Dynamics of Elite Theory Case Study: Elites Configuration in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The fall of the Suharto regime has resulted in changes in the configuration of political power in Indonesia. Political power defined as the capacity to control the political system. Suharto's regime was the central political power to control the political system and Indonesian society. Indonesia's political system very centralized. New Order by Suharto has produced an authoritarian regime. Suharto's authoritarian regime was ended after series of demonstrations and people protests in 1998. The change of political power was indicated by massive regional redistricting in Indonesia and also elite's configuration.

Keywords: *Elites Theory, Regional Redistricting, Decentralization, Post Suharto Regime*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the discussion of the elite theory which experiences the dynamics of changing roles along with the ruling regime. The context of Anthony Giddens (1984) asserts that the local political elite is positioned as actors in structuration [1]. In their position as actors, local political elites obtain restrictions or empowerment from the structure. Local political elites from certain circles give meaning to the existing structure as a limitation. However, the other local political elites from different circles interpreted as empowerment. The dynamics of the local elite's position relate to the changes in national politics. Therefore, this paper will explain the changes in classical and modern elite theory to understanding the definition of elite more comprehensively lesson learn from Indonesia

2. CLASSICAL ELITE THEORY

2.1. Ruling Elite and Violence

The classical elite theory issued by Pareto, in essence, wants to debate Karl Marx's theory of class division. Marx states that the ruling class is a class that has political power based on ownership of the mode of production. While according to Pareto, the formation of the elite class is not only due to ownership over the means of production, but also the ability to cajole or coerce the masses. Pareto divides the elite class into the ruling elite

(governing elite) and the non-ruling elite (non-governing elite). The ruling elite group is composed of individuals that have a political position, and the non-ruling elite groups are not composed of people who have a political position. Pareto believes that every society is ruled by a small group of people who simultaneously occupy both positions of social and political power. Pareto also focused on other features that enabled the elite to rule by examining power and intelligence as significant factors [2]. There are two important factors to become a dominant ruling elite; intrigue and violence. The strategy to preserve the position of the ruling elite by using trickery and violence is common. Sometimes combined with certain myths to manipulate the public to comply with the ruling elite.

Furthermore, Pareto developed a theory named elite circulation. Elite circulation may occur among elite groups who govern themselves or with another groups/individual. According to Pareto, the fall of the elite can occur due to loss of power or reduced use of violence. While at the same time, the ruled class uses violence to change the ruling elite. It means that the ruling elite also has to respond in kind by using violence.

The elite theory of the Pareto has limitations. Pareto divides the concept of social class into two; ruling classes and ruled class based on their political appointments. It means that a person cannot be considered to be a member of the ruling class if he does not have a political position. Whereas there are people, who do not obtain political

positions but can mobilize the masses and thereby wield political power. Furthermore, Pareto insists that using violence to maintain the ruling elite is the norm. However, Pareto did not explain how violence could succeed in maintaining a ruling elite position.

2.2. Political Control of Ruling Class

The classical elite theory Mosca wanted to reject was the notion by Marx and Pareto. Mosca explained that the formation of the elite class is not only caused by ownership over the mode of production or superior personal capacity but also that the elite are more organized and maintains communication among themselves in a comprehensive fashion that is not mirrored by the people they rule. Gaetano Mosca developed the concept of examining who is a member of the elite by viewing elite status as interconnected with political power [3]. He persistently refused government classifications, such as monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. Instead, he explained that there is only one form of governance, namely oligarchy. Mosca divide society into two classes, namely: the ruling class and the ruled class. The ruling class, which are usually fewer, generally hold sway over all political apparatuses and are members of the oligarchy. While the ruled class, although much larger, is regulated and controlled by the ruling class. The distinguishing characteristic of the elite is based on the power to lead and control politics. If the ruling class is losing their political control, there is a possibility that the ruling class will be dropped and replaced by a new one. Mosca advocates that when a new social force arises that the change of ruling class cannot be avoided.

According to Mosca, the dominance of the majority by the minority occurs because the individual quality of people in the minority group is much higher. Mosca examines the elite composition by recognizing the specific role of social forces. Mosca emphasized the significance of political formula. He believes that in society, the ruling classes try to find a moral and legal basis for their existence. There are some critical limitations to the elite theory proposed by Mosca. Mosca also divides the class into two ruling classes and ruled class based on the position in politics. However, Mosca did not explain how elite circulation might occur: what factors cause elites to circulate? Mosca did not explain how to organize the elite, even if the elite is organized, does conflict not occur.

2.3. Iron Law Oligarchy in Modern Democracy

Robert Michels correlated to the iron law of oligarchy as one of law in human history. Robert Michels (2009) popularized the iron law oligarchy in his book *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy.* Based

on his studies, Michels determined that the Social Democratic Party in Germany was oligarchical [4]. However, Michels conclusion is slightly paradoxical in that present a contradiction: how can a membership-based political party be oligarchical? Should not members of political parties that are not directly involved in the process of political contestation be given the opportunity to participate in decisions about the future of the party? In fact, the leaders of the party have controlled the process by recruiting the new party leader. Political leaders tend to have prepared and elected leaders from within their ranks or determined who could provide political continuity to the previous leader. Thus, the elite class engages in secretive dealings to renew itself which results in increasing social distance between party elite and the rank-and-file of mass supporters.

