

The 1955 General Election as the Ethical Foundation of Indonesian Democracy: A Normative-Historical and Islamic Political Perspective

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Abstract

This research examines the dynamics of the 1955 General Election in Indonesia and Muhammad al-Ghazali's perspective on electoral systems in the context of the modern state. The 1955 election marked a significant milestone in Indonesia's democratic development, applying a proportional electoral system with high voter participation. It successfully established an inclusive, accountable, and integrity-based electoral legal framework. Meanwhile, al-Ghazali's thought highlights that democratic principles such as shura (consultation), justice, and public participation are compatible with Islamic values. Modern elections are viewed as a practical realization of shura in complex societies where direct deliberation is no longer feasible. The academic contribution of this study lies in affirming that democratic electoral systems can be grounded in Islamic ethical values, and that the historical experience of the 1955 election offers a relevant model for developing progressive electoral regulations. This research enriches the discourse on Islamic political thought and Indonesian electoral law within the context of inclusive and ethical democracy.

Keywords: Democracy, Election Law, Indonesia.

Abstrak

Pemilu 1955 merupakan tonggak awal konsolidasi demokrasi Indonesia sekaligus ruang dialektika antara Islam dan nasionalisme dalam sistem politik modern. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pelaksanaan Pemilu 1955 serta mengkaji relevansinya dengan pemikiran teologi politik Muhammad al-Ghazali. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kepustakaan dengan pendekatan kualitatif-historis. Sumber data primer berupa dokumen resmi Pemilu 1955, Undang-Undang Nomor 7 Tahun 1953, arsip Konstituante, dan karya al-Ghazali, sedangkan sumber data sekunder berasal dari buku dan jurnal ilmiah terkait. Data dikumpulkan melalui studi dokumentasi dan literatur, lalu dianalisis secara

deskriptif-analitis dan interpretative. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Pemilu 1955 berhasil membangun sistem pemilu yang inklusif, berintegritas, dan legitim dengan partisipasi politik yang tinggi. Secara teologis, prinsip demokrasi seperti partisipasi, keadilan, dan akuntabilitas selaras dengan konsep syura dalam Islam, sehingga demokrasi dan nilai-nilai Islam dapat saling menguatkan dalam membangun sistem politik yang etis dan berkeadaban.

Kata kunci: Demokrasi, Hukum Pemilu, Indonesia

A. Introduction

Statistical data indicate that the level of electoral fraud and disputes in the 1955 election was relatively low despite the complexity of its administration. It may therefore be hypothesized that the integrity of the electoral process constitutes a crucial variable in determining the quality of electoral democracy. The general election further consolidated the principles of democracy and political pluralism in Indonesia by engaging a diverse array of political parties as well as various segments of society in determining the direction of governance.

The 1955 General Election was the first election conducted by Indonesia in the post-independence period and constituted a pivotal moment in shaping the nation's state identity and democratic political system. During this period, Islamic groups assumed a significant role in the political process, bringing theological values into the sphere of an emerging democratic order.¹ This article aims to explore how Islamic political theology influenced democratic practices during the 1955 General Election, as well as how the contestation among Islam, nationalism, and traditionalism shaped the political and social dynamics of that period. It examines the relationship between Islamic political theology and Indonesian democracy, with particular emphasis on the 1955 election.² It further examines the principal ideological contestations in post-independence politics, addressing the position of Islamic political parties within the framework of parliamentary democracy.³ It highlights Islamic values that support democracy from the perspective of political ethics, while linking democratic traditions with Islamic cultural practices in Indonesia.⁴ Meanwhile, by examining the plurality of Islamic

¹ Anggraini Titi, *kajian kodifikasi undang-undang pemilu*, 2014. hlm. 81.

² Herbert Feith, *the decline of constitutional democracy in indonesia*, 2006.

³ B. J. Boland, "the Struggle of Islam in modern indonesia," 1971, 283, <https://www.springer.com/us/book/9789024707812>.

