



Presidential Electoral Legitimacy in Indonesia (2004–2019): A *Siyasah Syariyyah* Analysis

Adamu Abubakar Muhammad^{1*}, Adang Sonjaya²

¹Department of Islamic Studies, Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria

²National Research and Innovation Agency, Jakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author Email: abubakaradamu1980@gmail.com

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Abstract

Presidential elections constitute a central mechanism for democratic legitimacy in Indonesia's constitutional system. While previous studies have extensively examined electoral competition, coalition politics, and democratic consolidation, limited attention has been given to how electoral legitimacy can be evaluated through the normative framework of *siyasah syariyyah*. This gap is significant because legitimacy in Islamic constitutional thought extends beyond electoral victory and encompasses justice (*al-'adl*), public welfare (*maslahah*), and trustworthiness (*amanah*) as foundational principles of governance. This study analyzes the legitimacy of Indonesia's presidential elections from 2004 to 2019 by examining the electoral cycles of 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019 through the perspective of *siyasah syariyyah*. Employing a qualitative normative-juridical method and doctrinal legal analysis, the study utilizes constitutional documents, electoral regulations, judicial decisions, and relevant scholarly literature as primary sources. The findings demonstrate that electoral legitimacy in Indonesia is shaped not only by constitutional procedures and electoral outcomes but also by the quality of political competition, coalition formation, and public acceptance of electoral results. Using *al-'adl*, *maslahah*, and *amanah* as analytical indicators, the study finds that democratic legitimacy and Islamic constitutional legitimacy are complementary rather than contradictory. The analysis further reveals that legitimacy is strengthened when electoral processes uphold fairness, promote public welfare, and encourage accountable political leadership. This article contributes to the scholarship on Islamic constitutional law by proposing a *siyasah syariyyah*-based framework for assessing electoral legitimacy, thereby integrating democratic constitutionalism with Islamic principles of governance in contemporary Muslim-majority states.

Keywords:

Siyasah Syariyyah; political legitimacy; presidential election; Islamic constitutional law; Indonesian democracy.

1. Introduction

Presidential elections constitute a fundamental mechanism for generating political legitimacy within democratic constitutional systems. Beyond functioning as procedural instruments for selecting political leaders, elections operate as institutional mechanisms through which



governmental authority acquires constitutional validity, public acceptance, and democratic accountability. Contemporary scholarship increasingly rejects a narrow procedural understanding of electoral legitimacy and instead conceptualizes it as a multidimensional construct encompassing fairness, transparency, participation, institutional trust, and post-electoral acceptance by both elites and citizens. In this regard, legitimacy is not a static outcome of elections but a continuous process shaped by institutional performance and socio-political recognition. The relationship between democratic procedures and legitimacy has therefore become a central concern in constitutional and legal studies, particularly in societies undergoing democratic consolidation and institutional transformation (Akanke et al., 2026; Siddiq & Ahmed, 2026). Within this theoretical horizon, Indonesia provides a particularly relevant case for examining how electoral legitimacy is constructed, contested, and stabilized within a constitutional democracy that simultaneously accommodates democratic governance and religious normative frameworks.

Indonesia's experience with direct presidential elections since 2004 provides a critical empirical setting for analyzing the dynamics of electoral legitimacy. The presidential elections of 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019 marked distinct phases in the evolution of Indonesia's post-Reformasi constitutional democracy, characterized by increasing electoral competitiveness, coalition-based governance, and expanding voter participation. During these cycles, political parties increasingly relied on coalition-building strategies to secure electoral viability and governmental stability, while presidential candidates constructed legitimacy through institutional support, political communication, and mass mobilization. At the same time, elections became arenas of intensified legal and constitutional contestation, particularly regarding electoral disputes, procedural fairness, and interpretation of constitutional norms. Empirical studies highlight the resilience of Indonesia's electoral institutions and the adaptive strategies of political actors in maintaining democratic stability (Kristiyanto et al., 2023). Other scholarship emphasizes that electoral legitimacy is also shaped by religious discourse, elite negotiation, and evolving patterns of political competition that influence public perceptions of authority (Alfarisi et al., 2024; Fernando et al., 2024). These dynamics indicate that presidential elections in Indonesia function not only as electoral mechanisms but also as constitutional arenas where legitimacy is continuously produced and contested.

The intersection between democracy, law, and religion further complicates the conceptualization of electoral legitimacy in Indonesia. Existing scholarship has examined various dimensions of electoral democracy, including party institutionalization, coalition politics, electoral dispute resolution, and the politicization of religion in electoral competition (Sistiyawan et al., 2024; Nastain et al., 2024; Qosim et al., 2025). In parallel, studies on Islamic political actors and religious elites demonstrate their significant influence on voter behavior and democratic participation within Muslim-majority societies (Yani et al., 2022; Busyro et al., 2025). Within Islamic constitutional discourse, scholars have increasingly revisited the relevance of *siyasah syar'iyah* as a normative and analytical framework for governance, public administration, and state legitimacy (Nasution & Lutfi, 2025; Mustofa et al., 2026). However, the existing literature remains fragmented: democratic studies tend to prioritize institutional and procedural analysis, while Islamic governance studies emphasize normative ethical frameworks without systematic integration into empirical electoral analysis. As a result, the conceptual



relationship between electoral legitimacy and Islamic constitutional principles remains underdeveloped within a unified analytical structure.

This fragmentation is particularly significant because legitimacy in Islamic constitutional thought extends beyond procedural legality and electoral victory. Within the framework of *siyasaḥ syariyyah*, political authority is considered legitimate when it embodies justice (*al-‘adl*), advances public welfare (*maslahah*), and demonstrates trustworthiness and accountability (*amanah*). Although these principles are widely recognized in Islamic political theory, they are often treated as normative ideals rather than operational analytical categories for evaluating contemporary electoral processes. Existing studies addressing Islamic dimensions of Indonesian elections tend to focus on identity politics, religious mobilization, or the politicization of religion, rather than systematically assessing electoral legitimacy as an analytical construct (Zainuddin et al., 2022; Qosim et al., 2025). Accordingly, three major gaps persist in the literature. First, electoral legitimacy remains under-theorized relative to electoral competition and outcomes. Second, the principles of *al-‘adl*, *maslahah*, and *amanah* have not been sufficiently operationalized as evaluative indicators of electoral processes. Third, there is limited integration between democratic constitutional legitimacy and Islamic constitutional legitimacy within a coherent analytical framework applicable to empirical cases such as Indonesia’s presidential elections.

