

Analysis of State Power and Public Aspirations in Legislative Budget Conflicts

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Abstract

This research examines the dialectical relationship between the people and the state in the context of legislative budget policies, which often generate controversy, as well as the repressive responses of officials to public demonstrations. In Indonesian constitutional practice, the state budget is not merely a technical document but a manifestation of legal politics that should reflect the principle of popular sovereignty. However, political reality demonstrates a crisis of representation, where legislative policies prioritize elite interests over the needs of the wider public. This situation has led to the emergence of public demonstrations as an instrument of informal democracy to correct policy deviations. The method used is normative juridical with a qualitative approach through analysis of legislation, constitutional law doctrine, and related academic literature. The results show that public demonstrations have constitutional legitimacy as a manifestation of citizen participation in maintaining accountability for state administration. However, repressive actions by officials against demonstrations reflect a fundamental contradiction in constitutional democracy. Officials, who should function as protectors of people's rights, instead act as coercive instruments that restrict civil liberties. Reflections on this phenomenon reveal a gap between constitutional ideals and political reality. The implications are the erosion of the legitimacy of legislative institutions and the decline of public trust in democracy. Therefore, a repositioning of the state's paradigm is necessary, positioning demonstrations as a space for dialogue, not a threat, and strengthening transparency and accountability in budget management. These steps can strengthen substantive democracy in Indonesia while ensuring that sovereignty remains in the hands of the people.

Keywords:

state administration; public demonstrations; legislative policies and violence by officials

Introduction

In the dynamics of national life, the relationship between the people and the state is constantly in a complex dialectic. The state exists with a constitution, institutions, and policies designed to regulate social life, while the people, as holders of sovereignty, strive to ensure that every state policy aligns with the public interest. However, this relationship often leads to conflict, particularly when policies produced by state institutions are perceived as deviating from the aspirations of the people or prioritizing the interests of political elites (Kusuma et al. 2024a). This is increasingly evident in the context of legislative budget policies which often give rise to controversy in the public sphere, especially because they are perceived to

accommodate internal political interests more than the needs of the people at large (Salang 2006).

Public demonstrations are both a constitutional instrument and a democratic practice chosen by the public to voice dissatisfaction with state policies. Within the framework of constitutional law, demonstrations are not only a constitutionally guaranteed human right but also a reflection of citizen involvement in the process of social control over state governance. However, on the ground, public protests are often met with repressive action by security forces (Wibowo 2024). The violence perpetrated by authorities against public demonstrations reflects a fundamental contradiction in the implementation of democracy: on the one hand, the state guarantees freedom of expression, but on the other, it also controls this freedom, citing stability and public order.

Legislative budget policies are often a focal point of public criticism. Budget allocations deemed disproportionate, such as inflated aspiration funds, the construction of lavish facilities for representatives, or spending not directly oriented towards public welfare, often trigger waves of protest. The public believes that the state budget, as a concrete manifestation of legal politics and governance, should be directed as much as possible towards the public interest. When policy realities reveal a gap between the needs of the people and the interests of the political elite, the legitimacy of the legislative institution is eroded.

From a constitutional law perspective, this reveals two major problems. First, there is a crisis of political representation. The legislative body, as the representative of the people, is perceived as being far removed from the aspirations of its constituents. Second, there is a weakness in the checks and balances mechanism for ensuring accountability in state budget management. Public demonstrations have emerged as an informal corrective mechanism attempting to pressure state policies to adhere to constitutional mandates (Aulianisa and Aprilia 2019). However, the problem becomes more complex when the state's response to public demonstrations takes the form of repressive measures. Security forces, whose normative function is to protect the people, often act as coercive instruments that hinder public participation. Physical clashes, intimidation, and even the use of violence in handling demonstrations not only cause social trauma but also undermine the principles of the rule of law and constitutional democracy. This situation raises a fundamental question: is the state truly there to protect the people's rights, or is it prioritizing the stability of power at the expense of civil liberties? Reflecting on the state's governance regarding the clash between legislative policies and the aspirations of the people through demonstrations requires an in-depth study of power relations, political legitimacy, and the protection of citizens' constitutional rights. The Indonesian Constitution expressly guarantees freedom of expression and assembly, as stipulated in Article 28E of the 1945 Constitution. Therefore, repressive actions by authorities against public demonstrations must be placed within the framework of constitutional criticism, which questions the state's consistency in carrying out its constitutional mandate.