⁴ Thom Gibson, "Princeton : Princeton University Press , 2000 . 286 pages , index ." 72, no. October (2001). hlm. 242.

politics, this study addresses a gap in the existing scholarship through the explicit integration of a political-theological perspective.⁵

Aspect of Analysis	Research Focus	Scholar / Study	Principal Findings
Historical	The development of politics and elections in the post-independence period	Feith	The 1955 General Election functioned as an arena of ideological contestation among Islam, nationalism, and communism.
Political Theology	The integration of Islamic values into the modern state system	Madjid Bolland	Islam supports democracy as a system of values rather than as a formal system of political power.
Islamic Politics	The role of Masyumi and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) within democratic politics	Liddle	Islamic politics encompasses a broad spectrum, ranging from ideological orientations to pragmatic and participatory approaches.

Most studies predominantly emphasize the political and historical dimensions of the 1955 General Election. Only a limited number explicitly explore Islamic political theology in justifying participation in democratic processes, along with its juridical arguments from the perspective of contemporary Islamic thought, such as that of Muhammad al-Ghazali. Islamic political theology exerted a significant influence on the formation of Indonesia's democratic system during the 1955 election through its articulation of the values of *shūrā* (consultation), justice, and socio-political participation of the Muslim community.

Islamic thought, as articulated by scholars such as Muhammad al-Ghazali, asserts that power should be constrained by the principles of *shūrā*, justice, and the obligation to enjoin good and forbid evil. Within this framework, elections are interpreted as a contemporary form of deliberation compatible with Islamic values.⁶ The involvement of Islamic parties in the 1955 Indonesian General Election, along with debates in the Constituent Assembly between Masyumi and the Indonesian National Party, illustrates that democracy can serve as a

⁵ R. William Liddle, "The Islamic Turn in Indonesia: A Political Explanation," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 3 (1996): hlm. 613, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2646448>.

⁶ Aji Pangestu dan Siti Fatimah, "Refleksi Pemilihan Umum Pertama Tahun 1955 Menuju Penguatan Pemilihan Umum Yang Lebih Baik," *mauriduna* 6, no. 1 (2025): hlm. 12, <https://doi.org/10.37274/mauriduna.v6i1.1404>.

legitimate forum for establishing the foundation of the state while upholding the principles of sharia.⁷

The 1955 Indonesian General Election reflected both conflict and collaboration between Islamic and nationalist groups in shaping Indonesian democracy,⁸ as Islamic parties such as Masyumi and Nahdlatul Ulama grounded their participation in the principles of *shūrā* (consultation) and *‘adl* (justice), demonstrating that Islam is not inherently incompatible with democracy but instead provides a moral framework for responsible governance. Debates within the Konstituante further highlighted pluralism and deliberation within the emerging state system.⁹ and this study therefore examines how Islamic political theology influenced democratic practice and the evolving relationship between Islamic and nationalist forces in the early years of Indonesia’s independence.

B. Research Methodology

The type of research employed in this study is library research with a qualitative-historical approach. Primary data sources consist of official documents related to the administration of the 1955 General Election, Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 7 of 1953 concerning General Elections, the archival records of the Konstituante sessions, speeches of political leaders, as well as the original works of Muhammad al-Ghazali addressing the concepts of *shūrā*, justice, and governance in Islam. Secondary data sources include scholarly books, national and international journals, academic articles, and previous research findings relevant to the themes of democracy, Islamic politics, and electoral law in Indonesia. Data were collected through documentation and literature review methods by identifying, compiling, and examining various relevant written sources. The data were subsequently analyzed using descriptive-analytical and interpretative approaches to reconstruct historical facts and to assess the relevance of Islamic political theology within the practice of democracy in Indonesia.

⁷ Feith, *the decline of constitutional democracy in indonesia*.

⁸ Rodia Amanah, “Dinamika Pemilihan Umum Tahun 1955: Pelaksanaan dan Catatan Merah,” *NUSANTARA: Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* 9, no. 4 (2022): hlm. 3910.

⁹ Nurcholish Madjid, *islam kemoderenan dan keindonesiaan* (Bandung: pt mizan pustaka, 1987). hlm. 215.