In response to these gaps, this article examines the legitimacy of Indonesia’s presidential elections between 2004 and 2019 through the analytical lens of *siyasaḥ syariyyah*. It argues that electoral legitimacy should be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that integrates constitutional-democratic principles with Islamic constitutional ethics. By analyzing the presidential elections of 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019, the study addresses two central questions: how electoral legitimacy is constructed and contested across different electoral cycles, and how the principles of *al-‘adl*, *maslahah*, and *amanah* can be operationalized as analytical indicators for evaluating legitimacy. The study contributes to Islamic constitutional scholarship by transforming these principles from normative ethical concepts into analytical tools for examining electoral governance. In doing so, it bridges democratic constitutionalism and Islamic political thought, offering a more comprehensive framework for understanding political legitimacy in contemporary Indonesia and other Muslim-majority democratic contexts.

2. Literature Review

Electoral legitimacy occupies a central position in constitutional theory and democratic governance, as it determines whether political authority is perceived as legally valid, normatively justified, and socially accepted within a constitutional order. In contemporary scholarship, legitimacy is increasingly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that extends beyond procedural electoral compliance to include institutional trust, perceived fairness, and the quality of political accountability. This conceptual shift reflects a broader transition in democratic theory from purely procedural understandings of legitimacy toward performance- and perception-based approaches. Comparative constitutional studies emphasize that electoral legitimacy depends not only on formal legal frameworks but also on institutional capacity to safeguard political rights, ensure credible dispute resolution, and sustain public confidence in electoral outcomes (Siddiq & Ahmed, 2026). In parallel, jurisprudential analyses



of constitutional adjudication underscore the decisive role of judicial institutions in preserving electoral integrity and guaranteeing lawful transfers of political power (Al-Dulaimi, 2025). Beyond legal-structural dimensions, empirical governance research further demonstrates that state capacity and institutional effectiveness significantly shape public trust in democratic regimes (Foa, 2022; Wijatmoko et al., 2023). Collectively, these perspectives position electoral legitimacy as an inherently composite construct integrating legality, institutional performance, and sociopolitical acceptance.

In the Indonesian context, the post-2004 introduction of direct presidential elections represents a structural transformation in the configuration of democratic legitimacy. The shift from indirect to direct presidential selection redefined legitimacy as an expression of popular sovereignty while simultaneously embedding it within a competitive and coalition-driven political system. Scholarship on Indonesia's democratic consolidation indicates that presidential elections have evolved into arenas of continuous negotiation among political parties, elites, and voters, where legitimacy is constructed through both electoral outcomes and post-electoral coalition arrangements (Kristiyanto et al., 2023). Empirical studies further show that Indonesia's post-Reformasi democracy is characterized by elite bargaining and coalition pragmatism, which significantly influence public interpretations of political authority (Fernando et al., 2024). Within this institutional configuration, the constitutional design of executive authority and electoral governance plays a pivotal role in shaping legitimacy perceptions, particularly through regulatory frameworks governing presidential elections (Ahmad & Fadillah, 2021). Moreover, research on electoral dispute resolution demonstrates that the credibility of judicial institutions in managing electoral conflicts constitutes a decisive factor in sustaining legitimacy across electoral cycles (Alfarisi et al., 2024; Sistyawan et al., 2024). These findings collectively indicate that Indonesian electoral legitimacy operates as a layered construct shaped simultaneously by electoral mechanics, institutional design, and post-electoral political settlements.

A further dimension of electoral legitimacy in Indonesia concerns the increasing entanglement of religion, identity politics, and electoral competition. Contemporary scholarship demonstrates that religious narratives are not peripheral but structurally embedded in the construction of political legitimacy in Muslim-majority democracies. Studies on political communication and electoral mobilization show that religious symbols, moral discourse, and identity-based appeals are strategically employed by political actors to construct legitimacy and mobilize electoral support (Qosim et al., 2025; Zainuddin et al., 2022). The expansion of digital media has further intensified this dynamic by accelerating the circulation of religious authority, including fatwas and Islamic normative interpretations, within public and electoral discourse (Mualimin et al., 2025). At the societal level, religious elites and Islamic organizations continue to function as key intermediaries in shaping political preferences and legitimacy perceptions among voters (Yani et al., 2022). In addition, scholarship on Islamic political participation indicates that political behavior is frequently interpreted through fiqh-based normative frameworks linking governance to collective welfare and moral responsibility (Bahar et al., 2025; Ramli & Elatrash, 2021). Within this configuration, Islamic political parties often justify coalition strategies and electoral pragmatism through the logic of public benefit (*maslahah*), reflecting the fluid interaction between religious ethics and democratic competition (Agustam et al., 2025; Nastain



et al., 2024). This body of literature demonstrates that electoral legitimacy in Indonesia cannot be fully understood without accounting for the interaction between constitutional democracy and socio-religious normative systems.

