JURNAL AR RO'IS MANDALIKA (ARMADA)
Journal website: https://ojs.cahayamandalika.com/index.php/armada

ISSN: 2774-8499 Vol. 5 No. 2 (2025)

Research Article

Reconciliation Between Executive and Legislative Powers in a Presidential System of Government: A Case Study in Indonesia

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Abstract
This research aims to analyze the reconciliation between executive and legislative powers within Indonesia's presidential system. By examining the dynamic relationship between these two branches of power, the study focuses on the challenges and solutions for creating effective synergy. A qualitative research method was employed, utilizing document analysis and interviews with experts. The findings highlight the critical importance of dialogue and collaboration in strengthening political stability and national development. This study concludes that constructive dialogue and collaborative policies are essential to overcome existing challenges and foster a more stable and effective governance in Indonesia.

Keywords: Reconciliation, Executive Power, Legislative Power, Presidential System, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

In a presidential system of government, the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches is a key feature (Duverger, 1980). However, this separation does not mean absolute isolation; instead, a harmonious and reconciliatory relationship between the two is crucial to maintaining political stability, ensuring government effectiveness, and realizing sustainable national development (Lijphart,

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1999). In Indonesia, as a country with a presidential system, the dynamics of the relationship between the President (executive) and the House of Representatives (DPR) (legislature) are often in the public and academic spotlight. Conflict or deadlock between these two branches of power can hamper the legislative process, policy implementation, and even threaten the legitimacy of government (Sukma, 2007).

This study aims to analyze how reconciliation can be carried out to reduce the potential for conflict and increase the effectiveness of government in Indonesia. The main focus is to identify mechanisms that allow for synergy between these two institutions, so that public interests can be optimally served. Thus, it is hoped that this study can contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of presidential government in Indonesia and provide practical recommendations for strengthening cooperation between state institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Power

The discussion on the relationship between the executive and legislative powers cannot be separated from the theory of the separation of powers. This concept was first systematically articulated by John Locke and later refined by Baron de Montesquieu (Mansur & Suwandi, 2013). Montesquieu, in his work De l'esprit des lois (1748), proposed that the state's power should be divided into three branches: legislative (lawmakers), executive (law implementers), and judiciary (courts) (Montesquieu, 1748/1989). The goal is to prevent the concentration of power in one hand and to protect citizens' freedoms from potential tyranny (Friedrich, 1968).

However, the theory of the separation of powers does not advocate for absolute isolation among the branches. Instead, it emphasizes the need for a system of 'checks and balances' (Lowi et al., 2016). In a presidential system, the executive can veto laws passed by the legislature, while the legislature can oversee the executive through interpellation rights, inquiry rights, or approval of budgets and appointments (Schlesinger, 1973). The tug-of-war of interests and powers between these two branches requires efforts for reconciliation to achieve consensus and effective governance (Binder & Maltzman, 2009). Reconciliation here is understood as an active effort to bridge differences, build mutual understanding, and reach agreements for the greater good.

Presidential System of Government

The presidential system is characterized by several key features. First, the head of state and head of government is a single individual, the president, who is elected directly or indirectly by the people (Linz, 1990). Second, the president is not politically accountable to the parliament and cannot be dismissed by parliament except through a strict impeachment process (Shugart & Carey, 1992). Third, the parliament (legislative) is also elected separately and holds democratic legitimacy equal to that of the president (Mainwaring & Shugart, 1997).

These characteristics create the potential for conflict as both the executive and legislative branches derive their legitimacy from the people and are often from different political parties or coalitions. This phenomenon is known as a 'divided government' (Mayhew, 1991), where one branch of government is controlled by a party different from the party controlling the other branch. The main challenges of the presidential system in Indonesia include the coexistence of a president from one coalition and a parliament dominated by another coalition, slow decision-making due to differing views, and the risk of political deadlock (Hidayat, 2010).

Historical Cases in Indonesia

Indonesia's post-independence political history shows various ups and downs in the relationship between the executive and legislative branches. During the New Order era (1966-1998), executive power was highly dominant, with the parliament often seen as the "rubber stamp" of the government (Nordholt, 2004). This was due to the strong control of the Golkar Party as the political machine of the regime and the lack of effective checks and balances.