C. Discussion and Research Findings

The Historical Context and Significance of the 1955 General Election in the Consolidation of Indonesian Democracy

The 1955 Indonesian General Election marked a foundational moment in Indonesia's constitutional history as the first democratically conducted national election after independence, taking place amid ideological fragmentation among nationalist, Islamic, and communist forces and fragile state institutions;¹⁰ beyond selecting political leaders, it served as a vehicle for political education and the articulation of popular sovereignty, reflected in high voter participation. Following the Dutch transfer of sovereignty in 1949 and the transition from the Republik Indonesia Serikat to the Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia in 1950, Indonesia entered the era of Liberal Democracy (1950–1959),¹¹ characterized by parliamentary governance, party fragmentation, rapid cabinet changes, and intense ideological debates.

From a socio-political perspective, the 1955 General Election emerged from the need to establish governmental legitimacy through a constitutionally grounded mechanism of popular representation. According to Herbert Feith in *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*, the 1955 election represented the apex of Indonesia's relatively free and competitive parliamentary democracy, before it subsequently deteriorated due to political instability and ideological conflict.¹² Herbert Feith argues that the 1955 General Election reflected the political elite's commitment to the principles of constitutional democracy, albeit without the support of strong and stable institutional foundations. The election was conducted in two stages: on 29 September 1955 to elect members of the House of Representatives (DPR), and on 15 December 1955 to elect members of the Konstituante. Voter participation was remarkably high, exceeding 90 percent, demonstrating widespread public enthusiasm for the democratic process. The four major parties that dominated the electoral results were the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI), Masyumi, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI). The diversity of ideologies represented in the election reflected the socio-political pluralism of Indonesia at that time.

From the perspective of democratic consolidation, the 1955 General Election holds significant importance as an effort to institutionalize peaceful

¹⁰ Budiardjo Miriam, *dasar-dasar ilmu politik* (jakarta: Gramedia, 2007). hlm. 91.

¹¹ Gibson, "Princeton : Princeton University Press , 2000 . 286 pages , index ."

¹² Feith, *the decline of constitutional democracy in indonesia*.

political competition. As stated by Affan Gaffar,¹³ this election demonstrated that in the early stages of independence, Indonesia had a substantial opportunity to develop a sound procedural democracy. The relatively honest and fair electoral mechanism served as an indicator that the principle of popular sovereignty had been concretely implemented. Nevertheless, the results of the 1955 election also revealed a high degree of political fragmentation. No single party secured an absolute majority, making coalition-building a necessity in the formation of cabinets. This condition led to recurrent governmental instability. Ultimately, this situation contributed to the issuance of the Presidential Decree of 5 July 1959 by Soekarno, marking the end of Liberal Democracy and the beginning of Guided Democracy¹⁴.

Progressive Electoral Principles in the Practice of the 1955 General Election

The 1955 General Election constituted an important foundation in the development of Indonesia's electoral system. Although conducted within the context of a newly established state facing significant institutional challenges, the election demonstrated several progressive electoral principles that continue to serve as normative standards in modern democracy, namely inclusivity, integrity, accountability, and fairness.¹⁵

The 1955 General Election fulfilled many of these fundamental indicators, albeit within a still relatively simple institutional framework. Nevertheless, structural weaknesses such as party fragmentation and cabinet instability demonstrated that the quality of an election does not necessarily guarantee the consolidation of a stable political system.¹⁶ This underscores that elections constitute an essential prerequisite of democracy, but not the sole determinant of its sustainability. Normatively, the 1955 General Election remains an ethical and historical reference point in the development of Indonesia's electoral system. The values of inclusivity, integrity, accountability, and fairness continue to serve as relevant evaluative standards for strengthening electoral democracy in the contemporary era.¹⁷

¹³ affan Gaffar, *politik indonesia: transisi menuju demokrasi* (yogyakarta : pustaka pelajar yogyakarta, 2006), hlm. 152. <https://digilib.dprd-diy.go.id/index.php/bibliografi/detail/3870-politik-indonesia-transisi-menusju-demokrasi>.

¹⁴ Amanah, "Dinamika Pemilihan Umum Tahun 1955: Pelaksanaan dan Catatan Merah."