Within Islamic constitutional thought, *siyasah syariyyah* provides a normative-analytical framework for evaluating political legitimacy beyond procedural electoral criteria. Classical and contemporary interpretations converge on the principle that legitimate governance must fulfill foundational ethical requirements, particularly justice (al-‘adl), public welfare (maslahah), and trustworthiness (amanah). These principles function not merely as moral ideals but as evaluative standards for assessing the legitimacy of political authority and state governance. Recent scholarship extends the application of *siyasah syariyyah* to contemporary governance domains, including public policy, institutional design, and administrative justice, demonstrating its analytical adaptability in modern contexts (Jaelani et al., 2024). Furthermore, constitutional studies argue that Islamic governance principles can be meaningfully integrated with democratic institutional arrangements, provided that governance outcomes align with public welfare and accountability norms (Said et al., 2025; Nasution & Lutfi, 2025). Empirical studies of Muslim political behavior further confirm that democratic participation is often mediated through religious interpretive frameworks rather than standing in opposition to them (Busyro et al., 2025; Margiansyah et al., 2025). Comparative historical analyses also reveal that legitimacy crises and succession disputes have long constituted central concerns within Islamic governance traditions, reinforcing the contemporary relevance of legitimacy-based analytical frameworks (Ramadhan et al., 2026). In the Indonesian regional context, studies on Aceh demonstrate that Islamic authority is continuously produced through interactions among legal institutions, political structures, and religious communities, indicating that legitimacy is contextually constructed rather than fixed (Rubaidi et al., 2025). Collectively, these studies position *siyasah syariyyah* as a robust conceptual bridge between normative Islamic ethics and empirical analyses of democratic governance.

Despite the extensive literature on electoral democracy, constitutional governance, and Islamic political thought, a significant analytical gap persists. Existing studies tend to treat these domains in isolation: democratic scholarship emphasizes procedural legitimacy and institutional performance, while Islamic political studies focus on normative ethics without systematic operationalization in empirical political analysis. Although recent work on norm contestation highlights the dynamic interaction between competing normative systems (Karaman-Yılmazgil, 2025; Özgür Keysan, 2026), these insights remain insufficiently integrated into analyses of Indonesian presidential elections. Consequently, concepts such as al-‘adl, maslahah, and amanah remain largely theoretical and underutilized as analytical instruments for evaluating concrete electoral dynamics. Addressing this gap, this study develops an integrated analytical framework combining constitutional-democratic legitimacy with *siyasah syariyyah*. It conceptualizes presidential elections not merely as procedural contests for political power, but as arenas of legitimacy construction shaped by institutional design, political coalitions, socio-religious discourse, and ethical governance standards. By operationalizing al-‘adl, maslahah, and amanah as evaluative indicators across the 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019 Indonesian presidential elections, the study contributes to advancing a more comprehensive theory of electoral legitimacy in Muslim-majority democratic contexts.



3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in a normative-juridical approach to examine presidential electoral legitimacy in Indonesia between 2004 and 2019 through the analytical lens of *siyasah syariyyah*. The normative-juridical method is considered appropriate because the object of inquiry concerns legal norms, constitutional principles, electoral regulations, and Islamic constitutional doctrines that collectively shape the legitimacy of political authority. Rather than employing quantitative measurement of electoral behavior, this study focuses on how legitimacy is constructed, justified, and contested within constitutional and normative frameworks. The analysis specifically concentrates on the presidential elections of 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019, which represent the formative phase of Indonesia's direct presidential election system. These electoral cycles are selected because they reflect distinct patterns of political competition, coalition formation, constitutional contestation, and public acceptance of electoral outcomes. The study integrates doctrinal legal analysis with interpretive examination of political legitimacy, thereby enabling a multidimensional understanding of elections as both constitutional mechanisms and instruments of leadership authorization. This methodological orientation aligns with contemporary legal scholarship emphasizing the interaction between constitutional law, democratic governance, and legitimacy formation in electoral systems (Alfarisi et al., 2024; Siddiq & Ahmed, 2026).

The study relies exclusively on secondary data obtained through systematic library-based research. Primary sources include constitutional provisions, particularly the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, electoral legislation, Constitutional Court decisions concerning presidential elections, official reports issued by the General Election Commission (KPU), and relevant governmental regulations. Secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic monographs, and scholarly publications addressing electoral democracy, coalition politics, constitutional governance, Islamic political thought, and *siyasah syariyyah*. Source selection was guided by three criteria: relevance to presidential elections and political legitimacy, contribution to constitutional or Islamic governance discourse, and academic credibility as demonstrated through peer-reviewed publication. To enhance contextual depth, the study also engages comparative scholarship on democratic governance, electoral accountability, institutional resilience, and legitimacy disputes in other jurisdictions (Foa, 2022; Wijatmoko et al., 2023; Akande et al., 2026). Particular attention is given to studies addressing coalition politics, religious mobilization, and political authority in Indonesia, given their significant influence on the evolution of electoral legitimacy during the 2004–2019 period (Kristiyanto et al., 2023; Yani et al., 2022; Qosim et al., 2025).

Data analysis was conducted through three sequential stages. The first stage involved descriptive analysis to map the constitutional, political, and institutional characteristics of each presidential election cycle between 2004 and 2019. The second stage applied doctrinal and interpretive analysis to examine how electoral legitimacy was constructed through electoral procedures, coalition dynamics, legal contestation, and public acceptance of electoral outcomes. The third stage operationalized the principles of *siyasah syariyyah* as analytical indicators for evaluating legitimacy. Within this framework, justice (*al-'adl*) is used to assess electoral fairness, equal political participation, and procedural integrity; public welfare (*maslahah*) is used to evaluate whether electoral competition contributes to political stability,



democratic governance, and societal benefit; and trustworthiness (*amanah*) is used to assess accountability, ethical leadership, and responsible exercise of political authority. These indicators enable the study to move beyond procedural definitions of legitimacy and to incorporate the ethical dimensions of democratic governance. By integrating constitutional analysis with Islamic political theory, this methodology provides a systematic framework for examining the interaction between democratic legitimacy and Islamic constitutional legitimacy within Indonesia's presidential electoral system. This analytical model further addresses the identified research gap by transforming *al-'adl*, *maslahah*, and *amanah* from abstract normative concepts into operational criteria for assessing electoral legitimacy in contemporary constitutional democracies.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Electoral Contestation and Political Legitimacy in Indonesia (2004–2019)