Therefore, modern democratic societies, non-governmental organizations, and political parties cannot escape this cycle of elite circulation. The inescapable nature of this cycle is why the cycle is referred to as "iron". According to Michels, the majority of people are apathetic, lazy and soulless slaves, and incapable of governing themselves. They are to be considered as tools and when prompted by coercion, slaves. The leaders of society who, having obtained their position by the exploitation of the masses, adroitly use the masse's lack of political sophistication against them. Elites will use whatever manner of coercion is socially acceptable to obtain such positions. If these methods prove successful and an unassailable political position is achieved, they can never be removed from power. However, Michel's theory is not without limitations. Michel explains that oligarchy is an essential factor in the organization of political parties and the operating of the state. Further, Michel did not explain the impact of the oligarchy on the political system in a country. How elite circulation can occur in the oligarchy system

2.4. Democracy and Ritual Elite Mechanism

Mills conception of the formation of social class within a society is based on research conducted in 1972 about leaders in all sectors including political, economic, social, cultural and civic institutions in the United States. Mills found that less than 250 people who occupied the position of executive, legislative and judicial branches of the central government control about 40% of private companies and 50% of universities. About 200 women and men control three television companies and most of the print media company. From this research, it can be outlined that some few people have made significant decisions for all citizens of the United States. Mills identified three classifications of ruling elite. First, the upper stratus of Mill's classification is composed of high-ranking bureaucrats and influential political executives, such as presidents and cabinet ministers. The second strata of Mill's classification outlined an elite

entrepreneurial class comprised of the owners of big companies. The third and final tier of Mill's classification of elites targets explicitly high-ranking military officers that are seen to wield a different kind of power than other bureaucrats outlined in the first tier.

According to Mills, these elites do not hamper civil liberties. They respect the principles of law and conduct themselves transparently. Their actions cannot be categorized as dictatorial. The power inherent to these positions grants the incumbents power not only in the government but also in the political, financial, educational, social domains. However, Mills argues that despite democratic elections, the ruling elite groups always come from the top-level elites or similarly social well-placed groups. The ruling elite is an elite group in the region, occupying state positions, military cliques and formative economic positions. Why does this happen? It is primarily caused by economic policy and national security that is determined by the whims of top-level elites. Second, the top-level elite has a significant role in the central level; meanwhile, non-elites are almost entirely isolated from the process of governance. Third, the political elites collaborate with industry and the military.

In the United States, the top-level political elites are stationed throughout each branch of the American government ranging from the White House and the Senate to various defense agencies and the Pentagon. These positions grant elites the ability to make binding decisions that are politically legitimate. At the second tier of elite infiltration of governmental institutions are the fringe elites. These fringe elites are elected officials who, though possessing a legitimate position in the government, do not wield any considerable political power. Procedural democracy is used as legitimacy for elites to dominate the government. Elections and democracy are just a ritual before elites circulate in government positions [5]. Therefore, mills elite theory has limitations. Mills explained that there are groups that make public policy in a country. However, Mills did not describe how the election was merely an elite ritual and the relations among the three types of elites.

2.5. Elites in Modern Society

Bottomore describes the elite as a group of people who hold a prominent position in society [6]. The elite is a group of individuals who have significant roles and give influence to the development and the dynamics of society. However, elites have a different role in the social domain because elites have a significant role in managing and controlling social change. It is certain that the dominant elites will determine the dynamics of society. Elites are needed to control society and hold critical social positions. Bottomore describes the elite based on two perspectives, namely politics and economics. Based on the political perspective, Bottomore uses Mosca's

notion of elites in politics refers to the group that uses political influence to uphold and perpetuate itself. Bottomore also distinguishes a small group of namely political elite, which consists of individuals who significantly use political power in the society. Members of the political elite are comprised of government, high-ranking officials, military leaders, leaders of industry, and in some cases, includes aristocrats and royal families who are politically influential. The political elite consists of groups, which may be involved in various levels of cooperation, competition, or dispute resolution between one another. This elite group must create new social-political institutions which mobilize the communities and actively support the activities of the ruler.

Meanwhile, Bottomore explains the elite from an economic perspective based on Marx's theory. Bottomore also explains that class consolidation requires the centralization of various types of economic, political, and military forces. Bottomore agrees with Marx's view that the formation of classes in society begins with economic power. The emergence of the ruling class called the "bourgeoisie" by Marx, is very important in the modern society. The emergence of this class is also accompanied by other positions in politics, military, and education. The existence of the ruling class allows the society to be more open and provides an opportunity for the public to gain access to education and political rights and so on. According to Bottomore, the correlation between the political domain and the economy in capitalist society is increasingly complicated compared to the feudal system. Bottomore also stressed that the notion of the ruling class is unclear. The strength of the class with the factor of economic ownership does not necessarily explain the changes of the ruling elite comprehensively.