¹⁵ Ketut Sedana Arta, "Sistem Pemerintahan Demokrasi Liberal Dan Tercapainya Pemilihan Umum I Pada Tahun 1955 Di Indonesia," *Widya Citra* 1, no. 2 (2020): hlm. 85.

¹⁶ Jimly Asshiddiqie, *Pengantar Ilmu Hukum Tata negara jilid 1*, jimly, asshiddiqie, vol. 1, 2006, www.jimly.com/pemikiran/getbuku/4.

¹⁷ Gaffar, *Politik Indonesia: Transisi Menuju Demokrasi*.

1. Inclusivity: Broad and Equal Political Participation

One of the principal characteristics of the 1955 General Election was its exceptionally high voter turnout, exceeding 90 percent. This indicates that the electoral system at the time was inclusive, granting voting rights to citizens without discrimination based on race, religion, or social group. In the post-colonial context, this represented a significant advancement, as it expanded universal political access to the populace. As noted by Herbert Feith in *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*, the 1955 election was conducted in a relatively free and open manner, enabling diverse political forces nationalist, Islamic, socialist, and communist to participate legitimately in political competition.¹⁸ This condition reflects the recognition of pluralism as a fundamental pillar of democracy.

From the perspective of modern democracy, inclusivity constitutes a primary indicator of electoral quality, as emphasized by Robert A. Dahl through the concept of polyarchy, which requires broad participation and open competition as prerequisites for substantive democracy.¹⁹ The 1955 General Election fulfilled these fundamental principles within the context of its time.

2. Integrity: Honesty and Adherence to Rules

Electoral integrity refers to the conduct of elections in a manner that is honest, transparent, and in accordance with the law. The 1955 General Election is often regarded as one of the cleanest elections in Indonesian history. The processes of voting and vote counting were carried out in a relatively orderly manner, with minimal interference from those in power. During the Liberal Democracy period, there was a strong commitment among political elites to uphold constitutional rules of the game, including in the administration of elections.²⁰ This demonstrates the presence of a political ethic that upholds fair play and respect for legal procedures.

In contemporary democratic standards, electoral integrity has become a matter of global concern through the use of electoral integrity indicators, which include the independence of electoral management bodies, freedom of

¹⁸ Feith, *the decline of constitutional democracy in indonesia*.

¹⁹ Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy participation and opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971). hlm. 75.

²⁰ Gaffar, *Politik Indonesia: Transisi Menuju Demokrasi*.

campaigning, and the legitimacy of results.²¹ Although the 1955 General Election did not yet have an independent institution comparable to the modern General Elections Commission (KPU), it nevertheless demonstrated a high degree of integrity within its historical context.

3. Accountability: Political Responsibility to the People

The 1955 General Election also reflected the principle of accountability, namely that political power is acquired and maintained through a mandate from the people. The parliamentary system in place at the time enabled the House of Representatives (DPR), elected through the general election, to exercise oversight over the government, although in practice it frequently encountered cabinet instability. Within the framework of constitutional democratic theory, accountability constitutes an essential mechanism for limiting power. The parliamentary mechanism nevertheless provided space for executive responsibility to the legislature elected by the people. Its relevance to modern democracy lies in the principles of horizontal accountability (among state institutions) and vertical accountability (between the people and the government through elections).²² The 1955 General Election became an early example of political accountability based on an electoral mandate in Indonesia.

4. Justice: Equal Competition Among Electoral Participants

The principle of justice was reflected in the relatively equal opportunities afforded to political parties to campaign and obtain public support. No single party dominated or monopolized the electoral process. The four major parties, Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI), Masyumi, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), competed within a political arena that was both competitive and open. From the perspective of political justice theory, equal political opportunity constitutes an essential condition of democracy. As emphasized by John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*, the principle of justice as fairness serves as a foundational requirement in the basic structure of society.²³ Although John Rawls did not specifically address the 1955 General Election, the principles he proposed can be employed as a

²¹ Pippa Norris, "Also from Cambridge University Press by the Author," no. 2008 (2014). hlm. 37.