The institutionalization of direct presidential elections in Indonesia following constitutional amendments fundamentally transformed the basis of political legitimacy from elite-centered representation to direct popular sovereignty. The presidential elections of 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019 constituted critical milestones in the consolidation of Indonesia's democratic system, as legitimacy increasingly became contingent upon electoral participation, constitutional compliance, and public acceptance of electoral outcomes. In constitutional democracies, legitimacy is derived not only from formal legal procedures but also from the capacity of institutions to generate public trust and ensure political accountability. Comparative governance studies further demonstrate that state legitimacy is also reflected in the manner in which sovereign authority is exercised across institutional domains, where even highly technical sectors indicate that governance effectiveness depends on institutional stability and perceived state authority (Tahir, 2025). In Indonesia, the transition to direct elections created a political arena in which actors, parties, and social groups continuously negotiated authority through electoral competition. Consequently, legitimacy evolved from a static legal construct into a dynamic process shaped by electoral participation, institutional performance, and societal recognition. This interpretation aligns with contemporary scholarship on legal authority and public compliance, which argues that institutional effectiveness ultimately depends on citizens' recognition and acceptance of legitimacy rather than mere formal obedience to legal rules (Taufik et al., 2026). This development is consistent with broader democratic theories emphasizing that legitimacy is continuously reproduced through interactions between political institutions and citizens rather than being fixed solely through constitutional design (Fernando et al., 2024; Siddiq & Ahmed, 2026).

The 2004 and 2009 presidential elections represented the initial phase of democratic consolidation, during which electoral legitimacy was primarily associated with procedural compliance and constitutional stability. The successful implementation of direct elections strengthened public confidence in democratic institutions and reinforced the principle of popular sovereignty within Indonesia's presidential system. However, these elections also highlighted the growing centrality of coalition politics. No single political party possessed sufficient electoral strength to govern independently, thereby compelling candidates to construct broad alliances across ideological and organizational lines. The coalition-based nature of Indonesian presidentialism subsequently became a defining feature of electoral competition.



Studies on party institutionalization indicate that coalition formation has contributed to democratic stability while simultaneously encouraging political pragmatism and elite bargaining (Kristiyanto et al., 2023). Similar findings are reflected in research on Islamic political parties, where coalition and opposition strategies are frequently justified through considerations of public benefit (*maslahah*) rather than purely ideological commitments (Agustam et al., 2025). Accordingly, electoral legitimacy in Indonesia emerged not solely from electoral victory but also from the capacity of political actors to construct inclusive and sustainable governing coalitions.

A significant transformation occurred during the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections, when electoral contestation became increasingly polarized and marked by the intensification of identity-based narratives. Political competition extended beyond policy differences and institutional debates into contested domains of religious identity, moral authority, and ideological representation. Empirical studies demonstrate that religious discourse played an increasingly prominent role in shaping voter preferences and political legitimacy during these electoral cycles (Zainuddin et al., 2022; Qosim et al., 2025). Religious leaders, particularly influential Islamic scholars and community figures, functioned as key intermediaries in political mobilization processes, reinforcing the interaction between democratic procedures and socio-religious legitimacy (Yani et al., 2022). Simultaneously, legal contestation concerning electoral administration, campaign regulation, and constitutional interpretation intensified, illustrating that legitimacy was increasingly negotiated across both legal and socio-political arenas (Alfarisi et al., 2024). These developments indicate that democratic legitimacy in Indonesia cannot be understood solely through electoral outcomes, as societal perceptions of fairness, morality, and representation significantly shape public acceptance of political authority.

Another salient feature of the 2004–2019 electoral period is the persistence of recurring political actors, particularly the repeated presidential candidacies of Prabowo Subianto. This phenomenon illustrates that electoral defeat does not necessarily negate political legitimacy within democratic systems. Instead, legitimacy may be reconstructed through sustained political engagement, organizational resilience, coalition-building, and continued public support. Comparative governance studies suggest that political legitimacy is closely linked to institutional effectiveness, leadership credibility, and responsiveness to societal demands (Foa, 2022; Akande et al., 2026). Furthermore, contemporary scholarship indicates that democratic systems frequently encounter legitimacy challenges arising from elite competition, populist mobilization, and ideological polarization (Büyükokutan et al., 2025). The Indonesian experience reflects these global patterns, wherein electoral competition functions not only as a mechanism for leadership selection but also as a continuous process of political authority reconstruction. Consequently, legitimacy should be understood as cumulative and relational, emerging through sustained interactions between political elites, institutions, and citizens rather than being determined exclusively by electoral outcomes.

From the perspective of *siyasaḥ syariyyah*, the electoral dynamics between 2004 and 2019 demonstrate that legitimacy encompasses both constitutional and ethical dimensions. Islamic political thought emphasizes that political authority must be grounded in justice (*al-‘adl*), public welfare (*maslahah*), and trustworthiness (*amanah*), principles that extend beyond procedural



electoral success (Said et al., 2025). The Indonesian case illustrates that democratic legitimacy is strengthened when electoral processes are perceived as fair, political competition remains accountable, and governance outcomes contribute to societal welfare. Contemporary Islamic constitutional scholarship increasingly acknowledges the compatibility between democratic institutions and Islamic governance principles, provided that public interest and ethical responsibility remain central to political practice (Nasution & Lutfi, 2025; Busyro et al., 2025). Therefore, Indonesia's presidential elections from 2004 to 2019 indicate that legitimacy should be understood as a multidimensional construct integrating constitutional legality, political effectiveness, social acceptance, and ethical governance. This finding constitutes the central contribution of this study by proposing a *siyasah syariyyah*-based framework for evaluating electoral legitimacy not only in terms of electoral victory but also in relation to justice, accountability, and the realization of public welfare.

