific area of the state." Meanwhile, according to Parson, deconcentration is "the sharing of power between

members of the same ruling group having authority respectively in different areas of the state." Referring to the definitions of decentralization and deconcentration formulated by Parsons, Mawhood (1983) defines decentralization as "devolution of power from central to local governments". In line with this opinion, Smith (1985) defines decentralization as "the transfer of power, from top-level to lower level, in a territorial hierarchy, which could be one of government within a state or offices within a large organization"

It can be concluded, in defining decentralization, Parsons (1961), Mawhood (1983), and Smith (1985) have put the idea of sharing the governmental power and transfer of power as the main essence of the idea of decentralization.

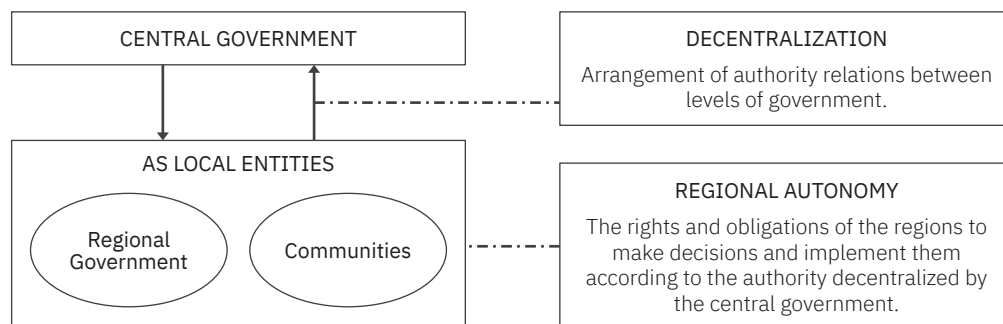
On the other hand, the administrative decentralization perspective emphasizes decentralization as the delegation of administrative authority from the central government to local governments. Cheema & Rondinelli (1983, p. 18) in their book entitled, "Decentralization and Development: Policy Implementation in Developing Countries", formulate a definition of decentralization as... the transfer of planning, decision-making, or administrative authority from central government to its field organizations, local administrative units, semi-autonomous and parastatal organizations, local government, or non-government organizations.

Furthermore, Smith (1985, p. 26) formulated decentralization objectives based on national interests (central government) and regional governments' interests. In terms of the central government's interests to strengthen democracy and political stability of local communities through political education, to provide leadership training, and create political stability. The purpose of decentralization in terms of the interests of regional government is to mature regional communities, namely helping in realizing political equality, local government accountability, and local government responsiveness.

Mawhood (1983) defines regional autonomy as freedom assumed by a local government and its community in making and implementing its own decisions. Moving on from this definition of regional autonomy, the essence of regional autonomy is determined by the determining actors, namely the regional government and the community, to make and implement decisions in the regions. Dhal (1989) said that from the beginning, the need for decentralization and regional autonomy was not based on technical considerations but was the result of a tug of war or political conflict between the regions and the center so that regional autonomy became a solution. The distribution of power between government levels and the choice of institutions for decentralization results from a political process that begins with group decisions that often have a territorial identity. The political dimension of the formation of autonomous regions or decentralization is localized government as part of a basis for recognition of a community group as a political entity. Regional autonomy is a logical consequence or fruit of decentralization caused by governmental authority from the central government for regional governance (Rasyid, 2005; Supriatna, 2016).

According to Hidayat (2004: 29), regional autonomy is determined by the central Government's decentralized authority to regional governments. Thus, regional autonomy is the right and obligation of regions to make their own decisions and implement policies by the authority that has been decentralized by the central Government (Figure 1). "Area" is an entity that includes. Regional Government and society with limited powers granted.

In a study of decentralization in Indonesia, Maryanov (1959, pp. 341–349) states that the implementation of decentralization within the framework of a unitary state in Indonesia is divided into three characteristics, namely: 1) Expectations vs. Reality; 2) Ideological Orientation Vs. Technical Orientation, 3) Leadership Monopoly. Expectations vs. Reality, these characteristics were interpreted as high expectations to realize the image of a unitary state with an optimally functioning regional government unit also functioning to carry out their autonomy. However, this expectation has never been satisfactorily achieved. Part of the failure was due to unacceptable conditions at the local level (Maryanov, 1959, p. 343).