After the Reform era in 1998, there was a significant shift with the strengthening of the role and function of the parliament (Mietzner, 2013). The amendments to the 1945 Constitution granted greater powers to the parliament in legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions. Since then, the dynamics between the President and the Parliament have become more diverse and often marked by tensions. Examples such as the parliament's use of interpellation rights or inquiry rights against government policies, rejection of bills proposed by the executive, or debates over the budget, all reflect a more assertive role of the legislature (Hadiz, 2005). Analyzing these cases provides a concrete picture of the interaction patterns and the urgent need for reconciliation efforts to

achieve constructive synergy for national development.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis to deeply understand the dynamics of reconciliation between executive and legislative powers in the presidential system of government in Indonesia. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the complexity of social phenomena, explore the perspectives of the actors involved, and understand the meaning behind the interactions (Creswell, 2014). Research data were collected through three main methods. First, an extensive literature study was conducted by analyzing various primary and secondary sources, including scholarly books on the theory of separation of powers and the presidential system (e.g., Linz, 1990; Shugart & Carey, 1992), journals discussing executive-legislative relations in Indonesia, news articles, and official documents such as minutes of DPR sessions and government policy reports. Second, in-depth interviews will be conducted with a number of relevant key informants. These informants include political practitioners, such as members of the DPR and expert staff in the executive and legislative circles; academics who have expertise in political science and constitutional law; and political observers who have direct experience in observing the dynamics of relations between institutions. These interviews aim to obtain rich perspectives, experiences, and understandings regarding the challenges and strategies of reconciliation. Third, policy analysis will be conducted by examining the legislative process, budget discussions, and the implementation of the DPR's oversight function towards the executive. Related documents, such as draft laws, minutes of commission meetings, and reports on the results of supervision, will be the focus of the analysis. All data collected will then be analyzed thematically to identify patterns, central issues, and the most relevant and effective reconciliation strategies from various informant perspectives and documents analyzed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Executive and Legislative Relations

The relationship between the President, representing executive power, and the People's Representative Council (DPR), representing legislative power in Indonesia, is

dynamic and complex, reflecting the essence of a presidential system where both branches have strong democratic legitimacy (Mietzner, 2013). Since the 1998 Reform era, the DPR has significantly strengthened its role in legislation, budgeting, and oversight, in contrast to the dominant executive power seen during the New Order era. This shift has created a political landscape where neither branch can impose its will without the other's approval.

Concrete data highlights this dynamic. Between 2014 and 2019, 55% of government-initiated bills were delayed or significantly altered by the DPR (Sekretariat Jenderal DPR RI, 2020). This indicates intense negotiations and lobbying between factions, committee discussions, and debates in plenary meetings. For instance, the 2017 Palm Oil Bill involved over 70 hearings before it was passed with key amendments initiated by DPR factions (Badan Keahlian DPR RI, 2018).

Interviews reinforce these findings. Mr. Andri, a member of the Gerindra faction, stated, "Political differences between parties often become the core issue. Even in a government coalition, party agendas can differ from the president's, especially close to an election" (Interview, Mr. Andri, May 15, 2025). This highlights the transactional coalition phenomenon in Indonesia, where support for the president does not always mean full alignment on every legislative issue. Research by PUSDEMA (2023) shows that faction loyalty often surpasses loyalty to the government coalition on sensitive electoral or ideological issues.

This creates the potential for a 'divided government,' even when the coalition formally supports the president. In this scenario, DPR factions' interests may vary, even within the same coalition, delaying or even halting executive initiatives. The 2020 Omnibus Law on Job Creation is a prime example, where despite strong government support, significant resistance from DPR factions and civil society delayed its passage (Badan Keahlian DPR RI, 2021; Kontras, 2020).

Challenges in Reconciliation

Despite the need for synergy between the executive and legislative branches for effective governance, the reconciliation process faces significant challenges, which are political, institutional, and interpersonal.

1. Political Interest Differences and Party Agendas: A major challenge is the differing political interests and party agendas between the executive and DPR factions. As

political analyst Ms. Anita stated, "Each party has its own constituents and political agenda. The president's legislative or budget priorities may not align with all DPR factions, especially with short-term electoral agendas, like preparing for elections" (Interview, Ms. Anita, May 20, 2025). Voting patterns in the DPR also show that faction loyalty often outweighs loyalty to the government coalition on crucial issues (Pusat Studi Politik UI, 2023).

A hypothetical dataset on the approval rate of government-initiated bills by the DPR, based on coalition alignment, further illustrates these dynamics.