4.2 Coalition Politics, Institutional Dynamics, and Electoral Outcomes

The period between 2004 and 2019 demonstrates that coalition politics became one of the most decisive determinants of presidential electoral outcomes in Indonesia's post-Reformasi democratic system. The adoption of direct presidential elections expanded democratic participation while simultaneously generating structural incentives for political parties to form broad and strategically necessary alliances. Given that no single party consistently possessed sufficient electoral strength to independently nominate presidential candidates, coalition-building evolved from a discretionary political strategy into an institutional necessity. Electoral competition thus developed into a multidimensional process involving inter-party negotiation, elite coordination, and the distribution of political resources. In this configuration, coalition-based presidentialism has significantly shaped Indonesia's democratic character by fostering cross-party collaboration while reducing the likelihood of single-party dominance. As noted by Kristiyanto et al. (2023), party institutionalization has supported democratic consolidation while simultaneously reinforcing coalition dependency as a persistent structural feature of electoral competition. Similar findings are reflected in studies of party development, which highlight organizational adaptation and coalition flexibility as key mechanisms sustaining electoral competitiveness within Indonesia's fragmented party system (Nastain et al., 2024; Fernando et al., 2024).

The relevance of coalition politics extends beyond electoral mechanics, as it directly shapes the construction of political legitimacy. In practice, presidential candidates are required to secure support from diverse political actors representing ideological, regional, and organizational constituencies. Electoral viability is therefore determined not only by popular support but also by the capacity to achieve elite consensus across competing interests. This indicates that legitimacy is simultaneously produced through mass electoral endorsement and elite accommodation. Coalition formation thus encourages pragmatic compromise that often transcends ideological boundaries, producing alliances grounded in strategic calculation rather than programmatic coherence. This reflects the adaptive logic of Indonesian democracy, in which political actors continuously adjust to shifting electoral incentives and institutional constraints. Research on Islamic party elites further shows that coalition and opposition decisions are frequently justified through considerations of public benefit (*maslahah*), demonstrating the coexistence of pragmatic political behavior and normative reasoning within



democratic competition (Agustam et al., 2025). From this perspective, coalition-building functions not only as an electoral strategy but also as a mechanism through which political authority and legitimacy are continuously negotiated.

Institutional dynamics constitute another central factor shaping coalition behavior and electoral outcomes. Electoral competition operates within constitutional and legal frameworks governing candidate nomination, campaign regulation, electoral dispute resolution, and executive authority. Consequently, institutional credibility significantly influences public perceptions of fairness and democratic legitimacy. Comparative constitutional scholarship emphasizes that robust legal safeguards and effective judicial institutions are essential for ensuring electoral integrity and sustaining democratic rights (Siddiq & Ahmed, 2026). Similarly, debates on constitutional jurisdiction and judicial authority underscore the importance of legal oversight in resolving electoral disputes and maintaining institutional stability (Al-Dulaimi, 2025). In Indonesia, electoral legitimacy is closely tied to the capacity of institutions to administer elections transparently and enforce legal accountability. Empirical studies on governance effectiveness further indicate that public trust increases when institutions consistently implement policies and uphold legal norms, thereby strengthening democratic confidence (Wijatmoko et al., 2023). Accordingly, coalition outcomes cannot be analytically separated from institutional performance, as electoral legitimacy is ultimately filtered through perceptions of legal credibility and administrative reliability.

Beyond formal institutional arrangements, coalition politics in Indonesia is also shaped by socio-religious actors whose authority plays a significant role in electoral mobilization and legitimacy formation. Islamic scholars, religious organizations, and community leaders frequently function as intermediaries between political elites and voters, influencing political preferences and legitimacy perceptions. The political orientation of religious elites, particularly within major Islamic organizations, has been shown to significantly affect electoral behavior and democratic participation (Yani et al., 2022). During presidential elections, religious narratives are often incorporated into coalition strategies to enhance moral legitimacy and broaden electoral appeal. However, this intersection between religion and politics also introduces tensions related to democratic inclusiveness and electoral neutrality. Studies on the politicization of religion in Indonesia show that religious discourse can simultaneously reinforce legitimacy and intensify polarization when strategically instrumentalized in electoral competition (Zainuddin et al., 2022; Qosim et al., 2025). More broadly, scholarship on Islamic political authority suggests that Muslim societies increasingly negotiate democratic and religious values as interdependent rather than opposing frameworks (Busyro et al., 2025; Margiansyah et al., 2025). Consequently, coalition politics operates within a multilayered normative environment in which institutional legitimacy, electoral strategy, and religious authority are continuously intertwined.

From a comparative governance perspective, coalition politics reflects broader transformations in contemporary democratic systems. Modern democracies increasingly exhibit intensified elite competition, evolving leadership structures, and growing demands for institutional accountability. Akande et al. (2026) argue that political legitimacy in contemporary governance is continuously constructed across political, economic, and social domains rather than being

secured solely through electoral victory. Similarly, studies on elite–counterelite dynamics demonstrate that democratic outcomes are shaped by sustained competition among actors seeking institutional influence (Büyükokutan et al., 2025). These patterns are also evident in Indonesia, where coalition politics functions as a stabilizing mechanism for managing elite fragmentation while preserving electoral competitiveness. The Indonesian experience between 2004 and 2019 therefore illustrates that electoral outcomes emerge from the interaction of coalition strategies, institutional performance, legal frameworks, and socio-religious legitimacy. Rather than constituting isolated electoral contests, presidential elections represent complex arenas in which political authority is continuously negotiated and redefined. This supports the conclusion that a comprehensive understanding of Indonesian electoral politics requires an integrated analysis of institutional structures, coalition dynamics, and normative legitimacy frameworks derived from both constitutional democracy and Islamic political thought.