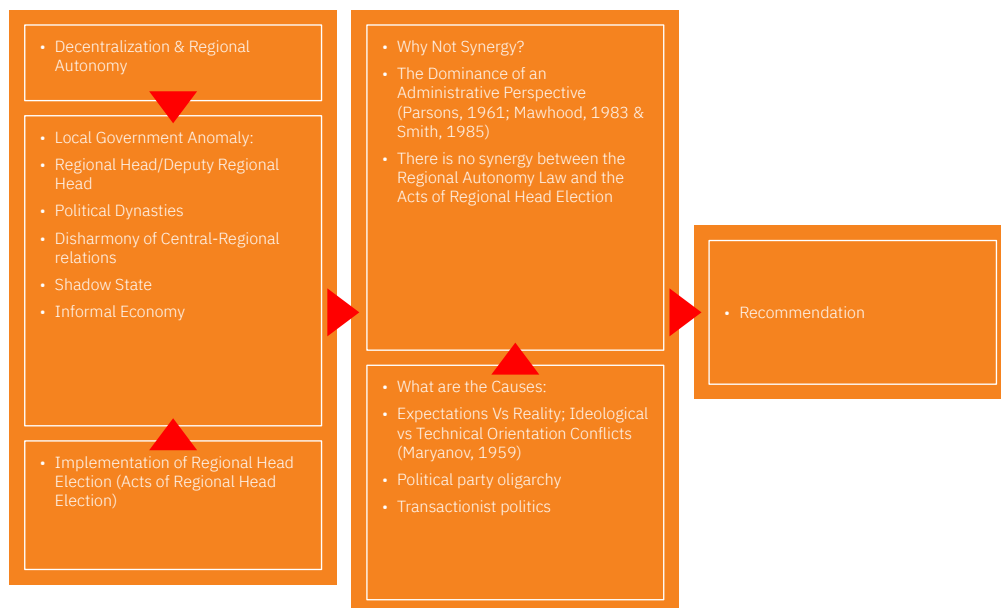


**Figure 1.** The Relationship between Decentralization and Regional Autonomy (Source: Hidayat (2020))

Ideological vs. technical where values are expressed theoretically and the use of abstract ideas, such as 'democracy.' On the other hand, technical directions are more concerned with policy implementation than abstract goals. Ideological orientation vs. Technical orientation is interpreted as a controversy between the central and regional governments overextending regional autonomy. The ideological orientation is represented by the local government's voice demanding more independence that the people want. The technical orientation response (central government) emphasizes the lack of local governments' capacity and offers control over the administration of the regional government (Maryanov, 1959, p. 349). The monopoly of political leadership means the central government's claim as an actor to decide which regions should be granted autonomy and the level of authority that should be granted. Submitted (Maryanov, 1959, p. 352). In this study, the characteristics of expectations vs. reality and ideological vs. are used because both characteristics are adequate to explain the controversy between the central and local governments regarding the idea of a Regional Head Election and regional autonomy.

The urgency of the Regional Head Election in the perspective of decentralization and regional autonomy refers to Smith's opinion that the Regional Head Election is a vehicle for political education. Hence, residents directly elect their leaders through the Regional Head Election from individuals who can lead the region. Regional Head Election provides leadership training. There is a national leadership selection through Regional Head Election after going through a training process (training) for regional leaders in stages from regional to national level. Furthermore, regional head elections as a means to create political stability.

Several studies in Indonesia on Direct Regional Head Election Process (Hikmat, 2014), Regional Head Election legal arrangement (Nugroho, 2016), Regional Head Election and political parties (Asmuni, 2017), incumbent behavior (Tjenreng, 2016), regional election financing (Research and Development Agency, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2017), regional election conflicts (Hikmat, 2014), money politics (Sjafrina, 2019), youth participation in the 2018 regional elections in Barat Java Province (Djuyandi & Herdiansah, 2018), and the asymmetric Regional Head Election system (Nuryanti, 2015), as well as Ferza & Aulia's study (2020) of the practice of political dowry in the 2018 Regional Head Election. Experience of several countries in implementing regional elections, such as in Croatia, the study of Mackic (2014) examines incumbent intervention on the budget cycle and human resources of employees at the time of the regional head elections. In Croatia, Koprić et al. (2015) examined the regional election system at the autonomous country level, where there was no central government intervention. Throughout the search for previous studies, there has been no study that specifically analyzes the root cause of why there has not been a synergy between regional autonomy and regional elections and identifies the factors causing it.



**Figure 2.** Flow of Mind in Developing the Synergy of Regional Autonomy and Regional Head Election

## 2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative method (Creswell, 2013) with a literature study to answer the following questions: First, why hasn't there been a synergy between Decentralization and Regional Autonomy with Regional Head Election? The answer to this question was seen from the theoretical and empirical dimensions. Viewed from the theoretical dimension, it refers to the definition and objectives of decentralization put forward by Parsons (1961), Mawhood (1983), and Smith (1985). The second question is the factors causing the lack of synergy between decentralization and regional autonomy with the Regional Head Election? Referring to the theoretical dimension is because the concept and implementation of decentralization in Indonesia have not been free from conflicts or gaps between ideological and technical orientations Maryanov (1959). The empirical dimension is due to the emergence of political party oligarchy and the rampant practice of transactional politics. This study's data collection method is a desk study through examination and analysis of data and information sourced from literature studies relating to the topics discussed. The flow of thought for the study is presented in Figure 2.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. The Problem of Not Creating Synergy Between Regional Autonomy and Regional Head Election

#### 3.1.1. Implementation of Decentralization and Regional Autonomy Dominated by an Administrative Perspective

The synergy between regional autonomy and regional elections has not yet been built because decentralization and regional autonomy policies are considered to be dominated by the administrative decentralization perspective and the lack of actualization of the political decentralization perspective. To explain that the application of the concept of decentralization in decentralization and regional autonomy policies in Indonesia is more dominated by an administrative perspective, the authors compare the concept of decentralization and its application in Acts about Regional Autonomy, namely in Acts No. 22 of 1999, Acts No. 32 of 2004 and Acts No. 23 of 2014.