This problem is not only legal, but also sociological and political. Legally, the state has an obligation to uphold the principles of democracy and human rights. Sociologically, public protests reflect the dynamics of a society that is increasingly critical and participatory regarding the course of government. Meanwhile, politically, the clash between legislative budget policies and popular aspirations demonstrates a tug-of-war between the interests of the political elite and the people. Therefore, a discussion of the constitutional reflection on this phenomenon is important not only to affirm the commitment to the rule of law but also to strengthen the foundations of substantive democracy in Indonesia. From a historical perspective, public demonstrations in Indonesia have often been turning points for political change. From the period of resistance against the New Order to the reform era, demonstrations

have been a strategic medium for correcting state policies deemed to deviate from the interests of the people. Therefore, the current repressive practices against public demonstrations raise concerns about democratic regression. The state seems to be returning to old patterns that position power as an instrument of domination, rather than as a means of serving the people. Researchers seek to highlight the constitutional reflection on the clash between policies and popular aspirations in the context of protests over legislative budgets and the use of violence by security forces.

The relationship between government, public policy, and public aspirations is conceived as an integrated framework within participatory democracy, in which policies are expected to reflect the will and needs of the people. However, both conceptually and empirically, a significant gap persists between this normative ideal and the actual practice of governance, particularly in the determination of legislative budgets. Government institutions often operate as dominant actors in policy formulation, while public aspirations are frequently reduced to procedural formalities with limited substantive influence. This condition reflects a clear policy gap, namely the distance between normative policy objectives and their real-world implementation, as well as an empirical gap evidenced by rising public resistance, protest movements, and the escalation of state violence. Thus, the conceptual integration between responsive governance, participatory policy-making, and the genuine accommodation of public aspirations remains incomplete in practice.

Research Method

This research uses a normative juridical method with a qualitative approach. This method was chosen because the focus of the study lies in the reflection of state governance on the conflict between legislative policies in budget management and public aspirations expressed through public demonstrations. The normative juridical study allows researchers to analyze legal regulations, constitutional principles, and relevant constitutional law doctrines in examining incidents of violence by officials and the legitimacy of public protests (Fatah, Jaya, and Juliani 2016). This analysis was conducted by examining laws and regulations, especially the 1945 Constitution, the Law on the State Budget, and the Law on Freedom of Expression in Public.

The data sources in this study consist of primary, secondary and tertiary legal materials (Ahmad et al. 2024). Primary legal materials include constitutional provisions, laws, and regulations related to budget management and human rights guarantees. Secondary legal materials include academic literature, journals, research reports, and expert opinions relevant to the theme of public demonstrations and apparatus repression. Meanwhile, tertiary legal materials, such as legal dictionaries and encyclopedias, were used to strengthen understanding. Data collection techniques were conducted through literature studies and analysis of official documents. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively, emphasizing legal argumentation and normative reflection. This analysis aimed to understand the relationship between legislative policies, public demonstration practices, and apparatus actions within the framework of state administration, thereby gaining a comprehensive understanding of the challenges of constitutional democracy in Indonesia.

Results and Discussion

The research results show that the clash between legislative policies regarding budget allocation and the aspirations of the people expressed through public demonstrations reflects a fundamental tension in the practice of state administration in Indonesia. This tension arises from a gap between the constitutional principle that places sovereignty in the hands of the

people and the practice of budget politics that tends to prioritize elite interests. The aspirations of the people, which should be the basis for the legitimacy of public policy, are often sidelined (Vinanda et al. 2025). When criticism is voiced through demonstrations, the state's response often takes the form of repressive actions by the authorities. This situation raises fundamental questions about the state's consistency in carrying out its constitutional mandate as a democratic state governed by the rule of law.

1. Legislator Budget Policy and the Representation Crisis

From a state administration perspective, legislative institutions occupy a central position as representatives of the people in the policy-making process, including in managing the state budget ((Kusuma et al. 2024b);(Anwar 2024)). The public budget is not merely a technocratic document, but rather a concrete manifestation of legal politics that determines the direction of national development and the distribution of welfare. Therefore, every budget decision taken should reflect the aspirations of the people, in line with the principle of popular sovereignty as enshrined in the 1945 Constitution. However, political reality shows a gap between these constitutional expectations and budget preparation practices at the legislative level (Riharjo 2015).

