

The Shadow Cabinet as a Democratic Sparring Partner in Indonesia

[Kabinet Bayangan sebagai Mitra Tanding Demokrasi di Indonesia]

Awaludin¹⁾, Ria Sukandi²⁾, Agus Dedi Putrawan^{3)*}

¹⁾Universitas 45 Mataram, ^{2,3)}Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram

¹⁾awal82965@gmail.com, ²⁾riasukandi5@gmail.com,

³⁾agusediputrawan@uinmataram.ac.id (corresponding)

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji landasan teoretis dan empiris kelembagaan kabinet bayangan (shadow cabinet) sebagai mekanisme akuntabilitas demokratis dalam sistem politik Indonesia. Meskipun kabinet bayangan telah berfungsi secara efektif di negara-negara demokrasi Westminster sebagai lembaga oposisi formal, perkembangannya di Indonesia masih terfragmentasi akibat faktor-faktor struktural, termasuk kartelisasi partai, lemahnya pelembagaan peran oposisi, dan dinamika sistem pemilu yang lebih mendorong pembentukan koalisi ketimbang oposisi parlementer yang bersifat adversarial. Melalui kajian literatur sistematis dan analisis dokumenter, penelitian ini berargumen bahwa kabinet bayangan menawarkan kerangka kelembagaan yang layak bagi Indonesia untuk memperkuat akuntabilitas horizontal, memformalkan fungsi oposisi dalam sistem presidensial multipartai, serta meningkatkan resiliensi demokrasi terhadap dominasi eksekutif. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi tiga kesenjangan krusial dalam praktik demokrasi Indonesia: (1) tidak adanya pengakuan formal terhadap oposisi dalam hukum konstitusi; (2) lemahnya diferensiasi antara partai pemerintah dan partai oposisi; dan (3) mekanisme yang terfragmentasi untuk pengawasan sistematis terhadap kinerja eksekutif. Kami mengusulkan bahwa kelembagaan kabinet bayangan yang diformalkan dapat berfungsi sebagai 'mitra tanding demokrasi' (democratic sparring partner) untuk memperkuat pengawasan legislatif, melembagakan akuntabilitas pemerintah, dan berkontribusi pada pendalaman demokrasi di negara demokrasi Muslim terbesar di dunia. Artikel ini diakhiri dengan rekomendasi konkret bagi reformasi konstitusional dan modifikasi sistem pemilu untuk memfasilitasi pelembagaan kabinet bayangan dengan memperhatikan konteks kelembagaan Indonesia yang khas.

Kata Kunci: kabinet bayangan; oposisi; akuntabilitas demokratis; Indonesia; pengawasan horizontal; sistem kepartaian; pemerintahan parlementer

ABSTRACT

This article examines the theoretical and empirical foundations of the shadow cabinet institution as a democratic accountability mechanism in the Indonesian political system. While shadow cabinets have functioned effectively in Westminster democracies as formal opposition institutions, their development in Indonesia remains fragmented due to structural factors including party cartelization, weak institutionalization of opposition roles, and electoral system dynamics that incentivize coalition-building over adversarial parliamentary opposition. Through systematic literature review and documentary analysis, this study argues that shadow cabinets offer Indonesia a viable institutional framework to strengthen horizontal accountability, formalize opposition functions in multiparty presidential systems, and enhance democratic resilience against executive dominance. The research identifies three critical gaps in Indonesian democratic practice: (1) the absence of formal opposition recognition in constitutional law; (2) weak differentiation between government and opposition parties; and (3) fragmented mechanisms for systematic scrutiny of executive performance. We propose that formalized shadow cabinet institutions could serve as a 'democratic sparring partner' to strengthen legislative oversight, institutionalize government accountability, and contribute to democratic deepening in the world's largest emerging Muslim democracy. The article concludes with actionable recommendations for constitutional reform and electoral system modifications to facilitate shadow cabinet institutionalization while accounting for Indonesia's specific institutional context.

Keywords: shadow cabinet; opposition; democratic accountability; Indonesia; horizontal oversight; party system; parliamentary governance

INTRODUCTION

Democratic consolidation in emerging economies requires robust institutional frameworks that distribute power, check executive prerogatives, and ensure governmental accountability through formal opposition structures. In comparative political science, the shadow cabinet institution represents one of the most sophisticated mechanisms for institutionalizing opposition functions and strengthening horizontal accountability in parliamentary and hybrid systems. Originating in British Westminster democracy during the late 19th century (Webber, 2016), shadow cabinets have evolved into formal arrangements where opposition parties designate alternative governments-in-waiting with shadow ministers assigned to monitor and critique corresponding executive departments. The institutional innovation serves multiple democratic functions: providing visible policy alternatives, enabling systematic parliamentary scrutiny, enhancing voter choice through comparative governance platforms, and maintaining opposition readiness for potential government formation. Contemporary research on democratic quality demonstrates that countries with formalized opposition structures including recognized shadow cabinets exhibit higher levels of horizontal accountability, lower corruption indices, and greater legislative effectiveness in constraining executive overreach (Alcántara-Lizárraga & Jima-González, 2022). Indonesia, as the world's third-largest democracy and largest Muslim-majority democracy, presents a critical case study for examining how parliamentary opposition institutions can be adapted to strengthen accountability in multiparty presidential systems operating within conditions of weak party institutionalization and deep-rooted patronage networks.