In theory, the definition of decentralization in the perspective of political decentralization, according to Parsons (1961), Mawhood (1983), and Smith (1985)

puts the idea of sharing governmental power and transfer of power as the main essence of the idea of decentralization. Mawhood (1983), as one of the proponents of the political decentralization perspective, never hesitated to argue that decentralization is nothing but the evolution of power from central Government. However, the practice of decentralization and regional autonomy policies contradicts the theory of decentralization. Acts No 22 No 1999 defines decentralization as "the transfer of authority", but in Acts No. 23 No 2014, which replaced Acts No. 22 of 1999, decentralization is defined as "handing over of functions". The words "authority" and "affairs" change the meaning of decentralization, that "regions only carry out functions, not authority" means that local governments only carry out administrative functions by the functions assigned to the regions. According to Mochtar (2012), there are fundamental differences in the use of the nomenclature of "authority" in Acts Number 22 of 1999 (article 7) and the nomenclature of "affairs" in Acts Number 32 of 2004 (article 10). Juridically, authority is the government's right and power to determine or take policies in the framework of administering Government, while what is meant by government affairs is the content of the authority itself. The division of authority between the Government and the regions as stipulated in Acts No. 22 of 1999 includes Government and provincial authorities, while regency/municipal authorities are authorities that do not include the Government and province's authority.

In this context, Acts No. 22/1999 does not provide space for the central government to interfere in matters that have become the authority of Provinces, Districts, and Cities. Provinces cannot interfere with Regency/City affairs either. Thus, the press points of Acts Number 22 of 1999 is on the authority, which determines the authority's content. This pattern is believed to stimulate creativity and regional initiatives to explore various activities and ideas to realize public services in the context of implementing regional governance. From a political perspective, Acts No. 22 of 1999 highlights local democracy in decentralization and regional autonomy arrangements.

However, in Acts No. 32 of 1999, it is stated that the regional authority to regulate and manage government affairs and the interests of the local community itself is by statutory regulations. The fundamental difference in the meaning of regional autonomy based on Acts No. 22/1999 and Acts No.32/2004 is the elimination of the phrase "the interests of the local community according to their initiative based on community aspirations" from the meaning of regional autonomy as referred to in Acts No. 22 of 1999. The removal of this sentence has implications for authority devolved to autonomous regions. Autonomous regions are very limited only by the prevailing laws and regulations and not the people's will and aspirations. Whereas in fact, the statutory regulations referred to are none other than the statutory regulations above Regional Regulations whose making authority rests with the central government's power. It seems that Acts No. 32/2004 tends to lead to a centralized system and undermines the meaning of regional autonomy.

Furthermore, regional autonomy in Acts No. 23 of 2014 is seen to preserve the use of the nomenclature of "government affairs" as seen in the definition of decentralization and regional autonomy in this Acts as follows "The transfer of government affairs by the central government to autonomous regions based on the principle of autonomy. Meanwhile, regional autonomy is defined as "the rights, authorities, and obligations of an autonomous region to regulate and manage government affairs and the interests of local communities in the Indonesia system". Such a definition narrows the meaning of regional autonomy in which regions (regional government and communities) carry out the Central Government's functions.

The next reality is the difference in formulating the goals of regional autonomy, Acts No. 32 of 2004 stated the purpose of regional autonomy "to accelerate the realization of community welfare through improvement, service, empowerment, and community participation, as well as increasing regional competitiveness by paying attention to the principles of democracy, equity, justice, privileges and specialties of a region in the



system of Indonesia "Meanwhile the objective of regional autonomy according to Acts No. 23 of 2014" the implementation of regional government is directed at accelerating the realization of community welfare through improved services, empowerment, and community participation, as well as increasing regional competitiveness by observing the principles of democracy, equity, justice and the uniqueness of a region in the system of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia."

The common thread of the goals of decentralization and regional autonomy in the Regional Government Law above, when juxtaposed with a political perspective decentralization as stated by Smith (1985), it can be concluded that the objectives of regional autonomy in the Regional Government Law are not in line with the concept of decentralization according to Smith which emphasizes that the goals of decentralization and autonomy area is the ongoing local democracy for the benefit of the community and local government. What is expected from local democratization is the realization of political equality, local government accountability, and local government responsiveness. Thus, the non-actualization of political perspectives in the substance of the Acts of Regional Autonomy impacts the failure of democratic principles in the implementation of regional governance.