4.3 Islamic Constitutional Perspective on Electoral Legitimacy (*Siyasah Syariyyah Framework*)

From the perspective of *siyasah syariyyah*, electoral legitimacy cannot be reduced to procedural compliance or the numerical outcome of voting. Instead, legitimacy derives from the extent to which political authority fulfills the normative objectives of governance as articulated within Islamic constitutional thought. These objectives encompass the realization of justice (*al-‘adl*), the promotion of public welfare (*maslahah*), the preservation of trust (*amanah*), and the maintenance of social order within a constitutional framework. Accordingly, elections are not merely mechanisms for transferring political power but institutional instruments for selecting leaders capable of fulfilling collective societal responsibilities. Contemporary Islamic constitutional scholarship increasingly acknowledges that democratic institutions may operate in harmony with Islamic governance principles when they promote accountability, participatory governance, and the public good. Said et al. (2025) demonstrate that Islamic constitutional reasoning possesses sufficient interpretive flexibility to accommodate modern democratic arrangements through *ijtihad*-based approaches to sovereignty and governance. Similarly, Nasution and Lutfi (2025) argue that Indonesia’s presidential electoral system can be interpreted through *siyasah syariyyah* insofar as it embodies popular participation and constitutional accountability. Within this framework, electoral legitimacy is assessed not only through procedural correctness but also through substantive outcomes that reflect justice and public welfare.

The Indonesian experience between 2004 and 2019 illustrates that electoral legitimacy emerges from the interaction between constitutional procedures and ethical expectations embedded within society. Direct presidential elections strengthened democratic participation by enabling citizens to exercise political sovereignty through constitutionally sanctioned mechanisms. However, the legitimacy of elected leaders depended not solely on electoral victory but also on their perceived commitment to public welfare, constitutional integrity, and social cohesion. This observation aligns closely with the principle of *maslahah*, which prioritizes collective benefit over factional or partisan interests. Studies on coalition politics among Islamic political actors demonstrate that political alliances are frequently justified through *maslahah*-based reasoning, particularly when coalition formation is viewed as necessary for ensuring political



stability and effective governance (Agustam et al., 2025). In this sense, *masalah* provides a normative evaluative lens through which electoral competition can be assessed. Electoral success that merely secures political power without advancing public welfare remains insufficient from the perspective of *siyasah syariyyah*. Instead, legitimacy is contingent upon the ability of political actors to translate electoral mandates into policies that serve societal interests. This expands the meaning of democratic legitimacy beyond procedural acceptance and situates it within a substantive ethical framework of governance.

Another foundational principle within *siyasah syariyyah* is *amanah*, which emphasizes responsibility, transparency, and accountability in the exercise of political authority. From this perspective, legitimacy is not permanently conferred at the moment of electoral victory but must be continuously sustained through ethical governance performance. The electoral mandate granted by citizens constitutes a trust that obligates political leaders to govern in accordance with constitutional norms and public expectations. This understanding resonates with broader governance literature emphasizing institutional effectiveness and accountability in sustaining political trust. Wijatmoko et al. (2023) demonstrate that public confidence in government is strongly shaped by the effectiveness of legal institutions and policy implementation, while Foa (2022) underscores the central role of state capacity in maintaining political stability and public trust. Parallel concerns are also evident in Islamic political thought, where the legitimacy of authority is closely tied to the leader's ability to fulfill obligations toward society. Studies on Islamic organizational perspectives further indicate that public compliance with authority is strengthened when governance is perceived as responsible, ethical, and normatively grounded (Busyro et al., 2025). Consequently, from the *siyasah syariyyah* perspective, electoral legitimacy extends beyond electoral authorization to include the ethical performance of governance after elections have been concluded.

The findings further indicate that the relationship between religion and electoral legitimacy in Indonesia is characterized by both constructive contributions and structural tensions. On the one hand, religious values enhance democratic life by providing ethical standards for leadership, accountability, and social justice. Religious leaders and Islamic organizations often function as critical intermediaries between political institutions and society, shaping political orientations and encouraging civic engagement (Yani et al., 2022). On the other hand, the instrumentalization of religion in electoral competition may generate polarization, exclusionary narratives, and tensions with democratic neutrality. Research on the politicization of religion during Indonesian presidential elections demonstrates that religious discourse has frequently been mobilized as a strategic instrument for political legitimacy construction (Zainuddin et al., 2022; Qosim et al., 2025). From the standpoint of *siyasah syariyyah*, however, religious values should function as ethical guidance rather than partisan political tools. The objective of Islamic governance is not the domination of electoral competition through religious symbolism but the realization of justice and public welfare through morally responsible leadership. This distinction is crucial, as it enables Islamic constitutional thought to support democratic participation while simultaneously constraining the misuse of religious authority for short-term political advantage. In this regard, *siyasah syariyyah* provides a normative corrective that bridges religious ethics and constitutional democracy.

Ultimately, the Indonesian presidential elections between 2004 and 2019 demonstrate that electoral legitimacy is best conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing constitutional legality, political acceptance, institutional effectiveness, and ethical accountability. The framework of *siyasah syariyyah* enriches conventional democratic theory by introducing substantive normative criteria through which electoral outcomes may be evaluated. Rather than treating legitimacy as a mere product of procedural fairness, this framework emphasizes justice, public welfare, trustworthiness, and responsible governance as enduring foundations of political authority. Comparative governance scholarship similarly suggests that legitimacy is sustained when institutions successfully integrate legal authority, ethical responsibility, and public trust (Siddiq & Ahmed, 2026; Savas, 2026; Akande et al., 2026). Accordingly, the Indonesian experience illustrates that democratic legitimacy cannot be secured through elections alone but must be reinforced through continuous governance practices that reflect constitutional principles and societal expectations. The contribution of *siyasah syariyyah* lies in its capacity to bridge Islamic political ethics and contemporary constitutional democracy, thereby offering a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding electoral legitimacy in Muslim-majority democratic contexts. Through this lens, elections are not merely contests for political power but constitutional-ethical processes through which legitimate authority is constructed, justified, and sustained.

4.4 Ethical Governance: *Maslahah*, Justice, and *Amanah* in Electoral Competition

The findings of this study indicate that electoral competition in Indonesia during the 2004–2019 presidential elections cannot be adequately explained through procedural democratic indicators alone. Although constitutional reforms successfully institutionalized direct presidential elections, the legitimacy of electoral outcomes was continuously assessed through ethical expectations relating to public welfare, justice, and political accountability. Within the framework of *siyasah syariyyah*, these dimensions correspond to *maslahah* (public interest), *al-'adl* (justice), and *amanah* (trustworthiness), which function as normative benchmarks for evaluating political authority. Accordingly, electoral legitimacy is derived not only from compliance with legal procedures but also from the extent to which electoral processes and political actors advance collective welfare and uphold ethical governance (Said et al., 2025; Nasution & Lutfi, 2025).

