AL-FARABI'S POLITICAL ETHICS AND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES IN INDONESIA: A STUDY OF REGIONAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

This study explores the relevance of Al−Farabi's political ethics in the practice of democracy in Indonesia, with a specific focus on regional elections as a manifestation of people's sovereignty. Indonesia, as a democratic republic, grants its citizens the right to directly elect their leaders, reflecting the principles of political participation. However, in practice, regional elections are often marred by various problems such as money politics, negative campaigning, vote manipulation, and the rise of identity politics, which contradict the ideals of political ethics. Using a qualitative library research method with a philosophical approach, this study examines Al−Farabi's ideas on political ethics and their application to contemporary democratic practices. The findings reveal that, first, Al−Farabi emphasizes that the foundation of political ethics lies in the ultimate goal of human life, namely happiness; second, political ethics serve as a means to achieve collective happiness as well as a moral compass for leadership; and third, the application of political ethics in Indonesia's regional elections remains incomplete due to persistent ethical violations. This research underscores the importance of revisiting classical political thought as a normative framework for strengthening democracy and promoting ethical leadership in Indonesia.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menelaah relevansi etika politik Al-Farabi dalam praktik demokrasi di Indonesia, dengan fokus khusus pada pemilihan kepala daerah sebagai wujud kedaulatan rakyat. Indonesia sebagai republik demokratis memberikan hak kepada warga negara untuk memilih pemimpin secara langsung, yang mencerminkan prinsip partisipasi politik. Namun, dalam praktiknya, pemilihan kepala daerah sering diwarnai berbagai persoalan, seperti politik uang, kampanye negatif, manipulasi suara, dan menguatnya politik identitas, yang bertentangan dengan ideal etika politik. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan dan pendekatan filosofis, penelitian ini mengkaji gagasan Al-Farabi tentang etika politik serta penerapannya dalam praktik demokrasi kontemporer. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, pertama, Al-Farabi menekankan bahwa dasar etika politik terletak pada tujuan akhir kehidupan manusia, yakni kebahagiaan; kedua, etika politik berfungsi sebagai sarana mencapai kebahagiaan kolektif sekaligus pedoman moral bagi kepemimpinan; dan ketiga, penerapan etika politik dalam pemilihan kepala daerah di Indonesia masih jauh dari sempurna akibat pelanggaran etika yang terus berulang. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya menghidupkan kembali pemikiran politik klasik sebagai kerangka normatif untuk memperkuat demokrasi dan mendorong kepemimpinan yang beretika di Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Starting from the Middle Ages, the concept of democracy has evolved into a central issue in global political discourse. The historical trajectory of democracy's implementation in various countries has demonstrated that this system of government has made a significant contribution to the progress of human civilization. As social beings who live in groups, human beings gain recognition of their fundamental rights and dignity in the context of countries that adhere to democratic systems. In democratic countries, the government is committed to developing and maintaining democratic values in the life of

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the nation and state (Rowa, 2015). Democracy originated from the Greek word which consist of the word, demos means people, kratos/kratein means power/power. Democracy is like a tool that can make society prosperous. However, how well these tools work depends on several factors: what the conditions of the society are like, and who uses them (the leaders). For democracy to be truly effective and beneficial, its people need to have a good education, a stable economy, and a culture that respects rights and obligations. Moreover, democracy will be meaningless without upholding human rights (Suryana, 2022).

Indonesia as a democratic country means that government in Indonesia is run based on democratic principles, where the highest power is in the hands of the people. This means that the people have the right to participate in the political process, including directly electing their leaders, voicing opinions, and participating in public policymaking. The democratic system embraced by Indonesia, namely Pancasila democracy, is still in the stage of evolution and multi－interpretive understanding. Nevertheless, there is a consensus that a number of fundamental principles of constitutional democracy are implicitly enshrined in the original text of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Furthermore, the 1945 Constitution explicitly refers to the two basic principles that are the spirit of the constitution, as stated in its explanation (Budiardjo, 2007).

The practice of democracy in Indonesia has developed rapidly since the reform era, which is marked by direct elections, including the Regional Head Election (Pilkada). The regional elections are a manifestation as well as a benchmark to be called a democratic country. General elections, especially regional elections, show a real form of direct democratic practice carried out by the people.