In this regard, Syarif (2004) writes that the existing Regional Government Acts have not significantly shifted administrative decentralization towards political decentralization. The implementation of decentralization and regional autonomy in Regional Autonomy Acts in Indonesia emphasizes the administrative perspective initiated by Cheema & Rondinelli (1983), which defines decentralization as a "delegation of authority" in planning, decision making in regulating public service functions from higher levels of government to organizations or agencies, which are at a lower level. Decentralization focuses on efforts to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in government administration and regional development as the main objectives. The position of the Regional Government is to become the administrator that guarantees the implementation of development programs, services and supervision of the running of regional governments. As a result, the application of decentralization and regional autonomy from an administrative perspective is increasingly moving away from what is known as devolution of power or transfer of power according to Parsons (1961), Mawhood (1983) and Smith (1985).

### 3.1.2. There Is No Synergy Between Regional Government Acts and Regional Head Election Acts

There are 5 critical issues that show no synergy between Regional Autonomy Acts and Regional Head Election Acts, these five issues are broadly presented in Figure 3.

#### 1) *Critical Issue 1: Direct Regional Head Election is not Synergized with the Status of an Autonomous Region*

The pros and cons of direct Regional Head Election arise when there is uncertainty in regulations, namely: (1) whether the Regional Head Election is carried out directly or through representatives (Regional House of Representatives) and (2) whether the Regional Head Election is carried out in accordance with the status of an autonomous region.

The direct Regional Head Election or Regional Head Election through representatives is not affirmed in the constitution, Acts of 1945, Article 18 paragraph (1) of the Acts of 1945 reads 'Governors, Regents and Mayors respectively as heads of provincial, regency and municipal governments elected democratically'. The meaning of 'democratically elected' in the Acts of 1945 contains a double interpretation, namely: first does not refer to 'direct election,' but can contain the meaning of being elected through the Regional House of Representatives, which is elected directly through legislative elections. However, in Acts Regional Head Election, Acts No. 8 of 2015, Article 1 mentioned that the election for governors and regents/mayors is conducted directly regulated:

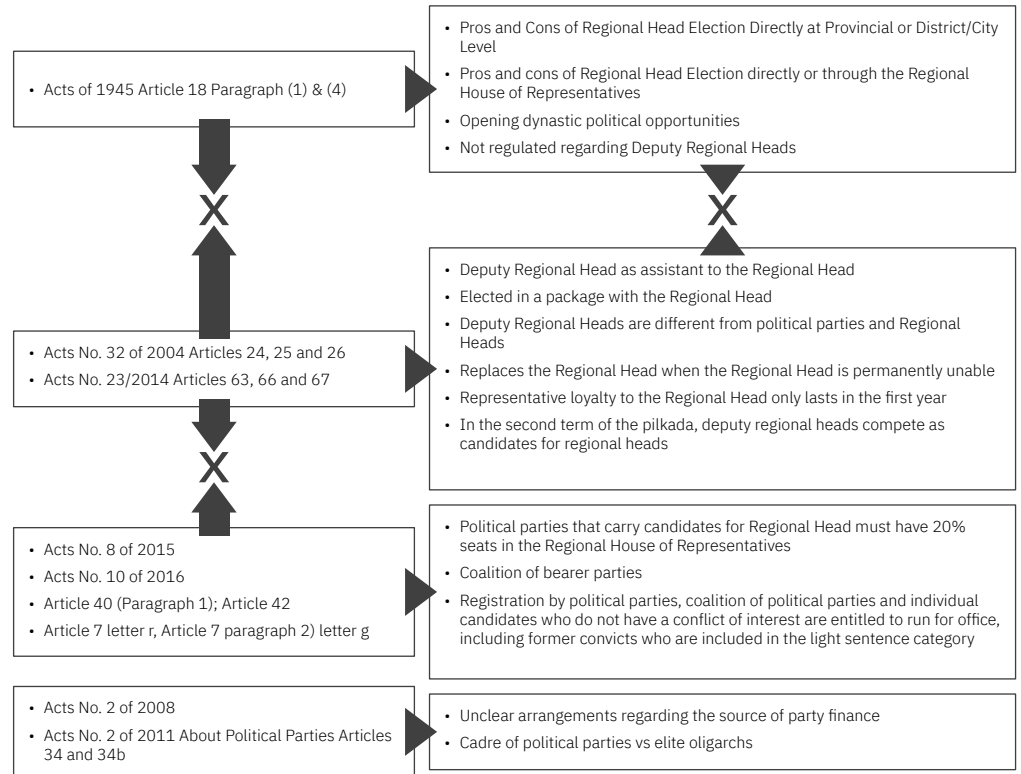


Figure 3. Issues Not yet Synergized between Regional Autonomy Acts and Regional Head Election Acts