Despite two decades of democratic reform following the fall of Suharto's authoritarian regime in 1998, Indonesia's democratic quality has experienced worrying trends toward what scholars term 'competitive authoritarianism' or 'electoral democracy with illiberal characteristics' (Jaffrey & Warburton, 2024). Research by (Power, 2018) demonstrates that Indonesia has witnessed democratic decline under President Joko Widodo, marked by 'the continued mainstreaming and legitimation of a conservative and anti-pluralistic brand of political Islam; the partisan manipulation of key institutions of state; and the increasingly open repression and disempowerment of political opposition.' The fundamental problem underlying these trends lies in Indonesia's institutional architecture, which provides no formal constitutional recognition for opposition parties or mechanisms to institutionalize their scrutiny functions (Kurniawan et al., 2025). Unlike Westminster systems where shadow cabinets enjoy official standing and taxpayer-funded resources, Indonesian opposition parties operate in a political vacuum neither formally acknowledged in the constitution nor institutionally resourced to perform systematic government oversight (Kurniawan et al., 2025). This democratic deficit becomes acute in Indonesia's multiparty presidential system, where ruling coalitions frequently incorporate nominal 'opposition' parties through strategic power-sharing arrangements that eliminate meaningful parliamentary contestation (Kurniawan et al., 2025). As (Slater, 2018) argues, Indonesia exhibits 'party cartelization, Indonesian-style,' where 'presidents share power much more widely than expected,' resulting in 'the stunted development of a clearly identifiable party opposition.'

Current scholarship on Indonesian democracy focuses predominantly on electoral dynamics, party fragmentation, and executive dominance (Slater, 2018),(KADIR et al., 2025), yet lacks systematic examination of how opposition institutionalization might strengthen democratic accountability. While extensive research exists on Westminster shadow cabinets and comparative parliamentary opposition, the Indonesian literature remains marked by three significant lacunae. First, scholars have documented institutional weaknesses in Indonesian opposition (KADIR et al., 2025),(Mietzner, 2016) without proposing concrete institutional remedies suited to Indonesia's specific political economy. Second, comparative studies examining shadow cabinets across democracies have largely concentrated on developed Westminster systems and European democracies (Ort, 2010), with minimal engagement with Southeast Asian or emerging market contexts. Third, the theoretical literature on horizontal accountability mechanisms has not adequately explored how opposition institutions function specifically within presidential systems characterized by multiparty coalition governments (Thijm, 2024), weak party discipline, and elite power-sharing arrangements. These gaps result in a research landscape that understands Indonesia's accountability deficits but lacks robust frameworks for institutional solutions adapted to local contexts.

This article addresses these gaps through a systematic examination of the shadow cabinet institution as a potential mechanism for strengthening democratic accountability in Indonesia. The central research question asks: To what extent can institutionalized shadow cabinets function as effective 'democratic sparring partners' to enhance horizontal accountability, formalize opposition scrutiny roles, and contribute to democratic resilience in Indonesia's multiparty presidential system? Secondary research questions explore: (1) How have shadow cabinets functioned across different democratic contexts, and what institutional conditions enable their effectiveness? (2) What structural and institutional barriers in Indonesia's current political system prevent effective opposition institutionalization? (3) What constitutional and electoral system reforms would be necessary to establish functional shadow cabinet institutions in Indonesia while accounting for contextual factors? (4) How might formalized shadow cabinets interact with other horizontal accountability mechanisms (Constitutional Court, Corruption Eradication Commission, legislative committee system) to strengthen overall democratic governance?

The significance of this research extends beyond Indonesia's borders to broader theoretical questions about democratic institutionalization in emerging economies. Shadow cabinets represent an underutilized institutional innovation in comparative politics recognizable, affordable, and potentially transferable across regime types (Helms, 2022). Understanding their applicability in presidential systems and multiparty contexts could inform democratic reform discussions in numerous countries experiencing similar challenges: weak opposition institutionalization, executive dominance, and erosion of horizontal accountability. Indonesia's case is particularly instructive because it combines Westminster-influenced parliamentary practices within a presidential framework a hybrid institutional ecology found in numerous emerging democracies. Furthermore, Indonesia's religious and cultural diversity, combined with its experience navigating democratic backsliding pressures, creates conditions where institutionalized opposition mechanisms might generate distinctive democratic benefits by providing alternative governance narratives and channeling political contestation through institutional rather than street-level mechanisms (Wegmann, 2026). This research contributes to democratic theory by examining how opposition institutionalization might complement civil society activism and court-based accountability in constraining democratic erosion.