Local democracy is expected to be a means to elect leaders who are able to implement the aspirations of the community and implement good governance. However, in practice, the Regional Elections are often colored by various problems, ranging from money politics, black campaigns, to political violence, information manipulation, corruption, and acts related to   moral issues. This condition raises fundamental questions about how to apply Al－Farabi political ethics in democratic practice, especially in the Regional Elections in Indonesia (Asnawi, 2023). Al－Farabi, known as Abu Nasr Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Tarkhan, was a prominent Muslim philosopher and scientist who was born in 872 AD in Farab, Kazakhstan. He was an important figure in the development of Islamic philosophy and is often referred to as the "Second Teacher" after Aristotle because of his ability to integrate Greek thought with Islamic teachings (Zar, 2019).

As a teenager, Al－farabi received formal education in Baghdad. In this city, he studied Arabic language and literature under the guidance of Abu Bakr al－Sarraj. In addition, he also deepened his logic and philosophy by studying two prominent figures, namely Abu Bisyr Mattius ibn Yunus, a Nestorian Christian who had significant contributions in translating works of Greek philosophy into Arabic, and Yuhana ibn Hailam.To deepen his understanding of the Greek philosophical tradition, Al－farabi then continued his studies at Harran, an intellectual center that was heavily influenced by Greek culture at the time. In Harran, he studied with Yuhana ibn Jailad, an influential philosopher. After some time, Al－farabi returned to Baghdad (Hasyimsyah Nasution, 1999). As one of the leading Muslim political theorists, Al－farabi blended the political philosophy of Greek thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus with Islamic principles. His political theories are rich in theological subtlety that encourages unity, which is the ultimate goal of mankind to achieve happiness both in this world and in the hereafter. Because of its strict prerequisites, Al－farabi's political theory is almost impossible to apply to any individual or nation (Sjadzali, 2001).

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Al－farabi emphasized that the democratic system is a good political framework, with the best form of government being the main state (*Al-Madinah Al-Fadilah*). He argued that the optimal state sovereignty is autocracy, in which an individual holds absolute authority over the state. Through his concept of the main state, Al－farabi has enriched his knowledge of the political ethics of the state. In the concept of the main state, according to him, a leader must have good morals or ethics, so that the leader can bring their people to happiness. The practice of democracy in Indonesia has developed rapidly since the reform era, which is marked by direct elections, including the Regional Head Election (Pilkada), but in practice, the Regional Elections are often colored by various problems, ranging from money politics, black campaigns, to political violence, information manipulation, corruption, and acts related to moral and moral issues.

To distinguish the research conducted by the author from previous research, the author presents several scientific works   to strengthen the results of this author's research and not duplicate previous research. First, Runi Harianti's scientific work with the title "Political ethics in a democratic country" can be drawn from this research that basically suggests that ethics is an intellectual choice, both based on an ideal and material approach. If we look at the national and international levels, ethics are seen as laws that have a political impact. Meanwhile, at the micro level of individuals or communals, ethics have a moral impact. Although in reality it is often mixed, basically ethics at the high level is a law with concrete sanctions, while at the tendah level ethics is morality with inner sanctions (Hariantati, 2003).

Furthermore, the scientific work of Siti Salbiyah, a student of UIN syarif Hidayatullah, with the title "Political Ethics from the Perspective of Al－farabi" this research discusses Al－farabi's political ethics which is based on the purpose of human life, namely happiness. In this case, al－Farabi mentioned how to get to happiness, one of which is that human beings must be in the hands of an ideal leader, that is, a leader who is in accordance with the concept of leadership of al－Farabi (Salbiyah, 2018).

Furthermore, Agustina and Mutiullah's scientific work entitled "Al－farabi's Socio－Political Philosophy And Implementation Towards Democracy" which aims to explain Al－farabi's socio－political philosophy can be integrated and applied concretely in the dynamics of democracy, the results that can be drawn from this research The implementation of Al－farabi's thinking on democracy is not only limited to political structure, but rather to leadership qualities and underlying values.   Therefore, for democracy to succeed, leaders need to integrate philosophical and moral understandings in their leadership, in line with Al－Farabi's view of a just and harmonious state (Agustina, 2023).