*“Election for the Governor and Deputy Governor, the Regent and Deputy Regent, as well as the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, hereinafter referred to as Election is the implementation of people's sovereignty in the province and district / city to elect the Governor and Deputy Governor, the Regent and Deputy Regent, as well as the Mayor and Deputy Mayor directly. and democratic.”*

Regional Head Election regulation is also not synergistic with autonomous regional status. Acts No. 22 of 1999 stipulates that the province as an autonomous region as well as an administrative region exercises the authority of the Central Government, which is delegated to the Governor. Provincial regions are not the superior governments of regencies and municipalities. The Autonomous Regions of Provinces and Districts and Municipalities do not have a hierarchical relationship. However, Acts No. 32 of 1999 which regulates the existence of an administrative area for the importance of deconcentration, also in Acts No. 23 of 2014, in Chapter I article 1 paragraph (13) states the administrative area, where the province is the administrative area and the Governor is the representative of the Central Government to carry out government affairs which is the authority of central government in the regions.

2) *Critical Issue 2: Supporting Political Parties and the Effectiveness of Regional Government*

The requirements for political parties to propose candidates are regulated in Article 40 paragraph (1) of Acts No. 10 of 2016, which states that “Political parties or coalitions of political parties that can register a pair of candidates if they meet the requirements of at least 20% of the total seats in the Regional House of Representatives or 25% of the accumulated vote acquisition is valid in the general election for members of the Regional House of Representatives in the region concerned.” However, the support for 20% of these seats did not come from one party, but several political parties, so that the regional head received minority support in the



Regional House of Representative. With the provision of 20% of the vote, it is burdensome because most provinces, districts, and cities have a very limited number of parties that receive a Regional House of Representative seat allocation of 20%. There are regions where no one party has won the Regional House of Representative seats as much as 20%. As a result, the nomination of candidate pairs must be carried out through a coalition of at least two or more parties in the local Regional House of Representatives. The large number of parties that form one coalition and/or the sharp differences in the parties that include one coalition play a role in causing friction in the relationship between regional heads and the Regional House of Representatives. In this condition, political compromises often occur between regional heads and members of the Regional House of Representatives. When the policy issued by the regional head often does not get support from the Regional House of Representatives, the majority party in the Regional House of Representative is not the same as the party that supports the regional head. For example, regional heads are from party A or from parties A and B, while the Regional House of Representatives is dominated by parties B, C, D, and F. It becomes a problem when compromises are not in line with the will and interests of the people.

### *3) Critical Issue 3: Conflict Regional Head and Deputy Regional Head*

Article 18 paragraph (1) of Acts 1945 reads, 'The governor, regent, and mayor respectively as the head of the provincial, regency and municipal governments are elected democratically'. The definition of Pasalinisecarajelast not mentioning the deputy head of the region (deputy governor, deputy regent, and deputy mayor).

In contrast, Acts No. 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Government recognizes the existence of a deputy regional head, in article 24 paragraphs (3) and (4) states the existence of a deputy regional head, further paragraph (5) states 'Regional heads and deputy regional heads are directly elected in one pair by the people in the area concerned'. In Acts No. 23 of 2014, articles 63, 66, and 67 concerning regional government continue to recognize and preserve the existence of deputy regional heads.

Acts of 2016 No. 10 regulates Regional Heads' general election in one package with the deputy regional head. The reality that occurs is that the subordinate position is observed from the regional head to position himself as the sole decision-maker that has the potential to marginalize the deputy regional head and trigger hidden conflicts between regional heads and deputy regional heads. Subordination can also be seen from the deputy regional head position as a substitute for the regional head if the regional head is permanently absent.

### *4) Critical Issue 4: Political Dynasty*

Acts of 2015 No. 8 in Article 7 letter r, regulates that one of the requirements to apply as a candidate for Regional Head is not to have a conflict of interest with the incumbent, namely not having blood relations, marital ties, and lineage of 1 (one) straight level upwards, downwards, aside from the incumbent, namely father, mother, in-law, uncle, aunt, brother, sister, brother-in-law, son-in-law, unless they have passed one term of office. The provisions are intended to cut dynastic politics in the regions.

However, the Constitutional Court Decision No. 33 / PUU-XIII / 2015, among others, states that Article 7 letter r along with the explanation of Article 7 letter r in Acts Regional Head Election regarding the requirements for regional head candidates not to have a conflict of interest with the incumbent, contradicts the Acts of 1945 and does not have binding legal force. The Amendment Acts of 1945 do not contain a clause restricting the president and vice president and regional heads and deputy regional heads from nominating their wives and close relatives after the president and vice president as well as regional heads and deputy regional heads end their second term of office.