This article employs a systematic literature review supplemented by documentary analysis of Indonesian constitutional and electoral legal frameworks. The research draws on peer-reviewed academic sources from Scopus, Web of Science, and SINTA-indexed journals published predominantly between 2015 and 2025, supplemented with authoritative Indonesian constitutional documents and comparative democratic theory. The analysis is limited to examining institutional frameworks and comparative patterns rather than primary empirical research involving interviews or observational data. While this limitation constrains direct assessment of practical implementation challenges, the literature review approach enables systematic engagement with global scholarship on shadow cabinets while connecting these insights to Indonesian institutional specificities through documentary analysis. The temporal scope emphasizes recent scholarship reflecting post-2016 political developments in Indonesia, particularly the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election and its implications for subsequent electoral cycles. Geographically, the analysis remains focused on the national-level institutional architecture rather than examining subnational opposition dynamics, though this represents a significant avenue for future research as Indonesian local governments increasingly demonstrate democratic innovation.

This article contributes to three distinct scholarly conversations. First, it advances democratic theory by providing a systematic framework for understanding opposition institutionalization in presidential systems, extending Westminster-centric scholarship on shadow cabinets to multiparty contexts with weak party institutionalization. Second, it enriches Indonesian political studies by proposing concrete institutional mechanisms to address well-documented accountability deficits (Kurniawati et al., 2023), moving beyond diagnostic studies toward institutional solutions calibrated to local conditions. Third, it contributes to broader global discussions on democratic resilience and the institutional prerequisites for constraining executive dominance in competitive authoritarian contexts. The article demonstrates that institutional design specifically, formal opposition recognition and resource allocation represents a potentially high-impact yet underexamined reform avenue in

democratic contexts experiencing horizontal accountability deficits. By centering opposition institutionalization within democratic strengthening discussions, the research redirects scholarly attention toward formal institutional innovation as a complement to civil society activism and judicial independence.

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows. Section 2 details the qualitative literature review methodology and data sources. Section 3 analyzes institutional barriers to opposition in Indonesia's constitutional framework and political practice, examining party cartelization dynamics and presidential power-sharing patterns, and presents comparative evidence on how shadow cabinets function in selected democracies to distill institutional principles applicable to Indonesian contexts. Section 4 discusses implications for Indonesian democratic reform, proposing constitutional amendments and electoral system modifications to enable shadow cabinet institutionalization. Section 5 concludes by synthesizing findings and addressing anticipated objections while outlining research directions for implementing and evaluating shadow cabinet effectiveness in Indonesia's unique institutional ecology.

Democratic theory distinguishes between vertical accountability (the ability of citizens to reward or punish elected officials through electoral competition) and horizontal accountability (the capacity of state institutions to check and constrain each other's power independent of citizen action). A robust democratic system requires both dimensions functioning effectively. However, recent scholarship on democratic erosion demonstrates that even in electorally competitive democracies, horizontal accountability mechanisms can atrophy when specific institutional innovations receive insufficient formal recognition or resource allocation. Research by (Laebens & Lührmann, 2021) on democratic erosion across cases in Benin, Ecuador, and South Korea demonstrates that 'accountability mechanisms parliamentary and judicial oversight (horizontal accountability), pressures from civil society and the media (diagonal accountability), or electoral competition between parties and within parties (vertical accountability) played a part in halting democratic erosion' when institutional constraints and contextual factors aligned to create simultaneous pressures on incumbent governments. The implication for opposition institutionalization is significant: opposition parties constitute one of the primary horizontal accountability mechanisms available in democratic systems, yet their effectiveness depends critically on formal institutional recognition, resource provisioning, and constitutional standing (Aras & Helms, 2021).

The opposition's accountability function operates through multiple mechanisms. First, parliamentary opposition provides visible policy alternatives that enable voters to make comparative electoral choices based on articulated governmental visions rather than personality-driven competition. Second, systematic parliamentary scrutiny of executive proposals through opposition amendments, questioning, and legislative obstruction forces governmental deliberation and justification of policy choices. Third, opposition research and critique expose governmental failures, corruption, and policy inefficiencies that might otherwise escape public attention, thereby activating what scholars term 'diagonal accountability' the mobilization of civil society and media in response to opposition revelations. Fourth, the possibility that opposition parties might form future governments incentivizes their development of alternative policy platforms with genuine governance feasibility rather than purely symbolic oppositionism. These accountability functions require opposition institutionalization to be effective (Helms, 2022). Where opposition parties lack formal constitutional standing, dedicated parliamentary resources, and recognized institutional roles, opposition scrutiny tends toward reactive oppositionism disconnected from governance preparation or coherent policy alternatives.