Legislative budget policies often spark controversy because they are perceived as not addressing the needs of the wider community. For example, budget allocations for the construction of luxury facilities, additional aspiration funds, or political spending that prioritizes the council's internal interests over the public interest. This situation demonstrates a crisis of political representation, where representatives no longer fulfill their representative function substantively. Representation, which should be oriented toward constituent interests, is instead reduced to a mere procedural formality that results in elitist practices (Nugroho 2021).

The crisis of representation is further exacerbated by weak accountability mechanisms in budget management. Oversight processes by the public and other state institutions are often ineffective, creating room for abuse of power. Consequently, the public feels a sense of injustice when their basic needs, such as education, health care, and employment, are not prioritized in budget policies. This situation creates collective disappointment, which is then manifested through public demonstrations (Wahyudi 2025).

Demonstrations ultimately become a means for the people to correct legislative policies that do not align with their aspirations. This confirms that the system of political representation in Indonesia still faces serious problems. The legitimacy of legislative institutions is eroded when the people perceive that budget policies do not reflect their interests. This creates tension between the state and society, where demonstrations serve as an informal yet effective form of social control in reminding the government not to deviate from its constitutional mandate. Thus, the crisis of representation arising from legislative budget policies becomes an important point of reflection in the practice of state administration. The state is required to restore the legislative representation function to its primary orientation, namely to promote the welfare of the people (Efendi 2025). Without improvements in transparency, accountability, and public participation, clashes between legislative policies and the aspirations of the people will continue to recur, potentially even leading to greater delegitimization of state institutions. The formulation of legislative budget policy reflects a deepening crisis of political representation, where the gap between elected officials and public aspirations becomes increasingly visible. In the ideal concept of democratic governance, legislators act as representatives of the people's interests, yet empirically budget decisions are often dominated by elite negotiations and institutional interests. This condition

illustrates a policy distortion, in which public priorities such as social welfare and public services are marginalized by political bargaining. The imbalance between the concept of representative government and the reality of budget allocation demonstrates how public aspirations are structurally excluded from strategic state decisions.

2. Public Demonstrations as an Instrument of Democracy

Within the framework of constitutional law, public demonstrations are a form of political participation that is constitutionally guaranteed. Article 28E paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution expressly states that everyone has the right to freedom of association, assembly, and expression of opinion. This means that demonstrations are not merely emotional expressions of groups dissatisfied with state policy, but rather an integral part of the practice of constitutional democracy. Demonstrations function as a channel of political communication that allows the people to convey their aspirations directly to state administrators when representative channels through legislative institutions are deemed ineffective (Pureklolon 2016).

Sociologically, public demonstrations reflect a societal dynamic that is increasingly critical of the practices of power. In the context of legislative budget policy, demonstrations serve as a corrective instrument, emphasizing that budget allocations must be oriented toward the interests of the people, not simply accommodating the interests of political elites. Therefore, demonstrations should not be viewed as a disruption to public order, but rather as a manifestation of active citizen participation in overseeing the functioning of government. Without space for demonstrations, public participation will be limited to the electoral mechanism, which takes place every five years, putting democracy at risk of becoming trapped in formalism without substance (Permatasari et al. 2025). However, in practice, public demonstrations in Indonesia often receive a negative stigma. The state often positions them as a potential threat to political stability and security, so their handling tends to emphasize a coercive approach rather than a dialogical one. This reflects a bias in understanding the meaning of democracy, where political stability is prioritized over respect for human rights. In fact, substantive democracy presupposes a broad space for public criticism to monitor and assess government performance. Public demonstrations have strategic significance in maintaining a balanced relationship between the people and the state (Fithriyatirizqoh and Zhanaty 2024). It serves as a reminder that power ultimately comes from the people and must be exercised in accordance with the constitutional mandate. In other words, demonstrations serve as an informal check and balance instrument that can pressure both the legislative and executive branches to be more careful in formulating policies. Within this framework, demonstrations are not a form of resistance against the state, but rather part of the democratic process itself.

Reflections on public demonstrations underscore the need for a paradigm shift in how people's aspirations are viewed. The state should position demonstrations as a space for dialogue, not a threat. Security forces should not act repressively, but rather act as facilitators to ensure the expression of aspirations is orderly, safe, and within the law (Riyanto 2024). With this approach, demonstrations can truly function as an instrument of democracy that strengthens the legitimacy of the state while strengthening the sovereignty of the people in state practice. Public demonstrations function as a corrective mechanism within democratic systems when formal representation fails to accommodate popular demands. From the perspective of democratic theory, protests represent a legitimate expression of popular sovereignty and participatory control over state power. Empirically, mass demonstrations over legislative budgets indicate a breakdown in institutional communication between the state and

society. Rather than being viewed as a threat to order, public protests should be understood as evidence of an aspirational deficit within policy-making structures, where citizens feel compelled to reclaim their political voice through direct action.