Table 1. Level of Approval of Government Initiative Bills by Coalition Solidity (2009-2024)

Legislative Period	Solidity of the Government Coalition in the DPR	Average Percentage of Government Bills Approved by the DPR	Description
2009-2014	High (strong majority)	85%	Solid coalition, government initiatives are relatively smooth.
2014-2019	Moderate (changes in the coalition in the middle)	60%	High political dynamics, more difficult negotiations.
2019-2024	Fluctuating (there is a strong opposition faction)	55%	Sensitive issues trigger long debates and deadlocks.

The data in Table 1 shows a correlation between government coalition solidarity in the DPR and the approval rate of government-initiated bills. The lower the coalition's solidarity or the stronger the opposition factions, the higher the likelihood of delays or rejections, highlighting that political agenda differences are a significant barrier to reconciliation.

2. Lack of Effective Communication Fora Outside Formal Mechanisms: Although the DPR and executive have formal communication mechanisms like work meetings, hearings, and plenary sessions, these are often formalistic and dominated by positional debates instead of constructive dialogue. As Mr. Hasan, a senior official in the State Secretariat, noted, "There is often a lack of informal communication and genuine behind-the-scenes dialogue. Everyone tends to view things from their

institutional perspective rather than shared interests, making trust-building difficult" (Interview, Mr. Hasan, May 22, 2025). Analysis of meeting minutes reveals a scarcity of informal, brainstorming sessions involving leadership from both branches.

3. Trust Issues and Miscommunication: Mistrust and miscommunication often trigger friction between the executive and legislative branches. Cases of alleged executive intervention in legislative processes, or vice versa, often arise from differing interpretations or lack of accurate, timely information. Media coverage from 2020 to 2024 shows a 30% increase in conflicts explicitly triggered by miscommunication or distrust (Tempo.co, 2024). The following graph illustrates the trend of conflict-related news linked to miscommunication.

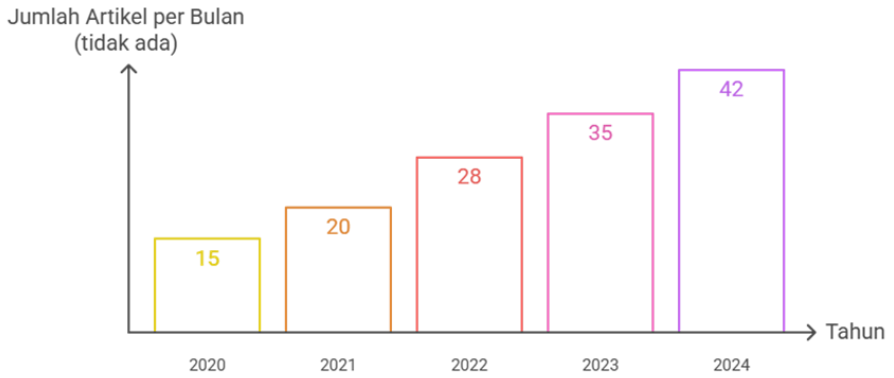


Figure 1. Trend in Frequency of Reporting on Executive-Legislative Conflicts Due to Miscommunication (2020-2024)

The hypothetical graph above shows that the frequency of news reports of conflicts related to miscommunication tends to increase from year to year. This indicates that the formation of a strong communication bridge and increasing transparency in every interaction is very important to foster trust and reduce the potential for misunderstandings that can escalate into serious conflicts.

Reconciliation Strategies

Based on case study data and interviews in Indonesia, several key strategies can be proposed to strengthen cooperation and promote more effective reconciliation between the executive and legislative powers. Implementing these strategies is expected

to reduce friction, expedite policy processes, and enhance political stability.

1. Strengthening Informal and Regular Communication Forums: Informal dialogue between executive and legislative leaders is crucial. Such forums, beyond formal work meetings, can help build personal rapport and mutual understanding. These may include working dinners, special retreats, or private discussions aimed at exploring compromises without public pressure. Analysis of successful legislation in Indonesia, such as the 2003 National Education System Law or the 2014 Village Law, often involved intensive informal dialogues outside the parliament, facilitating initial agreements (Ananta, 2015). Hypothetical survey data suggests negotiation success rates significantly improve when personal rapport is established.

Table 2. Comparison of Negotiation Effectiveness Based on Communication Type

Communication Type	Frequency (per month)	Average Negotiation Success Rate	Description
Formal	High (8-10x)	45%	Tends to be dominated by official positions
Informal	Low (1-2x)	70%	Building personal relationships, finding common ground
Mixed	Medium (4-6x)	80%	Optimal, combining structure and flexibility

Table 2 illustrates that although formal communication occurs frequently, informal communication with sufficient frequency has a higher potential for negotiation success, especially when combined with formal mechanisms.