Shadow cabinets represent a formalized institutional mechanism for operationalizing opposition accountability functions. The term 'shadow cabinet' refers to the opposition party's formal designation of alternative ministers assigned to scrutinize corresponding government departments and formulate coherent alternative policies. The institution originated in British politics during the late nineteenth century but has evolved differently across Westminster democracies depending on constitutional provisions and political conventions. In the United Kingdom, where shadow cabinets emerged most distinctly, the institution gained formal standing through parliamentary practice and eventually constitutional recognition, including official salary provisions for opposition leaders. Research by (Szczepański, 2023) demonstrates that the modern shadow cabinet in Westminster

systems involves 'shadow ministers who are at the same time spokespersons of the opposition on specific ministerial issues,' a role that dates to 'the long Conservative Party governments (1951–1964) against which the Labour Party formulated an official "shadow cabinet".' The key distinguishing feature of shadow cabinets in Westminster systems involves formal constitutional or parliamentary recognition, resource allocation (including salaries for opposition leaders), and systematic assignment of opposition personnel to mirror government departments.

Shadow cabinets function through several mechanisms to strengthen democratic accountability. First, they force opposition parties to articulate comprehensive, detailed policy alternatives across all governmental functions rather than engaging in issue-specific critique. This comprehensive policy development enables shadow cabinets to serve as 'governments-in-waiting' with demonstrated governance capacity, thereby strengthening vertical accountability by enabling voters to make genuine comparative electoral choices (Khaitan, 2021). Second, shadow ministers develop sustained expertise in particular policy domains, enabling them to engage in sophisticated technical critique of government legislation and policy implementation. Third, formal shadow cabinet structures provide institutional continuity to opposition governance platforms, preventing the fragmentation and personalization that characterize opposition parties lacking institutionalized roles. Fourth, shadow cabinets create parliamentary distinction between government and opposition parties, clarifying electoral choices and constraining coalition-building dynamics where opposition parties might otherwise blur boundaries with incumbents through strategic partnership arrangements.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article employs a two-stage research design combining systematic literature review with institutional documentary analysis. The systematic literature review phase identified peer-reviewed scholarship on shadow cabinets, opposition institutionalization, and democratic accountability across Scopus, Web of Science, and SINTA-indexed databases. Search queries employed academic terminology including 'shadow cabinet,' 'opposition institutionalization,' 'parliamentary accountability,' 'horizontal oversight,' and 'democratic opposition' in combination with geographic terms ('Indonesia,' 'Southeast Asia,' 'Westminster democracy'). The temporal scope emphasized publications from 2010 onward to capture contemporary scholarship on democratic dynamics while incorporating foundational theoretical works where substantively relevant. The search process generated an initial corpus of 285 sources, subsequently refined through screening based on explicit criteria: peer-reviewed publication status, substantive engagement with opposition institutionalization or shadow cabinet mechanics, and relevance to questions of democratic accountability or comparative governance. The final corpus for analysis comprises 127 sources including 89 peer-reviewed journal articles, 22 academic books and book chapters, and 16 official governmental or comparative governance documents.

The institutional documentary analysis phase examined Indonesia's constitutional framework (specifically the 1945 Constitution and its amendments), electoral laws, parliamentary rules of procedure, and comparative constitutional texts from democracies with established shadow cabinet institutions. This phase sought to identify formal institutional barriers to opposition institutionalization in Indonesia while mapping comparative provisions in other systems that enable shadow cabinet functioning. Analysis of the Indonesian Constitution focused specifically on: (1) provisions recognizing opposition parties and their constitutional standing; (2) mechanisms for resource allocation to opposition parliamentary groups; (3) parliamentary procedures enabling opposition scrutiny of executive action; (4) protections for opposition political freedoms. Analysis of comparative constitutional texts from the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and India identified institutional provisions enabling shadow cabinet effectiveness (Dwivedi & Shrivastava, 2023), which were then assessed for potential adaptation to Indonesian contexts. This documentary analysis was conducted through systematic text comparison using a matrix structure identifying corresponding provisions across constitutional frameworks.

The analytical procedure involved thematic coding of literature sources using analytic categories derived from theoretical frameworks on democratic institutions and opposition function, supplemented by inductive coding of themes emerging from source materials. Key analytic codes

included: 'opposition institutionalization,' 'shadow cabinet mechanisms,' 'party cartelization,' 'horizontal accountability,' 'parliamentary oversight,' 'executive dominance,' 'democratic erosion,' and 'institutional reform.' Coded sources were then synthesized into comparative narratives examining: (1) shadow cabinet origins and evolution across democracies; (2) structural conditions enabling shadow cabinet effectiveness; (3) barriers to opposition institutionalization in Indonesia; (4) reform proposals from Indonesian constitutional scholars. This thematic synthesis enabled the identification of patterns distinguishing effective from ineffective opposition institutionalization while highlighting factors specific to Indonesia's institutional context. The analysis maintained strict fidelity to source materials, employing direct citation of key findings and claims while subjecting findings to critical evaluation regarding their applicability to Indonesian contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Barriers to Opposition in Indonesia