From the previous studies that have been identified by the researcher, the researcher sees that these studies only focus on discussing political ethics in democratic practice but no one has examined in detail Al－farabi political ethics in the practice of democracy in Indonesia case study of the regional elections, thus there is a gap for the author to raise the latest research with the formulation of the above problem.

The research methods applied in this article are literature research (*Library Research*) with the type of qualitative research (Sudarto, 2002). This approach involves steps such as collecting data from various sources from the library, reading, taking notes, and managing research materials. Then describe the meaning contained in the object being researched according to the facts and existing data. The purpose of this approach is to find relevant theories as a reference in dealing with the problems at hand. The sources used in this study are in the form of primary sources of *Ara' Ahli Madinah Al-fadilah* and secondary sources from books, magazines, scientific journals, and other document sources

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to support primary sources. So that the author can analyze the application of Al—Farabi's political ethics in the practice of democracy, especially the regional elections in Indonesia, as well as examine Al—Farabi's views regarding political ethics.

AL-FARABI BIOGRAPHERS

Abu Nasr Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Tarkhan, better known as Al—farabi, was a Muslim intellectual who was born in 257 AH/870 AD in Wasij, a small village in the city of Farab, Transoxiana region (now Kazakhstan). He came from a family of scholars and was very famous among Western intellectuals in the Middle Ages as Abu Nashar. The name "Al—farabi" itself is taken from the name of his hometown (Supriyadi, 2009).

There are differences of opinion regarding the ethnic origins of Al—farabi. Some sources say that his father was a Persian soldier who served in the Turkish army, while his mother was of Turkish descent. As a result, Al—farabi is often categorized as being of Persian and Turkish descent. However, there is also a view that adheres to the principle of Islamic law that determines descent based on the paternal line, so that Al—farabi is considered to be a descendant of Persia (Sirajuddin Zar, 2019).

Al—Farabi, known in the Western world as Al—farabius or Avennaser, has been widely recognized by European intellectuals thanks to his significant contributions to the interpretation of Greek philosophy. From an early age, Al—Farabi showed a keen interest in knowledge and mastered various languages profusely. Although Munawir Sjadzali mentions his ability to speak 70 languages, further studies show that Al—Farabi actively mastered four major languages, namely Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Kurdish (Sjadzali, 2001). This linguistic proficiency allowed him to access a wide range of sources of knowledge and established him as one of the most influential intellectual figures of his time.

Coming from the city of Farab, where the majority of the population adheres to the Syafi'i school, Al—farabi has received a comprehensive education from an early age. In the small town, he studied various disciplines, including the study of the Qur'an, Arabic grammar, literature, as well as religious sciences such as jurisprudence, tafsir, hadith, and the basics of arithmetic.

After completing his basic education, he migrated to Bukhara, the intellectual and religious center of the Samanid dynasty under the leadership of Nashr ibn Ahmad, to deepen his knowledge. There, Al—farabi began his music studies under the guidance of Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Al—qasim. His expertise in this field is manifested in a monumental work entitled "*al-musiqa al-qabir*". Subsequently, he continued his intellectual wanderings to Merv to delve into Aristotle's philosophy and logic under the tutelage of Yuhanna ibn Hailan, who became his professor (Gholib, 2009).

In order to deepen his study of logic and philosophy, Al—farabi migrated to Baghdad. In this city, he studied with Abu Bakr As—Saraj in Arabic language and literature, as well as with Abu Bisyr Mattius Ibn Yunus, a Nestorian Christian who had translated many works of Greek philosophy, in the fields of logic and philosophy. Al—farabi also studied from Yuhana ibn Hailan. During his 20 years in Baghdad, he devoted time to analyzing Greek philosophical texts and serving as a teacher. Among his prominent disciples was Yahya ibn Adi, a Christian philosopher (Yamani, 2002). Al—farabi is nicknamed as the second teacher (al—Muallim al—Tsani) (Juwaini, 2023).