### 5) Critical Issue 5: Political Parties' Financial Sources and Cadres

Acts of 2008 Article 34 No. 2, regulates the source of party finance, namely originating from: a. membership fees; b. donations that are legal according to law; and c. financial assistance from the Regional Budget. There are unclear regulations related to political parties' financial sources that come from legitimate donations (point b), the tendency for money politics to occur, namely:

- a. Many allegations point to the flow of party funds originating from businessmen who have access to political party rulers or candidates for political party rulers so that the sources of state wealth from the government bureaucracy can flow to political parties.
- b. Access to government tends to be monopolized by donors so that the public does not have the same opportunity to be involved in government project tenders.
- c. Financial readiness of candidates for regional/deputy head candidates is an important requirement to be appointed as the official candidate pair for a party or coalition of parties. In some cases, there are strong allegations that some of the campaign funds from the pair went to the financial posts of supporting political parties.

Cadre of political parties as stated in Article 34 Paragraph (3b), namely "cadres for members of political parties gradually and sustainably", based on this provision, career paths become the basis for recruiting regional head candidates from political parties. Political parties often nominate candidates for regional head/deputy regional head candidates who are less qualified due to their closeness to the leadership of the party's Central Executive Council and candidates from among celebrities, who are known by the communities.

### 3.1.3. Factors Causing Not Creating Synergy between Regional Autonomy and Regional Head Elections

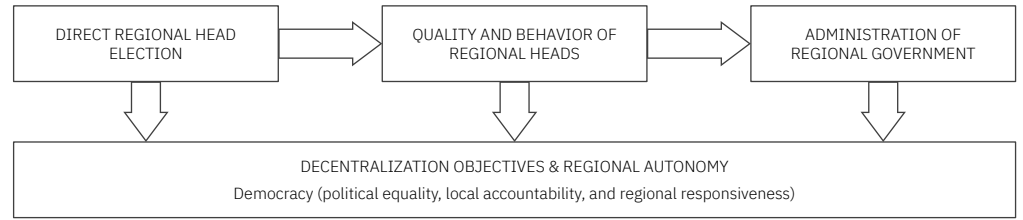
Maryanov (1959, pp. 341–349) describes the characteristics of the implementation of decentralization in Indonesia as Expectations vs. Reality and Ideological vs. Technical Orientations.

First, Expectations vs. Reality. Decentralization and regional autonomy aim to create democracy and prosperity at the local level. In terms of realizing this local democracy, the Regional Head Election is an instrument for realizing local democracy, which is decentralization itself. Smith (1985) in detail states that direct election of regional government heads and members of the Regional House of Representatives is an important requirement for actualizing decentralization goals for the benefit of local governments in terms of realizing political equity, local accountability, and regional responsiveness. In line with Smith, Arghiros (2001) asserts that a decentralization policy expects to reduce the power of the central government, while the Regional Head Election creates a way for accountable and responsive local government to be achieved.

According to Smith (1985) and Arghiros (2001) above, suppose the goals of decentralization are connected with the Regional Head Election. In that case, the Regional Head Election is believed to be an essential instrument for the purpose of creating a democratic regional government. Ideally, through the Regional Head Election, regional leadership that has quality and behavior that is oriented towards creating a prosperous society and local democracy will be selected, as described in Figure 4.

Haris (2014) states that there is a gap between expectations and reality. It was seen that the regional elections are not yet in line with the application of democratic principles to create a regional government that sided with the interests of the people. There has been an improvement in the electoral system in the reform era, which was carried out freely and democratically. However, the ideals of reform to produce a regional government that is clean and in the interests of the people seem to evaporate as a community dream.

**Figure 4.** Relationship between Regional Head Election and the Goals of Decentralization and Regional Autonomy (Source: Adapted from Wasistiono, 2013)



Empirically, the weak actualization of political decentralization in regional autonomy policies can be seen by the emergence of political oligarchy and transactional politics in the Regional Head Election. The Regional Head Election, which should be a pillar of democracy, is marked by the power of the elites or the oligarchs of political parties. The reality that happens is that the oligarchs who control political parties can choose and determine candidates for the regional elections. The selection mechanism for regional head candidates by several parties by selecting regional head candidates is actually carried out in ways that are far from democratic values. The netting system tends to be closed, not transparent, and does not allow public monitoring, which raises the reality of "political dowry" (KPK & LIPI, 2016, pp. 39–40). legislative candidates to get "blessing" and recommendations from the party to be carried and/or nominated in the regional elections. The serious impact of the increasingly expensive political dowry is the formation of a corrupt and transactional government. Candidate pairs, whose financial resources are limited, end up trapped in a corruption case because they have to return political costs, including dowries, to investors or entrepreneurs who finance them. It is not surprising that many regional heads and legislators are caught in corruption cases (Table 1). This is in line with Sjafrina's study (2019), which found that high funding for general elections and Regional Head Elections is the root of the problem of political corruption, where political corruption is born from high-cost political and election corruption.