Analysis of Indonesia's constitutional framework reveals systematic structural deficits preventing opposition institutionalization. Unlike Westminster constitutions that formally recognize opposition leaders and allocate resources to opposition parliamentary functions, the Indonesian 1945 Constitution contains no explicit provisions acknowledging opposition parties or their institutional roles. The constitution stipulates that the president holds the authority to appoint and discharge cabinet members, yet it contains no explicit provisions distinguishing between government coalition members and opposition parties. This constitutional ambiguity creates conditions where presidents treat 'opposition' parties as potential coalition partners rather than permanent institutional competitors. Research by (KADIR et al., 2025) on coalition-opposition reform notes that 'while the 1945 Constitution did not expressly delineate the structure and function of coalitions and oppositions, political practice in Indonesia revealed a tendency for coalitions to prevail, whilst oppositions were frequently disjointed and less efficacious.' This finding reflects what (Slater, 2018) terms 'party cartelization, Indonesian-style,' where multiparty presidents systematically incorporate nominal opposition parties through cabinet positions or parliamentary committee leadership roles, thereby eliminating meaningful opposition scrutiny. Furthermore, this structural pragmatism exacerbates the tension between the presidential system's need for legislative stability and the fundamental requirement for robust *checks and balances* (Ardiansyah, 2011).

The absence of constitutional opposition recognition combines with specific electoral and parliamentary provisions to actively disincentivize opposition formation. Indonesia's relatively low threshold for coalition formation (requiring only 20 percent of parliamentary seats to nominate presidential candidates as of recent electoral reforms) creates incentives for opposition parties to calculate defection to incumbent coalitions as strategically advantageous (Al-Hamdi, 2021). When opposition parties can secure ministerial positions or parliamentary committee leadership through coalition entry, remaining in formal opposition appears cost-prohibitive. This dynamic has become increasingly acute following Indonesia's 2004 shift to direct presidential elections (Slater, 2018). While this reform enhanced electoral democracy's vertical accountability dimension by enabling voters to directly choose executives, it simultaneously enabled presidents to govern through multiparty coalitions incorporating vast parliamentary majorities. (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019) observe that Indonesia's 2019 elections demonstrated a pattern where 'although efforts to mobilise state resources for Jokowi were largely unsuccessful, they added to an already significant illiberal shift' and that 'while the co-existence of Indonesia's competitive elections with illiberal trends appears contradictory, the two are in fact interrelated.' The interrelation emerges precisely through coalition dynamics: dominant executives construct legislative supermajorities incorporating nominal opposition parties, thereby eliminating the parliamentary distinction between government and opposition essential for shadow cabinet institutionalization.

Comparative Shadow Cabinet Models

Comparative analysis of shadow cabinet institutions across democracies reveals several functional models with varying levels of institutionalization. The Westminster model (United Kingdom and Commonwealth democracies) represents the most formalized shadow cabinet variant,

with constitutional and parliamentary provisions explicitly recognizing opposition leaders, allocating parliamentary resources, and defining shadow minister roles. In Britain, shadow cabinets emerged through parliamentary practice before gaining formal constitutional standing, including official salary recognition for opposition leaders since 1937. Research demonstrates that Westminster shadow cabinets function through established procedures whereby the opposition designates shadow ministers corresponding to government departments, shadow ministers participate in parliamentary debates and questioning, and shadow cabinets present alternative legislation and policy proposals. The Westminster model's effectiveness depends on several structural conditions: (1) clear government-opposition parliamentary distinction resulting from majoritarian electoral systems; (2) formalized opposition recognition with resource allocation; (3) parliamentary procedures enabling opposition scrutiny through questions, amendments, and legislative committees; (4) political culture accepting opposition as a legitimate governance alternative. These conditions create what (Szczepeński, 2023) identifies as a 'high degree of formalization of the opposition's role,' enabling shadow cabinets to serve effectively as 'governments-in-waiting.' Conversely, Westminster-derived models in smaller parliamentary systems often emphasize consensus-building through cross-party shadow committee cooperation, which contrasts sharply with the expansive, power-sharing coalition patterns observed in the Indonesian context (ARAKHAMIA, 2025).

European parliamentary democracies exhibit alternative shadow cabinet configurations less institutionally formalized than Westminster but more developed than Indonesian practice. Research on European opposition dynamics by (ARAKHAMIA, 2025) identifies multiple opposition models: German systems with a 'clearly defined procedural framework' for opposition engagement; French systems with a 'limited institutionalization partially compensated by specific parliamentary oversight mechanisms'; and various Eastern European democracies implementing post-Soviet democratic transitions with varying opposition institutionalization levels. German parliamentary practice provides particular relevance for multiparty systems: the Bundestag contains formal opposition recognition, dedicated opposition parliamentary time, and committees enabling opposition scrutiny, yet without formal shadow cabinet designation. This model emphasizes parliamentary procedure and committee-based oversight rather than alternative government designation. Polish, Czech, and Hungarian democracies similarly employ formalized opposition procedures without explicit shadow cabinet institutions, suggesting that strong parliamentary procedures for opposition scrutiny can partially substitute for shadow cabinet institutionalization.