Because of his success in interpreting Aristotle's logic well which is also known as *al-Muallim al-Awwal* (First Teacher). So Oemar Amin Hoesin argues that it is as if Aristotle's

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task has reached its peak and Al－Farabi continues the task as the second teacher (Hoesin, 1975). In 945 M, Al－Farabi arrived in Damascus and established relations with *Saif al-Daulah al-Hamdani*, the ruler of the *Hamdani* Dynasty in Aleppo. Impressed by － Al－Farabi's intellectual depth, *Saif al-Daulah* invited him to Aleppo and offered him an honorable position in the palace. Nevertheless, Al－Farabi was more inclined to the simplicity of life and rejected all forms of luxury that came with such high status (Sirajuddin Zar, 2019).

Therefore, Al－Farabi was known as a very simple philosopher, uninfluenced by the love of material possessions and worldly positions. So he is famous for his qanaah nature. His main focus is on the search for knowledge and seriousness in the learning process, not on the accumulation of material wealth. Therefore, Al－farabi lived in poverty, a condition that lasted until the moment he breathed his last. Al－farabi lived during the period of Abbasid rule until the Mu'ti era, a period marked by prolonged political turmoil and the absence of government stability (Supriyadi, 2009).

During his lifetime, Al－farabi produced several monumental works covering various fields of knowledge. Among his famous works is *Al-jam' bain Ra'yai al-Hakimain* which compares the views of two great philosophers, *Tahshil al-Sa'adat* which discusses the attainment of happiness, *Maqalat fi Aghradh ma ba'd al-Thabiat* which examines the purpose of metaphysics, and *Risalat fi Isbat al-Mufaraqat* which discusses the separation between substance and action. Other works such as *Uyun al-Masa'il, Ara' Ahl al-Madinat al-Fadhilat, Maqalat fi Ma'any al-Aql, Ihsha al-Ulum, Fushul al-Hukm, and Al-Siyasat al-Madaniyyat* also enriched the treasures of Islamic thought, especially in the fields of philosophy and politics (Sirajuddin Zar, 2019).

AL-FARABI'S POLITICAL ETHICS

Before discussing political ethics, the author first discusses the meaning of ethics and politics itself. Etymologically, the word "ethics" is rooted in the Greek word "*ethos*" which refers to character, disposition, or habits. In Latin, the equivalent word is "ethic" which also refers to habits. Meanwhile, in old English, "*ethicos*" is defined as a collection of moral principles or values. Thus, ethics can simply be understood as a scientific study of habits or customs that contain moral values (Hambali, 2021).

Etymologically, there is a root similarity between the concepts of "ethics" and "morality". Both refer to norms or habits embraced by a social group. The word "moral" has its roots in the Latin "mos" which means custom or custom, while "ethics" comes from the Greek word which has a similar meaning. However, this difference in language origin indicates a nuance of difference in the conceptual development of the two terms in the philosophical tradition (Bertens, 2000). Meanwhile, terminologically as expressed in the KBBI, the word ethics can be distinguished into 3 meanings, namely (Bahasa, 2008):

1. Knowledge of good and bad and about moral rights and obligations.
2. A group of basic values or values that are relevant to morality.
3. The value of right and wrong embraced by a group and society

Furthermore, politics, politics comes from the Greek word, in Greek politics is understood as polis which means city, city state. From polis then developed into polites which means citizen and politicos which means citizenship, the root word politics comes from the English word politics which means wise (Eviany, 2019).

Politics is a complex and multidimensional social phenomenon that involves the decision－making process, allocation of resources, and the regulation of power relations

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in a society. From the perspective of political science, politics is not only limited to the activities of the government or political parties, but covers all aspects of human life that concern the common interest. Politics involves interaction between individuals, groups, and institutions   to achieve collective goals (Syafhendry, 2024).

As explained above, ethics is a discipline that specifically examines human actions from a moral perspective, distinguishing between right and wrong. This discipline refers to the value framework that governs human rights, obligations, and actions in various life contexts. In other words, ethics is a collection of moral principles that are the basis for evaluating human behavior and decisions (Hambali, 2021). Politics, like ethics, is a realm that involves aesthetic and ethical values in the context of government. The management of government is one of the important components of politics, which includes the supervision of individual behavior Listiyono Santoso, Teologi Politik Gus Dur (Yogyakarta: Ar－ruz, 2004), 186.. Thus, politics can also assess the good and bad of individual behavior and lead these behaviors to more effective goals (Surbakti, 1992).