Apart from the constellation's high cost, selecting candidates for Regional Head Election candidates in political parties also tends to be closed, exclusive, and nepotistic. Although there are formal procedures that political parties have in the recruitment process, in reality, these procedures are not implemented by the leadership of political parties (KPK & LIPI, 2016). This can be seen from the emergence of regional head candidates who have a kinship with political parties or candidates who have a kinship with regional heads (wife, children, son-in-law, in-laws, and other close relatives), or those who rely on financial capabilities and popularity such as artists and entrepreneurs. These incumbents run for the second term, including candidates who have an inadequate track record of becoming leaders, such as ex-convicts.

Noor (2018), in his study in the Provinces of Banten, Jakarta, Central Java, and East Java, found a symptom of political oligarchy pervading political parties, where parties experience personalization, namely parties are under the shadow of the party leadership and their cronies. Parties that capitalize on their parties with large enough

**Table 1.** Corruption Acts of Regional Heads and the House of Representatives handled by the Corruption Eradication Commission of 2004-2020

NO.	POSITION	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	TOTAL
1	Governor	1	-	2	1	1	2	1	-	-	2	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	17
2	Mayor/Regent and Deputy	-	-	3	6	6	5	4	3	3	3	12	4	9	2	0	9	3	72
3	Members of the House of Representatives and Regional House of Representatives	-	-	-	2	7	8	27	5	16	8	9	19	23	5	61	8	17	215
TOTAL		1	0	5	9	14	15	32	8	19	13	24	26	33	7	61	17	20	304

<https://www.kpk.go.id/id/>

funds without adequate capacity to lead organizations are suspected to be a bad precedent for the Indonesian political world that threatens Indonesian democracy because parties that are supposed to accommodate the aspirations and interests of the people are instead used by the interests of certain individuals or groups.

Transactional politics in Regional Head Election is a form of transaction or agreement between two parties who have mutual needs, especially in political practice where there is a process of giving and receiving something both material and non-material in accordance with the agreement that has been agreed. General is money politics, which is giving a certain amount of money or other forms to voters or party leaders to enter as a definitive regional head candidate, and the candidate pays the voters to be willing to vote on election day. According to [Hidayat \(2009, pp. 129–132\)](#), the political form of money is directly in the form of cash payments from candidates for the position of the regional head for individuals or institutions with different values in each region. Meanwhile, indirect money politics is in the form of giving goods in the form of nine basic materials, building materials, and other materials provided by candidates to individuals or institutions.

Transactional political practices during the regional elections can also be analyzed from the practice of bartering nominations and political puppets ([Solihah, 2016](#)). Political bartering takes the form of an agreement between two political parties. For example, in Region A, a political party that is a political opponent in the regional election will support a candidate favored by another party by bartering, where the party will later nominate a puppet candidate in the election. For example, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) with a democratic party conducts political bartering in the nominations for mayors and regents. The Democrat Party will nominate its puppet candidate or Risma's challenger in the city of Surabaya. On the other hand, the PDIP will carry the challenger or puppet candidate for the strong candidate in the Pacitan district ([Tribun Kaltim, 2015](#)).

Political puppets in regional elections occur when the incumbent has a strong political base and re-runs as a participant in the elections. This is a form of political transaction and a pragmatic mindset, in which the political parties that carry the candidates are estimated to lose, so political transactions between parties are carried out with the presence of political dolls ([Tribun Kaltim, 2015](#)). The party that is expected to lose is merely proposing a candidate, but in fact, the party supports the incumbent. This is done with the consideration that instead of carrying cadres and then losing, it is better to support the incumbent in exchange for money or other rewards for developing his political party. The emergence of a political puppet in the Regional Head Election is related to the strength of the incumbent candidate in the Regional Head Election so that his political opponents think more pragmatically for profit. Candidates for dolls who are deliberately presented by certain parties to meet the minimum standards for the number of participants so that the elections are not postponed. A puppet candidate's phenomenon can be seen from a candidate deliberately advancing to lose, to meet the minimum standard for the number of participants. The characteristics are that the candidates' popularity is not clear, the vision and mission are just ordinary, and the financial capacity is limited.

Second, ideological vs. technical orientation, ideologically, the Regional Head Election refers to Acts of 1945 as a means of people's sovereignty. Pilkada, as a pillar of democracy, is to realize the people's sovereignty in order to produce a democratic regional government. Juridically, Regional Head Election is the elaboration of Acts of 1945 Article 18 paragraph 4, which reads: "Governors, Regents, and Mayors respectively as heads of Provincial, Regency and City Government are elected democratically". The meaning is that sovereignty is in the hands of the people. Therefore, the election of regional heads, both governors, regents, and mayors, is a vehicle for the manifestation of people's sovereignty in a democratic manner.