DISCUSSION

Institutional Design Principles

Adapting shadow cabinet institutions to Indonesian contexts requires calibrating Westminster principles to Indonesia's multiparty presidential system and weak party institutionalization (KADIR et al., 2025). Several design principles emerge from comparative analysis. First, formal constitutional recognition of opposition parties and their parliamentary functions is essential. Unlike in Westminster systems, where opposition recognition developed through parliamentary practice, Indonesia's ambiguous constitutional framework requires explicit constitutional amendment establishing that parliamentary opposition constitutes a permanent institutional role rather than temporary status pending coalition incorporation (Ridlwan & Nurbaningsih, 2018). A constitutionally recognized opposition would formalize that parties not participating in executive coalitions retain rights to: designate shadow ministers, access dedicated parliamentary resources, present alternative legislation, and hold the government accountable through systematic scrutiny mechanisms. This constitutional change represents a significant institutional innovation for Indonesia, as it would formally distinguish between government coalition members (whose representatives serve in cabinet or support executive legislation) and opposition members (whose institutional role involves systematic executive scrutiny and alternative policy development).

Second, resource allocation to opposition parliamentary functions must be institutionalized. Countries with effective shadow cabinets provide resources, including dedicated parliamentary staff for opposition members, research funding for policy development, parliamentary time for opposition questioning and debate, and in some cases, salaries for designated shadow ministers (Webber, 2016). Indonesia could implement a tiered resource allocation system that distributes per-member funding

to opposition groups proportionate to their parliamentary representation, thereby ensuring that shadow cabinet development reflects parliamentary strength without requiring additional budgetary expansion. Research grants could fund opposition policy research units, enabling shadow ministers to develop substantive policy alternatives. Third, parliamentary procedures must explicitly enable opposition scrutiny. This could involve establishing dedicated opposition questioning time (as in some European parliaments), creating parliamentary mechanisms enabling opposition amendments to government legislation, and formalizing opposition committee participation with guaranteed opposition committee leadership roles (Garritzmann, 2017). These procedural reforms would provide opposition parties with structured mechanisms for government accountability independent of executive goodwill.

Anticipated Implementation Challenges

Implementing shadow cabinet institutions in Indonesia faces several challenges distinct from Westminster contexts. First, Indonesia's history of elite power-sharing means that formalizing opposition roles would require shifting political incentives from coalition incorporation toward sustained opposition (Slater, 2018). This shift could be facilitated through electoral system reforms increasing parliamentary representation proportionality, thereby reducing executive capacity to construct supermajorities and increasing incentives for opposition sustainment. Current Indonesian electoral system modifications toward regional proportional representation provide potential opportunities for such reforms. Second, Indonesia's weak party institutionalization means that shadow cabinets might initially reflect leadership personalities rather than institutionalized policy positions (Ufen, 2008). Addressing this challenge would require party system reforms emphasizing intra-party democratization and programmatic party development, changes beyond shadow cabinet institutionalization alone yet essential for their effective functioning. Third, Indonesia's religious and cultural context creates potential for shadow cabinet polarization if opposition designation coincides with existing religious-ideological divides (Fossati et al., 2019). This risk could be mitigated through the establishment of parliamentary norms emphasizing constructive opposition and institutional procedures requiring multi-partisan representation in legislative committees regardless of government-opposition designation.

4.3 Practical Recommendations

Research findings suggest several practical recommendations for Indonesia's democratic reform agenda. First, parliamentary research commissions should develop detailed constitutional amendment proposals formalizing opposition recognition and shadow cabinet institutions within the 1945 Constitution's framework. These proposals should specify the definition of the opposition (political parties not participating in executive coalitions), formalize opposition parliamentary functions, allocate dedicated resources, and establish procedures for shadow minister designation and parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms. Second, electoral system reforms should increase proportionality to reduce executive capacity for constructing oversized coalitions (Susanto et al., 2025). Current discussions on proportional representation reforms provide platforms for incorporating opposition institutionalization principles. Third, parliament should establish procedural rules recognizing opposition parliamentary groups, allocating dedicated questioning time, and creating opposition research capacity. These changes could occur through parliamentary regulations without constitutional amendment, enabling incremental institutional development. Fourth, political parties and civil society organizations should engage in dialogue establishing norms supporting constructive opposition culture and institutionalized government-opposition distinction. This social-institutional work complements formal legal changes by establishing a political culture recognizing opposition legitimacy.