²² Feith, *The Decline Of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*.

²³ John Rawls, *A THEORY OF JUSTICE* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

normative framework to assess that competition in the election was relatively fair compared with subsequent periods.

Normative-Historical Approach in Contemporary Electoral Regulation

The normative-historical approach in contemporary electoral regulation constitutes an analytical framework that integrates two essential dimensions: the normative dimension, which encompasses the ideal principles of democracy, and the historical dimension, which is grounded in the empirical experiences of electoral administration over time.²⁴ In the context of a democratic state such as Indonesia, electoral law should not be formulated solely on the basis of immediate technical and pragmatic considerations but must be grounded in fundamental constitutional values, including popular sovereignty, political equality, justice, and respect for human rights. This normative dimension serves as an ethical foundation to ensure that electoral regulation preserves the essential character of democracy as a system of government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Theoretically, the principle of procedural democracy as proposed by Robert A. Dahl in the concept of polyarchy emphasizes broad participation and free political competition as minimum standards of democracy.²⁵ Modern electoral regulation must guarantee these two elements through the protection of voting rights, freedom of campaigning, and equal opportunities among electoral participants. Consistent with this, John Rawls in his concept of justice as fairness argues that the basic structure of political institutions should provide equal opportunities for all citizens to participate in the political process.²⁶ Thus, the normative approach requires electoral lawmakers to place substantive justice as the primary orientation, rather than merely administrative efficiency.

The experience of the 1955 General Election demonstrates that a relatively free and fair election does not necessarily guarantee governmental stability when the party system is excessively fragmented. Conversely, during the periods of Guided Democracy and the New Order, electoral regulation tended to function as an instrument of political legitimation that restricted political competition. As explained by Herbert Feith, the decline of parliamentary democracy in Indonesia was not solely caused by procedural weaknesses but also by elite conflict and the

²⁴ Valina Singka Subekti, "Dinamika Konsolidasi Demokrasi: Dari Ide Pembaruan Sistem Politik Hingga Ke Praktik Pemerintahan Demokratis," 2015. hlm. 82.

²⁵ Dahl, *Polyarchy Participation And Opposition*.

²⁶ Rawls, *A Theory Of Justice*.

failure to build constitutional consensus.²⁷ This historical reflection is important so that contemporary electoral law is designed in a more balanced manner between stability and freedom.

In the contemporary context, democracy faces complex challenges such as digital disinformation, vote buying, identity-based polarization, and the technological transformation of campaigning and vote counting; therefore, a normative-historical approach remains essential to ensure that regulatory innovations uphold fundamental democratic values and avoid repeating past repressive practices.²⁸ The strengthening of institutions such as the Indonesian general election commission and supervisory mechanisms through the Indonesian general election commission illustrates how historical lessons are institutionalized within a reform-oriented legal framework, enabling electoral regulation to maintain its ethical orientation while adapting to evolving political realities.²⁹

Relationship between Democracy and Islam in Political Thought

The relationship between democracy and Islam in political thought is a discourse that continues to evolve, particularly in the context of modern Muslim majority states.³⁰ Conceptually, democracy emphasizes the principles of popular sovereignty, political participation, deliberation, justice, and accountability of power. Meanwhile, within the political tradition of Islam, principles such as *shûrâ* (consultation), justice (*ʿadl*), trustworthiness, and the responsibility of leaders toward the community are recognized. Within a normative framework, there exists a significant point of convergence between the two, particularly in the ethical dimension of governance and the limitation of political authority.³¹

Classical political thought regarding the ethics of power can be observed in the works of Al-Ghazali, particularly in *Al-Iqtishad fî al-I'tiqad* and *Nasihât al-Muluk*. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that political authority constitutes a trust that must be exercised for the benefit of society. He argues that religion and political power are “twin brothers”; religion functions as the moral foundation, while political

²⁷ Feith, *The Decline Of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*.

²⁸ Pangestu dan Fatimah, “Refleksi Pemilihan Umum Pertama Tahun 1955 Menuju Penguatan Pemilihan Umum Yang Lebih Baik.”