3. Violence by the Apparatus and the Problem of Constitutional Democracy

The violence used by authorities in responding to public demonstrations demonstrates a fundamental contradiction in the practice of constitutional democracy in Indonesia. On the one hand, the constitution guarantees freedom of opinion, association, and assembly as fundamental rights of citizens. However, in reality, authorities often use a repressive approach to restrict the movement of demonstrators. Violent acts such as forced dispersal, the use of tear gas, intimidation, and even the criminalization of demonstrators not only violate human rights principles but also delegitimize the state's role as a protector of people's rights (Nabila 2022).

From a constitutional perspective, the repressive actions of the apparatus show the weak internalization of the principles of the rule of law (rechtstaat) (Julianti et al. 2025). A state based on the rule of law should place the law as its supreme authority, with the apparatus acting as the protector of the constitution and the people's rights. However, in reality, the apparatus often becomes an instrument of power, prioritizing security over the protection of civil rights. This situation creates a serious problem: the misuse of state institutions, which contradicts the constitutional mandate (Basuki 2011).

Violence by the authorities also impacts the declining quality of democracy. Constitutional democracy requires the people to have the freedom to correct state policies, including through demonstrations. When this space is restricted by violence, democracy loses its substance and has the potential to shift into a pseudo-democracy that emphasizes only electoral procedures without guaranteeing civil liberties. In other words, repressive actions by the authorities are an indicator of democratic backsliding, which is dangerous for the sustainability of the state system.

Furthermore, violence by the authorities creates social and psychological distance between the state and society. The people who should be protected feel alienated by the state's coercive policies. This exacerbates the crisis of trust in state institutions, particularly the legislative body, whose policies have been the source of protest, and the security forces, who are supposed to maintain order with a humanistic approach. This distrust can have far-reaching implications, from declining political legitimacy to increasing the potential for horizontal and vertical conflict. Reflecting on this incident demands reform in the way public demonstrations are handled. The authorities need to position themselves as facilitators, not as tools of repression (Alifiana and Ahmad 2024). The use of force should be a last resort and only carried out within proportionate limits in accordance with international human rights law. Furthermore, the state needs to strengthen accountability mechanisms for officials who commit violations to prevent impunity. Without such measures, violence by officials will only continue to undermine constitutional democracy and erode the state's legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The use of violence by state apparatus against protesters reveals a critical contradiction within constitutional democracy. Normatively, the state is obligated to protect civil liberties, including freedom of expression and assembly. However, empirical realities show that coercive force is frequently employed to suppress dissent, indicating the persistence of authoritarian practices within democratic governance. This contradiction reflects a serious governance failure, where the state prioritizes order and political stability over constitutional rights, thereby weakening the legitimacy of both government authority and public policy itself.

4. Reflection on State Administration Between Ideality and Reality

Within the framework of state administration, there is a normative notion that the state is a vehicle for accommodating the interests of the people and ensuring the implementation of the principle of sovereignty. Ideally, every policy formulated by the government or legislative institutions should be rooted in the aspirations of the people, as the holders of supreme sovereignty (Damanik, Farina, and Nugraha 2025). However, the political reality in Indonesia demonstrates a gap between constitutional ideals and actual practice. Public demonstrations rejecting specific budget allocations for legislators are a clear reflection of how state policies often deviate from the spirit of popular representation.

When public aspirations are not accommodated through formal mechanisms, such as representative forums or policy dialogues, demonstrations emerge as an alternative. Public demonstrations are not merely a form of resistance, but a legitimate expression of popular sovereignty. However, what happens on the ground often reveals another side of the democratic problem: people fighting for their rights face violence from the very authorities that are supposed to protect them. This situation raises critical questions: whether the glorified constitutional democracy is truly implemented in accordance with the nation's fundamental legal principles, or whether it has simply ceased to be political rhetoric.