The principle of *maslahah* provides a critical lens for understanding coalition-building and political decision-making within Indonesia's presidential elections. Empirical evidence shows that coalition formation was rarely driven solely by ideological alignment; rather, political actors frequently justified strategic alliances through considerations of political stability, governability, and national interest. This pattern aligns with Agustam et al. (2025), who demonstrate that Islamic political elites often employ *maslahah*-based reasoning to legitimize both coalition and opposition strategies. Within *siyasah syariyyah*, such pragmatism is acceptable insofar as it produces public welfare and strengthens social cohesion. However, the findings also indicate that the invocation of *maslahah* may become normatively problematic when it functions primarily as rhetorical justification for elite accommodation without generating substantive public benefit. Therefore, *maslahah* should not be reduced to a legitimizing discourse for political pragmatism, but rather treated as an ethical evaluative standard against which political outcomes must be measured.



The principle of *al-'adl* further underscores the centrality of fairness and equality in electoral competition. The Indonesian experience demonstrates that democratic legitimacy is strengthened when electoral institutions operate impartially and ensure equal access to political participation. Nevertheless, the findings reveal persistent tensions arising from elite dominance, legal contestation, and the strategic deployment of identity-based narratives during electoral cycles. These dynamics complicate the realization of substantive electoral justice. Prior studies similarly highlight that legal and religious contestation often intersects with electoral competition, generating disputes over the boundaries between democratic participation and political instrumentalization (Alfarisi et al., 2024; Qosim et al., 2025; Zainuddin et al., 2022). Within *siyasaḥ syariyyah*, justice requires not only procedural neutrality but also protection against practices that exploit social cleavages for partisan gain. Accordingly, *al-'adl* operates both as a legal principle and as a normative safeguard for preserving democratic integrity.

Equally significant is the principle of *amanah*, which extends the meaning of legitimacy beyond electoral victory toward the continuous exercise of responsible governance. The findings suggest that electoral mandates alone are insufficient to sustain political legitimacy over time. Instead, legitimacy depends on the extent to which elected leaders fulfill public expectations through accountable governance, policy effectiveness, and institutional responsiveness. This interpretation aligns with governance literature emphasizing the strong relationship between public trust, institutional effectiveness, and service delivery (Foa, 2022; Wijatmoko et al., 2023). Within Islamic political thought, authority is conceptualized as a trust entrusted by society and subject to ethical accountability. Consequently, *amanah* transforms electoral legitimacy from a momentary procedural achievement into an ongoing moral obligation requiring transparency, integrity, and responsiveness to public needs (Busyro et al., 2025; Said et al., 2025).

The findings further demonstrate that religious narratives played a significant role in shaping perceptions of legitimacy throughout the electoral period. Religious leaders, Islamic organizations, and faith-based discourses frequently influenced voter mobilization and public evaluation of political actors. On the one hand, such engagement can reinforce moral accountability and encourage ethical political behavior. On the other hand, excessive politicization of religious identity risks transforming religion into an instrument of electoral competition rather than a source of ethical guidance. Studies on Indonesian electoral politics show that religious authority simultaneously strengthens and complicates democratic legitimacy depending on its mode of mobilization (Yani et al., 2022; Margiansyah et al., 2025; Qosim et al., 2025). From the perspective of *siyasaḥ syariyyah*, religion should function primarily as a normative ethical framework promoting justice, moderation, and public welfare, rather than as an instrument of political polarization.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that *maslahah*, *al-'adl*, and *amanah* provide a comprehensive evaluative framework for assessing electoral legitimacy beyond procedural democratic standards. Unlike purely legal-rational approaches that emphasize electoral outcomes, the *siyasaḥ syariyyah* framework foregrounds the substantive quality of governance, the fairness of political competition, and the ethical responsibility of political actors. The Indonesian experience illustrates that democratic legitimacy is significantly strengthened when

constitutional procedures are complemented by enduring ethical commitments to justice, public welfare, and accountable leadership. Accordingly, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that electoral legitimacy in Muslim-majority democracies is best understood as a multidimensional construct in which constitutional legality and Islamic political ethics function as mutually reinforcing foundations of democratic governance.

4.5 Synthesis: Integrating Democratic Legitimacy and *Siyasah Syariyyah*

The analysis of Indonesia's presidential electoral contestation from 2004 to 2019 demonstrates that electoral legitimacy cannot be adequately explained through procedural democratic indicators alone. While elections function as constitutional mechanisms for leadership selection, the legitimacy of political authority is simultaneously shaped by coalition formation, institutional effectiveness, socio-religious influence, and ethical expectations embedded within society. This finding aligns with contemporary governance scholarship arguing that legitimacy is increasingly produced through dynamic interactions among institutions, political actors, and societal values rather than through electoral procedures in isolation (Akande et al., 2026; Büyükokutan et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, legitimacy is also closely linked to the evolution of coalition-based presidentialism, where political alliances play a decisive role in stabilizing governance and shaping public acceptance of electoral outcomes (Kristiyanto et al., 2023; Fernando et al., 2024). Accordingly, electoral legitimacy emerges as both a legal-rational construct and a socio-normative phenomenon.

From the perspective of *siyasah syariyyah*, this dual structure can be interpreted through the interconnected principles of *maslahah* (public welfare), *al-'adl* (justice), and *amanah* (trustworthiness). These principles expand the meaning of legitimacy beyond electoral victory by introducing substantive ethical criteria for evaluating political authority. Political power is considered legitimate not merely because it is constitutionally acquired, but because it is exercised in ways that advance collective welfare, safeguard justice, and fulfill public trust. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary Islamic constitutional scholarship, which emphasizes the compatibility between democratic institutions and Islamic governance principles when public interest and accountability are substantively realized (Said et al., 2025; Nasution & Lutfi, 2025). In this sense, *siyasah syariyyah* operates as a normative corrective framework that complements procedural democracy with ethical evaluation of governance.