²⁹ Amir Said Arjomand, *Constitutionalism and Political Reconstruction* (Boston, 2007). hlm. 68.

³⁰ Rémy Madinier, “Civil Islam : Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia, Robert W. Hefner,” *Moussons* 72, no. 6 (2002): hlm. 160, <https://doi.org/10.4000/moussons.2633>.

³¹ M. Abduh Wahid, “Pergumulan Islam dan Politik di Indonesia,” *Jurnal Politik Profetik* 7, no. 1 (2019): hlm. 138.

authority serves as its protector. Without religious morality, power tends toward injustice; without an orderly system of governance, religion becomes difficult to implement within the social sphere. From this perspective, political legitimacy derives not merely from coercive capacity but from ethical responsibility and justice in governance.³²

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of justice as the core of legitimate governance. A leader is obligated to protect the rights of the people, avoid tyranny, and maintain a balance between individual interests and the common good. This principle aligns with the concept of the rule of law in modern democracy, which requires the limitation of political power and public accountability. Thus, although the classical Islamic political system is not identical to modern electoral democracy, there exists a compatibility of values in terms of ethical leadership, social responsibility, and orientation toward justice.³³

In the context of modern political thought, several scholars argue that democracy can be understood as an institutional mechanism for realizing Islamic values of justice and consultation. Democracy provides procedures for selecting leaders, controlling political power, and ensuring public participation; all of these may be viewed as instruments for achieving *maqashid al-shari'ah* (the objectives of Islamic law), namely the realization of public welfare.³⁴ The challenge lies in maintaining democratic practice in alignment with moral and ethical values so that it does not devolve into a mere competition for power devoid of an orientation toward justice.

Thus, the relationship between democracy and Islam in political thought is not antagonistic but dialogical. Democracy can be enriched by Islamic ethics concerning trust and responsibility, while Islamic values can be institutionalized through democratic mechanisms that guarantee participation and accountability.³⁵ Al-Ghazali's perspective on the ethics of power demonstrates that the essence of good governance, both in the Islamic tradition and in modern democracy is justice, morality, and a commitment to the welfare of the people.³⁶

³² Boland, "The Struggle Of Islam In Modern Indonesia."

³³ al - Ghazali, *Sejarah Pemikiran Ekonomi Islam* (kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2005), hlm. 160. <https://anyflip.com/swnyc/igvy/basic/>.

³⁴ Muhammad Yaufi dan Nur Mutiullah, "Al-Ghazali in the Political Ethics and Governance : An Analytical Studies on Al-Tibbr al-Masbu > k Fi > Nas } i > h } ah al-Mulk," *Tasfiyah* 7, no. 2 (2023): hlm. 208.

³⁵ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "The Indicatos of Wasatiyyah or Moderation in Islam," *ICR Journal* 7, no. 2 (2016): hlm. 264, <https://doi.org/10.52282/icr.v7i2.267>.

³⁶ Al - Ghazali, *Sejarah Pemikiran Ekonomi Islam*.

The relationship between democracy and Islam became one of the central issues in the discussion of the 1955 General Election, particularly with regard to the participation of Islamic political parties and ideological debates within the Konstituante. Islamic political thought, especially as articulated by Muhammad al-Ghazali, provided a normative foundation for the acceptance of democracy as a system compatible with Islamic principles. Al-Ghazali viewed general elections as a modern manifestation of the principle of *shûrâ* (consultation), enabling public participation in determining political direction through collective decision-making.³⁷

Implications for Electoral Systems in Muslim-Majority Countries

In political theory, Robert A. Dahl emphasizes that democracy requires broad citizen participation and free political contestation as characteristics of polyarchy.³⁸ This principle corresponds to the concept of *shûrâ* in Islam, which emphasizes consultation as a collective mechanism in decision-making. Accordingly, elections can be understood as an institutionalization of the value of deliberation within the context of the modern state.