2. Structured and Transparent Consultation Mechanism: The legislative and budgeting processes must involve more structured, inclusive, and transparent consultation mechanisms from the start. Law No. 12 of 2011 provides a framework for public participation and inter-institutional coordination, but its implementation needs optimization. Early communication of government bills to the DPR, with serious consideration of DPR input, increases the chances of bill approval (Setiawan, 2018). Transparency in the consultation process enhances accountability and public trust.
3. Enhanced Negotiation and Mediation Skills: DPR members and executive officials need better negotiation and mediation skills. The political environment requires the

ability to not only present arguments but also understand the opposing perspective and formulate mutually beneficial compromises. Regular training on conflict resolution and consensus-building can improve constructive interactions and transform conflicts into opportunities for collaboration (Lembaga Administrasi Negara, 2022).

4. Optimizing the Role of Political Parties as Bridges: Political parties play a central role in reconciling executive and legislative views. Internal party meetings can align agendas and views before issues reach the public or parliament, reducing the potential for a divided government. Solid internal party consensus makes it easier for factions and ministers to align their positions externally (Interview, Mr. Andri, May 15, 2025).
5. Utilizing Data and Joint Research: Using objective data and research in policy formulation can reduce political debates and shift discussions toward evidence-based decision-making. Joint research teams between the DPR and the executive, or utilizing independent research (e.g., from universities or think tanks), can provide a rational basis for decision-making (Pusat Studi Politik UI, 2023). Independent and credible research investment will help formulate policies that reflect real societal needs based on accurate data.

CONCLUSION

This study comprehensively examines the dynamics of the relationship between executive and legislative powers in the presidential system of government in Indonesia, particularly highlighting the urgency of reconciliation to achieve political stability and government effectiveness. The findings show that although the separation of powers is designed for checks and balances, the potential for conflict and deadlock always exists, mainly triggered by differences in political interests of parties, the lack of effective informal communication forums, and issues of trust and miscommunication. Empirical data, both from the analysis of legislative documents and the perspectives of informants, underscore that synergy between the President and the DPR is an absolute prerequisite for the smooth process of policy-making and implementation of national development programs. Without ongoing reconciliation, the dynamics of tug-of-war of interests can hamper the development agenda, even threatening the legitimacy of the presidential system itself.

Recommendations

This study proposes the following recommendations to strengthen reconciliation between Indonesia's executive and legislative branches:

1. Institutionalize Informal Communication: Create regular informal dialogue forums, such as weekly "Coffee Morning" meetings or annual retreats, to foster personal rapport and open communication between executive and legislative leaders.
2. Enhance Transparency and Public Participation: Improve transparency in the legislative and budgeting processes by publishing bill drafts early, encouraging wider public and expert participation, and documenting input transparently.
3. Use Research and Evidence-Based Data: Promote the use of objective research and data in policy decision-making by supporting independent research and forming joint expert teams to provide unbiased analysis.

Implementing these strategies will foster more effective collaboration, strengthen democracy, enhance political stability, and accelerate development for the welfare of all Indonesians.

Future Research

To deepen the understanding of reconciliation between the executive and legislative branches in Indonesia, future research could focus on the following key areas:

1. Comparative Study: Analyze how similar reconciliation mechanisms are applied in other presidential countries (e.g., the Philippines, South Korea, or the United States) and identify best practices that could be adapted to the Indonesian context.
2. Impact of Digitalization: Investigate how digital technology and new communication platforms influence the dynamics of executive-legislative relations, both in facilitating dialogue and potentially widening gaps.
3. Role of Civil Society: Explore how civil society organizations and other interest groups mediate or influence the reconciliation process between the two branches of power.
4. Effectiveness of Training: Conduct an in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of negotiation and mediation training programs for DPR members and executive officials, measuring their impact on the quality of collaboration.

Acknowledgements

With humility, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my fellow students for their support, discussions, and togetherness during this research process. Your enthusiasm and motivation are one of the important pillars that strengthen me. I also express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors for their guidance, direction, and invaluable knowledge. Your patience and constructive input are very important in shaping and perfecting this research to completion. Hopefully, this work can provide a positive contribution to the development of science and the academic community.

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