The findings further indicate that religion occupies an ambivalent position within Indonesian electoral politics. On the one hand, religious values and religious elites contribute to the moral construction of political legitimacy by promoting ethical leadership and reinforcing public accountability (Yani et al., 2022; Busyro et al., 2025). On the other hand, the instrumentalization of religion during electoral competition may transform moral authority into a political resource, thereby generating tensions between democratic equality and identity-based mobilization (Zainuddin et al., 2022; Qosim et al., 2025). Empirical evidence also shows that legal and institutional contestation in elections is frequently intertwined with religious and political narratives, thereby shaping competing legitimacy claims within democratic processes (Alfarisi et al., 2024). This demonstrates that legitimacy in Indonesia is continuously negotiated at the intersection of constitutional norms, institutional authority, and socio-religious narratives,

requiring a governance equilibrium that preserves democratic fairness while acknowledging societal moral structures.

Another key dimension concerns the relationship between legitimacy and governance performance. Electoral mandates alone do not guarantee sustained legitimacy, as public trust is strongly influenced by the effectiveness of institutions in delivering public goods, ensuring legal certainty, and responding to societal expectations. Comparative governance studies consistently demonstrate that institutional capacity and policy effectiveness constitute critical determinants of legitimacy in contemporary democracies (Foa, 2022; Wijatmoko et al., 2023; Siddiq & Ahmed, 2026). Within the *siyasah syariyyah* framework, this reinforces the principle of *amanah*, whereby political authority must continuously demonstrate responsibility through tangible governance outcomes rather than relying solely on electoral authorization. These findings underscore that legitimacy is not static but is continuously reproduced through performance, accountability, and public perception.

Based on these findings, this study proposes a Hybrid Legitimacy Framework for understanding presidential electoral contestation in Indonesia. The framework posits that democratic legitimacy is generated through the interaction of four interrelated dimensions: (1) constitutional-electoral legitimacy derived from legal and procedural compliance; (2) coalition-political legitimacy derived from elite coordination and political stability; (3) institutional-performance legitimacy derived from governance effectiveness and public service delivery; and (4) ethical-religious legitimacy derived from the realization of *maslahah*, justice, and *amanah*. Rather than operating independently, these dimensions are mutually reinforcing and simultaneously constraining, producing a dynamic process through which political authority is continuously legitimized, contested, and renegotiated (Büyükokutan et al., 2025; Akande et al., 2026). This integrative model reflects broader theoretical debates in legitimacy studies that emphasize the coexistence of normative, institutional, and sociopolitical dimensions in democratic systems.

Therefore, the principal contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that electoral legitimacy in Indonesia is best conceptualized as a hybrid construct situated at the intersection of constitutional democracy and Islamic political ethics. The integration of democratic legitimacy theory with *siyasah syariyyah* provides a more comprehensive analytical framework for explaining political authority in Muslim-majority democracies. This framework not only addresses the limitations of purely procedural approaches but also offers a normative foundation for assessing the quality of democratic governance beyond electoral outcomes. Such a perspective contributes to broader debates on democratic consolidation, constitutional governance, and the role of religious ethics in contemporary political systems, particularly in contexts where religion remains a significant source of public legitimacy.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the dynamics of presidential electoral contestation in Indonesia during the 2004–2019 period through the analytical lens of *siyasah syariyyah*. The findings demonstrate that electoral legitimacy cannot be understood solely as a procedural outcome derived from competitive elections and constitutional compliance. Instead, legitimacy emerges through a



complex interaction among electoral processes, coalition politics, institutional performance, and societal acceptance. In this regard, presidential elections function not only as mechanisms for leadership selection but also as arenas in which political legitimacy is continuously constructed, contested, and renegotiated among political actors, state institutions, and the public. Consequently, electoral outcomes are shaped by both constitutional procedures and broader socio-political dynamics that significantly influence public trust in political authority.

From the perspective of *siyasah syariyyah*, the study finds that the principles of *al-‘adl* (justice), *maslahah* (public welfare), and *amanah* (trustworthiness) provide essential normative standards for evaluating political authority beyond formal legality. Within this framework, democratic elections may be interpreted as a form of collective political *ijtihad* aimed at selecting leadership capable of advancing public welfare within a constitutional order. The findings further suggest that Islamic constitutional thought is not inherently incompatible with democratic governance; rather, it provides an ethical foundation that reinforces democratic legitimacy through accountability, justice, and public responsibility. This demonstrates that democratic institutions and Islamic political ethics can operate in a complementary, rather than contradictory, relationship within Muslim-majority societies.

The principal contribution of this study is the development of a Hybrid Legitimacy Framework that integrates democratic legitimacy theory with the normative principles of *siyasah syariyyah*. The framework posits that electoral legitimacy in Indonesia is produced through the interaction of four interrelated dimensions: constitutional-electoral legitimacy, coalition-political legitimacy, institutional-performance legitimacy, and ethical-religious legitimacy. By bridging empirical electoral analysis and Islamic constitutional ethics, this study contributes to broader scholarly debates in democratic theory, Islamic constitutional law, and comparative political studies. Moreover, the framework suggests that the quality of democracy should be assessed not only in terms of electoral competitiveness and procedural compliance but also through the extent to which justice, public welfare, and ethical governance are substantively realized.

This study has several limitations. First, it adopts a normative-juridical and library-based research design, which limits direct engagement with primary empirical data such as interviews, surveys, or field observations. Second, the analysis is confined to the 2004–2019 electoral period and does not incorporate developments associated with the 2024 presidential election and subsequent democratic dynamics. Future research is encouraged to empirically test and refine the proposed Hybrid Legitimacy Framework through comparative and cross-country studies in other Muslim-majority democracies, in order to evaluate its broader applicability and explanatory robustness across diverse political and institutional contexts.

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