According to Bottomore's elite theory, there are some limitations. Bottomore divides the community into a ruling class and ruled class. The division of society based on political and economic position. However, Bottomore did not explain how the elite circulation and how the relations among the elites.

2.6. Limitations of Classical Elite Theory

The classical theory of elites provided by Pareto, Mosca, Robert Michels, Mills and Bottomore have many shared limitations. One of these limitations is a general tendency towards overstating the political and societal power of the ruling class. Under these theories, the ruling elite put forth an uphold political and social structures that possess the explicit goal of dominating the masses. These classical elite theories assume that non-elites cannot mobilize masses and must, therefore, use political subterfuge. These classical elite theories are overly focused on political and economic power, whereas there are still cultural elites, who wield significant power to influence the structure of societies by mobilizing the community. The classical elite theory also explains that

the unequal distribution of power has led to the emergence of a regulating and regulated class. Thus, classical elite theory only upholds the notion that elites exist as a result of unequal distribution of power within society. Classical elite theory rejects the emergence of elites based on cultural and ideological approaches. The limitations of classical elite concepts have been improved by contemporary elites such as Murray Milner

3. CONTEMPORARY ELITE THEORY

3.1. Three Types of Elites

Contemporary elite's theory expresses a more flexible argument. Therefore, Milner defines a more comprehensive elite theory that is more capable of accounting for a more comprehensive notion of elites. Milner explains that the fundamental attribute of elites is an ability to obtain and maintain societal power by using three categories of resources [7]. According to Milner, the source of power comes from politics, economics, and status. These three sources of power correspond to three different types of elites. First, a political elite is one who capable of using political power to legitimize his actions. Power is used to influence others, and, if the action is considered to be politically legitimate, everyone accepts the action. A person can, therefore, become a political elite when he can control the internal order and provide public protection against external threats. Milner provides an example between police and robbers. In this case, the police not only serve to arrest but also define the robber and convince others that this robber is a common enemy and must be arrested. Thus, the accepted function of the police to catch robbers is only accepted by the public because they have agreed to it. The difference between police and robbers is based on legitimacy. The use of legitimate power is associated with defense against external enemies and enforces group norms, which are often manifested in rules and codified in law [8]. Second, an economic elite is a person can control the modes of production. Murray gives an example, in the local community usually occurs pros and cons of the economic model. Therefore, the economic elite is needed to control the modes of production in society.

Third, a cultural elite who derives their social standing from a combination of culture and ideology. Such elites have relatively high status in society because they possess culturally relevant skill or for religious factors. Economic and political elites usually have higher status due to economic and political power. Cultural elites are highly respected, but they are not ideological elites. Ideological elite emerges as a type of cultural elite whose position is formulated from the synthesis of culture and politics. Historically, this status of ideological elites stems from a religious and intellectual elite that plays a vital role in articulating and conveying ideology

to society. Ideological elites' debate and propose various models of life and things that should be done by many people. Examples of ideological elites are Brahmin priests in India. Milner argues that the political elite and the economic elite use their status to legitimize their actions.

3.2. Characteristics of Elites in Indonesia

The literature demonstrates that the fall of Suharto's authoritarian regime has resulted in changes in the configuration of elites in Indonesia. Robison and Vedi Hadiz argue that this insubordination typically results when local oligarchs misuse the autonomy granted to them through the decentralization processes [9]. In line with Hadiz, Winters describes the inequality of economic resources as the source of potential power imbalances [10]. Therefore, the fall of the Suharto regime was seen by local elites as the right time to seize power of elites at the local level. The economic incentives that can be gained by using decentralization have provided the impetus for local elites to enter politics. Renton explains that the fall of the Suharto regime provided an excellent opportunity for local elites or paramilitary organizations to grow [11].

Despite being deposed from power at the national level, Suharto era elites continue to remain an active force in Indonesian politics. Since the beginning of the decentralization era in post-Suharto regime, there were elites uprising marked by a growing number of elites involved in determining public policy, either at central or local level by various means. Aspinall and Klinken describe several characteristics of elites in Indonesia. First, elites will keep consolidating their power and dominate organized political activities, including the electoral system. Second, the elite is no longer limited people who supported Suharto and has already begun to expand. Third, elites at the local level tend to manipulate democratic processes by exploiting public resources [12]. In the New Order era, the political elite has always used the military to consolidate political power. After the New Order era, the military was no longer allowed to engage in politics. This ban led to the creation of the new social dynamics and the emergence of local elites.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The reality of the Indonesian political scene shows that when the regime authoritarian came to power, there was a group of local political elites who experience limitations from the existing structure and there are also a number of other local political elites who are experiencing empowerment. The fall of the New Order government resulted in the presence of a political system that the democratic style allows for a change in meaning existing structure. local political elites who originally defined structure. Milner clearly stated that, anyone can

be said to be an elite if they have the ability to manage the economy, politics and status.

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