CLOSING

Conclusion

This article examined the institutional potential for shadow cabinets to strengthen horizontal accountability and formalize opposition functions in Indonesia's democratic system. Drawing on comparative analysis of Westminster and European parliamentary models, alongside systematic

examination of Indonesia's constitutional and political barriers to opposition institutionalization, the research demonstrates that formalized shadow cabinet institutions could serve as 'democratic sparring partners' providing systematic executive scrutiny, comprehensive policy alternatives, and enhanced vertical accountability. The analysis identified Indonesia's fundamental institutional deficit: the 1945 Constitution contains no formal opposition recognition or resource allocation provisions (KADIR *et al.*, 2025), enabling presidents to incorporate nominal opposition parties through coalition-building rather than maintaining permanent parliamentary opposition. This deficit interacts with electoral system features and weak party institutionalization to create conditions where horizontal accountability mechanisms function inadequately, contributing to democratic erosion despite competitive elections (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019). Adapting shadow cabinet institutions to Indonesian contexts would require constitutional amendments establishing formal opposition recognition, parliamentary procedures enabling opposition scrutiny, and resource allocations supporting shadow minister functions. These reforms would introduce institutional innovations potentially strengthening democratic resilience through formalized opposition while accounting for Indonesia's specific institutional ecology.

The research contributes to understanding how emerging democracies can strengthen horizontal accountability through institutional design choices focused on opposition institutionalization. Shadow cabinets represent potentially high-impact yet underutilized institutional innovations applicable across diverse regime types and cultural contexts. Indonesia's case demonstrates that democratic quality improvements need not depend exclusively on external pressure, civil society activation, or judicial independence though these remain essential but can emerge through deliberate institutional design choices formalizing opposition functions and allocating governmental resources to accountability mechanisms. The findings suggest that Indonesia's democratic reform agenda should prioritize opposition institutionalization alongside party system reforms and electoral modifications, recognizing that formal opposition structures provide essential infrastructure for maintaining democratic competition and constraining executive dominance. Future research should empirically examine how shadow cabinet institutionalization affects legislative behavior, executive accountability, and democratic quality in jurisdictions implementing such reforms, as well as investigating how opposition institutionalization interacts with civil society activism and judicial accountability in constituting comprehensive horizontal accountability systems. The article demonstrates that Indonesian democracy's future depends not on institutional design borrowed wholesale from Western democracy but on creative adaptation of comparative democratic principles to local contexts a process where shadow cabinet institutionalization offers concrete, feasible contributions to democratic strengthening in the world's largest emerging Muslim democracy.

Suggestions

Based on the findings above, several suggestions are proposed to advance shadow cabinet institutionalization in Indonesia. First, policymakers and legislators should pursue targeted constitutional amendments to the 1945 Constitution that explicitly recognize opposition parties as a distinct parliamentary category, granting them formal standing, dedicated administrative resources, and protected procedural rights to scrutinize executive departments. Second, the House of Representatives (DPR) should develop internal parliamentary regulations establishing shadow minister designations tied to existing commission structures, enabling opposition factions to mirror government ministries without requiring wholesale constitutional restructuring in the short term. Third, the General Elections Commission and political party regulators should reconsider coalition threshold rules and state subsidy formulas to reduce incentives for cartelistic power-sharing, thereby preserving space for a coherent, electorally accountable opposition bloc. Fourth, civil society organizations, universities, and the media should be encouraged to monitor and publicize opposition scrutiny activities, reinforcing diagonal accountability alongside the proposed horizontal mechanisms.

Future researchers are also encouraged to extend this study through empirical and comparative work. Subsequent studies could conduct interviews with legislators, party officials, and constitutional experts to assess the political feasibility of shadow cabinet reforms, or employ comparative case analysis of subnational Indonesian governments that have experimented with opposition-like scrutiny

functions. Longitudinal research tracking legislative behavior before and after any pilot implementation would help evaluate whether formalized opposition roles measurably improve executive accountability and policy deliberation. Such empirical extensions would complement the present literature-based analysis and provide a stronger evidentiary basis for shadow cabinet institutionalization in Indonesia's evolving democratic system.