The embodiment of the constitution is not in line with the reality that occurs. Its implementation is always accompanied by technical problems (Tjahya Supriatna, 2016): (1) At the stage of candidacy: there is dualism in the management of political

parties; Candidate recruitment system within the party; Internal party conflicts; Falsification or use of fake documents (diplomas, health certificates); There is no room to raise objections from pairs of candidates/political parties against the determination of the pair of candidates determined by the General Elections Commission; In the event of a political party conflict, the General Elections Commission takes sides with one of the candidate pairs/administrators of certain political parties so that the political party.

General Election Commission, which actually met the requirements but failed to nominate a candidate. As a further result, political parties and constituents have lost the opportunity to get a regional head, which is their preference. The stage of determining the pair of candidates: chaotic determination and neutrality of the KPUD; Certain political parties or figures intervention; the arrogance of party supporters and candidates for the regional head. (3) The election campaign period was marked by money politics, campaign rules violations, and supporters' coercion/intimidation. (4) The stages in the determination of the Provisional Voters List (DPS) and the Permanent Voters List (DPT) often have multiple, and no voting rights are registered; delay in submitting voting forms, and inaccurate updating of the List of Potential Voters (DPPP) and lack of socialization. (5) Problems with voting and counting of votes at voting places: Neutrality of the Bureaucracy and civil servants; Manipulation of votes at voting places; Pressure on the Commitment Maker Officer and Voting Organizing Groups at the voting place.

The complexity of regional head elections shows that democracy in Indonesia has only been running procedurally and is still far from a substantial goal, only a technical tool, and does not reflect the psychological realm, personality, and national ideals. Only a technical tool because democracy is run by shallowness without giving room for the depth of ethics and reasoning. Political leadership places more emphasis on logistical resources than authoritative resources. Democracy does not become an arena for strengthening "metrication" or government by capable people. On the contrary, it becomes a catalyst for "mediocracy" or governance by mediocre (Latif, 2012). Meanwhile, Hidayat (2009, p. 127) states that the implementation of direct regional elections without the presence of "democratic behavior" has led to money politics practice. "Democratic behavior," which means the majority of voters, qualitatively have sufficient knowledge and make them sure that they are choosing the right candidate based on rational political considerations. According to Case (2002), if democratic practices only involve strengthening democratic institutions, they are merely a type of procedural democracy and do not reach a substantive democracy level.

#### 4. Conclusion

The application of decentralization in Indonesia tends to be dominated by the perspective of administrative decentralization and does not actualize the perspective of political decentralization. The application of a political decentralization perspective for the purpose of local democratic development to become the goal of regional autonomy is also very limited. The study found a conceptual gap in formulating the definition and objectives of decentralization and regional autonomy in the Acts of Regional Autonomy. The definitions and objectives in the Acts Regional Government tend to direct local government towards organizational goals rather than local democratization development goals. In addition, there is a tendency to preserve centralization in the substance of the Acts of Regional Autonomy. The definition and purpose of decentralization and regional autonomy in the Regional Government Law (Acts No 32 of 2004 and Acts No 23 of 2014) direct regional government to the aspect of realizing "development administration" to achieve "welfare" and does not emphasize "local democratic" development.

The reason for the lack of synergy between regional autonomy and regional elections is due to the oligarchy in the body of political parties. As a result, the

recruitment process for regional head candidates by regional election participants is colored by high-cost politics. In regional head elections, they do democratically elect regional heads, but they choose the results of choices and agreements of the oligarchs in the supporting political parties, which are often not based on adequate capacity and competence but are based more on Regional Head Election participants with material and financial resources. And also, popularity. Another contributing factor is the proliferation of transactional political practices involving both the local government bureaucracy as well as the economic and social elites, which in turn become the parties who have influence in determining the course of the regional government.

First, the Ministry of Home Affairs needs to evaluate the decentralization and regional autonomy policies. The need for a necessary evaluation of the material of Regional Government Acts is related to the need for a form of regional autonomy to realize democratization on the one hand and welfare and justice for local communities on the other.

Second, the consequence of the first recommendation is that the regional government Acts to be revised needs to provide space to actualize political perspectives, which are operationalized in a series of chapters, articles, and paragraphs. The operationalized substances for the development of local democratization include political education, leadership training, and creating local political stabilization. Second, operationally builds political maturity, namely, political equality, accountable local government, and responsive regional government.

Third, Revise Acts Regional Head Election, which regulates parties' internal democratic mechanisms in proposing candidates for regional elections. The oligarchs strongly influence the submission of the proposed candidates. The oligarchy of political parties has caused many problems in the implementation of regional elections, including money politics and massive political corruption in the regions. In parallel with that, Acts of political parties were revised to reduce an oligarchy or elite's feel. There need to be rules of the game institutionalized in the revision of Regional Head Election Acts and Political Party Acts. The game rules are intended as the sole basis for an activity to free the party from strong individual maneuvers.

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