In classical Islamic political thought, the ethics of power occupy a central position. Al-Ghazali in *Nasihat al-Muluk* states that political authority is a trust that must be exercised for the benefit of society and protected from injustice. He emphasizes that religion and the state are closely related: power without morality tends to produce tyranny, while morality without political authority is difficult to implement within the social sphere.³⁹ This view shows that political legitimacy depends not only on formal procedures, but also on the ethical integrity of its implementation. Therefore, electoral systems in Muslim-majority countries must guarantee honesty, transparency, and the prevention of manipulative practices such as vote buying and electoral fraud.

The principle of justice also represents an important point of convergence between democracy and Islam. John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* argues that political institutions must be designed to ensure equality of opportunity and the protection of fundamental rights of citizens.⁴⁰ This concept is consistent with the Islamic value of *ʿadl*, which requires fair treatment without discrimination. In the electoral context, this means equal access to candidacy, campaigning, media, and

³⁷ Yaufi Dan Mutiullah, "Al-Ghazali In The Political Ethics And Governance : An Analytical Studies On Al-Tibbr Al-Masbu > K Fi > Nas } I > H } Ah Al-Mulk."

³⁸ Dahl, *Polyarchy Participation And Opposition*.

³⁹ Boland, "The Struggle Of Islam In Modern Indonesia."

⁴⁰ Rawls, *A Theory Of Justice*.

political representation, so that competition occurs in a fair manner and is not structurally unbalanced.

Historical experiences of Muslim-majority countries show that the quality of elections is greatly influenced by political culture and elite consensus. Herbert Feith argues that the failure of parliamentary democracy was not solely due to procedural weaknesses but also because of elite conflict and weak commitment to constitutional rules of the game.⁴¹ This becomes a lesson that a good electoral system must be accompanied by moral commitment and political responsibility from the actors involved. Electoral democracy without ethics can turn into an arena of destructive power competition.

In contemporary studies of the relationship between Islam and democracy, John L. Esposito argues that the values of participation, consultation, and justice have strong roots in the Islamic political tradition (1996).⁴² This perspective enriches the electoral system with an ethical and spiritual dimension that strengthens the meaning of political accountability. Furthermore, Noah Feldman in his study of Islamic constitutionalism argues that the principles of limiting political power and the supremacy of law have long been part of the classical Islamic legal tradition.⁴³ This demonstrates that the idea of the rule of law is not an alien concept but has historical resonance within Islamic civilization. The implication for electoral systems is the importance of regulatory design that limits the dominance of political power, guarantees the independence of electoral management institutions, and ensures the resolution of disputes in a fair and constitutional manner.⁴⁴

Thus, electoral systems in Muslim-majority countries ideally represent a synthesis between modern democratic procedures and Islamic political ethics. Democracy provides an institutional mechanism for participation and peaceful transfers of power, while Islam offers a moral orientation that emphasizes trust, justice, and public welfare. The integration of both enables elections to be not only

⁴¹ Feith, *The Decline Of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*.

⁴² Esposito Jhon, Zeina Barakat, Dan Muncjow Thies, *Islam & Democracy*, 2006.

⁴³ Noah. Feldman, "The Fall And Rise Of The Islamic State," 2010, 200, https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Fall_And_Rise_Of_The_Islamic_State.html?hl=id&id=Ba0x5shcb_Wc.

⁴⁴ Abdulaziz Sachedina, "The Islamic Roots Of Democratic Pluralism," *The Islamic Roots Of Democratic Pluralism*, 3 Oktober 2001, Hlm. 189, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195139914.001.0001>.

legally valid but also ethically and religiously legitimate, thereby strengthening the foundations of democracy rooted in the values of society.

D. Conclusion

The 1955 General Election was the initial milestone of Indonesian democracy that succeeded in establishing an electoral system that was inclusive, integrated, and legitimate, characterized by high political participation and a relatively comprehensive legal framework. This historical experience demonstrates that from its early stages Indonesia possessed a strong democratic foundation, both procedurally and substantively. In the perspective of Islamic political theology, the thought of Muhammad al-Ghazali affirms that democratic principles such as participation, justice, and accountability are in harmony with the concepts of *shûrâ* and moral responsibility in Islam. Thus, democracy and Islamic values are not contradictory but can mutually reinforce one another in building a political system that is ethical, just, and civilized.

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