Thus, politics can also assess the good and bad behavior of individuals and lead these behaviors to more effective goals. Therefore, the goal of politics is not only to gain sovereignty but also to achieve peace in society. When examined intensively, politics and ethics are two things that cannot be separated and both need each other.

Franz Magnis defined political ethics as a value system that is the basis for political actions. He emphasized that political ethics is not only a matter of individual morality, but also a complex social construction. In other words, political ethics concerns the collective dimension of morality, in which political actions must always be tested based on the moral values that prevail in society. Furthermore, Magnis argued that the main purpose of political ethics is to ensure human dignity and dignity in the context of state power relations (Suseno, 2003). Thus, political ethics can be understood as an effort to realize a just and civilized social order.

In Al－Farabi's political philosophy, the head of state has a central role analogous to the heart in the human body. It serves as the main source of all political activities, the formation of social norms, and the guardian of harmony in society. In addition to carrying out government functions, the head of state also plays the role of a teacher and educator for all his people (Al－farabi, 1985), for Al－Farabi, a good leader must have wisdom that comes from a deep understanding of moral and ethical values, as well as the ability to uphold justice and welfare (Pancawati, 2018).

Al－farabi argues that political ethics is essentially an attempt to achieve happiness. He emphasized that to achieve happiness, human beings must be led by an ideal leader, which is in accordance with the concept of leadership proposed by Al－farabi. In his view, the ideal leader is a figure who has good qualities and can direct society to happiness (Nurlaeli, 2023). In this context, political ethics is not only the responsibility of the leader, but also the responsibility of all citizens in creating a just state and serves not only as a guide for leadership, but also as a path to achieving true happiness for all citizens.

Al－farabi underlined that the concept of happiness in his philosophy is not merely a passive ultimate goal, but rather a dynamic condition achieved through consistent moral and ethical practice. He argued that true happiness for the entire human society can only be realized if the supreme leader of the state is able to implement two main strategies, namely systematic moral teaching and the cultivation of noble character (Muthhar, 2018). Furthermore, Al－farabi also argues that happiness can be achieved when the rational power possessed by humans becomes optimal, then the optimality of the racial power can be achieved when the human soul no longer needs material support, has become a spiritual and immaterial substance (Al－farabi, 1985).

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DEMOCRACY IN INDONESIA

Indonesian democracy is a system that gives the people the power to elect leaders and determine state policies, through the implementation of general elections (Sakti, 2020), elections are a means available to the people to exercise their sovereignty and are democratic institutions in another definition elections are a democratic process that allows citizens to elect their leaders and representatives through voting. This process is an integral part of the democratic system, providing opportunities for people to participate in determining the direction of the country's leadership and policies (Muhammad, 2014). However, even though general elections, especially regional elections, are carried out with democratic principles, various ethical challenges often arise in the implementation of regional elections.

In a democratic system, political ethics includes principles such as honesty, transparency, accountability, and social responsibility. Political ethics in democracy is the moral foundation that governs how political actions are carried out in order to remain fair and transparent. In a democracy, leaders are elected by the people, and therefore, political ethics must reflect the interests of the people as a whole. However, in practice, political ethics are often ignored, which can lead to injustice, misappropriation, and abuse of power (ISMAIL, 2017).

ELECTION OF REGIONAL HEADS

The regional elections are the most direct form of democratic implementation in Indonesia, providing an opportunity for citizens to elect leaders who they consider capable of managing their regions. Although elections in Indonesia are carried out with democratic principles, in practice there are often various ethical problems that undermine the integrity of the electoral process.