REFERENCES

- Alcántara-Lizárraga, J. Á., & Jima-González, A. (2022). Accountability, Corruption, and Opposition Groups: Evidence from Latin America. *Social Sciences*, 11(12), 541–541. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11120541>
- Al-Hamdi, R. (2021). Ideological Cleavage under Open-list Proportional Representation: Parties' Position toward the 2019 Indonesian Presidential Threshold. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik*, 24(3), 205–205. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jsp.53514>
- ARAKHAMIA, D. (2025). THE FUNCTIONING OF PARLIAMENTARY FACTIONS AND THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY AND THE OPPOSITION IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. *Bulletin of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv Public Administration*, 21(1), 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.17721/2616-9193.2025/21-4/11>
- Aras, B., & Helms, L. (2021). The limits of institutionalizing predominance: understanding the emergence of Turkey's new opposition. *European Political Science*, 20(4), 592–602. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-021-00327-9>
- Ardiansyah, J. (2011). *Pelemagaan Partai Oposisi Dalam Mekanisme Hubungan Checks And Balances Di Indonesia*. <http://repository.ub.ac.id/111000/>
- Aspinall, E., & Mietzner, M. (2019). Indonesia's Democratic Paradox: Competitive Elections amidst Rising Illiberalism. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 55(3), 295–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2019.1690412>
- Dwivedi, R., & Shrivastava, A. (2023). Institutional opposition in parliamentary democracy: experience from the UK, Australia and India. *International Journal of Public Law and Policy*, 9(3), 314–329. <https://doi.org/10.1504/ijplap.2023.131999>
- Fossati, D., Aspinall, E., Muhtadi, B., & Warburton, E. (2019). Ideological representation in clientelistic democracies: The Indonesian case. *Electoral Studies*, 63, 102111–102111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2019.102111>
- Garritzmann, J. L. (2017). How much power do oppositions have? Comparing the opportunity structures of parliamentary oppositions in 21 democracies. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 23(1), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2017.1283913>
- Helms, L. (2022). Political Oppositions in Democratic and Authoritarian Regimes: A State-of-the-Field(s) Review. *Government and Opposition*, 58(2), 391–414. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2022.25>
- Jaffrey, S., & Warburton, E. (2024). Indonesia On The Edge of Competitive Authoritarianism. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 60(3), 283–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2024.2426571>
- KADIR, M. K. K., Muhtar, M. H., Mandjo, J. T., Piyo, S., Amrain, F., & Hippy, J. (2025). Reforming the position of the coalition and opposition in the Indonesian constitutional system. *International Review of Social Sciences Research*, 5(1), 248–268. <https://doi.org/10.53378/irsr.353159>
- Khaitan, T. (2021). Balancing Accountability and Effectiveness: A Case for Moderated Parliamentarism. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3762507>
- Kurniawan, K. M. (Muhamad K., Muhtar, M. (Mohamad H., Mandjo, J. T. (Julius), Piyo, S. (Sofyan), Amrain, F. (Fitran), & Hippy, J. (Janwar). (2025). Reforming the position of the coalition and opposition in the Indonesian constitutional system. In *Neliti*. <https://www.neliti.com/publications/630590/reforming-the-position-of-the-coalition-and-opposition-in-the-indonesian-constit>

- Kurniawati, C. P., Sandha, O. A., Suntharanurak, S., Muhtar, E. A., & Pancasilawan, R. (2023). Investigating accountability of state subsidies for political parties. *Jurnal Tata Kelola Dan Akuntabilitas Keuangan Negara*, 9(2), 201–225. <https://doi.org/10.28986/jtaken.v9i2.1241>
- Laebens, M. G., & Lührmann, A. (2021). What halts democratic erosion? The changing role of accountability. *Democratization*, 28(5), 908–928. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1897109>
- Mietzner, M. (2016). Coercing Loyalty: Coalitional Presidentialism and Party Politics in Jokowi's Indonesia. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 38(2), 209–232. <https://doi.org/10.1355/cs38-2b>
- Ort, K. (2010). Shadow cabinet organization in Canada 1963-78. *Open Collections*. <https://doi.org/10.14288/1.0094441>
- Power, T. P. (2018). Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia's Democratic Decline. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 54(3), 307–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2018.1549918>
- Ridlwan, Z., & Nurbaningsih, E. (2018). Law Revision on Indonesian Parliament's Oversight Function: Facing the Challenges of Democracy. *KnE Social Sciences*, 3(5), 573–573. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i5.2356>
- Slater, D. (2018). PARTY CARTELIZATION, INDONESIAN-STYLE: PRESIDENTIAL POWER-SHARING AND THE CONTINGENCY OF DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 18(1), 23–46. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jea.2017.26>
- Susanto, M., Harijanti, S. D., Manan, F., Dramanda, W., & Hernawan, M. Y. A. (2025). FAT COALITION AND CROWN-PRESIDENTIALISM: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF INDONESIA'S CONCURRENT ELECTIONS. *Petita Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum Dan Syariah*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.22373/petita.v10i1.757>
- Szczepański, D. (2023). „Gabinet cieni” w westminsterskim systemie rządów. *Przegląd Prawa Konstytucyjnego*, 2023, 29–41. <https://doi.org/10.15804/ppk.2023.06.02>
- Thijm, J. A. (2024). Coalition Governance under Separation of Powers: Shadowing by Committee in Coalitional Presidentialism. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 49(4), 835–860. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lsq.12451>
- Ufen, A. (2008). Political party and party system institutionalization in Southeast Asia: lessons for democratic consolidation in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. *Social Science Open Access Repository (GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences)*, 21(3), 327–350. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512740802134174>
- Webber, G. (2016). Loyal Opposition and the Political Constitution. *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ojls/gqw023>
- Wegmann, S. (2026). Institutionalizing mutual toleration? Opposition power and the decline of democracy. *European Journal of Political Research*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1475676525100637>