Reflections on state governance in this context reveal a gap between the ideals embodied in the constitution and practical reality. Ideally, the state implements the principles of participation, transparency, and accountability, but reality demonstrates oligarchic policies, closed spaces for dialogue, and the use of coercive force to suppress dissent. This confirms that the clash between legislative policies, popular aspirations, and repressive actions by the apparatus is not merely a technical conflict, but a structural problem in national life. Thus, reflections on state governance teach that constitutional democracy is not merely a written legal system but must be a concrete practice that sides with the people (Inrastuti and Polamolo 2019). Reformulating inclusive public policy governance and repositioning the role of security forces as protectors, not repressors, are important steps to ensure that democratic ideals are not continually defeated by unequal political realities. The dynamics of budget conflict, public resistance, and state violence demonstrate the wide gap between the ideal principles of state administration and its practical implementation. Ideally, governance is based on transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and participation. In reality, administrative practices remain highly centralized, elitist, and detached from public needs. This condition signifies a persistent implementation gap, where governance norms are formally acknowledged but substantively ignored. As a result, public trust in governmental institutions continues to erode, reinforcing the structural disconnection between the state and its citizens.

5. Implications for Democracy in Indonesia

The clash between legislative policies, public aspirations, and violence by authorities in the context of public protests has significant implications for the quality of democracy in Indonesia. Democracy fundamentally demands open dialogue, citizen participation, and respect for freedom of expression (Nuna and Moonti 2019). However, when budget policies that are deemed not to reflect the interests of the people actually give rise to widespread disappointment, and the aspirations of the people expressed through demonstrations end in repressive actions by the authorities, public trust in democracy is eroded.

This incident demonstrates a crisis of representation that is dangerous for the sustainability of democracy. Legislative institutions, which should be the primary channel for conveying the people's voice, are often perceived as entities that prioritize the interests of certain groups or political elites (Samosir 2021). As a result, demonstrations emerged as an

alternative mechanism for expressing discontent. However, when the state's response is violence by the authorities, democracy not only loses its substance but also violates citizens' constitutional rights.

A further implication is the weakening of the legitimacy of democratic institutions (Sari and Achsa 2025). People are beginning to doubt the existence of legislative institutions and law enforcement officials as pillars of democracy that are supposed to protect and represent them. If this situation is allowed to continue, the potential for political apathy will increase, which in turn could reduce citizen participation in formal democratic processes such as elections. In other words, the clash between policies that are not in favor of the people and the repressive handling of public protests can lead to a structural delegitimization of democracy itself. Therefore, democracy in Indonesia must be interpreted not only as electoral procedures, but also as a substance that guarantees the protection of people's rights, policy transparency, and the accountability of state institutions. Constitutional reform that places dialogue as the primary instrument in resolving conflicts is crucial for regaining trust in democracy. Without serious remedial measures, democracy risks becoming trapped in an empty formalism, far from the ideals envisioned by the constitution. These conditions collectively indicate that Indonesian democracy faces a structural challenge in harmonizing government power, public policy, and popular aspirations. The recurring conflicts over legislative budgets and the escalation of repression suggest that democratic procedures have not been fully translated into democratic substance. If unaddressed, this situation risks transforming democracy into a mere procedural system devoid of meaningful participation and social justice. Strengthening democratic governance therefore requires institutional reforms that prioritize participatory policy-making, civilian oversight of security forces, and the genuine integration of public aspirations into state decision-making processes.

Conclusion

The clash between legislative policies regarding budget allocation, the aspirations of the people expressed through public demonstrations, and the repressive response of the authorities reflects a fundamental problem in the practice of state administration in Indonesia. Political reality demonstrates a crisis of representation, where legislative institutions often fail to substantively carry out their representative function, resulting in budget policies reflecting elite interests rather than the needs of the people. This situation has given rise to public demonstrations as an instrument of informal democracy that serves to correct state policies and affirm the principle of popular sovereignty. However, when the space for aspirations is confronted with repressive actions by the authorities, constitutional democracy loses its substance and has the potential to degenerate into mere proceduralism.

Reflections on this state administration emphasize the need for a paradigm shift in viewing people's aspirations, namely by positioning demonstrations as a space for constructive dialogue, not a threat to political stability. Security forces must act as facilitators guaranteeing citizens' constitutional rights, not as instruments of repression that undermine democracy. The implications of this issue are significant, as they concern the legitimacy of state institutions and the sustainability of democracy itself. Without serious improvements through increased transparency, accountability, and public participation, the crisis of representation and repressive practices will continue to erode public trust in the state. Therefore, Indonesian democracy must be interpreted substantially by guaranteeing the protection of people's rights, opening up wider space for participation, and upholding the principle of people's sovereignty as mandated by the constitution.

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