Regional elections in Indonesia are often colored by ethical issues, especially money politics and vote manipulation and so on. Money politics, which refers to the use of money to influence voters' choices, is one of the most common ethical issues found in elections. Although there have been efforts to eradicate this practice, money politics remains a problem that threatens the integrity of the elections (Asnawi, 2023). General election regulations in Indonesia, as stated in Law Number 10 of 2008 article 2 and related laws and regulations, have established a comprehensive ethical framework for all election organizers and participants. The basic principles of elections, namely direct, public, free, secret, honest, and fair, not only function as technical guidelines for the implementation of elections, but also as moral norms that must be obeyed by all parties involved in the democratic process (Handoyo, 2016). However, in practice, elections are far from their true function, namely as a forum for managing conflicts of interest. Thus, the application of political ethics in Indonesian democracy is very important, especially in regional elections, where people are allowed to elect regional leaders. Political ethics can be a guideline to avoid practices that are detrimental to democracy, such as money politics and negative campaigns and can provide ethical awareness for prospective leaders and voters (Pamungkas, 2009).

If referring to Al－farabi's political ethics, the implementation of regional elections in Indonesia must emphasize more on ethics and morality in politics. According to Al－farabi, a good leader must be able to lead with wisdom and justice, and have a vision for the common good, not personal or group interests. The application of ethical values in

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the Regional Elections will be very helpful in creating a fairer and more transparent government, which in turn will improve the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

Al－farabi emphasized that leaders must have high wisdom and morality, while in practice, many Indonesian leaders engage in practices that undermine the integrity of democracy, such as money politics, identity politics and negative campaigns.

To improve the quality of Indonesian democracy, it is very important to prioritize ethical values in the regional elections, through the following stages:

a. Political Ethics Education

There is an increasingly urgent need to implement a more comprehensive and intensive political ethics education program, not only for individuals who aspire to become political leaders but also for the general voting public,   to cultivate a deeper understanding of the critical role that moral principles, integrity, and ethical decision－making play in shaping just, transparent, and accountable governance within a democratic society.

b. Strict Supervision

Election supervisory institutions must adopt a more assertive and uncompromising stance in addressing and eliminating the pervasive practices of money politics and vote manipulation, by strengthening enforcement mechanisms, ensuring strict adherence to electoral laws, and holding accountable all parties involved,   to safeguard the integrity of the democratic process and restore public trust in electoral outcomes.

c. Increased Transparency

The election process must be carried out with a significantly higher degree of transparency by actively involving a broader range of stakeholders such as independent monitoring bodies, civil society organizations, media, and academic institutions to participate in the review, oversight, and control of each stage of the electoral proceedings, thereby ensuring that every decision and action taken remains firmly aligned with the fundamental principles of justice, fairness, and moral responsibility, and preventing any potential abuse of power or deviation from democratic values.

d. Affirmation of the Law

In the election process, particularly in the context of regional elections, the enforcement and application of the law must be significantly tightened and strengthened to ensure the establishment and implementation of clear, firm, and binding rules for both voters and candidates who seek to be elected, so that every stage of the electoral process aligns with the principles and provisions outlined in the Constitution, while also effectively preventing and deterring any actions or practices that deviate from the standards of political ethics, democratic accountability, and the moral responsibilities expected in a just and lawful society.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that political ethics according to Al－Farabi emphasize the achievement of happiness as the main goal of state life. In his view, an ideal leader is not only responsible for governing society but also for guiding them toward a good and happy life collectively. Therefore, political ethics is not merely a set of moral rules in leadership but serves as the philosophical foundation guiding the entire political system to create a just, harmonious, and prosperous society.

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However, in the context of democratic practices in Indonesia, particularly in the implementation of regional head elections (Pilkada), the values of political ethics as formulated by Al－Farabi have not been fully implemented. Although the democratic system provides direct political participation opportunities for the people, in reality, political practices are often marred by ethical deviations such as money politics, negative campaigning, vote manipulation, and the exploitation of identity issues. This highlights the gap between Al－Farabi's idealistic political ethics and the political reality on the ground.

Thus, in order to realize a more moral democracy oriented towards collective happiness, as envisioned by Al－Farabi, serious efforts are needed to build ethical awareness among political elites and the general public. Value－based political education, strengthening clean and transparent democratic institutions, and active public oversight are important steps in reducing practices that contradict political ethics. The hope is that democracy in Indonesia will not only function procedurally but also substantively, upholding the values of virtue in national and state life.

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